7 Photography and Protest in Israel/ Palestine: The Activestills Online Archive

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Abstract

This chapter will explore two key ways that photography plays a role within the aesthetics of protest. This will be done through a discussion of a small number of photographs of political demonstrations selected from the online archive of the Israel/Palestine-based photographic collective Activestills. The photographs discussed in the first section of the chapter present evidence of people carrying photographic images within demonstrations. While the second section deals with examples of the how photography has been used to document the immediate scene of protest for distant spectators. After these discussions of particular examples from the archive, the chapter concludes with a more speculative discussion of the Activestills archive itself.

Keywords: Visual activism, online archive, protest, photography, Palestine, Israel

Introduction

This chapter explores two key ways that photography plays a role within the aesthetics of protest. This will be done through a discussion of a small number of photographs of political demonstrations selected from the online archive of the Israel/Palestine-based photographic collective Activestills.¹

¹ The term 'Israel/Palestine' is used to designate the unresolved political geographical construct that was formerly called Mandate Palestine, but is now constituted by the state of Israel within its 1949 borders and the occupied and besieged territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The photographs discussed in the first section of the chapter present evidence of people carrying photographic images within demonstrations. While the second section deals with examples of the how photography has been used to document the immediate scene of protest for distant spectators.² After these discussions of particular examples from the archive, the chapter concludes with a more speculative discussion of the Activestills archive itself.

For the purposes of the chapter, the aesthetics of protest is understood to encompass those aspects of protest that relate strongly to the senses, especially vision. This encompasses the ways that protesting bodies assemble within space, the ways they interact and move, how they dress, and the performances they enact. This *immediate* aesthetics of protest also entails the things that protestors carry: banners, placards, three-dimensional props, and images, including photographs, hence the discussion in the chapter of participants in demonstrations holding and showing photographs. But the aesthetics of protest is also wrapped up with the ways that protest is *mediated*. The aesthetics of protest is consequently understood to be both a matter of how protest appears to co-present observers and how the appearances of protest can be viewed through technically produced images. Jim Aulich defines this relationship between the immediate and mediated aspects of the aesthetics of protest as being one between ‘the aesthetic form of the protest in the present’ and ‘the aesthetic of the trace of the demonstrations in analogue and digital media’. For him, ‘[t]he “phenomenon” and its “image” are in an entangled relationship’ (Aulich, this volume).

In the case of photography, the mediation of protest can occur through the work of photographers, who define themselves as activists producing images for publication and distribution *within* social movements (Memou 2013: 70–76, 79, 81). But these images are often also intended for wider distribution. The Civil Rights movement in the United States, for example, ‘cultivated teams of professional “movement photographers”, whose work was intended to make up for the perceived shortcomings of mainstream photojournalism (Berger 2010: 110). While the South African photographic collective Afrapix worked ‘in concert with the liberation movement’ (Cedric Nunn, quoted in Newbury 2009: 241) to supply photographs of the struggle against Apartheid to the international press. The photographic mediation of protest also occurs through the work of ostensibly ‘non-political’ photojournalists, when they document photogenic protest events. For example, the Southern Christian

2 The photographs discussed in the chapter were selected either by using place names to search within the archive, or in the case of some photographs of people carrying photographs during demonstrations, by searching within the archive using the terms ‘photograph’.

Leadership Conference sought to provoke a violent official response to their protests in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963 on the correct assumption that this violence would be reported through mainstream photojournalistic images in the North American and international press (Berger 2010; Johnson 2007; McAdam 2000). Such press photographs, although produced for commercial purposes, can still serve the needs of protestors to gain publicity for their struggle and can therefore be understood as visual extensions of the immediate aspects of the aesthetics of protest.

