

# IDF Soldiers Denounce Israeli High Crimes Against Peace

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*Netanyahu is a world class thug. He wages a genocidal war on Palestine. Operation Protective Edge (OPE) is the latest example. Mass slaughter and destruction were horrific. James Petras calls Israel a "genocidal state."*

"Citizens and soldiers, criminals and professionals, torturers and sociopaths...coexist within the same person," he says.

Exterminating Palestinians is official policy. It's consciously pursued. It's done with "savage enthusiasm." It enjoys full Western support. Washington backs its killing machine. Israelis alone have rights. Palestinians are used, abused, mass slaughtered and exterminated. Rogue states operate this way. Israel and America are the world's worst. They partner in each other's crimes. They operate extrajudicially. They wage war on humanity. They claim a divine right to do what they damn please. They get away with it because who'll stop them. Humanity may not survive their madness.

On Friday, 43 IDF reservists and former army intelligence members published an open letter. They addressed Netanyahu and top military officials. They gave their ranks, first names only or initials. They included a reserve major and two captains. They kept their identities secret. They did so to avoid certain recrimination. Israel accepts no criticism. It goes all-out to suppress it.

Signatories denounced Israeli high crimes against peace. They condemned longstanding collective punishment. They henceforth refuse to serve. They want no part of Israel's killing machine. They were clear and unequivocal, saying:

"There's no distinction between Palestinians who are, and are not, involved in violence. Information that is collected and stored harms innocent people. It is used for political persecution and to create divisions within Palestinian society by recruiting collaborators and driving parts of Palestinian society against itself. We cannot continue to serve this system in good conscience, denying the rights of millions of people. Those among us who are reservists, refuse to take part in the state's actions against Palestinians. We, veterans of Unit 8200 (Israel's NSA equivalent), reserve soldiers both past and present, declare that we...refuse to continue serving as tools in deepening the military control over the Occupied Territories. It is commonly thought that the service in military intelligence is free of moral dilemmas and solely contributes to the reduction of violence and harm to innocent people. However, our military service has taught us that intelligence is an integral part of Israel's military occupation over the territories."

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Unit 8200 signatories admitted spying on Palestinians’ sexual “preferences.” They did so to blackmail them. To enlist collaborators against their own people. “We call for all soldiers serving in the Intelligence Corps, present and future, along with all the citizens of Israel, to speak out against these injustices and to take action to bring them to an end.”

Daniel is a reserve captain. He said gathering signatures took about a year. “There were fears of how people, and friends from the unit, might respond – if they knew that it was I and if they didn’t know,” he said. “I don’t feel comfortable in my conscience continuing to serve, and instead of dealing with the dilemmas and the ramifications, I chose to take a more evasive route,” he said. He calls it a “gray-market dodge.” He used it for three years.

“Now, later on, we feel that evasion is wrong, and that we have to take responsibility,” he explained. “In the end, I served there for seven years. I believed in what we did there – and for all those reasons. I must take responsibility for what I see as the perpetuation of the cycle of violence. We hope that people will think critically about these things.”

An IDF spokesman said Unit 8200 “worked since the day it was established to gather intelligence that allows the army and security agencies to perform their tasks, and each day it helps protect the citizens of the State of Israel.” He lied claiming no knowledge of crimes signatories revealed. It’s “unknown in the Intelligence Directorate,” he said.

Former Unit 8200 commander, Brigadier General Hanan Gefen (Res.) accused the signatories of a grave breach of trust,” saying:

“If this is true and if I were the current unit commander, I would put them all on trial and would demand prison sentences for them, and I would remove them from the unit. They are using information that reached them in the course of their duties to promote their political position.”

One signatory said he “thinks that all of us who signed the letter did so because we understood that we are unable to sleep well at night.” They’re not alone. Breaking the Silence calls itself:

“an organization of veteran combatants who have served in the Israeli military since the start of the Second Intifada and have taken it upon themselves to expose the Israeli public to the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories. We endeavor to stimulate public debate about the price paid for a reality in which young soldiers face a civilian population on a daily basis, and are engaged in the control of that population’s everyday life. Soldiers who serve in the Territories witness and participate in military actions which change them immensely. Cases of abuse towards Palestinians, looting, and destruction of property have been the norm for years, but are still explained as extreme and unique cases. Our testimonies portray a different, and much grimmer picture in which deterioration of moral standards finds expression in the character of orders and the rules of engagement, and are justified in the name of Israel’s security.”

Breaking the Silence was established to “demand accountability (for Israeli crimes) in the Occupied Territories perpetrated by us in our name.” [Yehuda Shaul](#) is a Breaking the Silence co-founder. Israeli actions during Operation Protective Edge were “unthinkable a few years ago,” he said.

Entire neighborhoods were destroyed. So were families in them. Noncombatant men, women and children were willfully targeted. They were murdered en masse in cold blood. “From one operation to the next, Israel and the IDF are just going down the drain,” said Shaul. “As a country, the moral low we reached in the previous operation is the point from where we start the next one. This is how it continues. Operation Protective Edge continued where Operation Cast Lead ended.”

Israeli strategy reflects madness. It’s “insane,” said Shaul. “Everything we do is right, and everything they do is wrong.” Palestinians are considered subhumans. Israelis ignore their suffering. “It is almost a crime in Israel to have empathy (for them), even though you are talking about women and children,” said Shaul.

Israeli soldiers “think a lot about right and wrong.” They knowingly perform duties contrary to their moral principles, Shaul believes. They cross one red line after another. Only after multiple times do they fully understand how they breached their moral code. At the same time, they acclimate. They get used to doing things they know are wrong.

“(T)he atmosphere in Israel (is) very bad” today, said Shaul. Even worse than during previous conflicts. There’s “no space for question marks, absolutely no space. I am not just talking about the media. There were many anti-war protestors beaten up in Tel Aviv and Haifa by gangs so they had to be taken to the hospital. And the police did nothing to protect them.”

At the same time, Israeli officials called for destroying entire Gazan communities. Their voices drown out sane ones. Critical ones “hardly get any platform these days,” said Shaul. They’re largely shut out.

Things today are worse than ever. Police state apparatus rules govern. Dissent is verboten. Militarized occupation persists. Gaza is a perpetual battleground. An entire population is vulnerable. “We continue to build settlements, said Shaul. “We increase our military rule over the Palestinians. Israel is not heading for a way out. We are digging ourselves in. We are doing everything we can to maintain the occupation.”

To deny Palestinians rights they deserve. To brutalize them. To eliminate them. To exterminate them. To make Israel ethnically pure. To do it over the corpses of Palestinian men, women, children, infants, the elderly and infirm. To wage genocidal war against them. To get away with it because who’ll intervene responsibly.

Breaking the Silence was founded in March 2004. Today it has over 1,000 members. They speak out courageously. They tell their own stories. They reject Israeli lawlessness. They believe Israel’s greatest threat is itself. Its militarized occupation. Its settlement enterprise. Its institutionalized racism. Its treating Palestinians like subhumans. Its waging wars without mercy to exterminate them.

“(T)he treatment of the Palestinians is the biggest threat to Israel,” Shaul maintains. “It undermines (its) legitimacy.” Israeli policy shouldn’t be “either us or them. It is exactly the opposite.”

Israel's security "depends on a sovereign Palestinian state beside us and on giving dignity and rights to the Palestinians. In Israel, we are now in a fight over the heart and the soul of our society. The questions are: who are we as a society? What country do we want to live in? The question is whether dropping all these bombs on families is something acceptable in our eyes or not."

Israel systematically spurns all international human rights laws, norms and standards. Morality isn't its long suit. Accountability is long overdue.

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