You Could Get Used to It: Susan Sontag, Ariella Azoulay, and Photography's *Sensus Communis*

By Joscelyn Jurich

the war was long
you get used to it

—Zbigniew Herbert, "Mr. Cogito Reads the Newspaper"

On March 20, 2014, at 7:30 p.m., about sixty people gathered at Times Square in New York City. Standing across from a glimmering white Sephora sign and just a few feet from the neon American flag glowing on the New York City Police Department outpost, the group raised pieces of pita bread toward a large digitally projected photograph on the side of the Thomson Reuters building. A broken tree protruding from a row of partially ruined buildings was the anchoring horizon point in a photographic frame seemingly swelling with people, Palestinian refugees lining up for food aid in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, Syria. "10 million people need our help in Syria," announced red lettering streaming across a digital banner running atop the projected image. A few minutes later, the projection repeated, then stopped; the crowd thinned, but remained. It repeated an hour later, at 8:30 p.m., and on the same day and at precisely the same times, projections of the photograph also took place in Tokyo's Shibuya business district, one of the busiest commercial areas in Japan. The projection, and the campaign that led up to it, was both a classical pseudo-event,[1] staged for the public and the press, and a contemporary, transnational version of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century magic lantern show,[2] orchestrated not by missionaries but by a humanitarian aid agency.

The photograph had been circulating widely on social media since the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) released it on February 24, timed to coincide with a UN Security Council resolution debate about opening besieged areas of Syria for aid. A vigorous online campaign organized through the social media platform Thunderclap accompanied the photograph's release. UNRWA set a target of twenty-three million "social media impressions" for their hashtag #LetUsThrough; the number was a symbolic choice as it was also the pre-war population of Syria.[3] According to UNRWA, the number of likes, tweets, and shares of the photograph using the hashtag was in fact 38.5 million, far exceeding their original goal. UNRWA aid deliveries were ceased after the photograph was taken on January 31, 2014, due to what the agency described as "security concerns."[4] About three weeks later, they resumed and then stopped again. On April 24, UNRWA was allowed to resume deliveries. As of this writing in December 2014, UNRWA is not able to distribute aid in Yarmouk.[5]

UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness unsurprisingly lauded the photograph, describing it as "cinematic in its scope and grandeur, and yet . . . deeply personal. Etched on each small face is a very personal private story." It was, he said, "the combination of the epic and the miniature" that explained the photograph's rapid-fire iconic status.[6] Almost one thousand newspapers worldwide ran it.[7] The *Guardian* published a large-scale reproduction on its front page; the paper's columnist Jonathan Jones, echoing Gunness, described it as "an epic scene of human suffering."[8] The *Independent* ran the photo with the headline, "Syria crisis: The picture that shows the true extent of the humanitarian crisis inside Palestinian refugee camp Yarmouk," and *Time* magazine and the *Huffington Post* were even more extreme in their assertion that this singular image represented everything the likely distant viewer needed to know, choosing the headlines, "One Picture Sums Up Syria's Humanitarian Crisis" and "This One Photo Will Show You Just How Terrible The Syrian Refugee Crisis Is." (Is "humanitarian crisis" or "refugee crisis" the more accurate description? "Syrian crisis" or "Palestinian crisis"? Or are multiple descriptors necessary and still insufficient?) None of these articles referenced the December 16, 2012, bombing by Assad forces of a mosque, a hospital, and a school in the Yarmouk camp or described the camp's complex and precarious recent history.[9] Along with "epic," "apocalyptic" was one of the most common adjectives used to describe the photograph in online, print, and social media. Reports that the photograph was a fake also circulated on social media and were quickly denied by UNRWA and proven fake themselves by digital media experts.[10] Some headlines assumed the photograph's potential to rouse disbelief and tailored their headlines accordingly, such as the *New Republic*'s: "This Photo is Not from 'Game of Thrones.' It's From Syria." In the journal *War in Context*, Paul Woodward correctly observed, "We live in an age of doubt and the internet is its engine"—writing in response to blogs and tweets alleging that the photograph was doctored. "The very notion that something can be "beyond doubt" has itself become an object of doubt."[11]

