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10 **Gaza at the margins? Legibility and** 11 **indeterminacy in the Israel-Palestine** 12 **conflict** 13 14 15 16

17 *Despite prominent attention to the nature of the state in the social sciences, the place of*
18 *language in creating and maintaining the state remains an emerging area of research. The*
19 *analysis that follows investigates indeterminacy and illegibility in messages disseminated by*
20 *the Israeli military in the Gaza Strip. This analysis highlights the ways in which linguistic*
21 *indeterminacy is used as a tool by the state in controlling populations at its margins, while*
22 *investigating the role of language in reproducing the state through the circulation of texts.*
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24

25 **Introduction: Important statement for the residents of the Gaza Strip¹**

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29 **F**or decades, state-sponsored violence has been an area of major concern within
30 human rights circles. Law and political science scholars have treated state
31 violence through analyses of the legality and efficacy of state methods, while at
32 the same time historians have re-analyzed periods of state violence, at times
33 challenging official state discourses (see Levine 2005; Morris 2008; and Pappé 2006 for
34 the case relevant to this analysis). Anthropologists have also contributed to
35 investigating the effects of violence in daily life (e.g. Green 1999; Schepher-Hughes
36 1993) and various forms of violence in relation to the state (Das et al 2000). However,
37 engagement from within linguistic anthropology on language within systems of
38 violence remains an emerging area of research (Faudree 2012; Gavriely-Nuri 2013;
39 Hodges 2011). One potential site of linguistic anthropological engagement with
40 broader anthropological discussions on violence is analysis of the forms of
41 communication that take place between state militaries and civilians in conflict. This
42 type of analysis highlights how language and violence intersect, along with the
43 means by which language becomes one part of a larger constellation of methods used
44 to reproduce and reinforce the sovereignty of the state itself.

45 Communicative acts between states and civilians in war manifest in a variety of
46 different forms. In the Gaza Strip – the geo-political context at the center of this study
47 – these acts take the form of SMS messages and phone calls sent by Israeli intelligence
48 officers through Gazan telecommunications networks and military leaflets dropped
49 over Gaza (Tawil-Soury 2013; Weizman 2009a, 2009b). These forms of discourse
50 represent direct methods of communication between the military, as an extension of
51 the state, and Palestinian civilians in Gaza. However, this communication only
52 travels top-down, from abstracted state structures to civilians in war.
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1 The analysis that follows investigates textual indeterminacy (Falk-Moore 1978,
2 Irvine 1996, Jaffe 2009) in the participant frameworks of SMS messages and leaflets
3 disseminated by the Israeli military within the context of the three most recent rounds
4 of violence in the Gaza Strip: Operation Cast Lead (2008-9), Operation Pillar of
5 Defense (2012), and Operation Protective Edge (2014). My analysis begins with a
6 seven-word SMS message sent by the military to a resident of Gaza during Operation
7 Pillar of Defense. Through the SMS message we establish the initial layers of
8 indeterminacy that are then built upon by the subsequent analysis of a series of
9 military leaflets used in Gaza.

10 The textual data presented in this study was collected from varied international
11 news organizations including NBC, Maan, and Haaretz, all of whom reported on the
12 three most recent outbreaks of full fledged conflict in Gaza. As one component of
13 their reporting, news outlets regularly publish the texts (often as photographs) of
14 leaflets or SMS messages when writing about the development of the conflict. In
15 addition, the Israeli Defense Forces, on its official website and blog, regularly publish
16 copies of leaflets dropped over Gaza.

17 Gaza represents an unfortunately well-suited case study for the type of analysis
18 that I present below. Near continual cycles of military conflict in the Strip have
19 created a situation in which discourses about these conflicts circulate (Spitulnik 1997)
20 in both local and international media and in daily discourse(s) in Israel and the
21 Occupied Palestinian Territories (Gavriely-Nuri 2013). Additionally, the Israeli state
22 has been involved in more military conflicts than any other Western state following
23 the Second World War (Gavriely-Nuri 2015, 4). Due to the heightened attention the
24 Israel-Palestine conflict receives, the frequency with which conflict takes place, and
25 the undeniable power imbalance between belligerents in the conflict, an atmosphere
26 exists where communication between the military and civilians has become
27 commonplace. Beyond its commonality in this context, I argue that language has
28 become a central tool in managing not only conflict but the ways in which the Israeli
29 state solidifies itself as a recognized democracy within the international community.

30 In the analysis below, leaflets and SMS messages are presented in transliterated
31 Arabic alongside an English translation carried out based on the photographed
32 copies of these texts that were reported in the media. These examples were chosen for
33 their wide circulation in international media, the quality of the documentation of the
34 texts themselves, and because they highlight the broad range of indeterminacies that
35 are present in these forms of military-to-civilian communication in Gaza, providing a
36 more holistic view of the role of language in one of the world's most enduring
37 conflicts. Beyond these textual examples, fieldwork that I conducted in the Gaza Strip
38 in 2013, six months after Operation Pillar of Defense and just over a year before
39 Operation Protective Edge, provides an ethnographic backdrop for these discursive
40 acts.

41 My aim in analyzing a specific set of texts, from a single context, is to show how
42 language can be utilized by states and their ancillaries in times of conflict. But
43 beyond simply examining the ways in which a given state or its military uses
44 language, what this analysis offers us is a way to understand how language
45 traverses the margins of the state and can serve as a source of political and social
46 power in the maintenance of sovereignty. As this analysis shows, in Gaza the
47 margins of the state are penetrated with discourses that create a vision of an Israeli
48 state that appears wildly illegible (Das 2004; Das and Poole 2004) and contradictory
49 to civilians caught in fighting. The textual representations of the state analyzed
50 below are shot through, to draw on Bakhtin's (1981) turn of phrase, with
51 indeterminacies that come in the form of ambiguity and unusable information that
52 challenges the forms of order and rationality that have been treated as hallmarks of
53 the state (Das and Poole 2004, 5).

54 While in contrast, at a national or international level, the state uses the marginality
55 of Gaza and the language of these texts to ascribe notions of democratic order,
56 legality, and humanitarianism to the state. The result is a duality where the state is

1 rendered both legible and illegible, while Gaza is continually situated as the location
2 of disorder, a space in which the state must necessarily impose itself (Das and Poole
3 2004, 6). However, by examining these representations of the state we see that despite
4 attempts to keep it at its margins, Gaza and the “forms of illegibility, partial
5 belonging, and disorder that seem to inhabit the margins of the state” (Das and Poole
6 2004, 6) ultimately constitute a necessary condition of the Israeli state as both a
7 theoretical and political object. At the same time, as Tawil-Soury and Matar have
8 described, Gaza is unique in that it continually reinstates its centrality, providing “a
9 vivid and painful contemporary example of the violence and enmity of modern
10 warfare (2016, 2).

