# From Deception to Mass Murder:

# Operation Mole and the Kafr Qasim Massacre Reconsidered

October 29, 1956, was a tragic day in Kafr Qasim, a small Israeli-Arab village in the “Little Triangle,” a region on Israel's frontier with the Kingdom of Jordan.[[1]](#footnote-2) It was the first day of the Suez War, a tripartite offensive of Israel, Britain and France against Egypt. Kafr Qasim was far from the Egyptian front and yet the local military authorities instructed the Border Police to enforce a curfew on the Arab population. The battalion commander responsible for the area, Maj. Shmuel Melinki, instructed all units to shoot curfew breakers on sight. In most sectors, the enforcing units did not shoot returnees from the fields, who were oblivious to the curfew. However, the Border Police unit on the road to Kafr Qasim, headed by Lt. Gabriel Dahan, intercepted several returning groups and cold-bloodedly massacred 47 men, women and children.[[2]](#footnote-3) Two other villagers were killed in neighboring hamlets.

Although the government and army denounced the massacre and court martialed the perpetrators, crystalizing the concept of "manifestly illegal orders” in IDF doctrine[[3]](#footnote-4), certain historians, commentators and journalists have since argued that the Kafr Qasim Massacre was in fact planned by high-level military and government circles. According to some authors, the latest of whom is the historian Adam Raz, the massacre was an intentional provocation designed to terrify the villagers and drive them across the border, in line with an IDF contingency plan known as “Mole” (*Hafarperet*). Our goal here is to present an alternative view based on new documents, with an eye to a counterintuitive insight: rather than being either part of a preconceived plan of expulsion, or an aberrant individual crime, the massacre was in fact a result of an Israeli deception plan that got out of hand, deceived the IDF itself, and was interpreted by some officers (but not others) as a cart blanche for expulsion and murder. More generally, we intend to explore the connection between military atrocities and notions of strategic deception, interpretation of orders and mission command.

## State of the Debate: The 1948 Expulsion Question and the Kafr Qasim Massacre

The debate on the Kafr Qasim Massacre, Operation Mole, and the purported plot by the Israeli Government to expel large numbers of Arabs to Jordan, must be understood in the context of the historiographical debates on Israel’s war of independence in 1948 and the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem. There is no doubt that as a result of the war, perceived by the Jewish state as an existential struggle, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs escaped the territories occupied by Israel into neighboring Arab countries or were expelled. Benny Morris assesses their number as around 700,000. It is also well-known that Israel barred these refugees from ever returning. [[4]](#footnote-5) Palestinian historiography traditionally defined this momentous event as the “Nakba” (the catastrophe) – a well-planned mass expulsion of Arabs by the Jewish forces.[[5]](#footnote-6)

Initially, Israeli historiography tended to deny such allegations, ascribing the exodus of Palestinians instead to societal collapse, a rational decision to escape hostilities, or evacuation orders issued by the *Arab* leadership.[[6]](#footnote-7) However, in the 1990s, and especially since the publication of Benny Morris’ seminal *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, it had become accepted among Israeli historians that at least a significant part of the Palestinian refugees were intentionally expelled by Jewish forces in the course of the war, expulsions which were often violent, and in some cases – accompanied by killing of some civilians to “encourage” the escape of others.[[7]](#footnote-8) However, given that a large number of Arabs still remained in Israel after the war, debates still persist whether the expulsions were part of a systematic plan of ethnic cleansing by the Israeli leadership, implemented only in part because of domestic and international circumstances, or rather a result of contradicting policies of different Jewish commanders, local strategic decisions and dynamically developing events, as Morris himself believes.[[8]](#footnote-9)

This is the crucial context for the debate on the Kafr Qasim Massacre. The mainstream narrative in Israel, developed by the Kafr Qasim court martial, the army and the government, is that the massacre was perpetrated by rogue soldiers and officers who followed “manifestly illegal orders”.[[9]](#footnote-10) Naturally, historians critical of the official Israeli narrative of 1948 likewise doubted the official Kafr Qasim Massacre narrative. Rejecting the allegations of rogue action, some of them argued that the massacre in 1956 was a planned government scheme, an extension of the forced transfer of Palestinians eight years earlier. [[10]](#footnote-11) After all, if in 1948 some Israeli forces killed a certain number of Arabs in order to frighten others to escape, so why not in 1956?

This version was supported by the statements of several defendants in the Kafr Qasim court martial, who self-servingly ascribed their murderous behavior to this alleged governmental plan for ethnic cleansing. It also relies on more credible sources. Even General Moshe Carmel, a famed commander from 1948 who was minister of transport during the 1956 Suez conflict, ruefully ascribed the massacre to hard-dying habits from the last war.[[11]](#footnote-12) The first two books published in Hebrew on the Kafr Qasim Massacre, by Moshe Kordov and Ruvik Rosenthal, did not offer a definite answer to the question of whether the massacre was a rogue action or rather a calculated atrocity planned by the government. The debate remains open.[[12]](#footnote-13)

Recently, those Israeli and Palestinian writers who questioned the official Israeli version and saw the massacre as a part of a governmental plan of ethnic cleansing, were joined by the historian Adam Raz. According to Raz, the Kafr Qasim massacre was only a small part of “Operation Mole”, a larger plan to push the Arabs of the Triangle across the border into Jordan. This plan was hatched by a radical faction in the Israeli establishment, headed by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan. According to Raz, commanders privy to the plan interpreted it as encouraging them to utilize “a provocation” to expel as many Arabs as possible across the border. The massacre was that well-planned provocation, designed to frighten some villagers to flee, and perhaps provoke others to rebel in a way that would justify more killings and expulsions. When the plan failed, because Jordan did not join the fighting, and because the villagers did not flee, it was easy for the government to use “rogue soldiers” as scapegoats.[[13]](#footnote-14)

Like all historians who study the Kafr Qasim Massacre and Operation Mole, Raz had to struggle to find credible primary sources. The Mole plan in the IDF archives remains classified to this day, and historians have to infer its details via careful analysis of testimonies, interviews, indirect references, a handful of released military documents – and trial transcripts, including the allusion of the defendants to the plan on which they laid the blame for their actions.[[14]](#footnote-15)

However, so long as the classified documents of Operation Mole remained unavailable, Raz’s thesis could not be confirmed or rebutted. Recently, however, we were able to uncover two versions of “Mole” in the archives of the Israeli Police. These copies, along with classified trial transcripts recently released by the IDF archives[[15]](#footnote-16), enabled us to present a different, more contextualized version of the events. Instead of the governmental conspiracy of ethnic cleansing portrayed by Raz, we interpret the massacre as a complicated result of botched plans, criminal negligence of commanders, vague orders interpreted in an atrocious way, all in the context of a strategic deception plan that went astray. We see Operation Mole as a part of the high-level, top-secret plan to deceive Egypt by creating a false impression that Israel’s main military effort was directed against Jordan (and to a lesser extent – Syria). As knowledge of the deception plan was limited to the uppermost tier, most officers on the ground believed that a war against Jordan was imminent, and therefore saw a curfew on the local Arab population as a necessary security precaution.[[16]](#footnote-17) Fueled by the relatively recent precedent of expulsions in the intercommunal war of 1948, mid-level officers expansively interpreted the “Mole” orders, approving measures that could be interpreted by their own underlings as intended to drive the Arabs of the Little Triangle out of Israel. This toxic atmosphere, of an out-of-control deception plan misinterpreted as a plan of expulsion, is the proximate context of the Kafr Qasim Massacre. However, it cannot be understood without reference to how Israeli Arabs were perceived by Israeli Jewish society, and hence also by the officers and men who regularly policed them – as well as by those individuals who perpetrated the massacre.

**Background (1): Perception of the Israeli Arabs as Enemies**

While Israeli Arabs were legally defined as citizens of Israel, they were, in 1956, still mostly subject to military administration, isolating them from Israeli-Jewish society and confining them to frequent curfews, limitations on their movement and other discriminatory and often arbitrary measures. Supporters of such measures believed they were necessary in order, among other things, to curb a lethal wave of armed infiltration across the Jordanian frontier and the Egyptian-ruled Gaza Strip which claimed hundreds of lives between 1949 and 1956. The infiltrators were often refugees from the same communities, even families, of the Arabs who remained in Israel, and many Israeli Jews, soldiers and civilians both, did not distinguish between these infiltrators and their Israeli Arab kin. As several officers and men stated in the trial, Arabs were universally considered enemies, not citizens.[[17]](#footnote-18) Corporal Shalom Ofer, one of the most enthusiastic perpetrators of the Kafr Qasim massacre, stated in his affidavit to the court:

Every Arab I saw while on duty, there was an order to liquidate. It was always explained that Arabs are fifth columnists and enemies of the state […] during conversations in our platoon, operations against the Arab population from 1948 were often mentioned. It was explained that the government's policy was to expel the Arabs from their villages, so the state will not suffer from an enemy within its borders.”[[18]](#footnote-19)

Official IDF plans, such as "Mole", often referred to the local population as “enemies". The Kafr Qasim massacre cannot be understood in isolation from this deeply hostile attitude to the Israeli-Arab population.

Yet the Israeli state of 1956 was not the embattled provisional government of 1948. Though the newborn state still struggled to maintain border security and integrate the deluge of Jewish immigrants, the Jewish population of the state had more than doubled since its foundation. Furthermore, the Jewish communities in Israel were no longer isolated enclaves separated and outnumbered by armed and hostile Arab communities. Rather, the remnant Arab communities were isolated, disarmed, and heavily policed. Israel's economy, though challenged, was sturdy enough to support a professional modern army, and that army was now an army in fact, not merely in name, armed with the artillery, tanks and aircraft which it lacked in 1948. Thus, while Nasser's Pan-Arabist rhetoric and closing of the Tiran straits invoked memories and existential fears from the cataclysmic struggle of 1948, Israel was in fact in an immeasurably stronger position, both internally and externally – especially given its secret alliance with Britain and France.

## Background (2): The Suez Crisis, Operation Kadesh and the IDF Deception Plan

By late October 1956, Israel was on a war footing, having cosigned the Sèvres Agreement with Britain and France. In commitment to undertake a joint effort against Nasser's Egypt, Israel would send a military force towards the Suez Canal, and Britain and France would then issue an ultimatum for both belligerents to withdraw from the Canal Zone, ostensibly to safeguard the international freedom of shipping. In truth, however, the Israeli attack was to be used as an Anglo-French pretext to regain control of the Canal Zone, previously nationalized by Nasser, and potentially overthrow his regime. France also hoped to block Egyptian aid to the FLN rebels in Algeria. Israel was in turn eager to exploit Britain and France to decimate the Egyptian Army before it could absorb newly acquired Soviet weaponry and launch a war against Israel.[[19]](#footnote-20)

To maintain secrecy and give Egypt no opportunity to prepare, the high command hatched a top-secret plan of deception, intended to generate the appearance that Israel was preparing to go to war against Jordan rather than Egypt.[[20]](#footnote-21) On October 24th, 1956, when the Sèvres accords were concluded, Israeli Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Dayan ordered the head of the General Staff department to keep the mobilization secret and “immediately employ a deception towards Jordan.”[[21]](#footnote-22) A day later, Dayan told the high command that though Jordan was not the target, soldiers in the field should be told they were mobilizing in response to developments in Jordan.[[22]](#footnote-23) In reality, part of the Sèvres agreement was an Israeli commitment *not* to attack Jordan unless it attacked Israel first (in which case Great Britain would not come to the aid of Jordan.)[[23]](#footnote-24) True, some Israeli leaders fantasized on occupation and partition of Jordan, but they recognized that realizing such a dream was dependent on American and British cooperation which was not forthcoming, certainly not after the conclusion of the Sèvres Agreement. Therefore, from the point of view of the Israeli leadership, a deception against Jordan was useful, but it was imperative that Israel should not, in fact, attack Jordan, as it would destroy the crucial cooperation with Jordan's British protectors.[[24]](#footnote-25)

But what if Jordan attacked Israel first? Chief of staff Dayan assumed that Jordan might attack and prepared for just such a contingency. To face the possibility of Jordanian intervention (or worse: joint Syrian, Jordanian and Iraqi intervention) while fighting Egypt, Israel reinforced the borders with five infantry brigades, a force strong enough to repulse, or at least delay, a surprise attack, and a mobile reserve force in the south, which could be sent to the Jordanian front should Jordan intervene.[[25]](#footnote-26) And yet Israel moved most of its forces to the Egyptian front, showing that from the point of view of the Israeli leadership, an option of a confrontation with Jordan became increasingly remote.

