

# Israeli Soldiers Break Silence

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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[Breaking the Silence](#) (BTS) is an organization comprised of Israeli combat veterans. They served since the start of the second Intifada. They refuse any longer to stay silent.

Their testimonies expose “the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories.” Their purpose is to stimulate public debate. They revealed abuses too gruesome to hide.

They include “looting and destruction of property.” Many other crimes and abuses are much worse. In their own words, they reveal the deplorable immorality of Israel’s militarized occupation.

Most Israelis ignore it. They turn a blind eye to what’s done in their name. “In order to become civilians again, soldiers are (also) forced to ignore what they have seen and done.”

BTS members have been revealing disturbing truths for years. A previous article discussed them, saying:

“We, reserve officers and soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)...have always served in the front lines” (We) were first to carry out any mission, light or heavy, (and we did it) to protect the State of Israel and strengthen it.”

“We....served....long weeks every year, in spite of dear cost to our personal lives, have been on reserve duty all over the Occupied Territories, and were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country (but were only given to perpetuate) our control over the Palestinian people.”

“We(‘ve)....seen the bloody toll this Occupation exacts from both sides.”

“The commands issued to us in the Territories (have) destroy(ed) all the values (we learned) growing up in this country.”

“The (way) the Occupation (undermines the) IDF’s human character and (exposes) the corruption of the entire Israeli society.”

“We....know that the Territories are not Israel, and that all settlements are bound to be evacuated in the end.”

“We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements.”

“We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.”

“We hereby declare that we shall continue serving the Israel Defense Forces in any mission that serves Israel’s defense.”

“The missions of occupation and oppression do not serve this purpose – and we shall take no part in them.”

Women soldiers also speak out. Their testimonies match their male counterparts. They condemn the corrupt state of Israel’s military. They want no further part of horrific crimes committed in their name.

To date, BTS collected over 700 testimonies. Soldiers from all segments of Israeli society supplied them. They’re frank, bold, revealing, and courageous. Those published were “meticulously researched” for accuracy.

Facts are cross-checked with additional eyewitness evidence, as well as archival material from human rights organizations.

Most soldiers remain anonymous for their own safety. They’re concerned about IDF recrimination and societal pressures they’ll face otherwise. Israel doesn’t take criticism lightly.

It wants no one obstructing or denigrating military or government policies. Doing so can be hazardous. Being Jewish doesn’t grant immunity. Soldiers bearing witness to horrific crimes have special concerns. They have smoking gun proof of Israeli lawless.

Their testimonies are damning. They reveal the real Israel. They destroy the myth of a free, open, and equitable democratic state. Throughout its history, ruthlessness defines policy.

Militarism is a way of life. Arabs are considered lesser beings. Occupied Palestinians are persecuted for not being Jewish.

Edward Said explained it powerfully. His books, articles, and outspokenness bear witness to decades of horrific treatment.

He described “Sharonian evil.” Among other crimes, he massacred children. He turned Palestine into an isolated prison. He used tanks and F-16s against civilians.

He, his predecessors, and successors committed virtually every imaginable atrocity. Netanyahu exceeds his extremism. He, Barak, and likeminded hardliners represent consummate evil.

Palestinians are persecuted and oppressed for their faith, ethnicity and presence. An endless cycle of violence, depravation, and degradation targets them. In Gaza, slow-motion genocide is policy.

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israeli soldiers operate like storm troopers. Hitler had a Jewish problem. Israel has a Palestinian one. They can’t get rid of them, so they’re brutalized mercilessly.

BTS soldiers want shocking truths revealed. Everyone has a right to know. Israelis need to know what type society they live in. Change depends on exposing it to the light of day.

US media scoundrels suppress it. So do European ones most often. Exceptions are rare. They prove the rule. [London Guardian](#) writer Harriet Sherwood headlined “Former Israeli soldiers disclose routing mistreatment of Palestinian children,” saying:

BTS members described “beatings, intimidation, humiliation, verbal abuse, night-time arrests and injury.”

