APPENDIX 1

DOCUMENTS AND SOURCES, 1956

A historical investigation into any particular incident can seldom ever be truly complete. Scratching further might uncover something new and significant—an unopened file or a long-lost letter, for example. This book is chiefly dependent on the oral testimony of Palestinians asked to recall the tragic events in Khan Younis and Rafah in November 1956. As much as possible I have tried to present the available documentary evidence to supplement these personal accounts. I visited the U.N.'s archives in New York a number of times and contracted two Israeli researchers to dig through Israeli archives as well.

Below, I present extended cullings from some of the documents I quoted in the book to provide more context for the interested reader. Also included are selected newspaper reports from the period (many of which provide much misinformation), as well as additional comments by Mordechai Bar-On, chef de bureau to IDF chief of staff Moshe Dayan in 1956, whose knowledge of the Israeli perspective is intimate. My brief commentaries follow when appropriate. Readers are alerted in those cases where words on old, photocopied documents were difficult to read.

Letter from Lieutenant Colonel (U.S. Army) R. F. Bayard, chairman of the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission [U.N. observers] to Colonel Leary, acting chief of staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), November 13, 1956 (see p. 373):

Dear Colonel Leary,

I felt that it is about time I got a letter off to you in order to keep you informed of conditions in general in the Gaza Strip as we see it. It is quite evident that the Israelis do not wish to have United Nations Observers circulating in the Strip and reporting upon the actions they are taking against the civilian populace. From the reports we receive from UNRWA personnel and from the very few incidents that have been witnessed by Observers, I have come to the conclusion that the treatment of civilians is unwarrantly rough and that a good number of persons have been shot down in cold blood for no apparent reason. It seems to me that representatives of the International Red Cross should be present on the scene. Of course, we hear many rumours of atrocities, much of which we can discount, but a small percentage are probably factual. No doubt it would be quite embarrassing to the Israelis if we could circulate freely and report upon these incidents. We will keep a written record of those incidents reported to us by UNRWA personnel. Mr. [Thomas] Jamieson [an UNRWA official] states that many key

UNRWA native personnel are missing from the camps and are believed to have been executed by the Israelis. . . .

Many Israeli soldiers have robbed civilians, taking watches, rings, fountain pens, etc. away from the Arabs either in their homes or on the streets. Every vehicle and every bicycle [in Gaza City] has been confiscated. Private workshops and machine shops have been stripped of all mechanical tools. Many mules and horses have been taken and cloth has been taken from the stores.

I have been visited on several occasions by the more prominent Palestinians with a request for assistance. The Palestinians begged us, the UNTSO, not to leave and state that as long as we remain the people have some hope and confidence in the future....

Life here is very easy as far as we of the UNTSO are concerned. However, it is unpleasant to witness the treatment of the local populace and particularly to note the indignities directed upon personnel friends....

Best regards,

R. F. Bayard
Lt. Col. US Army
Chairman

On November 18, 1956, the IDF Southern Command Headquarters sent a top-secret communiqué tasking two officers with investigating the "Rafah incident."

Re: Appointment of an inquiry commission into a search in RAFAH 12/11/1956 in which 40 [or 60—original unclear] were killed and 20 injured

1. In light of my authority, according to High Command regulations (1955), I, General Haim Laskov, Chief of the Southern Command, hereby appoint you:

   Colonel Arieh Reiss, chairman
   Captain Herzl Golan, member

   members in the above mentioned inquiry commission.

. . .

3. To receive first-hand details, you will approach the military governor of Gaza.
4. The inquiry report original with 3 copies will be personally handed by you to the Command adjutant administrative officer no later than the 25th of Nov. 56.

Whatever report Colonel Reiss and Captain Golan submitted could not be found in the IDF archive by my researcher.

A five-page classified IDF report, dated November 25, 1956, entitled "Problems in the Gaza Strip and Outlines for Intelligence Activity," and signed by Officer Avshalom Shmueli, notes:

8. Searches and operations by our forces:

E. During searches the governor's loudspeakers were used. It was recently agreed that the governor is responsible for detailed orders regarding search procedures. This after exposure of a search in Rafah in which tens of Arabs were killed. According to a rumor, the leak to the press, in this case, came from the governor's circles.

Article from the *Times* (London), dateline Tel Aviv, November 18, 1956, by "Our Correspondent":

REPORTS OF SHOOTING OF ARABS

Reports of indiscriminate shooting of Arabs by Israel troops occupying the Gaza strip [*sic*] continue to circulate here and are causing the Government much concern. . . .

The worst of these unfortunate shooting incidents, which seem to have gone on at intervals all last week, took place at the refugee camp of Rafah last Tuesday [*sic*: it was a Monday]. According to an U.N.R.W.A. field director, Mr. T. Jameson [*sic*: Thomas Jamieson], at least 60 refugees were killed and 30 were seriously wounded when fire was opened by an Israel unit which, as it approached Rafah camp, saw what its officer took to be an organized attempt by some thousands of refugees to break out and loot U.N.R.W.A. stores. Arab sources at Rafah put the dead at a much higher figure.

The commander of the Israel forces in the Gaza area, Colonel Chaim Gaon [*sic*: Haim Gaon], says that 12 men of Rafah camp "may have been killed" and their bodies taken away by members of their families who, in refugee-fashion, are reluctant to admit their dead and so lose a part of their U.N.R.W.A. rations, which are drawn by heads of families only.

A MISUNDERSTANDING

The Rafah incident seems to have had its origin in a mishap which reflects upon the military organization of the district. Apparently an Israel unit which had been on guard at the camp and had taken part in the screening of refugees withdrew from the camp—which is sprawled over and around Rafah township—before its relief had arrived. The refugees, many of whom had been standing about in a big enclosure waiting to be screened, are thought then to have assumed that the Israel Army was withdrawing behind the old armistice lines and to have taken what must have seemed a heaven-sent opportunity to loot U.N.R.W.A. stores.

According to U.N.R.W.A. field officers, however, the amount of looting was negligible. It is probable that the Israel relieving unit, faced by some thousands of Arabs who looked as if they might be in a riotous mood, lost its nerve. There is no doubt that the Arabs, caught out of bounds and probably up to mischief lost their nerves when they caught sight of the approaching Israel soldiers. The result was the unnecessarily bloody episode of the kind Israel's enemies are likely to turn to damaging account against her.

Officials of the U.N.R.W.A. and other observers who have been trying to get at the real truth of the Rafah shooting and other incidents of last week do not accuse Israelis of any deliberate brutality. On the whole Israel soldiers have behaved well....

The Israeli newspaper *Kol Ha'am* reported the following on November 20, 1956:

SECURITY COUNCIL CALLED ON TO PREVENT FURTHER MASSACRE OF ARABS IN THE GAZA STRIP

(U.N. Headquarters; UP service) Today the director of the office for Palestinian refugees in New York, Dr. Issam Tanum [or Tanus—original unclear], in a memo to the Security Council, accused Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip of preparing for "genocide"—mass destruction—among the refugees.

[Tanum/s] demanded that the council take immediate steps to prevent further slaughter. He claimed that 50 refugees have been murdered in cold blood.

THE BRITISH PRESS ON THE DISTURBANCES

London: Today the press has published many accounts of the incidents in the Gaza Strip which involved Arab refugees and Israeli soldiers. A writer for the *Daily Express*, Donald Wise, reported that Israeli soldiers had leaped from trucks to beat citizens, and he quoted a UN spokesman who claimed that 59 Arabs had died in the recent incidents.

A writer for the *New Chronicle* reports an Arab account from Gaza which said, "If Colonel Bayard, head of the UN in Gaza, hadn't remained here, I'm sure that thousands of refugees in Gaza and the surroundings would have been killed. Anyone who sets out on the path of slaughter and destruction in cold blood, whether he's Arab or Israeli, doesn't want UN witnesses." Reporter Peter Vane [name unclear] writes that the Israelis have tried their hardest to remove Bayard from the area.

The *Times* reporter in Tel Aviv has also written about the events in Rafah.