Though reported in some of the mainstream press as if the UNRWA photograph represented everything about the war in Syria, there are of course numerous other images that show the war's devastation in multiplicitous forms. One might, for example, turn to Palestinian photojournalist Niraz Saied's images of the Yarmouk camp (where he himself grew up), including a photograph of three ill children in the camp, entitled *The Three Kings* (2014),

Yarmouk residents gathered to await a food distribution from UNRWA (January 2014) by unknown photographer; © unwra.org

which won first prize in the recent UNRWA photography competition;[12] or to Italian photographer Franco Pagetti's series, *Veiled Aleppo* (2013);[13] or the rawer images of the war by Syrian photojournalist Ziad Homsi, the co-creator with Mohammad Ali Atassi of the 2014 documentary *Our Terrible Country*.[14] And one might engage in what Susie Linfield called the "double horror" of looking at perpetrator photographs,[15] widely available on social media[16] and most notably in the mainstream press in January 2014, when the *Guardian* and other major international news outlets reported on the release of fifty-five thousand digital images of the torture and killing of approximately eleven thousand Syrian detainees by Assad's regime.[17] The online version of that article included ten of the images found within the international inquiry team's report[18] that were presented as evidence of war crimes at the UN Security Council and the House Foreign Affairs Committee in July 2014 and exhibited at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in October 2014.[19] The fact that a former military photographer and defector from the Syrian Army (with the code name of "Caesar"), who had been commanded to take such photographs, was also the individual who smuggled them out and released them, not only complicates his own status as a perpetrator, witness, and victim, but perhaps also the viewer's resistance to viewing them.[20]

One of Susan Sontag's central anxieties in *On Photography* (1977) and in *Regarding the Pain of the Others* (2003) parallels that in Zbigniew Herbert's poem "Mr. Cogito Reads the Newspaper," in which the titular narrator struggles to have an intellectual and emotional connection to the news of mass-scale faraway suffering ("they don't speak to the imagination / there are too many of them"[21]). Sontag's concern is not only, following from László Moholy-Nagy, to recognize the need for photographic literacy, but also to interrogate what she believed to be photography's power to both transfix and anesthetize. Partly in reaction to and against Sontag's work, contemporary critics and scholars have worked to define "an ecology of images,"[22] and one that moves toward both defining and reimagining the political potential of photography.

History as catastrophe and photography's role in exposing, perpetuating, or changing this condition were chief concerns of Sontag and also of Ariella Azoulay, one of Sontag's more provocative contemporary critics. Azoulay's *The Civil Contract of Photography* (2008) argues that photography creates its own "citizenry," and that when an individual (photographer or photographed) "tries to address others through a photograph, she is becoming a citizen in the citizenry of photography."[23] Photography, writes Azoulay, is a civil action, but it is one outside of the state and even outside of property. For her, as distinct from what Roland Barthes and Sontag argued, photographs cannot be "owned" by a stable meaning and are a sort of free currency for the global citizenry of photography. Though fully aware of photography's historic and contemporary link to state power, photography's evidentiary potential and its new accessibility and distributability constitute what Azoulay argues is a new citizenry, outside of conventional states but bounded by a common interest, a *res publica* based on the commonality of looking at and participating in photography. Photography is always a civil contract, according to Azoulay, regardless of one's citizenship. It is this special contract that is increasingly empowering individuals not only to use the camera as a weapon against state aggression, but also to view the very act of being photographed as emboldening rather than victimizing.

Azoulay's prolific work as a writer, academic, curator, and filmmaker is centered to a great extent on Palestine and Israel; her other major works, *Death's Showcase* (2001) and *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (2012), are, like *The Civil Contract of Photography*, theoretical works grounded in the region and in her lived experience. Azoulay explains in her introduction to *The Civil Contract of Photography* (which she began during the beginning of the second intifada) that the book grew directly out of her experience during that period. "I can say," she writes, "that observing the unbearable sights presented in photographs from the Occupied Territories, encountering them in the national context within which they were

presented and enduring the difficulty of facing them day after day, formed the main motives for writing this book."[24] For Sontag, the experience of seeing photographs from Bergen-Belsen and Dachau when she was twelve was a *punctum* that divided her life into two parts: the "before" and "after" of seeing images of an event she "could do nothing to affect, of suffering [she] could hardly imagine and could do nothing to relieve."[25]

Just a month before the UNRWA photograph began circulating online, *War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath*, an extensive traveling exhibition of 377 photographs taken by 280 professional, commercial, military, and amateur photographers (curated by Anne Wilkes Tucker, Will Michels, and Natalie Zelt for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) was on view at the Brooklyn Museum. The show problematically engaged with Azoulay's desire to free images for meaning and civic action and Sontag's anxieties about image fatigue.[26] Each museum that exhibited *War/Photography* curated it differently, and to visit the Brooklyn Museum's exhibition was to be bombarded by photographs of varying sizes and from historical periods ranging from the nineteenth century to the present, hung one atop another to purposefully overwhelm the viewer. Organized thematically rather than chronologically into categories such as "recruitment," "training," "sabotage," "executions," and "faith," this conceptual approach was widely criticized. The organization of images by "recurring type" is precariously close to the definition of "cliché," stated the *New York Times*; the *Nation* described the show as "a wasted opportunity," worth seeing only as an overwhelming reminder that "technological and moral progress do not march hand in hand."[27] Much of the criticism echoed Sontag's criticism in *On Photography* about the 1955 Museum of Modern Art exhibition *The Family of Man*, curated by Edward Steichen. The assumption of a "human condition or a human nature shared by everybody . . . denies the determining weight of history—of genuine and historically embedded differences, injustices, and conflicts"[28] and Steichen's "pious uplift"[29] makes "history and politics irrelevant"[30] "by universalizing the human condition, into joy."[31] The Brooklyn Museum exhibit instead universalized the human condition into the misery and perpetuity of war.

Spencer Platt's *Young Lebanese drive down a street in Haret Hreik* (2006), winner of the 2006 World Press Photo award, was another of the photographs included in the exhibit and was reproduced by the *New York Times* and other publications as the main photograph to accompany articles about it. The image shows a man steering a shiny red convertible through a rubble-filled street; to his left, two men talk on cell phones next to what looks like a recently bombed-out building; dust from the explosion rises in the air behind them. Glamorous and close enough to see, but far enough away to be protected, this attractive group seems like the visual epitome of disaster tourism, the voyeurs Sontag described in *On Photography*. The camera has made passive spectators into active voyeurs: "What do these people see?" she asks. "We don't know. And it doesn't matter. It is an Event: something worth seeing—and therefore worth photographing."[32]

Yet Platt's photograph actually portrays something very different. The photograph first appeared with the caption *Affluent Lebanese drive down the street to look at a destroyed neighborhood 15 August 2006 in southern Beirut, Lebanon*, and *Der Spiegel* first described it as an image of "war tourism," while a Dutch newspaper ran it with the headline "The Cool People VS Hezbollah." But the people in the photograph are not, in fact, voyeurs snapping images of the "suffering of others" on their cell phones; they are residents of the Beirut neighborhood who had fled during the bombing and returned days later; their interest in photographing was to document the damage to their homes and those of their friends. Like other controversial photographs, it generated a catalog of critical responses in the international press, the most informative a BBC report that interviewed each of the people in the car about their reaction to the photograph and gave them, as photographed subjects, the attention and agency that Azoulay emphasizes throughout her work. Platt framed the image as refuting stereotypes of civilian victims. Knowing that "these people are victims," he told National Public Radio, ". . . makes the photo that much more interesting" because it challenges "stereotypes of what victims should look like."[33] Arab cultural magazine *Al Jadid* described the image as Azoulay does, as an open sign: "The winning element in Spencer Platt's picture is the reality within the picture itself; what it reveals and what it hides, what is said and what is silent, what it freezes within the frame and what escapes, summoning reality without controlling it."[34]

Also included in the exhibit was Ron Haviv's *A soldier of the Tigers, a Serbian paramilitary group, kicks the dying bodies of the first Muslims to be killed in the war in Bosnia* (1992). *New York Times* foreign correspondent John Kifner opened a profile of Haviv with this description of the photograph: "The image is stark, one of the most enduring of the Balkan wars: a Serb militiaman casually kicking a dying Muslim woman in the head. It tells you everything you need to know."[35]

Haviv's photograph, Sontag writes, does not tell the viewer any of the most basic factual information; it does not reveal that the woman is Muslim and the militiamen Serb, nor does it show that the people lying on the ground are "dying" rather than dead. "In fact," she writes, "the photograph tells us very little—except that war is hell, and that graceful young men with guns are capable of kicking overweight older women lying helpless, or already killed, in the head."[36] The comment is at least partially erroneous (the men in the photograph are stealthy and strong looking, far from graceful) and unnecessarily callous in its sardonicism (what is the necessity of noting that the woman lying on the ground is overweight?). It is, as Sontag's comments make apparent, Haviv's caption that reveals the basic "need to know" facts about the photograph. Kifner's point, of course, is that Haviv's photography sums up the Bosnian war—but how? Does he mean that it was a war of militaries against helpless civilians? That it was a war of Serb aggression against Bosniak victims? Sontag's broad point is that no image alone can reveal everything a viewer needs to know about it and what it portrays; neither is one (or any) image capable of representing or revealing in summary form the complexity of a conflict or even of an individual. To ask such questions of a photograph is to demand "that it do what no photograph can ever do speak."[37] The caption, too, "is only one interpretation, necessarily a limiting one . . . [and] slips on and off so easily."[38]

UNRWA photo projection at Times Square (March 20, 2014) by Joscelyn Jurich

For Azoulay, photographs are objects that do speak, but through a particular type of ethical watching that is a marked shift from spectatorial looking. "It is our historic responsibility, not only to produce photos, but to make them speak," she writes. Azoulay uses Jean-François Lyotard to develop a concept of horror that extends to viewers and to their state of seeing, so that horror describes not only the image, but also the affective embodiment of viewers themselves.[39] This, for her, is the basis for an "emergency claim" that needs immediate treatment. Yet, like Sontag's slippery caption, might not Azoulay's ethical watching be just as tenuous? The very instability of the photographic image that she describes may extend to the particular type of watching that she argues is essential to photography's civic and political power.

Similarly, where the space exists for the multiplicity of viewings that will surely arise if visual and political categories are challenged is much less well developed in her work. Haviv's photograph, for example, might be complicated in Azoulay's reading as a scene in which militia are victimizing civilians by order of a government that is in turn victimizing all citizens, and where citizens worldwide watch as their governments remain passive spectators. The UNRWA photograph could be read as articulating one of Michel Agier's questions in *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government* (2011): "What universal human rights [do] people effectively have access to if they lose the use of their national citizenship?"[40] And it could also be viewed as a wholly violent image, embodying forms of violence Azoulay and Adi Ophir identify at work in the Occupied Territories: visible violence ("the exertion of physical force to injure its object . . . invasion, penetration, demolition") and withheld violence (which may include "economic power, purchasing power, rhetorical power").[41] Withheld violence may be exerted in the realms they define (following Michael Mann): physical, economic, political-governmental, or cognitive-cultural.[42] Yet one might differently read and ask very dissimilar questions of these photographs, too, and thus cause them to "speak" differently and perhaps very differently than Azoulay might envision. And the potential for images' rapid digital unstoppability—the increasing speed with which Sontag's "extramural" lives of images take shape, transform, and circulate—is also not sufficiently addressed by Azoulay.

It is impossible to know how those who saw Haviv's photograph reacted to it and for whom the image roused anything close to an actionable "emergency claim." But neither this photograph nor the others he took during the early stages of the euphemistically labeled "ethnic cleansing" of Bosniaks, some of which showed evidence of what Helsinki Watch accurately described as genocide, created any international claim to emergency or to action to halt it. "I thought these pictures would provide a final push, so the world would stop this," Haviv said. "But obviously nothing happened. It was really incredibly disappointing. I went from this very idealistic view of the power of photography to feeling it was just really frustrating."[43] For Sontag, too, the Bosnian war was a crucial turning point in how she viewed the actionable potential of photojournalism, journalism, and the political impotency of intellectuals: "In the case of Bosnia, the indifference, the lack of effort to try to imagine, was more acute than I ever anticipated."[44]

Years later, Haviv's photograph and others in his collection *Blood and Honey: A Balkan War Journal* (2000) [Ed. note: See review in *Afterimage* 28, no. 4] have been used as evidence at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In 2013 the photograph included in the *War* exhibit was evidence in the trial of Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic, and other photographs provided evidence to indict Serb paramilitary leader Arkan. In a 2013 *New York Times* article in which Haviv explained why he himself declined to testify in the Arkan trial ("It was my job as a journalist and a photographer to document what I saw. . . . The work was enough to show the world what this ethnic cleansing actually looked like"), he defined his role as a maker of documentary visual evidence. "I've now documented three genocides—Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur—and I look back to the lessons of the Holocaust, which were 'never again,'" he said. "Nobody should be able to say they didn't know what was happening. What we do as photographers is to attempt to create a body of evidence to hold people accountable."[45]

Like Eyal Weizman, who in *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (2011) and *Mengele's Skull: The Advent of Forensic Aesthetics* (2012) analyzes the tension between human testimony and material evidence and attempts to shift "the predominant conceptual frame by which refugee camps are

understood,"[46] Azoulay wants to displace the predominant ways in which photographs have been looked at, discussed, and treated as evidence and as archival objects. Photographs also occupy a precarious space between testimony and evidence, embodying both human vulnerabilities and material object nature. In this sense, the photograph is viewed, following Weizman's definition, "as concerned with the materialization of the event as with the construction of a forum and the performance of objects and interpreters within it."[47] For Azoulay, it is also especially Walter Benjamin's emphasis on the revolutionary, consciousness-shifting capacity of photography that underlies her work. For her, contemporary citizenship is inextricably linked to disaster, the state of emergency that Benjamin described as the rule, not the exception (Azoulay's 2011 article "A Civil State of Emergency" advocates citizens enacting their own "states of emergency" to protest the constant state of emergency that she argues defines the postmodern world).[48]

In her 2012 essay "Regime-Made Disaster: On the Possibility of Nongovernmental Viewing," Azoulay defines disaster as affecting "superfluous" populations, referencing what Hannah Arendt described as "the experience of not belonging to the world at all."[49] Her example in the essay, like the majority of the photographs she writes about, is from the Israeli/Palestinian context. Taken by an unknown photographer, the image she chooses to open her essay shows Palestinian men, women, and children crossing the King Abdullah Bridge between the West Bank and Amman, Jordan, in 1967, many of them carrying overstuffed suitcases and bundles of clothing on their heads.

All regimes, Azoulay writes, totalitarian and democratic, produce disaster, not just for their intended victims, but for the whole population. Disaster, she argues, is purposefully created to appear outside of the regime and to affect "only the population intended to be its victim."[50] While Sontag feared the habituation to horror that one could develop through looking at images of atrocity, Azoulay's concern is the habituation to a spectatorial type of looking lacking both critical interrogation and civic duty. Instead, the viewing needs to shift to the point of view of "all the governed" so as to understand that regime-made disasters affect everyone, though the cost "in life and property" will vary greatly. She then describes photographers similar to the way in which Sontag did in *On Photography*: "Photographers, and with their mediation, distant spectators . . . have become, even if virtually, a privileged population apart: observing 'the disaster' of others . . ."[51] The disaster, she argues, instead belongs to everyone. In a re-viewing or new viewing of photographs, a "civil viewing," which she also calls a "non-governmental viewing,"[52] the focus extends to "those who made [the subjects] victims."[53] This perspective will shift the responsibility to "the regime that governs all participants in the events of photography."[54] This will be a denaturalization process in which categories (in this case, "refugees") will be disrupted. The new viewing will make the spectator describe the photograph as showing "citizens transforming others into refugees."[55] Azoulay wants to stress here the way in which refugees are *made* by citizens and by governments.

The viewing needs to be politicized for Azoulay, and what are political qualities should not be confused as visual categories (the "refugee" for example). The type of viewing Azoulay advocates is a resistance on the part of the viewer, a refusal "to contribute to the ongoing transformation of this violence into supposedly respected law."[56] Here she echoes Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* (1921) in which he conceptualizes violence as "either lawmaking or law-preserving. . . [Violence] is implicated in the very nature of law itself."[57] Looking, for Azoulay, can then be a type of revolutionary act, a way of undoing or at least transcending the violence inherent in lawmaking, in linguistic and visual naturalization, and in sovereignty. Her project is to create the potentiality for a new language of photography that distinguishes between political and visual categories, and to unbind photographs from linguistic labels that limit their interpretation. Azoulay's assumption is that if our ways of seeing and making photographs "speak" change, the configuration of power relations and collective responsibility will also shift.

