

# “EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ISRAEL: CONTEXT AND CHARACTERISTICS”

Jack L. Rozdilsky, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

For a young nation, Israel has faced more than its share of emergency management challenges, primarily originating from warfare and terrorist attacks. For the past 60 years, emergency management in Israel has transitioned from small rudimentary units of dedicated responders to large governmentally coordinated systems. As it is difficult to isolate any aspect of Israeli society from the larger meta-narrative of the Jewish nation-state, this chapter attempts to treat the issue of Israeli emergency management from a holistic point of view.

While it would take a book length narrative to fully comment on interrelationships of all hazards in Israel in relation to the state’s emergency management practices, this chapter attempts to focus on some of the bigger picture considerations that are important when attempting to understand emergency management in Israel. The chapter is an interdisciplinary type of overview that a reader who is completely unfamiliar with both Israel and its emergency management practices will find useful when trying to place Israel into a comparative context. What this chapter does not do is detail specific operational-level lessons learned, focus on technical details of natural, technological, and social hazards and their management in Israel, or provide details of Israeli emergency management beyond the national level. Rather, this chapter introduces the reader to a context by which to interpret Israeli emergency management, then it presents an overview of key concepts and developments leading to the present state of emergency management in Israel, and then five conclusions are presented so that the reader can consider how emergency management in Israel may or may not relate to his or her specific comparative context.

It is noted that claims can be made that Israel is in a category of its own, when it comes to making comparisons. The author suggests that comparisons with Israel can be made as long as the comparisons are sophisticated in nature. Therefore, the second part of this chapter presents material commenting on the Jewish nation-state as a whole so that such background knowledge can be applied to interpreting Israeli emergency management in a sophisticated manner. The third part of this chapter highlights important aspects of emergency management for Israel including the Israel Defense Force’s Home Front Command and the recent creation of the National Emergency Agency, known by the Hebrew acronym RACHEL. It is suggested that due

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Emergency Management Program, Health Sciences Department  
Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, Illinois 61455-1390 USA  
JL-Rozdilsky@wiu.edu

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to the intangible assets that Israel's socio-cultural fabric provides along with the nature of the existential threats facing the state, that certain aspects of Israeli emergency management may have limited comparative value. As Israel represents a single-hazard based, military-centric model of emergency management practice, for other nations considering similar management schemes Israel may serve as a useful case to further explore. The approach taken to emergency management in Israel is rooted in the concept of the defense of the rear area. Defense of the rear area is another word for the concept of civil defense, in this case interpreted as part of a strategic policy where the survival of the nation-state depends equally on actions taken on the combat front and the home front. Specific emergency management strategies practiced in Israel, such as the defense of the rear area, represent approaches to preparedness that other nations can learn from. While very complex and at times comparison defying, closer examination of emergency management as applied in the Israeli context can be of benefit to practitioners and policy makers in other nations.

## **THE CONTEXT OF ISRAEL**

In order to have an understanding of any segment of Israeli society, including emergency management, it is necessary to have a broader understanding of the nation-state of Israel. Israel is not the type of place where comparisons to other nations can easily be made, in fact most of the time Israel defies comparison. Therefore, this part of the chapter will address issues of the dilemmas inherent in making comparisons with Israel. Once those dilemmas has been put forward, the concept of the interrelated Jewish nation and Jewish state will be presented, and an example of those historical connections will be highlighted. In addition, Zionism will be briefly explained followed by a look at issues surrounding the establishment of the state of Israel. In closing, a short reflection on Israel at its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be provided. The direct purpose of this part of the chapter is to allow the reader to have a glimpse into some the intangible issues related to Israel that in one way or another impact every emergency management decision made by the nation-state.

### **A Note on Making Comparisons with Israel**

While not an easy task, it would be relatively simple to describe the vulnerabilities faced by Israel and then list the management systems that Israel puts in place to deal with its hazards. It is a much more difficult task to attempt to comprehend whether Israel fits into a comparative context, and the frame of reference in which activities, such as emergency management, exist in for the Jewish nation-state. A dilemma exists where direct one-to-one comparisons on specific operational level actions may be valid, while other larger policy comparisons of Israel to other places have the risk of being superficial.

The question of '*Is Israel unique?*' is central to this dilemma. The debate over whether Israel is the type of nation-state that can be considered 'normal' for comparison purposes or whether Israel is 'unique' is a deeply seated conceptual debate. Dror suggests that the Jewish religion and Zionist ideology are quite active in propagating the image of Israeli uniqueness. For

example, “Jewish religion sees the Jewish people and Israel as radically unique in their essential nature and in their existential justification, as both a fact and a norm” (Dror, 1996, p.247). While the philosophical question of whether the people of Israel are a ‘unique’ light unto nations is beyond the scope of this work, taking a social science perspective on this debate is well within the scope of this chapter. The operative question is whether we can actually compare Israeli emergency management to other nations. The answer is a qualified yes, but the qualifications lie in making a sophisticated comparison.

Drawing on the work of Barnett it has been suggested that, “Israel maintains an ambiguous relationship of the standards used to select cases” (Barnett, 1996, p. 4). In the social sciences, if one were to consider some type of complex phenomenon, comparative cases are often selected on the basis of their relationship to some type of standard category. In considering Israel, Barnett suggested categories for comparison such as socialist versus capitalist or western versus third world. In comparing states to one another, most places are found to be more complex than the categories but, “Israel has an established reputation for being more defiant than most when it comes to categorization” (Barnett, 1996, p. 4). In looking at the development of the Israeli state, it has both socialist and capitalist traits. When considering the early days of Israel’s settlement, Zionist pioneers formed intentional Kibbutz communities based on socialist tenets. These communities played a foundational role in establishing national values and in developing an idealist cadre of leaders to socially and economically guide the nascent nation. Yet, Israel’s present day social and economic settings do not resemble its socialist Kibbutz beginnings. Another point of comparison, western versus third world also breaks down. Israel is not considered a third world state due to factors like its stable democracy, structure of production, and the level of personal freedoms given to its citizens. It is considered to be the only ‘western’ state in the Middle East (Beilin, 1992). At the same time, Israel achieved its independence in the mid-Twentieth Century alongside many other post-colonial states, it has experienced economic growing pains similar to developing economies, it has had fluctuating borders, and it has a high level of militarization both to protect its territory and mark its national sovereignty. These characteristics are more reminiscent of a third world state than a western state. Given these contradictions, Barnett notes for many social scientists “The Israeli case represents an unapproachable challenge, its rich and complex history producing a case inappropriate for the comparative enterprise” (Barnett 1996, p. 3). This author would concur with that analysis and he is hesitant to present this chapter in the context of something like a comparison of emergency management in Israel to emergency management in some other place.

