
Women, Violence, and the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39*



Matthew Hughes

Abstract

This new history brings women center-stage to the Arab revolt (1936–39) in Palestine and asks three related questions: how did Britain's colonial pacification affect women, what part did women play thereof, and how did soldiers treat women? This includes discussion of sexual assault. It does this through deep mining of multilingual sources. The article argues that British soldiers eschewed sexual violence towards women, but military pacification had considerable oppressive effects on women as a target population during counter-insurgency. The analysis suggests more broadly that national-military cultures prompt armies in war zones to treat women differently, making brief reference to Israel today.

Women and Revolt

The Arab revolt was a popular Palestinian rebellion in Mandate Palestine from April 1936 to late 1939 against British rule and Jewish immigration, supported by Arab fighters from neighboring countries such as Syria. Britain suppressed the revolt with a huge deployment of troops: some sixty infantry battalions and armored units

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rotated through Palestine during the counter-insurgency up to September 1939, alongside extensive support corps deployment, airmen, and land-based naval units from Royal Navy ships in Haifa port.¹ If Arabic-language sources on the Arab revolt are exiguous when compared with English- and Hebrew-language ones, material on women's part in the revolt is even rarer (in any language) and if mentioned in the literature, it is as a footnote to the insurgency.² Ted Swedenburg's book on the revolt and Sonia Fathi al-Nimr's (unpublished) doctoral thesis are notable exceptions here, as is Ellen Fleischmann's study of middle-class women in Palestine.³ In general, women appear tangentially or not at all, both contemporaneously and in the later literature that elides women's encounter with pacification. Arabic-language histories recount the stories of men for whom there are better records of events.⁴ Certainly, the British shot limited numbers of women, there were few (just one) named female fighters, sexual violence was muted, and rebels did not utilize women to, say, plant bombs, as Front de Libération Nationale insurgents did in Algeria in the 1950s, but this does not mean that women escaped the violence. Palestine-based British Army intelligence officer Tony Simonds's memory that "female terrorists were almost unknown" discounts the broader part that women played after 1936, one that this essay seeks to explore.⁵

1. For the British military order-of-battle, see Matthew Hughes, *Britain's Pacification of Palestine: The British Army, the Colonial State and the Arab Revolt, 1936–39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), Appendix A. For recent studies of the Arab revolt, see Matthew Kelly, *The Crime of Nationalism: Britain, Palestine, and Nation-Building on the Fringe of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017); and Steven Wagner, *Statecraft by Stealth: How Britain Ruled Palestine 1917–40* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019).

2. Pace Ted Swedenburg's *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), which devotes a chapter to women in the revolt, and Ellen Fleischmann's examination of middle-class women in her *The Nation and Its "New" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). There is also useful information on women's roles in Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement. From Riots to Rebellion*, vol. 2, 1929–1939 (London: Cass, 1977); and Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, *Falahim ba-Mered ha-Arabi be-eretz Yisrael, 1936–39* [Falahin during the Arab Revolt in the Land of Israel] (Tel Aviv: Shiloh Institute, Tel Aviv University, 1978). For discussion of Arabic-language source material, see Hughes, *Pacification of Palestine*, 1–35.

3. Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt*; Sonia Fathi el-Nimr, "The Arab Revolt in Palestine: A Study Based on Oral Sources" (doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 1990); Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*.

4. 'Naji Allush, *Al-Muqawama al-Arabiyya fi Filastin, 1917–48* [The Arab Resistance in Palestine, 1917–1948] (Beirut: Attaliya, 1969); Mustafa Kabha, *Thawrat 1936 al-Kubra* [The Great Revolt of 1936] (Nazareth: Maktabat al-Kabs, 1988); Yusuf Rajab, *Thawrat 1936–1939 fi-Filastin: Dirasa Askariyya* [Revolt of 1936–1939 in Palestine: A Military Study] (Beirut: Institute of Arab Research, 1982); Subhi Yasin, *Al-Thawra al-Arabiyya al-Kubra (fi Filastin) 1936–1939* [The Great Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–1939] (Damascus: Shafa 'Amr Haifa, 1959).

5. Typed Memoir, Pieces of War, p. 136, Simonds Papers, 08/46/1, I[mperial] W[ar] M[useum] D[ocuments], London.



*The Scots Guard parade
by Jerusalem's old city
walls. [Library of
Congress]*

This article is a new history of women and insurgency in Palestine, building on Fleischmann's work on elite, urban women's part in the revolt to include the rural peasantry who were the "primary face" of the national movement and the revolt.⁶ This study focuses on rural women in the revolt as the countryside was the "womb" of a three-year rural "farmers' revolt," attached to which was a discrete secondary urban-based general strike in 1936.⁷ The argument here is that the revolt was at its heart a rural insurgency. There is a hidden history that may never be told in full of largely illiterate rural women who took part in a huge revolt as victims, warriors, and supporters.⁸ From house destruction to beatings, shootings, and violence, Palestinian women were caught up in British military pacification.

6. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*; Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 151.

7. Ghassan Kanafani, "Thawrat 1936–1939 fi Filastin: Khalfiyat, tafasil wa tahlil" [The 1936–1939 Revolt in Palestine: Background, Details and Analysis], *Shu'un Filastinyya* [Palestinian Matters] 6 (January 1972): 67–69; Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 106–8.

8. Just 11 percent of Muslim Palestinians could read in 1931, compared with 72 percent of Jews and 48 percent of Christians, and 88 percent of the literate Muslims were male: *Statistical Abstract of Palestine, 1937–38* (Jerusalem: Office of Statistics, 1938), 14.

Myriad village women joined rural *faz'a* alarm calls⁹ for intervillage mutual help in a conflict to support rebel forces, as when rebel band leader Fawzi al-Qawuqji escaped closing Army pincers in October 1936. Women protected their villages and resisted security force searches, and were beaten up and, occasionally, shot for their troubles. They paid government fines imposed for resistance with their dowries, four £P.5 notes in one case, and this was from villagers among whom a wage of £P.3–4 per month was considered a “large sum”; a £P.20 dowry equaled 250 days’ laboring by a village man at 80 mils per diem.¹⁰ Heavy fining and extensive village demolitions by British forces directly impacted the lives of Palestinian women, as did the mass detention of village menfolk.

