

The Civil Contract of Photography

Ariella Azoulay

Translated by Reli Mazali and Ruvik Danielli

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being the only sphere in which a new beginning would occur. Drana, unlike Truth, didn't choose to display and turn her breasts into a living proof. But when forced into a situation where her body was examined behind the closed doors of the photographer's studio, she didn't miss the opportunity of staring at the spectator and causing her to connect her disgusted look with her scarred body.

CHAPTER FOUR

Emergency Claims

American attacks on Iraq in 1991, conducted under the framework of what was called the "Gulf War," marked the beginning of a new era in the imagery of war.¹ This epoch has subsequently and repeatedly been described as one of sterilized or sanitized news coverage.² Such formulations indicate the emergence of the ruling power's ability, during times of war, to manipulate the production and distribution of images. Coalescing around such figures of speech as "smart bomb" and "precision target," this discourse has, in effect, allied itself with expressions coined by the ruling power. Rather than look at the images themselves and the ways in which they expose the evils of war, news editors, journalists, and critics focused at length on the nature of the new imagery of war, of which the general conditions of appearance had been formed through the cooperation of the media with the military and other branches of government. Susan Sontag has described this situation as "techno-war": "the sky above the dying, filled with light-traces of missiles and shells — images that illustrated America's absolute military superiority over its enemy."³ The flickering, green nocturnal photographs of Baghdad have become icons of an era of warfare conducted and photographed remotely at a distance.

The preponderance of such icons has made the gaze forget the fact that photographs were taken in this war, just as in all other wars perpetrated since the invention of photography. Slightly more than a decade later, daily bombings of Afghanistan and Iraq continue to be depicted as if such assaults occur under the same visual regime, one

overseen by a distant gaze. As Sontag contends, "Television, whose access to the scene is limited by government controls and by self-censorship, serves up the war as images. The war itself is waged as much as possible at a distance, through bombing, whose targets can be chosen, on the basis of instantly relayed information and visualizing technology, from continents away."⁴

The prevailing critical description of the new age that emerged with the American attack on Iraq in 1991 characterizes it as one exclusively made of sanitized images or, even further, as one wholly sanitized of images. Such a description adopts a remote stance toward its object, a position from which one cannot even take images into account or what is evident within them. Instead one can only derive an image from them — an image of the end of the image. This position, voiced by critics of the government, uncannily resonates with the government's own position, complementing the latter's effort to homogenize the field of vision, creating the conditions for its own images to be viewed in such a way that all others images will hardly be seen.⁵ If the Gulf War represents a significant turning point in the annals of the photographed image, it is not by virtue of having emptied the field of vision of images, but on account of it signaling a new stage in the government's efforts to monopolize control over the visual image and to impose its self-produced images on the media.

This attempted takeover was conducted along two parallel and complementary channels. One was made of the autonomous, real-time production of images via the weapons of war, distributed to the media as the most accurate and reliable record of military operations.⁶ The other involved the assignment of press photographers to specific fighting units, fully integrating them in the array of forces as "embedded" reporters. The first channel transformed the military into a major player within the visual field, allowing greater participation in a competitive domain where images are produced and distributed by a multitude of different agents vying with one another. The second channel effectively held the media hostage to the government's command.

In light of these developments, it is important to recall that cameras did not cease taking pictures once the age of sanitized "techno-

war" was declared. Photographic production has found its way into the media, with some photos appearing within mainstream outlets, others on the fringes, and, as always, with some remaining temporarily buried in archives. Without a doubt, the registry of images from the war in Iraq includes a wide variety of photographs. Among the more horrifying of shots one can find the charred corpses of Iraqi soldiers frozen in position or burned vehicles with dead occupants caught inside. Other photographs depict the experiences of American soldiers in action, as well as the sights that inevitably follow the horrors of war: the ruins of buildings, refugees and camps — all part of the consequences of war.⁷

Either viewed individually or taken in their cumulative abundance, these photographs refute the widespread assumption that postmodern war has made it impossible to see war and its horrors. These photographs are indubitably part of the repertoire of postmodern warfare, and they are constantly seeking spectators.⁸ The press photographer has not vanished from the arena of war and continues to take pictures. However, she now finds herself surrounded by other photographers who either work on behalf of various interest groups or others who come to be designated as "amateurs." All these photographers share her labors, competing over access to the various media outlets. Thus, for example, when the U.S. Army at the start of the attacks in 1991 successfully blinded spectators' eyes, making them believe there were no more images to view, press photographer Peter Turnley refused to join the pool of photographers assigned to various military units and roamed Iraq on his own, taking photos without the supervision of the military. The images he captured were distributed through various channels. On the eve of the Second Gulf War, the photographs he was able to capture were redistributed over the Internet in the form of a digital book entitled *The Unseen Gulf War*.⁹

The many photographs taken during the Gulf Wars and other horrifying occasions are not necessarily broadcast on the prime-time news or printed on the front pages of major newspapers. But these photographs do indeed circulate, and with a few simple steps, anyone can locate them through various information networks.¹⁰ Texts written about these images, despite the images themselves having

found distribution through diverse communication channels, still are not sufficiently exhibited — not on prime-time television, or on the front pages, or in color, or with such immediacy. Such texts, however, are testimony to the *existence*, rather than the *absence* of images. With each photograph — whether taken by a professional press photographer, an amateur photographer, or one working for a cause — there always remains the possibility of reading traces of an event (as well as its “counterevent”), or at least the ability to bring such an event into view through the photograph. Thus, for example, in the Web site album of Tim the Soldier,¹¹ pastoral views of American soldiers stationed in the desert appear alongside photographs showing Iraqi prisoners being forced to pile up the bodies of dead Iraqi soldiers. Without having been given the proper tools to perform the job, some Iraqis can be seen dragging a corpse unsteadily on a blanket in one photograph. Another shows six American soldiers carrying the corpse of a single Iraqi soldier on a stretcher. Looking comparatively at these two photographs, it is difficult not to observe the humiliation imposed on the Iraqi prisoners and the disrespectful treatment of the enemy dead. Even further, one cannot fail to see these photographs as a portent of the infamous torture photographs, also taken by American soldiers, a decade later in Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison. Efforts to monopolize control over photography thus will only partially succeed, and for only a limited period of time. As long as there are cameras in this world, photographs will continue to be made simultaneously by different people, and heterogeneous realities will be presented that will eat away at any supposed monopoly.