However, given the difficulties present in using Israel as a comparative case, recognizing the uniqueness of Israel does not negate the possibility of what Dorr suggests as, “Using Israel as a laboratory for deriving and employing our theories from which some generalizations may be derived . . . The uniqueness of Israel does not preclude either learning from Israeli experiences or Israelis learning from the experiences of others, just so long as this is done in a sophisticated way with proper adjustments of any conclusions to incorporate the overall features of the culture and the dynamics of the system” (Dorr, 1996, p. 254).

Therefore, the qualified ‘yes’ to the answer of the question of whether we can actually compare Israeli emergency management to other nation’s emergency management lies in the nature of making a sophisticated comparison. This chapter will attempt to make a sophisticated comparison by first establishing a context for considering Israel. Then, specific emergency management related aspects of Israeli society will be highlighted. In conclusion, some generalizations will be derived concerning some larger lessons learned from Israeli emergency management efforts.

### **The Jewish ‘Nation’ and the Jewish ‘State’**

In the following text, the term ‘nation’ is used in its social context implying common traits of a people as exhibited through identity, culture, religion, etc. The roots of the Jewish ‘nation’ can be traced back approximately 4,000 years to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E., where the nomadic lives of the patriarchs of Judaism (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) were detailed in biblical narrative. Millennia of Jewish cultural developments, triumphs, and struggles have taken place in the geographic region situated between the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. In addition to this area being the traditional Jewish homeland, the relatively short distance from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea has the character of isthmus, which provides both a connection between two oceans and a land bridge between Africa and Asia. Therefore, this land has been the site of migrations, trade routes, and conquests that have had lasting cultural impacts on worldwide human development (Karmon, 1971).

The term ‘state’ refers to political traits of an entity such as sovereign borders, governance, etc. While the Jewish nation existed for thousands of years, the Jewish state of Israel came into existence in 1948 following the dissolution and partition of mandated territory. From its inception Israel, was not recognized by neighboring Arab states and it established de facto boundaries by engaging in major wars. At the time of writing, Israel’s boundaries are relatively stable due to past armistice agreements with neighboring Arab states; however, the areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are Israeli occupied with the current status subject to the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement and the permanent status of these territories to be determined through further negotiation (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009).

Given the characteristics of the Jewish nation and the Israeli state, the term nation-state is used as it suggests that social aspects of a nation and political aspects of the state geographically coincide with one another. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a proper analysis of the interconnected history of the Jewish nation and the state of Israel, one would be naive not to acknowledge the intermingling of Jewish culture, values of Judaism, and the affairs of state in Israel.

### **An Example of Connecting the Historical Jewish Nation to the Modern Jewish State**

In attempting to understand how contemporary Israel operates, one must understand how present day decision making is often deeply rooted in values derived from past cultural experiences. While hundreds of examples of this concept could be highlighted, for the purposes

of this chapter, the example of Masada will be briefly highlighted. Masada illustrates how the values of the survival of the state that are important for its present day defenders are linked to the past cultural and historical experiences.

The ancient natural rock fortress of Masada is located on the cliff faces of the narrow plain of the western shore of the Dead Sea. Masada is currently an Israeli National Park, and it was declared as a United Nation's World Heritage site in 2001 (Bar-Am, 2006). **Figure 2.3** shows a portion of the Masada fortress. During the time of Christ, King Herod built a palace on the cliff that later fell under Judean control. During the period of Roman rule, treatment of the Jews became increasingly harsh and a group of Jewish resistors known as the Zealots launched a revolt. The Zealots were eventually driven from Jerusalem to the Masada fortress. After the Zealots held out under siege for seven months, the Roman forces eventually overtook the defenses. Upon penetrating the fortress they found that the defenders had committed suicide rather than be taken alive and enslaved. In fact, food stores were left as evidence that the defenders were not defeated and that they chose their fate. The 73 C.E. events at Masada and the Jewish Zealot's defiance of the Roman forces remains an important symbolic reminder of Jewish survival to this day. Today, one of the uses of Masada is as a site for Israeli Defense Force ceremonies where recruits make an oath that, "Masada shall not fall again" (Reich, 2005).



**Figure 2.3 Masada, Judean Desert, Israel**

The natural stone fortress is an eternal symbol of the Jewish fight for freedom.

*Photograph: Jack Rozdilsky*

## **The Concept of Zionism**

The concept of Zionism is also an example of the intermingling of perspectives which form the basis on which contemporary Israeli society operates. Modern Zionism can be characterized as, “Fusing the ancient Jewish biblical and historical ties to the ancestral homeland with the modern concept of nationalism into a vision of establishing a modern Jewish state in the land of Israel (Anti-Defamation League, 2009). A unique combination of the ethos combining aspects of Judaism, Zionism, and the advancement of the state drives a mission oriented society where there are not necessarily clear boundaries between beliefs and non-secular aspects of public management. A main theme to apply in understanding Israel is that the development of the relatively young nation state draws upon both Zionism and Judaism and the totality of religious tenants and cultural traits associated with them.

