

The Reserve Forces in the Gaza War: Challenges for the Continuation of the Fighting

Ariel Heimann | January 7, 2024

Israel's reserve forces have now been mobilized for three months. Their ability to continue to serve is based on the spirit of the people, the atmosphere in the country following the events of October 7, and the moral and economic support of the home front. However, these elements may diminish over time – not as the result of a specific event, but rather as the outcome of a process that is difficult to identify. Many reserve soldiers have sacrificed their lives, and others are willing to continue to risk their lives in this just war. However, the prolonged service creates emotional and practical difficulties for those serving, and it would be unreasonable to assume that the reservists will be at the disposal of the IDF indefinitely and at full force.

A significant challenge is posed by the fact that a considerable portion of the fighting force, many of whom were called up on October 7, will be released in the coming months after prolonged and draining service, knowing that a few months later they will be called up again for an extended period of service; some are released already with a mobilization date in the near future. These reservists, who will return home after an unprecedentedly extended period of combat, will face pressure from their families and workplaces – those who are salaried employees, and especially those who are self-employed – as well as psychological difficulties processing the experiences of battle. Against this backdrop, there could be instances of attempts to avoid additional service and even "quiet evasion of service" on a large scale.

To prevent a crisis, the IDF in particular and the State of Israel in general should place the reserve forces at the top of their priorities in every possible way, providing preferential treatment and far-reaching benefits. In the language of the reservists: "We put ourselves on the line, to the point of sacrificing our lives; now it's the country's turn to be there for us." Furthermore, the reserve force's "ticking clock" should be taken into

account in all war strategy and operational plans, whose implementation depends to a large extent on the reserve soldiers.

On the Eve of October 7, 2023

The reserve corps has always constituted a central part of the IDF's resilience and its ability to function. Ben-Gurion understood this when he established the corps, and the norm has been valid throughout the country's 75 years, especially in wartime. Nevertheless, over the years the reserve force received insufficient attention, which led to ongoing grievances and undermined competence.

Reservists are committed to their comrades, to the reserve corps, to the IDF, and to the State of Israel, and it appears that various systems unwittingly "exploited" this situation, knowing (as proven many times) that reservists would fully mobilize in the case of an emergency. The IDF's senior commanders, who are all career soldiers, tend to relate to the reservists as a resource that can be taken for granted. This attitude is all the more evident at the current time, when the State of Israel and the IDF in particular are in a state of full mobilization.

The scope of the reserve force's training and equipment (and the state of reserve stocks), and hence its competence, has experienced ups and downs over the years. According to a cautious assessment, on the eve of October 7, the reserve force was at a mediocre level compared to previous periods. Another critical issue is the lack of confidence by the IDF senior commanders (who never served in the reserves themselves) in the capabilities of the reserve force. In the past statements were even made about the reserve corps, especially the ground forces, being unnecessary, and about their irrelevance for ground maneuver warfare. These statements and the discomfort that they caused among reservists reduced the mutual confidence between the reserve force and the army's commanders.

In addition, the burden of the reserve force's operational assignments increased as the security situation worsened. Because of the need for large numbers of forces in the West Bank and the need to train the standing army, in early 2023 the IDF decided to call up reserve battalions for two operational periods every three years, instead of one. This led to hard feelings and complaints about the unfair distribution of the burden within Israeli society and insufficient compensation. 2023 also saw social protests against the judicial overhaul led by the government. The reserve force was swept up in the protest movement, and some volunteer reservists stopped volunteering. As a result, the reserve force was caught up in the center of the socio-political maelstrom, and the rift within the nation also harmed the delicate fabric of the reserve force.

Thus, the events of October 7 encountered a reserve force, individuals and frameworks alike, with mediocre operational competence and inadequate equipment. The state of the war reserve stocks was not at the expected level. Reservists, for their part, participated in training exercises and carried out operational assignments in the West Bank – but without sufficient backing from IDF commanders and Israeli society, at least not at the level that they expected.

Mobilization on October 7

The reserve force was fully mobilized as early as the morning of October 7. The Israeli government approved the call-up of 360,000 soldiers, and in practice about 220,000 of them were called up – in all of the forces. Reserve soldiers were mobilized immediately, without their ability to organize on a personal or family level or with respect to studies or workplaces. Until the beginning of the ground maneuver in late October, the reserve combat units were engaged in organization and training exercises to raise their low level of competence.