“Everything Could Be Seen”

The assertion that a sterile field of vision is operative is generally accompanied by an additional insults and accusations aimed at spectators, claiming that they turn away from images of horror and prefer to watch other things instead.¹² Critics claim that the vision of spectators has been blinded. The spectators are oblivious; their attention has waned; they prefer entertainment; they would rather avoid looking; they are weary of horrific images; they need more stimulating sights and more powerful images to move them. When spectators are conceived in this way, the question of how to stimu-

late them continually arises for professionals in many fields. But when the assertion that war has been sanitized of images is coupled with the assertion that spectators are blind, it remains unclear why spectators would actively avoid images that simply are not supposed to exist. These two contradictory assertions — one claiming that there are no images, while the other claiming that there are too many — are generally voiced in succession by the same speakers. According to the first claim, there are too few images, thus there is nothing to look at. According to the second claim, there are too many, and therefore it has become impossible to look. Both claims leap over what is visible to the gaze — fragmentary images of moments within the whole of what is called war — subsequently rejecting what has been rendered visible on account of not conforming to a phantasmatic model of the object of vision, the existence of which has been assumed by the critics. With this phantasmatic model, the much sought-after object of vision is a sort of pure object that makes it possible to see war with utter clarity. It is an ideal object of vision, which is why all the available images are either more or less than what is supposed to be offered.

The other side of this passion for a pure object of vision, which no existing image can equal, is the passion for a pure spectator who will encounter the image, be appalled by what is revealed, and successfully change the world through her active response to it. Such a hope inevitably results in disappointment through the repeated confrontation with the absence of such a spectator. There is no field of vision in which such an image may be found and no such image in existence: It is vain to wait. In its very essence, the image is partial, obscured, fissured, and questionable. Though mendacious, it nonetheless discloses something truthful, yet is nebulous at the same time. Handicapped, the image is not sufficient in itself and requires visual and verbal support — a spokesperson to bring it forth and to have it speak. A solitary image cannot testify to what is revealed through it, but must be attached to another image, another piece of information, another assertion or description, another grievance or piece of evidence, another broadcast, another transmitter. An image is only ever another statement in a regime of statements.

Photography’s inclusion within a discourse reasserts the civil

contract of photography, enabling the promise to continue to protect the last means of employing legitimate violence that is left in the hands of the modern citizen — photography. The civil contract of photography enables citizens and noncitizens alike to produce grievances and claims that otherwise can't be seen and to impose them by means of, through, and on the citizenry of photography. The civil contract of photography protects the citizen vis-à-vis power, endowing her political existence with a dimension beyond the bounds of being subject to power. The civil contract of photography is frequently threatened by the ruling power. When the citizen's gaze is diverted from photographs, and directed toward the field of vision created by the ruling power, where, in fact, there are no images, individuals abandon their commitment to the contract and effectively collaborate with the ruling power even when they may be explicitly opposed to its actions.

In order to protest against power, critics continue to monitor the field of vision it created — where, at most, only ideas can be “seen” — and relinquish the civil field of vision, where concrete objects await their gazes. To steady one's gaze on the photographs, to direct one's look at what is revealed by each and every one and to assume responsibility for how what is visible is articulated into discourse — this is sometimes all that a citizen can do. Indeed, in various places throughout the world, citizens are acting exactly in this way. They *themselves* are looking at what is presented to their gaze and are in no hurry to describe what the “spectator” may have seen or felt in relation to what is visible. Instead, they assume their own singular vantage point. Looking at what is visible as it is revealed from their own point of view, they attempt to extend the limits of this angle of vision, rather than renounce it so as to adopt the viewpoint of power, which ostensibly enjoys a birds-eye view of things. From their own localized perspectives, as citizens with multiple positions of speech and action, they take responsibility for what is visible and the way in which it unfolds in the discourse. As activists participating in various public associations, as parents, teachers, lecturers, artists, workers, and merchants, citizens of the citizenry of photography assume local responsibility toward what is visible, although the visible cannot be separated from its global conditions. In the follow-

ing, I will linger over the responsibility demonstrated by several photographers and artists toward what is visible in the reality of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

The existence of images within a discourse that does not cease to describe their absence is part of the current general conditions of the image. In other words, the visible threatens to turn invisible, and the invisible threatens to manifest itself as visible. Local conditions affect the generalized form of relations between the visible and the invisible. With the rising homogenization that characterizes the global age, local conditions perform a process of heterogenization within the field of vision. Based on an exhibition I curated in the summer of 2004 at the Um El Fahem Art Gallery in Israel, entitled *Everything Could Be Seen*, I will examine the viewing conditions specific to Israeli rule over the Palestinians.¹³

What could be seen? Where? In real time or in pictures? From nearby or from afar? When could it be seen? When it happened? After the fact? Under what conditions? Who said there was anything to see at all? What does seeing “everything” mean? And what does “could be” mean? If it “could be seen,” who prevented it from being seen? And if it could be seen, why is no one seeing it? Is it all over? Is there, perhaps, nothing to see? What does “seeing” mean? Is seeing possible? Does the fact that pictures exist imply that seeing is possible? Can one see at all without speaking about what one sees? And besides, who is saying that nobody saw? No one knew? Who's asking all these questions, and why? What are the conditions of possibility for the question “Could everything be seen?” Was the title of the exhibition an answer to a question? To a contention? To an accusation? To a court order? Who is posing the question? And why doesn't she address the question to herself?