***Kol Ha'am* reported the following on November 21, 1956:**

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

In relation to the events in Rafah, the military commander of the Gaza Strip, Lt. Colonel Haim Gaon, gave the following version to representatives of the press who were touring the area on November 18:

On the tenth of November IDF forces in Rafah were replaced. The residents, who assumed that the IDF was leaving the town, began looting UNRWA warehouses and protesting at the military command headquarters. According to the military commander, they fired at the headquarters and at vehicles on the roads. The rioting continued through the next day, November 11. The IDF sealed the town and on the following day, November 12, imposed a curfew and carried out searches. The residents of Rafah were ordered to show some identification. They displayed passive resistance and in some cases active resistance. One sergeant was injured by their shooting. The army was given orders to bring the men out of their houses by force. Some began fleeing toward the sand dunes, according to Lt. Colonel Gaon, but steps were taken to prevent their escape. During the operation there were 30 casualties, including both dead and wounded. The military commander reported that the searches resulted in the arrest of 200 Egyptian soldiers, 150 Palestinian soldiers, a few suspected Fedayeen and many other suspects.

The residents of occupied Rafah are still in shock from the terrible events of the past week. They are also full of rage [blank—censored].

The military commander of the Gaza Strip published orders for anyone traveling in Gaza in which he declared that the population is hostile and forbade visitors from making contact with residents.

Letter from U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold to Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir, November 21, 1956 (see p. 374):

According to information received which I must consider as reliable, the situation in the Gaza Strip, in particular Rafah, has been one giving rise to great concern. I will not here go into the question of the reasons for this unrest, nor into the information we have on the casualties ensuing. I hope that the situation has improved, and I gather from you that according to your information that is the case. However, the situation remains one which I cannot disregard in the execution of my obligations under the relevant General Assembly Resolutions. The other day I addressed to you a request that observers from the United Nations Emergency Force be permitted to enter to be stationed and to function within the Gaza area. I now wish to repeat this request....

Letter in reply from Foreign Minister Meir, November 21, 1956 (see p. 374):

I refer to your letter of 21 November on the situation in the Gaza Strip. As I informed you on the same day, rioting, instigated by Egyptian agents, took place in Rafah on 10 and 12 November. During the disorders the UNRWA Food Depot in the town was attacked by an unruly mob and the Israel authorities were compelled to take action to prevent large scale looting and destruction. Order was restored with some difficulty and, regrettably, there were casualties among the mob. Since then, however, complete tranquility prevails in the whole area, and relations between the local population and the authorities are amicable. . . . In view, however, of your desire for direct information [about the situation in Gaza], the Government of Israel would welcome the visit of your personal representative who will be given all facilities to investigate and report on the situation in the area.

On November 23, 1956, the Israeli Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee met with IDF chief of staff Moshe Dayan to discuss the war and its conduct (see pp. 374–75). This is the relevant part of the transcript:

MK Yaakov Hazan: What about the treatment of prisoners? I don't mean those prisoners who are already in our hands. I don't believe in stories that someone heard from someone, but if someone comes to me and says that he himself saw something, then I have to believe him. I heard different stories about units that behaved humanely toward prisoners when they captured them, but I've also heard about brutal and inhumane treatment of prisoners in other units. Is anything known about this, and what is the army thinking of doing?

. . .

Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan: . . . I haven't heard any specific complaints about the treatment of prisoners after they were captured. Perhaps there were a few such incidents, I'll put the question to the head of [. . .] maybe he has information about complaints. They didn't reach me, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen.

. . .

Regarding Knesset Member Hazan's question about whether different units behaved differently toward prisoners—there was different treatment, I know about certain units in their encounters with prisoners in certain places or with fleeing Egyptians—I don't know of any instance where they stood prisoners in a row and killed them—killing them instead of taking them prisoner. I imagine that there were borderline cases, where the people could have been captured or killed and it depended on the particular inclination of the specific unit. In one unit they told them to line up, seized their weapons, and then took the people prisoner, and in another unit they opened fire on people when it was possible either to capture them or kill them.

MK Moshe Aram: . . . Knesset Member Hazan spoke about the handling of prisoners at the time they were taken. I'm sorry to say that I heard about the handling of prisoners during the time they were in the camps. I heard something very grave, that even now they're being beaten, and sometimes they're being abused in other ways. I see this as a political question, not a military one. Is there any kind of treatment being given to the prisoners beyond handing out their food rations? Is there any kind of spiritual treatment, because one of these days these people will go back to their countries. Is there any kind of treatment that will show them what kind of country this is, what kind of army, what this community is that they've fallen into?

. . .

What was the point of making it public that tear gas was sent to Rafah? It was even said somewhere that poison gas was sent, although Soviet channels immediately denied that voluntarily, but how and why was that made public?

What exactly happened in Rafah?

. . .

Chief of Staff M. Dayan: . . . I don't know of disturbances in Gaza and in the Strip. I think there's absolute quiet. I include Rafah in this, apart from the one incident. As long as the Egyptians were fighting there, they fought too. Once the matter was over, they quickly stopped fighting as well. The residents haven't shown any signs of resistance or lack of cooperation. I don't think they're planning any act of protest or physical resistance to our presence there.

I'm sure if the U.N. comes and asks them who they'd rather have there, they'd choose Arabs, but there's no physical expression of this. In Rafah there was a bit of an unfortunate convergence of events and the Arabs there had a negative disposition. The convergence was this: Our unit left the area during a changeover of units, the second unit hadn't yet entered the area. At the same time, the prime minister here was giving a speech about his answer to the U.N.'s demand for a withdrawal, and there they were sure that we'd left without intending to come

back. The second unit entered the next day and imposed a curfew and had to search the arms caches and the Egyptian soldiers who were still there. This had been done in other parts of Gaza, and until it was done neither the arms nor the Egyptian soldiers were handed over. Once the search took place, both the Egyptian soldiers and the arms were found. So we went from one area to the next until it was Rafah's turn.

MK Menachem Begin: How much time passed between the one unit leaving and the other coming in?

Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan: A night or a day. Basically, the clash didn't happen with the arrival of the second unit. Afterward, they announced a curfew on the loudspeakers and that all the men had to assemble at a specific place for identification. They ignored the curfew and no one came. The loudspeakers went around and announced the curfew and that the men had to assemble, and not only did they not show up but they paid no attention to the curfew instructions. There were a lot of Egyptian soldiers and a lot of arms among this big group of Arabs who weren't listening to the instructions, which is why I said that there was a certain disposition involved. So the unit opened fire. I don't know where they fired and whether the Arabs fired. I don't know the general picture. After the shooting started in a few places, the Arabs went into their homes and after that they responded to the order to come for identification, and then 200 Egyptian soldiers were found. About 40 people were killed. I'm sure that many hundreds of Egyptian soldiers could hide in the sands between Gaza [City] and Rafah, but if there are 200 soldiers in the houses who don't want to hand themselves over and are inciting the others not to identify themselves, then the unit commander was absolutely right when he opened fire. It's unacceptable that the army declares a curfew and people go on wandering in the streets.

MK Moshe Aram: Were those killed all soldiers?

Chief of Staff M. Dayan: I think one boy was injured, there were no women, only men. During the identification, the [Egyptian] soldiers weren't wearing uniforms, but when they were asked for their papers it became clear that they were soldiers.

The problem with the Arab population is external and political, not local. There are plenty of informers there. In Gaza and El-Arish there are also Egyptian agents and soldiers and Fedayeen who want to take action, but the others hand them over, not because of loyalty but because of the informers.

Minutes of the debate in the Knesset, November 28, 1956. Proposal by Knesset Member Esther Vilenska (Israeli Communist Party) to debate the events in the Gaza Strip.

We propose a debate in the Knesset plenum on the events that occurred in the Gaza Strip. Information has reached us from soldiers and residents in the Gaza Strip about looting, humiliation, and killings of the Arab population in different parts of the Gaza Strip. There has been extremely disturbing information that after Gaza was occupied, tens of residents were taken from their houses and shot

without cause. Even the meager information that the censor has allowed the Israeli press to publish shows that dreadful acts have been carried out in Gaza, acts which any person of conscience, regardless of party affiliation, cannot fail to condemn.

Today's *Ha'aretz* includes an article from *Ha'olam Hazeh*, which says, among other things, "Two weeks ago an event occurred in occupied Rafah, which, according to the international press, ended with the killing of more than fifty Arabs. With unsurpassable stupidity, this apparatus thinks that it's possible to silence such an event at a time like this in the most sensitive place on earth. That's why the first piece of information came from the UNRWA people who are there, who spoke of a horrific massacre. To the whole world Israel's silencing looks like an expression of bad conscience." That's from *Ha'olam Hazeh*.

