



THE HIGH COMMAND

Settler influence on IDF
conduct in the West Bank

**[BREAKING
THE SILENCE]**



Breaking the Silence was founded in 2004 by a group of veterans who collect and publish testimonies from soldiers who served in the West Bank and Gaza since the start of the Second Intifada. Breaking the Silence aims to raise awareness about the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories, and to stimulate public debate about the moral price of military control over a civilian population and of ongoing occupation.

All testimonies published are meticulously verified before publication.

For more details about Breaking the Silence:

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The testimonies published here are unedited and presented in their original form, except for details that are withheld in order to conceal the identity of specific testimony-bearers, and brief parenthetical clarifications of military jargon and content.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the activists and volunteers who have contributed their time and energy to make the publication of this booklet possible, alongside all organizational activities. Without their invaluable assistance, these important testimonies would not reach the public.

For further information or to coordinate lectures or guided tours, please visit our website:

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All of the photographs in the booklet were taken by soldiers throughout their military service in the West bank. The pictures do not necessarily correspond to the events described in the booklet.

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in the West Bank



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Introduction

Breaking the Silence was established in 2004. Since then, the organization has collected and published testimonies of more than 1,000 soldiers who have served in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). The testimonies describe thousands of events that have taken place in various regions and units throughout the years. Much can be learned from the testimonies, including the IDF's modes and principles of operation in the oPt, as well as the moral implications of enforcing military rule over millions of Palestinians living in those territories.

This report focuses on testimonies of soldiers who have served in the West Bank, in which Israeli settlements are located. The testimonies depict the characteristics and implications of the deep-seated relationship between settlers and the IDF. They describe the reality in which settlers actively participate in enforcing the military rule over the Palestinians, and indicate that the military is often used by settlers as an instrument for strengthening their grip and control of the territory.

The testimonies also indicate that Israeli settlers are regularly involved in operational activities and influence their forms of implementation, occasionally even as commanding authorities for all intents and purposes, while taking part in decision-making processes. Additionally, on different occasions, settlers

politically lobby soldiers in a way that influences their worldview, discretion, and operational performance.

The close relationship between IDF soldiers, commanders, and settlers is supplemented with the lack of clear guidelines regarding soldiers' authority to enforce the law on settlers. These factors influence soldiers' ability to carry out their missions and occasionally limit it, especially in instances in which settlers carry out violence against Palestinians and their property, or against the soldiers themselves.

Background on the report's publication

The Elor Azaria affair and settler involvement in the shooting incident in Hebron

On March 24, 2016, Elor Azaria, an IDF soldier, shot and killed Abed al-Fattah al-Sharif, a wounded Palestinian attacker, in Hebron (hereinafter: the Azaria affair). Over the course of the weeks and months that have since passed, the Israeli public was exposed to information regarding the involvement of settlers from Hebron in the incident. In testimonies provided throughout the case's legal proceedings, along with accompanying media publications, it became clear how deep and cardinal Hebron settlers' involvement was in the incident, and how great their influence was on soldiers' and commanders' conduct - before, after, and during the shooting.

These revelations are neither surprising, nor are they unique, to the Azaria affair. The many testimonies collected by Breaking the Silence over the years indicate that the relationship between settlers and the IDF has been part of the ongoing daily routine in the oPt, including settlers' involvement in and influence on the army's conduct in the field.

Appeal to the Chief of Staff

Following the Azaria affair, Breaking the Silence appealed to the IDF Chief of Staff, bringing to his attention a compilation of soldiers' testimonies from the West Bank in the recent years. Many different cases described in these testimonies touch on the relationships between settlers and the army, from which one may learn of settlers' involvement in military activities and their influence on IDF operations.

The appeal stresses that it would be just if the IDF commanders did not turn a blind eye to this reality, but rather actively examine the relationship forged between settlers and the IDF over the years, and its impact on both military operations and soldiers' ability to carry out their official missions.

The Chief of Staff's response – distance from the reality on the ground

On May 15, 2016, Breaking the Silence received a detailed response from the Chief of Staff's bureau (hereinafter: the Chief of Staff's response), that described in detail the relationship between settlers and the army. An in-depth review of the response reveals gaps, some of which are significant, between the manner in which the Chief of Staff views the relationship between settlers and the IDF, and the reality in which soldiers operate on the

ground, as it is illustrated in the relevant testimonies published by *Breaking the Silence*.

In addition, the Chief of Staff's bureau decided not to examine the unacceptable phenomena presented in the testimonies, opting to ignore some of them and decisively deny others. The aforementioned gaps, denial and disregarding led to an understanding that an additional, in-depth, detailed analysis of the topic is of importance, in order to present the information for public scrutiny. That is the focal point of this report.

The report focuses on six aspects sufficient in indicating the close relationship between settlers and the army, noting their respective characteristics and implications. Each aspect is illustrated in the report through a number of testimonies that bring forth the inherent problematic challenges they entail.

A. Settler involvement in operational activity

Settlers in the oPt are not solely Israeli citizens entitled to military protection, subject to the rule of law in Israel. Some of them also function as participants, alongside security officials, in enforcing military rule over the Palestinian population. Soldiers' testimonies indicate that settlers take part in military activities, serve as guides, and even command soldiers, as partners in the decision-making process in shaping the IDF's operational policy.

The most prominent figures in this regard are the Civilian Security Coordinators in the settlements. Civilian Security Coordinators are settlers certified under a military order to act as security authorities in areas of the settlement defined by, and subject to, military commanders. The Chief of Staff's response states that "***Civilian Security Coordinators have no command or hierarchical authority over soldiers, and are separate from the chain of command***" (words in bold were added for emphasis and are not in the original reply).

Soldiers' testimonies indicate that the reality in the field is entirely different: many soldiers share instances in which they were required to abide by Civilian Security Coordinators' instructions - in most cases, residents of settlements themselves with clear ideological agenda - and to fulfill their demands as if they were of the military command echelon for all intents and purposes. Other testimonies indicate that soldiers stationed in settlements operate according to Civilian Security Coordinators' guidelines, which are occasionally related to operational aspects such as rules of engagement, defining settlement territory, and determining areas in which Palestinians are prohibited access, especially proximate to settlements. In other words, in many cases Civilian Security Coordinators take advantage of their authority to distinctly advance settlers' interests - settlement expansion, and expulsion of Palestinians from areas adjacent to them. The Chief of Staff's bureau indicated that "***a clear distinction is***

made between discussions conducted with settlement entities and internal military discussions. And in any event, decisions are made strictly by the authorized military echelon." Yet this description is not consistent with testimonies that describe how settlers took part in discussions on military situation assessments, applied pressure in making decisions to promote their interests, and in some cases were even involved in determining the missions assigned to the security forces.

Furthermore, testimonies indicate that at times relationships with settlers disrupt the IDF's operational activities. For instance, when the military seeks to prevent settler violence against the Palestinian population (such as 'Price Tag' attacks), settlers - including security officials (Civilian Security Coordinators, for example) - act to disrupt such activities. Such disruption is carried out in some cases through exploiting the close relationships between settlers and security officials, and in other cases by taking advantage of their access to information and operational-military means granted to settlers by virtue of their roles, such as the IDF transceiver network.

That noted, the close relationship between settlers and the army, which according to the Chief of Staff's response is intended to be *"a significant factor in the IDF's capacity to fulfil its security responsibility in the territory"* is often exploited and abused by settlers. As described in the testimonies, this relationship is sometimes taken advantage of in order to disrupt the proper

operational activities of the IDF, in contradiction of the conduct expected from IDF soldiers. All of this is carried out in accordance with settlers' political interests.

B. Failure to enforce the law on settlers harming Palestinians or their property

In the West Bank there are millions of Palestinians subjected to the IDF's rule and military law. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens - settlers - live in the same area, and are subject to Israeli civil law. Testimonies reveal how this situation creates confusion among soldiers and commanders as to their authority, and to the adequate response when witnessing acts of violence or legal transgressions on behalf of settlers. The lack of clear rules and instructions defining soldiers' authority in such cases often leaves soldiers feeling perplexed and helpless. This rings particularly true when settler violence is directed against Palestinians and their property.

Soldiers' testimonies describe how commanders, including senior ranking officers, settled for stammering instructions relating to the manner in which soldiers are required to respond to instances of settler violence. In some cases, the commanders explained to their troops that the army has no authority to act in such cases of violence, as the Israel Police are the sole authority responsible for addressing settlers' transgressions of law and order, due to

their status as Israeli citizens.

In their testimonies soldiers detail how even in situations in which settlers' actions contradict the policy of the Israeli security forces and violate the law, the military tends to side with them. These situations are generally associated with settlers' efforts to push Palestinian residents off their land, and to harass or harm them or their property. In several instances described in the testimonies, rather than enforcing the law against settlers who violate it, the events are resolved through some sort of "settlement agreements" between settlers and the security forces on the ground. For instance, in cases where Palestinian farmers seek to cultivate their land, with approval through preliminary coordination with security forces, settlers who arrive at the scene confront the Palestinians, and by that compel the army to intervene. In many cases in response to such confrontations, in order to restore calm and order to the area as quickly as possible, soldiers will separate settlers from Palestinians, distancing all parties from the area. The result is that despite prior coordination and the existence of required approvals, Palestinians are prevented from cultivating their land.

Such ad-hoc arrangements embody the army's desire to maintain the quiet in the region and prevent friction, along with settlers' aspirations to drive out the Palestinians from the area to take over additional territory, while the Palestinian interest is absent from such arrangements. In such incidents the deep-seated partnership

between the parties is revealed: the IDF's actions in times of crisis, as it seeks to reach compromises, serve settlers' interests, and their political and territorial ambitions, at the expense of the Palestinian population.

This undesirable reality, accompanied by testimonies that depict and define it, was brought to the attention of the Chief of Staff through the appeal, yet the reply to the appeal did not address the subject.

C. Settler violence against IDF soldiers

Soldiers' testimonies include many cases of settlers' violence against IDF soldiers. These incidents usually occur in cases in which the army acts contrary to the political interests of the settlers. Soldiers testified about instances in which they tried to prevent settlers from harming the Palestinian population or their property, or cases in which they were asked to permit Palestinian farmers access to their land or homes - to which settlers responded with verbal and physical violence, not only against Palestinians but also against the soldiers themselves. Testimonies suggest that while sometimes the violent behavior of individual settlers was spontaneous, in other cases it was precisely planned to damage military property and was carried out as a 'Price Tag' attack in response to the activities of the security forces.

Similarly, in cases of violence against the Palestinian population, as with cases of settler violence directed against the army, soldiers and officers testified that they were not equipped with clear instructions regarding the manner in which to act. In some testimonies, soldiers even speak of commanders who expressly ordered them not to act when faced with settler violence. Such an order strikingly contrasts the clear instructions soldiers receive regarding the manner in which they are expected to act when faced with incidents of Palestinian violence against settlers or security forces.

These phenomena were also brought to the attention of the Chief of Staff through the appeal, but they, too, were not addressed in the reply.

D. IDF soldiers guarding settlers' events and recreational activities

As part of the IDF's mission to ensure the safety of settlers as citizens of Israel living in the West Bank - the army is required to routinely guard events and recreational activities initiated by settlers. Some of these events are held outside of their settlements and sometimes even in Palestinian towns and villages. Testimonies indicate that not infrequently the army was required to deploy large military forces to secure such events on numerous occasions, while putting the soldiers at risk. These events include, among other things, praying at sites inside Palestinian towns

and villages; tours and recreational community events; as well as archaeological research aimed at identifying ancient Jewish historical ties to certain places.

In some cases, the army is even involved in securing settlers' illegal activities, such as the establishment of outposts. As such, bolstered by its mission to defend settlers, the military in effect transforms into a body that assists them in advancing distinct ideological activities. Such tasks often entail endangering soldiers, as they guard in hostile environments, and disrupting the daily lives of the Palestinian population.

E. Proximity and close personal ties between settlers and soldiers

Many military units are stationed in the West Bank adjacent to, and sometimes even within, settlements. In this reality of physical proximity, along with mutual national and religious identity, personal relationships between settlers and soldiers are often forged. Testimonies collected by Breaking the Silence over the years describe how settlers fraternize with soldiers, in giving them gifts, visiting them at guard posts equipped with food and beverages, and even host them in their homes.

In response to testimonies on placing military units adjacent to, and within settlements, the Chief of Staff's bureau responded that "*this is necessary for the purpose of implementing missions*"

because "In many cases, the most suitable and effective security response requires positioning IDF forces within settlements' territory or in immediate proximity to them". Without undermining the state's obligation to ensure settlers' safety, the testimonies bring to light the implications of this state of affairs. They indicate that sometimes geographical proximity, and the constant friction accompanied by it, challenge soldiers and even undermine their operational capabilities. In Hebron, for example, the location of one of the settlements in the "Mitkanim" army post is detailed in some of the testimonies as a nuisance and disturbance that complicates the IDF's operational functioning, sometimes even disrupting it.

Personal relationships between soldiers and settlers are also strengthened when soldiers receive food and beverages from settlers throughout their operational activities, and when they are invited into settlers' homes. Regarding soldiers being hosted in settlers' homes, the Chief of Staff wrote: *"the Central Command does not enforce a sweeping prohibition on participating in events organized by Israeli settlements or on soldiers being hosted in residents' homes [...] since participation in events is supervised in accordance with directives and follows commanders' consideration."* The response further asserts that *"commanders supervise contact and interactions between soldiers and residents, and in cases where any suspicion of improper conduct arise, clear instructions are given on behalf of the commander of the Central Command."*

The picture painted through the Chief of Staff's response is inconsistent with many soldiers' testimonies. Some of the testimonies describe how informal meetings - that take place in settlers' homes, public spaces, or guard posts - usually occur with neither the presence nor the knowledge of commanding echelons. They therefore occur without commanders' consideration as to the existence of these events and their content. Some soldiers who participated in these meetings noted that they were under the impression that settlers utilized those meetings to promote their political ideologies, in order to instill a commitment to them among the soldiers. In some cases settlers even encouraged the soldiers to act harshly towards Palestinians, while 'going easy' on settlers who defy the law.

The Chief of Staff's response further posits that *"according to the army's directives and Central Command policies, soldiers serving under central command are instructed not to accept gifts or offerings from civilians alike."* Testimonies seem to demonstrate that soldiers are not aware of a formal prohibition on receiving gifts and tokens from settlers. Moreover, several testimonies detail instances in which gifts received by soldiers were demonstratively displayed before the rest of the unit's soldiers and commanders. These tokens were generally given by settlers to support and assist combatants, but in some cases were given to recognize or reward them for harming Palestinians.

F. Integrating settlers and their political ideologies into IDF educational activities

The Chief of Staff's response asserts that "*Central Command forces are directed not to participate in any event with political or partisan characteristics and to heed to army commands, in not even attending any lectures or descriptions of this kind.*" Yet soldiers' testimonies detail that throughout the military's educational activities, they were exposed to content distinctly affiliated with the settler movement's political and ideological messaging. In some cases this involved racist and nationalistic messaging preaching hatred of Palestinians and encouraging national and religious separatism. In certain cases, such content was provided by settlers themselves, while in others by soldiers in conjunction with settlers.