The history here demonstrates that women played their part in revolt and pacification, both as subjects of attritional imperial control and as active agents of rebellion. Violence (or the fear of it) against Palestinian women increased the population-centric terror to British operations; rebels’ use of women to avoid security force searches helped the national struggle; women supporting their menfolk or as warriors themselves added to rebel fighting power; there were also incidences of men dressing up as women to avoid capture or carry out assassinations. The evidence here from an extensive range of archives opens a window for future enquiry as much as it answers questions, for military, Israeli-Palestinian, and gender history; more source material and creative methodologies, neither of which seems to be readily available, are needed to tell this untold story. This article puts Palestinian women to the fore: as victims of British pacification—including charges of sexual violence—but also as colonial subjects and resisters. It casts as wide a net as possible to include soldiers’ accounts as the British played such a large part in the violence after 1936, and it comments on how servicemen viewed and interacted with local women when stationed in Palestine. Rebel insurgent (so Arab-Palestinian) forces also attacked women—Palestinian and Jewish—as briefly mentioned here. The article includes some discussion on the sartorial side to the revolt as it affected women, filling out the picture of the impact of a period of insurgency on women’s lives by touching upon the role that social class as well as gender had to play during violent times. The empirical data on women and revolt will support comparative military case studies of different armed forces and their interactions with women in conflict zones. This boosts future theoretical studies on gender and violence more broadly understood. The methodology on the charged topic of sexual violence in the first section of analysis below has been to anonymize the victims of the sexual assault but not the alleged perpetrators as naming individuals throws light on the systemization of sexual violence. Non-British Arab personnel carried out some of the alleged

9. Arabic for a call for help in war, reinforcements, or (colloquially) people called for help in a quarrel.

10. Maj Davies, 2nd RUR, Report by Qadcol, 18 August 1938, Palestine Box, R[oyal] U[lster] R[ifles] Archive Belfast; Appendix: Explanatory Notes, Captured and Translated Arabic Material with Commentary, p. 158, Wingate Papers, Microfilm M2313, B[ritish] L[ibrary], London. There were 1000 mils to the Palestine pound.

sexual assaults on both women and men, a useful fact that can be discerned only by identifying alleged rapists.

As Victims: Sexual Violence

As one British resident of Palestine who was sympathetic to the Palestinian cause put it in the context of tens of thousands of troops in-country, “Rape is rare. There have been a few cases however and one is pending now at Tulkarm or Kalkilieh [Qalqilya] I forget which.”¹¹ Palestinians made allegations of sexual assault but the charges rarely had the specificity and never the amplification of accusations about general brutality, which is not to say that such things never happened, but deep archival mining uncovers scant material evidencing systemic or systematic sexual assault by British troops. Palestinian petitions on government violence and Jerusalem-based Anglican church protests, for instance, extensively highlighted torture and assassinations but not sexual assault. Had there been sexual abuse there is no reason why critics of the security forces would not have raised the issue, at least in broad terms, as Arab agents did against Jewish forces in 1948 after the Dayr Yasin massacre. As readers will see, Palestinians during the revolt raised at times concerns about violence against women, when they thought it a problem, and such charges supported the insurgent propaganda war against the occupying power. The absence (or muting) of sexual assault runs counter to the prevalence of sexual violence in many other conflicts, and more comment is made on this issue in the conclusion to this essay.¹² It tells a story as would the prevalence of such outrages.

Accounts of sexual assault in the form of molestation rather than penetrative rape appear very sporadically in the archives. They might have been the result of clumsy attempts by soldiers to search frightened village women. The claim was often that soldiers touched women’s breasts: “the wife of [AA] of Bir Zeit [Zayt] while on her way to the village spring for water was stopped by a soldier who proceeded to search her and feel her breasts. . . . On the same day, July 6th, 5 women of Bir Zeit were fetching water from the spring to the north of the village. The troops rushed, searched them and shamelessly handled their breasts and bodies in spite of their cries and protests.”¹³ Again, “In another case the soldiers

11. Extract from a Letter from an English Friend in Palestine, Addressed Dear Miss Newton [possibly from S. O. Richardson, Lawyer, Jaffa], 11 January 1939, Lees Papers, 5/9, L[idell] H[art] C[entre] M[ilitary] A[rchives], London.

12. Susan Brownmiller’s (now dated) *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975) argues strongly for the systematization of military (male) sexual violence across all armies, in contrast to the argument presented here that armies deploy violence differently. For a more recent study of the subject of sexual violence (against men and women; with the book starting with the rape of men in prison), see Joanna Bourke, *A History of Rape from 1860 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2007), while for the latest word on sexual violence in Mandate Palestine, see Orna Alyagon Darr’s interesting *Plausible Crime Stories: The Legal History of Sexual Offences in Mandate Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

13. Points 7–8 in President of Bir Zeit Council, File 1, Box 66, GB 165-0161, J[erusalem] & E[ast] Mission Papers, M[idle] E[ast] C[entre], St. Antony’s Oxford.

went in and found an unmarried girl in bed they forcibly took off her vest played with her breasts and tried to assault her but her shrieks attracted the neighbours and this was prevented.”¹⁴ Soldiers made women line up in front of them in a search at Tulkarm and bare their breasts to prove that they were not men.¹⁵

Accounts of rape are hard to find. A semi-autobiographical Arabic-language novella in 1939 written by an insurgent recounts British soldiers arriving in the village of the book’s hero, a Doctor Sabri, and raping his sister during a punishment raid: the “English bequeathed an irreparable stigma. . . stole her virginity.”¹⁶ There is an archival record of an assault by troops who “attempted to attack the honour of the wife of [BB] but she refused and yelled for help and consequently was rescued from the claws of the civilised troops by her village women neighbours.”¹⁷ Another accusation of the rape of a girl was directed at British troops: “[CC] aged 12, raped by the army. She received a dangerous wound on her head which broke the skull.”¹⁸ The Anglican mission in Jerusalem dealt with a gang rape allegation but against three Palestinian (or Arab) policemen, not British soldiers: “They beat me with their rifle butts—laid me on the ground. One sat on my chest and kept my mouth shut, etc., while another assaulted me—then the men changed places; all three had me in turn.”¹⁹ The German press made similar claims, for obvious propaganda reasons, with seven women raped in “Selluan” (so Silwan near Jerusalem) village by soldiers.²⁰ Similarly, Jews claimed that British soldiers molested Jewish women, with one notice entitled “Jewish Youth” proclaiming that British were the same as the Turks, caning and flogging people: “As the barbarian Turks, the British flog the Jewish prisoners on their feet, smashing their genitals, days and night, till they pass out. As the Nazis in Dachau, British officer put his hands on a young Jewish lady’s breasts, threatening her that she would be raped by soldiers. . . . We call to create a special committee to investigate all these cases and save the honour of Britain.”²¹

14. Report by Frances Newton dated 27 June 1938 on Search in Balad esh Sheikh of 24 June 1938, File 3, Box 65, GB 165-0161, J & E Mission Papers, MEC.

15. Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (New York: Owl, 2001), 421.

