

Numéro

Berlin

Itai Doron

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ITAI DORON on *waaHid in Jaffa*

waaHid in Jaffa is a photographic project that delves into the complex existential and emotional experiences of young Palestinian men, mostly from East Jerusalem and the West Bank, who have entered Israel, sometimes illicitly through holes in the border fence, in order to find temporary employment, or engage more freely with a more liberal and tolerant culture. Taken over a period of six years, the series of predominantly nocturnal photographs explores a largely hidden world: chronicling private moments from the lives of men who are among the tens of thousands of Palestinians working in Israel, legally or illegally, with a large majority exposed to corrupt working conditions, exploitation, and stereotyping attitudes. Against the background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *waaHid In Jaffa* examines and engages in a complex dialogue with the issues of representation of the Palestinians, particularly young Palestinian men (who are at the forefront of their nation's struggles for statehood) and their status as a threat or an enemy according to Israeli policies, rules, ideology, and a wider public perception.

The selection of photographs brought together in this book presents some of the Palestinian guys I randomly met between 2012 and 2018, usually during the month of Ramadan. The sequence starts with a succession of daytime pictures taken on a Friday before the midday prayer has been said, before dusk settles and night takes over. What follow are portraits of male characters wandering aimlessly at night through Tel Aviv and Jaffa, waiting for an opportunity to change their lives in the hope of escaping from boredom, loneliness and despair of daily life under military occupation. Whether porcupine hunting, trying to dodge Israeli police cars, or merely hanging out, the young men's modes of existence express a world of contradictions that lies between night and day, nature and urban, adolescence and adulthood, and a life lived in the shadow of a political conflict. Their postures and body language reflect the reality of colonization that has become a defining characteristic of the collective and national identity of the Palestinians in Israel, living life that is always on the periphery, in a constant state of flux. Their hairstyles and clothing mirror a struggle to craft a masculine identity from the oppositional cultures and traditions of oppressor and oppressed.

The photographs deliberately challenge the boundaries of recorded reality by blurring the lines between documentary and fiction, and the alternating spaces of dream and nightmare. The usually vibrant city of Tel Aviv and the ancient port city of Jaffa – Tel Aviv's southern and oldest part – are presented here as an eerie underworld, a realm of real and metaphorical shadows and of disturbing darkness, highlighting the tension between the characters and their perception by the audience as reticent, suspicious and ambivalent. The two cities together lie side by side on the Mediterranean Sea, occupying an important place in the Israeli and Palestinian public imagination, representing secularism, which is both admired and loathed. The impression of impending urban doom depicted in the photographs became reality on April 7, 2022, following the murder of three Israeli civilians and the wounding of twelve more in a crowded bar on a busy Tel Aviv street by a young Palestinian man. The man, who entered Israel illegally through an opening in the security barrier, was tracked down and killed nine hours later that evening in an exchange of fire with Israeli security forces near a mosque in Jaffa. The mosque, where he hoped to hide during the first Friday prayers of Ramadan, sits at the very center of the area where the majority of the *waaHid in Jaffa* photographs were taken.