Conclusion

The structural problems that this report brings to light are a result of the IDF's definition of its mission in the oPt, as it is worded in the Chief of Staff bureau's response: "*The IDF views the defense of civilians living in the region of Judea and Samaria as a mission of primary importance. [...] IDF forces are responsible for the well-being, security and protection of Israeli citizens, whatever their ethnic, religious or political orientation might be.*" (taken from the Chief of Staff's response).

The Chief of Staff's bureau chose not to address some of the problematic phenomena *Breaking the Silence* brought to their knowledge in the appeal, particularly those relating to settlers harming Palestinians and soldiers failing to enforce the law against violent settlers. This raises questions in regard to the extent to which the higher commanding echelon views the IDF's sovereignty in the oPt as committed to ensuring the safety and security of settlers as citizens of Israel, and of Palestinian residents alike. Even the testimonies clearly indicate that the military defines its soldiers' primary task to be protection of settlers in the oPt, being citizens of Israel who reside there. However, in accordance with commanders' instructions and the norms in the field, soldiers usually do not tend to consider guaranteeing the safety of the Palestinians as a mission they are obliged to as well.

For this reason it is no wonder that the instructions and orders soldiers receive for contending with settler violence and legal transgressions - whether directed against Palestinians or soldiers - are consistently characterized by systematic uncertainty. It is thus of no surprise that the authority bestowed upon soldiers in addressing violent situations is often unclear to both soldiers and officers on the ground.

These facts are added to the ongoing close relations between settlers and IDF soldiers, which manifest, among other things, through settlers regularly hosting and giving gifts to soldiers, as well as other patterns: including settlers, sometimes even in

positions of authority over soldiers, in operational activity; the integration of soldiers in securing events that promote the settlement movement's political agenda, some of which are even held in the hearts of Palestinian communities, and entail endangering soldiers; and the incorporation of settlers in ideologically oriented educational activities. The aforementioned phenomena, along with other incidents described in the report, create a reality in which settlers are extremely influential in regard to the IDF's mode of conduct on the ground.

This situation is an inevitable product of the Israeli military's mechanism of control that has been forming for nearly half a century; a situation in which two populations live in the same geographical area—one enjoying full civil rights subject to the civilian law enforcement system (settlers), and the other disenfranchised and subject to military law enforcement (Palestinians). In such scenario, the sovereign force in the territory, namely the body holding the authority as well as the responsibility to care for all residents' security, perceives itself as committed to the defense of one group only, while almost completely ignoring its duty toward the other. So long as this situation is maintained, it is of no surprise that Palestinian residents and IDF soldiers stationed in the oPt continue to suffer from settlers' violent assaults, and no wonder that soldiers indicate their helplessness before such violence.

The reality described in this report has coalesced over the course

of many years. Gaps between the Chief of Staff's response and the events on the ground, as depicted by the testimonies, and the reluctance to thoroughly and sincerely examine Breaking the Silence's findings, may lead to the conclusion that senior political and military ranks have no intention of acting towards changing this distorted situation. Through thoroughly reading this report, one cannot avoid considering the question of whose interests are being preserved in maintaining the situation as is, and why it is enabled by the political and military echelons.

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The West Bank



A. Settler involvement in operational activity

01

It's the Civilian Security Coordinator who directs the army, not the army that directs the Civilian Security Coordinator

Unit: Not for publication • Rank: Sergeant First Class •
Area: Maon • Period: 2013

There was a drill in Maon. The minute we got there, the Civilian Security Coordinator (a settler in charge of the security of the settlement, appointed by the Ministry of Defense) found us and delegated orders. One of his orders was to position me at a certain point to guard, and they all ran in some direction. The drill finished and I said, "How can you put me in a point where I can just be shot at?" And then my commander said to me, "It wasn't my decision, it was the Civilian Security Coordinator's." And then the Civilian Security Coordinator said, "I am the commander

on the field, I give the orders, when the army arrives I direct it.” The message, at the end of the day, is that during an incident it’s the Civilian Security Coordinator who directs the army, not the army that directs the Civilian Security Coordinator. The settlers made it clear to us that they not only manage the DCO (District Coordination Office) within the yellow areas (territories closed off to Palestinians proximate to settlements), they also manage the army operatively. They essentially protect their settlements with weapons provided by the army, and we essentially back the settlers.

02

Every force that enters the settlement answers to the Civilian Security Coordinator

Unit: Not for publication • Rank: Lieutenant •

Location: Karmei Tzur • Period: 2014

On the day of the Settlement Defense Duty, we reached the brigade’s base, listened to a lecture with the brigade’s regional defense officer, who explained the guard procedures and what to do and what not to do; and rules of engagement and all that stuff. From there we spread out into the settlements. When we

reached the settlement we underwent a briefing with the Civilian Security Coordinator, a civilian who represents the IDF in the settlement. He's a resident of the settlement and is responsible for the security of the settlement. Every force that enters the settlement answers to the Civilian Security Coordinator: the civilian guards and us, as soldiers on Settlement Defense Duty, the settlement's Civilian Emergency Response Team for when there's an incident – we're all subject to him. You're briefed on guard duty, on the settlement, on procedures – then you start guarding.

And we know ahead of time that the Civilian Security Coordinator is responsible. It's a known protocol in the army, that the person responsible in the settlement is the Civilian Security Coordinator.

When you reach the settlement, how do you know it is the Civilian Security Coordinator you should go to for instructions?

He came to us when we arrived, introduced himself, and started the briefing. And we know ahead of time that the Civilian Security Coordinator is responsible. It's a known protocol in the army, that the person responsible in the settlement is the Civilian Security Coordinator. Once I did settlement defense [while I was] at Training Base 1 (officers academy), and my team commander from Training Base 1 came to stay in the settlement for a day. The person I answered to was the Civilian Security Coordinator, not my team commander.

He gathers you and gives a briefing - What are his emphases?

First of all, the main emphasis is to strive to engage [the enemy]. It's repeated in all the lectures you hear – in preparatory training, with the regional defense officer, and with the Civilian Security Coordinator. Always strive to engage. If something happens, don't run away, don't be scared – first off, strive to engage. And then every Civilian Security Coordinator emphasizes his own points. From the posts and guard protocol, through the distance Palestinians are permitted to take from the settlement, to entry protocol for Palestinians into the settlement. It varies from one settlement to the other depending on what the Civilian Security Coordinator wants.

03

Each Civilian Security Coordinator is sovereign in his land

Unit: Reserves – Mechanized Infantry Battalion 8104 •

Rank: Sergeant First Class • Area: Jordan Valley • Period: 2013

The story in the [Jordan] Valley is that there's no formal law. The law is set by personas. The Civilian Security Coordinator's personality will have a big impact on how things run; the company commander's personality will impacts how things run; and the personality of the guy that lives in the Bedouin tent across the way.

It's all dependent on personas. There are Civilian Security Coordinators who are very tolerant and have been living there a long time and know the population – and there are relations of respect with those around them. There are areas that Bedouin are not allowed to enter near the settlements, there are procedures, rules that the Israeli DCO (District Coordination Office) explained to us.

What did the DCO explain?

200 meters [from the settlement]. As a reserve duty soldier, you don't measure meters. You arrive, the Civilian Security Coordinator tells you, "200 meters is where you see the trees there – they can't pass that." I can't tell whether it's 150 or 200 meters, and I don't care. In principal, the Civilian Security Coordinator defines the perimeter there. There are Civilian Security Coordinators that work on reaching understandings [with the Bedouin]: "You don't come within 100 meters of the fence and we'll be friends." He tells the company commander: "The guy who lives here, his tribe came from Hebron, he's a car thief." He already knows the family. And then he says [to the company commander] that "He knows that he can't move past 100 meters, usually he's fine..." Most of the time, the Civilian

As a reserve duty soldier, you don't measure meters. You arrive, the Civilian Security Coordinator tells you, "200 meters is where you see the trees there - they can't pass that." I can't tell whether it's 150 or 200 meters, and I don't care. In principal, the Civilian Security Coordinator defines the border area there.

Security Coordinators are practical; each one is the sovereign in his land. In one of the settlements I remember the civilian security coordinator was very tolerant. He built himself a large goat pen, and he was in very good relations with the Bedouin in the area. It was clear to them not to mess with him, and he says, “When I need to, I flex my muscles.” These are the dynamics, like sheriffs. And you have other Civilian Security Coordinators who are less tolerant; there are those who rely more on the army and there are those who will tell you during an incident, “Come, I’ll tell you what to do.”

04

In general, they tell you, “Do what the Civilian Security Coordinator tells you.”

Unit: Haruv • Rank: First Sergeant • Location: Ofra •
Period: 2010

We were in Ofra and went to guard the entry into the olive harvest. What was really weird was that if it’s agricultural land belonging to Palestinians who work on it during the harvest, why is it inside the [settlement’s] fence? It’s all agricultural land filled with Palestinian groves. They create problems for them all the time: it’s hard for

them to go in, hard to go out. I was on patrol and they told me “go and guard there. The Civilian Security Coordinator (a settler in charge of the security of the settlement, appointed by the Ministry of Defense) let them in, go and make sure everything’s going smoothly.”

The Civilian Security Coordinator let them in?

Yes. He let them in. And we’re there so that there will be a military presence. That’s also a strong element in the army: To be present. So that they’ll see a force there. Not much is done aside from simply standing next to them as they harvest.

How many Palestinians were there?

A group of 20, 30, 40. I think they expelled them earlier than they had planned, for which they created some problems. Or they didn’t give them access to their entire field, and then some old Arab dad really begged me and there was nothing to do. I don’t even know what the deal was.

Eventually, who decided whether or not they could stay longer?

The Civilian Security Coordinator. He’s the only one who knows the issue. Only after the fact do you understand who the Civilian

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Security Coordinator is and what it means that he's the Civilian Security Coordinator. He's part of the settlement, he protects it; he's against the Palestinians. The Ministry of Defense pays him but he's not their employee. You have no authority over him but he has some sort of authority over you. In general, they tell you, "Do what the Civilian Security Coordinator tells you."

Who told you that?

The company commanders. As a soldier, the commanders brief you, but as a squad commander, the Civilian Security Coordinator was with us and briefed us on all the positions and missions.

Does he also determine where Palestinians are allowed to be?

Where they're allowed and prohibited to be. It's a grey area; there isn't enough information or army protocols, it's unclear.

05

There's no doubt that we worked for the settlers

Unit: Not for publication • Rank: Captain • Area: Hebron •
Period: 2010

Leftists come regularly on Saturdays. There were disputed areas between [Palestinian] shepherds and settlers. They [left-wing activists] joined the shepherd who entered a disputed area that

was really his, and confronted the settlers. The soldiers would come and ask them to leave, escorting them a bit, and almost always issuing a closed military zone order. Each time before an occurrence we would do a 'leftist mission briefing.' Planning where they will come from and what they will do. It's an incident and you're the army and need to prepare for it. We would arrive together with the battalion commander and he would issue the closed military zone order.

Isn't that at the level of a brigade commander?

Exactly. Only the brigade commander can issue it. His signature changes on a regular basis, and I remember that every time the battalion commander would go to the side – sometimes it was an operations officer, sometimes it was one of the company commanders – he would go and sign the name of the brigade commander on the document. It says, "brigade commander signature," and he signs.

Is the brigade commander aware of this?

The brigade commander is aware, of course. It was a general authorization.

Are you describing a rare occurrence?

Not at all.

Why does it bother the army? If it's Palestinians' land, Israelis can be there.

We kicked everyone out, and obviously with the settlers it meant kicking them out with a wink. We know them and they know us. There was a sense that we were with the settlers against the leftists. There was the sense that we're together with the settlers and the leftists came to cause trouble.

Because it doesn't end there, it ends in mutual violence.

Is it the same treatment as with settlers?

No, of course not. It's not the same treatment as settlers since most of the officers are settlers. The company commanders were all religious. There's no doubt that we worked for the settlers. Within this confrontation we took the settlers' side. Settler representatives arrived at the briefing. There are Civilian Security Coordinators (settlers in charge of the security of the settlement, appointed by the Ministry of Defense), but there's also someone who coordinates it, a civilian. Saturday morning, they sit around and discuss which areas they're likely to reach.

Saturday afternoon, leftists and Palestinians are walking in the area. What did you do?

We kicked everyone out, and obviously with the settlers it meant kicking them out with a wink. We know them and they know us. There was a sense that we were with the settlers against the leftists. There was the sense that we're together with the settlers and the leftists came to cause trouble.

06

The Civilian Security Coordinator is like a sheriff

Unit: Artillery Corps, 55th Batalion • Rank: First Sergeant •
Area: Hebron • Period: 2007

Every quiet place is scary. Hebron is very quiet. Every time we were at a guard post, they told us unequivocally, “Don’t leave the out-post.” You see a road, you see two settler kids walking along it. You’re wearing a ceramic vest, with a weapon, at the post, scared for your life – and they’re just walking. The settlers really teased. They would tease the Palestinians because Palestinians live there. The Civilian Security Coordinator (a settler in charge of the security of the settlement, appointed by the Ministry of Defense) is like a sheriff. He arrives and he knows exactly what happened, where and the extent of it.

Does he give orders or instructions to the army?

Lots, lots, lots. The Civilian Security Coordinator is like the intelligence in the territories: you’re notified about a severe incident, and then you hear your officer get a phone call from the Civilian Security Coordinator. In a way the Civilian Security Coordinator is totally an extension of the army.

Were there cases in which the Civilian Security Coordinator told you what to do?

Yes. “Wait there, set up a checkpoint here.”

And where are the officers?

The officers told us, “If the Civilian Security Coordinator said so, listen to him.” Of course not in the sense that “the Civilian Security Coordinator said so” but rather like, “don't act until I tell you so,” and then the Civilian Security Coordinator would say so and then he [the officer] would say so [to us].

Were there instances in which Civilian Security Coordinators breached army orders?

They breached them more than a couple times. You would set up a checkpoint, and then say, “no one goes through.” You say, “You

can't go in,” and he [the Civilian Security Coordinator] says “I understand the order, I'm going in,” and just goes in.

If settlers' attack you or a Palestinian, who arrives to the area - You or the police?

We do.

Could you use force with settlers?

With settlers? No. Nothing was defined, there wasn't even discussion about it.

And with Palestinians?

Of course you can.

The Civilian Security Coordinator is like the intelligence in the territories: you're notified about a severe incident, and then you hear your officer get a phone call from the Civilian Security Coordinator. In a way the Civilian Security Coordinator is totally an extension of the army.

07

Settlers come to the meetings

Unit: Civil Administration • Rank: Not for Publication •

Location: Carmel • Period: 2011

How do you choose what to demolish? There's so much illegal construction – why demolish one house and not another?

