



Israeli soldiers talk about the Occupied Territories

April 12, 2016

To: Chief of General Staff of the IDF, Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot
Email address: mapa@idf.gov.il

Re: Examining the impact of settlers on IDF soldiers in the West Bank

Esteemed Lt. Gen. Eizenkot,

Recently new details were revealed regarding the shooting incident in Hebron, in which an Israeli soldier shot a wounded Palestinian terrorist, killing him. Among the details revealed, was the deep involvement of some Hebron settlers in the occurrence itself, as well as the prior relationships that had developed between some of the soldiers and extremists among the local settler population.

As an organization of former soldiers who served in the occupied territories, which has carried out in-depth interviews of over 1,000 soldiers over the years, we are familiar with the close relations that exist between IDF soldiers and members of the, often quite extremist, settler community. We have previously warned you of the dangers and challenges that these relationships pose before the soldiers carrying out their duties (attached is a position paper). From the hundreds of testimonies that we have gathered on the relationship between IDF soldiers and settlers (attached is a sample compilation), it becomes clear that their relations and collaboration spreads out over a wide range of areas: Many military units are stationed near, or even within, settlements; soldiers are regularly hosted in the homes of settlers; various bodies representing the settlement movement enter IDF bases to present historical, political, and geographical reviews based on the “settler narrative”; settlers are integrated into significant operational activities – sometimes as the soldiers’ and officers’ guides in the field; and there is even collaboration in operational decision-making processes.

As the IDF Chief of General Staff you are responsible for the well being of IDF soldiers. As the individual entrusted to ensure the army’s appropriate ethical functioning and the security of the State of Israel, we request that you do not close your eyes in the face of the disturbing reality painted by both the occurrence in Hebron and the hundreds of testimonies that we have gathered for over 10 years.

Therefore, we request that you order an investigation into the nature of the impact of the close relations forged between settlers and IDF forces operating in the West Bank over the years, and how they affect, and sometimes interfere with, soldiers’ ability to carry out their missions.

Sincerely,

Yuli Novak
Executive Director of Breaking the Silence