The reservists mobilized with the highest possible level of motivation. There was no need for explanation or convincing. However, they too, like the rest of Israel's citizens, felt frustration and a loss of confidence in the governmental establishment, as well as in the IDF. This loss of confidence was reinforced by the fact that many of them were not surprised to encounter a low level of equipment, a considerable shortage of protective equipment (ceramic bulletproof vests, for example), combat equipment (helmets and clothing), and other items needed for service. While the equipment supplemented by civilians in Israel and abroad, as well as the food provided by many volunteers, reduced the pressure, it did not reduce the frustration and disappointment.

Many reservists have been serving since October 7, going on leave from time to time to reenergize or for short visits home. In this respect, it is important to distinguish between those serving in combat frameworks in the Gaza Strip, in the northern arena, or in certain cases in the West Bank, and those serving on the home front, in the Home Front Command, and in various headquarters.

The Projection for 2024

According to statements by IDF commanders, in January 2024 a transition is expected from the stage of the war involving high-intensity combat, including large-scale ground maneuvers in the Gaza Strip and a maximum level of alert on the Lebanese border and in the West Bank, to a stage of continued activity in Gaza,

mainly standoff operations, that requires a much smaller number of forces. This stage is supposed to continue for around six to nine months (and possibly until the end of 2024). This will be followed by a stage of building new defense lines in the western Negev theater and shaping a new defense concept in the northern arena. All of this is given the assumption that the fighting in the north will not expand to the point of high-intensity war.

The IDF recently prepared a graph of combat and operational assignments for the reserve force in 2024. It appears that the estimated number of reserves that will be needed according to these timetables is optimistic, maybe too optimistic. Lower intensity combat in Gaza still requires significant forces to defend and control the areas captured by the IDF (especially in northern Gaza); the new defense line, including a security perimeter, will be double the size of the previous one and manned with much greater density; and meanwhile, the tension in the north will continue, requiring continued reinforcement on the border. Even if an arrangement of some kind is attained regarding the northern border, the number of forces needed then will be greater than in the past, a necessary condition for restoring the sense of security of the population and their willingness to return to their homes. Presumably, tensions in the West Bank will continue as well, at least at their current level. All this will have a considerable impact on the number of reservists needed, not only in order to staff these forces but also to provide the standing army, which has been in high-intensity combat for months, with time to reenergize and reorganize.

These periods of reserve service are unprecedented in recent decades and constitute a burden that has not occurred at least since the Yom Kippur War, the last war in which the entire reserve force was mobilized. In all the wars and operations since then – the First and Second Lebanon Wars, and operations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank – only part of the reserve force was mobilized. Thus, there were always those who could share the burden and replace those mobilized first. However, the big change that has occurred since the wars of the past is the sharp rise in the relative burden of reservists. The percentage of reservists is small (about 2-3 percent of the population), which creates difficulties for reservists regarding employment and the family burden.

Even after the situation is stabilized on all fronts, which, according to statements by the IDF and the political leadership, might occur in over a year at the earliest, the IDF will need a large number of reservists, much more than what was needed in regular times until the eve of October 7. Israeli society, at least in the near future, will not be willing to assume that "military intelligence will provide a warning." Its sense of security, after Hamas's surprise attack and the sparse deployment in the

Southern Command to defend the communities in the Gaza envelope, will also depend on greater physical presence at the borders than in the past – and the number of forces needed from now on at the country's various borders will vary accordingly. In addition, forces will be needed to defend communities throughout the country, in order to instill a sense of security in citizens.

To prepare for simultaneous high-intensity combat on two fronts in the future, the IDF will need to grow. Until the standing army is adapted to the new situation, the entire reserve force will need to supplement the order of battle. Large numbers of forces will be needed not only in 2024, but also in the following years.

Elements that Influence the Reserve Corps

Government, Knesset, Cabinet, Ministry of Finance

While the government values the activity of the reservists, this recognition is not expressed in the media, and the Prime Minister often refuses to meet reservists when visiting the army (presumably to avoid criticism). It appears that the civilian system takes the reservists for granted and considers their situation and needs as the army's business. The Ministry of Finance is busy dealing with the reservists as per the army's requests. Several discussions were held at the Knesset on the topic of assistance to reservists and their spouses in the Economic Affairs Committee, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, and the Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality. However, the system currently lacks medium and long-term thinking, and the almost exclusive focus on the economic aspect is insufficient.

