



The IDF in the Face of Popular Criminality following the Incursions at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid

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The violent incursions at IDF camps in Sde Teiman and Beit Lid are worthy of discussion on a number of levels. Firstly, in the general context of the state, its moral image, and its civil society; and secondly in the context of the political conduct of the state, the government leaders, and the political parties, both within and outside of the Knesset. This article focuses on a different aspect, which is worthy of a separate discussion: that of the IDF, its values and norms, and the actions of its soldiers in carrying out their missions—when it faces popular criminality in its ranks and its surroundings.

The crucial element in these events is not the violent incursions into military camps; it is the acts of which several reserve soldiers in the unit operating at Sde Teiman are suspected. Their alleged abuse of a terrorist under their supervision was described in legal terminology as “sodomy in coercive circumstances, causing injury combined with aggravated intent, collective abuse in aggravating circumstances, inappropriate behavior.” Some of them are also suspected of “assaulting and obstructing a public servant.”

1. The Breach of IDF Values

Even though the repugnant character of such actions is obvious, we will explain briefly the related breach of IDF values.

Statehood: All of a soldier's actions during their service in uniform must comply with the fundamental requirements of state activity. First of all, they must conform to the principles of the rule of law. Secondly, they must be done for the general benefit in accordance with the IDF values and the law. Thirdly, they must conform to the principles of the soldier's occupation or job, in accordance with IDF values and the law.

Human dignity: Any injury to a person in a situation in which there is no justification for injuring that person, constitutes abuse. Someone who injures a prisoner is injuring a person who poses no danger (which may justify injury). The person causing the injury has no authority whatsoever to punish another person. The person causing the injury is deviating from proper behavior according to the basic moral value of maintaining human dignity, which is one of the IDF values and one of the fundamental values of Israel as a democratic country.

Purity of arms: Arms and any other means of force in the possession of a soldier are designated solely for carrying out the missions assigned to the soldier in accordance with their orders and rules. No rule allows sexual abuse or collective abuse of prisoners or captives, and if an order to do this was given, it was manifestly illegal: it is forbidden to issue such an order, and if given, to obey it.

Representativeness: All of a soldier's actions during their military service should reflect the orders, rules, and values of the IDF, not their personal views. Disciplined military activity is impossible if the soldier does not restrict their actions to the sphere controlled directly by their commanders and indirectly by the IDF through its rules and values. A soldier who commits abuse creates the false impression that the IDF is abusive, thereby damaging their comrades and commanders and the IDF as a whole.

Professionalism: Every action by a soldier in the course of performing their duty is an action for the purpose of accomplishing a given mission in accordance with the professional principles guiding their activity. There are professional rules for guarding prisoners and captives, and these principles provide no basis for any type of abuse whatsoever.

Responsibility: The soldier bears responsibility for their actions, including the foreseeable results of their actions. A soldier who abuses prisoners is responsible for the possible grave consequences of their actions in the sphere of international law, which is liable to regard their actions and those of their IDF commanders as war crimes.

Dedication to a mission: A soldier with a good understanding of the task that they have been assigned in order to carry out a mission knows that they must dedicate themselves to that mission. This includes not only willingness to continue striving to achieve it, but also willingness to devote their best efforts until it is accomplished. Abuse, and especially collective abuse, can have no place whatsoever in the proper achievement of a mission in a

professional manner, in accordance with the orders, rules, and values of the IDF.

The grave suspicion that reserve soldiers failed to comply with their obligations under the law and according to IDF values, gives rise to several general problems which will be discussed here in brief. We will present these problems and initial suggestions for addressing each of them.

2. The Treatment of Criminality

The harsh events at the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid IDF camps feature suspected cases of abuse on the part of several reserve soldiers. The demonstrations on behalf of the suspects and the incursions into those camps attracted the media's attention, perhaps due to the photogenic nature of events. From the perspective of the essential defense of IDF values, however, the alleged criminality by soldiers is more important.