11 12 **From the Requerimiento to Gaza**

14 While situating language in modern military conflict may represent a relatively
15 novel area of interest, analyses of language within the context of state violence are
16 not new. The Spanish *Requerimiento* (Hanke 1949; Helps 1971) is one of a number
17 of cases where state actors that have utilized language in framing, threatening,
18 and ultimately carrying out acts of violence. As Faudree notes (2012, 182-83), the
19 *Requerimiento* were a collection of written texts used by the Spanish to formalize
20 their conquest of the Americas. The texts formally demanded that indigenous
21 peoples submit to the rule of Spain, demands made under the threat of violence if
22 the calls of the texts went unheeded (Faudree 2012, 183). In her analysis of the
23 *Requerimiento*, Faudree lays out four constituent parts of the structure of the texts
24 (Faudree 2012, 188):

- 25 1 Recounting of [Western] history, from creation through Papal donation
- 26 2 Explanation of Spanish authority to evangelize in the New World
- 27 3 Plea for the natives to submit to the Crown and permit evangelization
- 28 4 Promise of war if the natives do not submit
- 29

30 Faudree suggests that the participant framework of the texts is established most
31 clearly in the second half. Beginning in the third section, the text explicitly
32 requests the submission of native peoples to Spain. The fourth section, while
33 describing the consequences of resistance, also effectively constitutes the larger
34 social hierarchy that the texts establish (Faudree 2012, 188-89), a situation where
35 through their structure the texts both “describe and instantiate” a specific social
36 hierarchy (Faudree 2012, 188-89; Silverstein 1981, 9). Faudree argues that “the
37 entire narrative aims to create, through key speech acts, a specific configuration of
38 socio-political relations by describing them. . . The text’s form is thus a key part of
39 the process by which Spanish authority is simultaneously indexically presupposed
40 and indexically created” (Faudree 2012, 189). A similar structure can be discerned
41 from the language used by the Israeli military in the Gaza texts presented below.
42 The texts highlight linguistic practices, which reify the vision of a militarily
43 powerful, but ultimately democratic, Israeli state alongside a Gaza that is
44 continually situated as disorderly and under the control of decidedly undemo-
45 cratic non-state actors.

46 Through communicative acts that establish an indeterminate and shifting
47 participant framework, the state draws Gazan civilians into a complex relationship
48 with its military. This relationship positions civilians as both metaphorical and
49 literal intermediaries in shadow conversations (Irvine 1996) taking place between
50 Palestinian fighters and the state. These conversations take place outside of the
51 strict bounds of the texts, but coupled with the indeterminacies contained therein
52 constitute a larger body of discourse circulating between the military and
53 resistance organizations on the ground in Gaza. In doing so, SMS messages sent
54 to cellular phones eliminate the distance between civilians and abstract apparatuses
55 of state-power, creating a form of intimacy wherein a direct line of
56 communication with the state is being carried around in the pocket of Gaza’s

1 residents. Military leaflets falling over parts of Gaza during conflict, littering
 2 already crowded streets, are manifestations of the conflict that engage Gazans on
 3 multiple sensory levels: they can be picked up, read, used as fuel for fires during
 4 electricity shortages, or left to cover the ground until the conflict temporarily
 5 recedes.

6 Along with this constructed sense of intimacy we can also view the distance
 7 between the state and civilians as growing through the use of these linguistic
 8 practices. By delivering these texts remotely, the military creates physical distance
 9 between itself and civilians on the ground. This is coupled with the reality that
 10 leaflets are delivered by the same machines that may later drop munitions on Gaza.
 11 The duality of these machines in serving two contrastive purposes is in effect a
 12 manifestation of the indeterminacy that falls out from the texts examined in this
 13 study. As I highlight below, Israeli discursive engagement with Gazan civilians forms
 14 a complex interplay of indeterminacies. The result of this interplay renders the state
 15 illegible to civilians through ambiguous textual practices and the utilization of overly
 16 general (and thus ineffective) information in the texts, but legible, democratic, and
 17 humanitarian within the broader international community through the provision of
 18 what is argued to be an effective warning. My analysis begins with a seven-word
 19 SMS message sent by the Israeli military to a resident of Gaza during the 2012
 20 conflict. Through the SMS we establish the initial layers of indeterminacy that are
 21 then built upon by the subsequent analysis of a series of military leaflets used in
 22 Gaza.

23 24 **Touching the backbone: Gaza's telecommunications infrastructure as a** 25 **military tool** 26

27 During Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012, Rana Baker, a freelance
 28 journalist in Gaza, reported that her father received an SMS message from the Israeli
 29 Defense Forces (IDF). Although to a Western audience, receiving an SMS message
 30 from the military is unheard of, this is not unexpected in Gaza. By 2012, hacking of
 31 Palestinian communications networks by Israeli military and intelligence officers had
 32 become an established practice. Similar methods were used during Operation Cast
 33 lead in 2008-9, with as many as 250,000 calls being made to Gazan Palestinians, and
 34 text messages sent to most cellular phones in Gaza by the military (Amnesty
 35 International 2009; Tawil-Soury 2013, 80; Weizman 2009b).

36 The ability of Israeli intelligence officials to tap into and make use of the Gazan
 37 telecommunications infrastructure is one manifestation of what Tawil-Soury (2013)
 38 terms the "digital occupation" and "high-tech enclosure" of the Gaza Strip. This type
 39 of control is made possible through the architecture of Gaza's communications
 40 network that has Israel as its main technological support structure. Tawil-Soury
 41 describes (2013, 58) that:

42 A telephone call made on a landline, even between Gaza City and Khan Younis, is physically
 43 routed through Israel. Internet traffic is routed through switches located outside the Gaza
 44 Strip. Even on the ubiquitous cellular phones, calls must touch the Israeli backbone at some
 45 point. Like much else about the Gaza Strip, telecommunication infrastructures are limited by
 46 Israeli policies.
47

48 In spite of the commonality of the practice, visual data of the content of these SMS
 49 messages is challenging to obtain. For clarity, the SMS message is presented below in
 50 transcription and an English translation.²

51
52
53 Example 1: *The next phase is coming*, Operation Pillar of Defense (2012)³

54 *al-marḥala al-muqabala qa:dima ibta'adu: 'an 'ana:šir ḥama:s*

55 "The next phase is coming, distance yourselves from Hamas elements."
56

1 The SMS message was written in Standard Arabic, a code choice recurrent
2 throughout all of the texts examined in this analysis. Standard Arabic, although
3 spoken natively by none of Arabic's 300 million speakers, is the default written form
4 of Arabic. It is the language of literature, news, and official forms of government
5 communication (see Holes 2004). In addition to the prominent place of Standard
6 Arabic in institutional frameworks, the dialects of Arabic are also rarely codified in
7 writing.⁴ This makes Standard Arabic the default code for these texts, which can be
8 viewed as part of a larger body of "official" government discourse.⁵

9 Although Standard Arabic is a default for written Arabic, use of this variety
10 presupposes that the recipient is able to comprehend the message. Despite strong
11 Palestinian education rates, with literacy rates rising rapidly in more recent years,
12 cycles of violence and economic disparity over the past three decades have
13 resulted in the gradual collapse of educational infrastructure in the Gaza Strip
14 (Roy 2007, 228 & 292). Children, the elderly, and women in Gaza show the
15 highest degrees of illiteracy, which could, if they encounter these texts, require
16 that they turn to their social networks in order to determine the meaning of the
17 message, thus complicating their own ability to react quickly to the warnings that
18 the texts contain.⁶

19 Both local media outlets covering the use of these methods and my own experience
20 in Gaza speaking with civilians suggests that one primary issue with these messages
21 is that civilians largely do not feel as if they can trust the information they contain.
22 Despite the state's attestation that they provide regular and effective warnings to
23 civilians of impending military action, a legacy of seemingly never-ending conflict
24 creates an environment where there is little trust in the motives of the state. Civilians
25 also suggest that another factor that renders these messages largely illegible is that
26 the strikes that we will see mentioned in the remaining texts below often never
27 materialize. In addition, many of the warnings distributed by the military in Gaza are
28 sent across most of the territory, which Amnesty International (2009, 51) has argued
29 renders them too general to constitute an effective warning. The result is what
30 residents describe as a form of psychological warfare, where knowing what
31 information is accurate, what (or who) may be targeted, or when operations may
32 take place is never certain. Similar to what Das (2004, 227) has described with respect
33 to the Indian state, in Gaza this ultimately reflects an instability between what the
34 texts contain and the potential for the texts to manifest as military action.

