"I can’t tell you what the current criteria are for people who are denied entry into Israel for security purposes," said Sgt. Liron Alush in an exasperated voice, over the phone. "If the criteria that comprise the profile of a terrorist are known, the [terrorist] organizations will know how to get around them." I tried to explain to her that I had a client from the West Bank, a merchant, who had been classified as a security threat because he fit certain classifications and I was trying to get around the classification, or prove he did not fit the profile, in order for him to enter Israel and continue with his work.

The permit regime enforced in the West Bank—monitoring and preventing movement of the Palestinian population within the West Bank and into Israel—has become a complex bureaucratic apparatus for identification, profiling and surveillance of the movements of the Palestinian population.

My client thought that the reason for his denial of entry had something to do with his brother being kept in administrative detention. People who are denied entry by the General Security Service (GSS) do not have access to the reasons that led to their classifications as such, the identity of the classifiers, or the components of the discretion that led to the decision to classify them as "denied entry for security reasons." Nor can the classification, as "denied entry for security reasons," be directly appealed. The legal adviser of Judea and Samaria (the Hebrew names of the West Bank area) is generally the only possible address for inquiries and requests to the GSS to reassess and revoke the classification as a security threat.

The civil administration had written in reply to my letter enquiring about my client’s classification that there had been no specific information condemning him as a security threat, and yet, we could not obtain a permit for him to enter Israel for a short and important business trip.1

"Look. I don’t make the profile. The security apparatus does, and once they make that profile, it’s like cast iron. It won’t change until they say that the general profile of people who are security threats changes." Relatively generous with information and accustomed to speaking with international and human rights organizations, Liron Alush explained the most important rule of what I have come to call “security theology”; the ultimate belief, by agents in the Israeli bureaucratic apparatus, that when it comes to Palestinians, the security apparatuses are not only well equipped to make classifications about entire populations and construct the elaborate profile of “the terrorist,” they also have almost unlimited executive discretion in deciding the content of the category of “security threat.”

The category of the security threat is a master category, around which an entire taxonomy and system of classification revolves when it comes to identifying and distinguishing between friend and foe, in Israel’s permanent state of emergency. The security threat is thus not only a category, a tool for classifying people; it becomes a paradigm of thinking, a binary schema for seeing the Palestinian population. A person can be either a potential security threat or not a threat. All other possibilities collapse into the master category of the security threat.

I wish to describe the classification system of the GSS that has become known to me through my work as a human rights lawyer in Jerusalem. I explored it further through research I conducted on the bureaucracy of the Occupation, a racialized bureaucracy based on rules, decrees and regulations that vary by race, and separate rules and regulations for the governing of the Jewish vs. the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). This bureaucracy controls the management, movement and political economy of the Palestinian population in the West Bank. It is based on a bureaucratic model of colonial administration, which is quite different from the classic Weberian model of bureaucracy whose principles are: speed, precision, knowledge of the files, hierarchy and processing by known rules and regulations. I analyze the contemporary use of security threat classification vis-à-vis Palestinians in the OPT wishing to obtain from the military civil administration a permit for movement, and the effects of the classification of Palestinian prisoners as security threats, particularly those that are sentenced in military court or are held in administrative detention. Specifically, I address the security threat classifications
governing the lives of “security prisoners” within the Israeli prison system.

CLASSIFICATION OF SECURITY PRISONERS

The categorization of prisoners as “security prisoners” occurs both with regards to residents of the OPT tried in the military court and Palestinians who are Israeli citizens tried in Israeli criminal courts. While some of the classification guidelines of the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) pertain to the classic crimes against the state, such as sedition, spying, or treason, part of the classification is in fact a criminalization of political attitudes, beliefs, or circumstances.

The categorization of prisoners into criminal prisoners and security prisoners is usually done with regards to their identity, their offense and their political affiliation at the time of the sentence. It is an internal administrative decision of the IPS, based on internal regulation 04.05.00 of the IPS.

The categorization is based on several substantial tests regarding the nature of the offense and the motivation of the offender, that is, whether the offense was committed in conjunction with security-related circumstances or for nationalistic reasons. This guideline can also be interpreted as pertaining to the political circumstances of the offense or the political leanings of the accused. If the offense might have served in any way a terrorist organization or a person interested in jeopardizing the state security, the prisoner would be classified as a security prisoner. The nature of the motive is determined on the basis of intelligence provided by the police or the GSS. These intelligence reports are not available to the prisoner or his lawyer, and are hence impossible to contest. If any doubt arises, the default assumption is that the prisoner is a security prisoner.