In cases of criminality, the first steps are taken via the internal mechanism for preserving the rule of law in the IDF. This refers to the IDF's internal legal system, which includes the Military Advocate General and its entire military legal staff and the Military Police Criminal Investigative Unit for Operational Affairs (CIUO), which in specific situations will be instructed by the Military Advocate General to investigate allegations of criminal behavior by soldiers. In the appropriate circumstances, the Military Advocate General will put a soldier on trial before a court martial. If convicted, a soldier has the right of appeal to the Military Court of Appeals.

To a large extent, the IDF internal legal system corresponds to that of the state legal system. There are historical and objective explanations for this parallel, which should be maintained as is. In the IDF, the general idea of the rule of law is manifested in the actions of the Military Advocate General, the CIUO, and the military courts. Not even small deviations from these should be countenanced.

The CIUO investigators sent to investigate suspected abuse did their work in accordance

with the principles of their profession and position. I do not accept pointless comments from within and without the IDF about the proper ways of conducting investigations. Instead of asking frivolous questions about whether the investigators were justified in wearing masks, it would be preferable to focus on the gravity of the offenses, the concern about a level of group-orchestrated criminality, and the natural concern about the possibility that commanders were present when abuse was taking place and ignored it, or even worse.

Some of the objections to the conduct of the CIUO investigators came from the IDF Personnel Directorate, the organizational framework of which the CIUO is a part. Soldiers should not hear from the media that their commanders object to some professional aspect of their activity. Criticism of any professional aspect of activity must be communicated via the professional channels. It would be better for the public to hear an effective professional explanation of the CIUO investigators' conduct, rather than a repudiation in a questionable style that is also ethically lacking. The style of criticism is problematic insofar as it raises concern about the penetration of political norms into the IDF. Other expressions of this phenomena also underlie such a concern, but this is not the right place to discuss this question.

Commanders whose soldiers are suspected of severe criminality may not simply rely on the course of complex legal proceedings, from the CIUO investigation to the military court's verdict. In parallel to any formal investigation, they should take command measures to rid their unit of any risk of criminality. Before that, they should ask themselves what aspect of the unit's internal structure or mode of operation, or both of those, left room for criminality to arise, especially on a large scale.

In the reports describing the activity of the Military Advocate General and the CIUO investigators, I found no grounds to malign either of them. I was glad to read that the IDF Chief of Staff supported them in their conduct

and I recommend that he finds opportunities to strengthen and expand this support for both the Military Advocate General and the CIUO. However, it is also important to take note of general educational elements in the training of soldiers at all stages, and to individual educational elements in the standard operating procedures (SOP) and so forth. This will be further discussed below.

3. The IDF is Not, and Should Not Be, a "Mirror of the People"

In the events at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid, the IDF's encounter with criminality was not limited to suspicions about criminal behavior by soldiers. The suspected soldiers were supported by demonstrations, and occasionally by actions, on the part of civilians, including Knesset members, who assembled around the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid bases. Some of these civilians also broke into the bases.

The IDF usually shows sensitivity to views prevailing among civilians, first of all because of the influence that civilians have on the soldiers' families and friends and on the soldiers' decisions about the IDF, such as whether to volunteer for combat units and officer courses, and showing up for reserve duty, and secondly because of the common perception of the IDF as "the people's army."

A clear, well-defined, acceptable, and justifiable conception of "the people's army" does not exist, but the IDF, even as "the people's army," should not be "a reflection of the people." The IDF is a state-directed, essential, and professional institution with its own tasks, tools, and values. It cannot fulfill its essential tasks with the means at its disposal and in accordance with its values if it must reflect the full spectrum of opinions present among civilians. There are situations in which it is the duty of the IDF to distance itself from opinions held by this or that group, so that it can continue to maintain its official status and act properly in fulfilling its essential duty.

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military bases to defend soldiers suspected of severe criminal behavior, the IDF must express a firm stance against that of the demonstrators, while completely disassociating itself from the criminal behavior itself.

The situation is especially difficult and acute when government ministers or Knesset members are among the demonstrators. The IDF's constitutional status requires it to respect these public officeholders. At the same time, however, it must also maintain absolute loyalty to the rule of law, as represented in the IDF by the Military Advocate General, with the help of the CIUO. Insofar as they are needed, the military courts will also play important roles in preserving the rule of law.