These uses of photography relate to the political question of visibility, which is at the heart of the aesthetics of protest. As Andrea Brighenti observes, 'Visibility lies at the intersection of the domains of aesthetics (relations of *perception*) and politics (relations of *power*)' (Brighenti 2007: 324), meaning that politics is largely a struggle over visibility: over what and who can be seen, and in what ways. This is why Jacques Rancière states that 'politics is a question of aesthetics, a matter of appearances' (1999: 74). This is because, in his terms, the established political order is 'an order of the visible' that works to make sure particular things can be seen and others not (Rancière 1999: 29). Protest challenges this order by bringing people and their plights into the field of vision, entailing 'the introduction of a visible into the field of experience, which then modifies the regime of the visible' (Rancière 1999: 99). As pointed out above, the visibility of protest is both a matter of direct visual experience and of images. Though it is the latter that seems to be a more important consideration when it comes to relationships between photography and the aesthetics of protest. Visibility through the media, including photography, has been a crucial political stake for protestors at least since the mid-twentieth century (Cottle 2008; Faulkner 2013).

But if we are to understand the place of photography within the aesthetics of protest, it is necessary to be sensitive to the specificity of the aesthetics of photography itself, defined by its two-dimensionality, its pictorial framing of visible reality and the way that it captures a moment in time (Shore 2010; Price 1994). It is also necessary to understand what photography does, both technically and in terms of what people think it can do. Thought about in relation to both the use of photographs within demonstrations and its use as a means of visually mediating protest, its principle function is the technical capture and transportation of appearances across time and space (Berger and Mohr 1982: 92). After all, photographs are two-dimensional artefacts that carry the framed appearances of the things they depict and as such can be disseminated through different technical means.

By framing and freezing the visible world, photographs also ascribe significance to what they depict. Their underlying message is that what they show is important to see. This ascription of significance to an appearance through photography is the result of the agency of the photographer. Hence, John Berger's observation that the simplest message of a photograph is 'I have decided that seeing this is worth recording' (Berger 2010: 179). This significance is also affirmed by the agency of others, who use photographs they have not necessarily taken, for example, by showing them in demonstrations or by uploading them to social media platforms. But photographs also have a kind of agency of their own defined by their capacity to transport appearances and bring things into visibility in contexts, where they would not otherwise be seen. Photographers and other human agents utilize this capacity to produce an aesthetics of protest that involves showing the appearances of events that usually occur in the past and elsewhere.

This understanding of photography as a technology that deals in the capture and transportation of appearances does not involve an assumption that photographs have a 'truthful' relationship to what they show. Rather, veracity is understood as a key element of the socially embedded 'idea' of photography (Gitelman 2006: 7-8; Gitelman 2014: 84). Veracity is what we have made photography mean, not its essential condition. What this means, in general terms, is that the primary function of photographs within the aesthetics of protest is as documents that are taken to attest to the realities they depict. These photographs have other affective qualities and symbolic functions, but these aspects of photography are enmeshed with or built upon their function as documents. Consequently, the suggestion is that photography generally contributes to the 'political voice' of protest (see the introduction to this volume) on the basis of its documentary function.

Activestills mobilize the idea of photography as a veracious medium that has the power to show that which is general unseen, when they state: 'The collective believes in the power of images to shape public attitudes and raise awareness on issues that are generally absent from public discourse or presented in a misleading way by the media' (Activestills 2015). This general concern with the potential of photography to bring issues into political visibility prompted the foundation of Activestills in 2005 – by the Israeli photographers Oren Ziv, Keren Manor, and Yotam Ronen, and the Argentinian photographer Eduardo Sauteras – in response to the popular struggle that developed that year in the Palestinian village of Bil'in in opposition to the construction of a section of the West Bank Barrier on village land. The aim of the collective was to contribute to this struggle through their presence at demonstrations and through the production and dissemination of photographs.

Since 2005, Activestills has expanded and diversified its membership (to include Palestinian photographers) and responded to a wide range of ongoing political struggles. Their practices have involved the photographic documentation of demonstrations and other forms of resistance, and the distribution of these photographs through street exhibitions as well as through political blogs, social media and their own website. The Activestills archive is an aspect of these distributive practices and crucial to their concerns to provide visibility for political struggles against state violence and repression. The members of the collective freely contribute their photographic images to the archive, while also retaining individual rights to these images. This means that the archive exists in a state of relative independence from the practices of the individual photographers who have made it possible. As such, the archive is a collection of photographic documents of particular struggles and at the same time a complex aesthetic form in itself that is part of a wider set of aesthetics practices relating to dissent within Israel/Palestine.