You look at maps of demolitions and you can see that they demolish when it's close to the settlement. There are a lot of makeshift constructions in the South Hebron Hills, so many illegal villages in Area C (areas under Israeli civilian and security control) in the South Hebron Hills – and they demolish [Palestinian] Susya or in Khirbet at-Tuwani. It's a political discussion. Let's say among the 70-140,000 Palestinian residents who live in Area C – the vast majority live in illegal villages. There's a village in Area C, without any outline plan, which means that it's illegal. Near Carmel, one of the most successful settlements in the area that expands a lot, they [Palestinians from the village of Umm El Heir] make their food on a large taboun (outdoor stove) that apparently omits a burnt scent to the residents of Carmel. The thing was that it really bothered the settlers, and since it was an illegal construction, they could demolish it, destroy it and take it. I don't remember whether this story involved demolishing or taking, or whether they just didn't provide them with authorization. And the international

The brigade commander is in touch with the settlers and they come to the meetings. The weekly situation report takes place with all the Civilian Security Coordinators in the area and they exert pressure there.

organizations - it really preoccupied them, this story, because they [the residents of the village] couldn't eat and stuff. They tried to bring all kinds of new processes and every time it happened, the residents of Carmel would call us. It was a huge story that we dealt with.

In demolitions, why do they destroy one house in a village and not another?

The considerations are either based on security – let's say the thing with firing zones, or civilians, for that matter. In many cases, the brigade commander pushes forward proceedings against locations that bother him. [A place] located on a certain road, places that overlook a certain area [or] a settlement, which he doesn't want, all kinds of things like that. He told us many times: Tell **** (a civilian working for the Civil Administration's Inspection Unit) what's going on with this or that illegal construct.

Did he ask you about a specific location of illegal construction?

Exactly. A specific illegal construct for which they want to exhaust proceedings so that they can demolish it because it's bothering them security-wise, or because strategically it overlooks a settlement. The brigade commander is in touch with the settlers and they come to the meetings. The weekly situation report takes place with all the Civilian Security Coordinators in the area and they exert pressure there.

08

The company commander said that the Civilian Security Coordinator is the company's fourth team commander

Unit: Nahal Anti-Tank Company • Rank: First Sergeant •
Area: Tulkarem • Period: 2013

[I had] many encounters with older [Palestinians] guys when the [lookouts at the] observation post would tell me, "There's a shepherd 300 meters away from the settlement, go check who it is." I arrive, [and] it's some old guy with three horses and a cow, and with his ID, and I need to send him away. I normally didn't give a shit because that person and I would decide on a spot in the field that he wouldn't pass (towards the settlement), and I would tell the lookouts to go look for something more interesting.

Were the lookouts the ones who passed on the information?

Yes. In the settlement we were in, it's a shitty situation because the observation posts are civilian, it's national service. They have an observation post operations room, but I don't have the capacity to know what motivates their decisions. They always used to say, "He's crossing a red line." I don't know what that red line is.

What's the distance?

I have no clue and I don't know if they do. I never saw it written down anywhere. I talked about it with commanders that said, "yes, there's a red line," Civilian Security Coordinators (settlers in charge of the security of the settlement, appointed by the Ministry of Defense) – I assume they know, but they're usually stricter about the red line. I decided for myself what the red lines of the settlement were, which were in accordance with the people that threatened the respective red line, and it was also common sense. When I saw that it was a shepherd 500 meters from the settlement, and the guy needed to pass through there to get to his village, it didn't matter to me whether or not there was a red line. I saw the guy, made sure everything was okay.

Those were the distances? 500 meters from the settlement, and they already call you to distance someone?

It was indeed very far. And I told the lookout, "You know that's far, we're not endangering anyone." I always found some way to manipulate it, whether it was talking to the company commander, or just insisting myself. The company commander knows that a hazard won't come from what the lookouts identify. He knows that if there's a group of five people standing in some field, they won't leave a powerful explosive device there to blow up the entire settlement. What we were really interested in were the roads. Molotov Cocktails on roads, stones [hurled at] roads. The hermetic guarding of the settlements – I felt it wasn't the army's objective; that it was the objective of the Civilian Security Coordinator and the settlers. They don't want the Palestinians

to get too close, they want to feel all the more secure – that's logical. With the Civilian Security Coordinators – I had to kiss ass, to explain the situation to them. The relations with the Civilian Security Coordinator – you do joint drills, you see him all the time, he's the Civilian Security Coordinator 24/7; he's cool. One time we received a report, I was on a patrol so he came along, we disembarked together with him and started walking; we were much closer to the [Palestinian] village than to the settlement. There's a stream that divides them. There were guys taking measurements for lands because

they were setting up a terrace, Palestinians. I arrived, cleared these people, checked what they were doing. We spoke to them. I won't distance them, we're so far away, it's ridiculous. I think he also knew that he was forbidden from conducting a clearance there, that he had deviated from his boundaries. But that's their whole character; they [the Civilian Security Coordinators] really like to keep tensions high. I won't tell them yes or no, it could be that ultimately one time out of 100 it will pay off that they're constantly maintaining high tension - when something will really happen. On the other hand, sometimes it's ridiculous. The company commander said that the Civilian Security Coordinator

The Civilian Security Coordinator knows the area better and he works in close cooperation with the company commander, when it's in the settlement. They work together, look at maps together, delegate areas together. I think the spirit of things is that they would listen to him.

is the fourth team commander in the company. Because he has a Civilian Emergency Response Team – it's 20 people.

Part of the company or part of the company command?

More part of the command. If there's an incident then he's the star. He knows the settlement the best, he has Civilian Emergency Response Team that's well trained, they train for it all the time, for an infiltration into the settlement. If there's something like that then he's an important figure that must be present. He knows the area better and he works in close cooperation with the company commander, when it's in the settlement. They work together, look at maps together, delegate areas together. I think the spirit of things is that they would listen to him [the Civilian Security Coordinator]. If you don't have a developed enough awareness then you won't differentiate between them, you'll think he's one of us, that he obeys the same rules of engagement, because he speaks the same language – it's confusing. They have an operations room, they have two-way radios, but they're civilians. Meaning, they don't have authority. Maybe he does as a Civilian Security Coordinator. I assume he has special authority. There were lots of drills with the Civilian Emergency Response Team and with the Civilian Security Coordinators.

09

You have no chance of catching them

Unit: 401st Armored Brigade, Reconnaissance Company •
 Rank: Lieutenant • Location: Yitzhar •
 Period: Not for Publication

Do civilian guards sit in on the weekly or monthly situation reports?

The Civilian Security Coordinator (a settler in charge of the security of the settlement, appointed by the Ministry of Defense) sits in on both the company and the brigade's situation reports.

It's not exactly a situation report – I think they called it activity coordination.

You coordinate the activities you carry out with him; he has an IDF two-way radio in his vehicle. He must know about coordinated activities so that if he sees an IDF soldier, he can be sure that it's an IDF soldier and not someone dressed up as an IDF soldier – and that's why you need to coordinate activities that you carry out in his settlement with him.

If you identify a Price Tag* and report it on the two-way radio – can he hear it?

Outwardly, the Civilian Security Coordinator is on your side. The fact is that in practice you can't reach any settler, not a single one. They're all hidden. They blend into the territory. They're fully backed and you have no chance of catching them.

You report it to him. He hears it. The settlers know it's better not to mess with the border patrol officers, and that they can mess with the IDF, since the border patrol officers are in effect the police. They have more authority to arrest Israelis. There was this time when we drove in the Wolf (armored transport) where you can't see into the back. The vehicle itself is impermeable and a very tempting target because they [the settlers] would love to throw paint bottles and colored bulbs to spray on it. So soldiers would drive in the front, and border patrol officers in the back - where they can't be seen, teasing, and then the minute the settlers come out, the border patrol officers jump out and can arrest them. It didn't succeed. They didn't manage to arouse them. Things like that you don't tell him [the Civilian Security Coordinator], you speak directly on the cellphone.

In which kind of situation reports do the Civilian Security Coordinators sit in with you?

We dealt with Yitzhar. You coordinate your activity and he takes notes for himself. He can suggest to "maybe do something this way, maybe that way, maybe do a patrol here."

Did you raise the issue with him, that guys from the Yeshiva in his settlement have been attacking you?

Of course, he knows about it. I don't think there was a concrete answer. Outwardly, he's on your side. The fact is that in practice you can't reach any settler, not a single one. They're all hidden. They blend into the territory. They're fully backed and you have no chance of catching them.

* Price Tag – acts of vandalism by Jewish fundamentalist settler youths, aimed at the Palestinian population, Christians, left-wing Israeli Jews, Arab-Israelis, and the Israeli security forces.



B. Failure to enforce the law on settlers harming Palestinians or their property

10

You see what I mean? There's nothing to do about it

Unit: Civil Administration • Rank: Sergeant • Area: Nablus •
Period: 2014

There was an incident when the Palestinian DCO (District Coordination Office) claimed that settlers from Givat Ronen had kidnapped a Palestinian youth. It was retroactively reported. He (the Palestinian youth) escaped and reported it a few hours later. The officers [on our end] spoke directly with the DCO, and then they conveyed the claim to the brigade requesting that they look into it. [We] usually receive a response after, generally not long after. [The brigade] says “we’re aware,” “we’re not aware.” This always calms everyone down when they don’t need to deal with it and it’s not a mess, and there’s no damaged car in Tapuach Junction. It’s “well okay, the resident is okay, the force knows about it, or the

Civilian Security Coordinator (a settler in charge of the security of the settlement, appointed by the Ministry of Defense) knows about it and the settlers let him go.” So it absolves everyone, it doesn’t get the police. It’s always reported after the fact when it comes to the brigade, unless it’s a grave claim that they shot someone.

Kidnapping someone isn’t considered grave?

So that’s the thing. Today, any notion of kidnapping, I’m not trying to make light of it, but what is a kidnapping? They take him, detain him, hit him, yell at him. Kidnapping – we’ve already turned it into something super serious, but yes, it does happen. You can call it a kidnapping, it doesn’t matter. It’s a violent act. Its significance shouldn’t be diminished. It’s just that it didn’t interest anyone, the moment it was over and the resident [Palestinian] was okay, it didn’t interest anyone who these settlers were, why they did it. Just isn’t of interest.

They didn’t call blue uniform police?

No, because it ended. It wasn’t live, wasn’t developing. Okay, so he filed a complaint. We know that the residents of Givat Ronen are a bit crazy. We know this. That’s the approach: “Yes, we’re

We know that the residents of Givat Ronen are a bit crazy, we know this. That's the approach: "Yes, we're aware." But of course if it was the other way around, it wouldn't apply. If Palestinians from [the village] Burin kidnapped a settler and released him, they would enter Burin that same night. But we have no instructions to do anything criminal or civil about it when Jews do it.

aware.” But of course if it were the other way around, it wouldn’t apply. If Palestinians from [the village] Burin kidnapped a settler and released him, they would enter Burin that same night. But we have no instructions to do something criminal or civil with it when Jews do it. He [the Palestinian] was just released and that’s it. Sometimes we respond to the DCO and sometimes we don’t, depending on the incident.

In this case was there a response provided to the DCO?

I don’t think so. And anyway, for what purpose? We’d just tell them, “yes we’re aware of the incident.” What can we do - apologize? You see what I mean? There’s nothing to do about it.

11

The brigade commander said:
 “There’s nothing you can do about
 it. Get the police”

Unit: Haruv • Rank: First Sergeant • Area: Not for Publication •
 Period: 2011

I remember a conversation we had before going to the deployment area, and then someone asks: What happens if settlers throw stones? Silence in the room. And then he says, “No, there's

nothing you can do with the settlers, unless it's really life threatening and then you can..."

Who said this?

The brigade commander said: "There's nothing you can do about it. Get the police". And then you say, "What do you mean? Am I not the police? Ah, I'm only the police against the Palestinians, but if the settlers there riot I need to wait for the real police to arrive?" There was an incident in which there was a terror attack and after that they (settlers) went out to the road and started throwing stones. You get there, try to stop them with your body, "guys, go away," you beg them. There's nothing you can do to them, and they know it.

The brigade commander said that you're not allowed to do anything to the settlers and that you have to call the police?

Unless they're threatening lives in that moment, and then of course it's our job to block anyone from endangering life. You prevent him from endangering life. It's a bit unclear. [When] you have to stop him - then you can shoot him, but it's wasn't really said in those words. It's more the spirit of things.

There are no clear instructions?

Not at all. And they try to keep it from becoming an issue. That you won't do anything, because they will never get to that. There

There was an incident in which there was a terror attack and after that settlers went out to the road and started throwing stones. You get there, try to stop them with your body, "guys, go away," you beg them. There's nothing you can do to them, and they know it.

were cases when they were throwing stones on the road and you ask them to stop, they don't stop and then there's nothing you can do. You sit and wait for the police to come. And they're throwing stones in front of you on the road. There aren't any cars. They're just filling the road with rocks so that there's no driving through it. And you're not allowed to do anything. You can't arrest them.

Did you get the instruction that you're not allowed?

Very clear. I'm not allowed to handcuff them, they're citizens of the State of Israel, you're the army. An army cannot arrest its own citizens. The police can get there and handle them as they know how, but we don't have the tools. And there were cases in which they built a settlement on a Friday afternoon, and you go to chase them out of there, the kids, but there isn't much you can really do. You have to wait for the police.

What happens when the police arrive? They're no longer there?

No longer there, or the police drives them away. In ***, near the gas station, there's a barrier with a lock that prevents Palestinians from passing through. It was decided to open it, to allow them (the Palestinians) more freedom of movement. The settlers heard it on the radio and started throwing stones. We were all sent there. They reached the barrier and started throwing stones on the road, from little kids to adults. And they're yelling at you, "you leftists, you garbage, you're defending Palestinians, you hate us." They throw stones, and you can't catch them or do anything to them, you can't handcuff them, you can't point your weapon at them. You can only place yourself there and try to get them to move

back, pleading, “Please bro, what do I need this for now? You’re driving me crazy. Do me a favor.”

12

If we hadn’t been there, the settlers would've fucked them up

Unit: Lavi • Rank: First Sergeant • Area: Susiya • Period: 2007

There were leftists from Israel and abroad who used to come to Susya, and they would join the Palestinians in the area. We would come every time, because if we hadn't been there, the settlers would’ve fucked them up.

Were there instances of beatings?

For sure. There’s a road that leads from the post to the main road between Carmel and Shim’a, Asa’el, and all that.

What happened there?

Once they sent us to the Susya Junction telling us that there was violence and clashes there, and we arrived and saw one guy wrapped around another guy, they were squashing one another. It looked like a serious beating. We arrived after the front command squad with the company commander or the deputy company commander had already arrived and tried to break it up. At first

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you don't understand what's going on, you think it's a Palestinian beating up a leftist – and then you unlock them from the grip and you realize it's a settler beating [a left wing activist] to the ground, shaking the ground. He was speaking with pathos, you saw his eyes were completely red, and he was totally agitated: "They want to take our land." The minute we realized he was a settler and not a Palestinian, we got aggressive with the second guy. He was a left-wing activist from abroad who tried to film there.