The sentence “Everything could be seen,” which served as the name of the exhibition, is not a reply to any message arriving from the outside in the form of a question, a contention, or a court order. On its own, the sentence seeks to establish an urgency, to allow the images to give a warning, and to declare a state of emergency. The exhibition presented a series of images that had been conceived, collected, classified, created, or processed out of the continuing everyday reality of the state of Israel's “temporary” dominion over three

and a half million Palestinians. On display were visual traces of a people on whom a framework of control has been imposed, one that does not cease controlling their lives, denying them — usually in violent fashion — any political status. In collapsing the distance between the machinery of control and the body of the subjected, the denial of political status facilitates direct intervention in their lives. Whoever is placed in this position is a *noncitizen* of the state of Israel. A multi-layered relationship between a noncitizen and a citizen of the state subsists on several levels. Here I will dwell on one constitutive aspect of this relationship.

Urgency with respect to the citizens' situation (usually in defense of their security) requires and provides the justification for the state's direct intervention in the lives and bodies of the noncitizens. The transformation of one population (noncitizens) into a "human shield" for another population (the corpus of citizens) over a period of several decades makes it impossible to discuss the one isolated from the other. Despite gestures of separation and withdrawal, as the structure of relations between the two populations based on the hostility of mutually exclusive sides, the prolonged dominion of one over the other has tied them to a common destiny. In this framework, the noncitizens — Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — are paying the greatest and gravest cost. With growing frequency, they are completely abandoned, subjected to the damage of their property, and exposed to mental suffering and physical injury. However, within this situation, the ruling power's privileged citizens (Jews), its second-class citizens (Palestinians with Israeli citizenship), and the Palestinian refugees living outside the borders of the state of Israel (whose fate is still dictated by the state on account of their perpetual designation as refugees) — all pay a price. Citizens, on the whole, try to avoid paying and are repeatedly surprised when the bill arrives at their table. They take offense when the price to be paid is exacted from others, and not only from those who "should" pay it by virtue of their status as noncitizens. The chronicle of events — the daily news and the agenda it determines — coalesces around the price citizens are paying, depicting the transaction as something that could be or at least should be prevented. One sees on the margins of the daily publication and dissemination of this reportage,

without even a hint of emergency, traces of the ravages being inflicted on the population of noncitizens. Such traces appear divested of the function of civility that, to a greater or lesser extent, holds the power of turning the harm that has been inflicted into something that is not to be taken for granted.

In reading several images, I will focus on the price that is paid by noncitizens, which is supposedly extracted only temporarily, although such transience has in fact become the permanent and daily reality of their lives. I'll attempt to point out the structural gap that prevents the horror depicted in each of these images from turning into a state of emergency or an audible cry for help. Curating an exhibition made of these images was guided by the intention of turning a flash of time from the future — some distant day when one will be able to claim that "everything could be seen" — into the present, to contend that this day has already arrived.

As I write this text, and while you spectators are reading the text and contemplating the images, "everything" can already be seen. And this is not because the omnivoyant gaze has suddenly been revitalized or because messianic conditions have arisen that would allow a glimpse of the end. "Everything" can be seen because what one can see, even within the frames of the few images I will address, is enough for one to see "everything" and to understand its outline. What I'll consider is sufficient cause for the establishment of an indictment against injury done to citizenship. What I will show is not seen in the existent tribunals, nor is it translated into an emergency summons, given the current conditions of the gaze we are faced with and the particularity of the statement of horror that I will analyze below.

In the early 1930s, Walter Benjamin wrote that "photographic records begin to be evidence in the historical trial. This constitutes their hidden political significance."¹⁴ The images under discussion are evidence, incontrovertible evidence, of destruction, humiliation, injury, manslaughter, abuse, suffocation, suffering, misery, and injustice. They are the basis for seeing everything, despite the ~~ease~~ that not everything could be seen. There is a decisive rift, however, between the substratum of visual facts that have been compiled and the gaze that will rest on them. This gap prevents the gaze from seeing

the visual fact that is disclosed. The fact that visual materials remain from one event or another or from a certain situation doesn't necessarily insure their visibility. Not everyone who looks effectively sees. Seeing requires a special intention, which is manifested by a certain responsibility on the part of an addressee toward what is in fact seen. The collected pieces of evidence I gathered here for the exhibition Everything Could Be Seen will perhaps serve, at some point in the future, as exhibits to be admitted at the "historical trial." In the meantime, it seeks the responsibility of citizens for what has been shown. It does not suffice that the evidence is merely put on display. If the spectator fails to demonstrate responsibility toward it and to give it a place in current discourses, it is liable to be dismissed from the historical trial, like dust blowing in the wind.