In the framework of the resultant preparations, forces supposedly slated to relieve the Mount Scopus Hebrew University enclave in Jordanian East Jerusalem were trained for the night combat in which they would actually be engaged in Sinai. [[26]](#footnote-27) Deceptive training and operations were not limited to Central Command. Northern Command, in line with the scenario of a combined Syrian-Jordanian-Iraqi attack from the east, ordered one of its units to prepare the demolition of the Bnot Yaakov Bridge on the River Jordan, to prevent attacking Syrians from crossing. The operation was to be carried out on the very same night operation Kadesh was actually launched. [[27]](#footnote-28)

Thus, plans and sub-plans were promptly put into effect, creating the impression "among most men", as a senior Border Police officer wrote later to the IDF's history branch, that "the war was directed eastwards [Jordan], in line with the intentional and successful diversions by the IDF spokesmen."[[28]](#footnote-29) The Central Command, too, praised itself immediately after the war for the successful employment of its deception plans: "secrecy was kept in all levels… the deception worked perfectly and every commander was a partner in intentionally spreading the deception until the beginning of the operation."[[29]](#footnote-30) Some units were allocated to the Southern Command and briefed on their true objectives only hours before the war broke out.[[30]](#footnote-31)

The Israeli deployment along the Jordanian border was based on "Qtura", a (real) contingency plan for a hasty defense against an Arab surprise attack.[[31]](#footnote-32) "Qtura" covered all Israeli borders, but every regional command, and even subordinate units, had their own "Qtura" sub-plans.[[32]](#footnote-33) Indeed, virtually every plan that Israel has put into effect at the time either based itself on "Qtura" or utilized some of its components.

[illustration 1: deployment of the 2nd Border Police Battalion on the Jordanian Border, 27 October 1956]

In line with “Qtura”, the commander of the 17th brigade, Colonel Yissachar 'Yischa' Shadmi, who would play a central role in the Kafr Qasim Massacre, issued an order of the day titled “On the Even of Fateful Decisions.” The order parroted the Israeli official pretext for the build-up and claimed that "a severe danger threatens the existence of the state of Israel. The Iraqi army is flowing to the Jordanian border."[[33]](#footnote-34) In line of the deception plan, Shadmi’s orders made clear that the Jordanian brigade holding the line was ready to attack as soon as the Iraqi Army entered Jordan, and claimed that the enemy also had "undoubted air superiority".[[34]](#footnote-35) To supposedly counter this possible attack, the 17th brigade would be reinforced with an armored detachment, and also with the 2nd battalion of the Border Police, which was subordinated to the IDF [[35]](#footnote-36) and tasked with preventing enemy "special forces from operating in rear area[s]".[[36]](#footnote-37)

"The main order of the battalion", wrote its commander, Maj. Shmuel Melinki, "would be the routine mission […] to fight infiltration (in the sector only), unless given a specific order.[[37]](#footnote-38) Such an order was indeed given on October 29th, 1956: to enforce a curfew on Arab villages in its area, including Kafr Qasim. This was the fateful order that would generate the circumstances in which the massacre occurred.

## Operation Mole: Dealing with the Israeli-Arab Population during Operation Kadesh

In addition to Qtura, the battalion was issued another order, “Mole” (*Hafarperet*) which remains controversial to this day, especially in the context of the Kafr Qasim Massacre. Here, two of its versions, uncovered in the archives of the Israeli Police, are revealed for the first time.[[38]](#footnote-39) The causes of the massacre were indeed intertwined with "Mole", but it was **originally** neither a plan for massacre nor for expulsion.

"Mole" included instruction for rapidly imposing tight control over Arab villages near the Jordanian border, cutting connections between the villages, as well as between the villages and the Jordanians. As the documents show, this plan was not limited to the Triangle villages - but included sub-plans for every sector of the Jordanian front in which Arab-Israeli communities lived in close proximity to the border– including the Jerusalem area.[[39]](#footnote-40) The Mole orders were issued on October 27, 1956, by Col. Abraham (‘Abrasha’) Tamir, Operations Officer of the Central Command, even before the Border Police detachments were placed under IDF control, and then distributed down to the level of platoon commanders.[[40]](#footnote-41)

 In Col. Shadmi’s 17th Brigade sector, to which Melinki’s battalion was subordinate, the “Mole” sub-plan ordered the evacuation of the Arab population of the villages near the border (defined as “the enemy”) to other Arab villages, cities or temporary camps inside Israel, in order to "prevent the minorities in the battalion's sector from becoming a negative element, compromising security in an emergency situation". This was to be done through "arresting residents who endanger security [in Kafr Qasim the plan pointed out only six suspects from a population of 2070 – DO and YH], and confiscate property needed for state security during an emergency." This too had precedents, echoing the relocation of the residents of Ikrit, Biram and other Arab villages on the Lebanese Border to the Central Galilee in 1949 until the early 1950s – a supposedly temporary measure which became permanent.[[41]](#footnote-42) The border policemen were ordered to quarantine the area, prevent people from entering the villages or leaving them, using cars with loudspeakers to declare curfew, herding the population into temporary enclosures in the villages, arresting those considered a security threat, and finally – "evacuating some of the villages to internment areas.” For example, the villagers of Kafr Qasim were to be evacuated to the Arab village of Tira to the north, away from the main road leading to the Jordanian border. Commanders in the sector even visited Tira in order to examine the ground and to find potential locations to set up enclosures.[[42]](#footnote-43)

[Illustration 2: Map of Kafr Qasim and roadblocks according to Operation Mole, 28 October 1956]

Following the completion of internal relocation, the forces would be free to "turn to fight infiltration", as the infiltrators would have no Israeli-Arab population to hide amongst. As is customary with such plans, some details were to be added later – in this case, "orders concerning the treatment of civilians, rules of engagement, handling property and enemy installations".[[43]](#footnote-44) In short, "Mole" was portrayed to field commanders as a plan to remove hostile population to the interior of Israel to as a preemptive move to prevent infiltration from the Jordanian border.[[44]](#footnote-45) It is unlikely that the IDF truly wished to execute this plan during the Sinai campaign, as the forces required for its implementation (or an attack on Jordan) were never attached to the Central Command, and essential elements such as the military police, the martial law detachment or the cars with the loudspeakers were not allocated to the 2nd battalion of the Border Police. Actually, although the Jerusalem area also had a "Mole" plan, when "Kadesh" began, the Border Police battalion responsible for its implementation was shipped south to assist the occupation of Gaza [[45]](#footnote-46), indicating further that Mole’s implementation was never contemplated. In fact, in the context of the Suez conflict Mole was a faux operation, part and parcel of the IDF deception plan designed to hide the buildup against Egypt.[[46]](#footnote-47) It would have become a reality only if Jordan attacked Israel first, a very remote possibility in October 1956, and even then, only with the explicit permission of the high command.[[47]](#footnote-48) But very few people in the army realized it apart from a handful of senior officers.

## The Interpretive Evolution of Operation Mole: Deportation as an Option

Rather, given the deployment and briefing focus deriving from the planned deception, some commanders tasked with carrying out Operation mole interpreted it as implying an ambiguous option to expel the Arabs of the Triangle to Jordan. That was part of the living tradition of the War of 1948. Back then, local commanders were often given permission to destroy occupied Arab villages and expel their inhabitants when required and according to their operational discretion. Expulsions, forced or encouraged, rarely constituted a coherent state policy, but were often included in the toolkit of commanders on the ground, usually when the village or neighborhood was considered hostile – and some expulsions continued into the early 1950s.[[48]](#footnote-49) Plans for forced resettlement of Arabs from some border areas to villages inside Israel, in case of a war, also existed, and in some cases were even known to the villagers themselves.[[49]](#footnote-50)

This atmosphere was also reflected in the drafting process of Operation Mole. To reiterate, the high command never envisioned the implementation of the plan - it was solely a component of a larger strategic deception. In a classified testimony to a ministerial committee, Chief of Staff Dayan explained that, true, the army did expel Arabs in the demilitarized zone with Syria, residents who rejected the Israeli citizenship, but expelling Israeli-Arab citizens in the Triangle was out of the question. It would also escalate the situation along the Jordanian front beyond the threshold required for effective deception, and risk pinning down Israeli forces on the Jordanian front while creating a breach with Great Britain. For that very reason, Maj. Gen. Zvi Tzur, chief of the central command, ordered all units of the Central Command to “refrain from heating up the sector or to be dragged into provocations.” In this framework, any action against Israeli-Arabs was forbidden without the explicit authorization of Tzur himself.[[50]](#footnote-51)

 However, as far as the drafters of this contingency, who were not privy to the deception plan, were concerned, Mole was genuine, and also included, as a realistic contingency, the expulsion or driving off of at least some Israeli-Arabs. Col. Abraham (‘Abrasha’) Tamir, who was responsible for Mole’s planning as the operations officer of the Central Command, admitted in an interview, given in 2002, that “my plans were more of less [as follows]: I took what the Americans did with the Japanese in the Second World War. Simply speaking, in case of a war [with Jordan], those [Arabs] who won’t escape to Jordan would be evacuated to concentration camps in the rear. They would not remain on the border.” When asked by the interviewer what about those who would want to escape to Jordan, Tamir answered: “the road to Jordan will be open for escape if they want.”[[51]](#footnote-52)

In this interview, Tamir speaks about the option of an expulsion across the border almost as a side-thought. The inhabitants of the Triangle would be temporarily interned in the Israeli interior, but no obstacle would be placed in the path of those wishing to escape to Jordan. Indeed, the preparation of detention centers inside Israel and other preparations all pointed to a possibility of mass internment inside the country.[[52]](#footnote-53) However, as the plan moved down the chain of command, the idea that expulsion across the border could be encouraged became increasingly emphasized. That was certainly the atmosphere in the higher echelons of the 17th Infantry Brigade and the Military Administration Department of the Central Command. In an interview given in 1998, Col. Shadmi said that “Mole” was part of a contingency of the military administration, known as the “Blue Book” (which, however, he admitted he never saw in person). According to this contingency, the Arab villagers would be presented with two options: face evacuation to other villages and prison camps “like the Japanese in the Second World War”, or “join their brethren across the border.” The Arabs will be warned only a short time beforehand, “and we will take no step that will discourage them from choosing option B”, namely – escaping from Israel. [[53]](#footnote-54) In an apologetic testimony given one day after the massacre, Shadmi said that he instructed the 2nd Battalion to treat the Arabs as Israeli citizens, “as long as there was no order to expel them eastwards”.[[54]](#footnote-55)