16. Muhammad Mustafa Ghandur, *Tha’r al-Dam* [Blood Revenge: A Story from the Core of the Events of the Palestinian Revolution by the Pen of the Fighter Muhammad Mustafa Ghandur] (Syria: n.p., 1939), n.p.

17. S.O.S. From Halhool, The Martyr Village (stamped 22 May 1939), in File 1, Box 66, GB 165-0161, J & E Mission Papers, MEC.

18. Allegations of Ill-treatment of Arabs by British Crown Forces in Palestine (translated from the Arabic by Frances Newton, 19 June 1939), p. 144, File 5, Box 65, GB 165-0161, J & E Mission Papers, MEC.

19. Report on Visit to Azzun, 12 May 1938 and Azzun, 16 May 1938 [account of assault on DD, wife of EE, aged about sixteen to eighteen] both in File 1 (quotation from 16 May report, p. 1), Box 66, GB 165-0161, J & E Mission Papers, MEC.

20. Anon., “British Methods in Palestine,” *Yorkshire Post*, 23 November 1938.

21. File 04/-163-B/621: Riots, April 1936 [but actually January 1939–February 1940] [one bundle of papers], Tel Aviv Municipal Archive.

Linguistic and cultural barriers suggest that some fears of assault were misjudged, as when local Palestinian women came to see Miss Hulbert, a British teacher in Bir Zayt [Zeit], crying and complaining about the Army detaining their menfolk for road repairs:

“They are beating them! The soldiers are beating our men!”
“Beating!” exclaimed Miss Hulbert. “How do you mean—like this?” giving an energetic pantomime of two-handed whacking with a stick. “Oh no no!” replied the women. “Only like this”—demonstrating the mildest of pats and pushes; obviously no more than would be necessary to show the men where to go or what to do—not surprising when soldiers and villagers cannot speak each other’s language.²²

Similarly, a soldier who “spoke a little broken Arabic” and “seemed to understand” a young girl during a house search “tried to pat her head, but she shrank away in terror. He shrugged and turned to leave, virtually colliding” with the girl’s panicked mother, assuming the worst of the soldier who was only searching the building.²³

Rebels threatened to attack British women in retaliation for alleged assaults on Palestinian women, but never killed or sexually assaulted anyone, only wounding a Miss Newman, travelling with Royal Air Force Squadron-Leader R. E. Alderson, who was killed in a road ambush in February 1938. Newman was not the rebels’ intended target. (The wounding of a British woman worsened security force punishments delivered to local villages such as Ijzim after the attack.²⁴) In December 1938, rebel leader ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Hajj Muhammad “issued a warning to the effect that if British troops in Palestine kill, assault, or in any way maltreat any Arab woman, reprisals will be taken against English women. This policy has been opposed by some of the rebels and no agreement has yet been reached.”²⁵ Rough handling by troops of village women during search operations might have translated into accusations of sexual assault that were non-sexual in that the primary intent of the assault was punitive, such as removing chattel or evacuating villagers from buildings to be demolished, which women resisted. This might explain incidents such as the one that the national propaganda bureau in Syria claimed in July 1938 when “unknown persons” destroyed a kilometer of the security fence along the Lebanese border, after which troops came to neighboring villages, gathered village men, and took them to the damaged section of fence “and kept them to be tortured for two days” while soldiers searched villages, during which, it was claimed: “The soldiers not only beat women and children, but indecently

22. Diary, p. 27, GB 165-0302, Wilson Papers, MEC.

23. Ghada Karmi, *In Search of Fatima* (2002; London: Verso, 2009), 12–13.

24. Douglas Duff, *Palestine Unveiled* (London: Blackie, 1938), 58–61; Col W. V. Palmer, “The Second Battalion in Palestine,” in *The Queen’s Own Royal West Kent Regiment*, ed. H. D. Chaplin (London: Michael Joseph, 1954), 85.

25. Political Report Syria No. 6, Damascus, 28 December 1938, FO371/23276, p. 150, T[he] N[at]ional A[rchives], London.

assaulted women who violently resisted them. Four women were seriously injured and one miscarriage took place.²⁶ An Army lieutenant, meanwhile, noted the rape of Jewish women in a rebel raid on a *kibbutz*, while intelligence files recorded rebels raping Palestinian women.²⁷ Jewish files on insurgents described the “social tenseness obtaining over this matter in the Arab village public” and noted that had “the gangsters tried to touch the women, there would have been an uproar.”²⁸ Thus, when rebel band leader al-Hajj Muhammad clashed with the Irshaid family, he sent a band that not only killed and robbed family members but also “violated the honour of the women and did other unpleasant things,” after which family members fled the country “with a burning desire to take revenge.”²⁹ This, of course, encouraged intra-communal fighting among Palestinians and so supported British pacification—*divide et impera*.

Elements within British security forces, possibly from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) within the police force, allegedly outsourced some sexual abuse to local proxy forces, with prison guards telling one naked (presumably Arab) female detainee in Bethlehem’s Ladies’ prison whom they had previously tortured, “If you won’t speak, we’ll bring a nigger [meaning an Arab] to rape you,” although the victim recalled that “it seems that they had an order not to rape me.” Guards did, however, molest her.³⁰ A Jewish insurgent’s memoir of her time in Bethlehem jail as a Jewish prisoner is a useful account of life in the prison and is not suggestive of such things, perhaps because the British treated Jewish detainees differently or because such sexual assaults were, indeed, rare.³¹ In an interview with this author in 2009 (in Amman), the rebel fighter Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya (who died in 2012) claimed the rape of male prisoners by non-British security force personnel. The police used “awful” local Arabs to rape male prisoners, employing a “Castero/Kastero” in Jaffa and a “Saleh Alwalaji” in Jerusalem, both subsequently assassinated by the rebels, but “there were others” who detained handsome young Arab men to be sexually abused.³² Arab propaganda made similar claims of male sexual abuse when the Army picked up a Mohamed Abdul Qader al-Yason (Muhammad ‘Abd al-Qader

26. Bulletin issued by Bureau Nationale, Damascus [28 July 1938], File 2, Box 30, Creech Jones Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 332, W[eston] L[ibrary], Oxford.

27. Lt-Col [then Lt] Magill-Cuerden, 004485/05, p. 26, I[mperial] W[ar] M[useum] S[ound] A[rchive], London; Abd el Rahim el Haj Mahmad, *Captured and Translated Arabic Material with Commentary*, p. 33, Wingate Papers, Microfilm M2313, BL.

28. Appendix: Explanatory Notes, *Captured and Translated Arabic Material with Commentary*, p. 119, Wingate Papers, Microfilm M2313, BL.

29. Abd el Rahim el Haj Mahmad, *Captured and Translated Arabic Material with Commentary*, p. 33, Wingate Papers, Microfilm M2313, BL.