Jean-François Lyotard's theory of discourse, developed in *The Differend*, provides means for conceptualizing an ethics of the spectator, in order to discuss her civic responsibility.¹⁵ The statement, which is the smallest element of discourse, cannot be reduced to merely linguistic content or an expression; it is a structure of relations made among an addresser, an addressee, a referent, and a meaning. One cannot discuss the statement in isolation from these four elements (*instances* in French), although it is not necessary for all of them to be active. To discuss the damage that discourse cannot express, Lyotard develops a theory of discourse that is organized around the pole of the injured. To harm one of the elements of the statement, he writes, makes it impossible to express the damage, turning it into injustice and transforming whoever complains about the damage done to him into a victim. Harm inflicted on the element of the addresser can occur when the addresser is physically silenced, or when the authority of the addresser is undermined, or when the right of the addresser to maintain his or her ground and political status is subverted. Harm can also occur if the addresser is deemed to be insane or if what he or she says is labeled incoherent.

Harm to the element of the addressee occurs when the addressee is simultaneously the one who has inflicted the damage and the tribunal that decides on the damage, but also when the addressee is simply not present, does not understand his or her role, rejects that role, is negligent in carrying it out, or neglects it deliberately or out

of indifference. Harm to the referent is caused when its existence cannot be established, or when the procedures allowing it to exist are not recognized as valid, or when they are not available to the addresser, or because the evidence that would help establish its existence has been erased. Despite the fact that the referent can be established, harm to meaning is caused when the conditions of discourse distort the meaning of the statement.

My discussion will divert from the path that runs, according to Lyotard, from damage to injured person to victim, opting for a particular kind of *énoncé*: statements produced from and in the face of horror. *Zva'a*, the Hebrew word for horror, describes mists rising from the earth toward the clouds, ascending above a place where disaster has struck. But horror is not simply the view afforded to the gaze — "a horrific sight" — it also functions as a description of the state of the spectator of horror. Horror is the emotion that is aroused in the spectator by what she sees: the feeling of shock or alarm, a trembling, dismay, or fear. In the Hebrew Bible, the word "horror" appears only in Isaiah 28:19, although the Revised Standard English translation uses a different equivalent: "as often as it [judgment] passeth through, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night; and it shall be nought but terror [*zva'a*], to understand the message." Within a context that undermines the power of the visible in order to shock on its own, horror appears to demand that an emphasis be placed on the part of hearing for any understanding of horror as horror: "That he should give his heart to understand the rumor of calamities, his heart shall not be quieted, only shall be full of trembling and trepidation."¹⁶ In other words, horror already enfolds within itself the flawed nature of the statement in which it will be transmitted.

Such a flaw is due to the absence of the conditions required for a statement of horror to turn into what I call an emergency claim. An emergency is a situation involving calamity or mortal peril that demands immediate treatment. It is produced from a situation entangled in disaster, war, terrorist attacks, massacres, catastrophes, or accidents, but it also emerges from ongoing situations of poverty, misery, abuse, or humiliation. "Emergency," as a term, encompasses both the description of the calamitous or perilous situation and the

prescription of how it ought to be handled. A horror that takes place in conditions that turn it into a situation is thus designated as an emergency, the termination of which requires action to be taken.

But not every statement of horror turns automatically into an emergency claim. In the modern era, when the relationship between the ruling power and its subjects is mediated through citizenship, the ruling power is committed to alleviating situations that arise for citizens in conditions of disaster and holds the authority to declare a state of emergency. In Israel, a permanent state of emergency was declared in 1948 and has never been abolished since then. The alleged presupposition and justification for this unusually prolonged state of emergency is that the Jewish state and the Jewish citizens are under constant existential threat. Under the aegis of the state of emergency, Israel has ruled for more than forty years the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories as noncitizens and in the last decade has turned the territories themselves into a zone of emergency, without this other emergency ever constituting an object of legal or political concern.

Emergency claims are not necessarily articulated with the explicit hope for a declaration of a state of emergency. Rather, emergency claims are produced on a daily basis in the face of disasters of varying degree. These claims exist within a discursive framework in which the ruling power is indeed a powerful player, but has not completely monopolized the means of turning statements of horror into emergency claims.¹⁷ The modern citizen is capable of standing up to power and can negotiate and even contest the limits whereby her — or her neighbor's — statement of horror is turned into an emergency claim.

The meaning of a statement of horror as an emergency claim — even when the horror is clearly visible — thus is not something given or taken for granted. The emergency claim is open for negotiation. In principle, the civil contract of photography enables anyone to negotiate or to contest the transformation of a statement of horror into an emergency claim, even if under certain conditions (as a citizen or noncitizen of her country) this right has been taken from her. An emergency claim testifies to three facts: that a disaster exists; that it is an exception to the rule, one that necessitates immediate action

in order to terminate it; and that there is someone who wants to assume the position that allows immediate action to be taken in order to terminate it.

The statement is embedded in a discourse, and the related elements of addresser and addressee are not predetermined, fixed, and linear. The actualization of these elements (which involves the question of who is acting as addresser or addressee) and their restoration take place within a dynamic and decentered space dependent on negotiation between various factors. No one, including the addresser, has sole possession of the statement. Under occupation, war, or other situations of extreme violence, statements of horror are susceptible to harm at each of their four levels — that of the addresser, the addressee, the referent, and the meaning.

Let us examine these injuries in turn, beginning with their effect on the position of the addresser. In the photographic statement of horror, the position of addresser is in principle divided among at least three possible addressers who often act simultaneously and out of conflicting relations among themselves. This divided position can be detected as shared among the photographed person, photographer, and the photograph's editor, as I'll demonstrate in what follows in an analysis of three newspaper photographs. Even if we were to focus on the photographer as the addresser of the photographic statement, his address cannot annul the addressing of the photographed person, who may be looking for a different addressee than that of the photographer and the editor in an effort to allow a different meaning to appear. The heterogeneity of the addressing position, coupled with the fact that the photographic *énoncé* will always include more than what any addresser who has been party to its creation has hoped to include within it, turns the photographic sign into an active statement that can never be completely and ultimately sealed. This instability enables the spectator of the photographic statement to take responsibility for its meaning.

