# 11 Palestinians as Quasi Non-Citizens: "They Will Stab me in the Back"

In the previous chapter, I outlined that the interviewees emphasise an existential threat. Based on these findings, I will look at the presentation of threat, in particular the interviewees' presentation of Palestinians as a threat in more detail. In the narratives, this presentation is not limited to Palestinian-Israeli citizens but broadened in two directions: Jews vs. Palestinians (citizens and non-citizens) on the one hand, and "Western" societies vs. "Islamisation" on the other hand. In other words, Palestinians are presented as an existential threat on three levels: on the national level as "disloyal citizens", on the regional level as "members" of the Hamas—internationally recognised as a terror organisation—, and on the global level as "Islamist Muslim immigrants" in Western democracies, including Israel. Throughout the interviews, Palestinians are considered part of "the Muslim world" (Ilan); and on each of the three levels, different stereotypes about Muslims are employed.

## 11.1 ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE PRACTICE VI: "PEOPLE FROM THE VILLAGE"

Throughout the interviews, Palestinian citizens are hardly directly presented as a theme. Instead, they are the invisible *other* against whom the interviewees construct their reading of citizenship, or, rather *citizen's duties*, as was shown in the previous chapters. Accordingly, talking about Palestinians takes place in dichotomic terms of "them" vs. "us" (Weinblum/

Iglesias 2013): non-Jewish, non-contributing, disloyal segments of Israeli society vs. Jewish, contributing, loyal citizens. As shown above, in this context Palestinians appear most probably when it comes to the current state of the Israeli (Jewish) society, its perceived disintegration, the discursive events in the aftermath of (probable) military operations and matters of national security. A very simple explanation for the non-existence of Palestinian citizens in the narratives is that this is a direct reflection of the interviewees' everyday life and their lack of contact with Palestinian Israelis.

However, depending on their personal experiences, and above all, locality, the interviewees stress different levels. The particular locality of Natserat Illit (Hebr.: "Upper Nazareth") serves as a counter-example to the non-existence of Palestinian citizens in the narratives. Natserat Illit was founded in the 1950s as a development town in Upper Galilee at the geographical and socio-economic periphery of the country. Rabinowitz (2003) states, as a Jewish settlement uphill the Christian-Palestinian town, it was consciously put [geographically] above Natserat Tachtit (Hebr.: "Lower Nazareth") alongside other Jewish settlements in order to preserve the Jewish character of the region. Inhabitants of the city do not talk about too little everyday contact with their Palestinian neighbours but negative everyday encounters instead. Vicky, a public servant who has lived in Natserat Illit since her family's immigration, introduces "the problem with Arabs" (Vicky, p. 12) with a declaration of love toward her home town: "I love this city, [...] I belong here, [...] it makes me sad" (Vicky, p. 12). In the narratives, the very presence of Palestinian citizens or "Arabs" is discursively connected to different social developments which the interviewees perceive and present as problematic and who, more precisely, are presented as their main cause. The interviewees speak about it in the context of the city's location at the geographical, economic and political periphery of the country and a resulting lack of economic resources of the city's inhabitants. Avi, who is engaged with a local NGO to fight social problems of "Russian youth" in the city, describes an intermingling of social problems connected to the migration background of many of the city's inhabitants (cf. also Remennick 2010; 2003). Against the background of personal experiences—his stepfather beat him up when he was still living at home, and a close friend committed suicide because, according to Avi (p. 6), he was desperate about his economic situation living in Natserat Illit—Avi claims:

"It's not just me who grew up like this, there are many young people who grew up like this, simply they, they are used to misery, so nobody cares because they all grew up like this." (Avi, p. 11)

Vicky adds another aspect: "young people don't always have the money to buy a flat, (...) Arabs do, [...] it makes me sad, [...] I came from Russia in order to live with Jews" (Vicky, p. 13-4).