He really hit him?

Punches – yes, kicks – I didn't see, but I saw him locked around him, neutralizing him to the ground. We had to forcefully pull them apart.

Why were you aggressive with the international activist?

Because in your eyes, you're there to protect the settlers. That's exactly what you're supposed to do. As far as we're concerned, we're in a situation in which we're in territory where the settlers are always right. As a soldier, if you have to choose between a settler and a Palestinian, or between a settler and a left wing activist – you choose the settler, no matter the situation. That's

why I pointed out that suddenly our perception shifted. Suddenly, it went from thinking that the guy beating and locking and confining is a Palestinian who needs to be neutralized, to, “He’s trying to protect his land from this photographer.”

If you see him hitting, why don’t you detain him?

I have no clue.

What were the instructions?

No one will sit with you in a debriefing and tell you “If you see a settler hitting a Palestinians, fuck up the settler.” No one will ever say that, even though there were officers that think that’s how it should be.

13

They say to you, “You’re supposed to defend me, not them”

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: First Sergeant •

Area: Nablus • Period: 2012

I remember [there was] a procession [of settlers] and we blocked off a Palestinian road because the road to Yatma goes through Tapuach. We stopped the Palestinians who wanted to drive through at the junction. About 15 cars stood there, and whoever came later was turned away to come from a side road. And then

We always used to ask during all kinds of incidents, if the Jew does something, what am I supposed to do to him? And there wasn't, they never provided an answer about what can be done.

all the little kids and youth (the settlers) arrived and just started cursing at them and spitting at the Palestinians who were made to stand on the side. I was shocked that five-year-old kids were screaming curses: “burn, sons of bitches” – horrible things.

Why don't you say anything to them?

We do, but they don't really care. You tell at them to get out of there, to keep going,

but they know you're not... And then they say to you, “you're supposed to defend me, not them,” stuff like that.

How long did those vehicles have to wait?

It was around 40 minutes.

They just couldn't move?

Yes.

Do you remember other cases like that?

Yes. There's a field under the post – there was a conflict over to whom it belonged. It started one day and there was about a month of this. A Palestinian came to work there and then settlers assaulted him, kicked him out of there. Right under Tapuach. From there it grew bigger and bigger. In the end, there was an incident in which they (the army) agreed with this Palestinian that he would come to work there and we came to protect him, and there were tons of settlers. There were scuffles between the settlers and the Palestinians. The settlers ripped their bags of wheat that

they had come to plant. Each time they ran and grabbed their things and threw their things out of there.

But if the army is there, why don't they do anything to them?

So the army's there, you stand there and break it up, but they just don't care.

As the army you don't have authority over the settlers?

The truth is, no. We always used to ask during all kinds of incidents, if the Jew does something, what am I supposed to do to him? And there wasn't, they never provided an answer about what can be done.

A Palestinian attacks a settler - what do you do?

Grab him, arrest him. If it's life threatening I can even shoot him, [shoot] in order [to kill].

A settler throws stones at a Palestinian, what do you do?

I don't know, everyone has his own judgments. There are no instructions about it.

Are there rules of engagement?

For Jews? No.

Use of crowd control measures, is that allowed?

No.

Arresting or detaining settlers?

Also no. In principle, what you're supposed to do, in this case we would separate, stand in between them. The Jews there, the Arabs working there and we're a line of soldiers standing in the middle. I remember their contact, they tried to push us in order to get to the Palestinians and we stopped them.

And you weren't allowed to do anything about that either?

Aside from preventing them from reaching the Palestinians, no.

Were there instructions on what to do with settlers should they attack army or security forces?

No. They never talked to us about it. I remember they gave us talks about the complexity. A senior officer in our company was a settler, from the Valley. It really concerned him and he gave us two talks about it, that it's complicated when Jews push us and do things like that. But he never touched on what we should do about it.

It's complicated when settlers attack soldiers?

Yes.

14

We would escort them every morning

Unit: Not for Publication • Rank: Sergeant First Class •

Location: Maon farm • Period: 2013

There was some Arab village near Maon farm, and there were kids who would walk to school, we would escort them every morning. Kids aged 8-12 with backpacks, walking along a path, followed by an armored jeep with soldiers in bulletproof vests with weapons, a heavy military atmosphere, weapons loaded, and they go through this daily, twice a day, their entire lives. Why does this happen?

Because it passes by Maon farm, and settlers throw stones at them and harass them so you protect them from the settlers, so that they won't harass them. They always drive on the road wildly, don't take the children's existence into account at all. I can't say that there was an instance in which someone ran over a child, but you yell at the children to run to the edge and let the wild settler's vehicle drive on its rampage, leaving us surrounded by dust and stones.

15

"They don't pass through here, my territory"

Unit: Lavi • Rank: First Sergeant • Location: Maon farm •
Period: 2006

There was always that thing when settlers just want to— suddenly they define territory as their own. Maon farm, they were best at it there. They would suddenly declare a trail: They don't pass through here, my territory. Trails through which Palestinians pass, they go to school, I don't know why. "They don't pass through, my territory."

Who would say that?

Just settlers. There's one crazy guy in Maon farm, I don't remember his name.

We're supposed to guard the Arabs who pass, but you know, settlers throw stones at them, and you won't stand there like: throw them at me, I'm here. You say to them: please, please don't throw. Like an idiot.

What do you mean they declare? To whom do they declare?

To us. What do you mean to whom do they declare?

And what do you say?

“They do pass through.” We're supposed to guard the Arabs who pass, but you know, the settlers throw stones at them, and you won't stand like: throw at me, I'm here. You say to them, please, please don't throw. Like an idiot.

Even if they throw stones at you?

Did you hear about the incident in our battalion? One of the [soldiers] from the auxiliary company...

In escorting the kids (the IDF accompanies Palestinian children walking to school along a path next to Maon farm, following instances of violent attacks by settlers from Maon farm against the children)?

He got angry that they were throwing stones at the kids. He told them: Stop throwing stones. He didn't let them pass, began to push them, they showered him with stones, hit him with one here, he passed out. Got a stone here to his jaw and passed out. Then one of the soldiers immediately cocked his weapon, and fired into the air over the settlers. These two soldiers were taken to court the same day, got screwed over with 35 days in prison for having fired a bullet into the air.

Both soldiers?

No, the soldier who didn't shoot didn't.

The soldier who shot got 35 days in jail for having fired in the air?

The settler also said that he threatened him with a gun. I don't know, I wasn't there.

And the soldier who was hit?

He was also punished, because he hit a settler. He like started a fight with a settler.

So what did he get?

I don't remember, some 28 days in detention. He was the commander.

And did something happen to the settlers who beat him up?

Did something happened? They beat up, we don't hit the settlers.

Did the police come?

What police? Do you know what needs to go down for the police to come?

16

They all went into the Casbah from the Avraham Avinu neighborhood

Unit: Paratroopers • Rank: Lieutenant • Location: Hebron •
Period: 2005–2006

There was one time when three kids (from the settlement) decided that their goat was stolen. They were walking there on King David Street.

Shuhada Street?

Shuhada, exactly. They claimed that some Arab had jumped over the fence, through all the army posts, stole their goat, jumped into the Casbah with the goat in hand and fled. To do this you need to be part of the [Olympic] delegation to Beijing or something. And then the entire settlement came, broke open the Casbah gates. From eight days old kids to 70-year-olds. They went in, with her baby and all her kids, and it's, "blessed be god", a lot of kids, and the elderly – they all went into the Casbah from the Avraham Avinu neighborhood.

From the wholesale market?

Yes. they broke it open, entered the Casbah from there. Never mind that our patrol entered the Casbah after a briefing, with full equipment and ceramic (vests) and all that. They (the settlers) went in just like that, as they were. We had to go in to get them out.

It required all the forces in Hebron at that moment. My entire company of course, all the company commanders, battalion commander, deputy battalion commander, the operations officer, the police. Everyone arrived to take them out. To convince them to get out, to forcefully get them out. There was some kid there, the son of ***** (a well-known settler in Hebron) who our operations officer grabbed and forced into the jeep to get him out of there; he was one of the biggest rabble-rousers, despite being a kid only 8 or 10 years old. And then his mother came, and *** *** came to our company and wanted to sue the officer and blah blah blah. In short, I don't know what happened in the end, but that's more or less the situation. And all the kids there, after we got the whole settlement out of there, they started spitting on the soldiers.

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go in to get them out.
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17

Some illegal structures were cleared and it pissed them off

Unit: Civil Administration • Rank: Sergeant • Location: Qusra •
Period: 2014

There was a demolition order on a structure in (the outpost) Esh Kodesh. Some illegal structures were evicted and it pissed

them off. They responded with a Price Tag attack – cut down 20 new olive tree saplings from (the villages) Qusra or Qaryut. [At the same time] Palestinians arrived and there were major riots. Then we got a report from the Palestinian DCO (District Coordination Office) that Palestinians are holding settlers inside an abandoned house. They sent forces there, and then it turned out that though the Palestinians had hit and attacked them (the settlers) beforehand when they were on their way into the village, but now they were holding them defensively. The village elders pushed them into an abandoned house and tried to prevent

They arrested maybe seven adult [settlers] and seven minors.
There were about 15–20 of them. They got them out and they were injured [but] the minute they got to Shvut Rahel they just fled from the car because they knew they would be arrested. The next night there was a Price Tag attack in a different area.



youth from attacking them. And then the army and the Israeli DCO representative got them out. They arrested maybe seven adult [settlers] and seven minors. There were about 15-20 of them. They got them out and they were injured [but] the minute they got to Shvut Rahel they just fled from the car because they knew they would be arrested. The next night there was a Price Tag attack in a different area. They did a Price Tag attacks in Madma in Samaria, far away from there. It was right under everyone's noses and it was a serious Price Tag attack – they burned cars and sprayed graffiti.

When did you get the report?

In the morning. When the Palestinians got up in the morning.

They went out to investigate, photographed it, documented it. That's it, there were no settlers there anymore.

18

After another minute of awkward silence, the company commander said, "That's a good question, I need to think about it"

Unit: Nahal Reconnaissance Platoon • Rank: Not for Publication •
Location: Mitzpe Yair • Period: 2012

Were you present during incidents of settler violence against Palestinians?

I was at the base and suddenly there was a case of two settlers who left Mitzpe Yair and attacked someone, just attacked. They provided a description of them and our forces began searching for them. Patrols, all the vehicles available were deployed, we passed on the description of the two people who did it to the neighboring forces. There was a moment when they thought they caught them at a bus stop, but it wasn't them. They really tried, after a few hours they gave up and passed it on to the police. The Palestinian who was assaulted was badly hurt, he was in the hospital, had

bandages, was admitted. It was a lynch. And the news items online were minimal. I said that I felt like if it were the other way around, it wouldn't have ended that way. If it were a description of two terrorists walking around in Judea and Samaria, the entire world would be on its feet. Two settlers from Mitzpe Yair – the army just gave up after a few hours and handed it to the police. The next day they still didn't know if they had been caught or not. [During the debrief] a curious soldier at the table suddenly jumped and said to the company commander, "If I see two Arabs lynching a settler, what am I supposed to do?" The company commander's sharp answer was, "shoot to kill." "And if I saw these settlers hitting an elderly man, what should I do?" The company commander nodded with his mustache and was a little flustered and mumbled an answer: "Of course you need to respond somehow. I don't know how, but you need to respond." After another minute of awkward silence, the company commander said, "That's a good question, I need to think about it."

Did you have procedure for settler violence?

No, there wasn't anything decisive. The settler's starting point is always better.

C. Settler violence against IDF soldiers

19

They just threw a boulder at one of the soldiers

Unit: Nahshon • Rank: First Sergeant • Location: Yitzhar •
Period: 2010

We came to do a drill in Yitzhar. The Samaria Brigade does a drill, a very legitimate thing. The savages (settlers from Yitzhar) thought we were coming to clear out houses of theirs. They took a boulder, threw it, just threw a boulder at one of the soldiers. It hit his helmet and fractured his skull.

What is a drill?

Attack on a settlement. Say a terrorist penetrates a settlement [then] what to do [in such a scenario]. [During a drill] you come with a bulldozer, with power shovels, tons of stuff. The settlers thought we were coming to evict a house of theirs and they start going off.

How did it get to the point of throwing a rock at someone's head?

Because we came out, we were outside so they started acting wildly, throwing things, then they rolled things down towards the IDF vehicles, poured paint, and then they threw a rock and it hit. Luckily he was wearing a helmet.

Did you receive instructions on how to deal with a settler attack against you?

No. Nothing.

Did you have the authority to arrest a settler?

No. That's what the police are for. You're not supposed to deal with Jews.

But nonetheless, they physically assaulted a soldier. Threw a rock.

The officer's a settler. He's from Tapuach and half his family lives in Yitzhar. He'd find a way to temper it. As far as all the settlers are concerned, it's protecting their home. You're just protecting your home. Yitzhar is after all an isolated settlement – or the way the company commander defined it – it's a Jewish settlement that has seven Palestinian villages strangling it.

Did you have any guidelines about what you're supposed to do in such a case?

With Jewish attacks? No. The settlers – you're supposed to protect them. Yitzhar is a settlement with so many guard posts, and at the end of the day there are settlers that come to attack you.

We came to do a drill in Yitzhar. The Samaria Brigade does a drill, a very legitimate thing. The savages thought we were coming to clear out houses of theirs. They took a boulder, threw it, just threw a boulder at one of the soldiers. It hit his helmet and fractured his skull.

In the case that they attack a soldier with a rock to the head, there's no investigation? No sharpening of commands, instructions?

No. There was a debrief in order to understand how the events unfolded, at the company and battalion level. They treated him medically and everything, and we got out of there, and the next day the border police went in and the IDF didn't stay there. You forget that IDF soldiers, insofar as their power to respond to both Palestinians and settlers, are very limited. You're not the border police, who have the authority to take action, to break the hands and legs of Jews and Arabs alike.

If a Palestinian were to throw a rock at a soldier's head?

They would arrest him.

20

**We live in their backyard, or
they're in our backyard**

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: Not for Publication •
Area: Hebron • Period: 2010

The little kids who go through the post all the time, they have no problem screaming at soldiers and cursing at them (the testifier is talking about settlers who live inside "Mitkanim" military post in Hebron, whom he mentions in his testimony). And these are

kids who, like, we live in their backyard, or they're in our backyard.

Were there incidents in which they cursed?

Freely. Absolutely. A whole lot.

How old?

The youngest kid was six and there were some a bit older. Actually there aren't that many kids in the neighborhood, but there are kids aged 13, 14.

They just walk, throw out a curse and go on?

If you bother them, then yes, they'll curse at you.

What does it mean to bother them?

