

Israel Defense Forces soldiers condemn destruction of Gaza

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As the bloodbath continued in Gaza last week, a member of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Eran Efrati, exposed on social media classified information concerning the tactics and targets of the devastating attacks on the Palestinian people who are trapped in the war zone. He explicitly stated that his superiors encouraged IDF soldiers to take revenge on Palestinian civilians for their fallen comrades.

Efrati, a company sergeant, posted to his Facebook page on Tuesday, July 29 that Palestinian civilians killed during the Shuja'iyya massacre of July 20 were deliberately targeted in order to "punish" the population for the killing of seven Israeli soldiers serving in the Golani Brigade by sniper fire.

"The official command that was handed down to the soldiers in Shujaiyya was to capture Palestinian homes as outposts," Efrati wrote. "From these posts, the soldiers drew an imaginary red line, and amongst themselves decided to shoot to death anyone who crosses it. Anyone crossing the line was defined as a threat to their outposts, and was thus deemed a legitimate target."

Efrati, who has previously investigated similar attacks on Palestinians, continued, explaining that "the unofficial reason was to enable the soldiers to take out their frustrations and pain at losing their fellow soldiers on the Palestinian refugees in the neighborhood. Under the pretext of the so-called 'security threat,' soldiers were directed to carry out a pre-planned attack of revenge on Palestinian civilians."

Efrati has also stated that illegal weapons are being used by the IDF in Gaza but has not identified what these weapons are.

Following the public posting of these claims, Erati was detained, arrested, and interrogated for his posts to social media. Afterward, Erati discovered that his

Facebook and email accounts had been blocked through the censorship of his Internet Service Provider. He has also received threats of death should he decide to continue revealing information about the IDF and its operation in Gaza.

Despite threats to his life, Efrati has not remained silent. He has explained he will continue to find ways to divulge information to the world concerning Israeli war crimes.

Richard Silverstein, the creator of a political blog that exposes "excesses" of the Israeli national security state, has told reporters the revelations of Efrati can be compared to the massacre of My Lai. Referencing the Shuja'iyya massacre, some of which has been captured on video, he explains, "the man in green murdered in cold blood in the YouTube video wasn't killed by a lone gunman operating on his own. His murder was approved as an act of vengeance on all of Gaza. Let's remember that 120 Palestinians died that night in Shejaia. This was no accident. They weren't collateral damage. They were the targets."

News of the intentional targeting of civilians by the IDF has also come from the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, which published a statement on July 18 reporting that during one particular ground invasion, "The tanks, which serve as the heart of the assault force, received an order to open fire at anything that moved."

Efrati is not the only Israeli soldier to defy his superiors. Sahar Vardi, a member of the organization New Profile has told news reporters that more than 100 Israelis have contacted her network seeking to avoid serving in the current operation in Gaza.

"We don't see a lot of people that want to publicly refuse this war at the moment," Vardi said. "But war radicalizes people, and they begin to see the occupation

[in the West Bank] in a new light.”

In Israel, mandatory military conscription is required for all citizens upon reaching the age of 18 for two to three years, after which they are required to remain ready to serve when called up until the age of 45.

One soldier, 1st Sgt. A., who prefers to remain anonymous, refused to take part in the current operation in Gaza until he was jailed for disobeying orders. Previously, he had been jailed for two or three days for refusing to serve a round of reserve duty in the West Bank. This time, his punishment was more severe.

A. explained, “Many Tel Aviv-type people that preferred partying over fighting in Gaza showed up to the base a week late, and were also put in jail. But they were given three or four days. I was given 18 because my commander wanted to make an example out of me for refusing the premise of this war.”

Although he may go back to jail at any moment for this same offense, he is determined to maintain his position. “I see no alternative,” he said. “I can’t be a part of this cycle of blood and gore, where every two or three years we go into Gaza. I either refuse or I participate. There is no in-between.”

On July 23, the *Washington Post* published a statement submitted by a group of 50 Israelis who refuse to be part of the IDF reserves. According to the statement, their disdain for the current military operation is only part of the reason for their refusal.

“To us, the current military operation and the way militarization affects Israeli society are inseparable,” they declared. “In Israel, war is not merely politics by other means—it replaces politics. Israel is no longer able to think about a solution to a political conflict except in terms of physical might; no wonder it is prone to never-ending cycles of mortal violence. And when the cannons fire, no criticism may be heard.”



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