35 Drawing on Faudree's (2012, 190-91) discussion on the referential indeterminacy of
36 the *Requerimiento*, the fact that these SMS messages may not be understood or are too
37 general to be useful, reflects that they may not have been the targets of the message.
38 Looking outside of the immediate environment of Gaza, the content these messages
39 suggests that the broader regional or international community may have been the
40 ultimate recipients of the texts. This indeterminacy reflects how "language can be
41 used by those who have (or wish to claim) power to prescribe while purporting to
42 describe; to fix and define others while retaining all of the advantages of
43 indeterminacy and all the maneuver room of processes of situational adjustment"
44 (Jaffe 2009, 246). In this sense, the interplay between the illegibility of the texts to
45 those on the ground and their simultaneous legibility in the international community
46 provides the Israeli military with room to maneuver in wider international debates
47 surrounding their actions during war. The use of Arabic here, regardless of whether
48 or not it is understood, provides the military with the ability to say that it provided
49 warnings to Gazan residents in their primary language of communication, an option
50 that would not be available had the messages been sent in Hebrew or English, two
51 other major languages of communication used in Israel.

52 In turn, the provision of a warning and the citability of these texts (Das 2004, 234)
53 as they circulate in the international community supports Israeli state claims to the
54 legitimacy of their actions in the conflict. The effectiveness of this tactic can be seen in
55 the frequency with which the news organizations covering the use of this tactic
56 highlight the nature of the texts as a warning to civilians. The only exceptions to this

1 framing of the data as a warning designed to help civilians came from reports
2 published by Maan, a major local Palestinian news agency, and +972 magazine, an
3 online magazine dedicated to opposing the Israeli occupation.

4 Moving beyond the issue of linguistic code and legibility, by looking more broadly
5 at the events of Occupation Pillar of Defense we can reconstruct the temporal
6 development of the conflict in relation to the SMS message. The 'prior phase' that the
7 message alludes to began with an air strike that killed Ahmed Jabari, the head of
8 Hamas' military wing in Gaza on November 14th, 2012.⁷ The SMS provides a
9 warning of impending military action for the recipient. However, the time frame for
10 "the next stage" remains ambiguous. This temporal indeterminacy makes it possible,
11 as Jaffe (2009) notes, "to suggest without the risks of assertion; and with the benefits
12 of after-the-fact denials or reconstructions of their meanings and stances" (243).
13 Alongside this temporal indeterminacy, the use of the term '*ana:sir* 'elements' adds a
14 layer of lexical indeterminacy to the text by leaving the referent of an 'element'
15 undefined, a point that will be investigated in more detail later in this analysis.

16 Alongside the overwhelming military power of the state, through the system of
17 blockade that has been in place in Gaza since 2007⁸, the state has secured almost total
18 control of the movement of aid, goods, and people in and out of the coastal territory.
19 Through these discursive practices the state is able to provide warning to Gazan
20 residents—an action that would be expected of a democratic actor engaged in armed
21 conflict, while still maintaining control over both the territory and the temporal
22 development of the conflict. This ability to control virtually all aspects of day-to-day
23 life in Gaza, Halper's (2000) "matrix of control", also constitutes a larger strategic
24 advantage for the military. The use of language in the texts examined here serves to
25 further reinforce their position of power in the conflict, and their ability to control the
26 development of the conflict by controlling the flow and form of information.

27 Interestingly, the participant framework created through this indeterminacy is
28 ultimately as indeterminate as the SMS itself. On one level, the fact that this practice is
29 commonplace and was used en masse across Gaza bleaches the message of any
30 personal elements. On another level, Gazans are receiving SMS messages from the
31 Israeli military, an extension of the state. This ability to carry out such an intensely
32 personal act reflects the degree of power and control that the state has over Gaza's
33 residents, a visual manifestation of the methods of digital control discussed
34 previously (Tawil-Soury 2013).

35 This form of constructed intimacy is also one in which neither the recipient nor the
36 addressee is clear. It is impossible to know who authored the message or their role in
37 the conflict, but although the author is unidentified, the relationship itself is not
38 completely indeterminate. The message that Baker's father received was likely part of
39 a larger blast of SMS messages sent to many of the cellular phones in the Gaza Strip.
40 Still, the military has the ability to target specific phones and individuals in particular
41 areas of Gaza, as evidenced by the practice of calling civilians to alert them that their
42 specific home has been marked for air strikes.⁹ The result is a practice that is, on one
43 hand, delivered through both extremely personal and intimate methods—reaching
44 civilians on their personal cellular phones—and impersonally, through language that
45 reads as somber, devoid of emotion, and detached. The military's ability to reach
46 individuals directly closes the gap between what are often abstract state power
47 structures and the daily, lived experiences of those on the ground. What these texts
48 and the methods by which they are delivered represents is the potential for the
49 military to reach across boundaries that demarcate the traditional structure of the
50 state (Poole 2004, 50). Ultimately, as these texts show, the distinction between the
51 state's margin and its center is continually blurred, renegotiated, transgressed, and
52 reconfigured (Poole 2004, 55).

53 Through the language of these texts and the forms of warning they contain, the
54 Israeli military is able to position itself as democratic, moral, and just in the way it
55 manages conflicts. Military strategy here works hand in hand with the indeterminacy
56 of the participant framework of the conflict and the mapping of multiple different

1 participant roles onto a given actor (Irvine 1996). Beyond this issue of positioning, the
2 use of these texts also, in Das' terms, creates a situation in which Gazans are "pulled
3 into the gravitational force of the state through the circulation of documents
4 produced by its functionaries" (2004, 229). Within the Gaza context, the ultimate
5 effect of this pull towards the center is that it nullifies claims by civilians of potential
6 criminality of the state during times of conflict. To circulate a warning, even if it does
7 not constitute an effective advanced warning within humanitarian frameworks
8 (Amnesty International 2009) then "becomes proof of the 'legality' of the operations."
9 (Das 2004, 240).