The IDF: The Chief of Staff and the General Staff

The Chief of Staff, the IDF spokesperson, and other senior commanders laud the importance, readiness to mobilize, and contribution of the reserve force. The integration of the reserve soldiers with the standing army is highly valued, and it appears that previous deliberations questioning the importance of the reserve forces have been tabled.

However, the senior command tends to relate to reservists as an unlimited resource. At the current stage of the war, the reserve force has placed itself completely at the disposal of the system, but this stance may collapse as the war progresses, when pressure from home increases, the financial situation of reservists' families worsens, and the sense of an unequal distribution of the burden grows. The IDF controls the number of people serving and their short leaves, furloughs, or release, and does so based primarily on operational needs

and less on the need to maintain the reserve force in the long term. Furthermore, there are many signs that the IDF's commanders, who are preoccupied with the immediate and short term, do not currently have the wherewithal to think systematically about the reserve force in the span of the coming months. The system must be aware that at a certain stage, a situation could emerge in which there is a decline in motivation among the reservists. If at present people are looking for any way to enlist, in a month or a few months, the picture could change, and people could look for ways to be released.

The assistance fund: At the initiative of the IDF, the Ministry of Defense and the National Insurance Institute established an assistance fund for reservists and their families. The fund solves financial problems for many of those serving or their family members, and it is of great importance. However, there are many who do not exactly meet the criteria for receiving assistance but still encounter many problems, for example, women on maternity leave or immediately thereafter, wives on maternity leave or toward the end of this period, divorced couples who have joint custody of their children, self-employed people who are the spouses of people serving, hourly workers, and so on. In early November there were about 98,000 spouses of people serving in the reserves (97 percent wives). Of these, 17,200 are self-employed.

The Reserve Force Itself

As of the time of this writing, the motivation of reservists is very high. Not only is the mobilization well above 100 percent, but many who are exempt from service also seek to find ways to return and enlist. This is the case notwithstanding that soldiers have been away from home for three months (aside from short leaves). The reserve force, like the IDF as a whole, is not showing any signs of fatigue at this stage, but the situation should be examined in ongoing fashion in order to provide advance warning about burnout.

Factors that could reduce the motivation to serve:

- a. Difficulties at home: So far reserve soldiers have received unqualified support from their personal home front – the family. Since the start of the war, many families have been without one of the parents and sometimes without both. The ability to continue to function in this way is limited in time.
- b. Financial difficulties: Reserve soldiers will return home after many months in which the businesses of self-employed people were closed or suffered a significant decline in activity; and the workplaces of

salaried employees, even those that have supported reservists throughout the war, have "adapted" to function without them. 2024 is expected to be a difficult year economically, and many reservists fear that if cutbacks are necessary as a result, they will be the first to pay the price.

- c. Units that are not in combat in the Gaza Strip or on the northern border and are located for example on the Golan Heights or along the peaceful borders with Egypt and Jordan are the first whose level of motivation could decline. Their free time complicates matters. The same applies to reservists who are not part of organic reserve units.
- d. Support for the justice of the current war: Today there is complete support for the war among all citizens, including the reservists who have been mobilized. Activity that is not within the consensus and raises questions could undermine the cohesion of reserve units. At this stage, the threat seems distant, but it could materialize.
- e. Political disagreements: The rift that formed after the judicial overhaul was launched disappeared on October 7 as if it had never existed. But government actions that are not within the consensus (the budget, non-conscription of the ultra-Orthodox, and more) could bring this rift back into the open. This could also occur due to the inadequate and frustrating activity of government ministries and the imbalanced budget that includes the transfer of money based on coalition agreements, as well as the prime minister not wanting to meet with reservists and ignoring them. So far this situation, which is contrary to the stances of a large portion of reservists, has not created a rift or a specific wave of indignation. However, nothing lasts forever.
- f. Confidence in the IDF senior command: Despite the very impressive mobilization of the reserve force, its enlistment, and its commitment to the war, there are serious questions among reservists, as among all Israelis, regarding what happened on October 7. Some might say that this event led to a loss of confidence in the high command, while some might say that it is perhaps only a serious disappointment. Sooner or later, all of the deficiencies and pressures that already accompany reserve service, all the more so during the war, will be exacerbated by this lack of confidence. In other words: even though the statement "we're not dealing with it at present; now we're fighting" is right, it is

only valid for a limited time. Confidence will need to be renewed, and this is no small matter.

