

breaking the silence

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Israeli soldier testimonies 2000-2010

Prevention

## Intimidation of the Palestinian Population – "Prevention"

Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000, more than 1,000 Israelis and 6,000 Palestinians have been killed. The considerable escalation in violence between Palestinians and Israelis both in the Occupied Territories and within Israel prompted the Israeli security system to develop new, more aggressive methods of action, which were intended to oppress Palestinian opposition and prevent thousands of attempted attacks on Israeli civilians and soldiers on both sides of the Green Line.

This chapter addresses the offensive and proactive military actions of the IDF in the Occupied Territories during the past decade. Although Israeli security forces claim they are "preventing terror," the soldiers' testimonies compiled here reveal how broad the security forces' interpretation of the term "prevention" truly is: the term has become a code-word which signifies all offensive action in the Territories. The testimonies in this chapter demonstrate that a significant portion of the IDF's offensive actions are not intended to prevent a specific act of terrorism, but rather to punish, deter, or tighten control over the Palestinian population. "Prevention of terror" is the stamp of approval granted to any offensive IDF action in the Territories, obscuring the distinction between the use of force against terrorists and the use of force against civilians. In this way, the IDF is able to justify actions that intimidate and oppress the Palestinian population overall. The testimonies in this chapter also show the serious implications of the blurring of this distinction for the lives, dignity, and property of the Palestinians.

The military actions described in the present chapter include arrests, assassinations, occupation of homes, and others. The testimonies also reveal the principles

and considerations that guide decision-makers both in the field and at high levels of command. Even at the beginning of the Second Intifada, the IDF had already established the principle that would guide new methods of action against Palestinian opposition, known as “searing of consciousness”. It assumes that Palestinian resistance will fade once it is proven to Palestinians as a whole that opposition is useless. The testimonies in this chapter demonstrate that in practice, the principle of “searing of consciousness” translates to intimidation, instilling of fear, and indiscriminate punishment of the Palestinian population. In other words, the testimonies show that violence against and collective punishment of a civilian population can be justified by the principle of “searing of consciousness”, and are cornerstones of IDF strategy in the Territories (e.g. testimonies 1,2, and 3).

One of the methods of action most often identified with the IDF's efforts at “prevention” in the Territories is the policy of assassinations. The IDF has repeatedly claimed that assassinations are used as a last resort to protect against those who plan and carry out terrorist attacks. The soldiers' testimonies reveal that the military's actions in the last decade are not consistent with official statements made in the media and in the courts. More than once was a unit sent to carry out an assassination when other options were at its disposal, such as arresting the suspects (testimony 10). In addition, it becomes clear in this chapter that at least a portion of the assassinations are intended to revenge or punish, and not necessarily to prevent the materialization of a terrorist attack. One testimony describes the assassination of unarmed Palestinian police officers who were not suspected of acts of terror (testimony 55). According to

this testimony, the assassination was carried out as revenge for the murder of soldiers the day before at the hands of Palestinian militants who came from the same area. Other testimonies included here describe a policy of “paying the price”: missions whose goals are - to quote one of the commanders - “bring in the bodies.” (testimony 41).

Arrests are another principal expression of the efforts to “prevent terror” in the Territories. Over the course of the last decade, tens of thousands of Palestinians have been arrested in military operations conducted deep in Palestinian territory nearly every night. Soldiers’ testimonies reveal the methods for carrying out such arrests: In many cases, arrests were accompanied by abuse of bound detainees, who were beaten or degraded by IDF soldiers and commanders. The testimonies also reveal that arrests are used to accomplish a variety of aims, and in many cases, the reason for an arrest is unclear to those being arrested. For example, in many operations in which IDF forces invaded Palestinian cities and villages, all the men were arrested and gathered in a defined area, with no connection to any misdeeds and with no information on their intents, and were held, bound and blindfolded, for hours (e.g. testimony 24). Thus, under the guise of “prevention of terror”, mass arrests are used to instill fear in the Palestinian population and tighten Israeli military control.