When Palestinians are depicted in newspaper photographs, for example, their address tends to be pushed aside by the addressing of others. In most cases, the statement is transmitted from the viewpoint of the state, the Israeli-Jewish perspective that looks on the Palestinian mainly as an enemy, rather than as a governed population

on whom injury has been inflicted — viewing her as an exception, rather than as a fellow man. Even when the reporter or photographer responsible for creating such statements makes the effort to deviate from this pattern, their statements are reconfigured by the routine framework of editing by the newspaper, television program, or news report.

Removing the Palestinian from the position of addresser, or at least casting a shadow on him by the introduction of another addresser, constitutes a disservice to the possibility of his addressing. In the conditions of constant disservice, which disrupt the possibility that the statement of horror will appear, insisting on having the picture speak by way of a text, as well as on the sectioning of the text through the resuscitation of traces of addressing that have been stamped on the picture, makes it possible to restore the flawed statement of horror.¹⁸ In most cases, the Palestinian is denied a direct addressing position, being instead effectively interwoven into the body of the dominant narrative that attempts to justify the occupation or into the terms of the leftist Zionist narrative that is opposed to the occupation, but views it merely as a temporary aberration that Israel has to eliminate. Despite the differences between these narratives, both positions, insofar as the Palestinian is designated a non-citizen, integrate his grievance into a general narrative, thus putting in brackets the fact that he has been harmed by the ruling power. “The occupation” is a framework that does not expose urgency, yet statements of horror circulate. The actual state of emergency in which the noncitizen is captured is prevented from being seen when it is addressed under the terms of “the occupation.” This very term, “the occupation,” limits what should be negotiated to negotiations between two national entities, and thus any injury inflicted on the noncitizen is supposed to be part of these eventual ulterior negotiations. Under the present conditions, however, “the occupation” functions as a mechanism of neutralization that prevents statements of horror from emerging as emergency claims.

With regard to the position of the addressee in the conditions of occupation, the danger of turning into the secret ally of the ruling addresser hovers over the spectator or watcher of the statements produced from the places that are on the verge of catastrophe. The

addresser often behaves as someone who can foretell the addressee's level of openness to the horrifying information to be presented, what dosage she'll be able to bear, and the vantage point from which she'll be able to digest it. Many of these addressers are likely (“in private conversation”) to declare themselves opposed to the occupation, but that their responsibility toward the profession and the tasks it entails obliges them to be “attentive” to the addressee, whose attributed position they themselves have created. This covert cooperation between this addresser and the addressee thus addressed, whereby everything is apparently already known in advance, limits the statement's capacity to appear as an emergency claim that would place the spectator in a position of responsibility toward its meaning.

However, under the conditions of occupation, as we just noted, even the “interested” addressee may miss this position of being addressed that the statement has assigned her and simply regard the statement to be confirmation of what she already knows. In the conditions of occupation, failing to be addressed is always already structured into the manner in which the statement of horror is presented. The spectator must have a special interest and already be prepared to turn herself into the civil addressee of a singular statement — a position that requires a deviation from the side to which she belongs. Even the addressee who may in principle empathize with the Palestinians adopts a similar position that enables — without it being her explicit aim — the statements of horror to pass by without generating a dimension of emergency. This addressee looks at emergency claims and witnesses only as generalized statements of horror — “the Palestinian misery” — which are topics for negotiation only within an eventual political dispute between two national sides (the Israeli state and the Palestinian Authority). By transforming the emergency claim into a generalized statement, the addressee relinquishes her civil point of view and adopts one that has been created by the ruling power, the point of view from which this emergency claim has been contextualized.

The ruling power seeks to homogenize the heterogeneous scopic regime through the active reduction of objects seen within it to the logic of a national struggle. Under this scopic regime, which always seeks a monopoly, the possibility of statements becoming emergency

claims is limited, if not fully erased. The generalized statement is always assimilated into the ruling national discourse, even when it apparently claims that the ruling class is responsible for the injury inflicted on the noncitizen. This discourse amplifies the existing division between citizens and noncitizens in such a way that they are placed against one another, with the citizens on the side of the ruling power. The citizen as addressee acts like someone whose knowledge and position exempt her from being singularly addressed, since she has in fact become the addressee of the *generalized* statement. In this way, she can regularly speak out against the occupation. Such people — specifically, those who are the natural target audience for arguments about the status of the Palestinians on the verge of catastrophe — are the ones who repeatedly say, in an apparently experienced and “critical” manner, that there is no need for them to peruse such articles or look at such photos, because they claim already to know what they contain. Perhaps, due to the proliferation of pictures of horror, they have been left numb, which is a retroactive justification of the newspaper editor’s position.

In such conditions, where addresser and addressee have been made to agree in advance on the meaning of the statement — which in effect amounts to injury to each of the elements — the referent is usually assimilated to the meaning. The meaning of the statement is usually located within predetermined brackets, restricting the referent of the horror to an already constructed container of meaning. This prepackaging enables the addressee to participate in a community of citizens capable of recognizing a disaster through a commonly accepted framework while ignoring the particular details of the new situation surrounding the disaster site. On the one hand, the addressee acknowledges the statement’s existence, but on the other, she presents herself as sufficiently experienced in statements of its kind to allow her to skip lightly over it to pass on to the next item on the agenda. She thus confirms the structure of the statement, which has been classified in advance, and feels exempted from having to contemplate its particular referent. Not only can the addressee separate herself from those who unrelentingly deny the existence of the disaster and run the risk of looking at the situation in an unrealistic manner, she also can separate herself at the same time from those

who demand to learn something from this specific case or who seek to do something about it now.