- g. Emotional difficulty: Many reserve soldiers went through combat experiences that were unprecedented for them, on October 7 itself, in the fighting in the Gaza envelope communities in the following days, and in the fighting in the Gaza Strip. Fighting within a built-up area against an enemy that hides among the civilian population is complex and difficult, and has led to a situation where the number of casualties among reserve soldiers is the highest it has been since the First Lebanon War. Along with the emotional difficulty of processing this experience, there is also – for the reservist and his/her family – the unprecedented period of service: this is a generation of reservists for whom 20 days in 3 years was the standard of active reserve service. This could have a significant impact on motivation and on support from the reservist's environment for additional periods of service in the near future.

Israeli Society

There are several ticking clocks that could limit the duration of the current campaign, including the internal clock of Israeli society. Relevant issues include the prolongation of the war, the future of the hostages in Hamas captivity, protests by the families of the hostages and the murdered, and the impatience of evacuees from communities in the western Negev and the northern border. The expansion of the war into a multi-arena conflict could also lead to general impatience and protest. Given the closeness of the reserve force to the society at large, an erosion of the motivation among reservists would weaken the consensus currently allowing the government freedom of operation, and fatigue among the general public would weaken the motivation of reservists.

All of Israeli society, especially the reservists, see the current campaign as a just war, and agree with its declared objectives, but there is a concern that as the war goes on, without a political solution or a sense of victory – and even more so if there isn't a significant return of hostages alive, which according to all public opinion polls is a condition of victory among the Israeli public – disagreements will also arise regarding the continuation and the justification for the war. Reservists were those who led the protests against the political leadership in 1974 and 1982, and they will probably stand at the front of the protests over the October 7 events alongside the bereaved families, the families of the hostages (even if they all return), the population of the western Negev, and the evacuees from the north.

During 1982-1985 there was a significant level of "grey refusal to serve" among reservists called up for periods of service in Lebanon for the second or third time. This situation undermined the cohesion of reserve units and led to the statement by Minister of Defense Moshe Arens that the withdrawal to the Awali line in October 1983 was "because of the reserves."

A situation where reservists protest and demonstrate during the late stages of war could create great tension between the force and the political leadership, and possibly also the military leadership and even within the reserve units themselves. Such protests, whose beginnings may already be visible today, could break out the moment the war reaches a lower intensity, if the intensity increases again, and is expressed in a demand that the political leadership take full responsibility. In this respect, 2024 could also be an election year, in which various tensions in Israeli society could come to the surface in greater force.

A correct analysis of the situation by the IDF and Israeli society, while adding elements of support, would maintain the high level of motivation that currently exists for an additional but limited period. The decline in motivation will come, and we should be ready for it.

Families of Reservists

The families of the reserve force – the nuclear family and the broader family – have a dramatic role in the force's resilience and its ability to continue to serve and fight over time. This may be the most important and dramatic element of resilience. It is with good reason that reservists say that there are many problems on their respective home fronts: the concern for the fighting reservist, and care of the home and family while there are sirens and rockets falling, when the education system is not functioning properly, and especially when there is financial hardship. Consequently, several factors influence the resilience of families and their continued support: the duration of the war; the war's impact on the home front (continued rocket fire, damages); the number of casualties among reservists; the frameworks for children; family support (grandparents); the family's financial situation.

Thus far the families of reservists have stood admirably behind those serving since October 7, but this endurance over time should not be taken for granted. The strength of the reserve force is largely based on the backing that reservists receive from home. Over time, the difficulty of the family at home will increase, patience will decrease, and the critical backing could weaken. The clock ticking on the army's ability to maintain the reserve force overtime also greatly depends on the strength of the family on the home front.

Students, Universities

A high percentage of combat soldiers serving in the reserves are students. The universities postponed the opening of the academic year to the end of December, while at certain colleges studies began earlier. The universities, with mandatory state funding, must ensure that students are not harmed. The steps announced so far are insufficient. Reservists studying abroad got on an airplane and came to Israel, but studies abroad continued as usual. Those returning from the fighting expect that they will be helped, that customized solutions will be found for each of them, and that the solutions will be accessible and practical.

