

Palestinian Materials, Images and Archives held by Israel

swisspeace, April 2018

Written by: Dr. Rona Sela, Visual History
Researcher and Curator (www.ronasla.com)
for **swisspeace** (<http://www.swisspeace.ch/>).

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Abbreviation

PLO- Palestine Liberation Organization

IDF - Israel Defense Forces

IDFA- Israel Defense Forces and Defense Establishment Archives

1 Intro

The main purpose of the project is to discuss the possibility of returning Palestinian Materials, Images and Archives, visual and others, that were seized or looted by Jewish/Israeli forces/soldiers and individual since the first decades of the 20t century and which are now held by Israel in its official archives.

The proposed project aims

1. To chart the mechanism of looting and seizure and the types and scope of materials/archives/image that were taken by individuals or by organized military forces.
2. to deal with the way the materials/archives/image are held and controlled by Israel
3. to sketch a draft on how to return the seized and looted materials/archives/image to their legal owners and the public sphere and discuss obstacles that may be raised during this process.

2 What is known about Palestinian Material in Israeli archives?

2.1 A brief history of looting and seizure

Many visual and textual Palestinian archives, images and materials with cultural and historical significance are held in official archives in Israel. As early as the 1930s, Jewish military bodies, such as the Jewish Security Information of the Haganah, began to copy and seize Palestinian materials or materials with Palestinian importance for intelligence gathering purposes (for more information about the intelligence gathering see for instance: Gelber 1992, Salomn 2005; and for more information about visual gathering see: Sela 2009, 2013b, 2018). Combined with other intelligence gathering activities, these activities were designed to learn about the Palestinian resistance to Zionist enterprise in Palestine, its organizational structure, scope of operations and its leading figures. The gathering of materials intensified towards 1948, as many began to realize that a large-scale military conflict was inevitable.

During the Nakba (the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948) cultural and historical treasures and archives were seized from various Palestinian institutes, as well as from private homes and studios. Thus, for example, photographs used for information purposes were taken as booty from the office of Rashid Al-Haj Ibrahim (Sela 2009, 82-83). Librarians

from the National Library in Jerusalem accompanied Israeli army forces and expropriated libraries of rich households in West Jerusalem (Amit 2014). Amit states that according to library records, the books or entire libraries from sixty families (such as Khalil Sakakini, Ya'qub Farraj, Khalil Baydas and Fayez Abu-Rahme) and institutions, most of which were Palestinian and a few foreign, were plundered. Actually, the real number is higher and includes libraries, such as those of Mohammed Isa'f Nashashibi and Tawfiq Canaan, *ibid*, 103-105). Books were also seized in Jaffa (for instance from the house of Yousef Heikal, the mayor of Yaffa), Haifa, Tiberius and Nazareth. Most of those, however, were sold to Arab schools in Israel; one hundred were transferred to the National Library or destroyed (*ibid*, 79-80, 108-120).

At the same time, various archives, materials, images and other cultural and historical treasures, were looted¹ by individuals from antique stores, photography shops, studios, institutes and private homes. The looters were citizens motivated by personal interests or soldiers (not in duty) carrying, sometimes, permits, which allowed them to take property away from occupied territories (for instance, a photography album from the First World War taken from the Nashashibi family in Jerusalem by a soldier who carried a permit to "take off items/products from occupied territory", Sela 2009, 96, 141, appendix 6). In some cases, materials of significant importance were looted from dead or captured Palestinians during military battles (*ibid*, 96, Sela 2013a). With time, some of these looted goods found their way to official, mainly military archives but most of them are held by individuals/collectors (Sela 2000, 2009, 2010) such as parts of the archive of Hannah Safieh (Sela 2000) or materials looted from Abd Al-Qadir Al-Husseine, a Palestinian commander, after his death (Sela 2009, second volume, 39).

These practices continued in the following decades and during the next wars in an organized and deliberate manner by official military bodies as well as by individuals coveting cultural treasures (see Appendix B).²

As a result, Israeli archives became significant information sources on Palestinian history and culture. As far as I have found so far, the treasures include photographs, movies,

¹ The term "seizure" is used to describe the taking of booty by organized official bodies, while the term "looting" refers to pillaging by individuals.

² The *1955 Military Jurisdiction Law* forbids wartime looting, punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment. Nevertheless, this Hebrew [report by Yesh Din](#) Volunteers for Human Rights shows that this law is hardly ever enforced.

maps, libraries and a plethora of other visual and textual materials of great importance (Amit 2014, Sela 2000, 2009, 2010, 2013b, 2017a, b, c, 2018).