As a master category, when it comes to Palestinian prisoners, the security threat is a primary status, one which needs to be positively falsified, since in the eyes of Israeli bureaucracy, within every Palestinian who belongs to the suspect population lurks the phantom of the terrorist, whose motives are nationalistic in nature—even if these motives have not yet been manifested, they may at any moment.

A brief look at the offenses regarded as security threats reveals two patterns. The first pattern of classification, the main method of criminalizing political membership, is directed against politically oriented acts on behalf of or for the benefit of organizations; the other towards genuine terrorist activities. Political offenses, even fairly mild ones, like organizing an illegal protest, become security offenses when their motive is deemed nationalistic by the GSS. The last reason for classifying a prisoner as a security prisoner is a colonial legacy of Mandate Palestine: here are violations of the emergency defense regulations of 1945, a set of military decrees, allowing the executive power (usually the army) to suspend the law, including basic civil rights, in order to restore order and security in a state of emergency. These decrees were mainly used during the Mandate against members of the Jewish Etzel and Lehi movements; they specify participation or performing services for an illegal association, carrying weapons, firing a weapon or planting a bomb, holding military training sessions and providing a haven.

THE LORDS OF PROFILING

An essential part of the bureaucratic labyrinth of population management under occupation, the GSS is usually the most efficient and competent when compared to other departments. This state of affairs is not unique to occupation bureaucracies but has been a feature of most regimes which maintained a secret police.1 Arendt was adamant about the role of the secret service in turning what she called “suspect populations” into “objective enemies” through profiling systems. While suspect populations need to attempt or commit an offense, objective enemies are “carriers of tendencies” and therefore do not need to commit actual crimes. The indication of their danger is their belonging to a certain category of persons. Arendt asserts that the work of the secret service is endless because of the constant need to create more “suspect populations”:

“The superfluous-ness of secret services is nothing new, they have always been haunted by the need to prove their usefulness and keep their jobs after their original task had been completed.”

It is important to put Arendt’s analysis in context. She wrote of totalitarian regimes and had in mind the notorious Nazi and Soviet secret services. While we cannot compare these with the Israeli regime, Arendt’s analysis does provide us with powerful insights and analytical tools for understanding the process of classification of persons as “security threats.”

Ronen Shamir offers a theory of profiling, which is a major component of what he calls a new “global mobility regime,” based on a paradigm of suspicion: one in which crime, immigration and terrorism converge to create a distribution of risk management.
This theory explains, in terms of socio-spatial distances in a mobility regime, why certain types of people may be classified as security threats while others may not. At the very least, the mobility regime aims at slowing “suspect populations” down. This allows for practices of surveillance, gathering of intelligence and statistics about the population and its movement. Shamir writes:

The global mobility regime is predicated, first, on the classification of individuals and groups according to principles of perceived threats and risks; Secondly, on an emergent technology of intervention that provides the technical/statistical means for creating elaborate forms of such social distinctions.6

Shamir suggests that the engine of the contemporary mobility regime is a “paradigm of suspicion” that conflates the perceived threats of crime, immigration and terrorism, and that the technology of intervention that enables it is biosocial profiling.

The mechanism of biosocial profiling assigns people into suspect categories, which then translate, through the paradigm of suspicion, into practices and technologies of containment. Shamir uses Jonathan Simon’s analysis of policing and governance through models of risk management:

Profiling predicts behavior and regulates mobility by situating subjects in categories of risk. Techniques that “use statistics to represent the distribution of variables in a population,” treat individuals “as locations in actuarial tables of variation,” and seek to predict behavior and situate subjects “according to the risk they pose.”6

According to Shamir, the practices of profiling of the mobility regime represent a fusion between insurance-oriented risk-management strategies and a criminal justice-oriented sentencing paradigm: “In the process, profiling shifted from being a method for assigning specific individuals into various categories of risk into an all-encompassing method that targets society as a whole and treats mobility per se as a suspect practice.”7 The profiling practices of the GSS differ between Palestinian residents of the OPT, who are restricted in movement, and Palestinian prisoners who are citizens of Israel. In dealing with Palestinians, the GSS is freed from the distinctions between home and foreign territory. While some scholars believe that following the Oslo Accords the role of the GSS in the OPT has been attenuated, I argue that it has simply changed. From a service based on agents on location, the GSS has become a larger and more bureaucratic organization, which has shifted its mission from collecting relevant information on Palestinian activities to collecting all information.8 The GSS categorizes its actions on the basis of the racial identity of those it pursues. In a sense, the profiling and classification practices remained as bureaucratic colonial legacy, the rule of racial difference.