Just like, they're wandering around the post as if it's their backyard. Now, there are some guys who aren't bothered by this, but some are bothered by it. There are periods in which the officers get sick of it and they used to say: you can't walk around here, it's a post, you go in and out through this gate and that's it. There's also the club, which is close to the gate. We situated our club close to the gate. Almost no one from the company observes the Sabbath; we watched TV like always. Then a girl from the neighborhood came in, started screaming: "It's the Sabbath," came over to turn off our TV. I just kicked her out: Get out of here...

We situated our club close to the gate.

Almost no one from the company observes the Sabbath; we watched TV like always.

Then a girl from the neighborhood came in, started screaming: "It's the Sabbath," came over to turn off our TV. I just kicked her out: Get out of here...

21

The instructions we receive are that we're not supposed to deal with settlers

Unit: Samaria Regional Brigade • Rank: Sergeant •

Location: Yitzhar • Period: 2014

Did you ever experience settlers' violence?

There were all kinds of incidents. One time, settlers slashed the tires of the brigade commander's vehicle. And there was another incident; I am not sure if it happened at the same time or separately – they slashed the tires of a patrol vehicle while soldiers were asleep inside the vehicle. As opposed to other settlers, the Yitzharnikim (settlers from Yitzhar) don't like the army so much. I think what happened is that the army demolished a few small outposts, and there's a really small military post located in Yitzhar; there were around six soldiers there, something like that. And then at around five in the morning, the way the soldiers described it, they suddenly saw what started as a few people and ended up to be around 40, something like that, settlers who came, some with their faces covered, and they just said to them, "if you're quiet we won't hurt you." And then the soldiers, reservists, just said, cool, just give us our equipment at least. They took their equipment and the settlers just destroyed all the rest . Everything. The entire post. Just destroyed it entirely.

Why don't the soldiers do anything?

I think it's a very frightening situation. Also, the instructions we receive are that we're not supposed to deal with settlers. The police are supposed to, the blue uniforms. [The instruction is that] if there's friction with settlers, you immediately call the police or the border police sometimes, but we're not supposed to deal with them. It's not supposed to happen at all.

Were they really under a kind of attack?

Yes. Again, I don't know how much of a protocol there is, and they also weren't so prepared for this kind of situation. That's another thing that they really complained a lot about. It's quite a gray area. Basically, you're supposed to call the police and we (the army) don't handle it. That is how it begins and ends.

Settlers came, some
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covered, and they just
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"if you're quiet we
won't hurt you." And
then the soldiers,
reservists, just said,
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equipment at least.

22

People who bring us cookies on Friday before the Sabbath, are suddenly throwing stones at us and calling us Nazis

Unit: Nahal 932nd Battalion • Rank: Lieutenant •

Location: Hebron • Period: 2014

It was the night that it was announced to the public that the three kidnapped [youth] were murdered and that their bodies were found. That was the end of [Operation] Brother's Keeper. They took all the soldiers who were in the post out to the road. It was known that there would be chaos as there is normally [in such occasions]. There's a left turn to the so-called Jewish Tel Rumeida [neighborhood], and right to the Arab neighborhood. And the whole settlement just stood outside and there were only women and children and one guy (a settler), around 18, 19, 20 years old. Everyone stood there and yelled things, I don't know, some kind of protest of rage. And one guy noticed that a family of Arabs was going up Tarpat Road from the "Shoter" checkpoint. It's a family, a father, mother, little kids kind of hanging on their mother's hijab, really stereotypical. There were no youth, there was nothing, and the guy (settler) just started running towards

them and we blocked him and he started screaming: “How are you not putting them under curfew? Aren’t you ashamed? Arrest them. How are you letting them walk on these streets.” It started with, “listen man, don’t make us do something we don’t want to do. We don’t want to arrest you, we don’t want to handcuff you now in front of everyone.” Not that soldiers can handcuff Jews, but if they are acting out and cross the line we can nonetheless exert some force when we have the system’s backing. It started like this and he continued pushing and screaming. And then at some point we started pushing him and yelling at him in not so nice words to get off the street and that he would be arrested, and he understood at some point and after a few shoves he really did go back (behind all the women and children). And then the family kept going and got closer to the mob and the Jews started throwing stones.

At the family?

Yes. We did like a 360 around the family. Now the soldiers are totally confused, they don’t know if they are to look inside or outside, if they are going to conduct a search on this family of Arabs; who they are protecting from whom? They have no clue. Meanwhile the settlers are calling us Nazis and “aren’t you ashamed? You’re not doing your job, you’re confused,” and throwing stones.

They threw stones at soldiers?

Meanwhile the settlers are calling us Nazis and “aren’t you ashamed? You’re not doing your job, you’re confused,” and throwing stones.

Yes, on us as well. It's like, the same people who bring us cookies on Friday before the Sabbath, are suddenly throwing stones at us and calling us Nazis. There is something in this story that really demonstrates for me so many of the pressures that a soldier undergoes in Hebron. I still haven't found the exact words to express it, but it is just unbelievable what 18, 19, maximum 20-year-old kids have to go through in this country.

23

Who am I really defending here?

Unit: Sahlav • Rank: Sergeant • Location: Hebron • Period: 2002

One of the most memorable incidents etched in my memory was a funeral in the Jewish settlement. A soldier was killed in an incident on Route 60, he was shot. This created great unrest among the settlers. The funeral itself was very, very difficult. Really, the settlers rioted to degrees that I hadn't experienced. It was the first time I encountered such violence by settlers. We secured them, so to speak. We were there to protect them from the Palestinians. [But] in the end I found myself defending Palestinians from the settlers. They (the settlers) just walked down the street, on a road that leads toward the cemetery, and all along this path there are

Palestinian houses on both sides. After all, the Jewish community (the Israeli settlement in Hebron) sits on and has sections in which Palestinians live (the settlement in Hebron is divided into five different points of settlement, between which are Palestinian neighborhoods). And they just went, the settlers, along this entire path cocking their weapons and shooting into windows – taking rocks, tiles, battering the surrounding Palestinian houses. Now why do I remember it so well? Because it got to the point that just before the entrance to the cemetery, the convoy stopped and we all stood right in front of a Palestinian house, and the settlers began to break down the concrete barrier, and this is a concrete barrier. They just broke the whole barrier. And they stationed us there to protect the house, so they (the settlers) just knocked us over on the tiles, on the concrete barrier. Knocked us down, broke everything and trampled over us all. They walked over us and stepped on us toward the house. We got up quickly, and once again just created a barrier right around the house (belonging to the Palestinian family), and they (the settlers) just started to hit us because we weren't letting them enter the house. And then there was a moment when I heard one of the settlers say "okay forget it guys, I found another solution." Then he said something like, "Gas is of great use," something cynical and then they all left. And it turns out that they, I don't know how, but it turns out they created a gas leak in the house. Now, I don't know if there was a family there or not. I recall there being one, but I can't... I can't say [for sure] if there was one or not, but I remember the

situation and that I said to myself, "Wow, if I was in that house, God help me, how scary." Like, I'm completely smeared in blood, all bruised, and all I can think about is who I'm really defending here and what I'm doing here. And it's a very memorable incident for me, because I think it was the beginning of the crack. I came here to defend my country and then you say to yourself, but this is my country? Is this what my country looks like? Is this how people behave in my country?

24

Folks come down from Yitzhar to burn fields or burn orchards or uproot orchards

Unit: Armored Corps Reconnaissance unit, 401st Brigade •
Rank: Lieutenant • Location: Yitzhar • Period: 2011

In that area at the time our mission was to mostly protect Arabs from Jews. The Jews there are super problematic. You have this gathering, folks come down from Yitzhar to burn fields or burn orchards or uproot orchards. The civilian guard from Yitzhar cooperates with them, he doesn't hand them over. He might keep things on the low key, but he's a resident of Yitzhar. These people

are his neighbors. Yitzhar has a yeshiva in which the locals claim that the extremists are concentrated – that the settlement itself is not populated with extremists but that the extremists populate this yeshiva. The [military] patrols in the area drive throughout the area and also arrive there sometimes. They head up to the settlement, make the rounds, look around, secure. One of the patrols stands there and three guys from the yeshiva ("Od Yosef Chai" yeshiva) come down to them, I don't remember whether or not they were masked, but they often tended to be masked. From what I remember, they began to provoke them, the settlers to the soldiers, at some point they pull out a knife and puncture the tires of their vehicle right in front of them. The squad commander turns around, aiming the gun at 60 degrees into the nothingness of Samaria, blatantly opposite them, as opposite as can be – and fires a bullet into the air. For that shot he was insanely criticized by the brigade commander. He didn't go to court trial in front of the brigade commander, but a debriefing at the brigade commander's level was conducted, maybe even at the division commander's level - on the fact that he fired. The fact that settlers punctured your tire – that's an incident. The fact that

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you fired at 60 degrees into the air in the opposite direction, is considered an incident of very grave failure. And then the soldiers ask, “What am I supposed to do in such a situation?” They said [to them], “How is it not clear to you? You need to go and beat the hell out of the Israelis, the Jews.”

But if a Palestinian would throw stones?

You'll screw him up real good and take apart his village.

According to the army's instructions, you don't have the capacity to arrest Israelis?

You do have the capacity to arrest them. If you get into a confrontation, you can beat them up to subdue them, you can't cock your weapon. They praised a team from a paratrooper reconnaissance platoon that arrived at a similar incident, left the weapons with one of them, went in and gave them a beating. They seem to be saying “beat the settlers up, but don't reach a point where you cock your weapon and fire into the air.” There were cases in which the settlers rioted there, you almost can't do anything. Border police officers can, but until you reach the border police officers the incident could have ended six times already, especially since they hide one another. You see someone acting out aggressively against Arabs – they run and enter one of the houses. They run back up to Yitzhar, enter one of the houses, that's it. There's nothing more you can do because everyone covers for one another there.

Do you have the authority to enter homes and take them out?

In principle, the border police do it. Border police deals with Jews.

Were there arrests?

There were attempts. I don't remember any of them being particularly successful.

In the case when they attacked the jeep was anyone arrested?

No. It was investigated, but there's no way to prove who it was. He (the civilian guard) sees someone masked doing it and returning to the yeshiva. He won't tell you who it is.

25

In Yitzhar they would lay down
these caltrops to puncture our
tires

Unit: 101st Paratroopers battalion • Rank: Not for publication •
Location: Yitzhar • Period: 2005

What was your relationship with the settlers?

I don't remember the dynamic with them. In Elon Moreh we would often go eat with them on Saturdays, we had a good relationship with them. Later, in Yitzhar, the relationship wasn't as good, but it's probably something more political. It was in 2005, when all the issues with the settlers were already underway. I remember that in Yitzhar they would lay down these caltrops to puncture our tires.



Where would they lay them?

On the roads.

At the entrance to the army base?

At the entrance, inside Yitzhar, inside the settlement.

Are they like iron spikes?

Yes. They would call them ninjas. The settlers would harass us.

They were the ones doing that.

Were settlers arrested?

No. There weren't arrests.

Were there investigations?

None that I know of. Not in the company that I was in.

What were your orders? You see a settler laying ninjas on the road

now - how are you supposed to act?

Talk to them, nothing beyond that.

Do you have some authority to detain?

No. They didn't talk to us about it, but it was pretty obvious that we didn't.

Why not?

They're supposedly on our side.

Was it on a daily basis?

During that period? Yes, I think so.

Was there vandalism?

I think that they would damage our electric supply. It was inside the settlement so it wasn't too hard for them to do.

What would they do?

Disconnect the power.

The company commander didn't brief you on instructions in case a settler assaulted you?

No. He was a settler himself.

In Elon Moreh we would often go eat with them on Saturdays, we had a good relationship with them. Later, in Yitzhar, the relationship wasn't as good, but it's probably something more political.

D. IDF soldiers guarding settlers' events and recreational activities

26

Every entrance to Joseph's Tomb requires all the battalions in the brigade

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: First Sergeant •
Location: Joseph's Tomb • Period: 2013

Joseph's Tomb is a really weird experience. It means taking a convoy of buses to the middle of Nablus, you go in with 500 civilians once a month, really weird. It's a production. All the senior commanders would always go there, the brigade commanders, the border police commanders. Every company has its zone and knows exactly what it's doing. They know exactly when they go in, when they go out, a really large amount of forces. They create a corridor within the city in order to enter, and that's also what's bizarre. Because [it's] Nablus, a city where tons of people live in; they don't leave their homes. There was one day when there were

riots and some old man there stepped out, just stood outside his store and [they threw] tons of smoke grenades into the store, just because there were riots coming from his direction and he was in the way.

You say no one leaves the houses. What do you mean?

There's a kind of marked road, the fast access road to go in and out [the road through which buses and forces enter Joseph's Tomb] and there are houses along its entire route that no one leaves. There are large forces there along the entire route and you don't see anyone outside. They're not allowed to walk around there, or come near. Whoever gets close is pushed back. You don't see them, like, going out at that time.

It's a sort of curfew?

It's not defined as a curfew, but it is of sorts.

A person wakes up in the morning, wants to go to the bakery next door to eat a pastry and drink some coffee – he's not allowed?

It usually takes place at night, but in principle - he can't come close. They're not allowed. The instructions were to push back anyone who gets close. "Turn around, go around, go back home." The incident I remember the most from there is when we went in to clean, us together with around 10 boys [Israelis]. They were completely shielded. We didn't clean ourselves but we secured them and they just went into the tomb and cleaned.

How many soldiers secured 10 people?

A lot. Every entrance to Joseph's Tomb requires all the battalions in the brigade. Every battalion sends a front command squad

and more guys are stationed surrounding the area, and there are lots of border police forces. The advance guard company would station snipers on rooftops and stuff like that at large entrances.

27

At the end of the day, the archeologist calls each time and says: I want to visit mosque X, Y, Z

Unit: Judea Regional Brigade • Rank: First Sergeant •
Area: Hebron • Period: 2009-2011

There's a researcher for studies of the land of Israel who's considered among the leading scholars of historic Israel. He studies Judea and Samaria. He also lives in Judea and Samaria. He's a settler, very knowledgeable, who tells lots of stories. One day they came and told our officer: It's your responsibility to be responsible for ****. Anything he wants - you need to provide.

Who told you that?

The unit commander, with authorization from the brigade commander for all intents and purposes. In other words, When they say the magic word ****, [if it's needed] for the purposes of authorizing something with the brigade, it's authorized. Now,

****, whether consciously or not, studies mosques in particular, and the idea is to prove that there was a Jewish presence in certain mosques, or that they were built on something Jewish. At the end of the day, **** calls every time and says: I want to visit mosque X, Y, Z. One time it was a mosque in a town called Bani Na'im, outside Hebron. He claimed that it was very plausible that Lod's wife from the Bible was buried inside the mosque. They demanded that a visit to the mosque be organized for him. As those responsible for the relations with the Palestinians, we understood the significance. Especially when it's a guy that looks like a settler and the order is to make it happen in coordination. What's coordination? It means that the officer calls the Palestinians and they can't say no to him, they won't say, "We don't want you to visit."