In the book *Photography in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s* (Sela 2000) the author of this paper already discussed the looting and seizing of photography archives during the Nakba. Subsequently, the author extended her scope of study to materials, mainly visual and cultural, seized before, during and after the Nakba. She further discussed the ongoing looting in the last decades of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. Cases she looked at include among others, the seizure in Beirut in the 1980s and the Orient House in East Jerusalem in 2001 (Sela 2009, 2017a, b, c, 2018).

The Orient House contained: the Arab Studies Society archive, the library of the history of the Arabs of Palestine, the International Relations Archive, the Geographical Department, which reached the development of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Palestinians properties in West Jerusalem prior to 1948 (Rubinstein 2001) and a Photography collection of the Arab Studies Society (Sela 2000, Nassar 2001). The same seizure included also other Palestinian institutions such as the Palestine Research Center located next to the Orient House (Sela 2009, 2017a, 2018).

Most of the author's recent studies focused on the plundering in Beirut – including the library of the Palestine Research Center, the Cultural Arts Section, the Palestinian Cinema Institution and many other PLO and Palestinian institutions (Sela 2009, 2017a, b, c, 2018, Sleiman 2016).

3 Locations of Palestinian archival material

Today, most seized materials, visual or other, can be found in military archives. However, there are also materials in civilian official archives in Israel and in private hands as mentioned in chapter 2. The National Library of Israel in Jerusalem holds, for example, Palestinian visual materials catalogued as “Arab Gangs and their Leaders in the Troubles of 1936-1938”³ (Sela 2015 [2012]). The provenance of those photographs is unknown. Also, many other libraries taken from Palestinian homes during and after the Nakba are held in the National Library, grouped together in one place under the tag AP (“Appropriated Property”).



Figures 1 & 2

“Appropriated Property” (AP): Palestinian books in the National Library in Jerusalem.

The Archive of the IDFA is “the main historical archive of the IDF and the Ministry of Defense, and is also used as a record depository for the IDF and the defense establishment”.⁴ Since its establishment in 1948 the IDFA has archived a wide variety of textual and audiovisual records - films and tapes, photographs, maps, sketches, documents, etc. - created in various IDF units. Since the records in the IDFA were created in security forces as stated by the archive,⁵ their contents are related to the Israeli military and have been created largely by Jewish Israeli institutes, soldiers, photographers, filmmakers and other documentarians). Therefore, according to the IDFA’s own definition, the archive

³ They probably refer to the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939.

⁴ <http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/about/Pages/odot.aspx> (Hebrew)

⁵ <http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/about/Pages/hukimtkanot.aspx> (Hebrew)

represents “one of the most important elements in maintaining the collective memory and military heritage of Israeli society”.⁶ Additionally, the IDFA is also responsible for the archives of Jewish pre-state military organizations, and they are subject to its authority and regulations. These include the Haganah Archive, the Lehi (Stern Gang) Archive, the Palmach Archive, the HaShomer Archive, and the Jewish Legion, which dates back to WWI.⁷

4 Access – Israeli Laws

The materials in military and all other official archives in Israel are subject to Israeli law. The IDFA describes itself on the website as “a state archive operating as authorized by the laws of the State of Israel”, and designates the laws that “affect the archives’ work and the possibilities of reviewing and using the records”.⁸ The choice of the word “affect” suggests that the IDFA takes a wide range of freedom outside of the constitutional framework (Sela 2009, 2017a). The laws “affecting” the IDFA include, among others, the *1955 Archives Law*,⁹ the *1981 Protection of Privacy Law*,¹⁰ the *1998 Freedom of Information Law*,¹¹ and the *2007 Copyright Law*.¹² The IDFA is also subject to military orders and procedures, including *General Staff Orders* and the *2017 Ministry of Defense Directives*.¹³

As the IDFA material comes from “security forces, according to the *Archives Law* it is restricted from view for fifty years from the day of its creation”.¹⁴ Although not created in Israeli “security forces”, the Palestinian archives in the IDFA and other Israeli archives are subjected to Israeli law (ibid). Therefore, upon their archiving, their access is restricted.¹⁵

⁶ <http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/about/Pages/odot.aspx> (Hebrew)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/about/Pages/hukimtkanot.aspx> (Hebrew)