## **The Creation of the Modern State of Israel**

For thousands of years the Jewish nation existed without its own state. For the past millennia, the geographic region situated between the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf has been under the control of various foreign kingdoms, dynasties and empires. From the 1500s until the Twentieth Century, the area was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. As the Ottoman Empire was defeated by the Western Alliance in World War I, the Middle Eastern portion of the empire disintegrated and was divided up amongst European powers. In 1917, British forces entered Jerusalem ending over 400 years of Ottoman Rule. The area was then governed under the legal and administrative foundations established by the League of Nations as the British Mandate for Palestine. The British Mandate for Palestine held for approximately three decades, as Zionists actively encouraged Jews to migrate to the area and build communities in what would eventually become the state of Israel. While the 1923 mandate recognized ‘The historical connections of the Jewish people with Palestine’ competing Jewish and Arab claims on the land were not fully resolved (Reich, 2005). After World War II, for a variety of reasons, British interest in managing this territory began to draw to a close and it was hoped that the increasingly complex burden of partitioning this area would be passed to the newly formed United Nations. In 1947, the ‘Question of Palestine’ was placed on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly. As a result, a Partition Plan proposed a two-state solution, with a Jewish State, an Arab State, and an international area for Jerusalem. Zionists leaders accepted the Partition Plan, as they viewed it as a step towards eventual statehood. At the same time Arab leaders rejected the Partition Plan, as they did not accept that the United Nations had the right to give away large portions of Palestine to the Jews. Aspects of the present day Israeli – Palestinian conflict have their roots in these 1940’s decisions (Reich, 2005).

The 1947 Partition Plan set the termination date for the British Mandate of Palestine for May 15, 1948. At that time, the Jewish population in the land would become the state of Israel numbered 650,000, comprising a well-developed political, social and economic community. It could be said that it was ‘nation’ in every sense of the word and a ‘state’ in everything but name (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008). Twenty-four hours prior to the end of the British Mandate

on May 14, 1948, the leaders of the Zionist movement gathered in the Tel Aviv Museum to declare the establishment of the State of Israel. One of the leaders who would later play an important role in the development of the nation, David Ben-Gurion, read a declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel which recalled the spiritual and cultural connections to the land. The opening paragraphs of that declaration read (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008).

“Eretz-Israel (Hebrew for the Land of Israel, Palestine) was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.”

### **Challenges faced by the New Nation State**

Given the youth of the nation state of Israel, in many senses Israel is still developing. To understand the current challenges faced by the modern state, it is instructive to look to the past to understand the challenges the founders of Israel faced immediately after declaration of statehood in May of 1948.

When reading the third part of this chapter concerning emergency management in Israel, one may get the impression that emergency management in Israel one of the pieces of the puzzle of the nation-state that driven by events fell into place, not necessarily in any logical sequence. That impression may be somewhat correct, as the development of emergency management was taking place simultaneously with the development of a new state. There have been numerous imperatives that had to be met for the state to survive. So in any analysis of a sector of Israeli society the analysis cannot stand alone, outside of the whole. The whole can be considered as the following list of challenges that faced Israel in 1948. These challenges are not dissimilar to the challenges faced by Israel in 2010 and beyond. These challenges listed below are based on the work of Adelman (2008) as he reflected on Talmon’s delineation of the tasks faced by the Zionist movement when Israel was formed. These tasks included:

1. To focus the passions and will of diverse Jewish communities all over the world
2. To create on a voluntary base a government, parliament, bureaucracy, and army long before the Jews had even settled in the land of Israel in any number
3. To win over the support of a significant portion of the non-Jewish world and utilize that to gain aid and recognition from top international bodies

4. To build, without compulsion, a nation-state from immigrants from extremely diverse climatic, cultural, and economic backgrounds
5. To establish self-governing towns, villages, agriculture, industry, and self-defense bodies
6. To create a new basis for a civilization with a new language and social experimentation
7. To organize civil disobedience, underground acts, and guerilla movements, and then fight five professional armies in 1948, and several more in succeeding decades
8. To maintain a democracy and strong educational and culture, while surrounded by hostile Arab states
9. To win every battle and war against Arab nations who possessed quantitative superiority in manpower and military equipment
10. To take the relatively dead ancient language of Hebrew (spoken by 20,000 Jews in 1905) and make of a vibrant language of over 5 million Jews by the 2000s.

### **The Modern Nation-State of Israel**

In the year 2008, Israel celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a nation-state. Since its inception, Israel has had to cope with continual threats to its existence. The state has successfully defended itself as it has engaged in at least six major wars, dealt with two Palestinian uprisings, engaged in numerous smaller conflicts, and absorbed thousands of terrorist attacks. Due to this violence, Israel is constantly in the news as a volatile flashpoint and world trouble spot. However, it must also be duly noted that what is not reported with such frequency is the extensive list of accomplishments in overcoming dire situations, nation-building, and the fact that upon visiting Israel one will find a modern society that concerns itself with the problems and delights of everyday existence much like any other society. In the last 60 years, Israel has forged a self-governing nation-state built largely of immigrants from a wide variety of climatic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. All of these accomplishments have been made on the southwestern tip of Asia, while socially being surrounded by enemies, while physically building settlements on some of the most inhospitable lands on the planet. Today, the population of Israel is 7.2 million persons, with 41% of the entire world's Jewish population residing in the state (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Clearly given its youth and the complex scenario of challenges and opportunities facing the nation state, Israel is a work in progress.

## **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ISRAEL**

The emergency management system in Israel is a complex, ever-changing set of arrangements established to manage the emergency situations most likely faced by Israel. As with other places, emergency management policies are often driven by preparing for the last disaster. In Israel, the last disaster will most likely have been related to warfare or terrorist attack. Therefore, the approach to emergency management in Israel is one that is military-centric. Over time, the state has developed an array of agencies to deal with emergencies. In recent times, there have been movements to balance the military aspects and civilian aspects of emergency management. This part of the chapter will describe emergency management in Israel by first introducing two key concepts, the strife-induced civilian defense system and the defense of the rear area. Then some of the key points related to the foundations of emergency management in Israel will be discussed. Selected civil defense strategies used throughout Israel's history will be highlighted. Background on the Israel Defense Forces' Home Front Command and the newer National Emergency Authority will be presented in detail as they are two primary entities which manage emergencies in Israel. This part of the chapter will then close with a summary of current government agencies which have a role in emergency management in contemporary Israel.

### **Key Concepts: A Strife-Induced System and the Defense of the Rear Area**

When considering emergency management in Israel, two concepts are key points for understanding the situation. The first point is looking at Israel's development of emergency management as a 'strife-induced civil defense system'. The second point is the small degree of separation between the battle's 'front' and battle's 'rear'. Emergency management in Israel can be considered as an outgrowth of the concept of the defense of the rear area.