Statements of Horror

Although in some cases, statements of horror narrate the horror directly, requiring relatively no effort from the viewer to establish its presence in the context of emergency (one need only think of images in which we see wounded people, people already marked by the ravages of starvation, or mutilated bodies or demolished homes), under the conditions that we have just examined, other photos require a special discursive effort for the production of their visibility as emergency claims (one need only think of images in which we see families who have lost their loved ones, or views of desolate streets, ongoing dereliction, or diseases caused by inhuman living conditions). Despite the fact that horror is present in these photographs on one level of visibility or another and that most of them have been produced out of the horror itself, through the taking of stills or motion pictures, these statements are inherently flawed on account of the injuries we have just examined. These injuries are closely tied to the civil status of the photographed subjects. Such statements are flawed when they do not successfully generate an emergency, when the horror transmitted by these statements fails to appear as something that needs to be stopped immediately, or when they fail to depict something that requires preventative actions to be taken to ensure it from continuing through either direct rehabilitation or remuneration being offered to the victims.

In both flawed and the unflawed visual statements, the horror does not belong to the victim who is depicted, and it is not merely among those who are directly identified with the victim or who share the same territory with her that interest is aroused. Interest in the statement of horror and responsibility toward it constitutes one of the characteristics, abilities, and skills of the modern citizen of photography, part of what makes her what she is in a world stretched between domestic and global spaces. Despite the singularity of each and every statement and the incontestable particularity of the historical, political, and cultural circumstances from which it is manufactured, each has global characteristics that derive from the means of

its production, distribution, and the systems of exchange in which it circulates. The modern era has shown that anyone is liable to be the object of a statement of horror — perhaps not every kind of horror, and not in the same way, but in the modern era, equality before horror can unite populations whose differences are generally thought to be unbridgeable. Thus, for example, a disastrous train wreck or an earthquake can bring together rich and poor, the rulers and the powerless. The presence of citizens amid such disasters often contributes to the production of a proper statement of horror. The citizenship of photography may not be able to protect people from disaster, but can at least serve as a means for spectators to structure within the framework of a discourse the way in which the disaster has struck them and can enable them to limit the suffering that such calamities generate while accelerating the processes of recovery.

The statements of horror that will be discussed here are those in which noncitizens appear. The Palestinians are the noncitizens of the state of Israel. Ruled by the state of Israel, but as the exception to the rule of Israeli law, they have been effectively abandoned by the sovereign, and in most cases injury inflicted on them not only escapes penalty, but is rarely considered to be something that deserves notice. If injury to the Palestinians is sanctioned, any statement in which an attempt to report this injury fails to appear as an emergency claim in the framework of the existing discourse. Such a situation, then, creates particularly difficult conditions for the appearance of emergency claims as such. For instance, a photograph showing Palestinian detainees whose eyes have been blindfolded appears as a routine arrest procedure, rather than as a statement of horror, because the practice of blindfolding has become a commonplace procedure (figure 4.1). Such images are frequently printed in the media without any sense of urgency, which, if aroused, could expose this practice as a blatant violation of proper arrest procedures. In order to endow such images with urgency, the responsibility of a spectator is required to overcome the banality of their presentation.

Blindfolding is a characteristic treatment of prisoners of war, whose captors seek to prevent them from identifying the areas from which and to which they are being transported. Instead of the



תמונה: ניר קטרי, 2002. צילום: ניר קטרי, 2002.

Figure 4.1. Nir Katri (published in *Ha'aretz* with caption: "Suspect arrest, November 2002, no connection between the photographed person and the article"), *Ha'aretz*, 2002.

blindfold appearing as evidence of the constant conversion of an arrest procedure into the procedure for taking war prisoners, the distorted iconography constructed by the occupation presents it as an attribute of the Palestinian — of every Palestinian — as the mark of a dangerous enemy. The fact that the Palestinians lack political protection allows the occupation regime systematically to take actions that ensure that the existence of Palestinians in their own homes will remain temporary, making conditions such that the injury inflicted on them will be taken to be part of that liminal state.¹⁹ Not only does every movement by Palestinians require authorization, currently for tens, if not hundreds of thousands of them, even permanent residency in their homes requires a “permanent resident” permit, which has to be renewed every three months. Even at the time when the state was interested in commodities that could be obtained from Palestinians — for example, cheap labor — it was not interested in allowing their assimilation into the permanent register of citizens. Since the beginning of the occupation, transience thus has become a permanent feature of the Palestinians’ condition.²⁰ The state of Israel finds them, as transients, to be eligible only for life-preserving treatment, thus providing them only with the bare minimum that would be required to fulfill the necessities of life.

Not only is this population excluded from participating in the ruling power to which it is subjected, but its very existence has been reduced by the authorities to the existence of mere life. By employing the services of more than thirty dedicated humanitarian organizations, the state of Israel attempts to ensure the Palestinians the bare minimum necessary for their survival. Certainly, the bare minimum will not suffice for those receiving it, especially when this has been their condition for such a long time. It does seem to be sufficient, however, for those responsible for a situation in which so many have consistently been deprived, leaving this population on the verge of suffering a humanitarian disaster, and in fact, many organizations warn that the situation in the Occupied Territories is closer than ever to this catastrophe. Those who survive for extended period of time on this bare minimum exist in a perpetual state on the verge of catastrophe.

