

New IDF chief: What will Israel's military look like under Herzl Halevi?

MIDDLE ISRAEL: The new chief of staff's military tasks will be overshadowed by the need to retain the IDF's role as a polarized society's glue.

By Amotz Asa-El / Published Jan. 20, 2023

"The harder the conflict, the greater the triumph," said George Washington in what should inspire the IDF's new commander, Lt.-Gen. Herzl Halevi.

Like all his 22 predecessors, the 55-year-old paratrooper's tasks include varied military challenges in multiple arenas. However, on top of handling those, Halevi will also be tasked with retaining the Israeli military's role as a polarized society's most effective glue.

[...]

The share of non-enlisting men aged 18-20 has doubled over the past 30 years, from 16.6% to 30% of an annual intake of conscripts, according to the **Institute for National Security Studies**.

Among women, 40% don't enlist. Among men, half of the non-enlisting are ultra-Orthodox, while 12% of new conscripts are exempted due to psychological reasons, nearly three times their share as recently as 2014. These are presumably mostly secular. When adding the Israeli Arabs who do not enlist, the IDF is left with hardly one in two high school graduates joining its ranks.

In other words, Halevi's IDF is ceasing to be the "people's army" in which the elder Herzl Halevi – the uncle after whom he is named – served when he was killed in the Six Day War's battle for Jerusalem.

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