30. Case of RL, Arrested 15 May 1936, pp. 7–8, but 122–23 in overall file pagination, File 5, Box 65, GB 165-0161, J & E Mission Papers, MEC. The prison buildings still exist but are now a part of Bethlehem University.

31. Tzila Heller, *Behind Prison Walls: A Jewish Woman Freedom Fighter for Israel’s Independence* (Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV, 1999).

32. Author interview with Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya, Amman, 21 June 2009.



British troops on a main street in Jaffa [Library of Congress]

al-Yasin), a thirty-year-old farmer found in a village not his own.³³ The British in Kenya in the 1950s used local Kenyan black soldiers to sodomize prisoners with various objects, Caroline Elkins claims, as did Israeli security forces more recently whereby a “Captain George,” whose proper name was later revealed, allegedly sodomized a Lebanese suspect, Mustafa Dirani.³⁴

The British strenuously challenged charges of sexual impropriety against women, pointing to Palestinian hyper-sensitivities on any male interactions with women. In September 1936, the Gaza town crier went up and down the main street warning women not to leave their houses, alleging that British soldiers had been visiting homes. The commanding officer of the local unit, the King’s Royal Irish Hussars, wrote to his brigade headquarters, annoyed at accusations of “meditated rape,” pointing out that beyond some accusations of stealing oranges, there had been no “serious misbehaviour by the troops. A few of them, newly arrived from Jerusalem, went for a walk in the town and may or may not have

33. Bulletin No. 210, 4 September 1938, Arab National Bureau in Damascus, FO 371/21880, p. 211, TNA.

34. Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Holt, 2005), 136, 157, 208; Yonah Jeremy Bob, “Supreme Court: Lebanese Terrorist can’t sue Israel for Interrogators’ Alleged Rape,” *Jerusalem Post*, 15 January 2015; Tomer Zarchin and Gili Cohen, “Ex-IDF Investigator Accused of Abuse, Torture of Mustafa Dirani to Sue State,” *Haaretz*, 23 January 2012; Revital Hovel, “Gag Order Lifted,” *Haaretz*, 30 December 2013.

looked at some women. I have since put the town 'Out of Bounds.'"³⁵ As a British policeman told Army officer David Smiley on operation in Palestine in 1940, after they had watched fellow Arab police officers beat and hold lighted cigarettes to the testicles of three village men accused of murder, "It was a golden rule, he added, that women were never questioned or touched."³⁶

In a punitive raid during the revolt, an Army officer, after having candidly described smashing up villages on punitive operations, detailed how he came across a woman, supposedly in labor, so he left: "but I daresay she probably had a couple of rifles hidden under the bed or somewhere. But you know one just didn't molest the women at all. You couldn't touch the women. One just didn't nor did the soldiers. And if she had got stuff hidden there, grenades or anything else, she got away with it. Lucky for her."³⁷ Fleischmann also points to the reluctance of the British to search women, some of whom hid weapons behind the shield of children and babies.³⁸ Security forces behaved differently, many respecting women's "honor," as when Spanish secret police came to search George Orwell's hotel room during the Spanish Civil War where his wife Eileen was in bed (that Orwell was not Spanish must have influenced their actions): "Yet all this time they *never searched the bed*. My wife was lying in bed all the while; obviously there might have been half a dozen sub-machine-guns under the mattress. . . . Yet the detectives made no move to touch the bed, never even looked underneath it. . . . they were also Spaniards, and to turn a woman out of bed was a little too much for them. . . . making the whole search meaningless."³⁹ General Robert Haining in overall command in Palestine emphasized the official view that women "are not molested in any way. They are only searched on occasions when the services of a Police woman searcher are available. . . . Women searchers are occasionally employed as a deterrent against rebels disguising themselves as women, as has happened on several occasions."⁴⁰ Such British witnesses could be lying but they all tell the same story, and they are usually frank about general brutality directed at Palestinians.

Some British servicemen may have been reticent about discussing sexual matters, but others delighted in telling tales about visits to brothels and about how local women were sexual objects. Policeman Jack Binsley saw prostitutes in Gaza, as well as sleeping with Yemeni Jewish women as they were "not so strict" as other Jews.⁴¹ (The British never criminalized prostitution in Palestine.⁴²) Binsley

35. Col Thornton (CO 8th KRI Hussars, Gaza) to HQ 2nd Infantry Brigade (Jaffa), 30 September 1936, Lees Papers, 5/6/5, LHCMA.

36. David Smiley, *Irregular Regular* (Norwich, U.K.: Michael Russell, 1994), 15–16.

37. Col J. S. S. Gratton, 4506/03, pp. 14–15, IWMSA.

38. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 127.

39. George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1986), 179.

40. Report by Gen Haining on "Hostile Propaganda in Palestine," 1 December 1938, FO 371/21869, p. 169, TNA.

41. Jack Binsley, *Palestine Police Service* (Montreux: Minerva, 1996), 31, 35, 40.

42. Alyagon Darr, *Plausible Crime Stories*, 142.

wrote that in Gaza, “Pimps and prostitutes were there, with others I sampled an unsatisfying interlude in a cactus grove with a prostitute whose forty piaster [Egyptian currency] charge was arranged by our mess boy, aged fifteen years, who spoke some English.”⁴³ The Army’s need to keep soldiers healthy meant that they monitored brothels and ensured that such establishments had condom machines in each room; one soldier recalled staying away from the Saturday-evening visit to the brothel because of his fear of disease.⁴⁴

British personnel saw local women differently, looking to date Jewish women, for which two Jewish men beat up police officer Sydney Burr; on another occasion when Jews beat up a policeman for dating a Jewish woman, they also told her that “she’d have her hair cut off.”⁴⁵ Ethnicity and religion had some part to play in servicemen’s treatment of women, or at least in how they viewed them, as when Burr had a meal in a Druze community village: “All the lads were hoping to get a glimpse of some of their women who are remarkable for their beauty. We saw one little beaut[y] who fell over before she could dart into her house. She had practically yellow hair and what is seldom seen in England very dark blue eyes. Whereas the Arab women wear all black these girls are dressed in white, with a black velvet band round their foreheads.”⁴⁶ “Nordic in appearance” noted another policeman of the Druze, descendants of the crusaders and “courageous and brave in war.”⁴⁷

As Colonial Subjects: Searching Women

As the foreign (German) press described it during the revolt, Palestine was undergoing a “searching” and this meant physical contact between British personnel and Palestinian women.⁴⁸ Emergency Regulations during the revolt never altered the 1924 Arrest of Offenders and Searches Ordinance that decreed that only women could search female suspects.⁴⁹ When it came to searching local women, female “wardresses” attached to British units were deployed to search women villagers down to their “private parts.”⁵⁰ On another occasion, an army officer complained of police “mismanagement” in failing to bring along a female

43. Binsley, *Palestine Police Service*, 31.

44. Typed Memoir, Maj B. A. Pond, Pond Papers, 78/27/1, IWMD; Pvt Frank Proctor, 16801/5, IWMSA.

45. Police constable Frederick Edwards, 10317/5, p. 7, IWMSA; Letter, Burr (Bury Billet Haifa) to Mother and Father, 9 September 1938, Burr Papers, 88/8/1, IWMD; Letter, Burr (Inlying Piquet) to Mother and Father, 24 February 1938, Burr Papers, 88/8/1, IWMD.

