

Israeli Persecution of Palestinians Unrelated to Defense - Soldiers, Intelligence Officers Speak

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Global Research, September 16, 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Claims otherwise are false. A [previous article](#) explained. It said 43 IDF reservists and former army intelligence members published an open letter.

They addressed Netanyahu and top military officials. They denounced Israeli high crimes against peace. They condemned longstanding collective punishment.

They henceforth refuse to serve. They want no part of Israel's killing machine. They kept their identities secret to avoid recrimination. One of the letter signatories said separately:

"Some of (the things Israel's 8200 intelligence unit do) are supposed to protect us from violence, but some of it is just destroying Palestinian society, preventing them from improving their lives in any way."

"We're not saying this because we read it in some newspapers or blogs, but because that's what we had to do in the framework of our roles."

Another signatory said "(a)fter our service, we started seeing a more complex picture of a nondemocratic, oppressive regime that controls the lives of millions of people."

"There are certain things that we were asked to do that we feel do not deserve the title of self-defense."

"Some of the things that we did are immoral, and are against the things we believe in, and we're not willing to do these things anymore."

The letter stressed oppressive militarized rule for 47 years. Israel denies Palestinians fundamental rights.

It "takes away large portions of land in order to settle Jews who are subject to a different system of laws, justice and enforcement."

"This reality is not the inevitable result of the state's efforts to defend itself, but rather it is the result of choice."

"Settlement expansion has nothing to do with self defense, and the same goes for the limitations on construction and development, economic exploitation of West Bank lands, collective punishment of the residents of Gaza and the route of the separation fence."

London's [Guardian](#) headlined " 'Any Palestinian is exposed to monitoring by the Israeli Big Brother.' "

"Testimonies from people who worked in the Israeli Intelligence Corp tell of a system where there are no boundaries."

Comments made were damning. They included saying:

"Our work has serious impact on the live of many people."

"(O)ur database include(s) not only security-related intelligence but also personal and political information."

"(T)here is no respect for Palestinian privacy."

"I realized that the job I had done was that of the oppressor."

"After my discharge...I felt solidarity with the victims, with the oppressed people who were denied such basic rights as I take for granted to be mine."

"The attitude was 'Why not? We can, so let's do it.' "

"I assumed a role in which people are called "targets", and those people who really interest us are in no sense terrorists, but rather generally norma(l) people..."

"We take advantage of the impact we have on their lives."

"Sometimes it involves truly harming a person's life, or their soul...It can really screw up their lives. It made me feel omnipotent."

"If anyone interests us, we'd collect information on his or her economic situation and mental state."

"Then we would plan how we can perform an operation around this individual, in order to turn them into a collaborator or something of the sort."

"(W)hat I recall most...are the assassination missions."

"My job (wasn't) to ask questions. I was told what was needed and that's what I did."

"We knew the detailed medical conditions of some of our targets, and our goals developed around them."

"(W)e knew exactly who was cheating on their wife, with whom, and how often."

"All Palestinians are exposed to non-stop monitoring without any legal protection."

"There is no procedure in place to determine whether the violation of the individual's rights is necessarily justifiable."

"The notion of rights for Palestinians does not exist at all. Not even as an idea to be disregarded."

“Any Palestinian may be targeted and may suffer from sanctions such as the denial of permits, harassment, extortion, or even direct physical injury.”

“If you’re homosexual and know someone who knows a wanted person – and we need to know about it – Israel will make your life miserable.”

“If you need emergency medical treatment in Israel, the West Bank or abroad...Israel will allow you to die before we let you leave for treatment without giving information on your wanted cousin.”

“Any Palestinian is exposed to non-stop monitoring by the Israeli Big Brother, without legal protection, and with no way of knowing when they too would become an objective – targeted for harassment, extortion, or physical injury.”

“The fact that people (are) innocent (is) not at all relevant.”

“The Israeli public thinks that intelligence work is only against terrorism, but a significant part of our objectives are innocent people, not at all connected to any military activity.”

“Something I had a really hard time with was that all kinds of personal data was stored in the unit, such that could be used to extort/blackmail the person and turn them into a collaborator.”

“At the base we were told that if we find out some ‘juicy’ detail about them, that it’s important to document it.”

“Examples of this were a difficult financial situation, sexual preferences, a person’s chronic illness or that of a relative, and necessary medical treatment.”

Netanyahu said “Refusal to serve of any kind should be condemned.” He lied adding:

“The political use that was made recently, including the airing of false accusations, is unacceptable.” The Israeli Defense Forces, including all of its units, is the most moral army in the world.”

Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon compounded Netanyahu’s Big Lie, saying:

Accusations made are a “vile and reprehensible attempt to aid the lies and delegitimization spread around the world against Israel and its soldiers, without any basis.”

Intelligence and Strategic Affairs Minister Yuval Steintz demanded “punishment (for) an act of subversion.”

Labor party head/former 8200 Unit major Issac Herzog denounced what he called “conscientious objectors,” adding:

“This unit and its activities are essential not just in time of war, but especially in times of peace.”

IDF Chief of General Staff Benny Gantz said reservists voicing criticism no longer will contribute to intelligence gathering on Palestinian society.

According to former military intelligence chief Shlomo Gazit, accusations may cause “serious damage” to Unit 8200’s work.

He advised against severe reprisals. Doing so will publicize accusations made.

“The sooner we stop dealing with this letter, the better,” he said.