ITAI DORON waaHid in Jaffa

















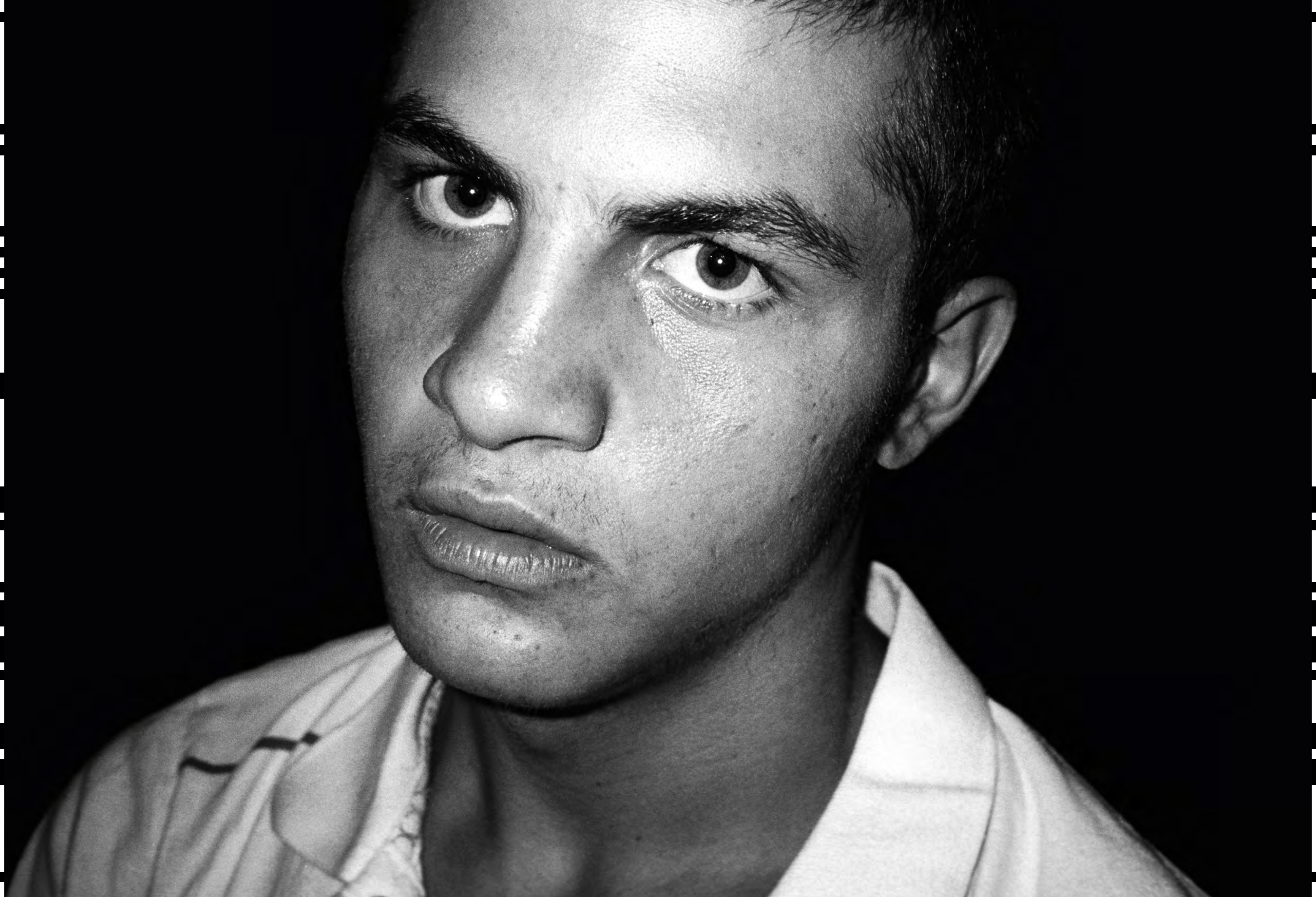




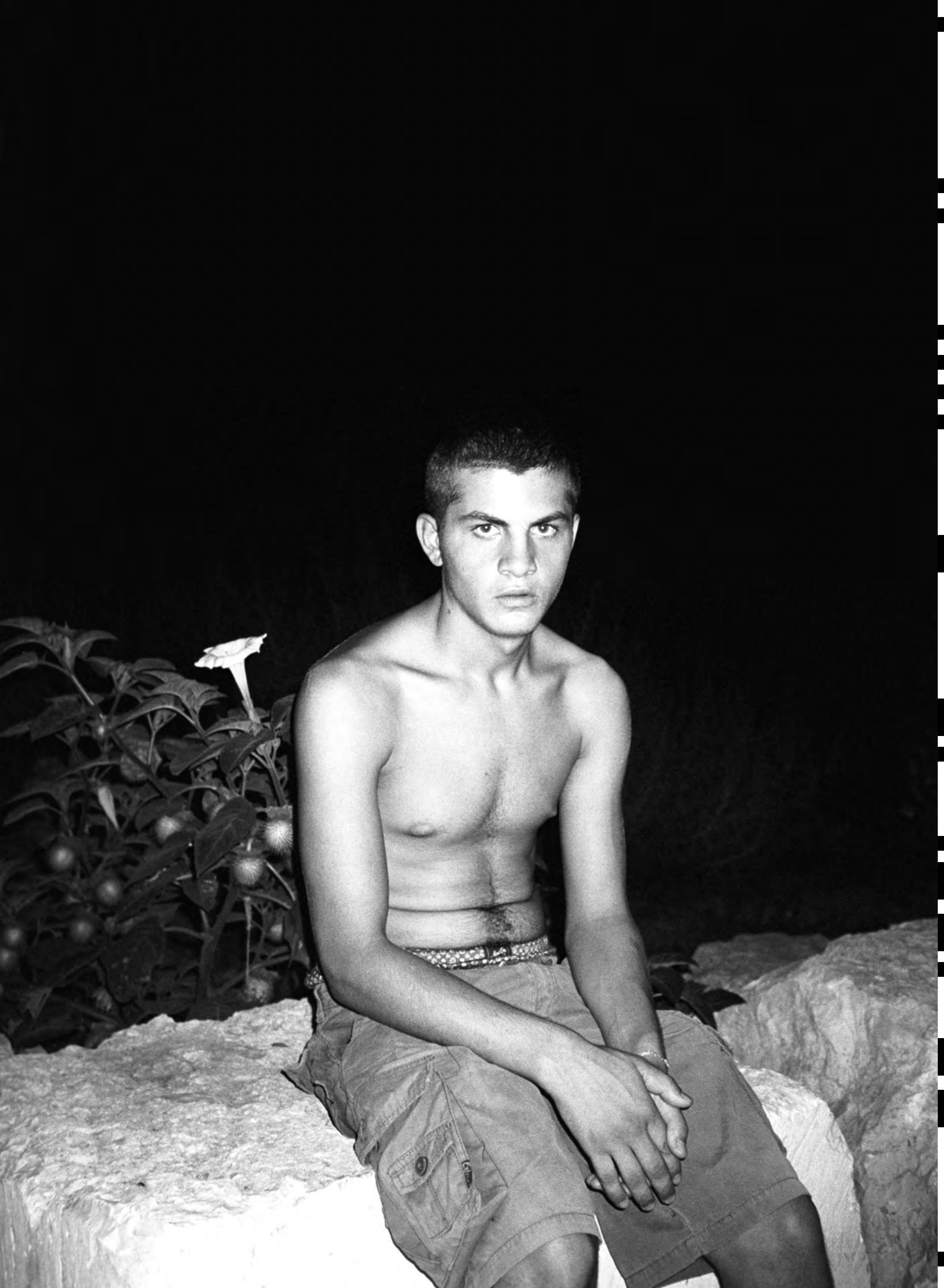






