Photographs Carried in Demonstrations

Participants in political demonstrations carrying and showing photographic images is not a new phenomenon. In September 1963 members of the Congress of Racial Equality in the United States carried a large photograph during a demonstration in Washington, DC, against the Ku Klux Klan bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama that same month. This photograph showed the wreckage outside the church after the bombing, which killed four young black girls. The organization Women Strike for Peace used posters bearing photographs of injured children during a demonstration against the Vietnam War at the Pentagon in 1967. While in 1970, the Art Workers Coalition produced a poster for use in anti-Vietnam demonstrations that showed a colour photograph of the Mai Lai massacre (Lippard 1990: 27-28). In all of these instances, photographs were used as documents that exemplified the violence that demonstrators opposed. This use of photographs in demonstrations emphasizes what Lisa Gitelman calls the 'know-show function' of documentary forms (Gitelman 2014: 1-4) through the performative showing of the images as evidence. This showing of the photographs combines a claim to truth with a moral imperative. The demonstrators seek to use the photographs as a means of showing the reality of violence committed elsewhere enabling a form of knowing that underpins the assertion that such situations should come to an end. Again,

photographic evidence is used as a kind of political 'speech' or 'voice' (see the introduction to this volume).

Other photographic images carried during political demonstrations, such as the portraits of 'disappeared' loved ones used by Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina or by activists calling for an inquiry into 'Bloody Sunday' in Northern Ireland (Herron and Lynch 2006), have served a largely mnemonic function. This is also the case with an image in the Activestills archive, which depicts the carrying of a large framed portrait of Mustafa Tamimi, who was mortally wounded by an Israeli soldier during a demonstration in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh in January 2012. The majority of the examples from the Activestills archive to be discussed in this section involve the use of photographs during demonstrations for evidential purposes rather than for the purpose of remembrance.³ However, as will be seen, there are some examples that involve the use of photographs for the combined purposes of showing evidence and engaging in a kind of remembrance.

A number of photographs in the archive show close-ups of Israelis in Tel Aviv in July 2006 protesting against the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon during the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah that occurred in July and August that year. These demonstrators hold images of injured Lebanese children or of Lebanese families mourning dead relatives. This showing of images of the injured or the dead is very similar to the use of photographs in opposition to the Vietnam War. In both cases, the demonstrators show photographic images in opposition to violence deployed by their own state against distant *others*. The photographs are used to bridge the spatial distance between Tel Aviv and Lebanon, which also involves the experiential distance between a space of peace and a space of conflict. Thought about in these terms, the photographs function as a means of bringing something into visibility in space where such things are generally not seen. Again, the showing of these photographs in the Tel Aviv demonstration mobilizes photography's know-show function, which is based on its association with veracity and the moral force that derives from its claim to truth. On top of this, the demonstrators also exploit the affective power of photographic images of violence. Something especially powerful, when it comes to images of the effects of violence on children. In doing this the demonstrators mobilize photography to enhance their claim to political visibility as Israelis

3 Meir Wigoder has also discussed photographs from the Activestills archive that show demonstrators holding and showing photographs in terms of the way that the images become 'performative' in the immediate context of the demonstrations and become the focal points for 'communities of touch' (Wigoder 2016).

who oppose their government's violent policy towards Lebanon. Here the aesthetics of protest involves the combination of a group of people assembled in public space with the appearances of the situations depicted in the images they hold.

Somewhat different are photographs in the archive that relate to the 'unrecognized' Bedouin village of Al Arakib in the Negev Desert north of Beersheba. Israeli authorities destroyed the village in July 2010, in the first of what became a protracted series of official demolitions in response to subsequent attempts by the villagers to rebuild their homes. Members of Activestills photographed the village prior to and during the demolition in July 2010. Oren Ziv in particular developed a working relationship with the villagers.⁴ He printed out copies of the photographs he took of the initial destruction of a number of homes in Al Arakib prior to July 2010 and gave these to the villagers, who used them in a demonstration in Tel Aviv in May 2010 against the proposed destruction of the entire village. Ziv also provided the villagers with further photographic prints of the July demolition, which were displayed in a protest tent established on the site of the former village a number of days after the demolition and also used in subsequent demonstrations. Photographs by Ziv and Yotam Ronen held in the archive depict the carrying of Ziv's photos of the initial destruction of homes in Al Arakib during the May 2010 demonstration in Tel Aviv.