10 Moving to an examination of leaflets used in Gaza between 2008-2014, we can
11 see that the military again takes on multiple roles, acting both with concern for
12 civilians through the provision of a warning, but also with calculated language
13 that serves larger state aims. However, by adding leaflets to this emerging
14 picture of state communication in Gaza it becomes clear that through layered
15 indeterminacies and the shifts in participant roles that result, civilians oscillate
16 between belligerent and non-combatant, positioning them as intermediaries
17 between resistance fighters and the state. One particular form of indeterminacy
18 that facilitates these subtle shifts in the participant framework is the use of lexical
19 indeterminacy tied to the notion of 'terrorist elements' within Gaza that are the
20 stated targets of Israeli strikes.

21 22 **'anāšir: The replication of lexical indeterminacy across texts**

23
24 One consistent thread through the data presented in this analysis is the use of the lexical
25 item '*ana:šir* - *elements*'. However, what constitutes an element in these texts is rarely
26 defined. Although it is reasonable to suspect that the IDF uses '*ana:šir* to reference
27 Hamas militants or installations, in a densely populated area like Gaza, what
28 constitutes an 'element' is often not entirely clear. The choice of targets by the Israeli
29 military in the past three conflicts also reflects that '*ana:šir* may refer to obvious military
30 targets such as rocket launching sites and resistance tunnels or training camps, but also
31 seemingly innocuous sites such as homes, schools, hospitals, or United Nations
32 facilities. As a result, the indeterminacy emerging from the use of '*ana:šir* makes it
33 challenging for civilians who receive these messages to follow their instructions.

34 As I have argued in relation to the SMS message discussed above, the
35 indeterminacy of '*ana:šir* provides moral or legal room for the military to conduct
36 itself in conflict, while also reifying a specific image of the state within the
37 international community. Continually framed as a warning to civilians, these texts
38 form part of what is regularly described as a form of 'humanitarian war' being
39 conducted in the Gaza Strip (Asad 2007; Weizman 2009b, 557; 2011). The use of
40 language here couples with the use of forms of high technology, notably the ability to
41 reach specific individuals on cellular phones, targeted assassination techniques that
42 are said to reduce civilian casualties, and the increasingly ubiquitous tactic of
43 'knocking on the roof'¹⁰ during times of open conflict. As it is, couched within the
44 broader discursive context of a warning, '*ana:šir* puts in writing that targets exist, and
45 that this has been communicated to civilians so that they can avoid them.

46 However, to civilians the continually shifting and seemingly arbitrary nature of what
47 constitutes a 'terrorist element' renders the state largely illegible. This illegibility stems
48 from the overly general nature of many of the warnings provided by the IDF in Gaza.
49 Even in cases like those presented below where specific directions are given, human
50 rights organizations have argued that these texts do not constitute effective advanced
51 warnings within current international humanitarian frameworks (Amnesty Interna-
52 tional 2009) and make it challenging, if not impossible, for civilians to effectively judge
53 the safest course of action. Still, the use of these forms of indeterminacy and, crucially,
54 that they occur within a textual warning does not serve to challenge the idea of a
55 democratic and humanitarian state carrying out conflict against a disordered,
56 uncivilized, non-state actor at its margins (Das and Poole 2004, 6).

1 This type of lexical indeterminacy and what it accomplishes can be grounded in
 2 another conflict: the United States drone warfare campaign (Benjamin 2013; Kaag
 3 and Kreps 2014). In the language of drone warfare, we see another example of
 4 how linguistic indeterminacy is used to the benefit of the state, reinforcing
 5 hierarchies of power while framing state military actions in broader humanitarian
 6 terms. A level of indeterminacy parallel to that of *'ana:šir* is evident in what the
 7 United States military and Central Intelligence Agency have termed 'signature'
 8 drone strikes. These drone strikes are carried out on individuals, groups, or
 9 structures that carry the 'signature' of terrorist activity. However, the political and
 10 military actors involved in US drone operations have been reluctant to commit to
 11 a description of what constitutes the 'signature' of terror activity. The resultant
 12 indeterminacy keeps the referential meaning of the term opaque, allowing the
 13 military and CIA to more easily conduct themselves without having to fully
 14 define the scope of their operations.

15 These forms of indeterminacy and their efficacy reflect the extent of state power
 16 and control in situations of conflict. Through its superior military power, the United
 17 States is able to conduct the "War on Terror" (Hodges 2011) while leaving
 18 indeterminate the targets of war. In the Gazan context, through a complex web of
 19 indeterminacies the military is able to carry out strikes against militant groups while
 20 often not defining what the 'elements' are that civilians should avoid. To further
 21 exemplify this point, I turn now to a collection of military leaflets used in Gaza. These
 22 leaflets highlight that the indeterminacies in the SMS message analyzed not only
 23 provide the military with flexibility in conducting its operations, but also continually
 24 reposition civilians in differing relations to the military and to resistance groups
 25 operating in the Gaza Strip.

27 **Lend a helping hand to your brothers and sisters in the Strip: military** 28 **leaflets in Gaza**

29 Compared to the sparse visual availability of SMS messages sent by the IDF to Gazan
 30 Palestinians, military leaflets constitute a larger body of data. The practice of
 31 dropping leaflets on both civilian and military areas during wartime is not new.
 32 Beginning on a large scale during World War I, leaflets have become a fairly well
 33 established method of alerting residents of an area of impending military actions, as
 34 well as playing a role in psychological warfare against enemy combatants (Taylor
 35 2003, 188-90).

36 For this analysis I have selected four examples of military leaflets, all of which
 37 were collected from various international news reports about the use of this tactic by
 38 the Israeli military, as well as from the official IDF blog, which has regularly
 39 published information about the steps taken by the military to reduce civilian
 40 casualties in Gaza.¹¹ The news sources were all major local and international news
 41 agencies,^{12 13 14} and these specific examples were chosen because they best highlight
 42 the range of indeterminacies present within the discourse of military leaflets in Gaza.
 43 The data below is presented in two columns, with transcription on the left and a
 44 translation of the Arabic into English on the right.

45 Example 2: *Take responsibility for your fate, Operation Cast Lead (2009)*¹⁵

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|---|--|
| 1. <i>baya:n ha:mm li-sukka:n al-qīṭa:'</i> | Important statement for the residents of the |
| 2. | Strip |
| 3. <i>nmin aḡli sala:matikum, taḥlu: al-mus'u:liyya</i> | For your safety, take responsibility for your |
| 4. <i>'an maši:rkum wa tajannabu: al-iqtira:b min</i> | fate and avoid approaching Hamas elements |
| 5. <i>'ana:šir ḥama:s wa mara:kiziha: allati sawfa</i> | and centers which will put your lives at risk. |
| 6. <i>tu'arriḡu ḥaya:takum li-l-xaṭar. ḥama:s wa</i> | Hamas has once again led the area to military |
| 7. <i>marra uxra: taqu:d al-minṭaqa 'īla: taš'i:d</i> | escalation and bloodshed and the Israeli |

