

THE ELECTRONIC INTIFADA

How close is the Israeli army to collapse?

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7 November 2024



Israeli military bulldozer driver Eliran Mizrahi and bomber pilot Asaf Dagan both died by suicide in October. (Via X/Haaretz)

Is the Israeli army on the verge of collapsing? That's the question many families of soldiers recently returned from Gaza seem to be asking.

A series of interviews with more than 20 combat soldiers and their families for an article published [last month \(https://www.ha-makom.co.il/idf-droppings/\)](https://www.ha-makom.co.il/idf-droppings/) by Tel Aviv news site *The Hottest Place*, suggests that the Israeli army is suffering from a potentially terminal crisis.

“This may be a quiet and hushed-up phenomenon,” writes journalist Revital Hovel, “but [it is] one that is continuously increasing. Many soldiers are refusing

to continue fighting in Gaza and are voting with their feet.”

A year of armed resistance to the Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip is taking its toll. Many Israeli soldiers are now refusing to fight.

Some are even dying by suicide rather than return to the field.

“The platoons are empty,” said “Rona,” the mother of one soldier. “Anyone who isn’t dead and wasn’t wounded was emotionally damaged. Very few remained who came back to fight.”

Like everyone else quoted by *The Hottest Place*, “Rona” used a pseudonym for fear of retaliation from the Israeli army.

Despite the unprecedented horrors the Israeli occupation army has been inflicting in Gaza and Lebanon for the last year, many of the surviving soldiers have been mentally scarred by their experiences.

Burnout

“There is a constant hidden dropping out from fighting,” said “Idit,” a second mother. “This is not a conscientious objection, but rather dropping out due to burnout.”

According to “Rona,” the army’s morale was already catastrophically low even before Israel carried out [a series of assassinations in Lebanon](https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/hizballah-vows-victory-israel-moves-invade-lebanon) (<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/hizballah-vows-victory-israel-moves-invade-lebanon>) ahead of the attempted ground invasion that began on 1 October.

Her son told her that, “I don’t know what army they’re planning to go into Lebanon with, but there is no army. I’m not going back to the battalion.”

This might help explain why, one month on, the Israeli military has failed to advance any significant distance into South Lebanon, and almost 100 soldiers have been killed in the attempt.

Hizballah tactics, weapons stall Israeli advance, with Jon Elmer



According to The Electronic Intifada's (<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/day-390-steadfastness-amid-grief-and-loss>) contributing editor and military analyst Jon Elmer, Israel has admitted to the killing of 70 of its soldiers on the Lebanese front alone since the invasion began.

Hizballah, the Lebanese resistance group stopping the Israelis, says that it has killed 90.

Yet this apparent breakdown of the Israeli army is neither only a recent phenomenon nor limited to Lebanon.

“Refusal and mutiny”

“Many parents relate that the breakdown of the combat soldiers’ morale started as early as April, when the IDF [Israeli military] got bogged down in Gaza,” Hovel wrote in *The Hottest Place*.

“I call it refusal and mutiny,” said “Inbal,” a third soldier’s mother. “They come back to the same buildings [in Gaza] they had cleansed [*sic* – cleared out], and they get booby trapped again, every time. They were in the Zaytoun neighborhood [of Gaza City] three times already. They understand that it is pointless and useless.”

“Yael,” a fourth mother, said: “I talked with my son, and he told me: ‘We’re like

ducks in a shooting gallery, we don't know what we're doing here. It's a second and third time that we return to the same places. The hostages are not coming back, and you see that it is not ending, and along the way soldiers are wounded and killed. It seems futile.' That was in March."

Another soldier, "Uri," related directly to *The Hottest Place* that three officers from his company were killed when an anti-tank missile hit a house they had occupied in Khan Younis, southern Gaza.

"All the officers went to the second floor of a building, and they were there together, close to one another, looking out the window," said Uri. "A missile entered the building from another window and hit them. The whole company had to evacuate them ... We were finished; we all wanted to go on home leave, and they decided to leave us in there [in Gaza] anyhow."

This "turning point" experience eventually led him to refuse to return to the fighting in July. "I started crying on a lawn and said that I couldn't take it anymore. I was emotionally done. I told my commander that I couldn't take it anymore."