⁹ https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law01/028_001.htm

¹⁰ https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law01/087_001.htm

¹¹ https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law01/144M1_001.htm

¹² https://www.nevo.co.il/Law_html/law01/999_853.htm

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ For the Hebrew text of the *Archives Law*, see https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law01/028_001.htm; see also Archive Regulations (2010), <http://www.archives.gov.il/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/%D7%AA%D7%A7%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%AA->

Thus, for example, when the author of this paper applied to view materials seized in Beirut, the Defense Establishment's Legal Advisor informed her on 26 November 2008, that these Palestinian materials "are considered IDF archival material [the authors' emphasis, R.S.] and as such they are 'restricted', as set forth in Article 7(a) of the Archive Regulations". The IDFA was therefore "unable to open this material to public view".¹⁶ The archive, this letter suggests, claims to own Palestinian material, subjects it to Israeli law as if it has been created by Israel/Israelis, and restricts access to it. This is a significant issue that the author of this paper recommends looking into in more detail. Moreover, according to the *Archives Law*, the censorship period might be indefinitely extendable: "With the committee's approval, the archiver may mark archived material as confidential – for reason of threatening the security or foreign relations of the state".¹⁷ The archive may also impose additional "special restrictions".¹⁸ The *1998 Freedom of Information Law*, which entitles every Israeli citizen or inhabitant "to obtain information from a public authority, subject to the provisions of this law",¹⁹ is inapplicable to any military, police or other security organization.²⁰

The State of Israel forces Palestinian history and culture into erasure and oblivion using two major mechanisms. Firstly, by looting and seizing historically and culturally significant archives and collections. and secondly, by holding and censoring them in Israeli archives. There, they are subjected to an oppressive apparatus with a clear intention of concealing them from view and rewriting or reinterpreting them for the benefit of the Israeli state. This apparatus includes restricting and closing materials, erasing information, controlling those allowed and not allowed to view the materials, claiming ownership over the occupied materials and subjecting them to the laws of the occupier and the rules and norms

[%D7%94%D7%90%D7%A8%D7%9B%D7%99%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%9D_%D7%A2%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9F_2010.pdf](#) (Hebrew); for the *1998 Freedom of Information Law*, see <http://www.sviva.gov.il/English/Legislation/Documents/Freedom%20of%20Information%20Laws%20and%20Regulations/FreedomOfInformationLaw1988.pdf> (Hebrew).

¹⁶ Sela 2009, Volume 1, 123, Sela 2017a.

¹⁷ 1955 Archives Law, Art. 10(c)(2)

¹⁸ Ibid. Art. 10(c)(3)

¹⁹ *1998 Freedom of Information Law*, Art. 1.

²⁰ Ibid., Art. 14.

of its archives (rather than of the original owner) and to tendentious interpretation and cataloging (for further details, see Sela 2009, 2017a, b, c, 2018).²¹

Moreover, Israel puts a range of obstacles in the way of researchers who seek to open or view Palestinian archives and write a history different from the official Israeli one – or that which criticizes Israel. Obstacles put in the way include the following: First, materials are classified usually for 50 years at the IDFA,²² and for an unlimited period of time if they have the potential to harm Israeli national security or foreign relations. Materials are, therefore, subjected to the military censorship and require the censor's approval to be viewed. Upon obtaining that approval, they are scanned and can be seen as digital copies – the original copies in the archives cannot be viewed, and the materials are inaccessible over the internet. In exceptional cases, where the researcher is known to follow the official Israeli narrative, there is a reasonable chance that the *Committee for Approving the Viewing of Restricted Materials* (formerly, *Committee for Approving Authorized Researchers*) will also grant access to restricted materials.²³

The Palestinian materials are subject to a truth regime and to knowledge production (Sela, 2009, 2012, 2017a, b, c, 2018), and are catalogued and interpreted according to the Zionist rather than the Palestinian narrative. Consequently, they are often camouflaged in the archive. Thus, researchers familiar with the Zionist system, its codes and terminology are required in order to find and open the Palestinian materials. Therefore, not only are many materials censored and concealed in Israeli archives, but even those open are subjected to colonialist management.

Another issue is the scope of Palestinian materials kept in Israeli archives. By the end of the millennium (fifty years after the fact), Palestinian materials seized around the time of

²¹ It resembles the mechanism of control over the archives and writing of history in other colonial states (Sela 2017a).

²² According to the *Archives' Regulation Law* (2010), the period of limitation is between 30 and 70 years.