Emergency management in Israel is closely aligned with the state's defense posture. Given Israel's conflict experiences as a whole, what Christensen and Blake (1990) describe as a 'strife-induced civil defense system', is an apt descriptive phrase to summarize development of the emergency management sector in Israel. Throughout Israel's post-1948 history, the state has been involved in major wars, minor skirmishes, and the target of numerous terrorist campaigns. After every conflict, post-event analysis has resulted in changes made to the state's military posture to better prepare for dealing with the next threat on the horizon. Those adaptations have had related impacts on civilian defense strategies. The concept of civil defense is not an abstract notion to the Israelis, but a practical reality as most if not all citizens have had direct experience related to defense of the homeland either from large scale attacks by standing conventional armies or smaller scale attacks by irregular forces and/or terrorists. In addition, an intangible factor to consider is the experience with national readiness that is gained from both elementary and secondary school curriculum and the requirements for national military service at 18 years of age. Conroy (2008) suggests such factors imbue the citizenry with resiliency.

From the moment of the founding of state of Israel up to the present day, the concept of 'defense of the rear areas' has always been central to defense of the state. In terms of threats faced by any modern state, "Geographically, the threat of attack on the 'rear' area is probably

most actual (for Israel) as compared with other countries” (Lanir and Shapira, 1984, p. 181). At the time of writing, the most recent conflict Israel had been involved in was the late 2008 - early 2009 skirmishes in Gaza and its environs. The Israel Defense Forces’ ‘Operation Cast Lead’ used a combination of air strikes and land invasions to attempt to interrupt the infrastructure of Hamas paramilitary forces in Gaza. A main objective of the operation was to stop the rocket and mortar fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli communities. It was estimated that during the height of the conflict nearly 3000 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009). In this conflict, there was very little difference in time and space between the battle’s ‘front’ and battle’s ‘rear’. During the Gaza conflict emergency management efforts consisted of activities like fortifying shelters in Israeli population centers in proximity to Gaza, distributing public information on creating safe spaces in buildings, and providing behavioral messages on how to act during rocket and mortar attacks. The effectiveness of the efforts was limited to a certain extent, as in some communities it was only possible to have less than one-minute of warning time prior to a bombardment. Therefore in such circumstances, it is a challenging task to provide adequate population protection. Despite the difficulties, a Unit of the Israel Defense Forces responsible for managing civilian defense, the Home Front Command met the challenges with the effective use of warning systems and the use of liaisons to increase the improve interactions with local authorities (Elran, 2009). While the Gaza conflict is indicative of current threats faced by Israel, the situation presented in the Gaza conflict is by no means a new threat. The blending of the front and rear battle areas was evident in 1948 in the words of David Ben-Gurion as he said on the day that Israel was established, “The entire people are the army, and the entire land is the front” (Home Front Command, 2009).

### **The Home Front in Early Days of Statehood and the 1951 Civil Defense Law**

One of the ways in which the story of Israel’s statehood is unique is that literally within hours of its establishment the new nation was at war. One day after Israel’s May 14, 1948, declaration of statehood, a coalition of neighboring Arab nations attacked the new state with the goal of rejecting the Jewish claim on the territory of the former British Palestinian Mandate. The young nation consolidated a number of established Zionists and Jewish self-defense paramilitary forces, such as the Haganah, into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The IDF successfully held off the Arab attacks leading to 1949 Armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. While the victory was very important to Israel, it did not create a situation leading to a solution for simmering Israeli-Arab tensions. In the 1948 Israeli War of Independence, the fierce fighting took place in the state’s central areas between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, so in the early days of Israel’s establishment the distinctions between civil defense and national defense were nil.

The IDF unit for civil defense known as HAGA (the Hebrew acronym for civil defense) was given official legal status under the 1951 Civil Defense Law. The purpose of HAGA was “to take all the necessary steps to protect the populace in the event of any attack by hostile forces or to minimize the results of such an attack, the emphasis being on saving lives” (Home Front

Command, 2009). The 1951 Civil Defense Law provided a basis for requiring the establishment of shelters and the beginnings of a coordinated rear area defense.

### **Civil Defense Strategies of Sheltering and Regional Defense**

During the first three decades of Israel's existence, important strategies for the defense of the rear area were sheltering in place and a system of regional defense settlements. Threats facing Israel varied from attacks coming from conventional armies to smaller-scale cross border terrorist attacks from irregular forces. Starting with the 1951 Civil Defense Law, emergency management involved rear area defense strategies and the military played a primary role in implementing civilian defense activities.

Sheltering in place was a primary rear defense strategy. However, the new state had many conflicting goals, such as the requirements of keeping up a strong defense apparatus and fighting wars, while at the same time building the institutions of the nation-state from scratch. At times during the 1960s and 1970s, economic constraints limited the extent to which Israel could accomplish all of its desired goals. While impressive by most comparative standards, in some cases implementation of coordinated rear defense strategies may not have been as comprehensive as envisioned. This situation was apparent in the 'shelter gap'. The shelter gap had emerged as both a strategic defense and political issue after the 1967 Six Day War. At that time it was estimated up to 60% of the necessary sheltering capacity was not in place (Lanir and Shapira, 1984). It was thought that such an absence of shelters would serve as an attraction for an enemy to attack populated areas. Also, given that weakness in the 'rear area' politicians thought that circumstance may limit their ability to make battle plans for the 'front areas'.

While efforts have been made to close the shelter gap, as recently as the 2006 Second Lebanon War, issues have been raised about the adequacy and number of shelters. However, as compared to most other places, Israel would still be in the upper tier of nations in terms of its comprehensive shelter system. To this day shelters remain as a primary component of Israel's rear defense. *Figure 3.3.1* depicts a shelter that is typical of the shelters found in communities of Israel's southern Negev region. For such shelters in the south, Home Front Command public information suggests that if sirens sound indicating that a rocket or missile attack is imminent, citizens have three minutes to seek refuge in such structures. Civil preparedness public information also stresses advanced planning. It is suggested that citizens know, in advance, the locations of shelters at home, at work and school, and at spots during transit so that one will know how to quickly move to the nearest safe space or shelter in an emergency situation (IDF Home Front Command, 2009a).



