

# Israeli military refuser sentenced to prison after exposing lies behind Gaza genocide

Omri Wolfe

29 December 2023

Tal Mitnick, an 18-year-old conscript to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), refused to serve and was sentenced to a 30-day prison term. Mitnick is one of hundreds of Israeli teenagers who have refused military enlistment this year to protest the Palestinian occupation. His refusal became a lightning rod in Israeli politics because of his sentence and the sharply worded political statement he published on social media, tearing down the arguments of the defenders of genocide.

Fortress Israel always requires an endless stream of fresh recruits, guaranteed through Israel's conscription laws, which mandate military service for both men and women, including reserve duty until age 40 or beyond.

Israel is a garrison state. Its navy strictly controls the shared coastline with the Gaza Strip; pilots crisscross the skies to carpet bomb the Palestinians or evade air defenses en route to Iran; drone pilots operate the densest reconnaissance network in the world; intelligence agents capture and process millions of signals a day; spies conduct assassinations abroad; and engineers maintain a massive nuclear arsenal, the Iron Dome missile shield, and sophisticated cyber operations. The West Bank is crowded with young foot soldiers guarding illegal settlements, patrolling endless checkpoints, and meting out military justice against an occupied population.

Military service functions as a pipeline to private industry, and placement in competitive military units is a prerequisite to specialized careers. The question, "In what unit did you serve?" is the Israeli equivalent of "How's the weather?" and a non-answer may invite condemnation.

Mitnick's decision to refuse would therefore be a courageous act of defiance at any time. Amid the xenophobic anti-Palestinian hysteria whipped up to

justify genocide in Gaza, it assumes even greater significance. Despite widespread enlistment exemptions granted for religious, health, and increasingly mental health reasons, the Zionist state views Mitnick's refusal under conscientious objector status as treasonous and, consequently, is making an example of him.

While first-time refusal often carries a sentence of 7-10 days, Mitnick has been sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment, after which he will again be called up, again refuse, and face further punishments to act as a deterrent to others contemplating similar protests against the war crimes of the Israeli state.

Mitnick published a statement on Twitter/X, stating, "Violence cannot solve the situation, neither by Hamas, nor by Israel. There is no military solution to a political problem." He lays out the political problem in clear and powerful language: "Before the war, the army guarded the settlements, maintained the murderous siege on the Gaza Strip, and upheld the status quo of apartheid and Jewish supremacy in the land between the Jordan [river] and the [Mediterranean] Sea."

Israel is an apartheid state, propped up through the "deepening of oppression, spreading of hatred, and the expansion of fascistic political persecution within Israel," in Mitnick's words.

He takes aim at fascistic arguments for collective punishment, noting recent polling within Gaza that found only 26 percent support for Hamas before October 7 and criticizing "the criminal lie that 'there are no innocent civilians in Gaza.'"

Mitnick repeatedly draws parallels between Hamas and the Israeli military state, criticizing their "corrupt interests" and use of "violence and war... to increase support for the government and silence criticism." He is disgusted by the "shoot first" mandate of the IDF

that led to the murder of three Israeli hostages shot to death while “waving a white flag shouting in Hebrew.” He recoils at the thought of how many innocent Palestinians have been mowed down without pretext during this genocide. Of the more than 21,000 Gazans officially murdered—no doubt a severe undercount—over 70 percent are women and children.

Israeli officials use genocidal language freely and have the full backing of the US for their indiscriminate killing spree.

Mitnick also alludes to an intentional standdown of Israeli forces around Gaza in the days before the invasion that led to the “abandon[ment of] the residents of the south and the entire country.” This conspiracy and the murder of escaped hostages have rocked Israeli society, leading to calls for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s ouster for incompetence and treason.

Mitnick insists, “It is important to distinguish between the ordinary people and the generals and self serving people who sit at the head of the system.” He believes that for both Israelis and Palestinians, “the vast majority of people want to live a good and safe life, have a place for their children to play after school, and to make ends meet at the end of the month.”

According to Mitnick, “In order to change, an alternative must be put in place, an alternative to Hamas, and an alternative to the militaristic society in which we live.”

The call for a radical transformation of society is gaining broad support worldwide, especially among young people, and reflects an objective change in social conditions. However, as brave as Mitnick and other “refuseniks” are, it is insufficient to protest the politicians and moneyed interests hellbent on war in the hopes of “pressuring” them to work against their interests. The only hope for putting an end to the imperialist exploitation that has led to this 75-year conflict is to unify the mass protest movement that has erupted all over the world and orient it towards the working class, the only revolutionary force capable of overturning the capitalist system that is the root cause of war.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit: