

Graphic Videos and Incitement, How the IDF Is Misleading Israelis on Telegram

The IDF unit responsible for psychological warfare operations operates a Telegram channel called '72 Virgins - Uncensored,' which targets local audiences with 'exclusive content from the Gaza Strip'

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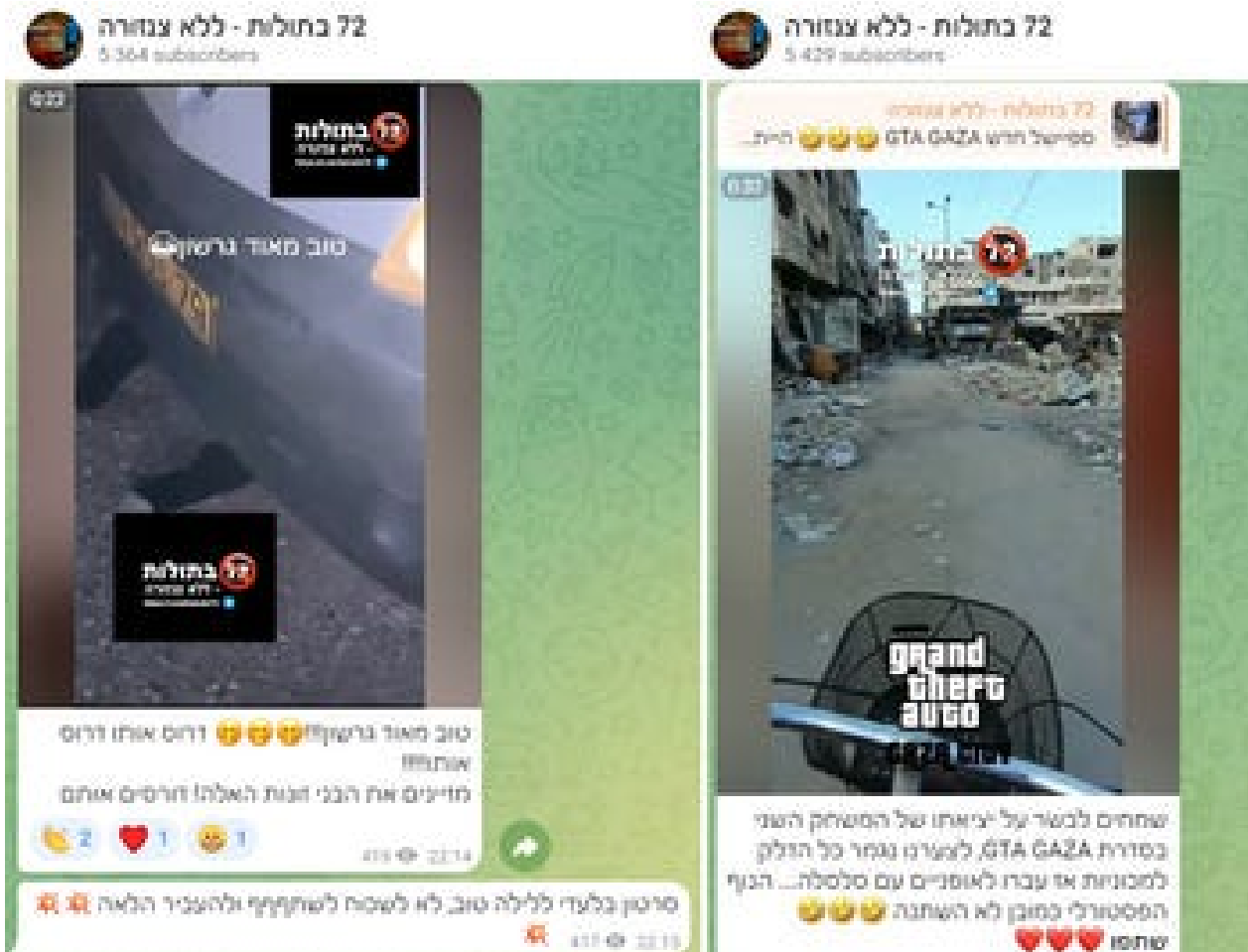
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The IDF Operations Directorate's Influencing Department, which is responsible for psychological warfare operations against the enemy and foreign audiences, operates a Telegram channel called 72 Virgins - Uncensored, which targets Israeli audiences and shows the bodies of Hamas terrorists with the promise of "shattering the terrorists' fantasy."

The channel, which boasts of "exclusive content from the Gaza Strip" and has published over 700 posts, [images and videos of terrorists](#) being killed and of destruction in the Strip, encourages its 5,300 followers to share the content so that "everyone can see that we're screwing them."