Why not?

Because they're scared, they want to maintain good relations with the army, because they know that when they say no to us, we can attack or stick it to them like 1,000 times. In general, a tour inside a mosque is coordinated with the Waqf. A Waqf is a Palestinian authority that is similar to our Rabbinate. For example, the visit to

When they say the magic word ****, [if it's needed] for the purposes of authorizing something with the brigade, it's authorized. Now, ****, whether consciously or not, studies mosques in particular, and the idea is to prove that there was a Jewish presence in certain mosques, or that they were built on something Jewish.

Bani Na'im was coordinated with them. We arrived, three jeeps, driving to the mosque in Bani Na'im to visit, research. We didn't grasp the significance of what we were doing...we went with him, he went in, at first people there were confused, they see the army and stuff. They let us in.

To the mosque?

Yes. He was measuring, looking, photographing, the imam arrived and then the mess started, within like half an hour maybe. He says, "Why is there a settler in my mosque?" While he [****] was measuring, we realized more and more people were arriving. We had three jeeps, we were maybe 10 soldiers, and suddenly there were like 150 Palestinians outside the mosque who saw a settler walking into the mosque with the army. For them, even though Bani Na'im is relatively less religious, more affluent – it is absolutely unacceptable. We were in the midst of a major riot inside the mosque. Within seconds our jeeps were being pelted with stones and [we] started running to the jeeps, right in the middle of the masses. They showered our jeep with stones and we had to get out of there. A few months later he sent his research, and it was entirely based on showing Jewish presence in Bani Na'im. To me, and to many looking on from the sidelines, it could look like someone who is trying to justify Jewish presence in Judea and Samaria. It serves their political objective in effect. And it really was like that. We did it several times. In Hebron he really discovered revelations that seemed serious, at least as far as what he claims.

Did you ever ask why they organize this kind of tours for ***?**

No. It's just what they did. I never asked or doubted. It's also very hard; he discovers real evidence. But on the other hand, you walk into an area controlled by another nation, that's supposed to belong to another nation. The Oslo Accord wasn't designed for us to violate it so that a scholar can come and research stuff. Oslo permits us to go into Areas A and B (areas in which the Palestinian Authority is responsible for security) but it doesn't permit us to go in for historical research. What allows us to go into Area C is supposed to be an ongoing substantive threat to the State of Israel and its Jewish citizens. We were in three mosques with him. One, which he claims was Lod's wife's tomb; the second, which he claims was a Jewish settlement. He claims that between (the neighborhood of) Tel Rumedia and the Tomb of the Patriarchs there was another small Jewish town, right next to the Tomb of the Patriarchs. And he claims that in order for there to be a Jewish town in this period, there has to be a pool of water. He claims that there's a mosque that is situated on top of a pool of water.

In the Casbah?

Right in the Casbah. We went to the mosque in the Casbah, and after learning our lesson from the incident in Bani Na'im, we went at night, quietly, without being seen. We really did find a kind of pool of water. On the third time we also went into crazy riots in Sair-Shiyuch (towns in the Hebron area).

That was also in a mosque?

Inside the mosque – everything is, by chance, inside mosques.

Who escorts these patrols? Are they coordinated ahead of time?

They're coordinated with the Waqf, and they ask for forces from the brigade, and the brigade allocates.

On behalf of whom is he researching?

I think he has an institute. He's considered the number one researcher. I think it's a non-political institute.

28

Almost zoo-like in a sense

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: First Sergeant •

Place: Hebron • Period: 2008

On Saturdays there were tours of the Casbah, which are basically a bunch of Jews from Israel, the diaspora, anywhere, who go on a tour of the Casbah through Palestinian territory that is generally closed to Jewish entry. I have no idea on what grounds they allow it, but they allow it, and we secure the tour. It means one patrol wandering around the stairs guarding from above ensuring that everything's okay, another patrol downstairs distancing possible threats from the group and the front command squad.

Does the front command squad go with them?

Walks among the group, in front and in back.

What happens on these tours?

There is a sense of tension among the soldiers, since it's a dangerous situation. On the other hand, Palestinians are very indifferent to the situation, and the Jews are very excited, and it's a really absurd situation, really almost zoo-like in a sense. You enter to take a tour and look around and then you leave. To look at a place in which people live in unbearable conditions. And you pass through [and the participants are] looking and asking. And the tour guide is from the Jewish settlement in Hebron, a familiar guy. Touching merchandise, like showing the merchandise to the guys on the tour, handling it freely as if it belongs to him. I think most of the merchants who were there [were] in shock; I imagine that they always had some sort of hope that these tourists might purchase some things from them. I don't remember seeing that happening even once.

It's on Saturday, isn't it?

Yes, tours on Saturday. That's it, all in all even on the most basic level for soldiers it's annoying because one of the patrols that guards the tour is a patrol that supposedly just got off from a mission not long before. They're sent back to guard, they get off again and then go back to patrolling. So it kind of eats up your free time. And in general it's an annoying situation. But there's also something in it that refreshes the soldiers sometimes, I think. To see some other faces and people in different situations.

29

The army has to guard a father-son trip from Tapuach to Yitzhar through two Arab villages

Unit: Not for Publication • Rank: Captain • Location: Tapuach •
Period: Not for Publication

There were security missions for all kinds of tours through Einbus and all the villages in the valley, from the area of Tapuach through the valley to Yitzhar, for a father-son trip. They are walking by foot

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locations.

in the middle of the night, under a full moon. The army has to guard a father-son trip from [the settlement of] Tapuach to Yitzhar through two Arab villages. You need to walk with them, escort them, position observation posts in absurd locations. There was an observation post force of five soldiers, there was the front command squad, and a patrol that was on call, plus an escort force right alongside them. It went through Jamma'in, Urif or Einbus to Yitzhar.

Are the settlers armed?

Yes, they usually defend themselves.

They were escorted by a pretty significant force. I don't know if they went into houses. I assume they walked on the trails on this road, and if not on the trails then through the fields. It's mostly fields, olive groves and plantations there. The situation is very complicated between the army and the civilians. Generally, either the Jews do it and it's a mess or the Jews do it and it isn't a mess. Usually, the area commander prefers to be there with them to make sure there's no mess.

Who makes the decision if something like that happens?

With the brigade commander's authorization. The battalion commander can come and say, "this is nuts." But it's not as nuts as them doing that, making a mess.

Is it possible to prevent them from doing it?

No.

And what if Palestinians want to march through Yitzhar?

The Palestinians won't want to march through Yitzhar. Maybe because they understand that it's stupid, maybe because they understand that they have nothing to look for there. They'll get beaten, shot, lots of tear gas, stones. They also don't have any option to arrange such a thing with the army.

30

Asking myself many times if I'm on the right side

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: First Sergeant •

Area: Hebron • Period: 2010

It was very hard for me to see the monument built for Baruch Goldstein [in Kiryat Arba]. There's just a huge, beautiful and dignified monument of sorts with trees all around. Until you hear his story you think he was a great man, a righteous man, and then you hear the story about how he just murdered so many people [Palestinians] who were praying (the testifier is referring to the Tomb of the Patriarchs massacre that took place in February 1994, in which 29 Palestinians were murdered and 125 were wounded by Baruch Goldstein, a settler from Kiryat Arba). I remember I was horrified by the community's perception of him. That he's a hero. Big part of my experience in Hebron involved asking myself many times if I'm on the right side.

What do you mean?

As a soldier you need to carry out orders... They tell you that you need to guard some march, Jews that just came to an Arab village, placed caravans and settled there, in the middle of this hilltop. They basically wanted to expand the area and they decided to set up a synagogue, which is also illegal, of course. When they

inaugurate a synagogue and put a Torah scroll in there, they do some kind of very large procession into it. Then they bring us as soldiers, we have to guard this procession. They block all the roads so that these guys can march their illegal march, we get to their makeshift synagogue, [they] bring in the Torah scroll and then there's an assembly. Some female rabbi gets up and talks about how we should all look around us, that the entire area is ours, we need to get it back. How did she say it? Obama just wants to put us in ghettos, and put fences up around us like they used to do – and we will break down the fences, expanding things. And I'm supposed to guard this place. There was also a religious member of Knesset there, I don't remember who it was.

They start marching with the Torah scroll and all that –where do they pass through?

They pass through Palestinians neighborhoods, where the passage is blocked.

Who stops them?

The army puts a patrol there, soldiers who stand with weapons to guard, and to warn anyone who wants to pass through that now they can't. They wait for the procession to end.

How long does it last?

Something like an hour and a half, if I'm not mistaken, and they walk very slowly, as is fitting for the inauguration of a Torah scroll. There's a very large community that goes there. I estimate that there were 50-100 people. I remember that little kids were passing next to me during the procession, religious kids from

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the settlement. I remember they actually talked to me about my weapon, “show me your bipod, show me your Trijicon (scope).” They really know a lot. What goes through my head at that time is that kids should be playing with Legos rather than talking about weapons all day. Because they really made an issue of it. Every time we would pass next to them they would pause on our weapons, kids. There was a kid who came to me and told me that when he grows up he wants to be a soldier and kill Arabs. A really young kid. That’s also an experience I’ll never forget.

They arrive with the procession to the same outpost, the same structure, the synagogue - and what happens there?

They hold some kind of ceremony around the inauguration of the Torah scroll itself, and, as I said before, some female rabbi came and gave some short speech on how important it is that this place belong to the

Jews, and that it’s ours and no one will stop us, and the whole world is against us, and that we’ll overcome these things and everything will be fine, and that we’re the living nation of Israel, and that we’ll win.

The entire area, which is an illegal outpost – does the army continue to protect it and defend it afterwards, too?

Yes. I think that there's a post there to this day. Two people were guarding a few settlers there, I think it was three families.

It's a few isolated caravans?

Yeah, yeah. Two to three caravans. Totally.

31

We go there all the time for no real reason

Unit: Not for Publication • Rank: Captain •

Area: Ramallah and Al-Bireh • Period: 2012

We had some kind of outpost on the Assaf junction. There were like three makeshift shacks, some guys suddenly appeared there and we had no choice but to guard them. This outpost created a lot of friction with Burqa (a Palestinian village near Ramallah). It's an exposed hilltop near the road.

What does a lot of friction mean?

Friction between hilltop youth and farmers from the village that passed through on the road. It means that now when they see a Palestinian getting close to their territory, they summon us; we go there all the time for no real reason.



Is it the settlers' territory?

It's the area they're in, [but] it is not theirs. As the army, we can't touch them or do anything, we waited for them to be evacuated.

They situate themselves on territory that's agricultural territory?

It's an open territory, south of them there are Burqa's groves, around one kilometer south. Usually they report to us that there's a Palestinian nearby so we pop over, bring a tracker and scan to make sure he doesn't come... a very exhausting activity, lots of "crying wolf" kind of thing.

How do they get you over there?

They have a phone number for the council's operations room, a civilian operations room, a phone center of sorts. They call and

the center knows to summon us.

And every time there's a call, you go?

We respond as if there was an infiltration into the settlement.
Forces, trackers.

Was it fenced off or anything?

Nothing, nothing. They didn't even have a floor.

**So what do you mean infiltrate? Where are the Palestinians
penetrating - between the caravans?**

Yes.

E. Proximity and close personal ties between settlers and soldiers

32

There was an instance in which one of the settlers gave a soldier who shot a Palestinian in the knee an axe

Unit: Nahal 932nd Battalion • Rank: Lieutenant •

Location: Hebron • Period: 2014

The relationship between settlers and soldiers is really confusing. As a commander I deliberated whether or not to let them eat with Baruch Marzel (an extreme right-wing activist who lives in Hebron). And then you say to yourself, like, what, am I going to put the burden of the situation on my soldiers who are hungry on Saturday because, I don't know, the cook is lazy...so I'll let them eat there and then he'll raise a toast and say he is really proud of everyone. He would tell us stories about how he had this automatic weapon during the Intifada and they [the Palestinians] would shoot at him, so he would stand at the window [of his house],

shoot into the city and take down their solar water boilers. And then we say, wow, he's crazy, this is unbelievable. Everyone would laugh and it was nice.¹ There was also an instance in which one of the settlers gave a soldier who shot a Palestinian in the knee an axe.

An axe?

An axe. But the battalion commander also says that anyone who kills a terrorist, or takes down a knee (a phrase describing shooting towards the the legs with an intention to wound and not to kill, in accordance to the IDF's rules of engagement) gets weekend leave starting Thursday. A soldier of mine who shot someone in the knee before I arrived, he got like an award plaque and got weekend leave starting Thursday. They train you to be a soldier after all, and a soldier is supposed to want to fight, and then you get to a place like Hebron, and that's not war, all your enthusiasm to fight is drained into you ultimately shooting someone in the knee. Like, they make you seek it out.

With Baruch Marzel, did the soldiers go to his house to eat?

Yes, into his home.

Did it happen at other families over there as well?

I ate at other families, but there were lots of interactions and things like this. They would approach every soldier, bring cakes and cookies and make it appear as if they are really concerned, of

¹ In an item aired on Israeli Chanel 2, Marzel denied having made such remarks.

course until you do something they don't like and then they call you a Nazi and throw stones at you.

Your commanders, how do they relate to this?

They turn a blind eye. They knew, they saw. Fine, I mean, take the cookies, take whatever you want. The Chabad guys would come into our post. Every time a platoon went out, the Hebron Chabad guys would throw them a barbeque, which sounds really nice and fun, and it really did raise morale among the soldiers. The problem is that it (the interaction with the settlers) confuses the soldiers completely about what their mission there is supposed to be, which is to maintain order, and it totally makes them biased – meaning now they can no longer enforce some kind of order on

the settlers. If they get gifts from them all day, you can really call it benefits. Before arrest operations, all kinds of guys would find us in bizarre places, and bring us pizzas and say to us: “Thank you, go get them.” They really rile you up to execute violence and “get them hard” and that kind of talk. There was this time when they invited all the commanders from [the military post in] Tel Rumeida to a house somewhere in Beit Hadassah, they brought us pizzas and cakes and stuff like that, and then had a talk with us, kind of review of the incidents that happened in

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the city with emphases on the things that are important to the civilian emergency response team commander [of the Jewish settlement in Hebron]. All in all it makes sense that the army would work together with the civilian emergency response team, but then *** (a well-known settler in Hebron) went like: “by the way, if you see the our children fooling around as kids do” – which basically means on Saturday they walk on the road because they have nothing else to do and look to get into fights – “then be understanding with them, they’re under a lot of stress, they live here and they’re scared all the time and sometimes it expresses itself in problematic ways.” It’s basically like whitewashing the fact that they’re violent. So “don’t notify the police, just bring them to me and I’ll handle them.” It’s the polar opposite completely, completely, completely, of how they encourage us to treat Palestinian youth.