- 1 8. *'askari: wa 'ila safik lil-dima:' 'inna jayš* Defense Force is determined to protect the
 2 9. *al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy 'a:zim 'ala hima:yat* citizens of the State of Israel as necessary.
 3 10. *sukka:n dawlat 'isra:'i:l kullama: taṭallaba*
 4 11. *al-amr.*
 5 12. *'inna haḍa al-baya:n sa:ri: al-maf'u:l li-* This statement is valid until the return of
 6 13. *hi:n'awdat al-hudu' 'ila al-minṭaqa.* calm to the region.
 7 14.
 8 15. *qiya:dat jayš al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy* Israeli Defense Forces Headquarters
 9

10
 11 Parallel to the structure introduced by Faudree (2012, 188), when examining these
 12 leaflets as part of a larger collective body of Israeli military discourse, I suggest a
 13 recurrent structure for these texts containing four constituent parts:

- 14 1 Position Palestinian resistance fighters as the recurrent source of regional
 15 tension
 16 2 Project the right of the military to protect its citizens
 17 3 Establish the onus of responsibility for safety as a primarily civilian concern
 18 4 Promise of violence if military warnings go unheeded
 19

20 In the example above the opaque term *'ana:šir 'elements'* (line 4) surfaces again, with
 21 the same level of indeterminacy as in the SMS message sent to Baker's father.
 22 Following this initial form of indeterminacy, by establishing the first part of the
 23 framework through positioning Palestinian fighters as the source of tension (lines 5-7)
 24 the military is able to solidify and maintain the second part of the structure, the right
 25 of the military to protect Israeli civilians (lines 7-9).

26 The third part of this textual architecture (lines 3-5) plays a major role in
 27 shifting the participant framework of the conflict by placing the responsibility for
 28 safety on civilians themselves, while insinuating a relationship between civilians
 29 and the resistance fighters that Israel has engaged in combat. Finally, the fourth
 30 part of this framework provides a warning (lines 8-9) to recipients of the message
 31 that violence will continue if the messages in the texts are ignored. Beyond
 32 establishing the fourth part of the textual structure, the military notes (lines 12-13)
 33 that their promise of violence is valid until calm returns to the area, but what
 34 constitutes calm and who makes that decision, remains ambiguous. We can only
 35 assume, given their position of power, that the military views themselves as the
 36 arbiters in determining when the present round of conflict will abate. While the
 37 order in which the structure is established varies, with multiple constituent parts
 38 at times being established by similar passages in the texts, the use and
 39 development of this framework allows the military to inject layers of indeterminacy
 40 into the conflict, both in its participant framework and into the texts
 41 themselves.

42 As was the case with the SMS message sent to Baker's father, the participant
 43 framework of this leaflet is ambiguous. The leaflet is addressed to the residents of the
 44 Gaza Strip, but it is unclear from the language of the message whether they are
 45 viewed as participants *in* or victims *of* the conflict. Superficially, this leaflet projects
 46 the residents as victims of the fighting that Hamas has brought upon the Gaza Strip.
 47 However, the indeterminacy that abounds regarding what the military considers a
 48 legitimate target in Gaza simultaneously positions the residents of the Strip in a
 49 liminal space somewhere between victim and participant. The leaflet instructs the
 50 residents of Gaza to negotiate their positionality within this indeterminate frame-
 51 work, making a choice regarding what to do after receiving the leaflet.¹⁶ In engaging
 52 with the leaflet and subsequently making that choice, civilians are further drawn into
 53 the participant framework of the conflict, or in Das' (2004, 229) terms the
 54 "gravitational force" of the state and through the sheer existence, use, and
 55 circulation of the leaflet, military action is licensed (Faudree 2012, 190; Spitulnik
 56 1997).

1 These military leaflets and the method by which they are delivered to Gazans also
 2 parallels the power dynamic of the conflict, a point mentioned at the outset of this
 3 analysis. The leaflets are typically distributed by drones or fighter jets: the same
 4 machines that may later drop explosives in Gaza are used to drop warnings for its
 5 residents. The use of the same machines to carry out seemingly contradictory aims
 6 reflects yet another layer of the indeterminacy present in the Gazan context. By
 7 examining another example, also from Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9, we see how
 8 even though certain forms of indeterminacy may recede, the overall indeterminate
 9 participant framework is maintained through a process of layering new forms of
 10 indeterminacy into the text and onto its recipients:

11
 12
 13 Example 3: *Lend a helping hand*, Operation Cast Lead (2009)^{17 18}

14	1. 'ila sukka:n qīta:' ġazza	To the residents of the Gaza Strip
15	2. taḥammalu al-mas'u:liyya 'an maṣi:rikum!	Take responsibility for your fate!
16	3. 'inna muḥliqi: al-ṣaw:ari:x wa al-'ana:ṣir	Rocket launchers and terrorist elements pose
17	4. al-'irha:biyya yuṣakkilu:n xaṭar-an	a threat to you and your families.
18	5. 'alaykum 'ala 'a:'ila:tikum.	
19	6.	
20	7. 'ida kuntum taḡribu:n fi: taqdi:m 'ayd	If you want to lend a helping hand and assist
21	8. al-'awn wa al-musa:'ada li-'aha:li:kum wa	your brothers and sisters in the Strip, then
22	9. 'ixwa:nikum fi: al-qīta:' ma: 'alaykum 'illa:	contact the number below to let us know the
23	10. al-ittiṣa:l 'ala al-raqam 'adna:h l-	location of rocket launchers and terrorist
24	11. iṭṭila:'ina 'ala ma'wa:qi' minaṣṣa:t	gangs that made you hostage to their
25	12. al-ṣawa:ri:x wa al-'iṣa:ba:t al-'irha:biyya	operations.
26	13. allati ja'alat minkum rahi:na li-	
27	14. 'amali:ya:tiha:.	
28	15.	
29	16. mana'a waqawa'a al-fa:ja'a aṣbaḥ bayna	Preventing the tragedy from happening is in
30	17. 'aydi:kum.	your hands.
31	18.	
32	19. la: tataraddadu:!	Do not hesitate!
33	20. sa-nuraḥḥib bi-jami:' al-ma'lu:ma:t	We will welcome all available information -
34	21. bidu:n al-ḥa:ja 'ila 21. ḍikr tafa:si:likum	without the need to mention your personal
35	22. al-ṣaxṣi:yya.	details
36	23. al-sirri:yya maḍmu:na.	Confidentiality assured.
37	24. yumkinukum al-ittiṣa:l bina:'abra al-	You can contact the following number:
38	25. raqam al-ta:li: 02-5839749	02-5839749
39	26. 'aw 'ala: al-'unwa:n al-ta:li:	And the following email address:
40	27. helpgaza2008@gmail.com	helpgaza2008@gmail.com
41	28. li-taqdi:m 'ayy ma'lu:ma ladaykum 'an	To provide any information you have about
42	29. naṣa:ṭ al-'ana:ṣir al-'irha:biyya	the activity of terrorist elements.
43	30.	
44	31. qiya:dat jayṣ al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy	Israeli Defense Force Headquarters

45 As with the leaflet in example 2, we can see the constituent parts of the structure
 46 that I have outlined above being established anew in example 3. The first constituent
 47 part of the structure, positioning Palestinian fighters as a source of regional tension is
 48 implicitly established (lines 3-4) through language that describes them as a threat. In
 49 doing so, the right of the military to respond, the second part of the structure, is also
 50 established. The third part of the structure is solidified (lines 2 and 16) through
 51 describing responsibility as being in the hands of civilians and imploring them to
 52 avoid bloodshed. This mention of bloodshed (line 16) also establishes an implicit
 53 promise of violence if this message is ignored, completing the remaining component
 54 of the overarching structure of these texts. Although 'ana:ṣir 'elements' is used again
 55 in this example, rocket launchers are also mentioned (lines 3 and 10), providing a
 56 slightly more concrete notion of what constitutes a terrorist element to the IDF.

This leaflet also actively solicits collaboration (line 10) from Gazan civilians to assist in Israel's military campaign, a crime that, in Gaza, is punishable by death.¹⁹ This leaflet is a departure from the other texts examined thus far, in that the participant framework has shifted slightly. While earlier examples positioned Gazan residents in an indeterminate or liminal position in relation to both the IDF and Hamas fighters, that is not the case in example 3. Here, the text positions the residents of Gaza closer to victims. Crucially, however, they are not victims of Israeli strikes, but victims of "terrorist gangs" (lines 10-11) operating in Gaza that the military would like civilians to help them eradicate. In drawing civilians into the scope of the state (Das 2004) by soliciting collaboration, the state contrasts civilians with terror elements in Gaza, reifying the notion of a 'margin' that "represents a zone of instability and danger precisely because it lies outside both the control and territory of the national state" (Poole 2004, 54).

The promise of anonymity (lines 20-22) from the IDF, which can be seen as welcoming the development of a relationship based on trust, is also made indeterminate when viewed in light of the relative ease with which Israeli intelligence officials have been able to tap into the Gazan telecommunications infrastructure (Tawil-Soury 2013; Weizman 2009b). Additionally, the use of email introduces electronic indeterminacy into the relationship between the recipients of this leaflet and the military. Through email the military opens a direct line of communication with civilians, establishing the potential for a personal connection between two disparate groups.

However, the connection suggested by the leaflet keeps the identities of Israeli officials receiving the messages hidden, while further undermining their offer of anonymity through the military's access to a personal detail that the leaflet describes as not required, an email (or Internet Protocol) address. In a sense this is yet another manifestation of the power imbalance in the conflict, this time through double-voicing (Bakhtin 1981, 324) which here protects Israeli officials while opening up a space whereby potential collaborators are vulnerable. In this leaflet, the military can offer confidentiality and anonymity to those Gazans willing to collaborate, but collaboration implies necessarily giving up your anonymity by providing contact information, which can then be tracked by the military. This is reified further by the frequency with which would-be one-time collaborators are pursued by intelligence offers to extract additional information regarding militant activities in Gaza.²⁰ The two remaining leaflets, both from Operation Protective Edge in July-August 2014, add new layers of indeterminacy to the participant structure by positioning civilians as simultaneously complicit in, and victims of the most recent round of violence.

Example 4: *The battle is ongoing*, Operation Protective Edge (2014)²¹

1. 'ila: sukka:n al-qiṭa:'	To the population of the Strip
2. 'alaykum naql ha:dīhi al-risa:la 'ila	Transfer this message to your leaders hiding
3. qa:datikum al-muxṭabi'i:n taht al-'arḍ	underground:
4. al-ma'raka maftu:ḥa	The battle is ongoing
5.	
6. kull 'afra:d qa:dat ḥama:s wa ba:qi:	All members of the Hamas leadership and
7. al-ḥaraka:t al-'irḥa:biyya ḡayr 'a:mini:n	the leaderships of other terrorist movements
8.	are not safe
9. jayš al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy	The Israel Defense Forces

Unlike earlier examples, which showed more overt linguistic manifestations of the constituent structure developed for these texts, the participant structure in example 4 is implied rather than explicit. From this example we see that the IDF views Hamas and other resistance organizations in Gaza as aggressors in the conflict. By noting (lines 4 and 7) that the battle is ongoing and that militants are not safe we discern that

1 the IDF is actively engaged in what it views as a struggle to protect its own citizens.
 2 In describing (line 2-3) that this message, aimed at groups “hiding underground”, is
 3 being transferred to the residents of Gaza the military successfully places respon-
 4 sibility on civilians for how the conflict unfolds. Finally, in concert with establishing
 5 the second part of the constituent structure, noting that the battle is ongoing (line 4)
 6 also implies that additional violence is forthcoming.

7 Through the manner in which the military places responsibility on civilians in
 8 example 4 and the specific mention that their leaders are in hiding underground, this
 9 example reflects a particular facet of the 2014 conflict that is perhaps more specific
 10 than earlier leaflets. During Operation Protective Edge, Palestinian militants made
 11 use of an expansive network of underground tunnels stretching from Gaza into
 12 Israel. This allowed Palestinian fighters to not only seek refuge from the fighting but
 13 also strike military and civilian targets inside of Israel.²² In light of this context, the
 14 mention of “hiding underground” could suggest that these tunnel-based military
 15 tactics are what the IDF is referring to, providing a substantially more concrete
 16 context for the message. However, another reading of these lines is possible. By
 17 describing them as hiding underground in a leaflet delivered to civilians, the message
 18 undermines Hamas’ leadership abilities, portraying them as cowardly in the face of
 19 conflict. The reminder (line 4) that the conflict continues above ground is perhaps less
 20 of a reminder to Hamas and is aimed more directly at civilians, an attempt to suggest
 21 that their leadership has abandoned them. This example also echoes larger military
 22 discourses that characterize Hamas fighters as using their own citizens as shields in
 23 the fighting.²³ It is unclear, however, if employing this type of discourse in a military
 24 leaflet successfully undermined Hamas’ position in Gaza.

25 As the language discussed above suggests, this leaflet takes a decidedly different,
 26 and more aggressive tone towards the residents of the Gaza Strip than earlier
 27 examples. While the leaflet undermines Hamas’ leadership ability, it also positions
 28 civilians as an intermediary between the military and Palestinian fighters by stating,
 29 “Transfer this message to your leaders hiding underground” (lines 2-3). The concern
 30 by the military evidenced through the language of the earlier leaflets is completely
 31 absent here, with the language of this message essentially implicating civilians in the
 32 wider conflict by placing them linguistically in the middle of a fight between a state
 33 military and a resistance organization.

34 The possible, varied readings for this leaflet simultaneously works against Hamas
 35 leadership while placing civilians in an uncertain position. The participant frame-
 36 work of the conflict shifts again in example 4 through language that positions
 37 civilians as complicit in the fighting. The remaining example is the least indetermi-
 38 nate and most legible of the data presented, but the overall structure and framing of
 39 these messages, which layers indeterminacies to strategically position both the
 40 military and civilians, remains apparent.