Arrests are often accompanied by destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and property, or by confiscation of property. The testimonies demonstrate that destruction is often the result of a mistake or operational need, while in other cases is the outcome of intentional actions by soldiers and commanders in the field, or by orders coming from higher levels of command. In every case, destruction of infrastructure and property has become an additional avenue for control of the Palestinian population in the Territories.

The invasion into and control of the Palestinian private domain has also been

common in the last ten years. Nearly every night, IDF forces invade homes of Palestinian families, often taking post in the house for days or even weeks. This pattern of activity, known as a “straw widow”, is intended to improve the IDF’s control of territory by capturing and controlling positions and creating hidden lookout points. The testimonies demonstrate, however, that often the aim of taking control of a house is not to prevent violence, but to cause conflict. Thus, for example, testimonies included in this chapter describe “decoy” missions, whose aim is to bring armed Palestinians out of hiding and into the streets so that military forces can strike against them. As such, these testimonies show that IDF field units don’t work only in preventing military clashes, but also in creating them.

Beyond assassinations, arrests, and destruction, the soldiers’ testimonies gathered in this chapter reveal the method of intimidation and punishment coined “demonstration of presence” - one of the IDF’s primary approaches used to instill fear in the Palestinian population. One of the most conspicuous expressions of “demonstration of presence” in the Territories is the method of night patrol in Palestinian cities and villages. During the course of the patrol, soldiers are sent to stroll the alleys and streets of a Palestinian village, and they “demonstrate their presence” in a variety of ways: shooting into the air, throwing sound bombs, shooting off flares or tear gas, conducting random home invasions and takeovers, and interrogating passersby. Field-level commanders term these patrols “violent patrols”, “harassing activity”, or “disruption of normalcy”. The testimonies reveal that “demonstrations of presence” in the Territories are carried out on a frequent and ongoing basis, and they are not dependent on intelligence regarding a specific terrorist activity. Missions to “demonstrate presence” prove that the IDF sees in every member of the Palestinian population - whether involved in opposition efforts or not - a target for intimidation, harassment, and instilling of fear.

“Mock operations” are another example of the objective of “disrupting normalcy”. Military forces invade homes and arrest Palestinians for purposes of training and drilling; they take over Palestinian villages as a drill in preparation for war or in order to train for combat in an urban setting. Although the arrested Palestinians and those whose villages are taken over by the IDF may think these military incursions are completely real, the soldiers’ testimonies show that mock operations are explicitly defined as drilling and training activities and are not intended to arrest a wanted person or prevent a future attack. These testimonies suggest that mock operations are becoming more common as the level of Palestinian violence diminishes and attempts to attack Israeli soldiers or civilians decrease.

Finally, the misuse of the term “prevention” also finds expression in military activities intended to oppress unarmed opposition to the Occupation of the Territories. During the past few years, a number of grassroots Palestinian protest movements have developed in areas throughout the Territories, often with the cooperation of Israeli and international activists. These movements use various forms of non-violent opposition, such as demonstrations, publications, and legal battles. IDF “prevention” activities also include attempts to oppress these movements by using violence against protesters, arresting political activists, and declaring curfews on villages in which political activity takes place (testimony 28).

The various objectives and phenomena revealed in this chapter form part of the logic of IDF activity in the Territories over the last decade. At the foundation of the reasoning behind IDF activity rests the assumption that there is no need to distinguish between enemy civilians and enemy combatants. “Searing of consciousness” and “demonstration of presence” best express this logic: systematic harm to Palestinians as a whole makes the Palestinian population more obedient and easier to control.





Soldier preparing for a 'demonstration of presence.' Batir, 2004



Palestinian detainee on a military base. Nablus, 2004





Palestinian detainees during 'Operation Defensive Shield.' Photo by S. Bloomberg, Ramallah, 2002



Palestinian detainees in an IDF vehicle. Nahal Brigade, 50th Battalion

# 1 I didn't know what a "demonstration of presence" really meant

**unit:** Paratroopers · **location:** South Hebron Hills · **year:** 2001

► They gave instructions to do some patrol inside. I think it was Yatta.

## **Is that what's called "a demonstration of presence?"**

A demonstration of presence.