**Figure 3.3.1 Shelter, Negev Region, Israel**

A community shelter located on a Kibbutz, such shelters can be used for protection from mortar, rocket, or missile fire.

*Photograph: Jack Rozdilsky*

Defense of the rear area also relied upon a system of regional protection where a HAG'MAR (a Hebrew acronym for regional defense) system was active. During the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel's borders were in flux. While the quick defeats of Arab armies in the Six Day War stunned the Israeli population into a state of confidence, the surprise attacks on Israel during the Yom Kippur War were also stunning in that Israelis realized the willingness and abilities of enemy armies to launch incursions into Israel's territory (Reich, 2005). After the Yom Kippur War, the IDF made a strategic decision to strengthen its regional defense HAG'MAR settlements, particularly those built along the lines of confrontations. In this effort many Kibbutz settlements became fortified sites.

The Kibbutz is a particular form of intentional community in Israel with a specific organizational structure rooted in an egalitarian value system. In these egalitarian communities, a combination of Zionist, utopian, and Socialist values provided for development of an idealistic class of citizens. The settlements were important to the establishment of Israel as, "The Kibbutz served as the avant-garde of the Zionist movement and it played a key 'pioneering' role in building the nation through the creation of a class of workers and farmers" (Sabar, 2000, p. 7). While the intentions, purpose and scope of Kibbutz settlements go well beyond civil defense, the Kibbutz is mentioned in this chapter as it played a role in the defense of the rear areas. Christainsen and Blake (1990) suggested that the Kibbutz was the foundation for present-day Israeli civil defense. An integral part of Kibbutz life was that residents would all participate in defending their settlement. Therefore, "In rural areas on Israel's border frontiers, a defense system made up of well trained and equipped residents was accepted as normal" (Christainsen

and Blake, 1990. p. 7). In the event of a border incursion or surprise attack, the settlements would provide the main force blocking the attacking enemy on the front lines, thus defending the state. A narrative on IDF history stated, “The regional defensive settlements and their people are really the standing army for the purpose of defending the borders of the state” (Home Front Command, 2009).

Over time as the nature of the threats facing Israel changed, examples of the previous eras infrastructure for rear area defense efforts remain in place, and can be activated again if the situation changes. During the 1990s, peace negotiations stabilized some of Israel’s border frontiers. For example, the fall 1994 Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty solved some sensitive issues, such as border demarcation. However, today Kibbutz communities along the Israeli – Jordanian border still have outwardly visible elements of the earlier defensive settlement in place. **Figure 3.3.2** from shows a picture from a southern Israeli community that is in close proximity to the Jordanian border. In such places, remnants of defensive systems established during past conflicts are still commonplace.



**Figure 3.3.2 Defensive Perimeter, Negev Region, Israel**

Perimeter protection by fencing at a Kibbutz, depicting the defensive features of settlements near previously hostile borders.

*Photograph: Jack Rozdilsky*

In August of 1977, rear defenses were reorganized when the Territorial Defense Units of the HAG’MAR regional defense systems were combined with the IDF’s HAGA civil defense unit to form MAK’HELAR (A Hebrew acronym for the combination of the Headquarters of the Chief Command Officer for HAGA - Civil Defense and HAG’MAR - Regional Defense). The unit was tasked with the responsibility of securing communities in the countryside. (Israel Defense Forces, 2009) Defense for rural communities was provided by protective elements like

fencing, circumferential lighting, setting patrol routes, and establishing on-site weapons caches (Home Front Command, 2009).

## **The Home Front Command**

A key development in Israeli emergency management in the 1990s was the formalized creation of a fourth command in the Israeli Defense Forces -- The Homefront Command (HFC). The IDF is structured along the lines of a sectoral command system, where a command is a senior operational echelon in the force's land-based operational alignment. Duties of a command include, "The preservation of security, the preparation of the forces and the sector in times of calm and during emergency situations, with the aim of achieving the military-strategic aims of war as ordered by the General Staff" (Israel Defense Forces, 2009a). The events precipitating the creation of the HFC were the experiences of the 1991 Gulf War, where Israeli policy makers recognized the importance of the homefront in protracted conflicts where civilian centers would fall under intense attack. In the 1990s, it was speculated that this type of conflict would be the prototype for the types of emergencies that would likely occur again. Given these developments, a need existed to clarify and tighten up the ability for defense of the rear areas. Therefore, on February 17, 1992, the Home Front Command was established as the fourth command in the IDF. The stated mission of the HFC is as follows:

"The Command constitutes a national branch responsible for preparing the country, its citizens, its institutions, its infrastructures, and its operational formations in confronting different emergency situations. The Command constitutes a national branch responsible for the integration and assimilation of the operational blueprint and combined doctrine used to confront emergency situations in conjunction with all search and rescue organizations, civilian as well as military establishments" (Israel Defense Forces, 2009b).

Within the HFC, five specific units exist whose goal is to implement specialized emergency management-related activities. These units are (Israel Defense Forces, 2009c):

- ABC (Atomic, Biological, Chemical) Warfare Battalions
- Extrication Battalions
- A National Search and Rescue Unit
- Search and Rescue Companies
- A Casualties and Wounded Identification Unit

The conflict of the 1991 Persian Gulf War played a formative role in the creation of the HFC. In 1991, an American-led coalition took to battle to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. While Israel sided with American-led coalition forces, it was not an active party to the combat itself. Despite the limited role of Israel, Iraq launched ballistic missiles against Israeli cities. Of the 40 missiles that hit Israel, 26 landed in Tel Aviv, six hit Haifa, five hit the West Bank, and three impacted the southern portion of the state. Despite Iraqi threats of using warheads with

non-conventional payloads (nuclear, chemical, or biological) to strike Israel, all of the missiles were conventionally armed resulting in limited physical destruction and few direct deaths. While Israel showed restraint in not launching reprisal raids for the attacks, the IDF was in action on the Home Front. The Gulf War was a traumatic experience on the Israeli population in terms of psychological and physiological terror caused by the Iraqi Scud missile attacks (Sheppard, 2009). During the Gulf War, IDF HAGA Civil Defense Units took a number of 'low profile' steps to defend the home front. These actions included handing out personal protection kits to all residents in Israel, using media to disseminate information related to taking protective actions with gas masks, publicizing directions for preparing a sealed and secure room in every home and public place, and enhancing cooperation between medical and rescue organizations in the rear areas (Home Front Command, 2009).

