

Haredim Orthodox Jews Oppose State of Israel Militarism: Is There a Civil War Brewing in Israel?

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The state of Israel arrested an ultra-Orthodox man of the Haredim community for refusing a mandate to enlist in the Israeli-Defense Forces (IDF). The move by the Israeli government sparked protests across the nation demanding his release from a military prison. The Times of Israel reported:

In Jerusalem, hundreds of ultra-Orthodox demonstrators clashed with police forces on the light-rail suspension bridge near the entrance to the city. According to police, several protesters attempted to break through the police security buffer and throw bottles and firecrackers at security personnel and passersby. Seven demonstrators were arrested, police said. A number of main roads in the capital were blocked as a result of the protests, causing heavy traffic throughout the city

The report claims that the demonstrations “were largely organized by a radical Lithuanian Haredi group known as “the Jerusalem branch,” Ynet reported.” The Haredi also wanted “the government to reinstate payments to religious seminaries which were frozen earlier this week by Finance Minister Yair Lapid.” Protest took place in Ashdod, Bnei Brak and Beit Shemesh among other areas. One of the organizers of the nation-wide protests is Rabbi David Zicherman who called for “civil disobedience” and to “stop paying taxes”.

He said “You are pushing us into a corner,” he said of the government. “We will start a war with the State of Israel, and it will burn like wildfire. We, Holocaust survivors, are now encountering a spiritual Holocaust.” and that “They will fail in their attempt to lead us to annihilation,” he warned. “We shall not compromise nor negotiate.” The report also said that state payments were cancelled by Yair Lapid because religious seminaries are “attended by draft dodgers” and that “a High Court ruling which determined that the state should stop making payments to seminaries as part of an ongoing effort to draft ultra-Orthodox men into national service.”

Criminal penalties are currently being considered. “Earlier in the day media reports claimed that four senior members of the committee, representing the Jewish Home, Hatnua, and Labor parties, had secretly reached an agreement on the nature of criminal charges that would be brought against ultra-Orthodox men who try to dodge the draft.”

The State of Israel drafts both Israeli men and women who turn 18 years old to enlist in the military or volunteer for national service. Since July 2012, the Tal Law came into effect “under which the exemptions were granted, was declared unconstitutional. The dissolution of the law has forced parliamentarians to draw up new legislation that would conscript ultra-Orthodox and Israeli-Arab men into the military.”

The Times of Israel says that the Haredi “have been pushing back hard against enlistment in the army, which they fear will make it harder for their followers to keep a strict interpretation of Jewish law and will cause spiritually perilous mixing with the secular population.” In 2012, an online website called www.failedmessiah.typepad.com published a story called ‘Haredi Rabbinic Leaders To Join Satmar’s Worldwide Anti-Israel Protests’ on Israel’s decision to draft Haredi Yeshiva students:

More than 80 top haredi rabbinic leaders from the Hasidic Agudath Israel Party and the non-Hasidic Degel HaTorah Party met separately yesterday in emergency sessions to discuss what they call the crisis of the Israeli government’s decision, forced by the High Court of Justice, to draft haredi yeshiva students.

Although the hasidic rebbes met in Jerusalem and the non-hasidic gedolim met in Bnei Brak, the two groups – which run as one party, United Torah Judaism, in national elections – issued one united statement after the meetings: “The government does not have the right to force haredi yeshiva students [of any age] to serve in the IDF”

The rabbis agreed to publicize worldwide this message and the alleged oppression of Haredim by the Government of Israel. To that end, several hasidic rebbes usually hostile to Satmar have decided to travel abroad to the US and other countries to participate in anti-Israel demonstrations being organized by Satmar’s two rebbes and by affiliated groups there. Satmar is vehemently anti-Zionist and has for decades be fighting with Belz, Ger (Gur) and other hasidic groups that have made some accommodation with the State of Israel.

Before the Israel became a state for the Jewish people, the Haredim were in opposition to Zionism (a political movement). The majority of the Haredim community opposes the state of Israel for religious and political reasons. The Haredi religion teaches that the Jewish people will not settle in Israel by enforcing violence against the indigenous population and will not engage in any war with other nations in the Middle East or in the world and behalf of the Zionist state. The Haredim opposes Israel’s ethnic cleaning of the Palestinians and other Jewish settlers’ expansionist policies regarding Palestinian land.

The Haredim say that Israel’s militaristic nature has transformed the Jewish character of spirituality into a warlike state. The Haredim has been facing a number of issues including discrimination and religious persecution by the Israeli government. There is also a rise of Haredim families living in poverty. Now with the arrest of a Yeshiva student from the Haredim community, police authorities will increase its harassment and arrests of those who refuse conscription into the Israeli army.

Israel is preparing for a major war involving Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon, and a possible strike in Syria with collaboration with the US military if the Assad government does not meet its deadline to remove its chemical weapons. Israel also has Iran in its future war plans that would involve a military strike if nuclear talks fail. That is why Israel needs all members of its society to enlist in the military. But the Haredim have moral values, those that are for a peaceful world, free from violence.

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