One photograph in particular shows two Bedouin men, one on the left with a megaphone and the other holding an image of the rubble of a destroyed home. In this example, the showing of the photograph appears to function both as a documentary means of attesting to the demolition of a building in the recent past and as an image that is indicative of something that will happen again if the proposed destruction of the whole village is not stopped. Although the showing of the photograph involves the spatial transportation of an appearance from the Negev to Tel Aviv, the photograph is predominantly used in relation to a temporal axis that relates it both to the past and the potential future.

Different again was the use of Ziv's photographs of the destruction of Al Arakib during demonstrations on the former village site. These demonstrations occurred on 30 July, a number of days after the demolition and later on 9 August 2010. There was also a further demonstration that involved the use of the photographs on the first anniversary of the demolition in

4 Information about Oren Ziv's activities in Al Arakib was derived from an interview with the photographer conducted by the author in Tel Aviv, 17 August 2015.

2011. The carrying of these photographic images of the destruction of Al Arakib during demonstrations at the site of the former village foregrounded the temporal rather than the spatial transportation of appearances. The images that the demonstrators hold depict the same location, where they are demonstrating. Photographs in the archive of the demonstration on 30 July 2010 show villagers holding images of bulldozers demolishing houses and of the police arresting members of the village community. Photographs of the demonstration on 9 August 2010 similarly show the villagers holding images of bulldozers flattening parts of the village and also the ruins of former habitations after their destruction. By holding these pictures during demonstrations at the site of the demolished village, the past is brought into dialogue with the present. The images that the villagers carry in the demonstrations are documents of an event that happened in the past, but they are not just that. Through their use during the demonstrations, they become tokens of loss. They represent the homes and communal existence that have been destroyed.

However, this is not a total loss. The village and its way of life could be rebuilt, as the villagers began to do after the first and each subsequent demolition. Thought about in these terms, the photographic images carried in the demonstrations functioned as both documents of actual events and also as tokens or icons of what was at stake in the villagers' political struggle. A struggle that would decide between two very different trajectories: on the one hand, destruction, displacement, and loss and, on the other, the reconstruction of the village and its communal life. Although the photographic images carried in the demonstrations depicted the destruction of the village by the state, they also showed what had been lost at the very moment it was being destroyed. In the absence of other photographic representations of former village life, it seems that the residents of Al Arakib had to use the Activestills images to both protest against the actions of the state and to stand-in for what they wanted to regain.

In the examples discussed in this section, protestors held printed photographic images with the aim of showing them to co-present spectators. However, it is also reasonable to suggest that the performance of the act of showing these images was itself intended to be photographed. Consequently, the showing of photographs within demonstrations was itself intended to produce further aesthetics in the form of images of the showing of these images. The use of photographs in the *immediate* context of the demonstration was meant to be *mediated*, so that the appearance of the performance of showing visual evidence could itself be transported to distant others.

Photographic Amplifications of Protest

The Activestills photographs of the carrying of photographic images within demonstrations, discussed in the preceding section, also attests to the more general use of photography as a means of documenting protest events. The following section will focus on this larger function of photography as a means of mediating and amplifying protest. Amplification is understood here to refer to ways that protest is given greater 'reach' (Bailo and Vronicu 2017: 1663) and visibility through mediation. As suggested in the introduction, the visual mediation of protest is a significant aspect of the aesthetics of protest, when it comes to questions of political visibility (see also the introduction to this volume). The photographic amplification of protest is based on both the capacity of photography to transport appearances and the processes through which photographic images are themselves transported.