Death by suicide

The article in the Tel Aviv publication is among a rash of similar pieces (<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-825316>) published in Israeli and Western media in recent weeks. The goal is often to elicit sympathy for the genocidal Israeli soldiers who are currently carrying out a holocaust in Gaza.

But some of these articles give away perhaps more than their authors intend.

In possibly the most notorious such article (<https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2024/10/21/middleeast/gaza-war-israeli-soldiers-ptsd-suicide-intl>), CNN told the story of Eliran Mizrahi, an Israeli soldier who drove a military bulldozer. Mizrahi died by suicide (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/reservist-with-ptsd-kills-himself-after-callup-order-family-demands-military-burial/>) in June this year, reportedly only two days after he was called up to return to Gaza.

According to Guy Zaken, Mizrahi's co-driver who spoke to CNN, he and his fellow soldiers would "run over terrorists, dead and alive, in the hundreds."

He graphically explained how, "everything squirts out" from under the bulldozer.

Israelis commonly use the word “terrorist” to describe any Palestinian.

Mizrahi and Zaken proudly boasted on an Israeli TV channel earlier this year that they had destroyed the houses of 5,000 “terrorists” — before claiming that effectively all houses in Gaza belong to “terrorists.”

Videos and other posts soon emerged online of Mizrahi posting evidence of his crimes on his own social media.

B.M.

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Same D9 operator, Guy Zaken, with his friend Eliran Mizrahi, who killed himself recently, were interviewed in April. They said they destroyed 5,000 houses of "terrorists", but when asked "how did you know they were terrorists?" they clarify that every house is terrorist's house.

Watch on X

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Israeli D9 operator: "We ran over hundreds of terrorists, dead or alive"

As we already know, when Israeli soldiers in Gaza say "terrorists", they just mean Palestinians.

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In the caption to this video Mizrahci posted in late April, he brags that his Combat Engineering battalion alone destroyed more than 5,000 houses.

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Quds News Network  @QudsNen

Israeli media report that the soldier Eliran Mizrahci killed himself due to severe depression following his return from battles in the Gaza Strip.

The soldier used to share videos and pictures of himself taking part in war crimes in Gaza.



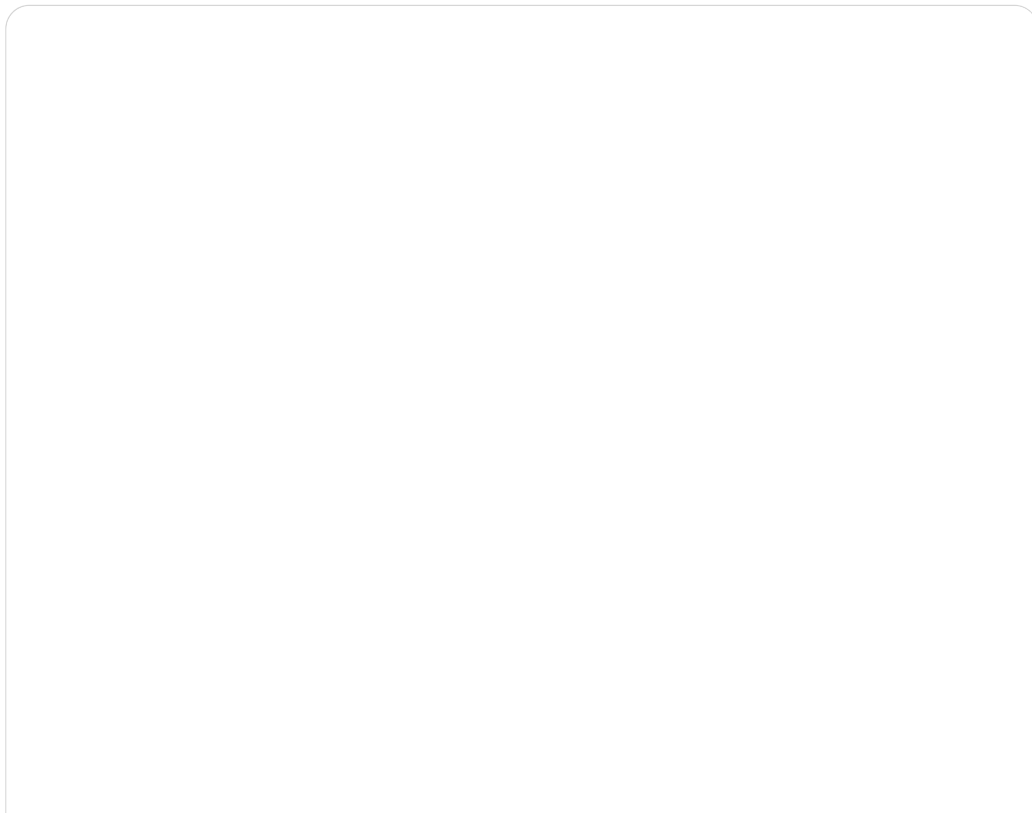
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November 7, 2023: "Wipe out the seed of Amalek!"