## **Was it an order? Would you do it all the time?**

No, that's it...I didn't get to do it a lot. There were a few specific cases. Meaning I got to do a demonstration of presence once or twice, but that specifically I know it wasn't OK, I'll explain right away. When we went in, we went in with that officer and another officer, and us. I personally as a soldier knew that there was an order to do a patrol, to do a "demonstration of presence." I didn't know what a "demonstration of presence" really meant. They went in, like basically all of us went in...we had an APC and a security patrol jeep if I'm not mistaken, and they fired rounds. Like the officers were...one was on the APC, you know, he aimed the APC so he had a MAG machine gun. We also fired our weapons sometimes...the officer would fire some more.

## **Fire in the air? Live rounds?**

No, at houses, at garbage cans, things like that.

## **Shooting at a home means at the walls, the windows?**

Both. Garbage cans, water heaters, things like that. Now the thing is, what became clear after the fact, we later heard on the radio, someone reported that he heard the shots from Yatta or the village that we were in, I don't remember. So, no one knew... meaning they knew we were there, and they asked if we saw something, so the officers said: "No." Apparently, I wasn't near the radio at that point, but when we returned after the fact they said, the deputy company commander asked: "What, how could it be you didn't hear anything there, they fired off rounds like crazy. So they said they didn't hear anything. And basically it seems that they weren't supposed to fire a single bullet, it was really meant to be a patrol with the APC, you know, just for show ■

## 2 Stun grenades at three in the morning

unit: Paratroopers · location: Nablus District · year: 2003

► We had all kinds of situations of very dubious work in Area A [i.e. under the control of the Palestinian Authority]. If that means going in on Friday, when the market is packed, in Tubas for example, to make a checkpost – a surprise checkpoint – in the middle of the village. One time, we arrived to make a surprise checkpoint like that on Friday morning, and we started to spread out as if at a checkpoint: inspecting vehicles and every car that passed. 300 meters from us a small demonstration of kids who were throwing rocks started, but they went maybe ten meters, and weren't hitting us. They started cursing us and everything. At the same time people start gathering. Of course it was followed with the aiming of weapons at the kids, you can call it self-defense.

### What was the point of the checkpoint?

To show the presence of the IDF inside the village. Inside the village, where the women go shopping, where the children play, just to show presence, and to enter a firefight, which within a second we didn't know if we would get it there. In the end we got out without a scratch, without anything happening, but the company commander lost it. He asked one of the grenade launchers to fire a riot control grenade toward the demonstrators, the children. The grenade launcher refused, and afterwards he was treated terribly by the company commander. He didn't receive a punishment because the company commander knew it was an illegal order, but he was treated really disgustingly by the staff. In the end that's how it ended. Another story was going into Tubas at three in the morning in a safari, with stun grenades and just throwing them in the street. For no reason, waking people up.

### For what purpose?

"We are here. The IDF is here." In general, they told us that some terrorist, if he were to hear the IDF presence in the village then maybe he would leave. He never left. It seems that the objective was just to show the local population that the IDF is here, and it's a policy which repeats itself: "The IDF is here, in the territories, and we'll make your life bitter until you decide to stop the terror." The IDF has no problem with it. We,

After the fact, the objective was to show the local population that the IDF was there, it's a policy that repeats itself... "The IDF is here, in the territories, and we'll make your life hell until you decide to stop the terror."

the ones who were throwing the grenades didn't understand why we were doing it. We threw a grenade. We heard the "boom" and we saw people waking up. When we got back they said to us: "Great operation," but we didn't understand why. It was every day. A different force from the company each time, part of the routine. Not an especially positive way of life ■

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### 3 To create a lack of sleep for the village

unit: Artillery · location: Gush Etzion · year: 2004

► The objective of "Happy Purim" is normally to not let people sleep. It's coming in the middle of the night, going around the village throwing stun grenades and making noise. Not all night long but at some specific time. It doesn't matter how much, they don't set a time for you. They say to you: "OK, they threw stones at you today in Husan, so do a "Happy Purim" there". There weren't many of those.

#### **What we call a "demonstration of presence"?**

I'm sure you've heard the term "Happy Purim" at some point. If not, you'll hear it. Yes, a demonstration of presence. We receive instructions from the battalion to carry out something like that a few times, as part of the situation report we did in the battalion. It's part of the activities that happen before...