4. The Handling of Civilian Obstruction

In the events at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid there were cases of Israeli civilians obstructing military activity. Civilians massing at the gates of a military installation obstruct necessary movement by soldiers entering or leaving the installation. When civilians break into a military installation, they interrupt the military activity taking place in it. Civilians attempting to prevent the CIUO from detaining soldiers suspected of offenses are obstructing the performance of a task that the military investigators have been assigned to carry out. Civilians trying to free soldiers suspected of offenses who are being held in a military facility are obstructing the military activity being conducted there.

Such cases of obstruction require substantial practical intervention to halt the disruption of military activity. Since the people causing this obstruction are Israeli citizens, it is usually the job of the police to prevent the obstruction using the means available to policemen. Soldiers will summon the policemen, who will remove the rioters to enable the soldiers to carry out the tasks assigned to them.

The policemen who are supposed to deal with the attempt by Israeli civilians to obstruct soldiers in their tasks will be policemen trained

in the use of force aimed at preventing such activity. This is because these policemen have been trained in the use of the force at their disposal to the precise extent needed to restore order, and also because they have been specially trained for tasks involving wider public unrest, rather than by one or a few individuals.

For future incidents, soldiers may be trained to act as policemen to maintain the ability of soldiers to perform their tasks in the face of obstruction by Israeli civilians. This need may arise, for example, when not enough policemen are summoned or arrive at the site where civilians are disrupting military activity and are consequently unable to prevent this disruption. Summoning soldiers who have not been trained in preventing obstruction, such as the two Nahal battalions called to Beit Lid, is legally permissible, but is obviously acceptable only when all the previous measures have failed to end the disruption.

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5. Police Conduct in Cases of Civilian Obstruction

There have recently been a few other cases of police assistance to soldiers. In media reports, Israeli citizens were seen impeding the entry into the Gaza Strip of trucks carrying humanitarian aid. The trucks were delayed, and the rioters threw the aid containers from the trucks onto the road in some cases, and even set them on fire in one case. Under international arrangements, the task of bringing humanitarian aid trucks to Gaza during wartime is a military mission. Although the police were summoned to the locations of the riots, police forces did not arrive in the area and did not suppress the unrest.

Following the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid events, some claimed that the police had not done their job properly in protecting the facilities and the soldiers working there against the rioters, who were Israeli civilians. Without determining whether this assertion is correct, it is worth discussing the proper conduct by the IDF in a situation in which the police are not intervening in an event or are not doing so on the necessary scale and with the necessary determination.

In the current circumstances, it is appropriate to mention a few of the values of the Israel Police. These values are divided into three groups: mission values, attitude values, and performance values. One of the mission values is “upholding and enforcing the law.” Two principles are attached to this value. The second principle states, “We will uphold the law in exemplary fashion in all circumstances with no appearance of unworthy conduct in all aspects of our activity.” One of the attitude values is “statehood.” Principle 1 attached to this value states, “We will uphold the law, in all circumstances, neutrally and professionally, objectively, and with equality, tolerance, respect, and representatively, with the means and methods permitted by law.” One of the performance values is “determination and adherence to the mission,” which by definition and according to the associated principle requires dedication, responsibility, judgment, alertness and decisiveness, insight and professionalism, reasonableness and proportionality.

Values and principles from the three groups therefore require that policemen act in highly proper, practical ways. Two comments are in order with respect to these values and principles: one local and one general. The local comment is that in the event of civil disturbance having a significant impact on military activity, if police conduct does not appear to conform to the law, its values, and its principles, the IDF should adopt local measures to neutralize the disturbance, using soldiers who have been trained for such activity. These soldiers should operate in accordance with IDF values, among

them statehood, professionalism, preservation of human dignity, and purity of arms.