43 Example 5: *You are hereby forewarned to exercise caution, Operation Protective*
 44 *Edge (2014)*²⁴

- 45 1. *bala:ğ 'askariyy 'ila sukka:n bayt la:hi:ya*
- 46 2. *bi-l-rağm min muba:darat waqf 'iqla:q al-*
- 47 3. *na:r 'ala: ħama:s wa al-ħaraka:t al-*
- 48 4. *'irha:biyya al-'uxra: istamirru: fi: iqla:qihim*
- 49 5. *al-na:r li-ha:da:*
- 50 6. *sa-yaqu:mu jayš al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy bil-*
- 51 7. *'amal bi-quwwa wa 'azam li-l-darb min al-*
- 52 8. *jaww al-'ana:šir al-'irha:bi:yya wa al-*
- 53 9. *buna: al-taħti:yya al-ta:bi'a la-ha: fi: al-*
- 54 10. *mana:tiq allati tuqlaqu min-ha al-šawa:ri:x*
- 55 11. *sa-yaqu:mu jayš al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy bil-*
- 56 12. *'amal bi-quwwa wa 'azam li-l-darb min al-*

Military Announcement to the population of
Beit Lahia
Despite the ceasefire initiative, Hamas and
other terrorist movements continue to fire
[on Israel].
Therefore:

The Israeli Defense Forces will work with strength and vigor to strike from the air terrorist elements and infrastructure in areas from which rockets are fired towards the State of Israel and they are as follows:

- 1 13. *bi-ittija:h dawlat 'isra:'i:l hiya ka-l-ta:li:*
 2 14.
 3 15. *min šarq 'aṭa:ṭara wa ḥatta: ša:ri'* From East of 'aṭa:ṭara to Sultans Street and
 4 16. *al-sala:ṭi:n wa min ġarb wa šima:l* from the West and North of Jabalia Camp.
 5 17. *mu'askar jaba:li:yya*
 6 18.
 7 19. *min 'ajl salama:tikum:* For your safety:
 8 20. *'alaykum 'ixla:' buyu:tikum ḥa:lan wa* Evacuate your homes immediately and go to
 9 21. *fawran wa al-ittija:h ila janu:b jaba:li:yya* the South of Jabalia city via the following
 10 22. *al-balad 'ibra al-ṭari:q al-ta:li:* way:
 11 23.
 12 24. *ša:ri' al-fa:lu:ja wa ha:da: ḥatta: al-sa:'a* Fallujah Street as of 12pm on Sunday July
 13 25. *12 ḏ'uhur yawm al-'aḥad 13.7.2014* 13th, 2014.
 14 26.
 15 27. *jayš al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy ġayr ma'niyy* The Israeli Defense Forces is not interested
 16 28. *bi-l-lams bikum wa bi-'abna:' 'ale:kum* in coming in contact with you and your
 17 29. *ha:ḡihi al-'amaliyya:t maw'aqata wa* families. These operations are [temporary
 18 30. *qaš:ira kul man sa-yaxa:lif ha:ḡihi a-* and short]. All who counter these
 19 31. *ta'li:ma:t wa la: yaxli:* instructions and don't leave immediately are
 20 32. *baytahu 'ala: al-fawr ḥaya:tuhu wa ḥaya:t* putting their lives and the lives of their
 21 33. *'abna:' 'a:'ilatih lil-xaṭar!!!!* families in danger!!!!
 22 34.
 23 35. *a'ḡara man 'anḡara!* You are hereby forewarned to exercise
 24 36. caution!
 25 37.
 26 38. *qiya:dat jayš al-difa:' al-'isra:'i:liyy* Israeli Defense Forces Headquarters

27 In example 5 (lines 3-4), Palestinian resistance groups are again positioned as a
 28 source of tension, here through what the military describes as the violation of a
 29 ceasefire. This violation results (lines 8-12) in the military responding to rocket fire
 30 directed at Israel and its citizens. Responsibility for the safety of Gazan residents is
 31 placed again in the hands of civilians (lines 30-36), through language that suggests
 32 that those who do not immediately follow the leaflet's instruction are in mortal
 33 danger. Finally, by noting (lines 27-29) that the military does not want to come into
 34 contact with civilians, an implicit promise of further violence is established.

35 Further, the lexical indeterminacy of *'ana:šir 'elements'* surfaces for a final time in
 36 this example. Despite the indeterminacy of *'ana:šir* that has run as thread throughout
 37 many of these texts, this example actually provides the greatest degree of useable
 38 information for civilians regarding military operations. The leaflet (lines 15-16)
 39 specifies the areas of Beit Lahia, north of Gaza City, that have been targeted for
 40 strikes, providing street names and directions (lines 20-25) to the recipients of the
 41 leaflets as to where they should go to avoid potential airstrikes. This is a departure
 42 from the often ambiguous mentions of military strikes in the earlier examples.

43 In this leaflet the military again appears to occupy a position of concern for the
 44 safety of civilians within the participant framework of the conflict, a theme common
 45 in some of the examples analyzed above. This concern, although highly visible in this
 46 example, still does not displace one of the major forms of indeterminacy that has been
 47 covered in my analysis of these texts. Civilians in Beit Lahia, regardless of their actual
 48 relationship with Palestinian resistance groups, are again located as an intermediary
 49 between the military and these organizations through the structure of the text.

50 Although they are not the expressed recipient of the message, in these forms of
 51 communication resistance organizations are made ratified overhearers (Goffman
 52 1981) in the sense that, once these messages are dropped in Gaza, they can be read by
 53 anyone who picks them up. However, by labeling civilians as the "official" recipients
 54 (Goffman 1981) of the message, the military again is able to position them as an
 55 intermediary between the IDF and Hamas. As I have argued above, through
 56 positioning the civilian recipients (Goffman 1981) of these messages as intermediaries

1 in the wider shadow conversation taking place between the IDF and resistance
 2 groups regarding blame for the conflict, the military is able to continually and
 3 repeatedly shift the participant framework (Irvine 1996, 140).

4 Through the shifting and multiple layers of indeterminacy that have surfaced in
 5 this analysis, civilians remain in a space somewhere between non-combatant and
 6 participant, between the violence of the margins and the order and scope of the state.
 7 On the surface this final example removes the more flatly visible manifestations of
 8 indeterminacy that have been highlighted throughout the study. However, the final
 9 leaflet still fulfills all of the constituent parts of textual architecture laid out above. In
 10 doing so, this message highlights that in its essence this is an architecture built on,
 11 maintained, and proliferated through indeterminacy. Through this indeterminacy,
 12 language reinforces and supports the larger social hierarchies and power structures
 13 of what has become the world's most enduring protracted conflict.

15 **Conclusion: Prevent the tragedy from being on your hands**

17 Tawil-Soury and Matar (2016, 2-4) describe that throughout its history many
 18 metaphors and narratives have been ascribed to Gaza. Perhaps most vivid among
 19 these have been the presentation of Gaza as an open air prison, a metaphor which
 20 lays bare the refusal of the world to truly work toward solving the Israel-Palestine
 21 conflict. Gaza also offers a possible window into "Israel's contemporary weakness –
 22 whether a weakness of its military to dispose of Gaza, or a weakness of morality in
 23 attempting to do just that" (Tawil-Soury and Matar 2016, 2). As they describe, Gaza
 24 "has always been and remains a problem for Israel" (Tawil-Soury and Matar 2016, 7).
 25 The coastal enclave has refused to be silenced, despite numerous attempts to relegate
 26 it permanently to the margins.