However, the socio-economic dimension of the "problem" is only the surface of the arguments here. Vicky complains Palestinians from the neighbouring settlements and Nazareth would strategically buy houses in the city young Jewish couples cannot afford. By doing so, in Vicky's eyes, Palestinians "break an unwritten law"; and this "unwritten law", according to Vicky, states that Natserat Illit is Jewish and does not allow Palestinian inhabitants. Jewish inhabitants, according to Vicky, would not even consider moving to Nazareth to live in an "Arab" town, or, as Vicky puts it: "I came here to live among Jews" (Vicky, p. 14). Interestingly, Vicky does not nearly as vigorously claim territory beyond the Green Line of 1967 as "Palestinian", or—at least—"not Jewish" territory, e.g. in parts of East Jerusalem where Jewish families are reported to strategically buy or build houses in order to "free those areas from Arabs"[1] (Lis/ Levinson, 2011). So, the actual "problem" Vicky describes here is the very presence of Palestinians in a territory she considers Jewish ("I came from Russia in order to live with Jews").

Avi argues along similar lines but does so in a much subtler way. He expresses his special concerns about female minors, in particular from FSU immigrant families, being seduced—whether he means sexually abused is not clear—by "people from the village":

"I [...], so to speak in my neighbourhood I see girls, basically Russians, like, immigrants, from the FSU, who, ehm, hang out with Arabs who come from the villages, with a BMW, like, a silvery one, and open windows, without a roof, they [the girls] get on the car, jump into the car, and this is not ok, girls aged 16, aged 14,

1 Jonathan Lis and Chaim Levinson. Top Israeli Officials Set to Inaugurate Jewish Neighborhood in East Jerusalem. Haaretz (English Edition), 25.05.2011. Retrieved from: http://www.haaretz.com/top-israeli-officials-set-to-inaugurate-jewish-neighborhood-in-east-jerusalem-1.363898

little ones, I am not used to this, and terrific, they haven't got a good education at home, obviously, or something here is inadequate in their heads or [...] it's not ok, we have a law that minors mustn't do that." (Avi, p. 10-1).

Avi's concern must be seen against the background of growing media coverage of the issue of intermarriage between non-Jewish female immigrants from the FSU with Christian- Palestinian citizens. These intermarriages were referred to as a rather problematic way of immigrant adaptation (Raijman/ Pinsky, 2011). Avi positions his argument against the background of "law", but at the same time he acknowledges that his problem with the phenomenon is on another level ("I am not used to this"); Igal mentions the phenomenon as well, yet he explains it more straightforwardly: "[there is] a problem with Russian whores and Christian Arabs" (Igal, p. 28).

Notions of Palestinian Israelis, as derived from the narratives, carry elements of cultural racism. Avi euphemistically calls those who in his opinion cause social problems "[people] from the villages" in Upper Galilee, in contrast to himself who lives in the Jewish city of Natserat Illit. "village people" carry the connotation of people with a low intellect,[2] however, the connotation is neither new nor specific for FSU immigrants. In this regard, the interviewees are certain they are in line with the Israeli nationalist discourse about the Palestinian minority. These stereotypes can be traced in Israel's political culture (Rabinowitz 2002), however, here they become reinforced by personal experiences. Rabinowitz shows in an investigation of early anthropological studies in Israel that even back then Palestinians were referred to as uncivilized. Yet, the stereotyping of Muslim minorities or rather non-white minorities also fits the (post-) Soviet notion, as Shumsky (2004) shows in his analysis about the construction of the superiority of Russian culture. Avi even links the *others* to dirt, a common feature of cultural racism which aims at constructing cultural superiority based on the dichotomy between civilized and uncivilized. Empirically, this phenomenon has been described, e.g. with regard to Pakistani and Indian immigrants in the UK (Nowicka/ Krzyzowski, 2016). Those same "[people] from the villages", the *others* Avi refers to, would come to the city and destroy the

2 On the stereotyping of villagers as people of lower intellect or "incompetent" (Fiske et al. 2002).

public park—not local (Jewish) inhabitants who care for their community, one may add:

"Once there was a water fountain, today there are only drug addicts and garbage everywhere, everyday come all kind of people from the villages, drug addicts, alcoholics, it's a mess over there, it's dirty everywhere." (Avi, p. 7).