33

There were settler families that actually lived inside the army facility

Unit: Paratroopers • Rank: First Sergeant • Location: Hebron •
Period: 2008

The minute you get to Mitkanim (a military post in Hebron), the first ones to approach you are the settlers. They take you to Friday dinner, talk to you, start a dialogue with you about the situation.

How does the settlers' influence manifest itself?

In conversations, demonstrations of what's going on there, primarily stories about how the Palestinian grabbed the Jewish child and tried to do "one two three," to him, or how the Palestinian tried to go into the synagogue or the Tomb of the Patriarchs, "not during his hours." Stories that may or may not be true. When you're a soldier – you totally inclined in their direction. When you constantly hear about what he [the Palestinian] did yesterday and the day before, you believe that the situation is "you need to do this to them so that they will understand."

Who gives the orders?

Settlers. Not anything explicit; it's a more of a didactic struggle. They come and invite you to dinner, and when dinners are accompanied by showing you pictures of the 1921 and 1929 riots,

it totally educates you through showing you how wrong they are and how right you are and how much your ethics are on the settlers' side. If they needed the gate [of the post] to remain open, it would remain open. I don't remember that we ever closed it on a Saturday. That was always our question – how are we not closing it? There was never an answer because they couldn't say that the settlers are the ones determining it. There were settler families that actually lived inside the army facility. They come sit with you, they always come sit and talk to you, it's totally legitimate.

Do you have the authority to arrest settlers?

No. Our authority with settlers is to inquire. As far as you're concerned, settlers are not part of your lexicon.

If a settler assaults a Palestinian - what do you do?

You check the Palestinian, take him aside, search and handcuff him, first thing. Your starting point is that the Palestinian is the problem.

Even if he gets beaten?

It doesn't matter. Arresting the settler, beyond the standard dry commands, is something that you're supposed to understand and know not to do.

34

They encouraged us to be on good terms with the settlers

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: first Sergeant •

Location: Tapuach • Period: 2012

They really encouraged us to be on good terms with the settlers in Tapuach. Since all the men in Tapuach go to synagogue on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, two soldiers sit outside and guard them. It was the norm to eat dinner and breakfast with the families because they always invite you. They were really nice to us. You sit on a bench outside the synagogue, spend an hour, an hour and a half, two hours there, and when they finish usually someone will come and tell the soldiers “good Sabbath, good Sabbath, come eat.” You go to their house, put your equipment in the corner, keep your two-way radio on you – but as long as you’re on alert, go eat at their house, sure. It was totally routine and totally fine. People liked to go because you’d eat real people food. There were two soldiers in Tapuach and two soldiers in Eli, and two in Rahelim – in the end about eight guys got a good dinner.

When you say they encouraged it, what do you mean, as far as the officers?

They saw it as something really positive, especially with the guys from Tapuach because they’re right above us, right above the post.

I think they thought that it was good to be on good relations with the settlers from Tapuach. It was all fine and good until one night olive trees were uprooted. You have the settlement Tapuach and below there's a checkpoint, and beyond the checkpoint its already territory belonging to [the village] Yasouf. There's Yasouf's grove, which ends in the middle - there's

Tapuach's grove, and on the other side of Tapuach, Yasouf has another grove. When they (the Palestinians) want to pass through from one [grove] to the other, it's in coordination with the (Civil) Administration.

Is it marked somehow?

They know somehow. I didn't understand completely how but they know. There's also some small fence. Once during some period we would open the gate down there and let the guys from Yasouf pass through to the other grove to tend to it, which was also with us escorting.

That has to be coordinated?

With the Administration, yes. We had to be there, also to make sure there wouldn't be any friction between the populations. And then, once when they arrived in the morning and the guys from the [Civil] Administration came with them, [they saw that] there had been a few trees uprooted. It was obvious what had happened but they didn't do anything about it, it didn't bother anyone. It

I think they thought that it was good to be on good relations with settlers from Tapuach. It was all fine and good until one night olive trees were uprooted.

was obvious that it was guys from Tapuach who had uprooted the trees because it couldn't have been anyone else because it's fucking far from any other place...

What do you mean when you say it didn't bother anyone?

It was like, "OK, it happened". The guys from the [Civil] Administration didn't like it, it annoyed them, but it's not like we tried to find out what happened; it's not like they said, okay, maybe we'll station a force to guard at night. There was no action taken to prevent it – not now or in the future. It was just, OK, here, trees were uprooted, it happened, and now, OK go and take care of the trees you have left.

Did they bring the police?

No.

Trackers?

Nothing. Maybe they reported it to someone, but there was no interest. They looked at the tree, everyone was sad and continued on.



35

You have to pop out for a mission
and a child and baby nonchalantly
walk past you in the post

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: First Sergeant •

Place: Hebron • Period: 2008

During our time there, there was this incident where the settlers ripped our battalion commander's ranks off during a riot. They managed to physically jump on him and when they eventually caught the person who jumped on him he was detained for a bit – but the settlers there didn't like us at all. Because we were members of the youth movements, the 50th Battalion (An infantry unit which has the reputation of being more dovish), a big mess. At first they tried, we were at their homes for Sabbath receptions, but it's not a normal neighborhood. The Mitkanim post is like the settlers' home, on each side of the post, so the guys (settlers) pass there throughout the day. They're an inseparable part of our landscape. You have to pop out for a mission and a child and baby nonchalantly walk past you in the post. An integral part of the post – from our Sabbath receptions in the post, to our conversations with the company commander. It's pretty disgusting.

What was the story with the battalion commander?

It was also in the news. There was a gathering, I don't remember

what about. Either they tried to block some bus belonging to Arabs or to one of your tours, and they jumped on him. They hated him because he was a leftist as far as they were concerned.

36

Soldier, do you want some money?

Unit: Nahal 50th Battalion • Rank: Not for Publication •

Location: Hebron • Period: 2010

Generally, how would you describe the Jewish settlement's attitude towards you?

Really nasty attitude, I pretty much suffered there. Everyone there pretty much suffered from the Jewish settlement. On the one hand they would tell us: Thank you for protecting us, and the Chabad House guys would come and bring us popsicles, drinks, snacks to our posts. Coffee at night. It was really nice, but there were a lot of guys who, in principal, just refused to take food from them. Even in the Jewish settlement itself, on many Saturdays, they'd bring us lunch already prepared and everything. Some soldier came, took the plate and threw it into the garbage in front of them on purpose. Extreme incidents like that. And like, they had this side of being nice and saying thank you and blessing us and giving us food, but if we did something they didn't like they would curse us

and confront us. There was one guy who just came with a cable cutter and at the entrance to the post, the base has an electric gate, an electric iron gate that runs on an electric track with a button. There was one [guy] who lived in the neighborhood near the post who got pissed off when we operated the gate on the Sabbath. So he came with his cable cutter and cut the cable. The Sabbath protocol is that the gate is [only] for the passage of people and only if the front command squad [jeep] needs to go out, so they open and close it. He got pissed that we did it. He just came and cut it and then they called the police. They didn't have what to do with that, they won't do anything about it.

How do you explain that? He damaged an IDF post.

That's how Jews are treated, like, it's the Kiryat Arba police. They know them (the settlers) personally, these guys. The police also go there, like, there are families who go eat with them. The Jewish settlement's security officer lives in Hebron and he's in contact with the police. I can't explain it.

Tell a bit about what it means to have a neighborhood inside a post, how does it manifest itself?

Not a neighborhood inside the post, just adjacent. And there's this door, and now it's gone; now you have to go around the yeshiva.

But during your time they did pass through?

Yes.

How does it look like when they pass through?

It doesn't look good in any way and it's pretty annoying. The kids would come to us, open the door to the rooms and go in, which was

the most annoying thing in the world and there were some who befriended them and played with them and the families invited them to their house for meals. But a lot of guys got really annoyed by it. They're little kids aged seven to 10, you can't say: kid, get out of there. At some point there were outbursts directed against them.

They had this side of being nice and saying thank you and blessing us and giving us food, but if we did something they didn't like they would curse us and confront us.

Like what?

Like, soldiers get off for the weekend, they do six-six (a six-hour shift followed by six hours for rest and other activities) or eight-eight, so for the six remaining, they sleep. Kids come and open the door and if someone there's awake, they start talking to him. It's the most annoying thing in the world.

They just hang around you all the time?

Not all the time. It was mostly on Friday. It was nice on Friday, Sabbath protocol, religious groups arrive bringing sweets, drinks, gifts, it was really nice. There were soldiers who got an MP3 players with earphones.

Just like that?

Just like that. Or rich American Jews who just came up to a soldier: Soldier, do you want some money? There was a soldier who got almost 500 shekels.

He took it?

No, he returned it later.

They would go around handing out gifts?

There were some Jews from Oklahoma who came with personal bags of Hershey's and shirts and lots of chocolates and lots of sweets, snacks.

And the soldiers took them?

Yeah, of course, and they also took some for our friends. It's the most fun in the world but lots of guys didn't accept anything from religious people.

And all the officers knew about these gifts?

Yeah of course, they would also take them.

F. Integrating settlers and their political ideologies into IDF educational activities

37

The guide said, "Area C is ours"

Unit: Caracal • Rank: First Sergeant •

Area: Ramallah and Al-Bireh • Period: 2014

During infantry corps school, they took us to Ofra, gave us a lecture there. They called the trip "In the footsteps of the Maccabees." Some rabbi started talking about something everyone can relate to – he talked about Derrick Sharp's three-pointer against Zalgiris at the time, (of) Maccabi, and compared it to the Jewish people against the world and the fact that we're always up against everyone and that we always have to believe in pushing to the end. Then they took us to some settlement somewhere. There's a caravan there that looks out onto the valley and we saw the massive construction with a guide who told us about the area's history. The construction in the settlements, really serious buildings. It was a very big hilltop and on top were some of our isolated settlements,

On the way there she took the microphone and said "By the way, all the settlements we're passing through are in Area C, Israeli territory in the full sense of the word." She said: "Area C is ours, Area B is both, and Area A is Arabs."

separated, three of four settlements far apart from one other. The entire area was annexed to us and she explained to us that this area is considered a regional council and that eventually it will all be connected to one local council – all these isolated settlements. If I'm not mistaken, they gave each settlement the same name because of their determination for it to be one settlement in the end, but it was made of three blocs, in which two isolated streets comprised each bloc, 5-10 minute

drive from Ofra. There was a Palestinian village there that looked really good; a village that you could tell had money. She explained that this was the Palestinians' vacation village. From there they took us to a caravan overlooking the area, she told us the history, about the Maccabees' battles that took place right there, and about the Jewish settlement. On the way there she took the microphone and said "By the way, all the settlements we're passing through are in Area C, Israeli territory in the full sense of the word." She said: "Area C is ours, Area B is both, and Area A is Arabs."

Who was it?

A settler doing her national service in Ofra and who gives tours there. She did her tour and then explained through half a smile that the Palestinians already settled in all the valleys down below so all we have left is to take the hilltops, and that's why we're

on the hilltops. Not because it's a strategic advantage and not because we're trying to provoke them. After we left the caravan they took us to Beit El, to some lookout point that had a mosaic floor in the middle with a map of Greater Israel. We also went past two outposts that she pointed out, blocs of four or five caravans. She avoided saying (the word) Palestinians – she didn't talk [about Palestinians] once. I purposely asked her every time, "This Palestinian village – what's it called?" Or, "Palestinian license plates, what's the difference between the green and the white ones?" And every time she said, "this Arab village, this Arab town, the Arab residents, the Arab license plates." That's also what she explained to everyone. She took the microphone and said, "Notice that all the Arab villages here are named after Jewish settlements that existed during the Biblical Period. When the Arabs settled here, they adopted the names of the Jewish settlements that were already here."

This tour was for trainees in the squad commanders course?

Yes, trainees in the squad commanders course, and they brought along girls doing their national service from the settlement.

38

They really liked joining the tours

Unit: Judea Regional Brigade • Rank: Sergeant • Place: Hebron •
Period: Not for publication

Tell me what it means to be an educational non-commissioned officer and under whom you serve.

[I was] under the Judea regional brigade, but my job was basically to go into the Tomb of the Patriarchs, to give tours. For all the battalions in the area, to explain the place to them, its sensitivity, relations with the community. With the Jews, with the Arabs, go into many commanders' meetings and invite them to come on the tours.

Who trains you to conduct tours inside the Tomb?

I received a guidance kit prepared in the past by an educational officer who was there. It was in cooperation with the Jewish settlement, the person in charge there.

With Noam Arnon?

Yes, precisely. Lots of locals gave me information; I didn't only rely on the kit I was given.

What was the main message from a day of touring inside the Tomb of the Patriarchs?

That we're there because we should be, because they need us, because it's the heritage of the State of Israel, of the people of Israel, and

we aren't there for no reason. We're there because there's a Jewish community that we want to maintain, and we'll do it at all costs. We talked a lot about the historical connection, the roots, that there really are crazy archaeological findings from the time of our patriarch Abraham, King David, and that the whole connection leads to the fact that we need to be there, despite all of the unpleasantness around it.

How do you explain this unpleasantness in such a tour?

It's very politically correct. Very.

What do you tell them? What's considered a success when they leave the Tomb?

To familiarize them with the history of the place, explain to them that a very grave incident happened there with Baruch Goldstein. To explain that just as there was a very grave incident from our side, there are also incidents from their side. That role is essential.

What do you say about Baruch Goldstein?

That there was a Jewish terrorist who went into Isaac Hall and started massacring people. And you know, you need to present it in a way that conveys the message, without going into political opinions.

What's the message?

We're against violence, we're here to protect our population, if

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they need us, because
it's the heritage of
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Jewish community that
we want to maintain,
and we will do it at
all costs.

there were to be a security incident for which we'd have to come and take action, we would do so. But of our own volition we will not grab an M16 and start shooting people, that's not right. First of all, I represent the IDF, I represent an organization that has objectives, and it doesn't matter what I think about the matter, I need to come and present the position they ask of me.

Did your tours in the Tomb of the Patriarchs take place with settlers from the settlement there, or other settlements sometimes?

They really liked joining the tours.

And what would they do?

The truth is, they didn't disturb. If Noam Arnon was in the area, then actually I would gladly include him.

What would he say?

Within the restrictions of the education corps. I don't remember anymore, but I do remember that we very much accepted the people in the area; we didn't want to provoke any anti (sentiment) of "we're saying the right thing and you're saying the wrong thing." All in all, they live there, they're part of the environment, but I will set the tone as far as what to say and what not to say, as far as the orders. I won't let someone come and start inciting against one of the sides, because that's not the objective of this information.

What was the interaction with the settlers or with Noam Arnon at that time?

I really liked them. I liked working with them, I went into their homes many times and we invited them to our base to get to

know the people, it enables you to be more connected to what you're doing. We cooperated with a very nice woman, *** ***, who came and ran an activity one evening for all the women of the unit, "a let's get-to-know-each other." It brought people together. You don't really know who you're protecting and what your objective is in relation to them; suddenly you meet the people and you understand what you're doing there, you understand that you want to protect *** *** and her five children. And the fact that she comes every Friday at noon to hand out Sabbath candles, is because she also wants to get to know you, to ensure that you're not her enemy, not against her. And the fact that soon you will go into the city, she will understand that you're doing everything because you have to and because there is a need and not because you hate her – on the contrary.