IDF spokesman Lt. Col. Peter Lerner said soldier testimonies would be examined. “Ramifications” for refusing to serve include possible criminal prosecution.

In response to accusations made, he lied saying:

“Israel’s intelligence Unit 8200 (places) special emphasis...on the morality and ethics and proper procedures and what we respect”

“We are facing a ruthless enemy that will carry out devastating attacks.”

“As such, our intelligence needs to be, I would say, top of its professional capabilities in order to intercept that suicide bomber, in order to forewarn Israel when there is an attack that’s going to happen, to be able to get to them before they perform their bad deeds.”

Fact check:

Israel has no “ruthless enemy.” Lerner lied claiming otherwise.

Millions of Palestinians are persecuted for not being Jews. For praying to the wrong God.

For wanting to live free on their own land in their own country. For wanting their fundamental human and civil rights respected.

For wanting to live free from fear. For wanting militarized occupation to end.

For wanting long denied self-determination within June 1967 borders. For wanting control of their own lives and resources.

For wanting diaspora Palestinians being able to return. For wanting East Jerusalem as their exclusive capital.

For wanting long denied justice.

In September 2003, [27 Israeli pilots](#) went public on Rosh Hashanah eve. They addressed a letter to Israel’s Air Force commander.

They’ll no longer participate in “targeted killings,” saying:

“We, Air Force pilots who were raised on the values of Zionism, sacrifice, and contributing to the state of Israel, have always served on the front lines, and were always willing to carry out any mission to defend and strengthen the state of Israel.

“We, veteran and active pilots alike, who have served and still serve the state of Israel for long weeks every year, are opposed to carrying out attack orders

that are illegal and immoral of the type the state of Israel has been conducting in the territories.”

“We, who were raised to love the state of Israel and contribute to the Zionist enterprise, refuse to take part in Air Force attacks on civilian population centers.”

“We, for whom the Israel Defense Forces and the Air Force are an inalienable part of ourselves, refuse to continue to harm innocent civilians.”

“These actions are illegal and immoral, and are a direct result of the ongoing occupation which is corrupting the Israeli society. Perpetuation of the occupation is fatally harming the security of the state of Israel and its moral strength.”

“We who serve as active pilots – fighters, leaders, and instructors of the next generation of pilots — hereby declare that we shall continue to serve in the Israel Defense Forces and the Air Force on every mission in defense of the State of Israel.”

In January 2002, [Haaretz](#) published a quarter-page letter from 52 Israeli soldiers and officers. They refused to serve in the Occupied Territories, saying:

“The price of occupation is the loss of the Israel Defense Forces’ semblance of humanity and the corruption of all of Israeli society.”

“We will no longer fight beyond the Green Line with the aim of dominating, expelling, starving and humiliating an entire people.”

They’ll no longer enforce collective punishment. They urged other IDF members to stand with them.

Eight months after the letter’s publication, 480 Israeli soldiers added their names to the original list.

In February 2002, The [New York Times](#) headlined “Protesting Tactics in the West Bank, Israeli Reservists Refuse to Serve,” saying:

“More than 100 Israeli Army reservists signed a statement published today saying they would refuse to continue serving in the West Bank and Gaza Strip because Israel’s policies there involved ‘dominating, expelling, starving and humiliating an entire people.’ “

Since the start of the second Intifada, “at least 400 Israelis, most reservists, have refused service in the Israeli-occupied territories, and in most cases they were quietly released from duty...”

About 40 got disciplinary hearings and jail for up to 28 days.

“(T)hey reported incidents during their service in which they said that soldiers had fired at Palestinians who did not endanger them, including stone-throwing boys as far as 100 yards away.”

IDF officials didn't dispute their accusations, said The Times.

According to one squad leader, "(w)e all have limits. You can be the best officer."

(S)uddenly you're required to do things that you can't be asked to do: to shoot at people, stop ambulances, destroy houses when no one knows who lives in them."

In November 2008, Electronic Intifada co-founder [Ali Abunimah](#) explained how Israel spies on US citizens, saying:

"AT&T and Verizon handed 'the bugging of their entire networks - carrying billions of American communications every day' to two companies founded in Israel."

Verint and Narus...are "superintrusive - conducting mass surveillance on both international and domestic communications 24/7..."

They sift "traffic at 'key Internet gateways' around the US. Virtually all US voice and data communications and much from the rest of the world can be remotely accessed by these companies in Israel."

James Bamford calls the Jewish state "the eavesdropping capital of the world."

"(T)he greatest potential beneficiaries of this marriage between the Israeli eavesdroppers and America's increasingly centralized telecom grid are Israel's intelligence agencies."

Information collected is used oppressively against Palestinians. It's done many ways.

It includes pre-dawn community raids, as well as other forms of harassment, intimidation, persecution and arrests.

Israel calls them "training exercises." Palestinians call them state terror.

Dozens of raids are conducted. Families are terrorized. They're not militants. They're not terrorists.

They threaten no one. They're nonviolent civilians. It doesn't matter. They victimized for being Palestinians.

According to human rights group Yesh Din's Emily Schaeffer:

"Yesh Din believes (Israel's) policy is a violation of basic norms of international humanitarian law, and we don't see any way the practice can be continued such that it wouldn't violate those norms."

Israel operates extrajudicially. International laws, norms and standards don't matter.

Palestinians are persecuted for not being Jews. Forty-seven years is enough.

Palestinians deserve better. They deserve long denied justice. It's high time they got it.

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Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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