The whole country has heard and is talking about these things. The Israeli public is ashamed of these acts and wants an immediate stop to them. There's no excusing these murderous acts in that they occurred during a time of war. These things were done after the occupation, to a peaceful population, just as on October 29 similar criminal acts were done to 49 peaceful residents of Kafr Kassem, acts that two weeks ago in the Knesset MK Schocken called "worse than treason."

[Just days before the Sinai war started, Kafr Kassem, a village of Arabs living inside Israel near Tel Aviv, was put under curfew by the Israel Border Police. Villagers returning home from their fields and neighboring areas, unaware that a curfew had been imposed, were stopped at the police roadblocks and killed.]

We protest these crimes not just from a general democratic standpoint but to an equal degree out of love for our people, out of a desire to erase a stain from our people. The government is responsible for these crimes just as it is responsible for its aggressive policy toward Egypt and its repressive policies toward the Arab population in Israel.

We propose a debate on the events in the Gaza Strip in order that the Knesset will decide 1) to condemn the acts of looting and murder that have been carried out by Israeli rule in the Gaza Strip; 2) to immediately halt these criminal acts; 3) to bring those who committed such acts to trial; 4) to carry out the United Nations' emergency decree to pull out IDF troops from all the occupied territory, including the Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister and Defense Minister David Ben-Gurion's reply (see p. 376):

I shall not debate with the two previous speakers [other speaker not identified]. It is not for them to talk of conscience, murder or robbery. I wish to report to the Knesset on the events which took place. The matter has already been discussed in the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, and a report has been sent to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The following events took place at Rafah where there are both local residents and a number of refugees. Rafah was liberated by the Israel Defense Army which drove out the Egyptian invader—and I hope he will never return there.

On the day after my broadcast to the nation, on the evening of 11 November, Rafah had the mistaken impression that the Israel Defense Army was about to

withdraw from the town. Whether this false report was spread by the agents of these two speakers or others, I do not know—but that was the impression created. As a result, disturbances took place, UNRWA stores were looted, and shots were fired by the rioters. On the following day, during which the unit stationed in the town was due to be relieved—by another unit which was late in arriving—the disturbances began again. They did so after the unit stationed in the town had left. One officer and three soldiers who remained fired in the air and succeeded in dispersing the rioters. Later, the relieving unit arrived and imposed a curfew to carry out a weapons search, for we had information—and we still have information to this effect—that there were numerous Egyptian soldiers and Fedayeen in disguise still in the Gaza Strip, murderers sent there by the Egyptian dictator.

A number of people in the town violated the curfew and some opened fire on our forces. After firing a number of warning shots in the air, our soldiers were forced to open fire on the rioters and 48 of them were killed and a number were wounded. Searches were made and, as a result, 250 Egyptian soldiers and a large quantity of arms were discovered.

Since this incident, quiet has reigned in Rafah and in the whole of the Gaza area. Efforts have been made by the Israel Defense Army to restore normal life. Local councils have reopened, medical assistance has been provided, postal and telegraphic services and transport restored. Two representatives especially sent by the Secretary General of the United Nations visited Gaza yesterday and they will also visit other places. They were astonished that in a few days after the occupation such tranquility and normalcy prevail in the area.

On this occasion, I must refute the disgraceful slander being spread by Nasser's agents in Israel—they are also the agents of certain others, whose names I don't wish to mention for reasons sufficient for me—that the Government is preparing to do to the Arabs in Israel what Egypt is doing to the Jews in Egypt. This is a vile calumny and incitement of the worst possible kind, which only traitors and enemy agents could disseminate.

I wish to state here, if any need exists to make such a statement, that the Arab citizens of Israel enjoy full equality of civic rights. They are treated exactly like Jewish citizens, and none of us considers them responsible for the criminal misdeeds of the Arab rulers. The Government will take stringent legal measures against those who spread the slander, the purpose of which is to stir up unrest in this country. The Egyptian atrocities will not take place in Israel, and if any act of murder does take place, the murderers are handed over to the law and tried as though they had murdered Jews. For Israeli justice makes no distinction between Jewish and Arab murderers. Only foreign agents and traitors could spread such calumnies. I propose to remove this matter from the agenda.

[62 voted in favor of removing the matter from the agenda, 3 against.]

Ben-Gurion's reference to two U.N. representatives (Colonel K. Nelson and Captain G. Svedlund) being "astonished" at the level of "tranquility and normalcy" in Gaza raised eyebrows at U.N. headquarters. In a cable to UNTSO acting chief of staff Colonel Leary on November 28, 1956, Colonel Nelson wrote, "I made no specific or categorical statement to the effect that everything was OK in Gaza Strip. Yesterday I toured Gaza

town only repeat only. The Israelis may have concluded that my impression was that 'everything seems OK in Gaza' but I could not have said that everything was OK in Gaza Strip since I did not leave Gaza town. . . . The basis of Ben-Gurion's alleged statement is no categorical [*sic*] quoted from me. . . ." In a communication to the U.N. secretary general on December 1, 1956, after finally traveling around the Gaza Strip, Colonel Nelson was able to report, "Conditions throughout the area can be classified as progressively normal." Day-to-day life was "being restored under an orderly plan of Israeli authorities. . . . Method of Israeli [*sic*] may be strong arm but there is evidence of control of population and stability. . . . Situation in Rafia [*sic*] is calm for both refugee and local inhabitants."

The foundation for any historical account of the Khan Younis and Rafah killings is the "Special Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (Covering the period 1 November 1956 to mid-December 1956)," presented to the General Assembly (Official Records: Eleventh Session, Supplement No. 14A A/3212/Add.1), New York, 1957 (see pp. 116–17 and 376).

Paragraphs 20 through 30, under the heading "Effects of Military Operations on Gaza Refugees," is the relevant section.

CASUALTIES AMONG REFUGEES

20. In addition to the disruptions referred to . . . , the occupation of the Gaza Strip by the Israel army resulted in a number of civilian casualties in both the refugee and local populations, and caused anxiety and fear among the refugees, particularly during the first weeks.
21. In other circumstances, it would have been a logical course for the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization to investigate and report upon casualties resulting from an armed attack across the demarcation line. In the present emergency, that organization was unable to do so, as the movements of its officers in the Gaza Strip had been restricted by the Israel authorities. The [United Nations Relief and Works] Agency has, therefore, made every effort to ascertain the facts concerning the various incidents affecting the refugees and it has sought to prevent any repetition of violence against the refugee population. The Agency has been compelled to rely upon its own sources of information. These were necessarily limited, but they included eye-witness accounts by UNRWA employees, both refugees and others.
22. The Director [of UNRWA, Henry Labouisse, an American] sets forth below a summary of the information he has obtained concerning refugee casualties, which he believes to be as accurate a reflection of the facts as prevailing circumstances permitted.
23. **Khan Yunis.** The town of Khan Yunis and the Agency's camp adjacent thereto were occupied by Israel troops on the morning of 3 November. A large number of civilians were killed at that time, but there is some conflict in the accounts given as to the causes of the casualties. The Israel authorities state that there was resistance to their occupation and that the Palestinian refugees formed part of the resistance. On the other hand, the refugees state that all resistance had ceased at the time of the incident and

that many unarmed civilians were killed as the Israel troops went through the town and camp, seeking men in possession of arms. The exact number of dead and wounded is not known, but the Director has received from sources he considers trustworthy lists of names of persons allegedly killed on 3 November, numbering 275 individuals, of whom 140 were refugees and 135 local residents of Khan Yunis.

