

# Video leak by IDF's chief lawyer of gang rape of Palestinian sparks right-wing defence of torturers

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The arrest and detention of Maj. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) top lawyer, has sparked a massive scandal after she revealed that it was she who leaked the infamous video in August 2024 of soldiers raping a blindfolded Palestinian detainee.

The leak of the CCTV footage followed shortly after prosecutors raided the Sde Teiman military detention centre, which is synonymous with torture and abuse, and detained 11 soldiers for interrogation about a violent assault on a Palestinian from Gaza, including anal rape. The Palestinian victim was hospitalised with injuries including broken ribs, a punctured lung and rectal damage, leading Tomer-Yerushalmi to launch a rare investigation.

The detention of the prison guards prompted a far-right mob of fascist thugs to gather outside Sde Teiman calling for the investigation to be dropped. Some of the protesters, including a minister and two members of the Knesset, broke into the base. Justice Minister Yariv Levin said he was “shocked to see harsh pictures of soldiers being arrested”, adding that it was “impossible to accept”, while Energy Minister Eli Cohen said, “We should all embrace them and salute them, certainly not interrogate them and humiliate them.” The fascist National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir called for an end to “light treatment of terrorists”, adding “Soldiers need to have our full support.”

Tomer-Yerushalmi leaked the video after the protests, saying in her resignation letter that it was “an attempt to debunk false propaganda against army law enforcement bodies”. Days later, five soldiers were charged with aggravated abuse and causing serious bodily harm. However, they have not been named and are currently not in custody or subject to any legal restrictions.

Since then, under intense pressure from the politicians and the media, Tomer-Yerushalmi has refused to investigate other cases of possible war crimes by the Israeli military. Only one Israeli soldier has been convicted for assaulting Palestinians in detention during the war, despite detailed

reports of widespread torture and abuse in Israel's prisons, with at least 80 deaths of Palestinians in captivity due to systematic torture, medical neglect and inhumane conditions.

She has brought no prosecutions against soldiers for killing civilians in Gaza, even after high-profile attacks that have prompted international outrage and were clearly in breach of international humanitarian law, including the killing of hundreds of medical and health care workers, at least 248 journalists and reporters, and 562 aid workers, according to the UN Human Rights Office, not to mention the tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians.

The very limited investigations into the barbaric conditions at IDF and Israel Prison Service facilities since the start of the war have not culminated in any reports. No disciplinary or criminal measures have been taken against those involved despite damning evidence from prisoners and reports issued by international organizations.

One army reservist serving at Sde Teiman told *Ha'aretz* last May, “Sde Teiman, as anyone who has been there knows, is a sadistic torture camp. Detainees entered it alive and left in bags”.

He said that the investigation was being conducted “as if all the hell we created there comes down to the question of whether or not an object was inserted into a prisoner's buttocks. But I saw this hell... I saw people enter this facility with war injuries and then starve for weeks without any medical treatment. I saw them peeing and shitting on themselves because they weren't allowed to go to the bathroom. Many of them weren't Nukhba [Hamas] fighters, just Gazans who were detained for questioning and released to their homes after severe abuse, when it turned out they were innocent. It's no wonder people died there. The wonder is that people survived.”

Sde Teiman is one of the very few cases of abuse by Israeli security forces to go through the courts. Five of the suspected rapists have been charged, not with rape but with

the lesser crimes of “aggravated abuse” and “causing aggravated injury” and their case is still ongoing amid heavy criticisms of the authorities for bringing it at all.

Tomer-Yerushalmi explained in her resignation letter, two days before her arrest, that she had authorised the publication of the video to defuse attacks on military investigators and prosecutors working on the case to enable it to go ahead. In no small part, this was an attempt to protect Israeli soldiers from international prosecution and leave punishment to Israel’s sympathetic judiciary.

However, following Tomer-Yerushalmi’s admission that she leaked the video she faced such levels of abuse on social media that there were fears she had committed suicide. Even after she was found, the attacks continued, with far-right commentator Yinon Magal posting on X, “We can proceed with the lynching” and adding a winking emoji. Protesters gathered outside her house, shouting slogans such as “We will give you no peace”.

Tomer-Yerushalmi, whose job it is to ensure that the army follows the law, has been arrested on suspicion of fraud and breach of trust, abuse of office, obstruction of justice, and disclosure of official information by a public servant, with the right-wing media and politicians accusing her of “breach of loyalty,” “breach of trust,” “dereliction of duty,” and “disrupting investigative operations”.

In the state ruled by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s gang of criminals and fascists that is using “the most moral army in the world” to carry out the genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in Gaza, the torture and abuse of detainees is routine, as B’Tselem’s report *Welcome to Hell* indicated. The Israeli rights organization described the horrific abuse of detainees in the Sde Teiman detention camp as the tip of the iceberg. Conditions were not unlike those of Abu Ghraib; the infamous jail used by the US to torture and abuse Iraqis.

Despite calls to shut it down, Israel’s High Court refused to close Sde Teiman in September 2024. Instead, the public uproar centres on the fact that the abuse was made public in the first place and by no less a person than Israel’s Chief Military Advocate.

Netanyahu has portrayed Tomer-Yerushalmi’s action as an attack on the nation, declaring “The incident in Sde Teiman caused immense damage to the image of the state of Israel and the IDF”, adding, “This is perhaps the most severe public relations attack that the state of Israel has experienced since its establishment”.

Defence Minister Israel Katz called the case a “blood libel” and threatened, “Anyone who falsely spreads blood libels against IDF soldiers and prefers the welfare of the Nukhba [the commando forces of Hamas’ military wing that carried out the October 7 attack] terrorists over theirs is not

worthy of wearing the IDF uniform and belongs in prison.”

The Palestinian detainee who was raped by the reservists in Sde Teiman was a civilian, not a Hamas fighter as the Israeli authorities had falsely claimed. According to leaked military documents, the victim was never charged with any crime and was among 1,700 Gaza detainees held without charge who were then freed in the prisoner exchange deal agreed at Sharm el-Sheikh on 13 October.

Amichai Eliyahu, the Heritage Minister from Jewish power who called for Gaza to be nuked weeks after the start of the war, demanded Guy Peleg, the Channel 12 TV reporter who broadcast the video, be imprisoned. Beitar soccer fans hoisted a banner depicting Tomer-Yerushalmi in a Hamas uniform, echoing the incitement that preceded the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995.

Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said the Military Chief Advocate had “collaborated in leaks with blood libels against the state of Israel”. The soldiers facing charges held a news conference wearing balaclavas, demanding compensation for “damage to their image” and the dropping of all charges.

Tomer-Yerushalmi’s resignation letter did not mention another allegation now under criminal investigation—that senior figures in the military prosecution department sought to conceal the source of the leak and may have misled Supreme Court justices in the process. This is now fuelling the drive by right-wing news outlet Channel 14 for a criminal probe against former IDF leaders and could trigger a wave of suspensions and resignations within the military’s legal hierarchy.

Netanyahu and his acolytes have seized on the scandal to renew their attacks on the judicial system, including calling for the firing of Gali Baharav-Miara, the Attorney-General, legislation to neuter its office, the closure of Army Radio, and to make the death penalty mandatory for anyone convicted of killing an Israeli citizen with a nationalistic or racist motive.

World leaders and the corporate media have largely remained silent about Israel’s crimes at Sde Teiman, in Gaza and the West Bank because Israel enjoys the support of all the imperialist powers now themselves slashing democratic rights and freedom of speech to suppress all opposition to their domestic and foreign policies.



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