46. Letter, Burr (Bury Billet Haifa) to Mother and Father, 9 September 1938; Burr Papers, 88/8/1, IWMD; Letter, Burr (Inlying Piquet) to Mother and Father, 24 February 1938, Burr Papers, 88/8/1, IWMD.

47. Douglas Duff, *A Sword for Hire* (London: Murray, 1934), 130.

48. Quoted in anon., “British Methods in Palestine,” *Yorkshire Post*, 23 November 1938.

49. Moses Doukhan, ed., *Laws of Palestine, 1918–1925*, 2 vols. (Tel Aviv: Rotenberg, 1933), i, 43.

50. Report by Frances Newton dated 27 June 1938 on Search in Balad esh Sheikh of 24 June 1938, File 3, Box 65, GB 165-0161, J & E Mission Papers, MEC.



Christian Russian policewoman searching Jewish woman for arms at the Jaffa Gate [Library of Congress]

“searcher” on an operation, suggesting that female searchers were used in the field.⁵¹ There were, however, very few female searchers for the whole of Palestine, so outside the major towns women should not have been searched unless a woman searcher was present, impracticable in fast-moving search-and-sweep operations. This was a boon for rebels who could hide weapons with women, as an Army in-house journal recognized: “The only real difficulty is when women are stated to be ill in bed, as the bed probably also contains whoever one is looking for. Official female searchers are practically never obtainable in any country.”⁵² Wealthy Palestinian women hid explosives and guns under their car seats “which the British did not dare to search because of their respect for the ‘sanctity’ of Muslim women.”⁵³ The British used Jewish and Armenian women as searchers—“no British woman would lower herself to do it”—but, for example, in October 1938 in Jerusalem they had just two Arab women for this task, one at the Jaffa Gate and one at the Damascus Gate, for an enclosed city with seven public gates (and other smaller, secret ones).⁵⁴ There are photographs of female Jewish searchers

51. Diary, 19 October 1937, Major White, Relating to Service in Palestine, 1974-04-24-8, National Army Museum, London.

52. Capt. E. P. A. Des Graz, “Military Control of Disturbed Areas,” *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 81 (November 1936): 813.

53. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its “New” Women*, 131.

54. J. M. Thompson (Government Welfare Inspector) to Archdeacon, 23 October 1938, File 4, Box 61, GB 165-0161, J & E Mission Papers, MEC.

and “Russian Christian police women” in the American Colony Hotel Archive in Jerusalem, the policewomen dressed in mufti, with the caption “New Police Regulations, February 1938.”⁵⁵ In June 1936, when the British wanted to search women escaping the Army’s destruction of old Jaffa, they sent seven women from the prison service in Jerusalem down to Jaffa for the job, commandeering a local building especially for the purpose.⁵⁶ The British police claimed that the Arab rebels hid their “stuff” with Palestinian women, Palestinians countering that hidden goods were simply valuables or money that they did not want stolen by servicemen.⁵⁷ Roger Courtney remembered that women “were never searched, except in towns such as Jerusalem, where there were women searchers, nor were the mosques. Both the women and the religion of Islam were inviolate.”⁵⁸ One trick that the British deployed in India used to uncover men hiding among women so as “not to offend purdah” was to ask to see everyone’s hands.⁵⁹ Rebel leader Hajj Amin escaped the Haram al-Sharif in 1937 dressed as a woman, in the view of British police.⁶⁰ Earlier, during riots in 1920, Governor Ronald Storrs used Indian Muslim troops to search women—a curious claim as the contentious issue was gender not religion—and “many of the women were found to be carrying all sorts of weapons. Storrs sent the collection to England, where it remains on display at the police museum in Chichester.”⁶¹ As readers can see from the footnote evidence here, this claim might be misplaced.⁶²

As Resistors: Women as Warriors, and Male Fighters Dressed as Women

Fatma Ghazzal was killed in battle at Wadi Azzoun in 1936, the only named Palestinian woman that this author can find who died as a female combatant.⁶³

55. Arab Revolt in Palestine Photograph Album 1938, A[merican] C[olony] H[otel] A[rchive], Jerusalem.

56. *al-Difa'* [The Defence] (Jaffa), 18–19 June 1936.

57. Diary, pp. 12–13, GB 165-0302, Wilson Papers, MEC.

58. Roger Courtney, *Palestine Policeman* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1939), 88.

59. William Slim, *Unofficial History* (New York: David McKay, 1959), 97.

60. Edward Horne, *A Job Well Done (Being a History of the Palestine Police Force, 1920–1948)* (Tiptree, U.K.: Anchor Press, 1982), 223.

61. Ilan Pappé, *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: The Husaynis, 1700–1948* (London: Saqi, 2101), 198.

62. There was no police museum in Chichester before the 1950s, so this is possibly a reference to the Sussex Regiment barracks in the town that the Royal Military Police subsequently moved into and where it located its museum prior to moving it to Southwick Park in 2007; much of the material from the Chichester police museum, but nothing relating to Palestine, is now in West Sussex Records Office. The Chichester barracks is now a housing estate. There was also a Philosophical and Literary Society in Chichester until 1924, after which it closed and sold off its collection. Email communication, Royal Military Police Museum to author, 21 August 2017; email communication, Chichester District Council to author, 21 August 2017; email communication, Malcolm Barrett (curator, police museum) to author, 22 August 2017.

63. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its “New” Women*, 126.

