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Stop freezing out the IDF

By Yehuda Ben-Meir

The national-religious public is beginning to accept the fact that insubordination of any kind is a "red line" that separates the camp's mainstream from the bad seeds within it. They are beginning to accept that this insubordination must be fought without compromise. This is because at its core the refusal to follow orders is only a symptom of a deeper rot that is expressed in turning one's back on the Israel Police, the Israel Defense Forces and the Shin Bet security service and everything these institutions represent. The firm stance against insubordination taken by prominent figures in the national-religious community shows that they now understand the exact location of this line.

And yet the alienation from the IDF and its critical role in Israel is not the sole province of the extreme right. Unfortunately we are witness to events in the state education system that our predecessors never dreamed of. These are not limited to the extreme, post-Zionist left, but rather affect the very heart of the education system. They should arouse concern in the heart of every citizen; in particular they should spur soul-searching among leaders of the patriotic, Zionist left.

Several weeks ago we learned that the principal of Tel Aviv's Ironi Alef High School had assembled the students and demanded that they take to the streets to protest the crimes of occupation carried out by the IDF. He emphasized that they must not be partners to such atrocities - in other words, a clear call to refuse orders.

Now we hear of Tel Aviv high school principals refusing to permit IDF officers to give talks to students. First it was the principal of Ironi Alef, followed by that of Gymnasia Herzliya, who explained his position by saying that a school is supposed to educate students toward peace, not war, and that it is undemocratic for the army to enter a school. The military's proper place, he said, is its own bases and the country's borders.

The gymnasia principal apparently knows nothing about democracy, about the IDF's role in society or about the role of a school in the State of Israel. By law, the main role of a school is to educate students to love humanity, their nation and land, and to be loyal citizens of their state. Can that goal be met by boycotting the army? The IDF is not a foreign legion, its soldiers are not mercenaries and its commanders are not warmongers. The IDF's function is to protect the State of Israel and its citizens from the cruel, bitter enemies who rise up against us to destroy us, who have engraved Israel's destruction on their shields.

Do those principals who refuse to let IDF officers into their schools believe we can obtain peace without the IDF? Do they not realize that without the IDF the peace

agreements with Egypt and Jordan, too, would not last? Even U.S. President Barack Obama said while accepting the Nobel Peace Prize that in a world in which evil has tremendous power, the military path is sometimes the way to peace - certainly when a country is seeking to establish or maintain power.

Something is rotten in the state of Tel Aviv's municipal education system. And yet, these developments are not the problem of the mayor and parents alone. A normal, life-loving country cannot accept such subversive, ungrateful behavior. Schools are not the private property of principals, and principals may not run them however they please.

Particularly disappointing is the silence of the left. If the left wants to remain part of the Israeli consensus, it too must know when to say, "Enough."

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