In general terms, photographic amplification occurs when people with cameras, present at the scene of protest, take photographs of other people marching, carrying objects or engaging in direct action. As noted, this is the case when protestors carrying and showing photographic images are themselves photographed performing such actions. These photographs can then be distributed in different ways and potentially viewed by spectators at varied degrees of spatial and temporal distance from the original protest situation. Amplification can also involve the further distribution and reuse of images by spectators themselves or lead to other responses such as the performance of further acts of protest. These points affirm Judith Butler's observation that visual mediation involves the extension of 'the scene or the space' of political protest (Butler 2012: 129). Yet, the visual extension of the scene of protest through photography is paradoxical, involving the creation of a sense of visual access for the spectator to an event that is not directly visible to them, while at the same time emphasizing the separation that exists between the original event and the image that the spectator actually views (Faulkner 2016b). As Jean-Luc Nancy observes, an image presents 'a world that we enter while remaining before it' (Nancy 2005: 5). The aesthetics of the photographic mediation of protest consequently involves tensions between proximity and distance, and between access and separation, but nevertheless enables the visual amplification and visibility of protest beyond the immediate vicinity and duration of a protest event.

The current domination of photojournalism by digital technologies enables the rapid communication of photographic images. Professional photojournalists can send images from the field to picture agencies and news wires almost instantaneously. These organizations can then make

these images quickly available to clients for rapid publication online or in print. But the current period is also marked by the use of camera-phones and cheap DSLR cameras by direct participants in protest events. These 'amateur' or 'citizen' photographers can upload their images to social media platforms and other websites while demonstrations are still in progress. Other users can then view and re-circulate, or re-upload these images. What this suggests is a contemporary situation in which photographs of protest can be distributed at different temporal rates – immediately, or with differing amounts of delay – but in which these images are generally distributed much more rapidly than in the past. This enables photographic images to function in more direct and embedded and concurrent ways as part of the sensible experience of protest.

The Activestills archive is full of images of the kind under discussion here. As noted in the introduction, the collective was initially formed in 2005 in response to the protests in the Palestinian village of Bil'in against the West Bank Barrier. The members of the collective have continued to photograph the protests in Bil'in up to the present. Their photographs have been used to amplify these protests in different ways. Village activists used the photographs of the struggle on their no longer active website (bilin-village.org). Such photographs were also used on left-wing websites and blogs such as *Digital Intifada* and *+972 Blog* as well as on Activestills' own social media accounts. The collective also organized exhibitions of their photographs of the struggle in Bil'in. Their first collective action involved the organization of a street exhibition of a grid of sixteen A3 paper prints of photographs of the demonstrations in Bil'in presented in different locations in Tel Aviv in early 2006 (Faulkner 2016a). This exhibition can be understood straightforwardly to involve the transportation of appearances from Bil'in across the Green Line (the 1949 ceasefire line) to the very different context of Tel Aviv. Activestills viewed the display of images on the street as an important way of bringing generally unseen aspects of the occupation into the Israeli public's field of vision.

Other exhibitions were organized in Bil'in itself as part of demonstrations to mark the second and tenth anniversary of the beginning of the village's struggle against the barrier. These exhibitions displayed the protests back to participants, showing them what they had achieved and reinforcing the culture of resistance within the village. Here the photographs shown in the exhibitions produced a form of amplification that was internal to the protest movement itself, rather than extending the scene of resistance beyond its immediate physical space. Photographs of these exhibitions in Bil'in held in the Activestills archive show members of the village community pointing at

the photographs, perhaps recognising themselves or others. The images in these exhibitions functioned mnemonically in relation to the maintenance and reproduction of the struggle, constituting a publicly visible archive of this struggle over two or ten years respectively. The staging of the exhibitions in Bil'in also involved Activestills performing a form of solidarity with the villagers. In this sense, the photographic images used in the exhibitions were records of the protests – embodying the know-show function that defines photographs as documentation – and at the same time functioned symbolically in terms of the notion of 'joint-struggle' between Palestinians and Israelis that informed the Bil'in protests.

