

# Untaken Photographs

**Curator: Ariella Azoulay**

Participants: Miki Kratsman, Boaz Arad, Beno Rotenberg, Efrat Shalem, B'tselem, Aïm Deüelle Lüski"

Massacres, expulsion, murder, rape, torture - so many historical events where cameras were not present, where photographs were not taken.

The exhibition will deal with untaken photographs of various types of violence. Through five photographic projects, the exhibition will raise the question what can be seen when a photograph has not been taken? In one way or another, all the photographs included in the exhibition replace untaken photographs.

If we had the photograph taken by a press photographer at each of these events, it would not suffice for the reconstruction of what actually took place, or of what we see in the photograph. We would need much material to begin to establish what we see and to make it speak. We would need to actually insist on seeing through the traces, the signs and distortions. We would need not only other visual and textual material - we would need to practice what elsewhere I have named Civil imagination in order to reconstruct what went on there at the moment the photograph was (not) taken, and to understand the relation between the photography event and the photographed event.

But many times, such photographs are not in our possession. Nor do we have any proof that any of these events were photographed, or that a photographer or camera had even been present.

The exhibition will show 6 photographic "essays" composed of photos that were produced or read in research of the untaken photographs. Miki Kratsman and Boaz Arad take "landscape photographs" of sites where massacres took place in 1948 in Palestine. Efrat Shalem takes photos of houses where women were murdered. Dor Guez takes photos of ruins of Palestinian habitats of 1948. B'tselem stages photographs of torture techniques described in testimonies of people who have been subjected to torture. Aïm Deüelle Lüski produces cameras with which he "takes" photos of conflicting point of view in specific sites like the seam line in Jerusalem of "Back to Back" military points. Finally, Beno Rotenberg's photographs from Al-Ramle will be read as the setting for rape in time of war.

These photographic projects activate what, elsewhere, I have called "civil imagination". This is a tool for reading the possible within the concrete. Every additional documented detail allows us to imagine more. Since I realized that we never see photographs of certain kinds of violence, I began to deal with photographs

not taken what I had already been doing with photographs that had been taken. Photographs, including those not taken or unavailable, gather on one single plane traces from the point of view of all the different parties in the photography event. This multiplicity is a good starting point for seeing beyond the framework of regimes of oppression under which such disasters take place.

The necessity to discuss photographs that were not taken is part of my ongoing research on photography under sinister regimes. The necessity to discuss photographs that were not taken is part of my understanding that photography is not merely a practice that produces photographs. Reconstructing the political ontology of photography is an attempt not only not to see from the point of view of the regime or speak its language, but also an attempt to answer it - in a language different from the one it uses.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication including an essay by the curator, short conversations with the photographers and photos of each projet.