24. **Rafah.** On 12 November, a serious incident occurred in the Agency's camp at Rafah. Both the Israel authorities and UNRWA's other sources of information agree that a number of refugees were killed and wounded at that time by the occupying forces.
25. A difference of opinion exists as to how the incident happened and as to the numbers of killed and wounded. It is agreed, however, that the incident occurred during a screening operation conducted by the Israel forces. These screening operations have been carried out in each UNRWA camp, as well as among the non-camp population. The stated purpose of the Israel authorities was to find persons who were members of the so-called "Palestine Brigade" or who participated in *fedayeen* operations. The procedure was to institute a twenty-four-hour curfew in the area being screened and to call all men between certain specified ages to gather at designated places; meanwhile, soldiers went through the houses and huts looking for suspects who might have remained at home.
26. The Israel authorities in Gaza state that the attitude of the refugees in Rafah camp was hostile and that there was some resistance to the screening operations, during which the casualties occurred. The refugees deny any such resistance. The facts appear to be as follows: Rafah is a very large camp (more than 32,000 refugees) and the loudspeaker vans which called upon the men to gather at designated screening points were not heard by some of the refugee population. Realizing this, an UNRWA official went personally to one section of the camp to inform the inhabitants of the Israel announcement. Moreover, sufficient time was not allowed for all men to walk to the screening points and get there before the designated hour. In the confusion, a large number of refugees ran toward the screening points for fear of being late, and some Israel soldiers apparently panicked and opened fire on this running crowd.
27. The Director has received from sources which he considers trustworthy lists of names of persons allegedly killed at Rafah on 12 November, numbering 111, of whom 103 were refugees, seven local residents, and one an Egyptian.

PROTEST BY THE AGENCY

28. Upon learning of the Rafah incident, the Agency protested to the Israel Government stating that, unless immediate measures were taken to put an end to such happenings, it would be impossible for UNRWA to continue its work among and on behalf of the refugees in the Gaza Strip. The Agency was assured by the Israel Foreign Office that the Government was taking urgent steps to establish the facts and was doing its best to ensure that there would be no repetition of such incidents.
29. To the best of the Agency's information, the two incidents mentioned above

are the only major ones of their kind which have taken place. There have been, however, a number of refugees killed or wounded in smaller incidents—some during the fighting, some in connexion with breaches of curfew restrictions, and some accidentally. The exact number is not known, but the Director has received a list, from sources which he considers trustworthy, numbering sixty-six individuals, of whom forty-eight were refugees, killed in the period 1 to 21 November (exclusive of those mentioned above).

30. It has not been possible to verify individually each listed death, nor has it been possible to complete a list of all refugees who may have been killed or who are missing. Further information may be obtained in the weeks to come, but it is most unlikely that lists of casualties can ever be made complete. One of the reasons for this is that, particularly in the early phase, many burials were made without identification.

Note here the references to eyewitness accounts, lists of casualties, and claims by Israeli authorities in Gaza. Presumably this material was written down. Perhaps these documents still exist and will be found by an intrepid researcher in the UNRWA archives—located mostly in Amman, Jordan—some day.

I asked Mordechai Bar-On, chef de bureau to Moshe Dayan in 1956, who was extensively interviewed for this book, specifically about the killings at Khan Younis and Rafah. Here is the relevant part of the transcript of the interview, which was conducted in English.

Q: *Let's move forward a bit to the actual conquest of Gaza and to what happened in Khan Younis and Rafah.*
Bar-On: What do you refer here to, Khan Younis, Rafah? I know of one case which I heard of and I didn't pursue it in great detail, of some, I think it was in Rafah, not in Khan Younis as far as I know, but it was in one place in which the commander, who happened to be in later years a great peacenik in Israel, Matti Peled. . . . But at that time he was the commander of a brigade, and he was commander of Gaza, so—

Q: *He was the commander of all of Gaza?* [Note: Matti Peled died in 1995.]
Bar-On: Of all Gaza . . . And don't trust this information because it's just what I remember, I never delved into that. . . . But there was some sort of a riot either in a refugee camp or in a prison camp. They tried to sort out the fedayeen or they tried to find those who were culprits of violent activities. And there was a kind of disorder in the place, and then there was [missing word] shooting on the part of the Israelis into the multitude. And as far as I remember something like 100 were killed, which is a great number. . . . I know of one such place. I don't know what you referred [to], Khan Younis. . . . To me, to my mind, [the incident I'm aware of regarding Khan Younis] is the raid at the end of August of 1955. But maybe I'm wrong.

Q: *So reports, when you were with Dayan, reports weren't really coming in about what was going on?*
Bar-On: Reports from?

Q: *Reports on what was going on in Gaza. . . . Because you don't seem to be familiar with what happened in Khan Younis. I'm just wondering, at the time were reports coming in about what was going on in Gaza? Or is it something that . . . you learned later after the war?*
Bar-On: No no no. At the time, of course. But you have to try to imagine how it works.

Q: *Okay.*
Bar-On: If a thing like this happens, first of all you report by telephone. Not by any writing. So it's word of mouth. I mean, they report it to the area command, and the area command reports to the G3, to the operation room . . . if it's important. In this case I guess it was important enough to let Dayan know right away, even by telephone. [The report] will not be of great detail. You do not ask him, how did it happen? . . . Somebody will tell there was a riot in the camp, and we had to open fire, and many were killed, but it's now quiet. Because the whole thing took perhaps a few minutes. The whole event—or maybe half an hour, and then the whole thing was over. So it's over now. . . . Then you've got investigations. Sometimes legal investigations, but very often the upper echelon demands a written report on what happened. So the report will then go by echelon and will reach—in most cases Dayan would not read that report. [It will arrive] two or three days later, and sometimes a week later. There were so many other things to busy himself with. . . . Actually, he knew the facts, he knew the facts exactly the way, what happened. Unless he thought it was something that had to be investigated by a lawyer, by a military lawyer, which he did not, I think, at that time. Then I would remember it much more. I don't remember it much more because for me it was a fleeting event. Somebody told me, I told Dayan, and that's it, finished, the story is over.

Q: *I mean, it is a long time ago. Do you remember how you heard about it?*
Bar-On: No . . .

Q: *But you would have been the one to have told Dayan then?*
Bar-On: I'm not sure. Maybe someone called him directly. And he told me . . .

Q: *And you don't know if a report was written about it or not?*
Bar-On: I'm pretty sure that there was a written report. . . .

Q: *And as far as you know, what happened in Khan Younis, you just don't even remember any—*
Bar-On: It's either there or there. You know, some reports . . . do not register with us, because what registered with me is a case in which 100 Palestinians are being killed, women and children, within an hour, that [registered with] me. The fact that there was some shooting in some place and two Palestinians were killed, would not record in my memory—sadly about my memory. But for them it's another case. And of course, the Palestinians, and I don't blame [them] for that, but the Palestinians have a tendency to inflate those stories because it serves them so they want to inflate them. Now sometimes they don't have to inflate because a hundred killed is a hundred killed.

Q: *I'll tell you, it wasn't women and children. There might have been some women and children killed, but it was [almost all] men. Just so you know.*
Bar-On: Anyway, they make the best out of these stories, especially over the years the story goes and becomes bigger and bigger. The memory becomes bigger and bigger. We have this experience, and it's only natural. So what you hear from people on the locale, you have to . . . take with a grain of salt, because they might report a truthful story, but [exaggerate] the way they tell [it] and the details. In my mind, I know only one mishap or one act of cruelty, if you might call it, or misdeed, and I know of one such case [where] Matti Peled was involved. There were many more—Palestinians were killed here and there over that period. I don't know if it was—I think it was Khan Younis, not in Rafah. So I do not know what do they refer to when they say another event in Rafah.

There is one intriguing reference to the killings in Khan Younis by Israeli professor of philosophy Avishai Margalit in his review of Noam Chomsky's *The Fateful Triangle* (*New York Review of Books*, June 28, 1984). In it, he states:

> Take the case of the massacre at Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip during the war of 1956, one of many unpublicized cases of Israeli brutality that Chomsky mentions. Israel was involved, according to the UN chief inspector, General E.L.M. Burns, in the massacre of at least 275 people. This number is cited by Chomsky although knowledgeable Israeli sources I have talked to believe it is too high. What is missing from this account, however, is the fact that each of the persons who were shot was identified as a *fedayeen* (or terrorist, in Israel's current jargon) according to lists compiled by Israeli intelligence before the killings. Execution without trial is evil, as is the mindless slaughter of innocents by Israelis at Deir-Yassin or by Phalangists at Sabra and Shatila.