Economics: The Israeli Economy, Employers, Small Businesses

The Israeli economy will be seriously affected by the cost of the war itself, the support for the communities of the western Negev and the northern border, and the decline in production due to the absence of many workers. This will complicate matters for many reservists, especially those who are self-employed and those with low income. In addition, many spouses of reservists cannot work regularly, and apparently some have suffered financially. The financial pressure will affect the resilience of families and directly affect reservists' ability to go and fight.

Employers are also affected, both directly due to the shortage of workers, and due to the cost imposed on them in payment to reservists (welfare rights). At this stage, employers are backing the reservists fully. But here too, nothing lasts forever. Employers could give up on reservists, find replacements for them, or learn to manage without them. Young workers who are before or between jobs cannot look for work, and even if they have been released for a period of one or two months, no employer would hire them if he or she knew that soon they would be mobilized again for an unknown period of time.

The Need

The reserve force is fully manifested in the October 7 war. Its combat soldiers have been fighting for over 70 days. Many reserve soldiers have sacrificed their lives and others have been seriously injured. Others are willing to continue to risk their lives in this just war, despite the many difficulties that accompany it. Now it is time for the IDF and the State of Israel to place the reservists at the top of their priorities in every sense and in every possible way, providing preferential treatment and far-reaching benefits. In the language of the reservists: "We put ourselves on the line

for our country, to the point of sacrificing our lives. Now the country must put itself on the line for us."

A conceptual change is needed: The reserve force needs to be venerated, and not only in slogans or in band-aid solutions. The worldview regarding the reserve force needs to fundamentally change. But the need is not only for the purpose of paying tribute to the reserve force. A proper analysis of the situation by the IDF and Israeli society, while adding elements of support, will maintain the high level of motivation that exists today for an additional but limited period. The decline in motivation will come, and we should be ready for it.

Recommendations

The Military Aspect

1. Extend the service of conscripted soldiers, at least combat soldiers and combat support soldiers, for a significant period, thus easing the burden on reserve soldiers. The additional service would be under the conditions of permanent service.
2. Create new reserve combat frameworks, based on a large number of soldiers who are exempt from service, ages 22 to 45, returning to service; ensure prudent utilization of personnel reserves and reduce the order of battle in existing units, so that the standard will not be higher than 115 percent. AFVs, tanks and artillery, in the first stage, can be found among vehicles that were designated for sale to other countries. An example of this is the Phoenix Unit that was established in November 2023, based on Merkava Mark 3 tanks that were intended for sale.
3. Maintain the mobilization graph of reserve units. The IDF recently announced that it will release reserve units and later remobilize them. The way this is conducted is critical, and the graph must be adapted in advance to military plans, and not changed after it has been decided. The release of reserve units should be for long periods, so that the release is meaningful and is not just a long furlough. Readjustment, the return to family, and only afterwards the return to work take time. Students will not manage to catch up on material and will immediately lose more material, and job seekers will not find an employer and work. It is very important not to make any change after announcing the plan and the date of return to service, in order not to undermine trust, to enable the soldiers to plan their civilian lives, and in order not to undermine their motivation to remobilize.

4. The competence of the reserve force is important not only operationally but also regarding the seriousness with which they are viewed. Competence is expressed in two main aspects: training and equipment. While it does not seem like it will be possible to train reserve units in 2024 (at least), aside from specific training in preparation for operational assignments, the equipment of reserve soldiers should be upgraded, improved, and placed on par with the equipment given to units in the standing army. If reserve units receive operational demands that are equal to those in the standing army, then the level of their equipment must also be equal.
5. The ticking clock of the reserves: Understanding the limitations and difficulties of the reserve force for recurring service over time, the IDF's war strategy and planning of operational activity must take into account the "ticking clock of the reserves," meaning what the reserve force is capable of. Excessive use of the reserve force could harm reservists' motivation, push it beyond its capabilities, and lower mobilization rates in upcoming mobilizations.
6. Command and psychological support structure: Reserve units do not have permanent support like units in the standing army. Not every unit has a casualty officer in permanent service, mental health officers are not attached to units on a regular basis, and the commanders themselves are reservists. Therefore, a command and psychological support structure should be established to handle those injured in the reserves, both physically and psychologically. In addition, the structure would work toward retaining reservists and address the expected decline in motivation to mobilize for additional periods of reserve service over the course of the year.
7. Special administration for addressing the reserve force and family members: An IDF staff should be established that is headed by a major general along with the chief reserve officer and staff leaders from all IDF directorates, as well as commanders in the reserves. This administration would be given powers and especially a significant budget to address all the issues related to the reserve force, not only compensation and payments.