#### **What's the rationale behind an operation like that?**

If the village initiates an operation, then you'll initiate lack of sleep for the village. I never checked how much this kind of operation causes lack of sleep, because you aren't in the village for four hours throwing a stun grenade every ten minutes, because after three times like that the IDF would have a tremendous shortage of stun grenades and couldn't do it anymore. It's operations that are at a specific time, and if you throw a single stun grenade at point x in Nahalin, apparently 100-200 meters from there it won't make so much noise. It maybe creates an effect that the IDF is around the village at night, you don't do too much activity, but I don't think it's more than that ■

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## 4 They called it an "arousal operation"

unit: Nahshon Infantry · location: Salfit district · year: 2001

► There were the standard missions – checkpoint, lookout, whatever – and then there was what's called "initiated operations." So that was like the action. Meaning going around the village, 3 in the morning, 4 in the morning, you know. And as we on the training track progressed then it became like more...Like I know? At first they would do the lookout on the village, they would sit between the village and the road, so no one would come and shoot at the road. So they would sit there with night vision, sitting, looking. Then, continuing on the track, then the platoon commander would already enter homes there and whatever...interrogate. What's there to interrogate? I remember that one time, you know, at very late hours, two, three, four, five, it doesn't matter, he randomly started knocking on people's homes. There isn't like, there is nothing...no information, [the platoon commander] just chooses a home. You go in, look around, wake everyone up...it's all very polite, he even spoke Arabic, I don't know what he would say to them. Without any physical violence, but with all of the presence. 5-6 soldiers enter the house in the middle of the night, stand in the living room. So we were very...you know, behind the platoon commander. Wherever he went we go with him. There isn't too much...no one breaks anything. You go in, five minutes, you leave, you look at everyone's ID in the house and that's it. But then too: All of a sudden you get it: walla, they enter homes at five in the morning without thinking twice. There is no information, there is nothing.

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### What was the excuse?

No excuse. That's the operation, going into homes.

### What do you write on the operation paper, the report you submit for the bureaucracy?

The bureaucracy? "Operation against those bisecting the road, the route to the A-Dik village to prevent shooting on the road." And you know...it's late, and boring, and you're falling asleep...then he [the platoon commander] takes you, goes on a patrol in the village, the dogs are barking...you know, to enter a bit...

### Action?

Yes. I remember, one time he let me: “come on, now you do the interrogation.” I knock, see a guy in front of me, I don’t know what to say. Like I know? I tell him: “Ask him who threw the rocks today at the patrol jeep.” They also liked going in on the patrol jeeps, they would call it like an “arousal operation,” so they’ll throw stones. It had another name, but that’s the definition. They would go in so...

**They would throw stones?**

And then they could see who...

**The trouble maker.**

Yeah, yeah. So we entered and he said to me, like before we went in he said to me: “Ask who threw it.” And I’m like on this high: “Do you maybe know who...” In short, it was embarrassing, everyone made fun of me. I wasn’t the primary interrogator anymore, you can imagine.

**So your operations are arousal operations?**

The company tactical team enters the village in order to draw out the stone throwers.

**Is it also part of the framework of initiated operations?**

No, that’s during the light of day, because normally the stone throwers are during the day. The initiated operations are at night. Those operations were entry into homes. Also, it was only our platoon commander. I know that in other platoons it happened less because you know, you don’t mess with our platoon commander. He was also, you know, you asked me about the mission report – he didn’t have to answer to anyone. If he wanted to, he could have done whatever he wanted. He wouldn’t do much, but I’m saying if he wanted to. He didn’t have to answer to anyone, you understand? You know, the jeep has to be in a certain place? So he would take it to buy shwarma, you get it? And who would say anything? If someone were to punch him, they would be paralyzed for a long time ■

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## 5 They beat him up, smashed his head with the butt of their weapons

unit: Kfir Brigade · location: Nablus district · year: 2009

### ► During your service in the territories, what shook you the most?

We did searches in Hares, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. They said that there are 60 houses that need to be searched. I said that surely there was some warning from intelligence, I tried to justify it to myself.

### During the day or at night?

At night.