The option of expulsion across the border was equally emphasized, this time in writing, by Lt. Col. Zalman Marat, the military governor of the Triangle. On October 27, the same day that the Mole orders were assigned to the 2nd Battalion, Marat sent a derivative order dealing with the presumptively hostile “Muslim population” near the Jordanian border in a case of emergency. According to our information, this is the first order in which “encouraged expulsion” became a written, official course of action. The order laid out several goals: including “closing and isolating” the population in the villages and “exploiting loyal manpower for the war effort.”[[55]](#footnote-56) It ended, however, with a cumbersome and ambiguous clause: "measures taken during an emergency will be of the type that will not cause the population to evacuate Israel in the first stages of the emergency, but their intention would be not to encumber such intentions [to escape from Israel] if the will or the need would arise".[[56]](#footnote-57) This paragraph hinted that Israel *might* want those villagers to leave or even expel them altogether. The letter was distributed to the 2nd battalion, to the 17th brigade, to the Martial Law Branch in the General Staff and to the central and northern commands – that is, everyone responsible for the borders or the Arab population. The official, written version of "Mole" did not include any plan to expel the Arab population from Israel; but Marat's letter hinted at this possibility, and therefore made it easier for "Mole" to be interpreted through this framework. In a letter to prime minister Ben Gurion, Melinki later claimed that Marat told him orally that expulsion was indeed the goal.[[57]](#footnote-58) Tamir’s side-thought suddenly became a legitimate option, though one among several. It also helped to strengthen the strategic deception, as it advised commanders in multiple sectors that trouble with Jordan was expected shortly.

Many officers in Melinki’s battalion felt that expulsion was not merely an option but even an unofficial policy tacitly encouraged by the higher echelons. [[58]](#footnote-59) Captain Haim Levi, the commander of the C Company that was responsible also for the Kafr Qasim sector, testified that Melinki explicitly ordered him not to block the eastern side of the village,[[59]](#footnote-60) “and if the Arabs escape – let them escape. This is an opportunity to see them across the border.” Many years later, Levi said in an interview that “the atmosphere was that [we are going to a war] against Jordan, and we want to expel these villagers… [but] it was not clear how to expel them.”[[60]](#footnote-61) Captain Yehuda Frankental, the commander of the E Company, did not believe that expulsion was part of the plan, but he did maintain that one of the purposes of “Mole” was to destroy the local Arab economy.[[61]](#footnote-62)

Here, in this ambiguous atmosphere, an even darker purpose crystallized in the minds of some officers and men in the 2nd Battalion, who were, of course, oblivious to the deception and believed that a war with Jordan was imminent.[[62]](#footnote-63) In Marat and Melinki’s version of Mole, it was assumed that some Arabs might want to escape from Israel in order to avoid deportation to the rear, but it was not assumed that the IDF would force them to do so, or even deploy violence to intimidate them.

However, killing some villagers in order to intimidate the others to leave the country echoed precedents from 1948. This was instilled in minds of many of the soldiers.[[63]](#footnote-64) Sgt First Class Benjamin Cole said that he understood that there would soon be a war against Jordan, and that “here [we] need to give somebody a smack, a blow so they will flee across the border.” Cole cautioned that such an option was not specified in the written orders, but “that’s how I felt.”[[64]](#footnote-65) Both Levi and his deputy, Moshe Tyomkin, saw mass killing as a possible tool of intimidation. According to Levi, who implied that Mole was the “background of the order”, even hundreds of causalities were a possibility, though a relatively remote one.[[65]](#footnote-66) A few days prior to October 29, Melinki cautioned his deputy, Aryeh Alexandroni, that Mole could be interpreted as a carte blanche for murder. “We should take care to maintain a [high] level of [soldierly behavior] and motivate the troops, in order to avoid murders and [other] illegal acts,” he said.[[66]](#footnote-67)

However, 16 hours before the massacre a surprising development came about: Melinki and his officers were notified that Operation Mole was canceled by the high command, leaving field commanders adrift and with no alternative operational plans. In absence of an ironclad operational plan, a window was opened for improvisation, local initiatives, and "creative interpretation" of previous orders, which left commanders significant freedom to define their objectives.

## One Minute to Midnight: The Day of the Massacre

At 1:00 am, the morning of October 29, Maj. Gen. Tzur called Col. Shadmi and told him that Operation Mole had not received authorization, particularly the components dealing with evacuation of Arabs. “The decision of the higher echelons,” said Tzur according to Shadmi’s testimony, “is not to deprive even one Arab of his home. To my [Shadmi’s] question, how will we deal with the problem of security [along the border], the general said that our actions had to conform with the decision of the higher echelons, i.e. not to deprive Arabs.” Lt. Col. Marat, too, was notified about this decision.[[67]](#footnote-68)

 In retrospect, it was not surprising at all that Mole was canceled at the last moment: it was part of a deception plan. After all, the higher echelons had never meant to implement it as part of "Kadesh", nor did they assign the Central Command the means for its implementation. However, when Shadmi briefed Melinki on October 29, 12:30, the cancelation of Mole caused both men considerable consternation. Shadmi told Melinki that Mole was abolished but was asked in turn which plan should replace it. Without Mole, the battalion had no framework for its activity, even regarding technicalities such as deployment and the location of roadblocks and observation posts. Therefore, as Melinki later told his officers, he and Shadmi agreed to continue using Mole as a blueprint for the technical aspects of the battalion’s activity along the border: The sectors, the roadblocks, and providing security to Israeli trains – all would be "according to operation Mole".[[68]](#footnote-69) Captain Levi later defined it as “Mole minus minus”, presumably without arrests, confiscations and evacuations of Arab villages. The recommendation of Shadmi’s deputy, Lt. Col, Yehuda Harari, to evacuate some of the residents of Kafr Qasim in order to use their homes as military positions, was accordingly rejected by Shadmi, to Harari’s great chagrin. In fact, the Central Command ordered that if given deployments should require evacuation of villagers, such deployments must be avoided.[[69]](#footnote-70) Even though Melinki initially ordered leaving the eastern approach to Kafr Qasim open to encourage escape, the roads towards Jordan were eventually blocked on October 29th.[[70]](#footnote-71)

However, crucially, Shadmi ordered Melinki to preserve a key component of Mole: setting an unusually early deadline for the routine nightly curfew imposed on the local Arabs. The villagers of the Triangle lived under martial law and were subject to regular nightly curfews from around 21:00 pm to 6:00 am. Shadmi, however, received permission from Maj. Gen. Tzur to push the deadline up to 17:00 pm. Melinki, and we should treat his testimony with extreme caution, later recalled that Shadmi showed no concern to the safety of the villagers. According to Melinki, Shadmi told him that Arabs spotted outside their home during the curfew would be summarily killed. It is even best that in the first night some Arabs would be killed to keep the others in tow.[[71]](#footnote-72)

Melinki later said – and again, this should be taken with a grain of salt - that he was horrified by the order, as he knew well that many villagers would be unaware of the curfew and hence probably return home after its imposition.[[72]](#footnote-73) Shadmi, known for his impulsive and “don’t question me” style of giving commands, told Melinki, according to the latter’s recollections, that he did not care. If an Arab were found outside of his home after 17:00, said Shadmi in Arabic, “Allah Yerahmo” (may God have mercy on his soul). “I want no sentiments,” he said, “and no arrests.” According to Melinki, he tried to dissuade Shadmi, but to no effect. The brigade commander was adamant.[[73]](#footnote-74)

At 13:15, Melinki convened 14 officers of his battalion, including the company and platoon commanders, for a briefing. Still clinging to the essentials of the deception plan, Melinki implied that a war with Jordan and other Arab states was about to break out, and that Mole was canceled. However, he emphasized that the technical aspects of Mole were still in place, including the strict curfew that would begin at 17:00. In tandem with his interpretation of Shadmi’s order, Melinki instructed enforcement of the curfew with extreme strictness, via killing anyone spotted outside their homes. Answering the questions of his subordinates, he emphasized that women and children should be killed just like men should they violate the curfew, that oblivious returnees were to be given no quarter, and that even the wounded should be finished off.[[74]](#footnote-75)

Captain Frankental left the meeting with a heavy heart. He felt that his own soldiers were too full of anticipation and eager to shoot. “The night,” he surmised, “will not end without victims.”[[75]](#footnote-76) The fact that Frankental realized that evacuation (and Operation Mole in general) were no longer part of Israel’s military policy, as well as his friendly relations with some local Arabs, possibly reinforced his conscientious objections to Melinki’s murderous order. As we will see below, he would do his best to modify it and save as many people as he could.[[76]](#footnote-77)

Melinki and his men (apart from Frankental) understood the killing of curfew breakers as justified killing, not murder, but their understanding of the implication of these so-called “justified” killings differed. As far as Melinki was concerned, “Mole” was cancelled, and expulsion of Arabs to Jordan was no longer an option. However, one component of Mole, the strict curfew, remained.[[77]](#footnote-78) He was therefore adamant to enforce that curfew, and believed that killing some people on October 29would intimidate the others to conform with the curfew, illustrating, as he told the court, that “there is no fooling around when it comes to security.”[[78]](#footnote-79) The troops, who were less informed, still saw the curfew, and Melinki’s orders, as a component of the now-defunct Operation Mole according to its non-official, word-of-mouth, interpretation, namely: killing some people in order to force the others to escape. Moshe Tyomkin, for example, was so fooled by the deception plan as to believe that his superiors probably planned an expulsion in the style of the War of 1948. “In War,” he said, “human life is cheap…” and added that “after the lifting of the curfew next morning, the inhabitants would leave their homes and see the carnage” and then the population would flee eastwards.[[79]](#footnote-80)

In another meeting with the unit commanders later that same day, Col. Shadmi gave contradictory messages. He emphasized that Operation Mole was canceled but remained ambiguous about the technical aspects of this contingency plan. As for the villagers, on the one hand he ordered that they “should not be disturbed” nor physically harmed. On the other hand, when an IDF battalion commander, Lt. Col. Shmuel Pecker, asked how to distinguish between infiltrators and Arab citizens, Shadmi said coldly “Allah Yerahmo.” By that, Shadmi did not necessarily refer to villagers who returned to their homes in daylight, but to suspicious figures wondering about in the dark, even if they happened to live nearby. Pecker was responsible for an area which was not as densely inhabited as Melinki’s. And yet, the Border Police commanders present understood Shadmi’s briefing as corroborating the strict curfew, including the order to shoot all violators.[[80]](#footnote-81) The road leading to the massacre was now paved.