As shown above, similar stereotypes are applied in the narratives when the interviewees speak of personal encounters with Mizrahim. The difference between the stereotyping of Mizrahim and the stereotyping of Palestinians is that with regard to the former one can observe a process, and, as a consequence, a change: the longer the interviewees live in the country, i.e. the more frequent and direct personal encounters are, the less do the interviewees apply collective negative stereotypes, but reflect upon the respective encounters. With regard to Palestinians, there is no such process. Wagner and his colleagues (e.g. Pettigrew et al. 2011; Zick et al. 2008; Wagner et al. 2003) claim that intergroup contact would diminish negative stereotypes toward the out-group and have overall positive outcomes. They do not go into detail, however, about the specific nature of intergroup contact (cf. Pettigrew et al. 2011). In Natserat Illit, everyday—still indirect, though—encounters between Palestinians and Jews are deeply impacted by mistrust, as the examples show, and those encounters, together with events on the national and international level, reproduce mistrust; as Avi states: "people from the village, they will stab me like a sheep" (Avi, p. 13). Consequently, Palestinian citizens are *othered* as a group which threatens the Jewish inhabitants', and, as a consequence, also the *Jewish collective's* economic and cultural existence. They are presented as a symbolic threat against which (Jewish) Israelis must defend their "group boundaries" (Barth 1969).

## 11.2 ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE PRACTICE VII: "PALESTINIANS = HAMAS"

Katya carefully avoids speaking about internal or foreign affairs; she prefers to talk about her work as a parliamentary assistant. When she feels she comes too close to political opinions, she interrupts her speech and states: "I don't

want to talk about it" (Katya, p. 31, p. 32). Yet at times she feels the need to make a statement. Katya comes to talk about "the people who are on the other side", and means Palestinian non-citizens, while speaking about how much she agrees with the Yisra'el Beitenu party's ideology with regard to foreign politics:

"[We need] to demonstrate to outside that we are not wimps, and not, not, not, not only peace talks—in the end—which means, yes, yes, one does need to show muscles sometimes, peace talks are very important, right, but, ehm, (4), but not only. There is, there is something that I don't really, ehm, love, but, ehm, (..), friends, ehm, friends simply, ehm, many tell me: 'what is possible to achieve with a good word and a pistol is much more than [what is possible to achieve] only with a good word.' It's—there is—it's simply a translation from English, yes, something like that, so yes, a good word, and also (...), and also—not only a good word—and also, and also you can't ignore that, because the moment you see your friends go, ehm, go, ehm, to fight, if—, there in the North [the Lebanon war in 2006] or the South [the Gaza war in 2009], and you don't know whether they'll return, and you don't know what's going on there, and you receive SMS messages, ehm, 'I am going to be not available [on the phone], ehm, I don't know, I don't know for how long, so don't miss me, and don't think that I—like, I am simply not available', what am I supposed to feel, what—am I supposed to feel love for the people who are on the other side of, of, of the border? Really not, really not, so, because of this it's very easy for me to connect to that [part of the party's ideology], with regard to internal affairs I don't know, I don't know, internal affairs, that's already, ehm, there are already many aspects." (Katya, p. 7)

Katya tells her story against the background of several wars and military operations in the years prior to her interview; she directly refers to the Lebanon War against Hisbollah in 2006, and the Gaza War (Operation Cast Lead) in 2009. She tells a story of emotional involvement–it is about a close friend in reserve duty who was sent to the Lebanese border at the very beginning of the war in 2006–and will refer to it as an argumentative basis throughout her interview. Lukas tells a similar story; he tells me how he was interested in that his friends who already serve share those experiences with him. Yet, as his statement shows, he does not only receive information and satisfy his curiosity but also becomes emotionally involved, stumbling, fearing for the lives of those friends when they get wounded in a military operation:

"I have several friends [who are already doing their military service], like, one of them serves as, like (..), ehm, nu, (..), he watches over the airplanes, repairs them and, like, checks if everything works, and there is one, let's say, in a fighting unit, he goes to the [occupied] territories and to the border control, [...], they talk about what they are going through, like, what they experienced, [...] and also my aunt was in the army, and she told me about the border controls that—when she was there—about the things that happened, like, once they had—there was an attack when she was standing there and she was wounded at the shoulder, she, like, talked about this when we came to visit her." (Lukas, p. 16)

In both Katya's and Lukas's narratives, Palestinians exist only indirectly: citizens as an abstract group with whom they have not got any real contact ("them", "there are Arabs in Israel", p. 31) and non-citizens as the "people who are on the other side of the border". The fact that Palestinian non-citizens are the *others* who cause Katya to part with her friends—an emotional act—because they represent a threat to national security obviously make it easier for her to "demonstrate to outside that we are not wimps".

Halperin et al. show in their study that this "fear" is a negative emotion, moderated through the perception of threat, plays a major role in the maintenance of negative attitudes toward individuals and social groups, constructed as *others*, They find that "exclusionist political attitudes [...], [i.e.] the opposition to the granting of civil and political *rights* to residents and immigrant minority groups [in the Israeli context, above all, Palestinian citizens]" (Halperin et al. 2009: 998) increases after traumatic events like terror attacks. Those attitudes function as a "psychological resource gain" and they help the respondents to "cope with [...] [their] life" (Halperin et al. 2009: 1008). The two examples outlined above confirm the findings of Halperin et al.. Besides, they show that negative emotions can also be triggered not only by the actual event but also by the memory of that event: both Katya and Lukas talk about incidents that occurred in the past; those they worried about have already returned and are out of danger. However, both of them have embodied the past experience of a threat in the form of an emotional, bodily, reaction into their dispositional repertoires and now, while talking about the experience, they look at the events through the lens of their embodied dispositions.

Several authors emphasize the emotional or affective aspect that ideology can create, in particular emotions of love (toward one's own group)

and hate (toward a perceived *other*) (e.g. Ahmed 2004; Bar-Tal 2001; Zuckermann 1999; Dowse/ Hughes 1986). Besides, emotions as collective memory or "cultural codes", are conceptualised as an integral aspect of a society's political culture (Gavriely-Nuri 2012): For the Israeli political culture this is particularly true with regard to perceived conflict or existential threat (Bar-Tal/ Antebi 1992a: 634). In their suggestion of how to conceptualise national identity, David and Bar-Tal emphasize the importance of the emotional dimension of *belonging* to a collective (David/ Bar-Tal, 2009: 360), of feeling attached (Ahmed 2004: 28). Ahmed stresses the link between "constant [collective] history" (and collective memorisation) and "personal [in this aspect also bodily] perception" of social interaction with perceived "*others*" (Ahmed 2004: 32). She starts her analysis of emotions, love of the in-group and hatred toward outsiders from the definition that "emotions are what move us" (Ahmed 2004: 27). Gold conceptualises emotions as culturally constructed and thus socially shared, yet internal states mediating an individual's "sense of belonging" (Gold 2015: 114-5). In her case study on the emotional dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she shows that both sides employ means of triggering negative emotions like humiliation (Gold 2015: 117-8).