### You went out as a patrol?

No, the whole division. It was a battalion operation, they spread out over the whole village, took control of the school, broke the locks, the classrooms. One room was the investigation room for the Shin Bet, one room for detentions, a room for the fighters to rest. I remember that it annoyed me in particular that they chose a school. We went in house by house, knocking at 2 in the morning on the door of a family. They are dying of fear, girls pee in their pants from fear. We knock hard on the doors, there is an atmosphere of "We'll bring them down," a fanatical atmosphere. We go into the house and turn the whole thing upside down.

### What's the procedure?

Gather the family in a particular room, put a guard, say to the guard to aim the barrel of his gun at them, and check the whole house. Another order we received, everyone born from 1980 until ... an age range from 16-29, it doesn't matter who, bring him in cuffed with a plastic cuffs and a blindfold. They also yelled at old people, one of them had an epileptic seizure. They continue to yell at him more. He doesn't speak Hebrew and they continue to yell at him. The medic treated him. We did the rounds. Every house they went into, they took everyone between 16-29 and from there brought them to the school, they sat tied up in the schoolyard.

### Did they tell you the purpose of this thing?

To locate weapons. And we didn't find any weapons in the end. They confiscated

Girls pee in their pants from fear. There is an atmosphere of "We'll bring them down," a fanatical atmosphere. We go into the house and turn the whole thing upside down



kitchen knives. What shook me the most was that there were also thefts there. One took 20 shekels. People went into the houses and looked for things to steal. This was a village where the people are very poor. There was a stage where they said, "What a letdown, there was nothing for me to steal. I stole what I found, markers, just to say that I stole something." You see really poor people.

**That was what the soldiers said?**

Just between soldiers, in the room after the action. There was a lot of joy at others' misfortune, people even told it happily. There was also a thing where one Palestinian (who was known to be mentally ill) yelled at the soldiers, but the soldier decided that he was going to attack him, then they simply exploded at him with blows. They hit him in the head with the butt of a weapon, he bled and they brought him to the school, to assemble with the rest. There were a lot of arrest orders ready and signed by the battalion commander, with a blank area. They wrote that the person was detained on suspicion of disturbing the peace. So they just filled in the name and the reason for the arrest. I remember that the people in plastic handcuffs, where they had put them on really close to the hands, I cut them off and put on freer ones. I got to speak with people there. There was one who works 13 hours a day, there was one whom a settler had brought into Israel to work for him, and after two months he didn't pay him his salary and handed him over to the police.

**Everyone was from that village?**

Yes.

**Was there something else you remember from that evening?**

That disturbed me? A small thing, but it disturbed me. There was a thing that they came to a house and simply demolished it. There's a weapons-finding dog and they wouldn't go with it and they just destroyed the house. The mom watched from the side and cried, the kids sitting with her and stroking her. I'm seeing how my mom put so much effort into every corner of our house and suddenly they come and destroy it.

**What does it mean to wreck a house?**

To break the floors, turn over sofas, throw plants and pictures, turn over beds, break closets, tiles. There were smaller things, but they didn't really disturb me. The looks of people whose house you've gone into. It really hurt me to see. And after that, they

left them for hours in the school tied and blindfolded. At four in the afternoon the order came to free them. That was more than 12 hours. There were security services investigators who sat and went one by one and interrogated them.

### **Was there a terrorist attack earlier in the area?**

No. We didn't even find any weapons. The claim of the brigade commander was that the Shin Bet agents did manage to find intelligence and that there are many stone throwers that we will now succeed at catching... Things always come up for me from the operation in Hares.

### **Which things?**

How they looked at us there, what went through their and their children's heads. How you take the son of a woman in the middle of the night and put him in restraints and a blindfold ■

## **6** The deputy brigade commander beat up a restrained detainee

**unit:** General staff reconnaissance unit · **location:** Nablus area · **year:** 2000

► It was in Kfar Tal, we went to look for a few suspects, a Nassar Asaida and his brother Osama Asaida. And we were at a house that Osama was supposed to be in, we surrounded the house and closed in on it, the procedure was that you yell and make noise...and if not – you throw a stone at the door so they'll wake up and in a situation in which...if it doesn't work then you shoot in the air or the wall of the house and if it continues to deteriorate, like I know, in the end there would be bombs on the roof, but the procedure was clear that you start the...the "action" with...