Existence on the verge of catastrophe is not the kind of situation that can be sustained before the actual outbreak of catastrophe.

Rather, it is a new form of catastrophe itself, a prolonged situation lacking any spectacular means of interrupting its routinization. On the contrary, this formation is a catastrophe that can be sustained for a long time without necessarily producing any warning signs, except for those stamped on the bodies of its victims. Existence on the verge of catastrophe is the formation of catastrophe that currently assails populations of citizens around the world, populations whose existence is transient, but whose condition — on the verge of catastrophe — is permanent. Forced into being transient, such populations are denied any way to demand a change in their situation, and under such conditions, whoever is still able to come to their aid can do no more than preserve their existence at the very edge of what is bearable — on the verge of catastrophe.

When citizens are struck by disaster, the statement of horror produced from the site of disaster area attests to an emergency and interrupts routine. The depicted disaster is generally accorded a name of its own, which serves as the support for additional statements that describe, refer to, and interpret it. Designated with a title, the disaster calls for an intervention, for a limit to be placed on the suffering it causes, and, finally, the title allows it to be remembered, saving it from sinking into the depths of oblivion.

Although the statement of horror is chain linked to a series of statements, such a connection ends once various systems manage to restore order. When this happens, the statement of horror is usually annexed to the mechanisms of remembrance, which ensure the commemoration of the disaster. When noncitizens are struck by disaster, however, a statement is not always produced, or the statement produced is not always a statement of horror. Even when such a statement is produced from a disaster, it is doubtful there will be any mechanisms of remembrance to preserve it. The incidence of disasters among the population of noncitizens and the fact that such disasters are not recognized as intolerable situations often turn their statements of horror into generalities. Such generalized statements are kept in storage, not necessarily referring to the particular disaster that has been reported, nor are they remembered as having been photographed at a given time and place. Instead, they come to express similar disasters in other places at other times. Captions such as the

“illustrative photo” or the “people depicted have no relation to the actual events” are conventional types of such generalized statements. When photographs are being used to illustrate a type of situation, rather than to testify to a singular event, it is a sure sign that a disaster has become chronic, that the worst is yet to come. The statement of the state of plight of noncitizens always arrives belatedly. But nothing is more urgent.

The conversion of statements of horror into generalized statements teaches us something about the status of the disaster and the blurred boundary between it and the routine existence of the population that exists on the verge of catastrophe. Statements produced from the disaster and from the routine of existing on the verge of catastrophe are usually produced retrospectively. They lack any real dimension of emergency. The personal and private disaster is assimilated into the population's collective situation and in so doing staves off the necessity for an active linking of statements that would put an end to the disaster. To demonstrate this further, I will present two examples of two different statements of horror: one produced from the situation of being permanently on the verge of catastrophe and the other produced from a concrete and singular disaster.

The front page of the *Ha'aretz* newspaper on January 19, 2004, featured a photograph in which a crowd of hundreds of Palestinians could be seen crushing each other while trying to exit the Erez crossing (figure 4.2). The photograph, having made it to the front page, apparently suggests an interruption of routine. But when one reads the caption beneath the picture, one understands that what is actually presented is merely stale news that has been retrospectively produced. The caption states: “Erez crossing, yesterday. The crossing was closed after the [suicide bomber] attack on Wednesday; with its reopening yesterday, long queues formed — at the end of which only a tenth the usual number of workers entered.”²¹ It should be noted that it is not clear who was damaged by the situation that the caption reports, the Palestinian workers who remained unemployed, or the Israeli employers who were left without their workforce. However, if the reader turns to the next page of the newspaper, as directed by the caption, she will encounter another photograph taken at the same location, while the article beneath it reports on the wounding



Figure 4.2. Erez crossing, *Ha'aretz*, January 19, 2004 (AP/Wide World Photos).

of an Israeli by gunfire near Ramallah (figure 4.3). This juxtaposition of these two modes of presentation is a regular and effective mechanism of justification that does not require too many words, arguing, in effect, that the citizen's injury serves as justification for the ill-treatment of an entire population of noncitizens. The statement of horror that describes the plight of the noncitizen is reinscribed as a necessary link in the attempt to address the emergency that is produced by the citizen's statement of horror.

Although the injury to the Palestinian has been erased, visible traces are left in the form of a mute emergency claim. Within the narrative framework that attempts to justify their injuries, effort is made to deny the misery and rage staring out from the eyes of thousands of Palestinians crammed inside a space too small to contain them — an attempt to deny the plight of people whose existence has been reduced to their desire to move from one place to another. In being part of commonplace and self-evident measures taken in the wake of terror attacks, the closing of the Erez crossing that took place four days earlier did not turn into an event from which a statement of horror was produced. The event might be reported, but implicitly or explicitly as an aside, only ever in the form of a dry report intended to deliver information about the implementation of a common, routine procedure. Reducing the existence of the procedure to a picture caption — “The crossing was closed after the attack on Wednesday” — turns the event into something taken for granted, as though it were a customary practice of the policy, so that the effects of this policy are simply unable to appear as emergency claims.