FROM SUSPECT POPULATION TO OBJECTIVE ENEMY: THE HISTORIC ROLE OF THE SECRET SERVICES

According to Hannah Arendt’s succinct analysis of the processes secret services create for population management, suspect populations (usually minorities) are populations viewed by the leadership of the ruling majority as problematic. Their loyalty to the state is questioned, but the suspicion is dormant. At first, this causes the state to deploy more resources in surveillance and information gathering. Adriana Kemp shows the evolution of the suspicion of the Israeli state towards Palestinians, who first became a “trapped minority” and then turned into, in the state’s conception, a “dangerous population.” A trapped minority is a population trapped between physical state boundaries, the state’s apparatus of control, and their ethno-cultural identity. Kemp argues that the transformation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel into a dangerous population is “a result of a coupling between the national goals of the dominant ethnic group and the constant preoccupation of the disciplinary state with population management and surveillance.”10 She shows how using the territorial terminology of “security areas” to refer to areas where the Palestinian citizens of Israel lived under a military government between 1949 and 1966 enabled the formation of the Palestinian minority as a “dangerous population.” The legal and physical creation of territorial boundaries, dangerous areas and border zones, designed to combat threats to the security of Israel’s Jewish population, serve as a projection on the Palestinian citizens of Israel and as the reason and justification for surveillance.

Returning to Arendt’s analysis, we see that “dangerous populations” do not necessarily reflect majority–minority relations, but a sociological category. The category of “objective enemy” refers to an enemy that is not a danger to the state, but that is hostile to the state. To be included in this category, one does not need to do anything criminal or even think anything in order to
become an enemy. The objective enemy “is defined by the policy of the government and not by his own desire to overthrow it.” An objective enemy does not have to be a member of an organization or the instigator of political action in order to become suspect—the suspicion is based on her membership in her ethnic/racial/social group. The shift from “suspect population” to “objective enemy” may coincide with the transformation of the organizational power of the secret service. In terms of administration, when the secret service is in the position of advising the political leadership and decision makers, and then implements their decisions which are based on its own recommendations, its institutional influence is vast because of its clandestine and extra-legal structures. However, in the advising and executive positions, the secret service remains part of a dynamic organizational negotiation and competition between governmental departments and thus it is prevented from gaining full authority and discretion on the subject of categorization of security threats.

In times of crisis and uncertainty, for instance in the period following the outbreak of the second Intifada (the Al-Aqsa uprising) and the crashing of the complex bureaucratic system erected by the Oslo Accords, the GSS gained autonomy, exclusivity and legitimacy over the process of identification, categorization and classification of dangerous persons and security threats. Describing the role of the GSS in the civil administration offices managing the bureaucracy of the occupation in the OPT, Brigadier General [res.] Dov Zedaka explained, in an interview I conducted with him in 2006, how the GSS gained complicity and legitimacy while other administrative bodies or officials held alternative opinions. He described a dramatic shift in the managerial paradigm of the civil administration. From the year 2000 until the end of the Israeli military’s Operation “Defensive Shield” in Jenin in 2002, the civil administration turned from an administrative body, focused on civilian as well as military aspects of the occupation, into a security apparatus of control in service of the heads of the military battalions. The agencies shifted their point of view and their practices from a paradigm of management of civilian population—the civil administration’s stated purpose and raison d’être—to a security paradigm of management, that is, one interested in separating, siting and identifying threats. This shift was empowered by a collective feeling of the “inability to distinguish between friend and foe.” The blur in the agent’s ability to distinguish between the categories of friend and foe in the Palestinian administration—people who used to work with the Israeli civil administration in the OPT in the double-headed bureaucracy erected by the Oslo accords—was startling. It motivated a greater demand for profiling and the creation of a plethora of new criteria and stable methods of identification that would enable the administrative apparatus to combat uncertainty by distinguishing between “friend” and “foe.” At the time, the master category available was the classification of persons as “security threats” and the profiling component, comprised by the GSS, became the core practice. In Zedaka’s discussions with GSS representatives regarding the extent of the restrictive measures imposed on the Palestinian population in the West Bank, he revealed a striking use of pre-emptive guilt by the Service representative in the debate, used toward any agent who questioned or criticized the extent of security measures used against the Palestinian civilian population. For example, when the GSS proposed to augment the age of workers required to obtain labor permits for work within Israel from 30 to 35, any objection would encounter the reprimanding reaction: “If something happens, do you want to take responsibility?”

