

## **By Refusing to Report for Duty, Israeli Reservists Created a Dangerous Precedent**

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Last month, a number of Israeli reservists—including air-force pilots, elite commandos, and cyberwarfare specialists—announced that they would not appear for their mandatory training rotations to protest the [judicial reforms](#) being considered by the Knesset. Fellow opponents of reform praised them for standing up for democracy; proponents of reform condemned them as traitors recklessly politicizing Israeli security. To **Kobi Michael**, the merits of judicial reform are beside the point: the boycott of reserve duty and the military’s handling of the situation, he argues, have seriously undermined the IDF.

[A]ny declaration of intent to stop volunteering is tantamount to a threat to paralyze [relevant] branches of the military or to disrupt severely their smooth operations, and undermines a unique model of service. . . . And so, a sea change has occurred. The IDF, against the wishes and not at the instigation of the top military leadership, but specifically because of the mishandling of developments within the military due to the political crisis, has become a political actor—the most influential actor in the public sphere in the reality of the current civil-political-moral debate.

Moreover, the military’s handling of this situation created a profound divide with the political leadership because of the severe damage to the political level’s faith in the military leadership and its response to the crisis. This will have a profound impact on future civil-military relations. The incident and the IDF response have scarred Israeli democracy, undermining the public consensus regarding the military and its apolitical standing, certainly when it comes to some of the most important branches of the military and the top echelons of the IDF leadership, which was perceived as supporting—or at the very least, willing to turn a blind eye to—the refusal to serve and, as a result, has become identified as opposing the judicial overhaul, even though none of the top officers have spoken about it.

It is hard to imagine, given the conditions that have been created, that this will not have an impact on the IDF’s recruitment model and on its standing as the “people’s army.”

[Read more at \*Institute for National Security Studies\*](#)

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