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Enlightenment in Eli

By [Gideon Levy](#)

The head of the Shin Bet, Yuval Diskin, suddenly emerged from the shadows and revealed the main principles of his worldview. Revealed? Not exactly. Diskin did not intend to reveal his views to all of us. He spoke confidentially before students at the premilitary academy at the Eli settlement. Thanks to Channel 10, which obtained a recording of the event, the remarks were given public exposure.

Channel 10's news department deserves praise for the achievement. Diskin deserves to be denounced. First, because of the venue: Why do the students of Rabbi Eli Sadan deserve to hear what is withheld from the rest of the public? Why is the settlers' academy more worthy than us? Would Diskin speak with such openness before left-wing activists or residents of Umm al-Fahm? Why in heaven's name in Eli of all places, which was born in sin and exists in sin? Diskin chose to speak at a place that nurtures the wild weeds of the settlers - perhaps to placate them, perhaps to flatter them.

The content of his remarks also raises serious questions. Diskin said some forthright and bold things that were sharply critical. But he said them as if he has no part in shaping the reality. Diskin is not a neutral observer looking at reality. He is one of those responsible for the way reality looks. Thus, in effect, he broadened the borders of the useless concept "shooting and crying." Now we also have "depriving and crying" and "erring and crying."

This applies, for example, to his remarks about the deprivation the Arabs of Israel suffer: "If we take an Israeli Arab from Umm al-Fahm with an Israeli identity card and a Jew who is arrested, I don't identify equality in the way the system treats him. The discrimination is much more in favor of the Jews than the Arabs." Putting aside his ineloquent language, we can ask: Who exactly is this "system" that deprives the Arabs? Who is responsible for the fact that an arrested "Noam" is treated differently than an arrested "Naim?" We are not only talking about interrogation rooms. There is no organization more responsible for the deprivation of the Arab citizens of the state - because of "security" excuses that are generally groundless - than the Shin Bet that Diskin heads. When they are humiliated at the airports, when security guards deny them access to various events only because of their origin, when they are not allowed to receive jobs at state institutions and government companies, and when they are charged with serious security offenses that turn out in court to be of minor import, the Shin Bet is responsible for this.

Diskin's admission of Israel's erroneous strategic assessments, which led to horrible and unnecessary bloodshed, also do not absolve him of responsibility. Yasser Arafat did not initiate the current intifada? For years, they fed us the argument that the arch murderer Arafat was responsible for all this bloodshed, from beginning to end, and therefore there was nothing to talk about with him. Now comes the head of the Shin Bet, who was also in a senior position when the intifada erupted, to tell us that they brainwashed us with false assessments. While it was published that Diskin also held the same view in the past, the fact that the assessments of the national Arafatologist, Amos Gilad, determined the official position of Israel raises questions about the functioning of the Shin Bet. While a few members of the radical left shouted that Arafat was a partner for peace, everything hinged on the security assessments of the "national assessment" bodies, which declared that Arafat was personally responsible for every bus that exploded in our streets. We nearly planned to assassinate him because of this. Now it turns out, according to Diskin, that this was untrue.

Diskin's remarks about longing for Saddam Hussein are also illuminating, as they come from the mouth of the director of such a highly reputed intelligence organization. "When you dismantle a system in which there is a dictator ... you get chaos." Did he also say this to the Americans? Perhaps this correct assessment can be applied to some other regimes? The Palestinian Authority, for example; if chaos reigns there, then the Shin Bet, which fostered Hamas in its early days and did everything to undermine the rule of Arafat and Abu Mazen, will be largely to blame.

When the heads of the Shin Bet step into the light, the truth is often revealed in its full nakedness, and it is not always flattering. Diskin's predecessor, Avi Dichter, emerged into the light several months ago and still has not said a thing, not a word. The suspicion is beginning to arise that he simply has nothing to say. Yisrael Hasson, who competed with Diskin to head the organization, is now a Knesset candidate of the far-right Yisrael Beiteini party. What does this say about the views that guided him during his tenure at the Shin Bet? Did he also then advocate "voluntary transfer?" The true face of another senior Shin Bet man, Gideon Ezra, with his racist expressions against Arabs, also came to light after he left the organization.

Diskin, who is considered the father of the perverse policy of liquidations, which is again flourishing without generating any public debate, was early to reveal himself. But this does not exonerate him from responsibility. The Shin Bet under his direction, as under his predecessors, is an organization that -alongside its determined war against terror - is responsible for several of the mistaken premises and outrageous injustices that shape our lives. It abuses thousands of Palestinians under investigation, humiliates Israeli Arabs and weaves an extortive and cruel web of collaborators, who are later tossed away like used objects. It would be preferable for Diskin to change the situation instead of lecturing to settler cadets about its severity.