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Between Tzippori and Saffuriya: The Double Homicide of the Feder Couple and the Policing of Minorities in the State of Israel (1953)

Yoni Shapira

This article examines the complex relationship between Jewish settlers and Arab refugees during Israel's formative years through a 1953 double homicide investigation in the Lower Galilee village of Tzippori. Using a local historical research approach focused on a specific geographical and cultural space, the study reveals how this crime and its investigation illuminate broader social and cultural processes in early Israel, adding a crucial historiographic layer to our understanding of the period.

Tzippori held profound symbolic significance for both communities. For Arabs, it represented Palestinian national aspirations, while for Jews, it symbolized Jewish settlement dating back to the Mishnaic period. After the IDF's conquest of the Galilee in July 1948, the Arab village of Saffuriyya was destroyed, with its residents fleeing to Lebanon, Syria, or nearby villages. The Jewish village of Tzippori was established on Saffuriyya's ruins in 1950. Former Arab residents continued to assert their claims to the area through both legal appeals and illegal activities, including infiltration and crime.

The article centers on a case that crystallizes these tensions: the Passover eve 1953 murders of Marchel and Helena Feder, Romanian immigrants who had settled in Tzippori in August 1950. The couple lived quietly—he running the village grocery store, she maintaining their home—until their deaths led investigators and villagers to suspect Saffuriyya refugees as the perpetrators immediately.

The investigation reveals the complex power dynamics between three groups: Saffuriyya's Arab refugees, Tzippori's Jewish residents, and the Israeli police, who were simultaneously working to solve the crime, establish their authority, and build public trust. The article uncovers the political, social, and cultural patterns that characterized this pivotal period and region through analysis of evidence and testimonies.

Citizens in Uniform: The Volunteer Unit for the Defense of the Border Settlements in the War of Attrition, Between Voluntarism and Militarism

Yosef Ohayon

In July 1969, during the War of Attrition, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) established “The Frontier Defenders” (in Hebrew, *Loḥmei HaMedina LeSfar*, abbreviated as LAMAS). Founded and commanded by Major General (Res.) Eliyahu Ben-Hur, the unit comprised volunteers aged 50-75, primarily veterans of the British Army, pre-state underground organizations, and the IDF.

Operating under the Northern Command’s Border Police, LAMAS members were deployed to settlements along the Lebanese border. They performed routine security tasks: guarding settlements, preparing shelters, repairing fences, and fortifying structures. Despite their service, the unit was disbanded in December 1969, merely six months after its formation.

Drawing on previously undisclosed archival documents and other sources, this article presents the first examination of LAMAS’s establishment and operations. It investigates the unit’s supporters and opponents, analyzes the challenges it faced during development, and assesses the volunteers’ contributions to border settlement defense.

The article argues that LAMAS’s dissolution stemmed not primarily from organizational challenges but from the declining status of volunteerism in Israeli society—a trend that began after the 1948 War of Independence and reached its apex following the Six-Day War. Beyond documenting this unique unit’s history, this study enriches our understanding of Israeli civil society mobilization during wartime.

“A Fresh Experiment”: The Lives, Deaths, and Commemoration of Policewomen in Israel

Nomi Levenkron and Inbal Wilamovski

This article examines the commemoration of Israeli policewomen who fell in the line of duty, analyzing their narrative, visual, and ceremonial representations across three periods: the establishment phase of women in the Israeli police force (1948-1994), their integration into combat roles, particularly in the Border Police (1995-2022), and their combat participation during the first day of the “Iron Swords” war (October 7, 2023).

The analysis builds on historian George Mosse’s concept of “The Myth of the War Experience,” which emerged during the age of nationalism to glorify battlefield death and sanctify warriors’ sacrifice for the homeland through public commemoration. While this myth primarily celebrated soldiers, it marginalized police officers despite their parallel willingness to sacrifice for the greater good.

Zionism incorporated this myth from its inception, developing it through ongoing dialogues between culture and society, periphery and center, and past and present. These tensions manifest in policewomen’s dual marginalization—both gender-based and organizational—within this framework.

Cultural representations offer a vital analytical lens for examining Israel’s evolving, polarized society. By tracing these representations from the police force’s establishment to present day, this study reveals key societal transformations: the shift from collectivism to individualism, the transition from state-led to family-and-friend-driven commemoration, and the evolution from physical memorials to distributed cultural and digital representations.

These changes have fundamentally reshaped commemoration practices, illuminating how cultural and societal transformations have redefined the memory of fallen policewomen.