The general comment is more complex. A situation is possible in which soldiers and their commander draw the attention of their senior commanders to an ongoing series of events in which soldiers were in need of police protection against Israeli civilians who were obstructing them in carrying out their missions, but the police did not provide the necessary help, and frequently provided them with no help whatsoever. In such a situation, following the rigorous examination of the facts, and after providing the police with an opportunity to explain what happened in those events, military staff should work with operational and legal advisors to achieve a general decision: the IDF will take action to protect soldiers against Israeli civilians obstructing military activity in IDF bases, the area surrounding each of those bases, or any site whatsoever in which military activity is taking place, in accordance with regulations. This would not exclude the standard practice of asking for police help and relying on it in putting a stop to the obstruction.

Such a transition to IDF independence in putting an end to actions by Israeli civilians aimed at obstructing military activity requires the training of military forces for such tasks and the training of each soldier to act properly until the military protection force steps in. This training should also include a clear objective, and practical distinction between military activity against an enemy and military activity for dealing with Israeli civilians who are obstructing military activity.

Soldiers are obviously trained to fight an enemy, while this activity deals with Israeli civilians. As such, special training of a military force for preventing Israeli civilians from disrupting military activity is necessary. At the same time, it should be noted that by its nature, such obstruction involves confrontation between civilians and soldiers, and since it is unavoidable when the problem occurs, it is also unavoidable in solving the problem, particularly

under time pressure. The training of a special military force to immediately subdue such disturbances will reduce as much as possible the damage caused by the friction between soldiers and civilians caused by those attempting to obstruct the soldiers in their activity.

This transition is not a step in a dangerous process of the state's disintegration. We are familiar with the Knesset Guard and the Court Guard, which are neither police units nor part of the Israel Security Agency (ISA). We are also familiar with military security agencies that are not part of the ISA security section. Although assigning a professional task to an agency that specializes in it has its advantages, there may still be room for separation between various agencies operating in the same field, so that while professional expertise is acquired in the framework of a single agency, the use of force involving that professional expertise takes place in a different agency. For example, legal evaluation of the situation is done by one agency and its experts, while practical missions are performed by another unit and its experts. We are familiar with such a division of labor in essential spheres, such as medicine and security guards. There is nothing unacceptable about making a military unit responsible for preventing obstruction of military activity by Israeli civilians. Perhaps it's worth considering a military draft for the establishment of a "soldier's protection corps," alongside the "border defense corps."

The day on which the military process of defining rules of behavior is completed in the framework of a properly expanded exposition of the IDF Code of Ethics, there will be room to include in it the compilation of special behavioral rules for activity when faced with Israeli civilians attempting to obstruct military activity.

6. Revised Education for Reserve Soldiers

Criminal activity by soldiers invites intervention by the agencies for preserving the rule of law within the IDF, but the use of law enforcement

agencies, criminal sanctions, and disciplinary measures are never sufficient to induce the soldiers to adopt habits of proper behavior in accordance with the law and IDF rules, orders, and values. This requires an educational approach, to which attention should be paid in the current circumstances. We will first discuss soldiers in general, and later devote special attention to reserve soldiers.

Any successful process of instilling values and norms in an organization or professional community must include four stages: recognition, understanding, assent, and internalization. This also applies to the IDF: both in combat units and throughout the command structure. While conducting military activity, the commander can only trust their soldiers to act properly if they can assume that the education processes that they have undergone have caused them to fully accept the values and norms of the IDF, based on an understanding of their meaning and assent to their content. If problems of understanding or assent arise, they should be solved during the education processes. If there are any suspicions of severe criminal activity by soldiers, their commanders must investigate until they locate the roots of the criminal behavior to uproot it and bring the soldiers back to the proper moral frame of mind for military activity.

The root of criminality in the Sde Teiman and Beit Lid cases is a distortion of morality and values—the unrestrained desire for revenge. Any desire for revenge is fundamentally unacceptable and dangerous when carried out. It is unacceptable because normal relations between human beings, groups of people, and countries must be restrained and determined by understanding and reason, not unrestrained emotions. Humanity recognizes that feelings of revenge exist, but has learned to restrain them, first of all through the basic principles of coexistence and secondly by replacing the unrestrained world of vengeance with a restrained world of law and punishment. The desire for revenge is inherently dangerous,

because control over emotions is weak by nature and acts of revenge are unrestrained. Their actual results can entirely exceed any framework of restraint. In the end, they invite retaliation and endless wars of vengeance.