### **Not with shooting?**

Not with shooting and...really at the end...when they report that we were in position, from the...side...at the house's three o'clock, I wasn't, I was at the twelve o'clock, from the three o'clock where \*\*\*'s force was, there were shots from a machine gun, maybe a Negev, I don't remember what they had, at the wall of the house. A burst of

It was for no reason. Releasing depression...He decided that he would remind him who the boss is, who the Jew is and who the Arab is, who the prisoner is...And I in that situation was standing between these two people, between the terrorist or the wanted terrorist and the deputy brigade commander so that he won't...to prevent abuse of the detainee

gunfire, you know five, six times: rat-tat-tat-tat like that...like they fired a lot and again against procedure and against...

### **So what happened to the suspect afterwards?**

The suspect came out afterwards, no, not from there and he was interrogated by, by us and it was really him and they restrained him with his hands behind his back and blindfolded him, I don't remember what we put on, um...and I took him to...to the northeastern corner of the courtyard and some kind of, they sent some kind of armored jeep of the deputy brigade commander, the brigade commander at that time was \*\*\* but he wasn't there. I don't know who the deputy brigade commander was, the deputy brigade commander arrived with a driver and a radioman or some other guy and when I took [the detainee] I certainly wasn't rough but I also wasn't gentle, I was very assertive, I took him and made it clear, so it was totally clear who the boss was in the situation, but when I got to the to the deputy brigade commander then the deputy brigade commander decided that instead of taking him with assertiveness he would also remind him, he would remind him who the boss is, who the Jew is and who the Arab is, who the prisoner is and he gave him some two, three, four, chops, elbows to the ribs, a kick to the ass, all kinds of...

### **The deputy brigade commander himself?**

The deputy brigade commander himself. It wasn't "see who's boss," which, say, would be one hit to show him, I would say I don't understand, it could be the guy, it was just releasing tension. It was the deputy brigade commander releasing tension on the...the son of a bitch who apparently sent suicide bombers... And I in that situation was standing between these two people, between the terrorist or the wanted terrorist and the deputy brigade commander so that he won't...to prevent abuse of the detainee. I also found myself threatening the...two or three times the driver and the radioman when they put him into the back of the jeep or whatever it was, because if I heard that something happened, I personally take care of them and I don't know where he is, then how would it end. I remember that after the fact I thought that as a soldier who was there to protect the State of Israel, in the end I said to myself: what's the difference between the deputy brigade commander abusing a...a Palestinian detainee who, it doesn't matter who it is, who is now restrained and blindfolded. Of

course I also told this, it didn't lead to anything.

### **The interrogation?**

The interrogation. You know, a small interrogation at the end of the night ■

## **7** A bound man, they kick him in his stomach and head

**unit:** Armored corps · **location:** General · **year:** 2000

► There is some law that it's forbidden to hit a Palestinian when he is bound, when his hands are bound. When a General Security Services Agent would take people out of their homes in the middle of the night, they would tie their eyes and kick them in the stomach when they were bound. Three in the morning, opening the door, bursting into the house. The mother is in hysterics, the whole family is in hysterics...they send someone to be checked, it's not always terrorists, yes, they catch them, bring them down...and you can't imagine what's going through the guys' head, they blindfold them, two soldiers accompany him from behind, holding him and other soldiers come along the way. And it's standing army people, 15 people who are a problematic minority in the company. And they just, a bound man, they kick him in the stomach and the head...those guys really liked it.

Those guys really  
liked it...really  
there isn't too  
much to do.  
Especially when  
it's officers...

### **It wasn't reported to the staff?**

It was an officer on the staff! A serious officer on the staff! You don't understand anything during regular service...if he didn't have the legitimization to do it he wouldn't do it! It's just because that's how it is. The Wild West and everyone...whatever they want.

### **And the majority, they should just take it as a given?**

I don't remember if I respected the person. I can't ignore it and say, "OK, he's like that." But the truth is that when I think about it, I should have done something. I really had to stop it...you don't think like that...you say that's the reality...it doesn't have to happen, they're shits that they do it...but you don't exactly know what to do. You

don't feel like you have anyone to turn to.