39

There was no way to think differently

Unit: Not for Publication • Rank: Sergeant • Area: Bethlehem •
Period: 2000

As an education non-commissioned officer, what are you supposed to do?

Lots of things. It was mainly, there's the whole topic of explaining the mission and educating soldiers to be highly dedicated to their mission.

Isn't that what commanders are for?

Okay, so an education non-commissioned officer works with the commander and helps him assimilate IDF values in the soldiers. Again, there's the tenacity of purpose in performing missions, which is the first value, and there's purity of arms of course, comradeship, responsibility. There are 11 I think – it's really shameful and disgraceful that I can't remember them all. And there's the whole topic of abating, that is to say, to abate it. That means bringing bands and taking them on trips and tours. We really wanted to take the soldiers out, for example, to a pool, and then we contacted all kinds of Civilian Security Coordinators in settlements to let them use a pool. And there's the whole topic of getting to know the area and its history to get the soldier to feel attached to the place, to what he's supposedly fighting for. And personally that was the most problematic thing in the world, and I had a lot of confrontations about it with the officer for whom I worked. Say, in Gush Etzion there's this guy, I don't know if he's still alive. I don't remember what his name is, but he's a kind of ranger of sorts in this area, hiking all the time and there are always some kids with him and he walks around the whole area. He knows the territory; he always takes everyone to the streams in Gush Etzion. The officer told me all the time: "Come on already, take your soldiers, let *** give them a tour of the area." And of

course, within 10 minutes, it got insanely political. There's a lonely oak tree in the Gush, next to one of the central settlements there. He started telling all these heroic battle stories about Gush Etzion. I don't know, for me it was hard, especially because I come from the wrong side of the political map. I'm sitting there and *** starts talking about the cradle of our culture, something like that. And I kind of cleared my throat. And the commander was really really happy because all the commanders in the battalion, like... there was no way to be... think differently.

There's the whole subject of getting to know the area and its history to get the soldier to feel attached to the place, what he is supposedly fighting for.

What is differently?

Differently, say against the war or against the occupation or something like that. There was no way.

Has anyone ever said something and was silenced?

Me. I asked him (the settler who guided the tour) not to get into it, and I was reprimanded by the commander. Clear and simple.

He took you aside?

No not aside, in front of the soldiers. Why aside?

What did he say?

Unpleasant things. He knew, he understood why I cleared my throat and said: "Well, we know your opinions, keep them to yourself," something like that.

But you're the education non-commissioned officer.

Yes, but again, I'm not an authority. As far as he's concerned I can keep showing my discontent.

These tours take place all the time?

Almost every company that reaches the area needs to go through a tour in the area and learn about Gush Etzion's battle heritage.

Appendix A



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

Appendix B

The IDF Chief of Staff's bureau response

Dear Mr. Zaidel,

I hereby approve that your inquiry from April 12, 2016 was received at the Chief of General Staff's headquarters, and our response is as follows:

Regarding your assertion about the location of IDF soldiers in proximity to Israeli settlements, and at times within the settlement's territory itself, we note that this is necessary for the purpose of implementing missions, in light of analyses of operational necessity, the area's history, and the prevailing security situation in each area. In many cases, the most suitable and effective security response requires positioning IDF forces within settlements' territory or in immediate proximity to them, alongside providing regional defense (positioning forces in security facilities, on roads, and other points in the area).

As to claims regarding soldiers being hosted in settlers' homes, we will note that according to the army's directives and Central Command policies, soldiers serving under the Central Command are instructed not to accept gifts or offerings from civilians,

Israelis, or Palestinians alike. However, the Central Command does not enforce a sweeping prohibition on participating in events organized by Israeli settlements or on soldiers being hosted in residents' homes. In some cases this is authorized, as part of a supervised relationship between the army and the civilians it protects. This has been carried out over the years in villages in other areas, such as villages near the border with Gaza and Israel's northern border. Insofar as participation in events is supervised in accordance with directives and follows commanders' discretion, we do not see hosting of this kind or participating in events in settlements (i.e. Independence Day events or other holidays) as any kind of deviation from appropriate policy, or as harming soldiers' professionalism or qualification.

It should be emphasized that, as indicated even in some of the testimonies submitted with the inquiry, a soldier who is not interested in interacting with settlers (in a context that is not part of his mission), is not obligated to do so in any sense. Moreover, commanders supervise contact and interactions between soldiers and residents, and in cases where any suspicion of improper conduct arise, clear instructions are given by the commander.

In your letter you further claim that settlers are involved in operational activities, as "leaders of the forces in the field," highlighting the civilian security coordinators. Regarding this matter, we stress that civilian security coordinators are legally certified security entities, and that they operate strictly in defined

territories, as subject to the instructions and directives of regional defense bodies across all brigades. Civilian security coordinators' authority is bestowed upon them by the Central Command in accordance with the 1971 decree concerning Settlement Guard duty (Judea and Samaria) (No. 432), regulating the authorities of the civilian security coordinator. As part of their duty, civilian security coordinators are expected to assist IDF forces and the Israeli Police in fulfilling their missions, as necessary, which includes the provision of security-related information and insights to the forces.

It should also be emphasized that civilian security coordinators have no command or hierarchical authority over soldiers, and are separate from the chain of command, as they are an entity appointed by the army, who exercises its authority in accordance to directives from the military echelon.

On the same matter, a claim was made that certain settlers are involved in decision-making processes and even partake in shaping operational policies, and to that end, an example was given of participation in military leadership's periodic situation reports. On this matter we should note that there are joint discussions attended by the leadership and municipal security entities, as is customary in many other locations in Israel, yet a clear distinction is made between discussions conducted with settlement entities and internal military discussions. And in any event, decisions are made strictly by the authorized military echelon.

Regarding the claim that IDF soldiers are exposed to political content and are given lectures provided by settlers' population, Central Command forces are directed not to participate in any event with political or partisan characteristics and to heed to army commands, in not even attending any lectures or descriptions of this kind.

As noted above, the claims in your letter were presented in a general format. As such, we can only respond in a general manner and say that IDF forces are responsible for the well-being, security and protection of Israeli citizens, whatever their ethnic, religious or political orientation might be. For this purpose, IDF forces often operate in areas in which these civilians reside, and it is possible that over the years various types of relationships will form between IDF forces and residents, as they do in other places in Israel, between other security entities and the population in the area in which they operate.

The IDF sees the defense of civilians living in the region of Judea and Samaria as a mission of primary importance, and ensures that the interface between Israeli civilians in Judea and Samaria and IDF forces in the region is conducted in accordance with army commands as well as in an appropriate and dignified manner.

The claim that the existing relationships disrupt IDF soldiers' ability to fulfill their missions is incorrect. On the contrary, the relationship with civilians, and in particular with those carrying

security-related roles in settlements in the region of Judea and Samaria, is a significant factor in the IDF's capacity to fulfil its security responsibility in the territory, so long as it is conducted in accordance with commands.

Thank you for your inquiry.

This response was originally provided in Hebrew and translated into English by "Breaking the Silence". For the original response in Hebrew please see Appendix C.

Appendix C



לשכת הרמטכ"ל

צבא	ההגנה	לישראל
לשכת	ראש המטה	הכללי
מזכירות	הפיקוד	העליון
טל'	-	03-5691120
פקס	-	03-5698296
תיק:		מנ - 12
סימוכין:		02000055-17-1424
ז'	אייר	תשע"ו
15	מאי	2016

לכבוד

מנהל מחלקת איסוף עדויות בארגון "שוברים שתיקה" – מר רון זיידל
ron@shovrimshatika.org באמצעות מייל:

מר זיידל שלום רב,

הריני לאשר כי פנייתך מיום ה-12 באפריל 2016 התקבלה בלשכת ראש המטה הכללי, להלן התייחסותנו:

אשר לדברך בעניין הימצאות חיילי צה"ל בסמוך לישובים ישראלים ולעיתים בתוך שטחי הישובים, נציין כי הדבר נחוץ לצורך ביצוע משימתם של החיילים, לאור ניתוח של הצורך המבצעי, ההיסטוריה הגזרתית והמצב הביטחוני השורר בכל גזרה וגזרה. במקרים רבים, המענה הביטחוני הנכון והיעיל ביותר מחייב הצבתם של כוחות צה"ל בתוך שטחיהם של ישובים או בסמיכות רבה אליהם וזאת לצד הגנה מרחבית (הצבת כוחות במתקנים ביטחוניים, בצירים ובנקודות נוספות בגזרה).

לעניין הטענות בדבר אירוח חיילים בבתי מתיישבים, נציין כי על פי פקודות הצבא ומדיניות פיקוד המרכז, חיילי הפיקוד מונחים שלא לקבל מתנות ותשורות מאזרחים, ישראלים ופלסטינים כאחד. יחד עם זאת, פיקוד המרכז אינו אוסר באופן גורף השתתפות באירועים מטעם ההתיישבות הישראלית או התארחות של חיילים בבתי תושבים. הדבר מאושר במקרים מסוימים, כחלק ממערכת יחסים מבוקרת, בין הצבא לבין האזרחים עליהם הוא מגן. כך נעשה לאורך השנים אף בישובים באזורים אחרים כמו ביישובי עוטף עזה וגבול הצפון.

הואיל וההשתתפות באירועים מפוקחת בהתאם לפקודות ולאחר הפעלת שיקול דעתם של המפקדים, איננו רואים באירוח מסוג זה או בהשתתפות באירועים מטעם

היישובים (דוגמת אירועי יום העצמאות או חגים אחרים) משום חריגה ממדיניות ראויה ופגיעה במקצועיות החיילים וכשירותם.

יש להדגיש, כי כפי שעולה אף מחלק מהעדויות שצורפו לפנייה, כי חייל שאינו מעוניין לבוא במגע עם ההתיישבות (בהקשר שאינו חלק ממשימותיו), אינו מחויב לכך בשום אופן. עוד יצוין, כי המפקדים מקיימים פיקוח על קשרי החיילים עם התושבים, ומקום בו נוצר חשש להתנהלות שאינה תקינה, ניתנות הוראות ברורות מטעם המפקדים.

עוד נטען במכתבכם כי מתיישבים משולבים בפעילות המבצעית, "כמנחי הכוחות בשטח", בדגש על רכזי הביטחון השוטף ביישובים (רבשצ"ים). לעניין זה נדגיש, כי רכזי הביטחון ביישובים הינם גורם ביטחוני שהוסמך כדין, והם פועלים במרחבי שמירה מוגדרים בלבד, וכפופים להוראות והנחיות גורמי ההגנה המרחבית בכלל החטיבות. רכזי הביטחון מחזיקים בסמכות אשר ניתנה להם מטעם מפקד פיקוד המרכז, מתוקף הצו בדבר הסדרת השמירה ביישובים (יהודה ושומרון) (מס' 432), תשל"א-1971, המסדיר את סמכויותיו של הרבש"ץ. כחלק ממילוי תפקידם, מצופה מהרבש"צים לסייע לכוחות צה"ל ומשטרת ישראל במילוי משימתם, עד כמה שהדבר נדרש, וזאת גם במסירת מידע ותובנות ביטחוניות לכוחות.

יודגש, כי לרבש"צים אין סמכות פיקודית או הירארכית כלפי חיילים, והם נפרדים משרשרת הפיקוד, בהיותם גורם ממונה מטעם המפקד הצבאי, המפעיל סמכותו בהישמע להנחיות הדרג הצבאי.

עוד באותו נושא, נטען כי מתיישבים מסוימים משולבים בתהליכי קבלת ההחלטות, ואף לוקחים חלק בעיצוב המדיניות המבצעית, ולצורך כך ניתנה דוגמה של השתתפות בהערכות מצב תקופתיות של הדרג הצבאי. לעניין זה נציין כי אכן מתקיימים דיונים בשיתוף ההנהגה וגורמי הביטחון המוניציפליים, כנהוג אף במקומות אחרים בישראל, אך קיימת הפרדה ברורה בין דיונים הנערכים עם גורמי ההתיישבות לבין דיונים פנים-צבאיים ומכל מקום, קבלת ההחלטות נעשית בידי הדרג הצבאי המוסמך בלבד.

אשר לטענה לפיה חיילי צה"ל מקבלים הרצאות ותכנים בעלי אופי פוליטי מהאוכלוסייה, הרי שכוחות פיקוד המרכז מונחים שלא להשתתף בכל אירוע בעל נופך פוליטי או מפלגתי ולהפקיד על פקודות הצבא, ואף לא לקבל הרצאות וסקירות מסוג זה.

כפי שצינו לעיל, הטענות במכתבכם הובאו במתכונת כוללנית. לפיכך, לא נוכל, אלא להשיב באופן כללי, כי כוחות צה"ל אחראים על שלומם, ביטחונם והגנתם של

אזרחים ישראלים, יהיו מיקומם והשתייכותם העדתית, הדתית או הפוליטית אשר יהיו. לצורך זה, כוחות צה"ל פועלים לא אחת בתווך בו אזרחים אלו שוהים, ולא מן הנמנע, שלאורך השנים ייווצרו בין כוחות צה"ל ובין התושבים קשרים שונים, כפי שאלה נוצרים אף במקומות אחרים בישראל, בין גופים ביטחוניים אחרים ובין האוכלוסייה בקרבה הם פועלים.

צה"ל רואה בהגנה על האזרחים המתגוררים באזור יהודה ושומרון משימה חשובה ביותר, ומקפיד כי הממשק בין האזרחים הישראלים באזור יהודה ושומרון לבין כוחות צה"ל באזור זה, יתנהל בהתאם לפקודות הצבא ובאופן ראוי ומכובד.

הטענה כי היחסים הקיימים משבשים את יכולתם של חיילי צה"ל למלא משימתם אינה נכונה. אדרבה, הקשר עם האזרח, ובפרט עם בעלי תפקידים ביטחוניים בהתיישבות באזור יהודה ושומרון. הוא מרכיב משמעותי ביכולתו של צה"ל לממש את אחריותו הביטחונית במרחב, ובלבד שהדבר נעשה בהתאם לפקודות. אני מודה לך על פנייתך.

בברכה,



רב סך
נעה הרפז-יוז
ראש מדור כנסת ממשל וציבור
לשכת
הרמטכ"ל

”

And then my commander said to me, 'It wasn't my decision, it was the Civilian Security Coordinator's.' And then the Civilian Security Coordinator said, 'I am the commander on the field, I give the orders, when the army arrives I direct it.' The message, at the end of the day, is that during an incident it's the Civilian Security Coordinator who directs the army, not the army that directs the Civilian Security Coordinator.

Unit: Not for publication • Rank: Sergeant First Class •
Area: Maon • Period: 2013

**[BREAKING
THE SILENCE]**