The Civilian Aspect

8. Students: Students serving in the reserves must be the responsibility of the universities and colleges. The problems of students who return from

combat and could be called up again should be examined thoroughly. The solutions should be specific and customized to the needs and capabilities of each reservist student, according to the field of study, the timetables of the reservist, and other variables. Leadership of the issue should be carried out by the voluntary work of a university president, alongside the executive director of the Planning and Budgeting Committee and student representatives (not necessarily the National Union of Israeli Students, but rather students who have returned from combat). It is important that the president of each university or college lead the issue. It is also important to consider students studying abroad who came to serve in the reserves immediately after the war broke out. The academic year at institutions abroad opened as usual and no one will give them special allowances. Those who wish should be accepted to study in Israel with proper support, while others who prefer to return abroad should be offered financial support to help them complete what they have missed.

9. Employers: This issue is critical for reservists' ability to continue to serve. Here too, a committee should be established that includes economic leaders, the Histadrut, the Manufacturers Association of Israel, the heads of independent unions, senior officials in the Ministry of Finance and other relevant government ministries, and the chief reserve officer. It is important that reservists feel that the heads of the system are addressing them directly and that their workplaces and those of their spouses are secure. At the same time, dilemmas related to employers should be resolved in order to prevent harm to reservists. This committee should be backed by a significant budget.
10. Payments and compensation: After the beginning of the war an assistance fund for reservists was established. It is important to ensure that the solutions proposed in the system are suitable for prolonged combat and the different nature of the civilian occupations of reservists, and that there is a sufficient budget. In this framework, combat soldiers should be prioritized. They should receive, by law, compensation above the compensation for the loss of work income and the regular payment for reserve service, which would constitute a kind of additional salary for their significant service. An example of this could be a tax exemption (similar to what residents of the area near the border with Lebanon are eligible for). The size of the payments should cause reserve soldiers to feel that the country is genuinely thankful, beyond words and declarations.

11. Support for families: The families of reserve soldiers are experiencing a very difficult period. These families need daily help, which can be expressed in economic support, practical help (babysitter, cooking, house chores), and more. The assistance fund addresses the financial aspect, and various bodies, including local authorities, would do well to focus on addressing other aspects that would help with special cases. As the war goes on, it is important to increase the fund and the forms of assistance.

The Governmental Aspect and Legislation

12. A civilian staff to address issues related to the civilian aspects of the reserve force: This staff would include all the civilian bodies involved in this issue: the various government ministries, the chief reserve officer, and other military representatives, as well as reserve commanders who themselves are currently serving, and representatives of their families. A senior civilian official would head the administration (the head of the National Security Council / the director general of the Ministry of Defense). The unification of the civilian and military administrations could be considered.
13. Legislation: A special law, the "Law on Released Soldiers from the October 7, 2023 War," is needed for all the issues raised here. Inter alia, this law must be backed by a substantial budget that would enable addressing all the issues related to the reserve force and the challenges it is facing. For example, the law and regulations must deepen the "security belt" that ensures that the employment of the reservist and his/her spouse are not negatively affected. A temporary law can be legislated by virtue of which reservists in combat and combat support units from a certain period and up would be protected against dismissal for any reason for the next two years. This is a critical point, because due to the decrease in the relative percentage of reservists out of the total population, they also necessarily constitute a much smaller percentage of corresponding position holders in the labor market, which pushes employers to choose someone else, despite their good will towards reservists.
14. Long-term support for reservists: In 1944 the G.I. Bill was passed in the United States, whereby soldiers returning home from World War II received a series of unprecedented, far-reaching benefits. This was the way to recognize those who served on the battlefield, and it ultimately led to economic prosperity for the United States. The benefits included free tuition at universities, low-interest loans, support for training, assistance purchasing homes, support for businesses of veterans, and more.

A conceptual change is needed: Israel must embrace the reservists serving and those returning from the battlefield, some of them physically and psychologically injured. The reserve force needs to be handled well and to receive preferential treatment. The handling must be systemic, while allocating significant funding. This is the nation's obligation to its fighters, and it is the only way to retain them in the long term.