**You go back home. Did you tell your mother and father?**

Are you serious? You suppress it.

**Your parents didn't know anything about it?**

What the hell! You're part of it. Really there isn't much to do. Especially when it's officers and you are a soldier in the tank corps who they wouldn't even piss on, so what? You'll get into a fight? You'll stop them? You'll bother them? You can't disrupt the company unity or the group dynamic, you can't come and fight people during. Now it wouldn't happen. I wouldn't allow it to happen, but that's not a big deal because I'm a reservist ■

## 8 The unit commander used a guy as a human shield

**unit:** Nahal Brigade · **location:** Hebron · **year:** 2002-2003

► I remember a specific incident where we used a human shield, not the neighbor procedure. A guy from the house, scared to death. The unit commander grabbed him like that, he walked in front of him with his hand on his neck, proceeding in his steps. The terrorist who was inside was wanted for 11 years. very, very, very senior. Very, very dangerous. We knew that he went into the PA police station, killed a few Palestinian police, threw grenades in every direction, like Rambo, went in and took two of his friends out of the prison. A very, very dangerous guy.

**Where was this and when?**

I think either Hebron or Jenin. It makes sense that it was Hebron because we were active a lot in Hebron during that time. It makes sense that it was Hebron. The end of my service, meaning the beginning of 2003 or the end of 2002. There was a very senior suspect who didn't leave the building, we knew definitively that he was inside. He had a bunch of weapons. The unit commander proceeded, and said to the guy whose arm he was holding that he should say that we'd kill him if he didn't come out,

if he didn't surrender. That we were going to kill the guy we were holding if he didn't surrender. It was all a show, a show...I believe it was a soldier. Afterwards they put him up against a wall, I never told anyone this in my life, they put him against a wall right at the door to the room of the senior suspect. We came with a laser scope, regular ammunition, so we weren't to expect these kinds of responses. And the unit commander puts the gun to his head and yells: "Where is he? Where is he? Where is he?" In the end it worked, he said where he was. To the credit of the unit commander. He was sure he was going to die. I was also sure he was going to die, by the way, as an observer from the side. I thought that he, I didn't think he would kill him but I was very, very confused by the situation ■

## 9 We would send neighbors to disarm explosives

**unit:** Engineering Corps · **location:** Ramallah · **year:** 2002

► So there was an uproar when the Kasams arrived in the West Bank. There was some location, they called us [because] they found Kasams in the minaret of a mosque. What do you do? You look for someone to go up to the mosque and take down the Kasams because it's dangerous for us. So they knocked on doors in the area. There is always someone who speaks Arabic on the force. There is a unit in the army of Arabic speakers who are like mediators who go with the force and make all of the announcements. In short they knocked on doors and found someone. They knocked on doors and found someone. He was retarded. They said to him: "Go up to the mosque. Above in the minaret are pipes. Bring them down." They didn't even tell him it was explosives. It turned out it was motors for Kasams. It wasn't so dangerous but it was certainly not work for someone like that but the reason it happened was because "neighbor procedure" was a reality, it was a basic procedure of combat. I think that until today it's a basic procedure of the rules of combat, "neighbor procedure"...that's it, I just remember how central "neighbor procedure" was to the rules of combat.

**Yours? You used it a lot?**

They knocked on doors and found someone. He was retarded. They said to him: "Go up to the mosque. Above in the minaret are pipes. Bring them down." They didn't even tell him it was explosives

A lot. All the time.

**In what way, you really used him as a human shield?**

Yes, a human shield in that if there was something dangerous.

**But you have a robot.**

But the robot takes a ton of time to operate and to bring it everywhere. You need a special vehicle. Our vehicles are not armored, and to put it on an armored vehicle is a whole story. Until it moves, and there were a ton of malfunctions. Bringing a robot to the minaret of a mosque, even the best engineers can't create a robot that can do that. "Neighbor procedure" was certainly central when dealing with suspicious objects.

**That's very strange...the basis of your entire duty is to know how to approach and a bomb and to neutralize it.**

Our duty is to remove the threat.