The formal establishment of the HFC focused attention on three issues: legal, operational, and organizational (Home Front Command, 2009). Legally, the formation of the HFC clarified the Civil Defense Act of 1951 by giving autonomy and wide-ranging on the ground authority to the HFC. Such actions were not clarified in previous reorganizations. In terms of operations, the creation of the HFC streamlined the IDF's command structure allowing certain commands of the IDF to prepare the rear so that other commands could exclusively focus on the front. Organizationally, the HFC also allowed for better coordination of existing military units and civilian emergency organizations.

In considering other literature related to the HFC, Kirschenbaum (2004) describes the HFC as a "National organization staffed by military personnel, whose specific goals are designed to protect the civilian population from natural, technological, and non/conventional war-related acts" (Kirschenbaum, 2004, p. 97). Furthermore he suggested, that the HFC was the prime supplier of disaster related plans, products, equipment, and social-psychological services to the Israeli population. Since its creation in the early 1990s, the HFC has been responsible for many emergency management activities on the home front resulting from both warfare and terrorist activities due to the Intifada's (or Palestinian Uprisings). In its dealing with these events Conroy (2008) suggests the HFC has emerged as a trusted and creditable messenger in terms of disaster preparedness instructions and preparedness-related educational curriculum.

From the 1991 Gulf War to the 2006 Second Lebanon War, the HFC had adeptly used its relation to the IDF to strengthen the implementation of its activities. Specifically, the HFC had direct participation in IDF activities allowing it to function while minimizing bureaucratic barriers, it had significant military-backed logistics capabilities, it had access to military intelligence to allow for preparedness activities to start before threats were actually realized, and it could make use of low cost military manpower when needed (Lis, 2006).

### **The Recent Evolution of the National Emergency Authority**

In September of 2007, the Government of Israel directed the Ministry of Defense to create a National Emergency Authority (also known by the Hebrew acronym RACHEL for Reshut Heyrum Le'umit). After some problems which emerged in the defense of the rear area

during the 2006 Second Lebanon War, current Israeli authorities' thinking posited that a new coordination agency was needed for emergency management. At the time of writing RACHEL is a work in progress. The creation of RACHEL suggests that Israel is attempting to seek a balance between the military sector and civilian sector of emergency management practice.

The Government of Israel authorized the Minister of Defense to establish a start-up team to create a new entity the National Emergency Authority (RACHEL) on September 16, 2007. The task of the start-up team was to formulate the specific jurisdictions and duties of RACHEL in relation to other existing entities such as the IDF, the HFC, the Magen David Adom Emergency Ambulance Services, the police, fire services, local authorities, and other civilian sector agencies. RACHEL was to be headed by the office of the Deputy Defense Minister and during its formation it was made explicit that the formation of the new authority in no way negates the other governmental bodies' responsibilities in time of disaster (Azoulay, 2007). In other words, the establishment of RACHEL did not make it the primary agency for managing emergencies in the state. Rather, the main role for RACHEL is one of coordination between government ministries, local authorities, and public organizations. In Elran's 2007 analysis of RACHEL, months after its formation, he suggested it was a significant step as it implied an official recognition of the centrality of civilian home front along with the military front (Elran, 2007).

In considering how this latest addition to the structure of emergency management came about in Israel, once again it was driven by strife-induced circumstances. The rear area defense efforts mounted by the HFC appeared to falter in 2006 during the Second Lebanon War. The late-summer 2006 conflict involved a 34-day military action where the IDF responded to various rocket and guerilla attacks on northern Israel's border from Hezbollah paramilitary forces that took up positions in southern Lebanon. As Hezbollah militants attacks intensified in northern Israel, the IDF responded with large-scale airstrikes throughout Lebanon and a ground invasion into southern Lebanon to disrupt Hezbollah infrastructure. After a United Nations brokered ceasefire ended the conflict, numerous questions were raised inside of Israel regarding actions on the front and rear area of the battle. In terms of this chapter, the focus will be only on the rear area questions. Reports from Northern Israel questioned the overall lack of planning for government organized evacuations and sheltering. Claims were made that as northern Israeli cities were being bombarded with rockets, the national government's civil defense efforts did not meet the needs of citizens in certain segments of society. Many persons with resources left under their own volition. At the same time, there were others who were unable to leave and they were sent to inadequately prepared shelters for extended periods (Mulholland, 2006). In a Government of Israel inquiry into the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon War known as the Winnograd Commission, the report determined that the government did not provide adequate support and emergency coordination for the rear areas. The establishment of the new National Emergency Authority is part of the Israeli Government's response to the Winnograd Commission (Azoulay, 2007).

In June of 2008, RACHEL both planned and executed a national disaster exercise called

‘Turning Point 2’. In the exercise, home front preparedness was tested based on an imaginary military confrontation between Israel and Palestinian militants (originating from Gaza), Hezbollah paramilitary forces (originating from Lebanon), and state-sponsored threats originating from Syria. The drills included simulated missile attacks on Israeli population centers. One of the main purposes of the exercise was to introduce RACHEL as a new disaster coordination authority. Conclusions from the exercise will be able to assist with the consolidation of the new national emergency authority into the framework of Home Front Law. That process of formalizing the role of RACHEL is anticipated to be completed by 2011 (Elran, 2008).

In summer of 2009, another national disaster exercise took place called ‘Turning Point 3’ where scenarios were established to test the way that the national level cabinet and government ministries along with local-level councils and municipalities handle emergencies like missile attacks. A system was also tested to send warnings of missile attacks to personal cell phones (Katz, 2009).