Nameless women died elsewhere. An Essex Regiment soldier wrote of two dead Arabs in an ambush, “one of whom was a woman.”⁶⁴ Peasant women’s mass involvement was physical and direct, not least as it was “their communities that were coming under physical attack” from the Army and rebel-bandit gangs.⁶⁵ When soldiers removed villagers’ grain onto a lorry and tried to take a laden camel during a punitive raid, its owner, an old woman, “begged to be spared her precious animal,” much to the amusement of the watching soldiers (but not the woman, one imagines), so speaking to a wider discourse surrounding the metaphors, puns, jokes, and similes used by security forces to make punitive action palatable:

A long altercation took place, in which all the villagers took part, and at length her request was granted. At once the whole concourse was delighted. The Colonel and the D.C. [District Commissioner] were embraced and acclaimed as protectors of the poor, benevolent dispensers of justice etc etc and in their delight at the retention of this one camel the villagers appear to have completely forgotten that their entire food supply had been removed. We looked with apprehension at the bulging sacks, additional weight for already fully loaded vehicles. . . . These duties, tiresome and unpleasant as they sometimes were, seldom lacked a touch of humour.⁶⁶

Village women gave (or certainly suffered) more than urban women and were arrested for being members of the Black Hand rebel band, for writing threatening letters to the police, and for hiding wounded rebel fighters, and they kept secrets.⁶⁷ When the Army detained menfolk in “cages” under Emergency Regulations, village women walked the distance to regimental camps to feed their menfolk. This not only saved on food for the British but had the added benefit that it aided pacification: “Now after a few days the women were so fed up with this that the men would probably come to an agreement you see and the whole area would be quiet.”⁶⁸ Elsewhere, when the British put 2,000 women into a “pen,” soldiers noted their relief when they released detainees because they made so much noise.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, as Fleischmann has shown, urban women collected money, took part in demonstrations, sent protests to the government, and formed women’s committees.⁷⁰ There were schoolgirl strikes; security forces arrested women for curfew violations.⁷¹ Women raised money, sometimes reaching

64. Typed Memoir, L/Cpl F. C. Metson, Metson Papers, 13691/13696, p. 4, Essex Regiment Museum, Colchester.

65. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its “New” Women*, 125.

66. Brig J. V. Faviell, Typed Memoir, *Fifty Days with a Company in Palestine*, pp. 13–14, Faviell Papers, 82/24/1, IWMD.

67. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its “New” Women*, 128.

68. Lt-Col G. A. Shepperd, 4597/06, p. 64, IWMSA.

69. *FIRM: The Worcestershire Regiment (29th Foot)*, 11/1 (April 1939): 54–55.

70. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its “New” Women*, 129.

71. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its “New” Women*, 129–31.

£P.100; they also sold their jewelry.⁷² In June 1936, a demonstration of women in Bethlehem left two British constables and several Arab women injured; four arrests were made.⁷³ In August 1936, a rebel band up to eighty strong, among which were women, attacked the Jewish settlement of Gesher.⁷⁴ The British arrested women demonstrating near District Commissioner Thomas Scrivenor's office in Haifa and "the three ring leaders were removed in a prison van and released at a sufficiently great distance from Haifa to keep them busily occupied for some time walking back."⁷⁵ Across Palestine, women protested. Police shot a girl during a stoning of forces in 1938 in Kafr Kenna (Kafr Kanna near Nazareth), as well as interning the village Imam for preaching "jihad."⁷⁶ When women atop houses stoned the police in another incident, a British constable was "badly injured" and the police "were obliged to open fire aiming over the heads of the women. The High Commissioner deeply regrets to announce that an Arab girl was hit by a stray bullet and mortally wounded."⁷⁷ Widows of dead fighters also took up arms and led by example, the "moral" being "that in Jenin women are fighting while in Acre even the men are reluctant to carry a rifle," in the words of colonial official Kenneth Blackburne.⁷⁸ In 'Ara village southeast of Haifa, women encouraged their "menfolk to go to the assistance of the gang, but this, it is thought, they refused to do."⁷⁹ In the north the Royal Ulster Rifles noted that a "considerable number" of women from the "truculent" village of Sasa had "stirred up" the local population and so the Army transported them in lorries to a distant spot, from where they had to walk home.⁸⁰ Captured Arabic-language documents held by the Christian-Zionist British officer Orde Wingate tell the story of how during

72. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 133.

73. Disturbances of 1936, 30 May–5 June, US Consul General Palestine to State Department, 6 June 1936, 867N.00/310 [Reel M#1037/1], National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland.

74. Haganah Report, 30 August 1936, Shai Intelligence Reports: 8/GENERAL/40, p. 135, Haganah Archive, Tel Aviv.

75. Diary, 23 April 1938, Scrivenor Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 378, WL.

76. Kafrkenna, Villages Collective Punishment and Punitive Reports, Police Station Diary, Nazareth, M/4212/8, I[srael] S[tate] A[rchive], Jerusalem; Village of Kafrkenna, Political Activities, Punitive Measures, Palestine Police Force: Report from Tiberias: M/4212/8, ISA.

77. Telegram, High Commissioner Palestine to Secretary of State for Colonies, 25 May 1936, L/PS/12/3344–45: Palestine Situation, India Office Records, BL. See also C. G. T. Dean, *The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) 1919–53* (Preston, U.K.: Mayflower, 1955), 66.

78. Monthly Administrative report for August 1938, Galilee and Acre District, 2 September 1938, by Acting District Commissioner K. W. Blackburne, File 2, Box 3, Blackburne Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 460, WL. The reference in this file to Yusuf Sa'id Abu Durrah makes little sense as he died in 1939.

79. Daily Police Report, 9 April 1938, p. 160, Scrivenor Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 377, WL.

80. 2nd RUR (Safad) Report on Operations to 16th Inf Bde, 6 July 1938, Report on Occupation Northern Area, 4–5 July, December 1937–March 1939 File, Palestine Box, RUR.

al-Qawuqji's escape when a *faz'a* call for help drew out local villagers, "many times the women were seen running behind their husbands ululating as they are wont to do thereby exciting their men to action."⁸¹

As in the battle for Algiers in the 1950s against the French, rebels in Palestine in the 1930s dressed as women to escape security checks and effect assassinations. A patrol of the (British-led) Transjordan Frontier Force encountered a "bandit" disguised as a woman who threw off his clothing and attempted to escape and so was shot dead.⁸² An assassin on another occasion dressed in women's clothing shot dead a temporary Arab police constable near Hebron police station, while police CID reported on rebels dressed as women in December 1938.⁸³ One man broke an Army village cordon and escaped dressed as a woman but when a sentry "pulled his veil off and saw it was a man, he bolted, and though the sentry fired after him, he missed him in the half light."⁸⁴ Cross-dressing ran in both directions, with rebels arresting and detaining (down a well) an armed man dressed as a peasant woman: "Suspected, he was caught. He was found armed and perhaps with evil intentions."⁸⁵ Women warriors and the subterfuge afforded by ruses whereby men disguised themselves as women acted as force multipliers, but Jewish intelligence files emphasized women's secondary roles (and how the *Yishuv*⁸⁶ should have exploited them for intelligence) in a useful summary:

The duties of the women were generally transport of water, cooking, washing and sewing of gangsters' clothes. Sometimes they carried messages and hid men in their abodes. The playing of a special part in the rebellion cannot be claimed by the Arab woman. Some welfare women in towns, mostly Christian, imitated men in lectures, meetings, demonstrations and speeches. A great service was rendered by women who hid arms and men disguised as women. The British took great care not to touch a woman. This was taken advantage of by the rebels. Later the authorities appointed women police who helped by carrying out searches. . . . Generally the *Yishuv* did very little to penetrate into the Arab woman's circle of life. This neglect was a pity, because there could have been profit in enquiry into this sphere.⁸⁷

81. Captured and Translated Arabic Material with Commentary, p. 15, Wingate Papers, Microfilm M2313, BL.

82. "Bandit dressed as Woman," *Palestine Post*, 16 May 1939, 2.