In a response in the letters page of the *New York Review of Books* (August 16, 1984), Chomsky stated his sources for the casualty figure at Khan Younis (citing the director of UNRWA, Henry Labouisse) and added that "the official Israeli account" and other reports "denied" that those shot had been identified as fedayeen. "In fact," wrote Chomsky, "it seems that the army simply went on a rampage after the conquest." Margalit replied:

> In my view bureaucratic murder according to pre-prepared lists and without trial is as evil as murder committed by rampageous soldiers hitting innocent civilians. It is no less evil: it is a different evil.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON SOURCES

p. 36: The Israel Foreign Ministry report cited is from its Middle East department. I found it in Tom Segev's book *1949: The First Israelis*.

pp. 77–78: Dayan's eulogy for Ro'i Rothberg is quoted from Benny Morris's book *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956*.

pp. 118–119: Mark Gefen's account of the Khan Younis killings was published in *Al Hamishmar*, April 27, 1982. Riva Hocherman translated the article from the Hebrew.

APPENDIX 2

THE DEMOLITION OF HOMES IN RAFAH: THE ISRAELI VIEW

In May 2003 I interviewed Israel Defense Forces spokespersons and commanders for their comments on the home demolitions in Rafah. What follow are the relevant portions of the transcripts.

Major Sharon Feingold and Captain Jacob Dallal, IDF spokespersons:

Feingold: What concerns us most is the tunnels—this is the biggest problem for us along that border. You have to understand that when we talk about these tunnels, this is a conglomerate, this is an operation, this is a business. . . . For the last two and a half years these tunnels have been used to smuggle both wanted terrorists and weapons and munitions. And . . . we're talking about dozens of tunnels. . . . The average is about 15 meters deep and 300 and 400 meters long. . . . Now they can't dig them out in the open, of course. They would be spotted in seconds. So what they do is they dig them . . . from houses which are closest to the border, which means the tunnels are shorter in length. Most of these structures along the border . . . are used as piers for tunnels. What we [do] is expose the tunnels. After we expose the tunnels we blow them up. So [the Palestinians] move further and further into Rafah itself to dig the tunnels. . . .

Q: *What sort of coordination do you have with the Egyptians on this?*
Feingold: I can't go into that, that's very sensitive, but I can tell you that the Egyptians are doing everything they can to fight this phenomenon from their side. . . . [M]ore than 100 tunnels [have been] exposed. We blow them up, they dig another tunnel. It's a game of, if you want, cat and mouse going after these people. And because they dig the tunnels from people's houses, it's very hard for us to detect these tunnels. Look at this. [She shows a photo on a computer.] This is a tunnel which was dug under the baby's cot, inside a house. This is a normal house in Rafah. You can see it's quite a wealthy house. And this is the pier for the tunnel, under the baby's bed. . . . [It] is not something out of the ordinary. This is what we're facing every single day in Rafah. . . . [T]hese tunnels are the arteries of terror. These tunnels are the ones supplying bullets, the AK-47s, the anti-tank rockets—the RPGs—and people, wanted terrorists.

Q: *I'd like to get a sense of . . . the threat that, from your perspective, the tunnels pose.*
Feingold: Oh, a very big one. [Shows a map of Rafah's border area.] They use these structures. Some of them are abandoned, some of them are not. Some of them have roofs. Some of them do not. Some of them are used as places where they keep their farm animals, you know, the chickens and the goats and

whatever. And in some of them the people are still living, [on the] first floor or the second floor. . . .

Q: *You mentioned a number of things that have been smuggled through. Go over that again. What is generally smuggled through as far as arms or ammunition?*
Feingold: Anything that you can get into the tunnel. It's very easy. When we destroy more tunnels we see that the price for an AK-47 automatic rifle rises from $1,000 to $2,000. You see by the market in Rafah, you see how good we are. Which is quite funny, but it's not funny to us. Basically, these tunnels are not very big. You have to be very small to crawl inside. But there are tunnels which we have discovered which are big, where they had lights in there, where they had a telephone system in there. People could actually walk. . . . We also don't know how many tunnels there are. . . . We do know that they use children to dig the tunnels . . . and pay them very low salaries. . . .
Dallal: In general, the whole question of children, also to lay explosive devices on the border, on the Philadelphi Road itself.
Feingold: They send them because they're small, because children are not something that should raise any suspicion. . . . They run there all the time.

Q: *And the evidence you have of that is what?*
Feingold: We have intelligence that shows that. . . . We know for a fact that they're using children all the time. . . . They send them to try to infiltrate the [Jewish] settlements inside the Gaza Strip. They're not that successful, but some of them have been. We caught a child that's eight years old and 14, if I'm not mistaken. . . .

Q: *Eight and 14?*
Dallal: Those are the youngest.
Feingold: The youngest that we caught, which managed to go, to infiltrate one of our settlements. They were caught.

Q: *And you say the children are also used to plant explosive devices?*
Dallal: [They] actually go up to the border road and leave things. I remember I was there, this was a while back when this happened, but they would see a child put a bag there, a brown bag, and walk away, along the road. And that was a sort of a small explosive device, and [the IDF] would deactivate it . . . later. And what can you do, also, when you see the children do things that are suspicious, we can't shoot, we don't shoot at them. There's nothing we can do. . . . They see it from the outpost, they know children [are] coming forward doing things that look suspicious, digging, leaving things, and also . . .
Feingold: Yep. It's a big problem. And interestingly enough . . . the residents of Rafah organized themselves and they [put] ads in newspapers there [saying], "Stop using our houses, stop using our children. . . ."

Q: *I've seen a number of times homeowners yelling at people with guns, "Get away from my home." Obviously, as you must know, there are a lot of people who don't have tunnels, and who don't want their homes destroyed.*
Feingold: That's something that has to be very clear. Our war is not against the Palestinian people. . . .

Q: *But what would you tell someone, a homeowner who's losing his home, whose home is getting bulldozed, who doesn't have a tunnel. . . .*
Feingold: We don't bulldoze someone's house if we don't have good reason to do that. We only bulldoze a house when that house is used either for intelligence gathering, or shooting [at] our forces, or as a cover for people who are planting explosive devices, or used by the tunnel smugglers. . . . In this asymmetric battle . . . it's not like the old conventional wars where you fight a soldier or you use a tank attack. Here we're fighting a battle of silhouettes and shadows. These people are not wearing uniforms. They're wearing civilian clothes. They assimilate themselves inside a civilian population. They use the civilian population. When you dig a tunnel under a baby's cot, you know fully well that when Israeli [soldiers] will find that tunnel, they will destroy the house. They're actually holding the people of this house hostage. These people are afraid of them. . . .

Q: *So you think some of these homes are used against the homeowner's [wishes]?*
Feingold: I'm sure that they are, I'm sure that they are. And this is tragic. These people are paying a price. . . . They have nothing to do with terror. They wish to live peacefully. . . . But we can't allow this. . . . And people publish ads in the newspaper saying don't use us as hostages, or go away from our neighborhood, it means that they got the message, our message. . . .

Q: *Now you mentioned a number of things that a house could be destroyed for, but according to the Governorate of Rafah, more than seven hundred dwellings or homes have been destroyed along the border.*
Feingold: No . . . I think that's a big exaggeration. I'm not sure that we can share with you all the statistics that we have. I have to ask you, what is a house?
Dallal: Yeah, exactly.
Feingold: What is a house? Is it four walls . . . ?
Dallal: A shed?
Feingold: Where you keep your chickens and your goats? These are not houses in the Western norm . . . with a family. . . .
Dallal: Are they inhabited? That's the other question. If the gunmen have been using them for six months and no one lives there, is that inhabited? Is the house built? Is that a house? And the other thing, all these [things] that [Major Feingold] was explaining to you for the reason why—When a house is used to conduct terror [it can be destroyed]. . . .
Feingold: Under the Geneva Conventions. . . .
Dallal: [As far as any house listed by the Rafah governorate] it could be a shed, it could be a half-built structure, it could be an uninhabited structure. . . .
Feingold: A few tens, a few dozens . . .

Q: *So a few dozen [houses destroyed] from your standpoint?*
Feingold: I would say not even close to [the hundreds mentioned]. And again, these structures we do go after, we do that for a reason. We don't just go there, you know, because we have nothing better to do. It's because we located a house that's been used by the gunmen for the last two months or for the last two weeks. And it could have been used by the gunmen. . . .