In *The Writing of the Disaster* (1986), Maurice Blanchot begins by warning the reader that disaster is always something past, always something other, always something separate. "The disaster ruins everything," he writes, "all the while leaving everything intact. It does not touch anyone in particular; 'I' am not threatened by it, but spared, left aside. It is in this way that I am threatened; it is in this way that the disaster threatens in me that which is exterior to me—an other than I who passively become other. There is no reaching the disaster."[58] This unreachability and even unrepresentability of disaster goes beyond Sontag, who ends *Regarding the Pain of Others* by emphasizing the need for individuals to have direct experience so as to even begin to understand images of the pain and violent deaths of others in conflict: "We don't get it. We truly can't imagine what it was like. We can't imagine how dreadful, how terrifying war is; and how normal it becomes. Can't understand, can't imagine."[59]

"What does it mean to protest suffering, as distinct from acknowledging it?" Sontag asks in *Regarding the Pain of Others*.[60] While for Azoulay a certain type of looking is protest against the suffering caused by sovereignty, Sontag limits who should look at "the close-up of a real horror"[61] to those who are directly able to assuage the suffering pictured (she gives the example of surgeons who might need to see certain graphic photographs to understand better how to heal) or able to learn from it. Her viewer is caught between two undesirable extremes: as either spectators-voyeurs or cowards. Looking is morally questionable, and so is choosing not to look. There is seemingly no way out.

"In thinking about political effects, you have to ask to what extent is politics about action and to what extent is it about creating conditions for action," said photographer Susan Meiselas.[62] One might reframe Meiselas's statement as asking to what extent, if any, photographs can be a part of creating conditions for political and social action, and to what extent they can be actionable objects in and of themselves.

Photographs such as the Yarmouk UNRWA photo; missionary Alice Harris's *Nsala Looking at the Hand and Foot of his Daughter* (1904), used in the Congo reform movement; and the widely disseminated

Roman Vishniac image of Nettie Stub, a young Polish girl he photographed in a Nazi transit camp in late October 1938 who was saved by the Red Cross, are the types of photographs that contemporary human rights and humanitarian regimes actively seek out as mobilizing agents. For the poet Herbert, the abstraction of the suffering individual into a mass was incompatible with another (but not the only) necessary affective condition for an active response: compassion.[63]

Yet the assumption that photographs like these will lead to intervention and create liberation from violence, is, Sharon Sliwinski argues, both dreamlike and ahistorical. To create a functioning critical visual public sphere, she writes, it is necessary to interrogate who is included in, and who is excluded from, the "world community" that Arendt described in one of her last lectures—that is, who is considered to be human. "[Arendt] believed," Sliwinski writes, "that this 'world community,' a community which is never simply given, comes into being through the collective exercise of judgment."[64] Jacques Rancière's "communities of sense" are similarly concerned and, while he writes from the perspective of fiction's power to create new communities, one could extend his definition to photography, able to create "new trajectories between what can be seen, what can be said, and what can be done . . . [it] cannot merely occupy the space left by the weakening of political conflict. It has to reshape it, at the risk of testing the limits of its own politics."[65] The *sensus communis* created through that collective exercise might be an essential first step in creating an inclusive and politically powerful visual public sphere. To participate in the potentially potent reconstructive process of Azoulay's "nongovernmental viewing," and to seriously re-view photographs as "regime-made disasters," is to possess the economic, political, social, and cultural conditions to allow such a thoughtful visual literacy to flourish. Neither Sontag nor Azoulay fully address that it is only through creating these necessary conditions that such a *sensus communis* might exist and evolve.