27 If Gaza refuses to be silenced, then, how should it be located when it is viewed
 28 alongside the enduring social and political project of maintaining the sovereignty of
 29 the Israeli state? Is it merely a violent thorn in Israel's side? Or perhaps it, and its
 30 present political leaders, are the primary barrier to both the security of Israel and the
 31 viability of a future Palestinian state? Variations on these themes certainly constitute
 32 much of the discourse that circulates about Gaza. However, I conclude by reiterating
 33 what I feel are perhaps the more salient characteristics of the data that I have
 34 presented. Indeterminacy has served as a thread that unites these varied texts. The
 35 SMS messages and leaflets presented here create a chain of communication between
 36 the military and Gazans, but this communication only travels from the upper levels
 37 of abstracted state power down to the daily lived reality of Gaza's residents. On the
 38 streets of Gaza where these texts are experienced, indeterminacy renders the state
 39 illegible (Das 2004, 244) through a complex process of shifting participant roles that
 40 puts civilians on perpetually uncertain footing.

41 The deployment of language in these forms and via the methods analyzed
 42 throughout this study creates spaces both locally and internationally where the state
 43 actively negotiates its relationship with its margins. Poole has argued that this
 44 relationship between the state "and its violent, extrajudicial, primitive, or natural
 45 'margins' is simultaneously both accepted and denied as a more or less constant and
 46 central feature of the judiciary, and indeed of 'the state' in general" (2004, 51). I push
 47 Poole's statement further, arguing that Gaza is indispensable to Israel and cannot
 48 ever truly be relegated to its margins. A modern Israel cannot define itself without
 49 Gaza, despite mainstream political discourse's attempts to situate it forever outside of
 50 the scope of the state and antithetical to democracy. Gaza has and continues to
 51 reinstate its centrality, as Tawil-Soury and Matar (2016) have described. However,
 52 this centrality transcends the levels of culture, history, or even the nature of
 53 international political regimes. Within its context, Gaza is essential to the emergence
 54 and maintenance of the state itself.

55 The state has utilized Gaza as a tool in the ongoing project of reifying its own
 56 status as a legible, locatable, sovereign democracy within the international

community. Achille Mbembe has argued that “to exercise control over morality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power” (2003, 12) is an essential component of the maintenance of sovereignty. An analysis of language in this context highlights one means by which the state asserts that control. Das has described that “the iterability of writing, the citability of its utterances” (2004, 234) makes possible conditions under which new social practices come into being that allow the state to reproduce itself. The language present in the leaflets and SMS messages deployed in Gaza forms one component of a constellation of methods that are used by the state for this purpose. In doing so, these texts highlight not simply the power of the state to produce “killable bodies” (Agamben 1998; Das and Poole 2004, 13), rendering them as bare life, suggesting instead that Gaza represents not a state of exception, a margin, but that it is embedded in every sense in the life of the state (Das and Poole 2004, 13).

Notes

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2. Transcription was carried out based on the Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics (Versteegh et al 2006) transcription protocol.

3. The content of the SMS can be retrieved from: <http://972mag.com/idf-sends-text-message-to-gaza-mobile-phones-the-next-phase-is-on-the-way/60046/> (accessed 21 January 2017)

4. With the advent of technology and in particular social media, this is actually changing. Still, official military communication remains a domain for Standard Arabic.

5. In a sense these texts fall into the larger collective of Arabic language materials published by the Israeli state, given that Arabic is one of the official languages of the state of Israel, even though Gaza’s residents are not Israeli citizens.

6. A 2015 report by the United Nations Development Program shows that in general, literacy rates among Palestinians, and specifically in Gaza are high. However vulnerable groups, namely the elderly, children, and women show the highest illiteracy rates across the Palestinian community. <http://www.ps.undp.org/content/dam/papp/docs/Publications/UNDP-papp-research-PHDR2015Education.pdf> (accessed 21 January 2017).

7. The IDF followed Jabari’s assassination by uploading the video of the strike to its official Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6U2ZQ0EhN4> (accessed 21 January 2017).

8. Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement regularly publishes updates regarding the situation in Gaza and in particular the state of the blockade: <http://gisha.org/publication> (accessed 21 January 2017).

9. Details of the process of calling civilians, along with the audio of a call made by an IDF officer to a civilian in Gaza is available on the IDF blog, however the call itself is in Hebrew and it is unclear from the audio if the recipient of the call actually understands Hebrew: <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2014/07/16/idf-done-minimize-harm-civilians-gaza/> (accessed 21 January 2017)

10. ‘Knocking on the roof’ is a practice whereby the Israeli military drops a warning bomb on a structure marked for further airstrikes. The munition generally contains a non-explosive warhead that penetrates the upper level of a structure. Israeli military officials argue that the practice serves as a warning to civilians in structures marked by a ‘knock on the roof’ to exit the building and seek shelter before follow up air strikes.

11. IDF Blog - <http://www.idfblog.com/blog/2012/11/15/how-does-the-idf-minimize-harm-to-palestinian-civilians/> (accessed 21 January 2017)

12. NBC - <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/israel-drops-leaflets-warning-northern-gaza-airstrikes-n154571>, and <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/battle-ongoing-gaza-israel-leaflets-warn-n171551> (accessed 21 January 2017)

13. Maan News - <http://www.maannews.com/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?id=207440> (accessed 21 January 2017)
14. Haaretz - <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.605421> (accessed 21 January 2017)
15. IDF Blog - <http://www.idfblog.com/blog/2012/11/15/how-does-the-idf-minimize-harm-to-palestinian-civilians/> (accessed 21 January 2017)
16. Similar linguistic moves are evident in the language of leaflets dropped by Syrian and Russian forces in advance of attempts by both militaries to retake Aleppo, Syria: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/29/world/middleeast/thousands-flee-onslaught-in-aleppo-as-assads-forces-gain-ground.html?_r=1, and <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2117306/russians-drop-warning-leaflets-ahead-of-massive-aleppo-blitz-as-terrified-families-tell-the-world-to-pray-for-us/> (accessed 21 January 2017)
17. <http://www.maannews.com/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?id=207440> (accessed 21 January 2017)
18. The leaflet contains a typo, the Arabic word 'ayd hand', which appears to have been misspelled in the original
19. One of the most recent examples of how seriously collaboration is dealt with in Gaza is exemplified in a case from 2014, where 18 suspected collaborators were killed by Hamas authorities: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/hamas-kills-18-alleged-collaborators-1408715295> (accessed 21 January 2017)
20. Multiple international news sources have detailed the practice of blackmailing Palestinian residents into becoming collaborators with the Israeli military and intelligence service. The Guardian provides one example: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/12/israeli-intelligence-unit-testimonies> (accessed 21 January 2017)
21. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/battle-ongoing-gaza-israel-leaflets-warn-n171551> (accessed 21 January 2017)
22. <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/7/gaza-tunnels-hamasisraelidf.html> (accessed 21 January 2017)
23. The IDF, in the period surrounding the 2014 conflict published numerous articles on its official blog detailing what it reported was Hamas' use of human shields: <https://www.idfblog.com/2014/08/27/hamas-terrorists-confess-using-human-shields/> (accessed 21 January 2017).
24. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/middle-east-unrest/israel-drops-leaflets-warning-northern-gaza-airstrikes-n154571> (accessed 21 January 2017)

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