## The Massacre

[Illustration 3: A map of Kafr Qasim and the position of Border Police elements, including names of section commanders and the movements of the commander’s vehicle, 29 October 1956]

In his thorough study, Adam Raz has already elaborated on the events of the massacre itself.[[81]](#footnote-82) Following the Israeli-Arab author Emil Habibi, Raz divides the horrendous killing that took place between 17:05 and 18:00, October 29, 1956, into nine waves. Most victims were murdered in the Western outskirts of Kafr Qasim, on the road leading into the village. The first to die were four workers who returned with their bicycles, shot without warning by one of the squads. The squad commander, Corporal Shalom Ofer, was the most active, enthusiastic and sadistic perpetrator of the massacre, and his men participated in most waves.[[82]](#footnote-83) In the second wave, at 17:12, Lt. Dahan himself supervised the killing of two Arabs who returned to the village with a mule-drawn carriage. Unlike Ofer, he spared two little children, a boy and a girl, who were able to return to the village. In the fourth wave, Dahan killed “only” one man, but allowed a truck full of returnees to drive into the village (or, according to another version, “missed” the truck in the confusion that ensued).[[83]](#footnote-84) In the fifth wave (17:30), another truck was able to make its way into the village. Ofer and his men, who shot it from behind, killed one of the passengers but the rest survived. The most lethal wave was the last. A truck full of women and girls was intercepted by Ofer and his men, who killed the driver and the passengers. Only one woman survived, by playing dead.[[84]](#footnote-85)

Four villagers were killed in other parts of Kafr Qasim. In the center of the village, a child, Talal Shaker ‘Issa, was dispatched to bring back the family goats, a few meters away, and as he was returning home was shot by David Goldfeld and his squad. Talal’s father, mother and sister, who stepped out upon hearing gunfire, were shot by the soldiers as well. The injured family members quickly escaped back to the house and closed the door behind them, but the child, Talal, died from his wounds in the absence of medical attention.[[85]](#footnote-86) This scene is especially telling, because it reflects bloodthirstiness that exceeded the orders given to the troops. Goldfeld, after all, knew that the family members were not curfew breakers, as they stepped out of the house only because the soldiers shot their child. He clearly sought to kill as many people as possible, murderous behavior even according to Melinki’s skewed standards.

During the final wave of the massacre, an IDF major named Shim’on (“Sisi”) Kotler passed by in order to occupy positions near the border, in the eastern outskirts of Kafr Qasim. Shocked by the scene, he asked the platoon commander, Lt. Dahan, to contact Company Commander Levi and ask him whether the curfew should be imposed with such lethal cruelty. Dahan refused, citing his orders. Kotler protested to Dahan that “you are committing a crime… you’re killing people, innocent men and women returning from work”, and said in frustration that if he had enough reinforcements, he would attack the border policemen, but to no avail.[[86]](#footnote-87)

News of the mass slaughter soon reached Captain Levi and Maj. Melinki. Dahan constantly reported by radio on Arab villagers killed by his men: “one down”, “three down”, “five down”. Around 18:00, when it became “15 down”, Melinki finally reacted.[[87]](#footnote-88) Astounded and panicked by the magnitude of the massacre, he ordered Dahan to cease fire until 19:30, and even afterwards, to shoot only in rare occasions of resistance to the troops. Almost simultaneously, Dahan reported “many down. Difficult to count”.[[88]](#footnote-89) Col. Shadmi was furious as well. Like Melinki, he was probably counting on the death of a few Arabs but was unprepared to take responsibility for a wholesale massacre. Foremost, he was afraid that the killings would provoke a military escalation on the Jordanian front contrary to the intentions of the high command. “The Border Police is already amok and can mess us all up,” he told his operations officer.[[89]](#footnote-90)

In a nightly meeting with Shadmi, Melinki and other officers, Maj. Gen. Tzur rebuked Shadmi for his behavior. “How could you violate my orders in such a way?” he said.[[90]](#footnote-91) Tzur, too, was worried that the massacre would heat up the Jordanian front. The military governor, Lt. Col. Marat, expressed his outrage as well when the magnitude of the massacre became apparent. He stated that such killings “were a disaster” and “ran against his policy” and the policy of the army to keep the Jordanian front quiet.[[91]](#footnote-92)

## Why Only in Kafr Qasim? The Interpretation of the Orders across the Region

A curious element of the Kafr Qasim massacre is that it took place only in Kafr Qasim, though the military governor himself had described this village as one of the most obedient and law-abiding Arab communities in the region.[[92]](#footnote-93) In the other villages in Melinki’s sector there were only a handful of isolated shooting incidents. In order to decipher the dynamics of the massacre, it is crucial to understand how Operation Mole and the curfew orders were so divergently interpreted across the sector.

In fact, apart from Dahan, the other commanders in the C Company behaved with relative moderation. Captain Levi repeated Melinki’s orders verbatim to his platoon commanders, but in practice gave them considerable leeway. Levi himself came to the village of Jaljulia, and found the local commander, Lt. Cole, shooting in the air to frighten the locals to enter their homes. Levi orally instructed Cole not to shoot returnees, and as a result, nobody was killed.[[93]](#footnote-94) In Tira, Lt. Aryeh Menashes allowed a large group of returnees into the village and prohibited opening fire without his permission. He even refrained from placing squads around the village, except in one place, in order to supervise his men more tightly. When he asked for Captain Levi’s permission by radio, the latter allowed him “to behave according to your discretion.” Only one resident was killed in Tira, in the eastern outskirts of the village, by a policeman who was unwatched by Menashes at the time.[[94]](#footnote-95)

In Kafr Bara, Lt. Nimrod Lampert gave bloodthirsty orders. Besides repeating the command from above, he added that if the troops encounter shooting from one of the houses, they should slaughter all inhabitants, men, women and children. In practice, however, his behavior was more moderate. Crucially, he concentrated authority in his own hands and closely supervised his squad commanders. Then, he spared a Hebrew-speaking child who returned from the fields, with whom he was previously acquainted, though he still rebuked his men for not killing the boy beforehand. Later, he also spared an old man who came with a cart, but it is unclear whether this was due to Levi and Melinki’s orders to stop shooting at 18:00, or not, as we cannot be certain whether this order reached Lampert on time. In any case, there were no victims in Kafr Bara.[[95]](#footnote-96)

In the E Company sector, Captain Yehuda Frankental modified Melinki’s orders, postponed the curfew by 90 minutes, instructed returnees to be escorted into the village, and forbade the troops to shoot without the authorization of a commander.[[96]](#footnote-97) When Frankental arrived at the village of Kalansawa at 16:25, 35 minutes before the beginning of the formal curfew, he had personally escorted the platoon commander, Lt. Benjamin Hollander to the house of the village elder, warned the elder that the curfew would begin at 17:30 (though, unbeknownst to him, the soldiers were ordered to enforce it with fire only after 18:30) and gave Hollander specific instructions to coordinate with the elders safe passage for returnees. To another platoon commander, Lt. Enosh Giv’ati, responsible for several smaller villages, he ordered to actively seek farmers in the fields, advise them about the curfew and send them safely to their homes. Similar orders were given to the platoon commander in Taybeh, and Frankental even warned him that unauthorized killings would be punished. Admittedly, the sector was not entirely free of cruelty. Without consulting Frankental, Hollander refused a plea by one villager to bring a midwife from the next house to tend his pregnant wife. [[97]](#footnote-98) In the village of Taybeh, a child was killed by a soldier because he ran in the street and ignored orders to halt. Later it was discovered that he was sent by his father to buy cigarettes without knowing about the curfew.[[98]](#footnote-99) And yet, Frankental’s orders and personal supervision of his men had most probably prevented quite a few killings, and maybe even a second massacre.[[99]](#footnote-100)

## Understanding the Kafr Qasim Massacre: The Ambiguity of Military Orders

Lt. Gabriel Dahan, the commander whose platoon perpetrated the massacre in Kafr Qasim, famously said in his trial that he was a soldier who “obeys orders without thinking,” and other soldiers and officers of the 2nd Battalion testified in the same vein. Benjamin Hollander had even said that a soldier should not think at all: his superior commanders “think on his behalf.”[[100]](#footnote-101) Another soldier said that he would kill even Jews if ordered to do so.[[101]](#footnote-102) Our inquiry, however, reveals that the Kafr Qasim Massacre was not a result of blind obedience, but rather of a wide interpretive spectrum of ambiguous orders, understood differently by different individuals across the military hierarchy. Commanders, on every level, took considerable liberties in interpreting their orders – and it seems that this was seen as legitimate.

 First, there was the deception plan. Israel sought to attack Egypt and keep the Jordanian front quiet. However, that official policy was known only to a handful of senior commanders, and most IDF soldiers, including the men of Melinki’s battalion, were made to believe that a war with Jordan was imminent. Operation Mole, which was part and parcel of this deception, gave rise to widespread anticipation that this imminent war with Jordan would also result in an ethnic cleansing of Israeli Arabs, perhaps by means of a violent provocation. Though trying to deceive the enemy, the IDF deceived its own troops as well.[[102]](#footnote-103)

The webs of misinformation and deception woven by the IDF high command, widened the gap between the intentions of the higher echelons and the interpretation of their orders down along the military hierarchy, especially when senior commanders failed to clarify their intent. In the main trial, Col. Shadmi said that Melinki *should* have understood that his [Shadmi’s] strict curfew orders were directed only against conscious violators and not against innocent returnees and that it was not necessary to explicitly forbid a knowledgeable battalion commander not to misuse the authority granted him to open fire. Rather, he implied, such explicit explanation was required on Melinki's part, for his subordinates were less knowledgeable [[103]](#footnote-104). However, Melinki made the same argument, insisting that it was for his subordinates to use common sense and understand that the curfew orders should not apply to innocent returnees [[104]](#footnote-105). Both Shadmi and Melinki, insofar as their testimony is reliable, expected their subordinates to understand their intentions – but did not take steps to make sure that this would actually happen. Orders are always subject to interpretation, and especially when superiors and subordinates have not only different understanding of the situation, but of state policy and the very mission they have to accomplish, as was the case in Kafr Qasim. Here, the problematics of strategic deception become clear. When top commanders create intentional ambiguity and deceive their own troops in order to deceive the enemy, they have to expect that the interpretation of their orders in lower echelons would take a very different shape than that they have originally imagined.[[105]](#footnote-106) In Kafr Qasim the consequences of this hermeneutic gap were fatal.

If any of the claims that Col. Shadmi had said either "no sentiments" or "Allah Yerahmo" are true, then, as one of the defense councilors argued in the trial, he was criminally negligent even if he “did not foresee the fatal consequences of his words.”[[106]](#footnote-107) This is because he failed to transmit his will to his subordinates and instead used such terms that left room for a *reasonable* interpretation that he actually wanted returnees to be shot. As for Melinki, if he truly never intended to shoot innocent villagers, as he argued in his apologia like testimony, then his orders achieved the exact opposite. In fact, when faced with the questions of his subordinates, he cleared the ambiguity by *radicalizing* the order, i.e. explicitly including returnees, women, children and the wounded in the category of those condemned to death.[[107]](#footnote-108)

Captain Frankental cleared the ambiguity, in the opposite direction, by interpreting, mitigating and eventually changing Melinki’s order. As the prosecutor rightly argued, his interpretation resulted in a structured and (relatively) humane plan of curfew: notifying the elders at 17:00, formal curfew at 17:30, but armed enforcement only after 18:30, and even that only with explicit permission and after proactive attempts to escort returnees to their homes. In Levi’s sector ambiguity remained and chaos reigned.[[108]](#footnote-109) Some commanders, such as Menashes, Lampert and Levi himself, interpreted the orders in a relatively moderate way, while others, such as Dahan, Ofer and Goldfeld, carried the order in a way that realized its full murderous potential and beyond. We saw, for example, how eager Goldfeld was to kill the ‘Issa family, even though they stepped out only in response to his own shooting. In Kafr Qasim, nobody followed orders blindly. Interpretation was key.