A soldier's actions are always in the IDF's name, any act of revenge by a soldier is perceived as having been carried out by the IDF, but an image of the IDF as an army of revenge is totally false, immoral, and unjustified.

Educational activity by commanders with assistance from effective professional staff organizations must instill the absolute opposition of the democratic state and its military arm to acts of revenge, even if the anger is justified and the hostility is natural. The focus of education against acts of revenge must be the uprooting of the desire for revenge. To the extent that revenge is perceived as permissible on the level of emotion and desire but forbidden on the level of actions, its materialization in the heat of war is unacceptable. It is not enough for a soldier to refrain from murdering helpless enemy civilians, for example, as an act of revenge for the murder of innocents on our side. Committing acts of vengeance should be inconceivable to the soldier, and they should have no desire to do so. The IDF is an army of defense, not of vengeance, and is able to attack when there is a justifiable need to do so. Since a soldier's actions are always in the IDF's name, any act of revenge by a soldier is perceived as having been carried out by the IDF, but an image of the IDF as an army of revenge is totally false, immoral, and unjustified.

Acts of abuse in the name of vengeance detract from the IDF Code of Ethics and every one of the values listed at the beginning of this article. A person committing abuse for the sake of revenge has excluded himself from the framework of the IDF values, norms, and ethics. In view of the acts of abuse allegedly being committed by their soldiers, the educational

process that commanders are called upon to conduct should renew the comprehension, assent and instilling of IDF values among their soldiers. One of the measures of its success will be the elimination of any inclination towards acts of revenge in the soldiers' activity, not only when it is criminal and insufferable, but even when it appears natural and innocent.

7. Moral Education for Reserve Soldiers

The soldiers suspected of abusing a prisoner are reserve soldiers. I believe that attention should be paid to this aspect of their actions, and that comprehensive measures should be taken in order to correct this aberration in the behavior of uniformed soldiers during their activity in the IDF.

As part of the background for a discussion of this aspect of the abuse, I will relate to a phenomenon that I encountered during Operation Iron Swords. A few foreign media channels showed me several hundred clips they had found on social media in which soldiers filmed themselves during their military activity. I am often asked to give my opinion about what is shown in these clips from the perspective of IDF values. The very fact that such clips are being shown by soldiers is a breach of regulations and orders, but there is nevertheless a good reason for viewing them.

All of the clips they showed me display improper actions. These never approached the level of war crimes or the like, but they were clearly in violation of the IDF Code of Ethics. I took note of two general features of these clips. The first is that officers almost never appeared in them; in only one clip did I see a major and a captain. The second is that the soldiers in these clips were reserve soldiers. The hundreds of clips that I saw are obviously not an adequate basis for generalizations about hundreds of thousands of reserve soldiers, but I believe that natural caution should not deter us from discussing the possibility that the level of adherence to IDF values among reserve soldiers

is much lower than the adherence to these values among soldiers in the regular army: both soldiers doing their conscription army service and commissioned and noncommissioned officers.

It is not difficult to guess the reasons for this. Soldiers in the regular army undergo processes of instilling IDF values at various stations in their military training throughout the IDF. They all experienced these processes at the outset of their service during basic training and other initial programs. Many of them were also exposed to them in later training courses, include junior command courses, such as tank commander courses and squad commander courses. Quite a few also experienced them in command courses ranging from Training Base 1 to military colleges. On the other hand, a reserve soldier who completed their conscription service several years ago does not undergo additional intense instilling processes, especially when they are called up for reserve duty during a war. No one should be surprised if this difference is eventually manifested in the routine behavior of soldiers of both types.

The inevitable conclusion is obvious in principle; its implementation, however, is very difficult. In principle, frequently occurring behavior by reserve soldiers during their army service in breach of IDF values should never be accepted. Implementation requires intensification of activity or new activity aimed at training soldiers and commanders in reserve service to act in accordance with IDF values. During a period of routine action, familiarity with and understanding of IDF values among soldiers doing reserve service, should be renewed during the army exercises in which they regularly take part, and also in one-day reserve activities devoted to raising their ethical level.