On October 7 he wrote: "Erase, flatten, do not leave a trace!!! Now more than ever!!!"

October 25: "Whoever plays with fire shouldn't be surprised when he's being burnt good!!! And we haven't even started!!!"





6:54 PM · Jun 8, 2024



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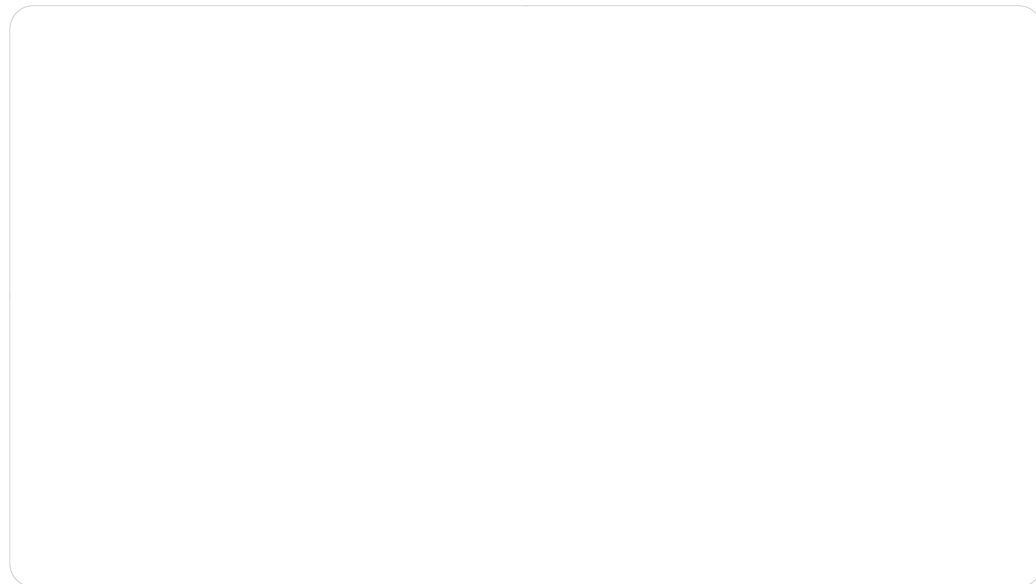
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Khaled Yousry
@KhaledYousry22 · Follow



On May 21st, I published and translated photos about Eliran Mizrahi, a reserve soldier in the engineering corps who was always posting about the war crimes he committed in Gaza. (The post is pinned)

Eliran Mizrahi, who fought in the Gaza Strip since October 7th, ended his life... [Show more](#)



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According to CNN, “Zaken says he can no longer eat meat, as it reminds him of

the gruesome scenes he witnessed from his bulldozer in Gaza, and struggles to sleep at night, the sound of explosions ringing in his head.”

Despite his enthusiastic execution of Israel’s genocide in the Gaza Strip, Mizrahi was initially refused burial in a military cemetery by Israel, apparently because he wasn’t technically an active duty soldier at the time of his death (*Haaretz* later reported (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-10-29/ty-article-magazine/.premium/mother-of-israeli-soldier-who-took-his-own-life-begged-for-help-the-army-ignored-her/00000192-d808-d4a2-ab97-d92f09de0000>) that this decision was overturned after his relatives led a public outcry).