The interviewees speak about many emotions. Above all, they make the relationship between Jews and Palestinians emotional and they themselves are emotionally involved in that relationship. With regard to Palestinians, the interviewees speak in terms of negative emotions of betrayal and fear; this is in line with the previous findings outlined above. The interviewees also speak of love, however, interestingly, not (only) with regard to a particular "in-group"—to speak in socio-psychological terms—but "love of the land of Israel". This is a phrase which mainly appears in the context of talking about Zionist values, yet the interviewees stress "love of the land of Israel" differently. Most interviewees use it to stress that IB is a "Zionist party" (e.g. Ilan, p. 24) and in direct reference to Zionism, namely as one of its principles, as Max outlines: "repatriation, love of the land of Israel, security" (Max, p. 10). Avi prefers to translate it into "patriotism", because he is hesitant about Zionist values: when talking about his civic engagement for the local immigrant youth in Natserat Illit, he mentions that he recently co-founded a

"Facebook group 'Young Zionist of Natserat Illit', but 'Zionist' I would like to be erased, I am not (...)—I don't think it's something good, ok, but anyway I learn[ed?]

about it in school, it's not that is an idea, that is a great idea, I don't support it that much." (Avi, p. 7)

Katya, in turn, connects "love of the land of Israel" to nationalism:

"I am a nationalist somehow, I also don't want—sure, this is right necessarily because I basically love—what is a nationalist basically? I love my country very much, I love my people very much." (Katya, p. 31)

Based on what has been outlined regarding emotions, Katya here talks about Palestinians on two levels: on the (material) level of personal experience—which contains emotional experience of fear, love and yearning—she states "[we need] to demonstrate to outside that we are not wimps", and agrees with IB's ideology of demonstrating strength (cf. Bar-Tal 2001). The tone of Katya's argument is persuasive: she builds it around a you-story ("you don't know whether they'll return, and you don't know what's going on there, and you receive SMS messages"), appealing to her listeners' imagination and expecting them to put themselves into her position and thus appealing to their sympathy and compassion. The personal story about her friend leaving for war makes it even more emotional and appealing.

On the (discursive) level of argument, however, Katya is more hesitant and seeks confirmation with her friends who tell her about the word and the pistol.[3] She shows the same hesitation with regard to internal affairs, i.e. how to deal with Palestinian citizens ("with regard to internal affairs I don't know, I don't know, internal affairs, that's already, ehm, there are already many aspects"); I assume here Katya talks as a lawyer, not a lay citizen.

However, I argue that Katya's goal of telling the story about her friend leaving for war is not only to appeal to her listeners' compassion but to present a justification of "showing strength". While at first glance arguing for a peaceful co-existence, Katya indirectly equals Palestinian non-citizens with the Islamist terror organisation Hamas in Gaza. Reflecting about where she stands politically, Katya says:

3 "[W]hat is possible to achieve with a good word and a pistol is much more than [what is possible to achieve] only with a good word" (see above).

"I am a nationalist somehow, I also don't want—sure, this is right necessarily because I basically love—what is a nationalist basically? I love my country very much, I love my people very much, about my (.) religion I can't tell, because I am not (..) particularly religious (..). That doesn't mean that I don't accept someone who (.), who is different, who is from another country, absolutely not! But I am, ehm, I am proud of what I am. So, yes, it is possible to consider me a nationalist, that's, that's how I see it."
Interviewer: "But can you accept someone who is different in your country or are you such a nationalist that you say: 'our country is ours and not for somebody else!'?"
Katya: "Good question (laughs)! Basically, the fact that we live (.), two people live here, there are Arabs in Israel (..), and basically, they also want peace, just as we do. I live—that is very, that is, that is, that is strange because (.)—let's say I live on this side of the street and (.) there is a house where Arab live and (.)—us and them and (..)—there is a particular family that runs a shop and we always do our shopping there, so (.)—why, why should I say this country belongs to me alone or it does not (.) if in the end we all want peace? I (.) don't want to bring up here my political standpoint, I don't want, I (.) don't want—whether—I don't want to say whether I am in favour, ehm, a state (.) for Jews alone, or whether I am in favour, ehm, of accepting *others*, I don't even want to start this [discussion] because basically what is important is that there will be, will be calmness, peace in this region already, it is enough already, it is enough, we fought here (..) about what? We need to find a way to live, find a way to live somehow—if we, we can't—they can't throw us into the sea, we can't throw them into the sea, this will just not happen, this just must not happen, so one needs, we do need to live side by side. If—we don't have a choice so we have to do this, we have to get along (4), I don't have anything else, I don't want to say (..)—yes, I do love my country, I am a nationalist somehow, I (...)—how far, how far I really, ehm, (..) identify (4)—that is simply, that is simply not right to say that I, I am ready (...)—I don't, don't know—I am starting now an inner (.) dispute between me and myself, and I don't want to because, because it is simply not right (..)—we need to, need to live in peace between the people of one state, between the people of half the state and, and the people and half the state and the second people, or simply as one people (..)—let the politicians find a solution, and I (..), and we must learn (.) to live—there is simply no choice—the politicians will fasten [something, i.e. find a solution] (laughs)." (Katya, p. 31-2)