It is also interesting for this discussion to consider a particular set of images within the archive that relate to the amplification of a demonstration that occurred in Nabi Saleh on 28 August 2015. Nabi Saleh is a small village with roughly 500 inhabitants, located near Ramallah, adjacent to the Israeli settlement of Halamish, which was established on village land after the June War in 1967. Between 2010 and 2016 activists within the village community staged weekly Friday demonstrations in opposition to settlers from Halamish seizing a village owned spring. These demonstrations usually began with a procession from the centre of the village down the road towards the spring, which would be blocked by the Israeli military, resulting in a series of confrontations that spread out across the hillside opposite the settlement. Photographers and video activists often attended and documented the protests both for the photojournalism industry and for political purposes. Members of Activestills attended the demonstrations in Nabi Saleh on a regular basis from their inception, resulting in a relatively large number of photographs in the archive that are searchable under the village name. As has been the case with Bil'in, activists in Nabi Saleh have been able to gain considerable media attention for their struggle, including in international publications such as the *New York Times Magazine* (Ehrenreich 2013).

The following incident in question exemplifies this media attention. On this particular Friday, the weekly demonstration had dispersed across the hillside between Nabi Saleh and Halamish, when a soldier seized twelve-year-old Mohammed Tamimi, the son of prominent village activists Bassem and Nariman Tamimi, on the pretext that he had been throwing stones. Mohammed was wearing a plaster cast on his left arm, which was also in a sling. His cries attracted photographers and other demonstrators to his location. What ensued was a short confrontation between the soldier holding Mohammed down and other female members of the Tamimi family, who managed to release the boy, all the while with a line of photographers in front of them taking pictures. Amongst those taking photographs of

this incident were the Palestinian photojournalists Abbas Momani and Mohammad Torokman, who worked respectively for the news agencies Agence France Presse and Reuters. Their photographs were widely published in the international press and broadly distributed on social media.

The photographs taken by all the photographers present at this event can be divided into two iconic scenarios: the first involving a struggle between an armed adult soldier and a boy, whose incapacity to resist the soldier was reinforced by the presence of the plaster cast on his arm, and the second showing Palestinian women and girls overpowering the soldier and compelling him to release the boy. The latter photographs include images that depict the soldier having a mesh ski mask torn from his head and his fingers bitten. Consequently, the photographs can be interpreted in terms of a set of compelling oppositions between the occupier and the occupied, and the oppressor and the resistor. It is reasonable to suggest that it was these connotations that led to the broad distribution of the photographic images of this incident.

The Activestills archive does not contain Momani and Torokman's commercially circulated photographs of the confrontation between members of the Tamimi family and the soldier. The archive does, however, contain ten photographs of the incident taken by the Palestinian freelance photojournalist Muhannad Saleem, who distributes some of his photographs through Activestills and their regular photographic feature on *+972 Blog*. The presence of Saleem's photographs in the archive allows for this specific incident in Nabi Saleh to be discussed in the context of the chapter, in that these photographs constitute an element of the complex and dispersed existence of the incident as an amplified media phenomenon.

Most of the photographs in the Activestills archive relating to the protests in Nabi Saleh show the regular repertoire of these demonstrations and as such are representative of the standard relationship between both professional and activist photographers and the Friday demonstrations in a number of Palestinian villages in the West Bank that have developed over the last decade. Photographers generally document the routines of these demonstrations. Yet, at the same time, the professional photojournalists especially hope to capture exceptional pictures arising from unusual incidents within these events. Such images have a strong commercial value within the news industry. The photographs under discussion are a good example of this. But they also carry a strong political resonance for anti-occupation activists. They attest in particularly loaded ways to the processes of oppression and resistance that define relations between the Israeli state and Palestinians living under occupation.