**CREATING THE SECURITY THREAT: HOW THE MECHANISM WORKS**

The security threat is a single, master category; all other distinctions and classifications are organized around it. Once this category is introduced on a daily basis into an administrative system, it calls for radical shifts in personal, administrative and regulatory practices. In time, in a similar mechanism to Kemp’s description of the construction of dangerous populations through the making of territorial boundaries, the security threat yields a practice that demands the erection of physical barriers such as checkpoints, separation walls and maximum-security facilities. While the category of security threat is always instigated amidst crises, a state of emergency or administrative uncertainty, once the security threat category is set in motion, is institutionalized, ceases to be an exception due to an emergency situation and becomes the only category dominating people’s thought and any political debate. This is because of its radical quality and the imminent danger it presupposes.

**THE METHOD: RADICAL SIMPLIFICATION, STANDARDIZATION AND HOMOGENIZATION**

The construction of the category of the security threat is fairly simple. It first relies on a radical simplification of traits or tendencies. It
then creates a standardization key or index, which includes criteria such as age, geographic area, and membership or participation in political and cultural organizations and family relations. This index formulates a template of a security threat, which becomes a default category. The final stage of this procedure is the homogenization of the security threat; a process that at once creates a collective general profile and individualizes any form of political membership.

Like all classification systems, categories become institutionalized and accepted through the rule of experts in their specific domain, along with their set of professional vocabularies and repertoire of practices. The processes of radical simplification, standardization, and homogenization are inclusive in the sense that they can be applied to most situations, from the permit regime in the West Bank to the classification of prisoners, and are exclusive in the sense that they can be constructed and applied administratively by the GSS alone, as it is considered the authority over the identification and profiling system. Most experts have their own jargon, their own secrets of the trade and sometimes they portray their professions as exclusive and highly complex, wishing to protect their expertise. However, in order to execute their expertise, the secret services need to collaborate with other organizations, particularly government agencies; hence, they must explain and simplify the content of the categories they use. In the case of the “security threat,” the expertise does not need to be simplified, since its very existence reifies and upholds the domain of expertise. It is precisely the secrecy and seriousness of the classification, the fact that no one knows the components of the classification, which render the category uncontested and beyond critique. Over the years, this uncontested domain of expertise has created a knowledge monopoly, which, combined with the monopoly of the GSS on decision making and administrative discretion regarding the profiling indices, has erected an impenetrable wall of taxonomy and classification of the Palestinian population.

INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMATION OF THE SECURITY THREAT

In the last couple of decades, a constant flow of military and anti-terrorism experts have entered and graduated Israeli universities, colleges and strategic research institutes, merging the security apparatuses with bases of academic power in the field of security studies and public policy. In Israel, as in the US, the field of security studies is expanding. The flow of security experts to and from the university creates an environment which provides academic legitimacy for the practices carried out by the GSS, among them the process of identification and profiling of security threats. This expertise gains legitimacy and justification by its academic location and the invention of the field of knowledge. It is then proliferated and exported to governments and private companies; as the knowledge base widens in scope and detail, technological advancements, such as biometric devices, are put to work, and they, in turn, generate new sets of criteria and constraints. The academic and market-oriented legitimacy for security consultants and their profiling capabilities creates a closed circuit of legitimacy, when political, financial and administrative interests feed each other in a loop, which solidifies the profiling and classification practices into objective and ordinary executive actions. Legitimacy for the construction of the security threat is justified, since it addresses public opinion and targets existing public fear, which is perpetually inflated exponentially to continue and expand the need for generations of new security knowledge and technology. The justification of the “security threat” classification relies on the Jewish Israeli public perception of Palestinian or “Arab” aspirations, the aspirations of an openly hostile population. An interesting example of this mechanism is the Yaffe Center for Strategic Studies, which conducts public opinion polls on national security. These surveys usually only ask Israeli Jews as respondents and questions regarding the Palestinian–Israeli conflict are presented as binary options: security or peace. One of many such surveys researching public opinion and national security in Israel is Asher Arian’s report “Israel Public Opinion on National Security 2002.” Section C of the report, entitled “Arab Aspirations,” reveals the manner in which the category of the security threat is constructed, when respondents are limited to answer the questions by the options given to them. Arian writes:

Figure 11 charts that in 2002, 42% of the respondents thought that the Arabs wanted to kill a large part of the Jewish population of Israel, and an additional 26% thought that their goal was to conquer the State of Israel, together totaling 68%. In contrast, in 1999 a total of 47% gave those two answers.