Children most often face stone-throwing charges. Usually they did nothing. At most they caused no harm. They can face prison and torture either way. They’re horrifically treated like adults. Sherwood gave graphic examples of soldier testimonies.

So did [London Independent](#) writer Donald MacIntyre. He headlined “Israel breaks silence over army abuses,” saying:

As a teenager, “Hafez Rajabi was marked for life by his encounter with” Israeli soldiers. His scars bear testimony to their abuse. They terrorized and brutalized him. He was “certain that he was going to” be killed.

He’s one of countless thousands. One boy was “beat(en) to a pulp.” So were others. In custody they’re tortured to confess even if innocent. British lawyers accused Israel of “serial breaches of international law in its military’s handling of children in custody.”

Kids young as 10 or younger are traumatized. Some never recover. Most are entirely innocent. Being Palestinian puts them at risk. Soldiers get habituated to violence. Commanders order it.

Dehumanization, brutalization, humiliation, and harassment are commonplace. Unaccountability is policy. Institutionalized cruelty goes unnoticed. So does murder and virtually every other type abuse.

Sunshine is the best disinfectant. BTS soldiers took full advantage. Others are encouraged to join them. Below are examples of what they said. Multiply each one by thousands if all soldiers spoke freely.

Growing up in Palestine means living with threatened state terror. Few kids escape it directly or indirectly. They face it growing up and as adults. Militarized occupation assures it.

A Hebron-based soldier said:

“You never know their names, you never talk with them, they always cry, shit in their pants....There are those annoying moments when you’re on an arrest mission, and there’s no room in the police station, so you just take the kid back with you, blindfold him, put him in a room and wait for the police to come and pick him up in the morning. He sits there like a dog ...”

According to another soldier:

One kid lay on the ground “begging for his life. (He) was actually nine years old, I mean, a kid has to beg for his life? A loaded gun is pointed at him and he has to plead for mercy? This is something that scars him for life. But I think if we hadn’t entered the village at that point, then stones would be thrown the next day and perhaps the next time someone would be wounded or killed as a result.”

Another:

“We were sort of indifferent. It becomes a kind of habit. Patrols with beatings happened on a daily basis. We were really going at it. It was enough for you to give us a look that we didn’t like, straight in the eye, and you’d be hit on the spot. We got to such a state and were so sick of being there.”

Another:

“The commander said to (her): ‘Keep away!’ Came close, cocked his gun. She got scared. (He shouted): ‘Anyone gets close, I kill him. Don’t annoy me. I’ll kill him. I have no mercy.’ He was really on the edge. Obviously (the boy) had been beaten up. Anyway, he told them: ‘Get the hell out of here!’ and all hell broke loose. His nose was bleeding. He had really been beaten to a pulp.”

Another:

“We’d often provoke riots (in Hebron). We’d be on patrol, walking in the village, bored, so we’d trash shops, find a detonator, beat someone to a pulp, you know how it is. Search, mess it all up. Say we’d want a riot? We’d go up to the windows of a mosque, smash the panes, throw in a stun grenade, make a big boom, then we’d get a riot.”

“Every time we’d catch Arab kids. You catch him, push the gun against his body. He can’t make a move – he’s totally petrified. He only goes: ‘No, no, army.’ You can tell he’s petrified. He sees you’re mad, that you couldn’t care less about him and you’re hitting him really hard the whole time.”

“And all those stones flying around. You grab him like this, you see? We were mean, really. Only later did I begin to think about these things, that we’d lost all sense of mercy.”

Over 700 other testimonies read like these. If made public, thousands of others could replicate them. These are serious, unprovoked crimes. Prosecutions rarely happen. Punishments are no more than wrist slaps. Commanders have total absolution.

Israeli rule of law says Palestinians don’t matter. They’re kicked around like rag dolls. Stray dogs wouldn’t be treated as abusively. Israeli soldiers have virtual carte blanche to do what they please.

Impunity protects them. Commanders order them to be tougher. So do extremist rabbis. BTS soldiers bear witness to Israel’s dark side. It’s the only side Palestinians endure daily.

Read the entire BTS [report](#) and know why.

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