Dallal: [Motions to a map and shows houses that are marked as being used by gunmen.] These are standing structures, and these are places in this particular area, the red is: grenades come from those houses, and pink: fire has been shot from those places—regularly. And these are the things that are standard.

Q: *You mentioned uninhabited homes. I'll just tell you from the . . . Palestinian perspective. They say they're fired at by the IDF—their home—just randomly. In other words, bullets just come in every now and then into their home. And after a while it just becomes too dangerous for them. They move out of the home, and they try to visit it during the day. And at this point it becomes abandoned or semi-abandoned. And then they feel they've sort of lost it. And I've even seen Palestinians who've boarded up their homes so that no one can use it to shoot from even though they're not actually living in it. Because they don't want their homes to be demolished.*

Feingold: Obviously not. The accusation that we shoot randomly is absolute nonsense. We understand that the battle that's being conducted against terror—inside these houses there are children and women . . . but when these houses are used to shoot anti-tank rockets at our soldiers—this is a war zone. . . . I don't know any soldier anywhere around the world who's been shot at and will not fire at the source of fire. . . . And as [Captain Dallal] said, once the house is used for combat activity it ceases to become a house. Under the Geneva Convention, it can be targeted. . . . We are only firing at people who are firing at us. . . . It's very sad that these people have to leave their houses. It's very sad. But why are they having to leave their houses? . . . [T]hese people who are in charge of the tunnels are very unhappy when we explode their tunnels. . . . It's an economic operation. Once we cut into their profits they become very agitated, very angry. They are determined to keep this area a combat zone. . . . As in every war, innocent people, bystanders, who have absolutely nothing to do with terror, are paying the price. . . .

Later, Captain Dallal told me that about 45 inhabited homes had been demolished by the IDF to date (May 2003) in Rafah.

Colonel "Pinky" (nickname given) commander of the IDF Southern Brigade of the Gaza Strip Division:

Q: *Let me ask you, do you have a figure of how many homes have been demolished? If you have a permit or permission to destroy every house, you must have a figure for it. Is that available? An IDF figure?*

Pinky: Approximately, I believe that we have destroyed between 300 to 400 houses, and if you check it you'll have the right number. . . . One of the most important things in guerrilla warfare is to learn and to prepare yourself for the next battle, and the next battle could be on the same day. But right now, you know, so many events. So you lose the time, you lose the day, you lose the events. If you ask me how many terrorists my brigade killed in the last year, I don't have the number anymore. In the beginning you count them, but if you go to the

books, there is the number of the terrorists that we killed, we got the number of structures we've demolished, we've got everything.

Q: *Let me ask you, from the Palestinian point of view, you've got people who say their homes are hit randomly by gunfire. What's your comment on something like that?*
Pinky: . . . It's a fighting zone.

Q: *They say there's no gunfire from their areas sometimes yet their houses are hit.*
Pinky: It's very easy to say something like this because you can never have the evidence to show that no one shoots from there. Because I can give you examples where they claim that we kill people and we hit people and when you are checking in the hospital, there is no one that arrived to the hospital. I can give you events that they claim that we killed someone and we don't have the name, we don't have nothing, even the place. It's not the place where my soldier was shooting. And I told you sometimes we make mistakes and shoot, but if I investigate every event—I don't want to say all the events—but most of the events when we hit places that we're not supposed to hit, it was by mistake. You don't see that soldiers have an aim to hit innocent citizens. You don't have something like this that you can show me and claim that there are people here who are bad people, bad soldiers. And I admit that sometimes when you are shooting here, there are stray bullets that hit in the wrong targets.

Q: *Now as far as the house demolitions are concerned, I've talked to people whose houses have been demolished who will say there's definitely no tunnel, that they argue with gunmen, they want gunmen to leave their area because they don't want their homes to be demolished, and their homes are demolished anyway.*
Pinky: I hear about this claim, and I know that sometimes maybe we demolished the wrong house. But in most of the cases, I told you, I cannot demolish a house without having a permit to do it. And what's happened, you know, it's like a process. . . . [Some Palestinians] are not going to admit and say that sometimes the gunmen get inside the house and shoot from the houses in the times they were there. And sometimes when people try to resist these kind of people, they shoot [at] them, in the leg. . . . And you know, you're American. Go and see what's happening in the world. I think that, if you check us, and look at our behavior, when people shoot anti-tank missiles at my soldiers, and you have here all the snipers, and you have here all the booby traps, and you will see how much damage we did, you will see that we are very very gentle, if you can say gently about something like this. But when there is [a chance] that my soldier is going [to be] hit by the terrorist, there is only one solution for me: it's to hit the targets and to destroy whatever is creating the situation to be bad [for] my soldier. You can come with me to visit the Cohen family now. I'm going to let them know how their son was killed. And one of the things that they ask—and we are talking about Khan Younis—why did you let the houses that our son was killed from . . . to be established—you didn't destroy it before our son was killed—from this house. So what are you going to say to this mother?

Q: *What do you say?*
Pinky: I say that I'm a soldier, a professional soldier, and I obey the rules. And

there are international rules, and it means if I want to destroy something or demolish something, it means I need to have a permit. And as long as we obey the rules, we are not going to destroy and kill people and demolish structures that do not have [a] connection with the terror operation. And unfortunately the house that [Cohen] was killed from—the sniper shot from this house—was demolished only after it happened. Because before [that], we did not have any evidence that [gave] us the option to demolish this house. . . . We brought the family to the post where he was killed . . . and they were very angry [that] we didn't destroy . . . the neighborhood.

Q: *You're talking about the Toufieh area?. . .*
Pinky: You understand where the post [is]?

Q: *Yes, I know exactly, I know Toufieh quite well.*
Pinky: You see I don't demolish houses there without reason. But if you take what's happened there in Toufieh, I'm sure other armies would destroy all the neighborhood through [to] the hospital.

Q: *All the way up to the hospital?*
Pinky: For sure. Go to Chechnya.

Q: *Oh yeah, well, the Russians.*
Pinky: So you see we are really gentle when we are picking the targets, and we try not to . . . hit the innocent people. I really feel bad about this. But when you take the families, the soldiers, that I [have] responsibility for, there is no option for me as a commander to let them be killed by this opportunity that I give to the other side. And the other side knows it. They know my rules of engagement, and they use it, and they use it in a cynical way, in the fact that they use the families, the innocent people as human shields, and it makes me sorry. . . .

Q: *Let me ask you one more question, and again about house demolitions along the border. It seems like this is gradually going north. Is there a point where this is going to stop or is it just going to keep creeping north, the demolitions, until you feel you're under no threat at all? When does that stop? Is there a limit on this?*
Pinky: When they will stop to shoot on my troops. This is the answer. If I will feel, and I will see, that there is no resistance, and there is no shooting, and there is no risk to my troops. . . . [T]he moment that I understand that they use [a house] to hit my soldiers, I'm there, I'm there. So the only thing that leads me is the confidence and the safety of my soldiers. We don't have [a plan] to destroy Rafah. It's not our aim. We want the smuggling from the tunnels [to] be stopped, we want the conducting of terror operations in this area [to] be stopped. . . .

Lieutenant Colonel "Avi" [full name not given], commander of the IDF Desert Patrol Battalion; Lieutenant "Erez" also present:

Q: *So are you responsible for the border area and Rafah?*
Avi: Yes . . .

Q: *So how would you characterize the responsibilities of your battalion?*
Avi: To guard the international border. . . . Nowadays this means that you have Egypt on one side, Palestinians on the other side, and in between them a corridor which is Israeli. And I'm responsible for this corridor. . . . Until the intifada began, our major activities were just kind of random patrols and random searches. It wasn't nearly as intense. We would find illegal cigars, once in a while drugs, but it was pretty light operations in terms of our patrolling this border, until the intifada began. . . . When the war began and they began to focus their activities, the Palestinians realized that their major source of contraband was being cut off, and they built hundreds of more tunnels, and the tunnels became designated—these are the tunnels for Hamas, these are the tunnels for Fatah, these are the tunnels for Islamic Jihad. . . . This is a war front. It's a central war zone. It has been and still is the front that has the most number of incidents of any place in Israel. . . .