Katya directly refers to slogans Hamas used as anti-Israeli propaganda ("they can't throw us into the sea"). But instead of making the source of this

propaganda clear, a terror organisation, Katya presents it as a fact that "they", "people who are on the other side of the border", even Palestinians in general, would agree upon.

## 11.3 ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE PRACTICE VIII: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

In the context of presenting Palestinians as terrorists, Ilan finally connects Palestinians to a broader perception of threat: "Islamisation" of Western democracies, which he sees Israel a part of. The presentation of an existential threat combined with the lack of recognition of what Israel does to defend moral values serve as the basis to disqualify any external, particularly "European" critique of Israeli (foreign) policy as unqualified; Here, Ilan directly addresses his warning to me as a visitor from Germany, or, Europe in general:

"[W]e are not Switzerland, we are not Denmark, people in Germany, maybe for them it is a little hard to catch, like, why Germany of all, from abroad, like, the situation we are in, and the policemen who are outside and check your bag every time, and, like, these things, like—in the United States this, like, now has begun a little to do this in this direction because of the terror that is there, it will also come to Europe, I promise to you that it will also come to Europe, I am also sure that in a little while it will come to France, to England, because there they have much Islamisation and, like—not, not Muslims, that's not an evil thing, but extremists, which is an evil thing, like, like there is extremism in every place, I believe that the extremists also—there is Nature Karta, I don't know if you know them or not, extremist ultra-orthodox, which is an evil thing, too, all extremism is an evil thing, so, we in this state, like, there is nothing you can do about it, we have to defend ourselves somehow, contribute, like, more than other people." (Ilan, p. 16)

Ilan repeats his justification for self-defence against the threat of Islamisation when talking about Israel's role in the region, yet downplaying the country's active part in the regional conflicts of the past:

"We [Israel] are a little different, we are such a small pitskalle [Yidd., tiny leftover], we want to survive, we don't want to do anybody wrong, not right, leave us alone, we

need to defend ourselves more than other–, there are sixty Muslim states around us, and they are not exactly our best friends." (Ilan, p. 24)

In this quote, Ilan does not even mention that there are also Palestinian, Christian and "Muslim", citizens living in Israel. In his adaptation of the ethno-nationalist discourse of the *Jewish State*, but assumingly also in his personal experience, those citizens simply do not exist. However, he adds a qualification, condemning all kinds of extremism, including Jewish (religious) forms. Thus, in Ilan's eyes, it is not only, but mainly Muslim extremism against which Israel has to defend itself. Ilan's presents a connection of how he perceives existential threat at present with former threatening experiences; in this context he mentions in the informal part of the interview that he and his parents had suffered from those incidents back in Ukraine. Thus, Ilan constructs a double- or even triple-perception of being *othered* in his story: first as a Jew, second as a Russian-speaking Israeli, and third as an Israeli or "Westerner" in general. Against the background of his personal experience, he presents Palestinians, "Muslims" as the *others* who threaten him and his State. Against the background of the collective (Jewish) experience of threat, Ilan is finally able to *belong*.