

Israeli Soldiers Break the Silence on Gaza War

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"[Breaking the Silence](#) is 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."

They recount disturbing experiences Israel wants suppressed – horrific crimes of war and against humanity including mass murdering civilians "excused as military necessities, or explained as extreme and unique cases."

No Israeli commander or government official was ever prosecuted for horrific high crimes demanding accountability.

Make no mistake. Israel's 2014 Operation Protective Edge was well-planned premeditated naked aggression against 1.8 million largely defenseless Palestinians trapped under lawless siege.

For Israel's powerful military, it was like shooting fish in a barrel. It was cold-blooded mass murder and destruction – mostly harming noncombatant men, women, children, infants and the elderly.

Israel considers them legitimate targets. International law calls killing them a high crime against peace.

Dozens of Israeli soldiers involved in last summer's war broke the silence on war crimes they were ordered to commit. More on what they said below.

The [Breaking the Silence](#) web site said testimonies were collected from over 60 IDF officers and rank-and-file soldiers involved in aggressive war on Gaza.

They served in ground, naval and air operations. Their testimonies were carefully vetted for veracity.

Their comments based on direct involvement exposed government and IDF command Big Lies.

Rules of engagement made Gaza a free-fire zone. Commanders ordered troops "to fire at every person they identified in a combat zone" – meaning anyone, anywhere in Gaza, including civilian neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, UN shelters, and other nonmilitary targets.

Everyone in sight was considered an enemy, including small children too young to understand what was happening.

A May 3 press release headlined “This is How We Fought in Gaza 2014.

Saying released testimonies “paint a disturbing picture of the IDF’s policy of indiscriminate fire, which directly resulted in the deaths of hundreds of innocent Palestinian civilians.”

“The testimonies collected by Breaking the Silence paint a troubling picture of” official Israeli policy.

Soldiers were told to “shoot to kill” anyone in sight. They were deliberately lied to about areas supposedly cleared of civilians where entire families remained.

“Throughout the Operation, the IDF fired thousands of imprecise artillery shells into residential neighborhoods.”

Soldiers were ordered to carry out “mass destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes.”

“Many residential homes were shelled, from the ground and from the air, in order to ‘demonstrate presence in the area,’ or even as an act of punishment.”

Breaking the Silence director Yuli Novak said the following:

“From the testimonies given by the officers and soldiers, a troubling picture arises of a policy of indiscriminate fire that led to the deaths of innocent civilians.”

“We learn from the testimonies that there is a broad ethical failure in the IDF’s rules of engagement, and that this failure comes from the top of the chain of command, and is not merely the result of ‘rotten apples.’ ”

“As officers and soldiers, we know that internal military investigations scapegoat simple soldiers rather than focusing on policy.”

“The public must know what missions its sons are being sent to carry out, and according to which norms the IDF acts in its name.”

“We call for the establishment of an investigative committee external to the IDF, which will investigate the policy behind the rules of engagement given during ‘Protective Edge,’ and the norms and values that stand at the base of this policy.”

Soldier testimonies best explain Israel’s lawless contempt for Palestinian lives and welfare.

An armored corps first sergeant said in part:

“(B)efore entering Gaza, the commander...said ‘(w)e do not take risks. We do not spare ammo (including in civilian neighborhoods). We unload. We use as much as possible.’ ”

A Givati Brigade lieutenant said:

“The motto guiding lots of people was: ‘Let’s show them.’ It was evident that that was a starting point.”

"Lots of guys who did their reserve duty with me don't have much pity towards (Arabs). The only thing that drives them is to look after their soldiers, and the mission. They are driven towards an IDF victory, at any price. And they sleep just fine at night."

"They are totally at peace with that. These aren't people who spend their days looking for things to kill. By no means. But they aren't afraid to kill, either."

"They don't see it as something bad. The power-trip element is also at play, it's all kinds of things."

"I think that a lot can be learned from Operation Protective Edge about the issue of dealing with civilians, and how that works."

"There were a lot of people there who really hate Arabs. Really, really hate Arabs. You could see the hate in their eyes."

A Gaza division lieutenant said in part:

"You could feel there was a radicalisation in the way the whole thing was conducted. The discourse was extremely right-wing."

"The military obviously has very clear enemies - the Arabs, Hamas."

"The discourse is racist. The discourse is nationalistic. The discourse is anti-leftist. It was an atmosphere that really, really scared me."

An infantry soldier said:

"The rules of engagement for soldiers advancing on the ground were: open fire, open fire everywhere, first thing when you go in."

"The assumption being that the moment we went (into Gaza), anyone who dared poke his head out was a terrorist."

A mechanized infantry first sergeant said:

"The rules of engagement are pretty identical: anything inside (Gaza) is a threat. The area has to be 'sterilised,' empty of people..."

"Shooting to kill. This is combat in an urban area, we're in a war zone. The saying was: 'There's no such thing there as a person who is uninvolved.' In that situation, anyone there is involved."

An armored corps first sergeant said:

"During training (they told us) we only enter houses 'wet,' with grenades, and the more of them the better - and (grenade) launchers if you can use them."

"You're going to 'open' a house? Don't take any chances, use your grenade launcher, utilise every effective tool you've got."

"Aim, fire and only then go in. You don't know if there is or isn't someone in

there. Go in 'wet' with grenades, with live fire. These were the orders for entering houses."

An infantry first sergeant said:

Orders were "(i)f you spot someone, shoot. Whether it posed a threat or not wasn't a question...If you shoot someone in Gaza it's cool, no big deal."

Commanders "made it clear that there were no uninvolved civilians."

Another first sergeant said "whoever you see (in Gaza), you kill." Asked who gave the order, he said the commander.

Soldiers spoke of "sterilizing" an area - killing everyone in sight. Just open fire, they were told.

Official Israeli policy was kill everyone. All Gazans are considered enemies. Law Professor Phillipe Sands called soldier testimonies "troubling insights into (Israeli) intention and method."

"(T)hey cannot be ignored or brushed aside, coming as they do from individuals with firsthand experience. The rule of law requires proper investigation and inquiry."

Top Israeli government and military officials claiming they took proper care to safeguard civilian lives were lying.

Official Israeli policy considers noncombatant civilians legitimate targets - including women and young children.

Everyone in Gaza is considered a terrorist. The Big Lie is drummed into the minds of recruits - brainwashing them to believe mass murder is the right thing to do.

According to Israeli human rights lawyer/Breaking the Silence advisor Michael Sfard:

"One of the main threads in the testimonies is the presumption that despite the fact that the battle was being waged in urban area - and one of most densely populated in the world - no civilians would be in the areas they entered."

Anyone there was considered fair game to kill. Rules of engagement allowed everything regardless of fundamental international law.

Official Spirit of the IDF code of ethics states "soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property."

Dozens of soldier testimonies show it's duplicitous rhetoric - meaningless.

In combat, anything goes is official Israeli policy - including indiscriminately mass murdering noncombatant civilians. Accountability remains nowhere in sight.

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