The only two other possible views that the survey offered were that the Arabs aspired to recover all the territories lost in 1967 (25 percent in 2002) or recover only some of those territories (7 percent in 2002).
Dov Zedaka’s explanation of the process by which the uncertainty in distinguishing between friend and foe and the lack of control of the civil and military administrative bodies during the outbreak of hostilities in 2000 aided the GSS in gaining authority and legitimacy is convincing; yet it is partial. The omnipresence of the category of security threat—the fact that it can appear in any governmental department—is versatile in its usage and employment and can be used by the police or by employment agencies; this helps the process of legitimizing and institutionalizing the category of security threat. The institutionalization renders it an inevitable, acceptable and indispensable part of administrative daily life. However, in order to maintain legitimacy, the contents of the security threat and the details it involves must remain constantly vague and ever-changing.

THE SECURITY THREAT AS A THREAT: THE DANGERS OF CRIMINALIZING A POPULATION

The most dangerous aspect of the classification of “security threat” or “security prisoner,” besides its dehumanizing moral aspects, is the criminalization of political membership, organization, or belief. In a situation of perpetual conflict, when political organization is classified as a danger and attracts threats, sanctions and retaliation from the authority, a political deadlock is created. People refrain from organizing political alternatives, and thus, the only public space available to be truly active politically is through militancy. An arbitrary classification system of political membership as security threat discourages non-violent social action, or any possibility for social organization needed to stop violence. If political membership and participation in a militant faction are rendered the same as non-violent political activity, both yielding the classification as a security threat, people have nothing to lose but their dreams of a different political future. Those who are afraid will be immobilized and paralyzed, retreating from society in general. Those who have less fear can be motivated to become militant. In any case, as soon as the security service and the prison systems create a risk management profiling system that is a zero-sum game, where identity equals risk, there is no point for activists and political leadership to opt for non-violent solutions. It is actually surprising how, under the harsh classification regimes of the security threat, many Palestinians have chosen non-violent political and social action, even though it carries with it similar consequences to the violent actions.

The category of the security threat and its use in dealing with Palestinian prisoners who are citizens of Israel or residents of the OPT is a category that obscures the real problem of Israeli society and government. Security profiling and classification obfuscate the political problem of coping with the political, social and economic problem that the Israeli state has with its Palestinian citizens and the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The category of the security threat prevents the motivation and generation of political solutions, perpetuating mediocrity and despair on the administrative level, as well as in the general public.

It is through simplification and homogenization of people into a template of a “security threat”—a process of transforming a large part of the Palestinian population into objective enemies on the basis of their identity and political affiliation—that the security threat paradigm creates a security threat. It does so by blocking any form of political alternative, by obscuring the difference between non-violent and violent political action, by deliberately canceling the difference between criminal activity and political activity and by criminalizing membership and identity. The “security threat” classification mechanism is only useful to those organizations and agencies whose power grows with the increase in security threats and the fear from them, not to anyone who seeks security and protection. For the Israeli public, the security threat classification mechanisms pose a ubiquitous and insidious security threat.

NOTES

1. Telephone conversation on November 5, 2005 with Sgt. Liron Alush, the head of the population registry department in the office of the legal adviser to Judea and Samaria in the military civil administration.
4. Ibid., p. 423.
5

Palestinian Women Political Prisoners and the Israeli State

Nahla Abdo

INTRODUCTION

In a security-obsessed state like Israel, whether described as a Mokhabarat state\(^1\) or as a "state of exception,"\(^2\) the prison system comes only second—after the military establishment—in exemplifying the true nature of the Israeli state. In such a system, sexism, racism and other forms of subjugation, often camouflaged by the law of the state, are widely unleashed onto the prisoner "other." In this chapter, I would like to shed some light onto an area that remains heavily under-researched: Palestinian women political detainees.

In Israel's settler colonial rule, the simple human right of freedom of expression is often suppressed and confiscated from the colonized/occupied. It is little wonder then that thousands or tens of thousands of men and women are subjected to various terms of political detention/imprisonment. Still, there is one particular form of resistance which subjugates the Munadelat (Arabic for female freedom fighters)\(^3\) to particularly harsh terms of detention: participation in the armed struggle. It is this group of Palestinian political detainees which is the focus of this chapter. Data used here is drawn from an extensive fieldwork of interviews, life histories, focus group discussions and a collection of women’s narratives conducted during 2007–08 in the West Bank. The majority of these women were detained between the late 1960s and the 1980s. Prison terms among this group of women ranged between three years to up to life sentence. Many of these women were released following the Oslo Accords, through prisoner exchange deals.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Women’s participation in the national liberation struggle has and continues to be part and parcel of the overall Palestinian anti-colonial