The Israel Defense Forces denies that it operates the channel, but a senior military official confirmed to Haaretz that the army is responsible for operating it.

"There is no reason for the IDF to conduct influence campaigns on Israeli citizens of Israel," said the official, who requested anonymity. "The messages there are problematic. It doesn't look like an awareness campaign of an army like the IDF, but more like talking points for [far-right rapper] The Shadow, and the fact that soldiers operate such a problematic page is egregious," he said.



Images from the '72 Virgins - Uncensored' Telegram group.

The channel was created October 9, two days after the war began, as The Avengers. The next day the name was changed to Azazel, echoing the Hebrew pronunciation of "Gaza" and a word for hell, and then 72 Virgins - Uncensored. An October 11 post read:

"Burning their mother ... You won't believe the video we got! You can hear the crunch of their bones. We'll upload it right away, get ready."

Images of Palestinian captives and the bodies of terrorists were captioned "Exterminating the roaches ... exterminating the Hamas rats. ... Share this beauty." The following text accompanies a video of an Israeli soldier allegedly dipping machine gun bullets in pork fat:

"What a man!!!! Lubricates bullets with lard. You won't get your virgins."

And:

"Garbage juice!!!! Another dead terrorist!! You have to watch it with the sound, you'll die laughing."

Each night, the channel posts a daily summary that includes [several IDF updates on the activity in Gaza](#), with promises of exclusive images and videos.

"As always, we're the first to bring you the information from the field," it says. "We have crazy recordings of terrorists, how can we put it, swimming with the fishes. We have documentation no one else has. We promise much more!!!"

On October 14, alongside the caption, "Exclusive video of a good night, don't forget to share and repost," was a video of an Israeli vehicle repeatedly driving over the body of a terrorist.

"Very good, Gershon!!! Run him over run him over!!!! Screw the bastards! Flatten them," the accompanying post said.



72 בתולות - ללא צנזורה

5 429 subscribers



The channel administrators didn't stop at images from Gaza. On October 11, hundreds of Israelis, including members of the Beitar Jerusalem soccer team's [violently racist fan club La Familia](#), rioted at the Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer, near Tel Aviv, following a rumor that Hamas terrorists who had invaded Israel were being treated there. People roamed the hospital, cursing out and spitting on medical professionals. Within an hour, a video of the riot was uploaded to 72 Virgins with the title,

“My brothers, the heroesssss, La Familia fans, love you!!!!!! What heroes, came to screw the Arabs.”

This isn't the first time that an IDF psychological warfare operation targeting an Israeli audience has been exposed. [Haaretz revealed](#) this year that during the 2021 war in the Gaza Strip, the IDF Spokesperson's Unit conducted a deceptive campaign against Israeli citizens aimed at boosting awareness of the IDF's attacks and their “cost” to the Palestinians. The army posted to fake social media accounts images of the widespread destruction in the Strip and called on followers to share “so they know we are retaliating big time.” Officials in the spokesperson's unit admitted, after the operation was exposed, that they had “erred.”

The Telegram channel also urges followers to share its content. Next to an image of what are alleged to be captured terrorists is the exhortation,

“Don't forget that all the content here is exclusive first for you!!!!!! Share it so everyone will see what crybabies they are.”

Over two years ago, Haaretz [reported](#) that the IDF hired the operator of a Telegram channel called [Abu Ali Express](#) as a consultant on the “war for public opinion on social media. The channel published exclusive reports, videos and pictures with its logo to its 100,000 followers, without proper disclosure of the cooperation with the IDF. More than once, the IDF spokesman referred journalists to Abu Ali Express for news on the fighting, while telling them that the information “did not come from the military.” Under the cloak of anonymity, Abu Ali Express discredited journalists who criticized IDF policy and then-Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman. In 2022, the IDF announced it had terminated the consultant's contract. This week, 72 Virgins shared a post from Abu Ali Express, which was given a prominent credit.



Images from the '72 Virgins - Uncensored' Telegram group.

For years, the IDF has used psychological warfare against Israel's enemies in an effort to undercut their narratives, influence the population (including in the Gaza Strip, Iran and Lebanon) and tout its successes. These campaigns are conducted in secret, using fake accounts, without leaving evidence of IDF involvement. However, the IDF is barred by law from using these capabilities against Israelis.

In a statement, the IDF Spokesperson's Unit said 72 Virgins is not operated on the IDF's behalf.

"If there was any connection by soldiers or other parties connected to the IDF with the page or its operation, this was done without approval and without authority."

However, as mentioned, a senior military official confirmed that the channel was systematically operated by IDF personnel.

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