It is possible that suicide among Israeli soldiers may be a hushed-up epidemic right now (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-05-12/ty-article-magazine/.premium/the-israeli-soldiers-who-took-their-own-lives-while-fighting-hamas-days-after-october-7/0000018f-6c88-d0ae-aded-edddd4f0000>).


According to CNN, thousands of soldiers “are suffering from PTSD or mental illnesses caused by trauma during the war. It is unclear how many have taken their own lives” as the Israeli military has not provided official figures.

Another high profile case recently featured in the Israeli press was 38-year-old Asaf Dagan, a veteran air force pilot who died by suicide last month.

His suicide note circulated (<https://x.com/Kahlissee/status/1849711229213855979>) online, apparently released (<https://www.msn.com/he-il/news/other/המכתב-שהשאיר-הנווט-לאמו-אולי-יוקל-לך-לדעת-שמצאתי-מנוחה/ar-AA1sS1Be?ocid=socialshare>) by his family in an effort to pressure the authorities into agreeing to the military burial he has also been denied.

Haaretz reported (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-10-29/ty-article-magazine/.premium/mother-of-israeli-soldier-who-took-his-own-life-begged-for-help-the-army-ignored-her/00000192-d808-d4a2-ab97-d92f09de0000>) that Dagan had been diagnosed as suffering from years of post-traumatic stress disorder.


“Dagan’s family cannot tell whether the source of his suffering were traumatic events he witnessed during the Second Lebanon War” in 2006, the paper reported, “or guilt about the bombings he took part in.”

Yossi Melman 

@yossi_melman · **Follow**

The moral decay +disintegrasion of Israel's social cohesion are manifested today by the arrest of 7 Israeli Jews who spied for yrs for Iran by gathering info on IAF bases&Mossad. They did it for money. Recently 13 Israeli Jews were arrested for knowingly spying for Iranian intel

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In a related twist last month, Israeli intelligence agencies announced that they had broken up two alleged Iranian spy rings – one of them entirely composed of Israeli Jews.

Yossi Melman, intelligence correspondent for *Haaretz*, described the very idea that some Israeli Jews are now willing to work for Iran against Israel as a sign of what he described as “the moral decay and disintegration of Israel’s social cohesion.”

Melman reported for the Tel Aviv paper (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-10-23/ty-article/.premium/israeli-jews-very-rarely-agreed-to-spy-on-behalf-of-israels-worst-enemies-what-changed/00000192-b598-d243-a5db-fff92cee0000>) that “the Shin Bet [intelligence agency] and police have arrested 14 Israelis on suspicion of spying for Iran. Since the arrests were made during wartime, the accusations are very severe. The suspects represent two separate rings recruited and controlled by agents of the Iranian ministry of intelligence.”

Despite claiming that the alleged spies were mainly motivated by money, Melman wrote that “the painful truth which cannot be ignored is that more and more Israeli Jews are ready to spy for Iran.”

He claimed that “in the last six months more than 20 Israelis were arrested by the Shin Bet and charged with espionage for Iran’s ministry of intelligence.”

These 20 alleged spies “are Israelis from various walks of life,” Melman claimed.

“Males and females, young and old, from across the country. They represent the mosaic of Israeli society: a yeshiva student from Beit Shemesh, a psychology student from a college in Ramat Gan, a businessman from Ashkelon and two new immigrants from Belarus and Ukraine.”

Melman explained the situation as he sees it: “Many Israelis are depressed because they don’t see an end to [Benjamin] Netanyahu’s belligerent policies. The economy is deteriorating and the government doesn’t offer hope to its citizens. All these are fertile ground for the cultivation of spies.”

It also seems to be fertile ground for the possible collapse, or at least severe degradation, of the Israeli military. With no end in sight to the war of attrition being waged by the resistance, the challenges for Israel’s military will only continue to mount.

A collapse may still be a long way off, but for Palestinian and Lebanese people, it could not come soon enough.

With translation by Dena Shunra and additional research by Maureen Clare Murphy.

Asa Winstanley is an investigative journalist and associate editor with The Electronic Intifada. He is author of the book [Weaponising Anti-Semitism: How the Israel Lobby Brought Down Jeremy Corbyn](https://orbooks.com/catalog/weaponising-anti-semitism/) (<https://orbooks.com/catalog/weaponising-anti-semitism/>) (OR Books, 2023).

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