

IDF Ordered Hannibal Directive on October 7 to Prevent Hamas Taking Soldiers Captive

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'There was crazy hysteria, and decisions started being made without verified information': Documents and testimonies obtained by Haaretz reveal the Hannibal operational order, which directs the use of force to prevent soldiers being taken into captivity, was employed at three army facilities infiltrated by Hamas, potentially endangering civilians as well

Gaza Division operations and airstrikes in the first hours of October 7 were based on limited information. The first long moments after the Hamas attack was launched were chaotic. Reports were coming in, with their significance not always clear. When their meaning was understood, it was realized that something horrific had taken place.

Communication networks could not keep up with the flow of information, as was the case for soldiers sending these reports. However, the message conveyed at 11:22 A.M. across the Gaza Division network was understood by everyone.

"Not a single vehicle can return to Gaza" was the order.

At this point, the IDF was not aware of the extent of kidnapping along the Gaza border, but it did know that many people were involved. Thus, it was entirely clear what that message meant, and what the fate of some of the kidnapped people would be.

This was not the first order given by the division with the intent of foiling kidnapping even at the expense of the lives of the kidnapped, a procedure known in the army as the ["Hannibal procedure."](#)

Documents obtained by Haaretz, as well as testimonies of soldiers, mid-level and senior IDF

officers, reveal a host of orders and procedures laid down by the Gaza Division, Southern Command and the IDF General Staff up to the afternoon hours of that day, showing how widespread this procedure was, from the first hours following the attack and at various points along the border.

Haaretz does not know whether or how many civilians and soldiers were hit due to these procedures, but the cumulative data indicates that many of the kidnapped people were at risk, exposed to Israeli gunfire, even if they were not the target.

At 6:43 A.M., at which time rocket barrages were launched at Israel and thousands of Hamas operatives were attacking army strongholds and the division's observation and communications capabilities, the division's commander [Brig. Gen. Avi Rosenfeld](#) declared that "the Philistines have invaded."

This is the procedure when an enemy invades Israeli territory, upon which a division commander can assume extraordinary authority, including the employment of heavy fire inside Israeli territory, in order to block an enemy raid.

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