The Israeli military, as well as most modern Western armies, bases itself on the ethos of "mission command": the superiors try not to interfere with the way their subordinates choose to execute their mission. Because each commander knows best how to do his job, and the situation is always dynamic and changing, any attempt to control everything from the top would be futile. In the words of Helmuth von Moltke the elder, the commander should "order no more than is absolutely necessary and to avoid planning beyond the situation one can foresee… Seldom will orders that anticipate far in advance and in detail succeed completely to execution".[[109]](#footnote-110) Mission command requires a certain culture with shared language and training, as well as flexibility, with commanders taking the initiative whenever they see an opportunity. There is "greater latitude for mistakes, and commanders could therefore unleash their subordinates more freely".[[110]](#footnote-111) But this latitude means that a commander must make sure his subordinate clearly understand not only what is expected of them to do, but also, when needed, what is expected of them not to do. A commander should not go into excessive details, but he should make his *intent* clear. Failure to do so amounts to negligence and dereliction of duty, in this case, with horrifying consequences; Not only those commanders who ordered the killings were to blame, but also the commanders who may not have *wanted* a massacre to happen, but whose ambivalent orders, insinuations and negligence enabled it.

## Conclusions

This article demonstrates that the Kafr Qasim Massacre was perpetrated by soldiers who believed they were obeying the spirit of their orders, even when their actions were in variance with the high command’s intentions and operational plans. This misinterpretation was based on the existence of a plan of deception which was inadequately explained to its perpetrators, and which was not replaced with operational contingencies once it became defunct, hence remaining, in the minds of some field officers, as being unofficially in force. This misinterpretation, however, did not take place in isolation: the fact that Israeli Arabs were considered by many to be a fifth column, part of the Arab struggle against Israel; the fact that the Border Police battalions were fighting infiltration and considered the local Arabs to be complicit in it; and the hope of some officers and men that the local Arabs would flee to Jordan or that an order to expel them would be given, were all necessary perquisites for the murderous misinterpretation of the defunct deception.[[111]](#footnote-112) Tough Operation Mole was conceived as relocation and internment of an allegedly hostile population from the frontiers, it nonetheless unintentionally played a disastrous role by feeding these perceptions, poisoning the atmosphere and fueling hopes for an eventual ethnic cleansing.

 But that the massacre occurred only in Kafr Qasim, and not in other villages in the sector, shows that commanders’ behavior and the precise way they formulated their orders was the most decisive variable. Shadmi’s carelessness and indifference to human life enabled interpretation mandating shooting innocent returnees. Melinki’s orders widened this interpretive “window of opportunity” and turned the scenario of killing innocents into a likely possibility. And even then, the interpretation of subordinate commanders mattered. While Frankental prevented such an interpretation by clearing the ambiguity[[112]](#footnote-113), Levi’s aloofness only enhanced it. Converging with the trigger happiness of Dahan and his troops, it resulted in a bloodbath. When Prime Minister Ben Gurion wrote in his diary that the massacre occurred as a result of “Shadmi’s negligence, Melinki’s stupidity and the sadism of Dahan and Ofer”, he was not far from the truth.[[113]](#footnote-114) And yet, Ben Gurion failed to follow this logic through and assign some of the blame towards his own person, as the Prime Minister who was, after all, responsible for the system of military administration, for the unofficial but prevalent designation of the Israeli Arabs as enemies and for the chaotic system of command. In later years, he added sins of commission to his initial sin of omission, as he contradicted his harsh condemnation of the massacre with lenient treatment of the condemned murderers.[[114]](#footnote-115)

The lessons of the Kafr Qasim case, as shown, go beyond explaining one massacre in one country. They offer us a glimpse into the process in which deception plans can result in outcomes contrary to those desired by their conceivers, because they impact not only their enemy but their subordinates and perpetrators. Here, we argue that this incident is in fact illustrative of how strategic deception plans can lend themselves to ambiguity contributing to war crimes and atrocities. Specifically, while plans designed for actual implementation are subject to considerable scrutiny and revision at many levels to eliminate the possibility of confusion of troops on the ground, plans intended to serve merely as cover for deception, never to be fully implemented, may not be circulated as widely, and usually are not subject to the same internal quality control. While considerable research has gone into the factors contributing to the realization, failure or success of the **intentional** purposes of strategic deception,[[115]](#footnote-116) there has been no equivalent research into the factors that might contribute to perverse **unintentional** outcomes. We identify these factors as including deliberate deception of the troops, historical precedent for possible murderous interpretation by field commanders and troops, and ambiguous wording of operational orders which leaves room for such interpretation. We conclude that when top commanders create intentional ambiguity and deceive their own troops in order to deceive the enemy, they must expect that lower echelons will interpret their orders very differently than that of their original conception and must proactively craft them not to leave to room for murderous interpretation. Not actively ordering war crimes or relying on the fact that the most likely interpretation of the order should not be construed as such is insufficient.[[116]](#footnote-117)

 The Kafr Qasim Affair also illustrates how, in the context of a deception operation, mission command without relevant oversight can lead to grave mistakes by subordinates, meaning that commanders need, especially in complex situations and especially when they don't know the full picture, to take extra care to make clear not only their intent but the limits of such intent, in case unwanted results could emerge from excessive operational freedom. It needs not be very complex. No commander could take any possible development into account, but effort and consideration need to be put into the preparations of soldiers and their orders, to ensure they act according to the real intent of the commander, and not according to assumptions not shared by the commander, leading to results which may completely contradict that intent.[[117]](#footnote-118)

## Postscript: Could "Mole" be an expulsion plan?

In his seminal book on the Kafr Qasim massacre, Adam Raz maintained, contrary to our arguments here, that “Mole” was a well-calculated, well-planned scheme to drive Israeli Arabs out of Israel and into Jordan. The Kafr Qasim Massacre, he argues, was part and parcel of this scheme. In the article above we presented an alternative interpretation, based on our understanding of the evidence. It is still important, however, to directly contend with Raz’s thesis. This is the purpose of the following postscript.

We argue that contrary to Raz’s claims, the original, formal version of “Mole” did not mandate expulsion of Arabs across the border. First of all, Raz did not have access to the plan itself, and therefore was forced to rely on second-hand rumors and hints. For example, Raz quotes Journalist Dan Horowitz who later told Journalist Ruvik Rosenthal that "in the corridors of the court people have spoken about the plan ["Mole"]" which Horowitz interpreted as an attempt to cause "the Arab population […] to do illegal things and then to expel" them.[[118]](#footnote-119) Other witnesses spoke decades after the events, so their knowledge may not amount to what they knew at the time, but more as to what they heard and interpreted later. Second-hand knowledge, decades after the events, is of course of limited value, though it can be corroborated by other sources.

Second, many of the sources which Raz interprets as proving that "Mole" was a plan of expulsion, show nothing of the sort. For example, in Maj. Gen. Tzur's testimony, two days after the massacre, he testified that "Mole" is "a plan that deals with all of the country… in the same way".[[119]](#footnote-120) This is definitely true. However, it says nothing of the *contents* of the plan, and definitely it does not suggest that it was a plan of expulsion (It does, however, remind us that "Mole" *wasn't* implemented in "all of the country”, or at all).

The 2002 Testimony of Abraham Tamir, who was responsible for the "Mole" plan, also states quite specifically that it was a plan to evacuate the Arab population of the border *inwards*, though if anyone should want "to escape to Jordan" they could – but the plan was an *inward* evacuation, modeled after the WWII US internment camps for the Japanese population.[[120]](#footnote-121) This, as we've seen, is fully corroborated by the written plan itself.

A note in the IDF Archive, which Raz uses to explain why there was no expulsion in practice, is also actually fully compatible with our explanation, but less so with the expulsion theory. The note, quoting quite accurately from "Mole", says that its goals were "quickly gaining control of the minorities villages in the Jordanian sector by neutralizing them and cutting the connections between them – and preventing a connection between them and the Jordanians", before adding that "the character of "Kadesh", as an operation planned and initiated by Israel, caused the inactivation of both plans ["Qtura" and "Molle"] in their original form".[[121]](#footnote-122) Raz interprets that as evidence that the Israeli plan to expel the villagers didn't happen because a war between Israel and Jordan didn't break out, and he assumes both that Israel wanted such a war and that it gained the approval of Britain and France – both claims, as we have shown, do not hold up to scrutiny. What the note does seem to suggest is that "Mole" did not contain any written part regarding *outward* expulsion, even if “Mole” had not have been part of a deception plan, as we argued above. Similarly, the letter that Melinki wrote to Ben-Gurion in December 1956, does not indicate that "Mole" was an expulsion plan. For all the apologetics and blame-shifting in the letter[[122]](#footnote-123), the only reference Melinki gives to expulsion across the border is one oral comment from Lt. Col. Marat.[[123]](#footnote-124)

Moreover, from a military point of view, the assumption that "Mole" was a plan of expulsion slated to occur during an Israeli attack on Jordan doesn't stand up to scrutiny. First, it ignores the fact that Israel had specifically promised not to attack Jordan, and for that reason the main plan put into effect was the defensive "Qtura" and not the offensive "Ishmael" contingency which should have followed it in case of a full-scale counterattack, or a preemptive attack.[[124]](#footnote-125)

It would also have defied logic if Israel, as some claim, planned to expel a population into an area which it would soon occupy. For that reason, too, a rumor that Melinki planned to attack and use the fleeing villagers as “human shields” is quite far-fetched. Had Israel carried out a widespread expulsion during an attack, the expulsion would disrupt the advancing army's logistics, by making the roads clogged with refugees. Given the limited lines of advance in the area,[[125]](#footnote-126) any large-scale refugee movement would have probably disrupted both the attack efforts of an Israeli force and the defense effort of a Jordanian force if the movement started *before* the attack; but if it would have started *after* an Israeli attack, it would first and foremost disrupt Israeli efforts.[[126]](#footnote-127)

Last and not least, had the upper echelons actually *planned* to expel the Arab population, there was no real need for such a convoluted way of doing it. There were indeed several small-scale expulsions after the 1948 war. Expulsion, as the few cases between 1949 and 1956 (and countless other examples around the world) have shown, was possible by using threat of force alone. The idea that "Mole" was an expulsion plan or a cover of such requires us to believe that Israel had hatched a plan to expel its Arab residents by not actually expelling them, but doing something else: shooting an unknown number of curfew breakers while preventing others from running away until the next morning, in the hope that then they would panic and run *after* the end of the curfew.[[127]](#footnote-128) We are supposed to believe that all this was done without the necessary manpower and equipment listed in the plan, which in any case did not speak of expulsion, but of evictions to other places within Israel. This would be a very convoluted plan when some soldiers with trucks would have sufficed to achieve that goal directly. [[128]](#footnote-129)

1. The authors are grateful to Mr. Sa’id Issa and Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur, for their graciousness in guiding us around the sites of the massacre in Kafr Qasim as well as for sharing testimonies and documents from the town’s archive, to MK Dr. Ahmad Tibi for arranging the tour, to Mr. Rasheed Haj Abed Aghbaria for deciphering difficult Arabic handwriting, to Dr. Hili Ratzon for sharing with us precious family documents, to Adam Raz and Ofer Aderet for their invaluable help in the research, to Mrs. Noa Reichmann who gave us access to rare materials from the National Library of Israel (closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and to archivists from the Israeli Police Archives, Border Police Heritage House, IDF archives, Israeli State Archives, Ben Gurion Archive and Yitzhak Rabin Center who helped us into rare interviews and documents during our research. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. In Kafr Qasim, tradition includes an unborn baby shot in his mother’s womb and an old man who suffered a heart attack as two additional victims. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Danny Orbach, “Black Flag at a Crossroads: The Political Trial of Kafr Qasim (1956-8): Dynamics and Consequences”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.45, issue 3, (2013), pp.491-511. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.603-604; Benny Morris, *Tikun Taut: Yehudim ve-Aravim be-Eretz Yisrael 1936-1956* [Correcting a mistake: Jews and Arabs in the Land of Israel 1936-1956] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2000), pp.133-134. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The term was first coined by Constantin Zureiq in his book *The Meaning of the Disaster* (Khayat’s College Book Cooperative, 1956) and was adopted by numerous Palestinians, international and even Israeli historians thereafter. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Yoav Gelber, *Komemiyut ve-Nakba* [Independence and Nakba])Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2004), pp.131-133; Shay Hazkani, “Ha-Mehkar she-haya amur leochiah she-ha-Aravim barhu be-48” [The study that should have proved that the Arabs escaped in 1948], *Haaretz*, 18.5.2013; Netanel Lorch, *Korot Milhemet ha-Atsmaut* [History of the war of independence](Yedioth Ahronot Press, 1989), introduction to the new edition, pp.5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Benny Morris, “Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948” in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.55 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Laila Parsons, “The Druze and the Birth of Israel”, in Rogan/Shlaim, *The War for Palestine*, pp.60-69; Morris, *The Birth*, pp.588-589. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. For a typical example see Gen. Haim Laskov, “Igeret Le-Mefakdim be-Tzahal” [Letter to the IDF commanders], quoted in Orbach, “Black Flag”, p.507. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Nur Masalha, “Operation Hafarferet and the Massacre of Kfar Qassim”, *The Arab Review* vol.3, no.1 (1994), pp.15-21; Gadi Elgazi, “Tevah Kefar Qasim, 1956: Tohnit Hafarperet” [The Kafr Qasim Massacre, 1956: Plan Mole], *Tarabut*, http://www.tarabut.info/he/articles/article/Kufr-Kassem-1956/ (last accessed 21.7.2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. A Hebrew Prisoner (*Asir Ivri* – a pseudonym of Moshe Carmel), “Ason Kefar Qasim ve-likho” [The disaster of Kafr Qasim and its lessons], *Lemerhav*, 24.10.1958. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Moshe Kordov, *Ahat*\_*E´sreh Kumtot yerukot ba-Din: Parashat Kefar-Kasem* [11 green caps on trial: the Kafr Qasim Affair](Tel Aviv: A. Narkis, 1959); Ruvik Rosenthal, ed., *Kefar Kasem: Eruim u-Mitos* [Kafr Qasim: events and myth](Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbutz ha-Meuhad, 2000). Rosenthal, a linguist by training, was the first author who exposed Operation Mole to the public. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Adam Raz, *Tevah Kefar Qasem: Biografia Politit* [The Kafr Qasim Massacre: A Political Biography] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2018), pp. 80-139, 278-279. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Raz, *Tevah*, pp.80-139; Ruvik Rosenthal, “Mi harag et Fatma Sarsur: Ha-reka, ha-meni’im ve-hishtalshelut ha-eru’im be-parashat tevah Kefar Qasem” [“Who killed Fatmah Sarsur? The Background, Motives and Course of Events in the Affair of the Massacre of Kafr Qasim”], in *Kefar Qasem*, pp.11-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Adam Raz and the Akevot Institute had struggled for years to release all documents related to the Kafr Qasim Massacre. As a result of their legal struggle, for which we are grateful, many of these documents were declassified on 1.8.2022 following a decision by the Military Court of Appeals. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. See for example: Moshe Fodor’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 29.4.1957, pp.51-53, Yehuda Frankental’s testimony, 1.5.1957, p.86, Moshe Tyomkin’s testimony, 17.6.1957, p.4, Mishael Shaham’s testimony, 12.6.1957, p.46, Tzvi Stahl’s testimony, 9.7.1957, p.55, Benjamin Hollander’s testimony, p.7, Itzhak Oren Papers, Tel Aviv University Archive (hereafter cited as OPTUA), 46.21/3, 46.21/7, 46.21/10, also available in Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. https://kafr-qasim-massacre.akevot.org.il/ (last accessed: 1.10.2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Yehuda Harari’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 25.4.1956, p.21, Hollander’s testimony, 10.7.1957, pp.31, 62, OPTUA, 46.21/2, 46.21/10, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. Even Captain Frankental, the most humane of officers in Melinki’s battalion, saw the Israeli Arabs essentially as enemies and potential spies. See: Frankental’s testimony at the Kafr Qasim Trial, 1.5.1957, (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Shalom Ofer’s affidavit in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 22.7.1957, p.2, OPTUA, 46.21/12, Akevot, Kaft Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. On the Sèvres agreement and the lead-up to the Suez war see Yagil Henkin, *The 1956 Suez War and the New World Order in the Middle East: Exodus in Reverse*, (Lanham: Lexington, 2015), pp. 94-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Interview with Abraham Tamir, 10.10.2002. Interviewer: Boaz Lev-Tov, Yitzhak Rabin Center, pp.32-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Mordechai Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra: HaDerech Lemivtsa Kadesh, 1956* [Challenge and quarrel: the road to the Sinai Campaign, 1956] (Beer Sheba: Hamerkaz LeMoreshet Ben Gurion, 1991), p. 279 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Special IDF General Staff Session, October 25, 1956, file 102/199/2005, IDF Archives [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Quoted in Avi Shlaim, "The Protocol of Sèvres,1956: Anatomy of a War Plot", in David Tal (Ed.), *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 141 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. It is true that some in the British leadership did think, or at least told Ben Gurion as much, that Jordan is an artificial country which "is not viable", but it wasn't a green light for action: as he told the Israeli government, they also said "they don't think it's [the disintegration] is an issue of a day or two, but a general issue" (Israeli Government meeting, October 28, 1956, INA file ISA-PMO-GovernmentMeeting-0002eeh. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Israeli Government meeting, October 28, 1956, INA file ISA-PMO-GovernmentMeeting-0002eeh [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Col. Shaike Gavish, CO Op. Branch, to OC Northern Command, "Planning of the "Maoz" plan" [Hebrew], October 19, 1956, file 43/171/1959, IDF Archives. See also the "Maoz" order from that date, file 218/157/1959, IDF Archives. See also the Maoz defense plan of the northern command from October 27th, 1956 in file L/45/15, Israeli police archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. IDF Northern Command, "Operation "Kadesh" – Operation Order no. 1", October 27th, 1956, file 53/171/1959, IDF Archives; IDF Central Command, "Operation 'Kadesh'" – operation order no. 1", October 27th, 1956, fle 743/1034/1965, IDF archives; IDF Northern Command, "Operation "Bridge": 3rd brigade to prepare the Bnot Yaakov bridge for demolition on the night of October 29/30, 1956", File 44/171/1959, IDF Archives. See also the documents describing the operational plans of the Northern Command for October 30-31 1956, File 44/171/1959, IDF archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Chief Superintendent [Shmuel] Eitan, to IDF History Branch, 12 November 1958, file 143/79/2006, IDF Archives [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. IDF Central Command, "Summary of Operation 'Kadesh'", Nov. 1956, File 734/1034/1965, IDF Archives. Most of the sub-commanders were not privy to the details of the deception. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. IDF Central Command, "Summary of "Kadesh"", December 24th, 1956, File 331/79/2006, IDF Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. IDF Staff Branch/Operations to Chief of Staff, "A summary of "Qtura" Operation Order", March 26th, 1956, file 7/776/1958, IDF Archives. There was also a contingency plan for an Israeli offensive, operation "Ishmael", but it was never put into action. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. The plan was not concerned with with infiltrators – to counter infiltration during wartime there were other plans, such as "Snake" (Nahash) and "Pseudocerastes" (Shfifon). IDF 17th infantry brigade, "Operation 'Kadesh' – final report", December 1956, File 331/79/2006, IDF Archives; Joseph Hoter Yishai, Operations Officer Regional Defense, "Plan "Shfifon" – Operation order no. 1.". n.d. (October 1956), both documents in File 331/79/2006, IDF Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. File 2002/1147/18, IDF Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Israeli Police/Border Police, "summary of a staff conference held at the Border Police HQ, 271200", October 27, 1956, file L/44/11, Israeli Police Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. 17th Infantry Brigade, "Qtura plan no. 1" (see footnote 35 above) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Lt. Col. Shmuel Melinki, CO 2nd battalion Border Police, "Organization of the battalion in full subordination to the IDF", October 29th, 1956, File L/51/4, Israeli Police Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Shmuel Melinki, CO 2nd Battalion Border Police, "Warning order for operation "Mole", October 27th, 1956, File L/73/12, Israeli Police Archives; Yehuda Frankental, CO E ("H") company, 2nd battalion, Border Police, "Operation Order – "Mole", October 27th, 1956, File L/73/30, Israeli Police Archives; Yehuda Frankental, CO E ("H") company, 2nd battalion, Border Police, corrections to Operation Order "Mole", October 29th, 1956, File L73/13, Israeli Police Archives. It should be said that at least one version of the "Mole" plan is still classified in the IDF Archives. While of course we didn't have access to that version, we believe that since the declassified version is what the soldiers and officers were familiar with, and so our conclusions remain valid. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. IDF 16th regional brigade (Jerusalem brigade), "Operation "Kadesh" – Operation order no. 1", October 28th, 1956, File 743/1034/1965, IDF Archives and File L/44/12, Israeli Police Archive.; Eitan to IDF history branch, November 12th, 1958; Interview with Abraham Tamir, 10.10.2002. Interviewer: Boaz Lev-Tov, Rabin Center, p.33. Shmuel Melinki, CO 2nd Battalion Border Police, "Warning order for operation "Mole", October 27th, 1956, File L/73/12, Israeli Police Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Yehuda Frankental, CO E ("H") company, 2nd battalion, Border Police, "Operation Order – "Mole", October 27th, 1956, File L/73/30, Israeli Police archives. Yehuda Frankental, CO E ("H") company, 2nd battalion, Border Police, "Protocol of an operation conference on 28.10.56, 2040 hours", October 30th, 1956, File L/73/15, Israeli Police Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. See Mordechai Bar-On, *Keshe-ha-Tsava heflif Madav: Perakim be-Hitpathut Tsahal ba-Shanim ha-Rishonot aharei Milhemet ha-Atsma’ut*  [*When the army changed its uniforms: chapters in the development of the IDF after the Independence War, 1949-1956*, (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2017), pp. 227-236. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Melinki, "Warning Order for Operation "Mole", October 27, 1956, as well as appendix no. 1 (intelligence); Frankental, "Operation Order – Mole", October 27th, 1956; Manashes’ testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 25.7.1957, pp.44,51, OPTUA, 46.25/14, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Melinki, "Warning Order for Operation "Mole". The operation order was written in the standard procedure of the time, and in the company commander's version (but not the battalion commander's version, which referred to the intelligence appendix without elaborating) it listed the villagers under "2. Enemy – The residents of the Arab villages", referring to the intelligence brief – and, as said earlier, Israeli intelligence suspected that in an emergency the villagers would turn over to the enemy. Frankental, "Operation Order – Mole", October 27th, 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. During the 1948 Independence war, some Arabs were concentrated in "security areas" inside Israeli cities, and confined to a guarded, fenced neighborhood or area. See Adam Raz, " When Israel Placed Arabs in Ghettos Fenced by Barbed Wire", *Haaretz*, May 27th, 2020, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-when-israel-placed-arabs-in-ghettos-fenced-by-barbed-wire-1.8877340. See also Jacques Kano *Be’ayat ha-Karka ba-Sihsuh ha-leumi bein Yehudim ve-Aravim, 1917-1990* [“The Problem of Land in the National Conflict between Jews and Arabs*, 1917-1990*](Raanana: Hakibutz Hameuhad/Sifriyat Poalim, 1992), pp. 72-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Fodor’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 29.4.1957, pp.46-47, OPTUA, 46.21/2-3, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection; 16th Infantry Brigade to 1st Battalion, Border Police, "Operation "Kadesh" – Order no. 1", October 29th, 1956, File L/44/12, Israeli Police Archive; "Kadesh and the Battalion no. 3", Border Police Command (N.D., 1959), Israeli Border Police Archives; Border Police Command, "The Order of battle of the 1st battalion towards the entrance into Gaza", January 1959, Israeli Border Police Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Tzur’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 28.7.1957, p.64 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Melinki’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 26.6.1957, pp.61-62, Shadmi’s testimony, 3.4.1957, p.33, Marat’s testimony, 13.5.1957, p.87 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Benny Morris, *1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 120-121, 136, 290-292, 301-310. Yoav Gelber, *Komemiyut ve-Nakba*, pp. 168-171, 176-185, 245-249, 281-292, 347-362.On the evacuation and expulsion of Ashkelon (Majdal) see Benny Morris, *Jews and Arabs in Palestine/Israel, 1936-1956* [Hebrew], 3rd edition (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), pp. 149-174. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Such was the case in two villages in the demilitarized zone in the north. In the end, the villagers were evacuated to Syria during the Sinai war, without any use of force – but they had made clear earlier in many opportunities that they saw themselves as Syrians and preferred evacuation to Syria to resettlement inside Israel. See documents concerning the villages of Kard-el-Bakra and Kard-el-Aniema, ISA, Files ISA-PMO-ArabAffairsAdvisor-000fbl4, ISA-PMO-ArabAffairsAdvisor-000fbl6 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Tzur’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 28.7.1957, p.76, Shadmi’s testimony, 3.4.1957, p.31 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives); Lt. Gen. Moshe Dayan, Lt. Col. Shaul Pinchuk and Lt. Col. Amichai Tzur to the Rosen Committee (The Committee of Three), 14.11.1958, pp.1-3, Israeli State Archives, 7903/50a; Marat’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 8.5.1957, OPTUA, 46.21/3-4, pp.32-33, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Interview with Abraham Tamir, 10.10.2002. Interviewer: Boaz Lev-Tov, Rabin Center, p.34. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Israeli Police, Haifa District, "Declaration of a closed military zone in the area of Damon", October 27th, 1956, and IDF Northern Command, Military Governor, "Activation of regulation 125 on Acre and Qafr Kama", October 28th, 1956, both in File 44/171/1959, IDF Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Interview with Lt. Col. Yissacher (“Yischa”) Shadmi, 4.5.1998. First conversation, גל 13/15557, p.28, Israel State Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Shadmi’s testimony to the Nishri Committee, 30.10.1956, OPTUA, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. And compare with his testimony at the Kafr Qasim Trial, 9.4.1957, pp.34-35, 97 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Zalman Marat, "The Central Area in Emergency (1)", October 27th, 1956, File L/59/9, Israeli Police Archives. Marat's letter helps to explain "Mole" in an additional way: “Mole” lists, but does not explain, the number of "suspected residents" and "combat manpower" in each village. The latter was usually between 1/3 and 1/4 of the men aged 16-50. Marat's letter mentions an "A list" of "smugglers and spies", which is probably the same as "suspected residents", and "B list" of "leaders, commanders, influencers, those with a military profession" – probably former soldiers and policemen in British mandatory Forces, or former fighters in the 1948 war. His letter also elaborated that residents of "lone homes and small ruins" would be moved into the large villages during the emergency. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Ibid. This letter, for some reason, was replicated verbatim by Melinki on October 30, one day after the massacre, and sent to the company commanders. See: Yissakhar Shadmi, "Orders concerning behavior with the civilians of the martial law (this order cancels the former one)", October 30, 1956; Shmuel Melinki, "orders concerning treatment of civilians under martial law ", October 30, 1956, both documents in File L/59/9, Israeli Police Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Melinki to Ben Gurion, 19.12.1956, p.2, Shmuel Melinki Papers (family possession, given to the authors with the courtesy of Dr. Hili Ratzon). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Frankental’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 1.5.1957, p.91, OPTUA, 46.21/3, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. The general "Mole" plan, in Melinki's version, specified only six roadblocks, all on main routes, disrupting movement between Arab villages in the area or the entrance/exit from the area (including a roadblock east of the Arab village of Tira, between the village and Jordan, but not between Tira and the nearby Jewish villages), but did not specify blocking positions outside the villages, which, apparently from Frankental's version of "Mole", was left to the company commanders to plan. In Frankental's plan for Qalansawa, the main force entering the village would be coming from the east – meaning, of course, that the route to Jordan will be closed. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Haim Levi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 2.5.1957, pp.113-115, and compare with Dahan’s testimony, 18.7.1957, p.7 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives); Yaron London, “*Ha-pekuda ha-ahrona shel Rav Seren Melinki*” (The last order of Maj. Melinki), *Yedioth Ahronot*, 28.10.1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Frankental’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 1.5.1957, p.87 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Fodor’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 29.4.1957, pp.51-53, Frankental’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 1.5.1957, pp.86-87, Tyomkin’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 17.6.1957, pp.4, 25a, Melinki’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 1.7.1957, p.21, Stahl’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 9.7.1957, p.55, Hollander’s testimony in the Kfar Qasim Trial, p.7, OPTUA, 46.21/3, 46.21/7, 46.21/9, 46.21/10, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Shmuel Yazerski’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 18.7.1957, pp.55-56, Shalom Ofer’s affidavit, 22.7.1957, pp.2-3, OPTUA, 46.21/11-12, 46.21/12, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Benjamin’s Cole testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 8.7.1957, pp. 11, 16-17, 27-29, and compare with David Goldfeld’s testimony, 9.5.1957, pp.16, 19-20, OPTUA, 46.21/10, 46.21/4, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection, as well as Cole’s testimony half a century later in Dalia Kerpel, “*Tevah Kefar-Kasem: anahnu lo yarinu*” [The Kafr Qasim Massacre: we didn’t shoot], *Haaretz*, 5.10.2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Levi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 30.4.1957, pp.49-51, 66-67, Tyomkin’s testimony, 17.6.1957, pp.113-115 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives), Compare with Hollander’s testimony, 11.7.1957, p.27, OPTUA, 46.21/3, 46.21/10-11, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Alexandroni’s testimony to the Military Police, 1.11.1956, and compare with Melinki’s testimony to the Zohar Committee (undated), p.1, SMP, and in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 27.6.1957, p.53, OPTUA, 46.21/9, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Marat’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim trial, 8.5.1957, pp.47-48, 56, 14.5.1957, pp.12-14, and with Shaham’s testimony, 11.6.1957, p.63, OPUTA, 46.21/3-4, 46.21/4-5, 46.21-7, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Aryeh Alexandroni, deputy commander 2nd battalion, Border Police, "Conference of battalion's officers, protocol, from 29.10.1956", October 29th, 1956, File L/73/15, Israeli Police Archive; Melinki to Ben Gurion, 19.2.1956, p.2, SMP. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Harari’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 25.4.1957, pp.22, 28, OPTUA, 46.21/2, Shaham’s testimony, 11.6.1957, pp. 14-15, 63 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). Marat, backed by the General Staff, rejected a similar request to evacuate residents from a handful of houses in the village of Bak’aa al Gharbiya, in line with the orders General Staff. See: Marat’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 8.5.1957, p.56, Levi’s testimony, 7.5.1957, p.37 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Compare with Levi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 7.5.1957, p.30-33, 36, 2.5.1957, pp.135, 138 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives).The roads towards Jordan were blocked also in Kafr Bara, Tira and Jaljulia. See: Lampert’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 25.7.1957, pp.34-35, 70, 81, Manshes’ testimony, 25.7.1957, p.45, Cole’s testimony, 8.7.1957, p.117 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives), corroborated by Melinki’s version of operation mole, L73/12, p.2, Israeli Police Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Alexandroni’s testimony to the Military Police, 1.11.1956, SMP, Tzur’s testimony to the Rosen Committee (Committee of the Three), 6.11.1958, Ben Gurion’s testimony to the Rosen Committee, 10.11.1958, Israeli State Archives, 7903/50a, Shadmi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 3.4.1958, pp.11, 41, Wadih Ahmad Sarsur’s testimony, 15.5.1957, p.67, Shaham’s testimony, 11.6.1957, p,28, Melinki’s testimony, 26.6.1957, pp.7-12, OPTUA, 46.21/1, 46.21-4, 46.21/7, 46.21/9, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Melinki’s testimony to the Zohar Committee (undated), pp.1-5, SMP, and in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 26.6.1957, pp.8-12, OPTUA, 41.26/9, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection; Melinki to Ben Gurion, 19.12.1956, pp.2-3, SMP. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Melinki’s testimony to the Nishri Committee, 30.10.1956, p.1, SMP, and in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 26.6.1957, pp.8-12, OPTUA, 46.21/9, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection, Tzur’s testimony in the Zohar Committee, 29.1.1957, p.3 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives) ; Melinki to Ben Gurion, 19.12.1956, pp.2-3, SMP. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Levi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 30.4.1957, pp.4-6, 48-49-52, Frankental’s testimony, pp.3-4, 37, Melinki’s testimony, 26.6.1957, p.13, OPTUA, 46.21/3, 46.21/9, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Frankental’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 1.5.1957, p.8, 25-26, 96, compare with Stahl’s testimony, 9.7.1957, pp.52-54, 66-69, Hollander’s testimony, 10.7.1957, p.8, OPTUA, 46.21/3, 46.21/10, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. Frankental’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 1.5.1957, p.91, OPTUA, 46.21/3, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Melinki’s testimony to the Zohar Committee (undated), pp.4-5, SMP, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. Melinki’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 26.6.1957, p.13, and compare with Levi’s testimony, 30.4.1957, pp.48-49, OPUTA, 46.21/9, 46.21/3, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Tyomkin’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 17.6.1957, p.22, and compare with Hollander’s testimony, 10.7.1957, p.12, OPTUA, 46.21/7, 46.21/10, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection, and as quoted by Raz, *Tevah*, p.120. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Shmuel Pecker’s testimonies in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 24.4.1956, pp.14-15, 74-76, Meir’s testimony, 25.4.1956, pp.41-42, Melinki’s testimony, p.26, OPTUA, 46.21/2, 46.21/9; Defense closing argument in Shadmi’s trial, 12.2.1959, pp.24-27, Israeli State Archives 938/10-פ, Shadmi’s trial – judgement, pp.871-872, SMP, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. Raz, *Tevah*, pp.139-168. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. In the morning after the massacre, Ofer boasted about the killings and described them in detail to other policemen over breakfast. Lt. Menashes called him “a murderer” and a row broke out. See: Menashes’ testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 25.7.1957, pp.17,37, OPTUA, 46.25/14, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. Raz, *Tevah*, pp.147-149. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Rosenthal, “Mi harag”, in Rosenthal, *Kefar Qasem*, p.31. Compare with the testimony of Mahmoud Muhammad Freij in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 3.6.1957, p.51, and Hana Suleiman ‘Amer, 10.6.1957, pp.58-67, OPTUA, 46.21/7, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. Testimony of Shaker Abdullah Issa to Latif Dori, 3.11.1956, Kafr Qasim Archives, courtesy of Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur; Dahan’s testimony to the Zohar Committee (undated), SMP, Dahan’s testimony to Captain Haim Levi, [probably 29.10.1956], pp.1-2, SMP. In the trial, Goldfeld refused to testify about the affair. See: David Goldfeld’s testimony, 9.5.1957, p.11, OPTUA, 46.21/4, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. See also Raz, *Tevah*, pp.163-165. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. Shim’on Kotler’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 27.3.1957, pp.120-121, Mordechai Eliraz’s testimony, 8.12.1957, pp.32, 40-42, OPTUA, 46.25/16, Kfar Qasim Trial, judgement, 13.10.1958, pp.18-19, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection; Verdict, p.120; Raz, *Tevah*, p.159. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Chaim Sprechmann’s testimony, 17.7.1957, pp.4-5b, OPTUA, 46.21/11, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Melinki’s testimony to the Nishri Committee, 30.10.1956, p.2, Levi’s testimony, 30.10.1956, pp.1-2, SMP, and in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 30.4.1957, pp.6-7, 48, Harari’s testimony, 24.4.1956, p.30, Yaakov Nishri’s testimony, 24.6.1957, p.142, Melinki’s testimony, p.33, Dahan’s affidavit, 18.7.1957, p.5a, Fruber’s testimony, 30.7.1957, p.92, OPTUA, 46.21/2, 46.21/2-3, 46.21/3, 46.21/8, 46.21/9, 46.21/11-12, Kafr Qasim Trial, judgement, 13.10.1958, p.8, SMP, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection; Rosenthal, “Mi harag”, in Rosenthal, *Kefar Kasem*, p.32. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. Shadmi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim trial, 3.4.1957, p.67, Harari’s testimony, 24.4.1956, p.30, Yaakov Nishri’s testimony, 24.6.1957, pp.164-165, and 25.6.1957, pp.33, 43, Melinki’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 26.6.1957, pp.39-40, OPTUA, 46.21/1, 46.21/2, 46.21/8, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Shadmi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim trial, 4.4.1957, p.15, Melinki’s testimony, 26.6.1957, pp.47-48, OPUTA, 46.21/1, 46.21/9, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Alexandroni’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 8.5.1957, pp.23-24, and compare with Marat’s testimony on the same day, pp.33, 92, and on 14.5.1957, pp.48-50, OPTUA, 46.21/3-4, 46.21/4-5, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Marat’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 15.5.1957, p.46 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. Kafr Qasim Trial, judgement, pp.67-68, SMP, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. The victim was an elderly guard who returned to the village from the fields. See: Manshes’ testimony, 24.7.1957, pp.5-7, 25.7.1957, p.32, and compare with the (less reliable) testimony of the shooting policeman, David Mizrahi, 31.7.1957, pp.66-72, who retrospectively distorted Menashes’ orders in order to justify his behavior, OPTUA, 46.25/14, 46.25/15, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Lampert’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 25.7.1957, pp.60-60a, 63-64, 29.7.1957, pp.24-26, 28-30, OPTUA, 46.25/14, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. In his testimony （29.7, p.46） Lampert also said that he was a little embarrassed that in his village nobody was killed, as if “he had lacked masculinity.” On the debate whether Levi’s moderation order reached Lampert, see: Prosecution closing argument in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 5.11.1957, pp.3-4, OPTUA, 46.25/16, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Stahl’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 9.7.1957, pp.52-54, Hollander’s testimony, 10.7.1957, pp.8-9, OPTUA, 46.21/10, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Hollander testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 10.7.1957, pp.24-25, 34, 67, Giv’ati’s testimony, 11.7.1957, p.73, Leizerovich’s testimony, 15.7.1957, p.11, 42, OPTUA, 46.21/10, 46.21/10-11, 46.21/11, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Leizerovich’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 15.7.1957, pp.14-15, pp.73-74, OPTUA, 46.21/11, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. Hollander and Giv’ati’s testimonies in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 11.7.1957, pp.26, 73, Leizerovich’s testimony, 15.7.1957, pp.51-52, OPTUA, 46.21/10-11, 46.21/11, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. Frankental received Melinki and Levi’s “moderation order” only at 18:15, and there was ample time to kill villagers beforehand. see Fruber’s testimony, 30.7.1956, OPTUA, 46.25/14, p.109. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. Dahan’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 28.3.1957, p.159, David Goldfeld’s and Yaakov Haskel’s testimonies, 9.5.1957, pp.38, 96, Hollander’s testimony, 10.7.1957, pp.9-12, 11.7.1957, pp.7, 22, OPTUA, 46.21/1, 46.21/4, 46.21/10, 46.21/10-11 Akevot, Kafr Qasim collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. Shai Amiram’s testimony, 18.7.1957, p.26, OPTUA, 46.21/11-12, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Tzur’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 29.7.1957, p.71, Levi’s testimony, 2.5.1957, p.112 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives); Shaham’s testimony, 12.6.1957, p.46, Tyomkin’s testimony, 17.6.1957, p.4, Stahl’s testimony, 9.7.1957, p.55, Hollander’s testimony, p.7, OPTUA, 46.21/7, 46.21/10, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. Shadmi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 3.4.1957, pp.81, 97, 100, OPUTA, 46.21/1, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. Melinki’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 4.7.1957, p.58, OPUTA, 46.21/9, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. Fodor’s testimony, 29.4.1957, pp.51-53, OPTUA, 46.21/2-3, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. Defense concluding arguments (Atty. Gideon Hasid), 5.1.1958, p.6, OPTUA, 46.25/16, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. Hollander’s testimony, 11.7.1957, p.23, OPTUA, 46.21/10-11, Kafr Qasim judgement, 13.10.1958, pp.35-48, SMP, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Closing argument of the prosecution in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 11.11.1957, p.5, OPTUA, 46.25/16, Akevot, Kafr Qasim Collection. Frankental’s thorough planning and preparations are also documented in Operations Diary of his company (29.10.1956), kept in the Border Police Heritage Museum (Beit Morshet Mishmar ha-Gevul). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Daniel J. Hughes (Ed.), *Moltke on the art of war* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), p. 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Eitan Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the U.S., British, and Israeli Armies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 198 [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Shadmi’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 8.4.1957, p.87 (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. His orders were, in effect, following the intent of the original "Mole" plan of the battalion, "preventing the minorities in the battalion's area from becoming a negative security [problem]" during the Emergency, but he prevented casualties while fulfilling that mission. Yehuda Frankental, CO E ("H") company, 2nd battalion, Border Police, "Operation Order – "Mole", October 27th, 1956, File L/73/30, Israeli Police Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Ben Gurion’s Diary, 30.10.1956, Ben Gurion Archive. And compare with the interview with Abraham Tamir, 10.10.2002. Interviewer: Boaz Lev-Tov, Rabin Center, p.35. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. It seems that this was a consistent approach: seven years earlier, Ben Gurion harshly condemned the members of the Kangaroo court that executed an innocent Israeli officer, Meir Tovianski, on a false claim of espionage. However, the head of military intelligence, who planned and organized the execution, was sentenced to one day in prison and a small fine, and other members of the court went unpunished. As in the Kafr Qasm case, here was a distance between the rhetoric and the actions of Ben Gurion in cases involving military personnel. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. E.g. Donald C. Daniel and Katherine L. Herbig (Eds.), *Strategic Military Deception* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981); Richards J. Heuer, "Strategic Deception and Counterdeception: A Cognitive Process Approach", *International Studies Quarterly*, 25(2), 1981, pp. 294-327; Isaac Wanasika and Terry Adler, "Deception as Strategy: Context and Dynamics*", Journal of Managerial Issues*, 23(3), 2011, pp. 364-378 is also useful. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. In this sense, Maj. Gen. Tzur’s assurance that “there was no room for difference between what [the high command] understood and what someone [in the field] thought” was both naïve and dangerous. See: Tzur’s testimony in the Kafr Qasim Trial, 28.7.1957, (new release, July 2022, IDF Archives). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. Interestingly, Melinki has claimed that in his first conversation with Shadmi after the massacre, the later had told him: "What a catastrophe! It could ruin the plan in the south. Had it happened tomorrow I wouldn't care" (Melinki to Ben Gurion, 19.12.1956, also quoted in Raz, *Tevah*, p.183). If this quotation is true, then Shadmi definitely understood that such a massacre was, from an operational viewpoint, against Israeli interests and goals – which of course also shows that he failed to convey his intent to his subordinates. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. Raz, *Tevah*, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. Ibid., p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. Ibid., p. 96 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. Ibid, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. For example, Melinki claims that Lt. Gabriel Dahan, the lead perpetrator of the massacre, was, during the British mandate period, a member of the IZL organization, hated by Ben-Gurion, and participated in the 1946 execution of two hostage British soldiers. He also noted that a section leader who participated in the massacre was also former IZL member. To our best knowledge, none of this was true, and probably was written to exploit Ben-Gurion's well-known hatred of the IZL. Melinki to Ben Gurion, 19.12.1956, courtesy of Dr. Hili Ratzon. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. See Yemima Rhosental (ed.) *Yitzhak Rabin: Prime Minister of Israel, 1974-1977, 1992-1995: selected documents*, Vol. 1 1922-1967, Jerusalem: Israel State Archives, 2005, p. 178 [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. The main route in the area was Kafr-Qasm-Mesha-Khares (Where Israeli Road #5 passes today). The hilly terrain meant that armored or mechanized movement was mostly limited to that road; therefore, any concentration of refugees on the road would disrupt Israeli (or Jordanian) advance. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. This is a well-known phenomena in many wars. For example, The 1957 US army Field Manual FM 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations* (Washington DC: Department of the Army), Section VII, noted that " disorganized masses of refugees and displaced persons resulting from military operations seriously impair the maneuverability of military units, endanger security, and threaten the health of the military force. In addition, refugees and displaced persons constitute a potent weapon which the enemy may use to disrupt friendly military operations". Thirty years after the massacre, one policeman claimed that the "official order" came from the "minister of defense" and was "to remove the Arabs from the area so they will serve as a barrier against enemy tanks". This is quoted by Raz (Tevah, p.120n.191) however without noticing that, even if we are to trust this hearsay, this could happen only in a defensive situation, not an offensive one. Of course, even if such an idea existed, this only reinforces the fact it was nothing but part of the deception. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. Some of the defendants in the massacre trial have said so explicitly. See Raz, *Tevah*, p.120. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. Some soldiers with trucks were definitely all that Major General Itzhak Rabin, Commanding officer of the Northern Command, needed when he decided to use the war as an opportunity to move to Syria some 2,000 Arab villagers from two villages in the demilitarized zones between Israel and Syria. See General Staff Meeting, April 12, 1956, IDF Archives, also quoted in Rosenthal (Ed.), *Yitzhak Rabin*, Vol. 1 pp. 179-180; Yitzhak Rabin, *Service Notebook (*Hebrew), Tel-Aviv: Maariv, 1979, Vol. 1. P. 97; Yossi Goldstein, *Rabin: Biography* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Shoken, 2006), pp. 102-103; and documents in files ISA-PMO-ArabAffairsAdvisor-000fbl4 and ISA-PMO-ArabAffairsAdvisor-000fbl6, Israeli State Archives (ISA). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)