83. Summary of Intelligence, Palestine and TJ, 4 November 1938, by Wing Commander Ritchie at GHQ [22/38], CO 732/81/10, TNA; CID Haifa to DIG CID, 19 December 1938, S25/22793: Druze Activities, p. 44, Central Zionist Archive, Jerusalem.

84. Capt. Cummins, Report by OC TARCOL of Operations, 19 September 1938, December 1937–March 1939 File, Palestine Box, RUR.

85. Diary entry for 29 October 1938 in Thomas Ricks, ed., *Turbulent Times in Palestine: The Diaries of Khalil Totab, 1886–1955* (Jerusalem: IPS and Passia, 2009), 239.

86. The Jewish community in Palestine. Literally, "settlement."

87. Appendix: Explanatory Notes, Captured and Translated Arabic Material with Commentary, p. 119, Wingate Papers, Microfilm M2313, BL.

Women and Sartorial Rebellion

Clothing signified rebellion as well as social class, socially conservative rurally based rebels wearing the traditional turban-style *kufiyya* headdress (plural *kufiyyat*, colloquially also called a *hatta*, with the cord for the headdress being the *iqal*) and demanding the same of townsfolk who might otherwise wear European dress with a red *tarbush* headdress (properly a head covering, called also a fez in the West), with the added advantage that rebels could then blend with the urban populace, up to a point as rural attire still looked different. Bahjat Abu Gharbiyya hid the Beretta pistol that he used to shoot Assistant Police Inspector Alan Sigrist in June 1936 under his *tarbush*, at a time earlier in the revolt when *kufiyyat* were not de rigueur.⁸⁸ The British recognized the significance of this sartorial resistance and 8th Division's commander in Haifa, Major-General Bernard Montgomery, wanted to ban the *kufiyya* (he also issued an order "that persons going about with their hands in their pockets will be viewed with suspicion"), one of his civil officials, Thomas Scrivenor, telling him that banning *kufiyyat* was unenforceable.⁸⁹ Undeterred, Montgomery "repeated that he did not want any prosecutions and that, if people disregarded the order, the head-dress should simply be removed from their heads by patrols and that if they insisted they would be put in the cage for a day or two to cool off."⁹⁰ Scrivenor noted that "the General's proposals for the abolition of the kefiyah and agal had been turned down by the Government. The Order was apparently considered to be legal by the Attorney General but the High Commissioner had introduced his veto."⁹¹ The pro-government Nashashibi family also asked (or ordered) villagers to wear the *tarbush* and not the *kufiyya*.⁹²

With their leaders dead, in prison, or in exile, a measure of authority for insurgents came with orders telling men to wear the *kufiyya* and for women to adopt the veil. Women were veiled for complex reasons and not just because of rebel pressure, including showing that they were Arabs and not Jews, but "the mainstream nationalist leadership also called upon (urban) women to dress modestly like their 'sisters the warriors of the village.'"⁹³ Fleischmann notes the fear among women because of internecine violence, "particularly among those women with Nashashibi ties."⁹⁴ A popular ditty connecting women's dress, chastity, and honor reflected the revolt's conservative tones, and was recited by boys who harassed women in the street who wore Western hats:

88. Matthew Hughes, "A History of Violence: The Shooting of British Assistant Superintendent Alan Sigrist, 12 June 1936," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45/4 (2010): 729.

89. Note on Conversation with Montgomery, [12] January 1939, by Scrivenor, pp. 298–304, Scrivenor Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 377, WL.

90. Ibid.

91. Diary, 13 January 1939, Scrivenor Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 378, WL.

92. Rajab, *Thawrat*, 100.

93. Swedenburg quoted in Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 133–34.

94. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 133–34.



Arab women's delegation to the British High Commissioner at the entrance of the residency [Library of Congress]

Umm al-bunya, al-raqqasa

Biddha bumba wa rasasa

[The woman who wears a hat, the dancer

Deserves a bomb and a bullet]

“Dancer” here meant a “loose” woman, “a virtual prostitute,” while *umm al-bunya*, the woman who wears a hat, was likely to be a Christian woman, although elite Muslim women also donned hats instead of veils, while some wore Western dresses and carried handbags but wore full face veils.⁹⁵ Well-to-do city Christian women were often at the forefront of demonstrations alongside their politically active husbands, the first women’s demonstration in 1929 processing in cars through Jerusalem, not a luxury item that village women would have owned.⁹⁶ Such actions reflected urban-based liberal movements in contrast to the rebels who issued leaflets encouraging young city people to join the bands while also instructing women to march after their village “sisters” and to stop wearing makeup and visiting cinemas “and other forms of entertainment,” instead rising to the level of peasant women

95. Ibid.; Walid Khalidi, ed., *Before their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876–1948* (Washington: IPS, 2004), 101; the 2016 French-Israeli film “In Between” nicely dissects class and social issues among Palestinian women in a contemporary context.

96. Yuval Arnon-Ohanna, *Herev mi-Bayit: ha-Ma'avak ha-Pnimi ba-tnu'a ha-le'umit ha-falastinit, 1929–39* [The Internal Struggle within the Palestinian Movement, 1929–39] (Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1989), 214–16.

who “carry jars of water on their heads” and make the “death of the fighters easier.”⁹⁷ The socially reactionary, obscurantist base of the rebellion came out in strictures on dress and social code. Rural bandit criminal bands tinged with Islamic religious fundamentalism issued manifestos proscribing not just western headdress but also townspeople listening to the radio or using (Jewish-supplied) electricity, and women going unveiled, or wearing makeup or short-sleeved dresses, including Christian women. Photographs show “Christian girls wearing ‘Muslim veils’ akin to a hijab while simultaneously dressed in Western dresses; Muslim urban women “were to don the more conservative form of veiling.”⁹⁸ A captured rural rebel tellingly complained to the British that while townsfolk may have “controlled us for a hundred years, we will control them for one year.”⁹⁹