Any emergency regarding the situation of the citizen population thus requires and justifies direct intervention in (that is, injury to) the population of noncitizens. Law and justice are absent, and implemented in their place is a policy that functions as a system of reward and punishment against which those who are hurt because of it are unable to defend themselves. Punishment of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of Palestinians without due process — who lost their livelihoods during those four days; the absence of a compensation mechanism for the lost workdays; the lack of any arrangement to pay for the cancellation of work or for the disruption of their employment on account their having been herded for hours inside transit halls in



Figure 4.3. Nir Kafri, Erez crossing, Ha'aretz, January 19, 2004.

intolerably crowded and suffocating conditions — none of this appears to be news worth reporting. Evidence of the Palestinians' situation is constantly present in the media, but rarely as the enunciation of emergency claims. Their misery is either presented as justified or personalized. The neutralization of their emergency effectively substitutes compassion for responsibility. If only one of the thousands of people in the photograph were a citizen, an injury to his livelihood would be enough of a reason to demand an accounting, if not the immediate return of his means of supporting himself. Repeated injuries to his livelihood, the restriction of his freedom of movement, and the continual endangerment of his health would be sufficient cause to launch a series of statements demanding that the situation be immediately rectified.

Figure 4.4 is the second example of a statement of horror produced by a disaster. Every few days after the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada, many such statements appeared in the newspapers. On the front page of *Ha'aretz* on April, 25, 2004, a small, solitary headline appeared without the supportive body of an article: "8 Killed in the [West] Bank: A University Lecturer and 6 Activists." On page four, alongside a photograph of an armed soldier pulling the arm of a Palestinian youth, a report appeared that was intended to be the follow-up story to the small headline on the front page. However, its subject was "IDF Operations in the Territories." The report was an assemblage of information gathered from "military sources," within the Israeli Defense Forces, most of which provided apparently incriminating details regarding each of the men who were killed — data that was supposed to justify their killing ("recently accumulated intelligence about his links with two wanted men from Hamas"). It also cited information from "Palestinian sources," most of which refuted the selfsame "incriminating details" (for instance, "he was beside his sister on their way home"). The collation of information in this way functions as a kangaroo court, announcing a verdict that has already been passed by the army. Of the disaster that has struck those killed and their relatives as a result of the miscarriage of justice and its swift execution there is no mention in the report.

Since the meaning of this series of statements of horror is not given the status of an emergency claim, such statements — which



Figure 4.4. Bitounia, *Ha'aretz*, 2004.

nevertheless bear the traces of the disaster — lack any dimension of urgency. Instead, the emergency that arises from the statements (especially from the photograph), is the urgency to deal with a threat — depicted in the form of a Palestinian youth — that hovers over the citizen. The soldier is seen rushing ahead, with his left hand holding a cocked rifle that is pointing forward, while his right hand grips the arm of an unarmed Palestinian youth whom he is dragging away in order to detain. The photograph's caption provides an explanation for the erasure of the emergency of the noncitizen's situation in favor of the emergency of the citizen's situation: "Border Patrol policeman arrests a Palestinian youth in the town of Bitounia near Ramallah. IDF activity forestalled a suicide attack that was planned apparently for Independence Day." Random arrest and mistaken identification ("An attack dog was sent to chase after the wanted men. The dog assaulted Abu-Limon, rather than the armed wanted man, Imad Janajara, who was running beside him, and then the soldiers shot and killed him from a distance, thinking he was the suspect"); unjustified suspicions ("Border Patrol men shot at the two who were unarmed. According to the IDF, they were trying to escape. One was killed and the other mortally wounded. No belt of explosives was found in their possession"); mortal wounding; killing — all of this awaits the Palestinian over the course of his daily routine. When such events occur, they are depicted as part of a larger plan of action or part of a policy that is logical and justified — obscuring the disaster that strikes the individuals who have been harmed so that the policy may be implemented and subsequently represented as a necessary price that has to be paid.

These two examples illustrate the gap between the use of these three photographs to justify these events and the emergency claims that could have been produced from them, as well as the production and distribution of statements in the media outside of any emergency context. The gap between the visible and the invisible places great responsibility onto the spectator and an even greater demand on the spectator-citizen, whose protection and well-being as citizen has been the source for legitimating injury to the noncitizen. The visibility of the horror is not an objective matter, because it has been entrusted to those who are its addresser. The structure of the state-

ment enables the citizen to participate actively in establishing the reference and in creating the meaning of the statement through a process of addressing and being addressed. As mentioned above, the four elements of the statement — addresser, addressee, reference, and meaning — are not stable. Every statement can be retransmitted, dictated by a different addresser and to a different addressee, while insisting on establishing the reference and extracting its meaning. Such a process is not subject to an economy of justifications, but rather is part of a civilian discourse that is faithful to the elementary principle of equality among those who are ruled.

In the exhibition *Everything Could Be Seen*, I tried to show the civil attitude taken by several artists, Israelis and Palestinians, toward emergency claims. Demonstrated in their work are multiple articulations that attempt to establish a set of necessary, but not completely sufficient conditions for the rehabilitation of the photographs' referents: attempts simultaneously to expand the site of their meaning while aiming to get rid of the generalized meaning of "the occupation," which presently contributes to the perpetuation, rather than the changing, of the existing situation. "The occupation" is a countereffective term for two principal reasons. First, it is related to the extended period of time that has elapsed since Israel occupied the territories, which has turned Israeli rule of the territories into a permanent arrangement, rather than a temporary matter. The second reason relates to the fact that the term "occupation" regularly diverts attention away from the control of humans toward the control of territory. While the framework is territorial, all discussion on "ending the occupation" focuses on territorial solutions, most of which aim for a separation and redimension of the physical space. The emergency claims gathered together in the exhibition space tried to bypass the dominant dispute over the land of Israel/Palestine and its territorial partition to open a debate on citizenship and to emphasize its distribution. Statements of horror are obscured by the term "occupation." What can be seen in these statements of horror is an ongoing situation in which territorial control is only one element in the large-scale subjugation of the Palestinian population taking place through a discriminatory distinction between citizens and noncitizens under a single governmental framework.²²