²³ <http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/about/Pages/mtikim.aspx> (Hebrew).. In a discussion held on 17 January 2005, at the Knesset *Constitution, Law and Justice Committee*, the committee chair asked Eviatar Ben-Tzedef about the criteria for granting access to confidential materials. Ben-Tzedef, who had been part of the Israeli defense establishment and editor of the IDF bimonthly *Maarachot* (“Campaigns”), answered that they need “to be one of us, to be reliable. I was the editor of *Maarachot*. I obtained [access] under that capacity”. Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) website: <https://www.acri.org.il/he/1940> (Hebrew).

the Nakba began seeing the light of day. However, Israel releases materials according to its own agenda and at the rate it chooses. These reflect above all the intention of a colonizing nation that latches on the occupation with the obvious intention of erasing and silencing the history of the colonized. In other words, there is a clear intention of concealing the history of injustices, secure the hegemony of the official Israeli narrative and erase alternative writing.

Over a twenty-year research period, the author of this paper has tried to obtain from the IDFA a list of materials looted or seized from Palestinians throughout the 20th century and to this day, which are kept in military archives. To date to no avail (Sela 2009, 2017a, b, 2018). Information about archives looted or seized that the author of this paper has made public had become available only under the following two circumstances:

1. After the restriction of access had been removed (usually after fifty years) and the materials were open to the public.
2. If the author succeeded in finding, using indirect methods she has developed (such as testimonies collected in various ways, *ibid*), information about the presence of seized or looted Palestinian archives in Israeli archives, and subsequently applied for their release. In these cases, the success rate is rather low.

To conclude, Israel has become a central source for information about the Palestinians. Therefore, its archives do not only hold “the collective memory and military heritage of Israeli society”,²⁴ but also the past and the culture of the Palestinians. However, the ability to know what Palestinian materials are held by Israel depends entirely on its willingness to cooperate and share the material it has seized or collected (see Appendix B).

²⁴ <http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/about/Pages/odot.aspx> (Hebrew)



Figures 3 & 4

Refugee Camps: Film stills seized from the Cultural Arts Section in Beirut.

Israel Defense Forces Archives (the ownership over the materials is marked in yellow at the above right corner).

5 Project Design (Draft): Returning Palestinian Material to the Public Sphere

5.1 Methodology, project design and resources

The author argues that Palestinian archived materials must be returned to their original owners. This project should be approached from several different sides simultaneously:

1. **Digital return-** Systematically scan all Palestinian materials currently accessible in Israeli archives: pool them together, catalogue them and create a digital database. I recommend consolidating all materials on a single platform and make them accessible to the public on the internet. The materials must return to the public sphere and be freely available to examine. To make this happen, the approval of the original copyright owner must be obtained – a fundamental issue that must be addressed while searching, collecting, scanning and cataloging these materials. In addition, it is important to continue the process of locating Palestinian materials in Israeli archives and release archives for view and use in addition to those the author has already released (to the extent possible).

A. This work requires a team of ca. ten people employed on a fulltime basis that will be responsible for:

1A1. Search: Search for Palestinian materials in Israeli archives

1A2. Developed Alternative Methods: the author recommends developing alternative sources of knowledge. Possible avenue to consider: collect testimonies from looters, people who were looted (archivists, librarians, creators, etc.) and witnesses. The author has personally collected a lot of information about looting and seizure from former Israeli soldiers and cross-referenced it with the original owners of the archives, their archivists and with archival data (Sela 2009, 2017a, b, c, 2018). Following this strategy, the author managed to open the archive of the Cultural Arts Section of the PLO seized in Beirut in 1982. The author recommends pursuing the same approach on a broader basis to locate archives/records still concealed in Israeli archives. It will enable lawyers and PR professionals to demand access to these materials and their return to their owners.

2. Copy-Rights Payment: A major question is whether the Israeli archives and copyright holders should be paid. Ethically, the author would recommend paying only the copyright holders. However, not paying the Israeli archives the fees they usually charge would place the entire endeavor at risk.

3. Legal Assistance: It would also be necessary to hire local and international lawyers for the following purposes:

C1. to deal with copyrights and the payment of use to their owners/holders as mentioned in chapter 51.2. above.

C2. to negotiate with the Israeli authorities based on Israeli and international laws and norms.

4.Scans and Copy-Right Payments (Costs and Difficulties) - It is important to note that Israeli archives charge the same amount of money to use Palestinian materials as for Jewish/Israeli materials. Other procedures, such as signing "The right to use form" are also the same for both Israeli and Palestinian materials, although Israel does not hold the copy-rights to Palestinian materials. This issue should be discussed on all legal levels.