Q: *I realize you can't tell me in specific terms how you know [where] there is a tunnel, but can you give me a general idea?*
Avi: I get intelligence information that there is a tunnel. I don't know exactly where. I begin to dig, not in a built-up area, like where there's homes, rather in the corridor, the Israeli corridor. I put dynamite inside the ground. This is the initial explosion. If I [hit near] a tunnel, the tunnel sucks all the [earth above] inside. And it . . . automatically [traces] a line, shows you on the surface of the earth the line that the tunnel is following.

Q: *Oh, I see, it just sort of collapses.*
Avi: It points to where they are going. It follows the line all the way to the house. . . .

Q: [Referring to a map of Rafah on the wall.] *Can I ask you, the Xs indicate what and the dots indicate what, the red dots?*
Avi: Red is [for] homes that people live in, and black [is for] empty homes. The numbers are mosques. . . . [We document with] recorded footage, every tunnel. Because they constantly claim that we're destroying homes, and we're killing people, innocent civilians, we put a photographer with us at all times. . . . We don't just randomly destroy homes. Every home that on the other side that they say we destroyed, every single home has a history. Either they fired on our troops from there—RPGs, anti-tank fire—or there was a tunnel.

Q: *So you have a record here of every home and its history, then?*
Avi: On the intelligence level of the division for pretty much every house we have the information.

Q: *The colonel described to me the permission process for destroying a home. Can you go over that with me, too?*
Avi: I get information saying that such-and-such tunnel was dug from such-and-such location. That's the first process. . . . Once I find a tunnel, I know what direction it's coming from, I then gather intelligence and information [on] the home, the home that built the tunnel, do people live in [it] or is it vacant? . . . There is a project plan, the project plan goes to [Colonel "Pinky," who] sends the

project plan above him to the commander of the area, and the commander of the area sends it all the way up to the legal advisor for the entire army. They either approve it or they don't approve it. There are times they turn me down because the exit of the tunnel is in an area where to destroy it we'd have to destroy many homes, it's in a very crowded area so they say instead of destroying the home, destroy the tunnel itself, the complete tunnel. . . . The best way to do it in the end is to go to the entrance, or the exit, however you want to look at it, the entrance, we'll say, from the Palestinian side, and destroy the entrance. It's not my decision in the end. I have to go through this whole process.

Q: *How often is it turned down?*
Avi: Very very frequently. . . . The problem is that they know we're going after the first row of homes so they simply keep moving the entrance of the tunnels deeper and deeper into the camps. Which means if we want to go to the opening, we have to [go] further and further . . . into the camps. And we will go everywhere. Everywhere we have to go, we will go.

Q: *In the final analysis, do you feel your efforts have been very effective with the tunnels, or do you feel like you keep finding more, which indicates that the Palestinians keep pushing it?*
Avi: We're very very successful. I go in with my Hummer and speak to the Palestinian population. . . . When I go in, I make an announcement on the loudspeakers telling everyone to get out of the area. After we deal with the problem, we distribute flyers . . . saying, "People, if there are no tunnels, we're not coming in here. If you build tunnels, we are coming in here. So don't build tunnels. Protect your homes." I speak to many people over there. . . . I know them, I speak to them.

Q: *When you say you speak to them, do you actually get out of your vehicle . . . ?*
Avi: I move in my Hummer. . . . I'm protected by the Hummer. I see people, I call them over to me, and I speak to them.

Q: *And basically you tell them no tunnels, no problem?*
Avi: I speak to them about the situation, about everything. I explain to them why this is happening. Their greatest concern is to explain to me that they're not the ones involved. They're like apologetic almost. They just can't control it, they say. . . . We're in a defensive situation, not an offensive situation. They who bring us inside, cause us to fight, are the terrorist units. That's why we enter. All the times that we go in are because of the terrorist units or because of the tunnels. . . .

Q: *Why do you think . . . homes [are] abandoned then? Because they were once inhabited.*
Avi: I showed you the map. You asked me about the Xs, the black and red. I work here every day, 24 hours a day. . . . I know where they live and where they don't live, who lives there. I know the father of the home, his children.

Q: *Just with your intelligence?*
Avi: From my eyes, because I'm here constantly. They built their homes before the war. People were living in them. When the war started, people fled their

homes. Not because we came into the homes, but because the other side started using their homes for military operations. They didn't want to get killed. So that's why they left their homes.

Q: *I have to put this to you. I've spoken to Palestinians. They say they leave their homes because bullets come into their homes from the Israeli side. They say that after a while it's just too dangerous.*
Avi: I understand everything you're saying, and I agree that bullets come in. But bullets come in because they're firing at us from those homes. Either from the homes or from the area of the homes. When we know it's a populated house, we do our utmost to not fire into a populated house. And in the end of the day, the owner of the house weighs up his options. If he's in an area where there's fighting around, whether it's from the Israeli side or the Palestinian side, if it's too dangerous . . . there, he leaves.

Q: *When you say "area of the house," what do you mean?*
Erez: [Showing a photo of homes.] An area of a home, we mean by that, if we're talking about 575, for example [the home is numbered], the area is from this wall or from this bush or from the windows.

Q: *In other words the* immediate *area of the home, that's what I want to get at, the yard of the home, from behind the home.*
Erez: Yeah, of course . . .

Q: *You know, those are pretty much my questions, unless you think there's something you should tell me.*
Avi: I'll tell you just one thing. I'm a father of two girls, I have a family, and I have a home. And I know what it is to have a home. Every place I go into I think ten times, one hundred times, should I go inside. But in every place, if there is danger to my soldiers, or if there's a dangerous situation, whether they're bringing in arms and weapons, I'll go in and take care of the situation. It's too bad that the other side, I'm talking about the population of the other side, it's too bad they don't understand after I've been here for two years, I don't understand after two years being here how the other side has not succeeded to kick out the minority that exists there that causes all the suffering.

APPENDIX 3

THE DEMOLITION OF ASHRAF'S HOME

Ashraf's house was finally and completely demolished by the Israeli army on May 17, 2003, after I had finished researching this book.

As it happened, I was back in Rafah at the time on assignment for the *New York Times Magazine*, writing about the smuggling tunnels connecting Palestinian to Egyptian Rafah. Abed and I were sitting with a representative of the governorate of Rafah going over the subject of home demolitions when Ashraf called, telling us to get down to the Block J area because the Israelis were again demolishing homes.

On our way there we ran into Ashraf's brother, who told us, "They demolished the whole house." Here is my truncated journal entry about the incident:

> He's all smiles, all but giggly. You want to see? We turn down the sandy path, we can see the Zorob [tower], we've been hearing gunshots, we peer around a building; again, it's hard to get your bearings when you're looking at a landscape absent of something, and in this case what is absent is Ashraf's house. All I can see is dirt piled up. The brother explains that the bulldozers pushed sand and debris up on the house from two sides and that collapsed the structure. . . . I ask Ashraf's brother how he feels about what's happened. He doesn't seem particularly upset. "Now we are sure," he says. "Before it was in-between..."
>
> We got to Ashraf's home. His father is vaguely smiling. And then Ashraf steps out. . . . Ashraf has draped his arm over Abed. . . . "Life is fucking us," says Ashraf. "It's like shit."

Ashraf's dad, Talil, told me, "Yes, now it's finished. Now I should think about starting something new." Surveying the landscape, reduced to debris and sand, he said, "It was the nicest area in Rafah. Couples that were engaged used to come here to walk. Between day and night it became a ruin. . . . This is a disaster. This is a new migration."

A few days later, I spoke to the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel "Avi" (quoted at length in Appendix 2), who was responsible for the operation that destroyed Ashraf's house. My IDF minder, Captain Doron, was also present.

> **Q:** *Three days ago I was in Rafah, and I saw . . . homes demolished. . . . It was west of Block J.*
>
> [We refer to the maps to determine the area in concern. Avi shows images of a bulldozer with damage to its bullet-proof glass.]
>
> . . .

Avi: If you look from those homes to the Egyptian side you'll see a cement wall of the Israelis blocking your view. There's an opening there. There's an opening between that cement, which is the area [from which] we enter [to conduct operations in Rafah]. This is a bullet-proof tractor. He entered into that area to close that opening. Two days before this, there were people who exited through that area, terrorists, who were going to leave the Gazan side, go into Egypt, go all the way down south and [from there back into Israel]. Because of that I wanted to close the opening. . . . The bulldozer entered, and look at the results: There are a huge number of direct bullet hits on the vehicle.