What is most interesting about this particular case is that the photographic amplification of the confrontation between the Tamimis and the soldier resulted in a diverse range of interpretations of these photographs. From an anti-occupation perspective, the photographs resonated with understandings of the highly unequal power relations between the Israeli occupier and Palestinians while also showing the momentary overturning of this relationship of domination. However, from a right-wing Israeli point of view the photographs were evidence of quite different things. The photographs were read in terms of the notion of 'Pallywood', a popular right-wing neologism that combines the words 'Palestinian' and 'Hollywood', to imply that documentary representations of the oppression of Palestinians under Israeli rule involve the industrial scale manufacture of fictions comparable to Hollywood movies. In line with this thinking, the photographs were interpreted in relation to what was understood as the Tamimi family's record of 'staging' confrontations between themselves and the Israeli army to create publicity for their cause. For example, images uploaded to Twitter contested the authenticity of Mohammad Tamimi's broken arm, suggesting that it had been faked to heighten the impact of what was effectively a stage-managed event performed for the cameras. For example, a montage image uploaded to Twitter with the title 'Palestinian Propaganda Exposed' contrasted press photographs of Mohammad Tamimi being held down by the soldier from the 28 August incident with images of Mohammad wearing a plaster cast on one of his arms during an earlier demonstration. This combination of images was intended to demonstrate that this arm cast had been switched from his right to his left arm and was therefore not indicative of a genuine injury. This reframing of the photographs as representations of an inauthentic 'Pallywood' scene in fact led some international newspapers to redefine their initial online reporting of the incident (Tomlinson and Mullin 2015). What is also important to understand about this reframing of the photographs of the incident in Nabi Saleh is that it was not intended to challenge the veracity of photography per se, but to contest the interpretation of these particular photographs as images of Israeli oppression and Palestinian resistance. The charge of 'Pallywood' was meant to interrupt the relationship between showing and knowing that these specific photographs were generally understood to entail.

The photographs of female members of the Tamimi family overpowering the soldier in particular were also framed in Israel as evidence of the perceived vulnerability of Israeli soldiers doing their jobs while serving in the West Bank under rules of engagement that supposedly limited their ability to defend themselves against Palestinian attack. This understanding of the

Figure 7.1. Oren Ziv, 'Protest calling for the release of Israeli soldier Elor Azaria, Tel Aviv, Israel, 19.4.16, 2016. Reproduced with permission of Oren Ziv/Activestills.

meaning of the photographs resulted in the staging of a counterdemonstration on the road near Halamish in support of the Israeli army in Nabi Saleh on Friday 4 September, a week after the initial incident.⁵

A closely cropped version of one of the photographs showing the Israeli soldier being accosted by two female members of the Tamimi family was also used in a demonstration months later in Tel Aviv on 19 April 2016 (see figure 7.1). This demonstration was organized in support of the Israeli soldier Elor Azaria, who had been arrested on a charge of murder in March 2016 after fatally shooting an already incapacitated Palestinian man in the head in Hebron. One of the demonstrators held a large print of the photograph at the top of which was written in Hebrew 'This is what Israel looks like',⁶ suggesting that the image was being used to show how Israeli soldiers and the Israeli military were being humiliated. This use of the photograph of the Nabi Saleh incident indicates that for some Israelis the images of this confrontation had a generic meaning informed by certain perceptions of Israeli victimhood. This example also indicates that the forms of visibility gained for protestors through the photographic amplification of their actions

5 This counterdemonstration can be seen from a distance at the beginning of Israeli artist and video-activist David Reeb's video of the protest from Nabi Saleh on that day (Reeb 2015).

6 My thanks to Oren Ziv for translating this slogan.

is something that is often contested. Although the images produced for the photojournalism industry can benefit protest movements, the resulting images can also be appropriated and given contrary meanings by those who do not share the protestor's political view.

Conclusion

This chapter has involved the use of the Activestills archive as a source of photographic evidence for discussions of two significant ways that photography has been deployed in relation to protest in Israel/Palestine: the carrying and showing of photographic images during demonstrations and the use of photography to extend the visibility of protest beyond its immediate spatial and temporal limits. The discussion of these subjects has been informed by understandings of photography as a means of capturing and transporting appearances and as a form of documentation that works through what Lisa Gitelman calls the know-show function that defines all documentary forms. But what of the Activestills archive itself? Can the archive be discussed separately as something that has a place within the aesthetics of protest?