Conclusions

The discussion here has only scraped the surface of women’s role in the Arab revolt. Readers familiar with Tal Nitzan’s 2006 sociology thesis that Israeli troops do not sexually assault Palestinian women for racist reasons, not wanting to sleep with Arab women, might draw parallels here to British soldiers.¹⁰⁰ This would be wrong. Reading British soldiers’ accounts in the round, the issue was sexual congress with anyone available and not officially off-limits, as one Jewish girl noted when soldiers came to defend her settlement in 1929 and “refused to take sides; they regarded the whole affray as just another military assignment. In vain did my sister and her friends try to expound the ideological background of the conflict and win the British army over to the cause of the *yishuv*. . . . The soldiers listened politely enough but whenever asked what they thought they just leered at the girls and said, ‘Are you married?’”¹⁰¹ Not all armies behaved the same way to women, and British soldiers did not assault (sexually or otherwise) women in the way that, say, U.S. troops did in Vietnam after 1965, including gang rape and gross abuse of girls and women.¹⁰² It is not clear if this was a function of national culture, military traditions and discipline, the nature of the insurgency, or colonial ideologies, or some combination of all four factors. Anthony Beevor’s recent study of the battle of Arnhem raises the interesting point that national self-character helps explain how armies fight wars.¹⁰³ This might also

97. Quoted in Arnon-Ohanna, *Falahim ba-Mered*, 45.

98. Arab Revolt in Palestine Photograph Album 1938, ACHA.

99. Arnon-Ohanna, *Herev mi-Bayit*, 284.

100. Tal Nitzan, “Controlled Occupation: The Rarity of Military Rape in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” (master’s thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2006).

101. Ruth Jordan, *Daughter of the Waves: Memories of Growing up in Pre-War Palestine* (New York: Taplinger, 1983), 94–95.

102. See Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, “Vietnam” (PBS, ten parts, 2017), episodes 5–9; Gina Marie Weaver, *Ideologies of Forgetting: Rape in the Vietnam War* (Albany: SUNY, 2010), passim; Howard Jones, *My Lai: Vietnam, 1968, and the Descent into Darkness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), passim.

103. Anthony Beevor, *Arnhem: The Battle for the Bridges* (New York: Viking, 2018).

account for the contrasting behavior of soldiers towards civilians and women. British soldiers were at worst disinterested in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, and at best they rather liked the local Palestinian population. “At that time, in the Army at least there was almost total indifference in and ignorance of political affairs,” while many soldiers had pity for the Palestinians—“a gentlemanly easy-going community” and “the average soldier rather liked the Arab, preferring him generally to the Jew”—unlike French officer Paul Aussaresses’s chilling comment in Algeria in the 1950s that “I think I really forgot what having any pity meant,” amidst horrific, systemic mass abuse of Algerians, including systematic rape of women prisoners.¹⁰⁴ Or as a British officer put it: “What the devil is wrong with these Jews and Arabs that they can’t live decent peaceful lives, and allow us to go on soldiering nice and quietly in Aldershot? Why?”¹⁰⁵ The point here is that British soldiers did not have the visceral engagement with local politics—the skin in the game—as did indigenous settler populations, and this played its part in moderating violence to women in the military and political context of a colonial power that did not manifestly use or allow gendered or sexual violence for pacification anyway. The contrast with Kenya during Mau Mau in the 1950s where there was a mobilized local white settler population is obvious, and this deepened the violence of counter-insurgency there in horrible ways to include castration and rape, as Caroline Elkins and David Anderson have shown.¹⁰⁶ In Kenya in the 1950s during the Mau Mau insurgency, auxiliary white settler and black loyalist police-reserve units, and not the Army, committed the foulest abuse. Indeed, the limited accounts above on sexual violence point in the direction of the Palestine police and not the Army, whose soldiers served a time-bounded tour of duty in Palestine and so felt little ideological attachment to the place and its peoples. On one occasion police humiliated women in the Manshiya neighborhood bordering Jaffa-Tel Aviv, lining them up, questioning them in Arabic, “asking them their names and saying ‘How much to-day?’ God knows what they meant. They then made indecent gestures with their revolvers and sticks.”¹⁰⁷ But the British policemen on this occasion—who had also beat up and shot people—did not sexually assault any of the women that they threatened.

Israeli forces are ideologically engaged in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but do not target women for sexual abuse, so if Tal Nitzan is right then their racism is a

104. Rex King Clark, *Free for a Blast* (London: Grenville, 1988), 146, 152; Brig J. D. Haigh, 44/50/05, p. 5, IWMSA; Paul Aussaresses, *Service Spéciaux: Algérie, 1955–57* (Paris: Perrin, 2001), 64 (“*Je crois que j’ai oublié ce que c’était que la pitié*”).

105. Lecture on Palestine to 5th Inf Bde Aldershot, 25 August 1938, Functions of the British in Palestine, Palestine Box, RUR.

106. Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*; David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005); Marc Parry, “Uncovering the Brutal Truth about the British Empire,” *Guardian*, 18 August 2016.

107. The Manshia Exploits of the Three British Policemen in Mufti during the Night of 23–24 October, 1938, Exploit No. 1, Khalil Hamameh and Witness Statements, pp. 79ff, GB165-0109, Forster Papers, MEC.

more powerful bias than their misogyny. Or she may be misreading how soldiers see subject populations, and it may be that gross abuse is anathema for national cultures such as Israel's built on law, governance, human rights, and civil society, as has been argued elsewhere for the British.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, such national societal structures will reflect the cultures that they represent. This may account for why some armies commit mass sexual abuse in war zones while others do not. Indeed, the partial evidence here shows that Palestinian-Arab forces fighting with or against the government were as likely to carry out sexual assault as (or even more likely than) were British (or Jewish auxiliary) troops. This could be the result of the irregular nature of the rebel forces during a period of lawlessness or of their cultural-societal history and the position of women in such communities, or a combination of the two.

This article has argued that Palestinian women contributed heavily to the Arab revolt and suffered as a result, but that the British bounded the violence that they directed at women. The evidence as presented here demonstrates that in Palestine in the 1930s the British preferred legal, non-lethal, non-kinetic means of targeting women such as fines, curfews, village police posts, travel passes, house demolition (which was kinetic, to be fair), and detention without trial, methods that were far more effective for colonial control than brute force and rape. The British colonial state effectively managed force as a powerful tool of imperial control, and this meant official moderation of violence towards women by security forces that were not culturally inclined to target women unofficially anyway.

108. Rod Thornton, "Minimum Force': A Reply to Huw Bennett," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 20/1 (2001): 215–26; Thornton, "The British Army and the Origins of its Minimum Force Philosophy," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 15/1 (2004): 83–106.

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