



NEW RELEASE

Brant Slomovic *The Cracks in Everything*

Text by Matti Friedman
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Thousands of »lone soldiers« – young non-Israelis without family in the country – choose to serve in the military of their adopted country Israel.

Israel has been in a near-continuous state of conflict since the day of its proclamation, some seventy years ago. It has sustained its military through compulsory service. The overwhelming majority of those in its Defense Forces were born in Israel, raised alongside this notion of service. But theirs is not the only story of Israel's soldiers. There is a group of young men and women, non-Israelis numbering in the thousands, who come from countries around the world and volunteer into this legacy. For them, the price of admission into Israeli society is this very service. They are called »lone soldiers.«

Brant Slomovic considers their story through portraits and a survey of Israel's landscape. He asks where they came from, who they are, and why they sought out Israel as their home.

»When I joined an Israeli infantry unit in the summer of 1997, having moved from Toronto not long before, I discovered that army service in this country is the tail end of childhood. I was serving in an army of kids. The recruits I met that August, at a stark training base in the middle of the desert, had finished high school just a month before. Everyone – my new comrades, our sergeants and lieutenants – still lived in the same room they'd grown up in, with their teenage books and NBA posters and that 8th-grade jacket no one had bothered to throw out, and that's where they went back to on the weekends. I was just 19 myself. Envisioning a combat unit before I actually became part of one, I think I'd imagined something manlier – but our tent was full of care packages with homemade cookies. And there we were every evening, in fatigues a few sizes too big, lining up at the pay phones to call our mothers.

(...) Some of these soldiers are from Jewish homes where ideas about Israel played a central role. Others didn't know much about the place before they came. Some aren't Jewish according to strict rabbinic law, according to which Judaism is passed down only by the mother. One soldier said she wasn't sure if her mother was Jewish or not. The features of the soldiers – from Thailand, Canada, Kazakhstan, Argentina, Peru, Ethiopia – are the features of the entire planet. But the same thread runs through all of the stories of the lone soldiers who appear here: They've come a long way to join their fate to the fate of others.«

– from the text by Matti Friedman

Brant Slomovic (b. 1970, Montreal) is a Canadian photo-essayist based in Toronto, with a background as an emergency medicine physician. His experiences as a frontline doctor inform a unique perspective on the human condition, an attribute he carries with him into his role as a storyteller and image maker. He employs long-form documentary projects to examine narratives of culture and identity. What underlies Brant's approach is a viewpoint that considers every person through a lens of commonality and connection.

Matti Friedman, an Israeli journalist, is the author of *Pumpkin-flowers: A Soldier's Story of a Forgotten War*. He served in an Israeli infantry unit from 1997–2000, and in the reserves until 2016. He was born in Toronto and lives in Jerusalem.

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