

Israeli military refuser vows to continue opposition to “war of revenge” despite new orders to report

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In interviews conducted after he was released from military prison this week after serving a 30-day prison sentence, 18-year-old Israeli Tal Mitnick has vowed to continue his opposition to mandatory military service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Prior to reporting to prison last month, Mitnick published a courageous statement on Twitter/X saying in part, “Violence cannot solve the situation, neither by Hamas, nor by Israel. There is no military solution to a political problem.”

Since its bloody creation over 75 years ago, Israel has served as a Middle Eastern outpost for US imperialism. Without a constant source of fresh conscripts, the IDF would collapse. In order to forestall this eventuality, the government has instituted a policy of mandatory service which requires all Israeli youth, once they turn 18, to register with the military. Women are expected to serve two years, while men are obligated for two years and eight months.

Mitnick is part of the Mesarvot network, which describes itself as a “network of refusniks fighting for a better future for everyone” who refuse “to serve the occupation.”

In his interview with the *Guardian*’s Owen Jones following his release from prison, Mitnick noted that “Israeli society is very militarized” and that the mandatory service bleeds into “civilian society ... a lot of society is centralized around the army.

“And coming out against the mandatory service can be scary in Israeli society, especially today after October 7.

“I think I’m the only public conscientious objector,” he

told Jones, but that “there are a lot of people who object to mandatory service and to the reserves. They get exemptions in different ways, but there are other people... I am not the only one.”

While there have been other Israelis who have refused to join the IDF, since October 7 Mitnick is the first public Israeli conscientious objector. His refusal to join the IDF, coupled with his courageous public statements against the war, reflect a growing anti-war movement among youth and the working class throughout the world.

Increasingly, more Israeli youth are coming out against the war. In a January 15 interview with AFP, 18-year-old Sofia Orr talked about her coming refusal to join the IDF. “My conscience does not allow me to enlist,” she told AFP, adding that it was not possible to defeat the ideology underlying the Palestinian resistance through military means, “We are fighting fire with fire.”

Speaking to Amy Goodman with *Democracy Now!* Mitnick pledged to continue his opposition to being conscripted into the IDF. This is despite the fact he has been ordered to report again on Monday and will likely face another prison sentence.

Mitnick said that while his time in prison was not pleasant, it was also not “the worst experience imaginable, it’s not the experience Palestinian prisoners are being held under, in the West Bank, or inside Israel.”

In his interviews he said that there were probably 200 other people inside the prison with him and that while many did not agree with his opposition against the war and for peaceful co-existence with Palestinians, “the more they got to know me ... they realized the things I am

saying are not radical or crazy.”

Mitnick explained that many of the other prisoners were “deserters,” who did not report to the army for “socioeconomic reasons.”

He said, “They need to work to help their family, or take care of their baby brothers, when their mother has to go to work.” Mitnick said some of the soldiers he was talking to in prison were “in Gaza a couple of weeks ago.”

Mitnick said it was “heartbreaking” hearing stories from prisoners, who had deserted for only a few months, yet were receiving half-year prison sentences.

“When they come back and turn themselves in,” Mitnick told Goodman, “we are seeing a very heavy sentencing of those deserters as part of the fascist persecution.

“People that went to work for three months to feed their family are being sentenced to a half year in military prison.”

“Israeli society” he added, was being torn apart by two separate ideas, one fighting for the elimination of Gaza, and all Arabs in the West Bank, and those, Israeli and Arab, fighting for a “more just and better future.”

Asked by Jones to comment on videos of IDF soldiers committing war crimes, Mitnick said he saw the videos too, “and they sadden me. It really shows how systems can corrupt humans.”

Pointing to genocidal statements made by leading Israeli politicians, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mitnick said, “I think with all this talk about how ‘there are no civilians’ and ‘no one is innocent’ is bringing this the huge death toll we are seeing. It is also hitting back against Israeli society because we are seeing a huge amount of soldiers dying from IDF fire, and hostages dying from IDF fire.”

“To stop the massacre of the Palestinian people and also to stop more and more pain to Israeli families, we need to stop with this mentality,” he added.

Speaking more forcefully and clearly than any Ivy League university president in the US, Mitnick discussed the phrase “from the river to the sea” with Goodman. He noted that when many Palestinians use it, “it does not

mean a genocide of Jews; it means freedom for all Palestinians from the river to the sea.

“When Benjamin Netanyahu uses this term, it does not mean ‘freedom for all from the river to the sea.’ It means oppression of Palestinians, and it means Jewish supremacy from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea.”

Mitnick concluded his interview by voicing his support for protests against the war, “all around the world.”

These protests must not be orientated to government officials currently overseeing the genocide that has been ongoing for over 107 days. The only social force capable of putting a stop to the war and re-organizing global society to serve the interests of humanity, not the imperialist warmongers, is the international working class organizing against the capitalist system, the source of war and fascism.

On her Instagram last week, Palestinian filmmaker and by necessity, war journalist, Bisan Owda put out the call for a “Global strike week” for a ceasefire from January 21–28.

While dodging Israeli bombardment and scavenging for food and clean water, Bisan has delivered harrowing on-the-ground updates from Gaza throughout the military campaign. In her Instagram post calling for a general strike to stop the war, Bisan said the injustice in Gaza is a “war against humanity and the world, not just against Gaza!

“We civilians across the world do not have the tools of war! We do not thirst for killing and death! We only have our throats in the demonstrations and our boycott of the economic movement in our countries, especially those that support the genocide committed by Israel in Gaza!”

Bisan called on workers to “Strike as much as you can and protest ... for a whole week or until this madness ends!”



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