5. Rates:

Military archives - see table of rates²⁵

National archives - see table of rates²⁶

Private owners – variable.

6. Physical Return- The author argues that the originals must be returned to their owners. To the best of the author's understanding, such a demand can be made by the original owners or by official Palestinian bodies (government authorities or bodies with a research interest in the materials, for example research institutes, universities, archives or libraries). Based on the author's acquaintance with the complexity of the issue, this requires collaboration with legal advisors, media professionals, and the international community.

The author assumes that the key to the return of materials lies with addressing the legal aspect. The legal process must be conducted both within Israel, based on understanding the Israeli laws that regulate the holding of Palestinian materials, and on an international level. Media work can be highly beneficial in this regard. For many years, Israel has been struggling to recover Jewish property looted and seized during the Holocaust. and it will not be able to continue doing so as long as it holds on to Palestinian treasures.

It is important to note that there has already been set a precedent for the return of Palestinian materials held in Israel.²⁷ The Palestine Research Center archive and library taken as booty by the IDF 1982 were returned to the PLO after a year as part of a “prisoner exchange” brokered by the French (Sela 2009). In addition, in 2008, Israel returned four-albums of photographs by Ali Za’arur to his family. Za’arur was a Palestinian photographer mainly known for documenting the battles for the Old City in Jerusalem in 1948. His work had been given to Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, as a gift by family member after the war

²⁵

<http://www.archives.mod.gov.il/about/Documents/%D7%9E%D7%97%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%9F.pdf>

²⁶ <http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/library/services/GuideServices/Pages/Services-Price-List.aspx>

²⁷ About the return of Jewish books looted by the Nazis to their owner or Jewish institution see Waite 2002.

in 1967. Even though Kollek handed it over to the IDFA later, it was returned after the owners - Za'rur's son & grandchildren - claimed it back (ibid, 96-103).

7. Inventory - Demand from Israel, through international assistance, a list of all Palestinian treasures it possesses. Since this process will most certainly be prolonged and riddled with obstacles, the author recommends that knowledge about Palestinian archives and materials held by Israel also be gained through alternative, more indirect routes as described in section 51A2.

8. Maintaining Digital Copies- Assuming Israel returns the Palestinian treasures under international pressure, the question remains whether it should be granted the option of keeping digital copies. Note that Israel has done so in all cases it has returned archives to their owners; probably without the latter's explicit consent (Sela 2009, 2017a, 2018).

5.2 Risks

The major and most likely risk is that Israel will refuse to cooperate, place heavy obstacles as the author described (see Sela 2009, 2017a, 2018) as well as the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and the State Comptroller.²⁸ It is very probable that it will continue its colonial management of Palestinian visual and textual materials. The main question is thus whether the project should be announced publicly by extensive publishing for moral reasons. The author thinks the best way would be to try to turn the risk into an advantage.



Figure 5

Unknown photographer, *Palestinian Event in Batsa Stadium in Jaffa (today Blumfield)*, 1940s, Photograph taken from the office of Rashid Haj Ibrahim, IDF and Ministry of Defense Archive. In November 2002 the attorney general allowed the use of this image, among other seized materials.

²⁸ <https://www.acri.org.il/en/>.

6 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A - Initial Bibliography

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- 16 Sleiman, Hana. 2016. "The Paper Trail of a Liberation Movement." *Arab Studies Journal* 26 (1).
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6.2 Appendix B

Palestinian Archives/Materials Seized by Israel: What We Know So Far

A comprehensive list of Palestinian archives and materials held by Israel could only be available once Israel provides it. The visual and other materials the author has published over the years represent, it seems, only a small part of the materials that were open or that the author has managed to make available and that Israel holds (Sela 2000, 2009, 2017a, b, c, 2018). The author assumes that much more still lies buried in the archives, and that Israel still holds many archives and bodies of work that they looted and seized during the 20th century. These materials were probably not only taken during the wars but also during the period of military government imposed on Palestinians by Israel in the time-period between 1948-1966 and the subsequent, ongoing occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. What the author has managed to release for public view so far includes:

1. **Visual and other materials plundered prior to the Nakba from either Palestinian and British sources.** the author has come across a small number of images taken from Palestinian sources, but also a testimony of a photographer who had photocopied intelligence materials on the Palestinians, mainly from British sources (that collected information about the Palestinians as well).
2. **Visual and other materials plundered during and in the immediate aftermath of the Nakba.** This category includes archives and materials seized in an organized manner from Palestinian organizations and institutes, taken from Palestinian prisoners and bodies, or looted from studios and other private properties.

Seized materials include, among other things, entire libraries appropriated by the librarians of the Israeli National Library mentioned in chapter 2 above. This treasure is estimated to contain 30,000 books (Amit 2014, 79). For instance, the Khalil Sakakini library, apparently his private papers (Nassar 2001, 5), was taken as booty from his home. Sakakini's daughters saw the seized books after 1967 in the National library, including books that contain handwritten notes by Sakinini (Hanegbi 2002; Amit 2014, 105-106).

There is no precise estimate of materials looted and kept by private individuals, since most of them are inaccessible.

Finally, this category also includes looted materials that are currently held by military archives and come from various sources, such as the Rissas (Rassas) Collection. Ibrahim Rissas was a studio photographer, who started to work in the 1920s. His son Chalil (Khalil) Rissas is considered among the pioneers of Palestinian photojournalism in the late 1940s. Some of the photographs have been looted from the photographers' studio and others have arrived at the Israeli archives through other, unknown, paths (Sela 2000, 2009, 2017a, c, 2018). In all cases, the archives state that these are seized materials. Moreover, the photographs at the IDFA have been saved from the "cleansing of 1967". The author does hope other parts of the collection were not destroyed in that "cleansing" but it cannot be ruled out.

- 3. Materials seized from various Palestinian institutes, including PLO institutes in Beirut in the 1980s (mainly in 1982).** It is known, for example, that the materials of the Palestinian Research Center, while headed by its last director Sabri Jiryis, were seized and returned after a year as part of a prisoner exchange deal. Other archives are also known to have been seized in Beirut. For example, 1,200 films or footages have been seized from the PLO's Cultural Arts Section. Some appear several times in different versions, so the total is several hundred footages that has been taken (ibid). The author believes that the archive of Palestinian Cinema Institution has also been seized and is kept by the IDFA (ibid). According to Israeli soldiers' testimonies, many archives of various institutions of the PLO and other Palestinian institutions were confiscated in this period (Sela 2017a, 2018). To the best of the author's knowledge, they are held in Israel's archives, closed to the public.

4. The seizure of the Orient House. Israel Police seized the Orient House with its various archives (photographs, maps, plans, geographic records, documents, diplomatic correspondence, etc.) in 2001, during the Second Intifada. Issam Nassar argues that “items confiscated by the Israeli government included personal belongings, confidential information relating to the Jerusalem issue, and documents referring as far back as the 1991 Madrid conference. Even the office of the late Faisal al-Husseini was completely emptied. Impounded under the pretext of 'security,' the archives contain numerous documents and files that are integral to future development strategies for East Jerusalem and to the assistance of Palestinian negotiators” (Nassar 2001, 4-5). A photography archive that was established a few years earlier (Sela 2000) was also seized. According to a letter the author received from the Israel Police Complaints Unit (December 2008), they are stored in containers in Beit Shemesh (Sela 2009, 125; 2017a). The author would recommend asking the Israel Police Complaints Unit, with legal assistance, in what conditions they are currently stored. At the same time, in 2001 Israel has seized the new archives of the Palestinian Research Center established near the Orient House after the PLO had returned to Ramallah (1990s).

5. Assorted documents plundered during the military government and the post-1967 occupation from individuals and organizations. Examples include legal materials and reports seized from Palestinian human rights organizations. Further materials were looted from private homes during 2002, at the height of the Second Intifada. These documents are censored in Israeli archives and include descriptions of human rights violations which Israel seeks to conceal. Reports by Israeli human rights organizations claim that this is an ongoing practice.²⁹

²⁹ The Association of Civil Rights in Israel has reported cases in which many legal and human rights-related documents have been seized and even destroyed, <https://www.acri.org.il/he/5677>. See also the 2015 report by Yesh Din on violations by Israeli soldiers, including looting: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.yesh-din.org/%D7%93%D7%A3+%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%9D+%D7%9E%D7%A6%D7%97+%D7%93%D7%A6%D7%9E%D7%91%D7%A8+2016/YeshDin+-+Data+1.17+-+Hebrew.pdf> (both Hebrew).

Palestinian Materials, Images and Archives held by Israel

swisspeace, April 2018

Written by: Dr. Rona Sela, Visual
History Researcher and Curator
(www.ronasela.com) for **swisspeace**
(<http://www.swisspeace.ch/>).

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