In terms of an American comparative emergency management perspective, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) observers attended the Turning Point 3 exercise. In late-June 2009, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate met with Major General Yair Golan of the Israeli Defense Forces Home Front Command in an effort meant to “Foster a working relationship with Israel and bolster the exchange of information on common emergency management practices” (FEMA-DHS, 2009). American and Israeli emergency management cooperation has been established under an emergency management work stream workgroup put in place by a 2007 United States Department of Homeland Security memorandum of understanding between the two nations.

### **A Summary of the Structure of National Emergency Management in Israel**

If a large scale disaster were to happen in 2010, the Government of Israel has a number of authorities that have responsibilities for emergency management duties. Clearly, the Israeli Defense Forces’ Home Front Command would play a primary role in emergency management. In addition, one could expect that for future disasters in Israel, greater coordination of the military, government, and civilian sectors will take place as the National Emergency Authority’s roles become formalized. While not the focus of this chapter, Israel has a number of non-governmental organizations that would act in support of government authorities to deal with the aftermath of disaster on the local level. In addition, given the nature of the Jewish nation-state, it could be expected that both Jewish organizations and individuals in the worldwide diaspora would find it to be their duty to provide support to Israel in times of crisis.

Adapting information from a recent Reut Institute report related to prospects for Israeli emergency preparedness and resilience, these are the Israeli government agencies that have emergency management responsibilities (Reut Institute et. al., 2009):

- **Home Front Command**
  - Created in 1992 as a fourth command in the Israeli Defense Forces under the Ministry of Defense.
- **National Emergency Authority**
  - Created in 2007, also known as RACHEL (Hebrew acronym for Reshut Heyrum Le'umit), for the purpose of coordinating emergency management activities of the government and military, local authorities, and the civilian sector. RACHEL is under the Ministry of Defense.
- **National Emergency Economy Board**
  - MELACH (Hebrew acronym for Meshek Le'shat Herum) which is a part of RACHEL. The responsibilities of this agency include evacuations, assistance, and casualty management issues.
  - PESACH (Hebrew acronym for Pinuym Sa'ad ve Halalim) The responsibilities of this agency include the allocation of gas, supply of electricity, the supply of food and water, the provisions of communication services, and the operation of infrastructure.
- **The Police**
  - A national agency under the Ministry of Public Security.
- **The Fire and Rescue Services**
  - A national agency (also known in Hebrew as Mechabei Esh) under the Ministry of the Interior.
- **The Health Sector**
  - Numerous hospitals and clinics under the Ministry of Health and the Magen David Adom Emergency Ambulance Service.
- **The Civil Sector**
  - Numerous local units of government including municipalities, regional, and local councils.
- **The Environmental Sector**
  - The unit for monitoring hazardous material under the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

Given this array of capabilities, the Government of Israel has a vast set of management tools it can bring to bear on any emergency situation. At the same time, the continual need for coordination and adaptation will remain central to effective emergency management in Israel.

## CONCLUSIONS

As was specified in the second part of this chapter, one could make the case that Israel defies comparison. This author takes the position that comparisons with Israel can be made as long as they are made in a sophisticated nature. It has been the intent of the author to present both a context of the Jewish nation-state and an overview of key factors in Israeli emergency

management, so that the reader can be better equipped to assess the degree to which comparisons are possible and relevant. Such comparisons are not automatic and the author suggests that the act of making comparisons with Israel is a treacherous terrain. While specific operational related emergency management techniques may be easily exchanged amongst practitioners globally, the comparison of larger policy issues or direct transference of disaster management schemes is much more problematic.

The author suggests five major conclusions for this chapter on Israeli Emergency Management. Conclusions one and two are likely unique to Israel and may have only limited comparative value. Conclusions three and four suggest that Israel represents the implementation of a specific emergency management model and as a live example of such models, looking at Israel as a comparative emergency management example can be very useful for other places considering shifting policies and practices to those directions. Conclusion five suggest an example of how others can learn from how Israel manages emergencies.

### **Conclusion One.**

#### **Intangible Assets Supporting Emergency Management Based on the Socio-Cultural Fabric**

Given the trials and tribulations of the Jewish nation throughout history, along with the span of 20<sup>th</sup> Century events ranging from the tragedy of the Holocaust to the triumphs of the founding of a Jewish homeland, the citizens of Israel find themselves in a unique social-cultural fabric. The stakes are very are high - survival. Examples like the early Kibbutz settlements and their relationship to the defense of the rear area illustrate how many value systems can tie into one common goal - survival. To the extent the unique social-cultural fabric of Israel translates into purpose driven direct actions that the citizenry will take in relation to civil defense or emergency management, Israel holds a valuable intangible asset that other places do not necessarily possess. It is worthwhile to consider whether other places can tap into their own socio-cultural fabric as a valuable intangible asset to support emergency management.

### **Conclusion Two.**

#### **Existential Threats in Relation to Emergency Management**

As the state of Israel faced annihilation by a coalition of Arab armies within hours of the declaration of its statehood, today it is not unreasonable to consider that Israel may be annihilated in hours by conventional overland assaults or unconventional nuclear attacks. In commenting on threats to Israel, David (2009) points out that,

“Despite the grudging acceptance of Israel, threats to its existence persist. Countries and non-state actors continue to call for the end of Israel, often in an explicit and harrowing manner. Especially alarming is that many who seek the destruction of Israel represent powerful countries or have large followings, raising the possibility that their threats are not simply idle boasts but may be one day carried out” (David, 2009, p. 300).

David also suggests that it is ‘misleading and dishonest’ not to recognize that existential threats can have benefits to those states that manage to survive. While no state desires to face existential threats, the benefits include the ability to submerge divisive social and political issues at times of crisis and represent a unified home front to external enemies when the state is threatened with extinction.

Apathy of the public is a common problem emergency management officials need to overcome. The best laid plans may not be of much help if no-one cares to act on them. Outside observers can make note of how Israel’s existential threats support the emergency management sector in Israel.

### **Conclusion Three.**

#### **Israel as an Example of a Single-Hazard Approach to Emergency Management**

The reader should have noted that there is scant mention of the management of natural and technological hazards facing Israel in this chapter. The reason for this fact is that the chapter was written based on the predominant themes which emerge in relation to Israeli emergency management – That is Israel’s approach to emergency management is based on a military-centric model of dealing with hazards of social origin like warfare and terrorism. Given the nature of the state’s existence, it is fully understandable why this is the case.