Q: *Was this at night?*
Avi: In the day. At night we had the people going into Egypt from the Gazan side, and the next day we went to close the [opening]. . . .

Q: *I just want to be sure we're talking about the same thing. This happened, I think it was Saturday, when the homes were demolished.*
Avi: Yes. These were not homes that people lived in. These were deserted homes that people were firing on our troops from. And from these homes they constantly fired at us. So from three different directions they hit the vehicle, from every side window and from the front.

Q: *So gunmen were confirmed firing from those homes?*
Doron: Yeah, that's it.
Avi: We are positive those homes were deserted.

[Later, the subject of the bulldozing of Ashraf's and other homes came up again.]

Avi: On Shabbat, the incident you spoke about that Saturday, there were terrorists involved in this action. They were firing from the homes. You call this a home, we call this a military position. It's an empty home, a vacant home that no family is living in. There's nothing inside the house that would make it a home. It's not connected to water or electricity. . . . It's a military position [that] fires at us.

APPENDIX 4

PALESTINIAN FIGURES FOR HOMES DEMOLISHED

The day after Ashraf's home was destroyed, I accompanied the Palestinian officials sent to assess and document the extent of the damage wrought by the Israeli bulldozers. Besides Ashraf's, three other houses were confirmed demolished and two were reportedly demolished and needed to be checked on.

While we were doing our inspection, a man stepped up to tell the officials that his home had been destroyed, too. "There were four rooms," he insisted. "You don't believe me?" "It's not a matter of believing you or not," one of the local government's officials, an engineer, replied. "Come to the governorate. Bring the documents about your house, the plans."

The assessments of the engineer and representatives of Rafah's Distribution Center and the Ministry of Housing were important in determining who would get compensated for what. The governorate was responsible for compensating non-refugee households; UNRWA was responsible for compensating refugees. There was coordination between the two organizations, but their figures for homes demolished were slightly different due to different counting methods.

UNRWA counted each building as one house, no matter how many housing units it contained. The governorate counted all housing units as individual houses. For example, a demolished multi-story building that contained three separate apartments would be counted by UNRWA as one house but by the governorate as three.

UNRWA (with the lower figures) counted 459 refugee and 94 non-refugee homes completely demolished in Rafah from September 2000, the start of the Second Intifada, until May 2003, when I last visited. A further 72 houses were considered partially destroyed and unsafe. The total of homes that had been damaged but could be repaired was 883.

In the same period, UNRWA had built 97 replacement homes.

According to UNRWA, in Rafah, up to April 2003, 4,781 people from 874 families had their homes completely demolished.

When I mentioned to Isa Qarra, public information officer for the Gaza Field Office of UNRWA, who gave me the above figures, that an IDF spokesman claimed that only about 45 inhabited houses in Rafah had been destroyed, he said, "I have no comment. These are the numbers we have."

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For the big-picture sweep of events—political, diplomatic, and military—leading up to and beyond the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis I relied on two books, Kennett Love's *Suez: The Twice-Fought War* (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969) and Donald Neff's *Warriors at Suez* (The Linden Press/Simon & Schuster, 1981). By placing the Gaza raid of February 28, 1955, in their respective first chapters, both authors helped me understand its centrality in the context of what happened in Khan Younis and Rafah in November 1956.

For the Israeli point of view, I turned to Tom Segev's *1949: The First Israelis* (Owl Books/Henry Holt and Company, 1998) and Benny Morris's *Israel's Border Wars: 1949–1956* (Oxford University Press, 1993). Despite his right-wing politics and slant, Morris is considered an objective historian and a careful examiner of archival records. I relied on his book in particular for insight into Israeli responses to border incidents and the fedayeen campaigns. I quote from his figures for Israeli and "infiltrator" casualties. Morris was gracious enough to meet me in Jerusalem when I needed tips on approaching the Israeli historical record.

My other two important Israeli sources were Mordechai Bar-On's *The Gates of Gaza* (St. Martin's Press, 1994) and Moshe Dayan's *Diary of the Sinai Campaign* (Schocken Books, 1967). Mordechai Bar-On was personally very helpful to me, and my interview with him figures prominently in this book.

For the U.N. perspective on the events of the time, I relied on Lieutenant General E. L. M. Burns's *Between Arab and Israeli* (George G. Harrap & Co, 1962). Burns was the chief of staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and later the commander of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF).

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A number of Israelis—former military men, families of deceased military men, and historians—were contacted to see if more light could be shed on the events in Khan Younis and Rafah in 1956. Both Meron Rapoport, my researcher, and I spoke to Mordechai Bar-On and to Lieutenant Colonel Meir Pa'il, former commander of the 51st Battalion of the Golani Brigade, which was active in the Rafah area. In addition,

Meron spoke to Zvi Al-Peleg, a former governor of the northern Gaza Strip; the family of the late Matti Peled, military commander of the Gaza Strip; and the family of Lieutenant Colonel Haim Gaon. I consulted historians Benny Morris, Ilan Pappe, and Uri Milstein, among others. Meron talked to Uri Avnery, ex–chief editor of the weekly *Ha'olam Hazeh*, former Knesset member, writer, and historian, and Professor Avishai Margalit, whose comments on Noam Chomsky's *The Fateful Triangle* are noted in Appendix 1.

A NOTE ON NAMES, PORTRAITS, AND INTERVIEWS

Most of the people I interviewed for this book agreed to give their full names. Some wished to remain anonymous. Others gave partial names, and in those cases I have stuck to whatever portion they preferred to use.

For the portraits, I worked from photographs for most of the interviewees. In the cases of people who did not wish to be identified, I generally drew quick sketches to approximate the look of the individual without rendering him or her identifiable. Where a name is indicated but there is no portrait at all, the likely explanation is that my camera malfunctioned.

Regarding language, I have tried to be faithful to the words people used when they were interviewed, even though it meant reproducing choppy word choices. Where a reader might have been left confused, I have smoothed the language somewhat, though as little as necessary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Chris Hedges has been a close friend since we first met in Bosnia. Our trip to Gaza together in 2001 was my first step on the road that led to this book. His moral conviction has always been an inspiration to me. I would also like to thank Azmi, our fixer on that occasion.

Mark Dennis and Christine Hauser very generously offered me places to stay and introduced me to many interesting people when I was transiting through Jerusalem.

This book could not have been written without the help of Toufic Haddad and Abed Elassouli. Toufic paved my way. He accompanied me to Gaza on my exploratory visit for this book and introduced me around. Through Toufic I met Abed, and Abed agreed to become my translator and guide. Abed and I were barely out of each other's sight during my later two-month sojourn in Khan Younis and Rafah. I consider his contributions invaluable. Years after I had visited Gaza he still answered questions and checked spellings for me. Like me, he probably thought the process would never end.

Hani and Khaled, two characters in the book, were also very helpful in introducing me to their communities in Rafah and Khan Younis.

As I cannot speak Hebrew, I had the help of two Israeli researchers, Oshri Netev and especially Meron Rapoport, in digging into Israeli archives. Meron also contacted a number of Israelis who figured significantly in the 1956 story, or, if deceased, their families.

All the good people at the U.N. Archives in New York and at UNRWA headquarters in Gaza City were enormously helpful.

Riva Hocherman, my friend and editor at Metropolitan Books, did double duty, helping me cut down my manuscript to a manageable length and translating numerous Hebrew-language articles and documents. Her attention to detail and enormous efforts have made this book much better.

Nicole Aragi, my friend and agent, kept my spirits up during my mid–comic book crisis and somehow kept my income flowing when I wasn't sure I would reach the finish line without putting my things on eBay.

I am indebted to many other people, too numerous to mention: journalists and U.N. people I met and whose company I enjoyed in Jerusalem; NGO personnel here and there, especially Robyn Long; various Palestinians and Israelis who invited me into their homes; numerous Gazans, among the most hospitable people I have ever met; my patient friends back in the States, where I spent years writing and drawing this book; my wonderful parents, my sister Maryanne, as well as Keith and Collin; and my lovely girlfriend, Amalie, who teaches me every day that there is more to life than bad news and awful history.