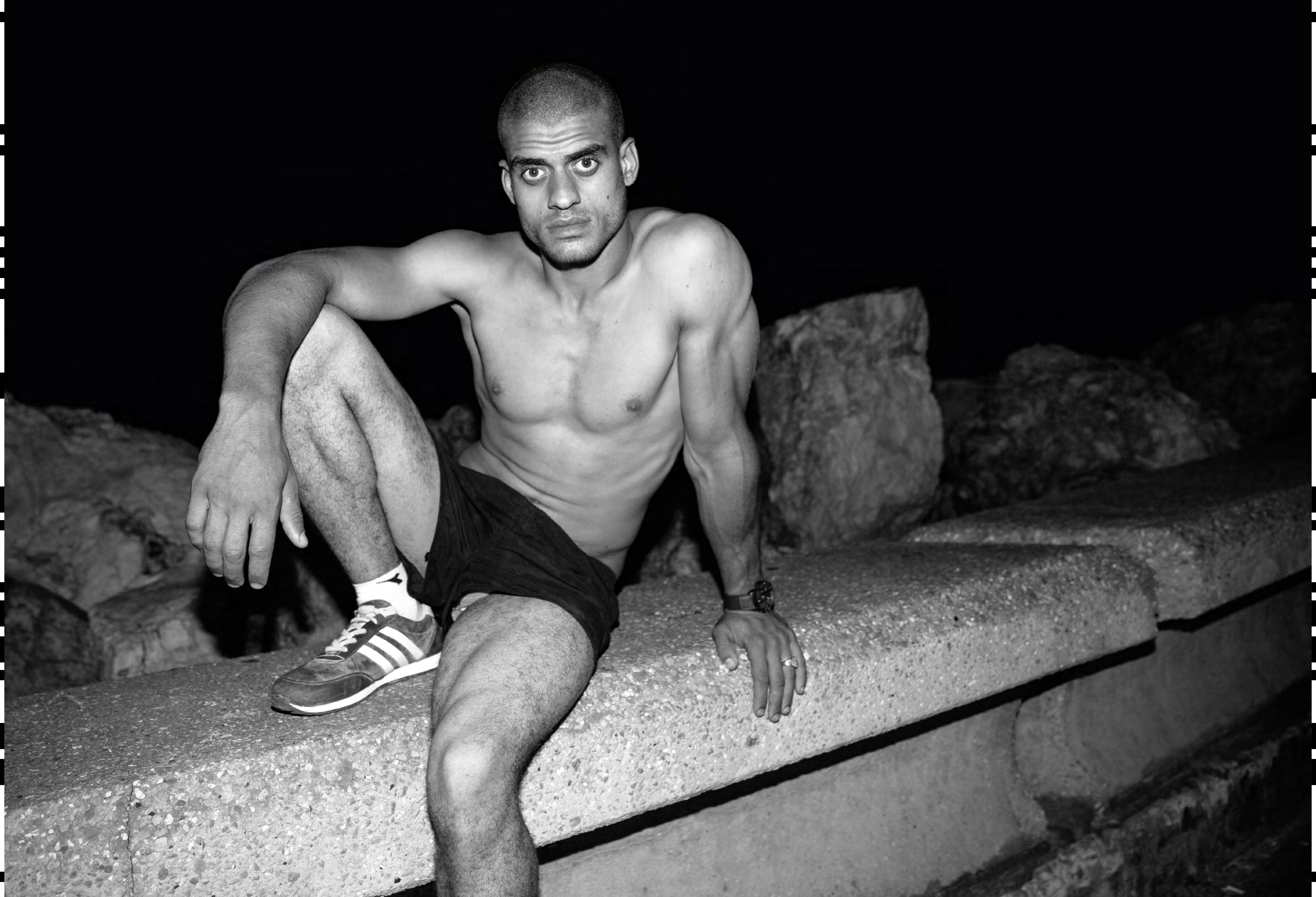












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