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By Shalom (Shuli) Dichter

## **Blue-eyed killer**

**The police who pulled the trigger in October 2000 and their comrades on the force should know that there is a price for shooting and killing citizens at a demonstration, even if they are Arabs**

Why not choose the simplest route and ask the police who shot the demonstrators in October 2000 to step forward and justify their acts in court? Why not demand this of their superior officers, since behind every sharpshooter stands a commander? About two years ago the head of the police internal investigations unit (Mahash), Herzl Sbiro, defended the decision by Mahash to close the files on these cases, arguing at the time that, in practice, the guilty parties cannot be found, saying: "What do they want from us? That we should pick the fellow with blue eyes from among fifty policemen, and indict him?" Be that as it may, among the ranks of the police today are 13 members of the force who, in October 2000, shot to death 13 demonstrators. These 13 are serving the public every day. Are their 13 hands trembling now, when they sign a check, pat a child on the head or cut a salad for dinner?

Since a conspiracy of silence is one of the skills of warfare, it is clear that there are hundreds of members of the force who serve with these 13 who know precisely who fired, in which direction, and how many times. They know and they remain silent. This week, with a wink and a poke in the ribs, many of those who know will say, "I know, but don't worry, it's ok." In another thirty years they'll be interviewed and they'll unburden themselves of the weight on their conscience. The article about them will of course mention the term "statute of limitations."

These decisions by Mahash and the attorney general reflect a collapse in the share prices of two parties: the police and the Arab citizens of Israel. Where the police are concerned, their stock is cheapened because of the wall of silence surrounding the shooters, because corruption in the system will naturally seep into every corner, and untruthful reporting is a phenomenon that spreads.

The stock of Arab citizens is also dropping on the open market in Israel this week, hitting an all-time low. Investors - government ministries that are supposed to allocate equal and fair funding for Arab communities, or private

businesses seeking to hire Arabs as employees - will think twice about investing in them, since even the state sheds their blood with such ease.

Will the police use the legitimacy thus bestowed on them to shoot again at Arab demonstrators, or will the demonstrations this Friday be "quiet," because the Arabs "got the message" that their citizenship here is second-class, and that shedding Arab demonstrator's blood is permissible? The police have no reason now to invest in appropriate service to Arab citizens. Will the attorney general's message find its way to all the government ministries, so that the modest progress achieved over the last decade toward equal allocation of state funding, will go down the drain?

I know that the Prime Minister is busy this week, very busy indeed - but if he is to prevent the crash of this stock, he will have to take the unprecedented step of rejecting the bad advice of the attorney general by sending the matter back to Mahash. Just as the central bank intervenes when there is a financial crisis, the government must take steps on two tracks if it is to rescue the country from this downward spiral, which is moving us along toward civil war: On the level of public awareness, the Prime Minister, indeed all the ministers, have an obligation to draw the line very clearly and openly for the legitimacy of Arab citizens, without any discrimination whatever. On the institutional level, the blue-eyed cop who pulled the trigger and his police comrades must find out that there is a price for shooting and killing demonstrating citizens, even if they are Arabs, and must see the state investing in Arab citizens, despite the drop in their shares this week.

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