And it is only through their existence that the last lines of Herbert's poem "Mr. Cogito Reads the Newspaper" might be actively and widely contemplated and challenged:

A subject for meditation
The arithmetic of compassion

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NOTES **1**. According to Daniel Boorstin, the pseudo-event is unspontaneous planned-for reporting, and self-consciously constructed to pique interest. See Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Vintage, 1962). **2**. On December 2, 2014, UNRWA staged another projection of a Palestinian refugee in cities worldwide. See Sarah Irving, "Iconic image heads UN Palestine solidarity campaign," *Electronic Intifada*, December 1, 2014, http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/sarah-irving/iconic-image-heads-un-palestine-solidarity-campaign **3**. For detailed information on the campaign, see "How UNRWA United People Around a Powerful Photo to Create Change on the Ground," https://d3enntrj2q0c71.cloudfront.net/ assets/CASESTUDY_UNRWA- 585959f6d20eecc358310e784546a38b.pdf. **4**. "Scale of suffering at Syrian refugee camp is revealed by photo of huge queue for food," *Guardian*, February 26, 2014. **5**. See UNRWA, "The Crisis in Yarmouk," www.unrwa.org/crisis-in-yarmouk. **6**. Deborah Amos, "Viral Photo Of Syrian War Victims Comes To Times Square," NPR, March 20, 2014, www.npr.org/blogs parallels/2014/03/20/291872345/viral-photo-of-syrian-war-victims-comes-to-times-square. **7**. Rick Gladstone, "U.N. Denies That Syria Image Was Faked," *New York Times*, March 11, 2014. **8**. Jonathan Jones, "A shocking image of Syria's brutal war—a war that will continue regardless," *Guardian*, February 28, 2014, 10. **9**. See Talal Alyan, "The Death of Palestine: Two Years of Siege in Yarmouk," *Huffington Post*, December 16, 2014, www.huffingtonpost.com/talal-alyan/yarmouk-refugee-camp-syria_b_6326054.html. **10**. Gladstone, "U.N. Denies That Syria Image Was Faked," *New York Times*, March 11, 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/03/12/world/middleeast/syria.html and "U.N. says shocking photo of refugees in Syria is no fake," *Al Arabiya*, March 13, 2014, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/digital/2014/03/13/U-N-says-shocking-photo-of-refugees-in-Syria-is-no-fake.html. **11**. Paul Woodward, "Yarmouk and a contagion of doubt," *War in Context*, March 13, 2014, http://warincontext.org/2014/03/13/yarmouk-and-a-contagion-of-doubt/. **12**. The theme of the 2014 competition was "I Am Not a Statistic." See "Yarmouk Youth Wins 2014 UNRWA/EU Photography Competition," November 26, 2014, UNRWA News Agency, www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/yarmouk-youth-wins-2014-unrwaeu-photography-competition; and Budour Youssef Hassan, "'Siding with life in the face of death': photographer captures siege on Palestinians in Syria," *Electronic Intifada*, December 17, 2014, http://electronicintifada.net/content/siding-life-face-death-photographer-captures-siege-palestinians-syria/14089. **13**. For a review and slideshow of Pagetti's work from Syria, see Geoff Dyer, "Flags of Resistance," *New Republic*, September 22, 2013, www.newrepublic.com/article/114774/geoff-dyer-syria-photography-franco-pagetti. **14**. A partial gallery of Homsi's work from Syria can be found on www.flickr.com/photos/ziad_homsi/. **15**. Susie Linfield, "Advertisements for Death," *New York Times*, January 27, 2014, 15. **16**. For an interesting discussion of citizen journalism and the circulation of images from Syria, see Charif Kiwan, "Cellphone War Reporting Dumbs Down the Truth," *Newsweek*, December 7, 2014, www.newsweek.com/cellphone-war-reporting-dumbs-down-truth-289763. **17**. See Ian Black, "Syrian regime document trove shows evidence of 'industrial scale' killing of detainees," *Guardian*, January 21, 2014. **18**. See Desmond de Silva, Geoffrey Nice, and David Crane, "A Report into the Credibility of Certain Evidence with Regard to Torture and Execution of Persons Incarcerated by the Current Syrian Regime," http://static.guim.co.uk/ni/1390226674736/syria-report-execution-tort.pdf. **19**. This exhibit still exists in online form at www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/cases/syria/syria-photo-galleries/evidence. **20**. See Michael R. Gordon, "Syrian's Photos Spur Outrage, but Not Action," *New York Times*, October 31, 2014, for a detailed analysis of Caesar's response to US foreign policy since the photographs' release and evidentiary use. **21**. Zbigniew Herbert in *Mr. Cogito*, trans. John Carpenter and Bogdana Carpenter (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco Press, 1995). **22**. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), 180. **23**. Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, trans. Rela Mazali, and Ruvik Danieli (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 143. **24**. Ibid., 16. **25**. Sontag, *On Photography*, 19–20. **26**. The exhibition premiered at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 2012 and ended at the Brooklyn Museum in 2014. **27**. See Linfield, "Pictures Without an Exhibition," *Nation*, January 14, 2014. **28**. Sontag, *On Photography*, 33. **29**. Ibid. **30**. Ibid. **31**. Sontag here reasserts Roland Barthes's assessment of the *Family of Man* exhibit in his essay "The Great Family of Man" (1957): "Everything here, the content and appeal of the pictures, the discourse which justifies them, aims to suppress the determining weight of History: we are held back at the surface of an identity, prevented precisely by sentimentality from penetrating into this ulterior zone of human behavior where historical alienation introduces some 'differences' which we shall here quite simply call 'injustices.'" **32**. Sontag, *On Photography*, 11. **33**. "Award-Winning Photo Draws Criticism for Subjects," March 2, 2007, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7684938. **34**. The photograph in Azoulay's ontological regime, too, is an open object, "open to all participants who will not only interpret what is seen as a given, but will also reshape the seen that is to be read" (Azoulay 38). **35**. John Kifner, cited in Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 111. **36**. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 90. **37**. Ibid., 108. **38**. Ibid., 109. **39**. Azoulay centers her argument around Lyotard's theory of discourse from *The Differend* (1983): the smallest part of discourse, the statement, cannot be reduced to linguistic expression or content. It is rather a structure of relations made between addresser, addressee, referent, and a meaning. The damage that discourse cannot express is organized around the pole of the injured: if one element of the statement is harmed by silencing the addresser, undermining the addresser, or subverting his/her political status, or when existence is denied, the addresser suffers harm. **40**. Michel Agier, *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2011), 149. **41**. Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, "The Order of Violence," in *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in The Occupied Palestinian Territories*, ed. Adi Ophir, Michal Givoni, and Sari Hanafi (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 39. **42**. Ibid., 101. **43**. Ron Haviv, cited in Susan Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 126. **44**. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 324. **45**. Haviv, cited in James Estrin, "Photography in the Docket, as Evidence," *New York Times*, April 2, 2013. **46**. Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils* (New York: Verso, 2012), 146. **47**. Ibid., 105. Sarah Vanagt's film *Dust Breeding* (2013), about the trial of Radovan Karadzic and the ambiguity of the legal and forensic evidence gathering process, is a recent and interesting treatment of many of the issues Weizman discusses here. **48**. See http://cargocollective.com/AriellaAzoulay/A-Civil-State-of-Emergency. **49**. Hannah Arendt, cited in Sliwinski, 134. **50**. Ariella Azoulay, "Regime-Made Disaster: On the Possibility of Nongovernmental Viewing," in *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism*, ed. Meg McLagan and Yates McKee (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 34. **51**. Ibid., 35. **52**. Ibid., 40. **53**. Ibid. **54**. Ibid. **55**. Ibid. **56**. Ibid., 41. **57**. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 1: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 67. **58**. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 1. **59**. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 126. **60**. Ibid., 40. **61**. Ibid. **62**. Susan Meiselas, cited in David Levi Strauss, "An Amplitude That Information Lacks," in *Susan Meiselas: In History*, ed. Kristen Lubben (New York: International Center of Photography, 2008). **63**. For important analyses of Herbert's poem in the context of photography, see James Johnson, "'The Arithmetic of Compassion': rethinking the politics of photography," *British Journal of Political Science* 41 (2011), 621–43; and David Campbell, "The Myth of Compassion Fatigue" in *The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Conflict*, ed. Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 97–125. **64**. Sliwinski, 134. **65**. Jacques Rancière, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics" in *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Beth Hinderliter et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).