**OK, I can also shoot. Tell everyone to take cover and...**

When they were doing the considerations, in optimal conditions it could have worked but to start shooting at the minaret of a mosque at one in the morning in the middle of Ramallah or to have one of the neighbors take it down...we aren't a command authority, we are a professional authority. We go to the commander and tell him our options (according to our order of preference): "Either you bring a tank now and shoot at the minaret of the mosque, or you bring a neighbor, or you want me to go up and bring it down." It's hard for me to remember what we said in that situation.

**What do you prefer?**

For a neighbor to do it.

**Were you afraid?**

What? Presumably. With improvised explosives any small mistake is extremely dangerous. If you have a telephone on you it's extremely dangerous, static electricity is extremely dangerous. Explosives are very very dangerous, friction near them is very dangerous. When you know how dangerous they are you don't want to go near them. So many times they used...I remember a case where there was a very big argument in the unit. It was in the area of Hebron. Someone in the area of Hebron who they shot at and was wearing a vest. Now I'm trying to remember if they took the vest off of him.

I think they did, but now you have to destroy it because you don't know what's inside of it [but] you don't want to endanger yourself by opening it. It's better to blow it up.

**Are you talking about a terrorist?**

Yes. One of the soldiers in the unit gave one of the neighbors a brick of explosives prepared to explode...he took the brick with the electric wire or maybe it was wireless, there were all different kinds, "take it, put it down and go." I'm like...as the army we don't take a risk, "you take it and put it [there]." There was a big argument if it was right or not right. I don't think there were many cases like that. But he said: "I'm not going near explosives if there is no reason."

**If there is someone else?**

Yes. If there is someone else. They did the same thing as a trend with the South Lebanon Army. I don't know if you know about it. They created a unit of South Lebanon Army soldiers who basically...they trained them on a very low level. They gave them short training and they would deal with the explosives in Lebanon. They didn't give them a lot of means or training. It's a similar trend here if there is someone else willing to do it.

**Willing...?**

Yes...

**So what was the argument?**

If it's right to let someone else do it from a professional standpoint. It's considered something professional.

**So it was a professional argument?**

Yes.

**It wasn't on an ethical level it was on a professional level?**

On no level.

**Is that what you learned in the course?**

Yes, totally.

**Before "neighbor procedure," if that is not an option you do it yourself?**

How is there a situation where that is not an option.

**If there are no people? Did anyone ever tell you no?**

Just understand that the argument was solely professional: if it's professional to let someone go before you in a place where there are suspected explosives. Can he



activate something or initiate something. Anything having to do with ethics didn't come up at all in the argument ■

## 10 I couldn't believe how an order to kill someone could be carried out in a minute

**unit:** Special Forces · **location:** Gaza strip · **year:** 2000

The General Security Service agents were happy like kids who came back from camp...No one in the unit dealt with the shooting at the wrong car, the killing of innocent people...I was shocked when the newspapers published that "a secret unit killed four terrorists"

► The story which brought me here happened in Gaza. After these two incidents, I think there was a period at the beginning of the Intifada where they assassinated people with helicopters, a huge media frenzy because sometime it would miss and kill other people. They decided to send people in, ground forces, and we started to get ready.

### **This was at the beginning of the Intifada?**

Yes, it was at the beginning of the Intifada. Until then there were a few assassinations with the help of helicopter missiles, from a media perspective...I remember there was a mess because they were offensive and they killed our guys and they informed us they we were going to do a "ground elimination operation".

### **Is that the terminology they used? "Ground elimination operation"?**

I don't remember. But I do know that we knew it was going to be the first operation of the Intifada. That was very important for the commanders and we started to train for the operation, the plan was to catch a terrorist on his way to Rafah, block him in the middle of the road and eliminate him.

### **Not to stop him?**

No, a straight elimination, targeted. The operation was cancelled and a few days later they informed us an operation was going out but we were going on an arrest-operation. I remember the disappointment that we were going to arrest him instead of something revolutionary, out of the ordinary in combat, changing the phase – instead we were going to arrest him. The operation was planned... Can I have a pen and paper?

**Yes.**

[Drawing] this is the road, here is where the APC regularly sits. We were supposed