Vered Maimon and Shiraz Grinbaum have argued that the key characteristic of the Activestills archive is its 'openness to perpetual updating and rewriting' as members of the collective upload new images of protests as they happen (Maimon and Grinbaum 2016: 34-35). For them, this makes the archive 'an archive of the *present*, vibrating with political potency and urgency as it constantly displays, circulates, and reframes the precariousness of its subjects and their images of relentless protest' (Maimon and Grinbaum 2016: 35). This approach to the archive is in keeping with the aim of the collective to be responsive to current political struggles. It also makes clear the difference between the Activestills archive and more traditional archival collections that relate primarily to the past. However, this approach also downplays the significance of the majority of the images held in the archive that do not depict very recent events.

In contrast to Maimon and Grinbaum's definition of the Activestills archive as an 'archive of the *present*', it is worth considering the value of the archive as something that documents the struggles of the past. This is worthy of consideration on the understanding that current political struggle always involves a relationship to dissent in the past. Palestinian national struggle in particular involves a collective consciousness of the unresolved historical injustice of the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948 and also collective memories of

resistance to dispossession and occupation that have been shared across generations. This means that Palestinian struggle is not simply about the immediate present, but more precisely about the present as a continuation of the resistance and steadfastness (*sumud* in Arabic and Palestinian political parlance) of the past. Thought about from this perspective, the Activestills archive gains a value as a collection of images that can enable the viewing of struggles as they develop over time. Moreover, the archive has value as a repository of visual evidence of ongoing protest in a wider political context within which struggle has been constant, but also fleeting and subject to forgetting. This is particularly significant, given the deliberate destruction and looting of archives relating to Palestinian national struggle by the Israeli government (Sela 2017) as part of what Baruch Kimmerling has called the 'politicide' of the Palestinians (Kimmerling 2003).

The discussion in the preceding section noted the street exhibitions staged in Bil'in by Activestills as part of demonstrations to mark the second and tenth anniversaries of the beginning of the struggle in the village. These exhibitions involved the bringing together of images of protest from different moments so that the history of community's own resistance could be shown back to them. As such, the exhibitions demonstrate a potential function of the archive as a source for visual histories of struggle that could be fed back into cultures of protest in the present. If one searches within the archive using the place-name 'Bi'in', this results in the identification of 2,259 photographs that go back to 2005.⁷ These photographs depict a wide range of scenarios, including demonstrations, direct actions, creative activism, stone-throwing, injuries, arrests, village invasions, prisoner releases, and the funerals of community members killed during the demonstrations. The photographs also document the changing conditions of protest within Bil'in, starting with images of demonstrations at a time when the barrier was yet to be built on village land up to the current situation where the original fence system has been moved further away from the village and replaced by a concrete wall. Such a rich and accessible collection of images of a single struggle is a rare resource that could have as yet undefined uses in relation to further acts of protest in the future.

This discussion returns us to the subject of the photographic amplification of protest discussed in the preceding section. The discussion of this subject involved an understanding that, in the case of photography, the aesthetics of protest is not just a matter of the immediate spatial and temporal context of protest, but also of how photographs are used to mediate and extend

7 This search was conducted in December 2018.

this context. The crucial question here is how far can this extension of the scene of protest be understood to go? If the photographic amplification of protest is part of the aesthetics of protest, then is there a temporal cut-off point when this no longer applies? The suggestion being articulated here is that this is not the case and that photographs of past protest can continue to contribute to the aesthetics of protest long after they were taken and first circulated. Think, for example, of the cultural longevity of images of the Civil Rights movement. These images have continued to have a cultural 'life' both in terms of broader social understandings of dissent and in relation to subsequent protest movements that have mobilized these images from the past as means of ascribing significance to their own actions (see Vis et al. in this volume). Is this a way that images of protest in the past held in the Activestills archive could function in the future? This is not something that can be predicted. However, reflecting on this matter allows for the consideration of the role of photography within the aesthetics of protest beyond both its use in the immediate context of protest and as a means of amplifying protest in its initial aftermath. This suggests that any further study of the role of photography in relation to the aesthetics of protest should be open to thinking about how photography as a tool can extend the aesthetic presence of protest over much longer periods of time than one might at first consider.

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