However, it should be noted that Israel is by no means immune to natural and technological hazards. Those hazards have purposely not been discussed in detail in this chapter as they have not played a large role in the development of Israel’s national emergency management strategy. However, the author would be remiss to say that other hazards play no role in Israel’s emergency management. The public information Internet World Wide Web site for emergency management in Israel created by the Homefront Command (Homefront Command, 2009b) lists under its “How to act in an emergency section” the following hazard related items:

- Correct behavior during missile and rocket fire
- How to behave in a rocket or mortar attack
- How to behave in an earthquake
- How to behave in a hazardous material leak
- How to behave in a flood
- First aid
- Coping with an emergency
- The national disaster drill

In addition to basic emergency practices and hazards of social origin, the public information website lists earthquakes, floods, and hazardous material leaks as other hazards of concern in Israel. It should also be noted that Israel faces potential natural hazards like

earthquakes originating from the northern section of the Dead Sea Rift Zone (Leonard and Steinberg, 2002). In terms of technological hazards, like any other developed nation, Israel faces many technological hazards related to industry, transport, and infrastructure. The worst non-war related disaster in the nation's history was a technological disaster of a building collapse (Lefkovits, 2006). In May 2001 in Jerusalem, a structural collapse during a wedding at the Versailles banquet hall killed twenty-three people and nearly 400 people were injured. The Homefront Command Search and Rescue Unit has participated in a variety of responses to technological disasters such as train crashes and building collapses in Israel and it has also assisted in foreign natural disasters like the September 1985 Mexico City earthquake (Israel Defense Forces, 2009).

In considering Israel, the comparative strength can be drawn from observing emergency management practices in a society that takes a single-hazard approach. From a terrorism perspective, the decade of the 2000s will be remembered for terrorist attacks such as the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. From an the emergency management perspective, the decade will also be remembered as the decade when many Western nations struggled with the balance between an all-hazards emergency management approach and a single-hazard emergency management approach based exclusively on fighting terrorism. With solid emergency management planning and procedures, preparedness for one type of hazard should have spinoffs and overlaps that can be applied to managing other types of hazards. Israel counts on such overlaps its ability to manage all hazards.

Despite the presence of other hazards, Israel's situation has positioned it to have a predominately single-hazard approach to emergency management. Israel's emergency management system can be viewed as an example to consider where both the strengths and weaknesses of taking a predominately single- hazard approach can be observed.

#### **Conclusion Four.**

#### **Israel as a Military-Centric Approach to Emergency Management**

For a variety of reasons explained in this chapter, the nation-state of Israel has taken a military-centric approach to emergency management. The structure of society, the threat environment faced, and the urgency of the dangers are some of the reasons such an approach has proven successful for Israel. Other nations have struggled with the extent to which standing military forces become involved in managing disasters. In some cases, especially with regard to warfare or terrorism, the military may be the most appropriate entity to manage the emergency. In the event of natural disasters or technological disasters, while the military may have materiel and personnel it can apply towards the situation, the civilian sector may be better suited to manage the emergency. Much of these decisions lie in the foundations of the governance structure of the nation in question.

Even as Israel has taken a very specific military-centric approach to emergency

management that has worked well for the nation, some arguments in Israel have risen where the role of the military and its related apparatus have been questioned. For example, in the recent 2009 Gaza conflict, Home Front Command played a major role in emergency management concerns of the rear area. Issues of unintended consequences were potentially present. Elran (2009) raises the question of, “To what extent it is appropriate in a democratic country for the military to be responsible for managing clearly civilian matters?” He points to the decision that was made by Home Front Command, to close the entire school system in the south. While arguments can be made concerning what is the best strategy to protect life in situations of rocket attacks on populated areas Elran points out, “Even if this decision was taken in consultation with the Ministry of Education and the local authorities, it was the military that led the move, despite its social civilian ramifications” (Elran, 2009, para.3). When military-based emergency management decisions are made impacting the civilian sector, questions concerning the very nature of democratic governance may not be far behind. One of the reasons driving the formation of the new National Emergency Authority in Israel is to coordinate government / military and civilian sector emergency management functions. Even with these steps towards increased coordination, one could note that RACHEL is housed in the Ministry of Defense.

For comparative emergency management purposes, looking at Israel can provide a wealth of information concerning the strengths and weaknesses that a military-centric approach has towards emergency management.

## **Conclusion Five.**

### **The Applicability of the Defense of the Rear Model in Emergency Management**

From its early inception, the nation of Israel has applied the defense of the rear model to emergency management. In this model, every citizen is a soldier or perhaps every citizen is an emergency manager. Unfortunately for Israel, in many cases there has been little separation between the battle’s ‘front’ and the battle’s ‘rear’. In interpreting this model to its full extent, if an enemy knew that Israel’s citizenry were so prepared for a hazard, like an aerial attack, the enemy may consider the utility of taking such actions. If citizens were known for such resiliency that attacks on cities would have little long-term damaging impacts, adversaries might not be so keen to launch attacks having few results and then face Israeli military reprisals.

In applying the defense of the rear concept to emergency management, what if the citizenry of a nation were so prepared for disasters, that the category four hurricane, or an EF-5 tornado, or the pandemic flu while having damaging impacts in the short-term would not interrupt the functioning of society to a great extent? What if citizens had the zeal of emergency managers to the extent they would become like emergency managers in thinking and practice? What if defending the rear areas applied to defending against needless loss of life, injuries, and economics setbacks to the nation?

Due to Israel’s circumstances, it has been possible to rally citizenry to a common goal in defense of the nation. An interesting question to pose is whether other nations could rally their citizenry in a similar manner. Is it possible to capture a portion of the energies driving such

Israeli zeal when facing existential threats, and put those energies towards defending, or preparing, the rear areas for other natural and technological hazards? While it is understood that when considering Israel in a comparative context, sophisticated comparisons must be made, the author suggests that closer exploration of Israel's management of emergencies may lead to finding select practices that can be transferred to other contexts in other nations. The concept of mounting a unified rear area defense is one of the themes which other nations can learn from.

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