In a period of non-intensive operational activity, part of each SOP can be devoted to the necessary presentation of IDF values, both independently and as a moral basis for the SOPs and various orders. In wartime, when time is short, it is sufficient to present emphases in

IDF values in the course of an SOP according to the circumstances of the planned activity. It is natural to devote part of each operational debriefing to an analysis of particular aspects of proper behavior in accordance with IDF values.

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In order to summarize the brief discussion of educational activity, it is worthwhile stressing the unique character of moral and ethical education. A command response is neither a legal nor a disciplinary response, and is not accompanied by a threat of punishment. It is designed to induce a soldier to act differently, because conduct in accordance with IDF values maintains the IDF's image in the eyes of its soldiers and commanders, their families, and the entire world. Damage to these values has a negative impact on the mutual trust between soldiers and commanders, the public's confidence in the propriety of actions by those wearing IDF uniforms, and international confidence in the IDF.

8. IDF Organizational Culture

Incidents revealed in events at Sde Teiman and Beit Lid have deep roots in the IDF's organizational culture and should be addressed not only in the context of a comprehensive review following the war, but also in local command actions to be implemented as soon as possible.

Over the years, assigning too many tasks to commanders has become a habit. The list of tasks that a commander must carry out, based on their professional judgment and following appropriate staff work, is so long that it is impossible for a commander to properly perform all of the tasks assigned to them. When overloaded with too many tasks, a commander cannot avoid arranging their tasks in order of

importance, urgency, etc. In such a state of priorities, some of the tasks are consigned to the bottom of the pile and receive less attention and may not be performed at all. If not totally neglected, they will be carried out in a different manner from the most important or urgent tasks. They will be carried out on the basis of a partial or poor process, or with no real process of preparation. At least some of them will be executed on a low level, as can be expected when preparation is perfunctory or incomplete. In this way, a habit of negligence has become rooted in IDF organizational culture.

This pattern of negligence is manifested in various ways, one of which is ignoring improper behavior by soldiers. A commander with more on their plate than they can possibly handle will not spend time enforcing values and norms having no clear link to tasks at the top of their list. The contagious nature of negligence should be highlighted here. It cannot be confined to marginal elements of the system. It may initially appear in the margins, but it naturally and continually spreads from there to the key elements of the system. The legendary spit and polish in the Armored Corps, for example, is one side of the concern that negligence in spit and polish in daily routine is liable to affect tank operations during a battle.

The behavior of soldiers, which has been consigned to the bottom of the commander's list of tasks, is an outgrowth of the soldiers' personalities, not only as expressed in conversations between the soldiers when there is enough time for personal conversation, but also when these personalities appear in the soldiers' conduct during their operational activity. Commanders will not engage in enforcement of the IDF's protocol in marginal cases, but it appears that some of the commanders are also not enforcing the protocol when the deviation from it occurs in the middle of operational activity. A prominent example is the graffiti written by soldiers on buildings in the Gaza Strip announcing Jewish settlement. Many examples are known of statements by

religiously observant soldiers and commanders of an openly religious and prominent nature during the war. I have seen "Messiah" patches on the uniforms of soldiers in the Gaza Strip that give the impression that they are part of the uniforms. Had the commanders acted properly, these patches would not have appeared on their uniforms.

Processes of deterioration are slow and misleading, but it is easy to be swept along by them. The phenomenon of a group of soldiers suspected of sexual and other abuse of a prisoner in jail is an extreme manifestation of soldiers' behavior in the absence of appropriate conduct by commanders in enforcing IDF values. It is reasonable to assume that such coordinated abuse did not appear out of nowhere; it was undoubtedly preceded by other phenomena of similar types leading down the slippery slope.

When the dust settles, the war ends and the operational inquiry processes are concluded, it will also be appropriate to conduct a comprehensive and thorough inquiry into the IDF organizational culture. One place that such an inquiry could begin is cases of religious behavior by soldiers and commanders in contravention of IDF orders, regulations, and values. This is a sensitive area, and I would not be surprised if senior officers avoid dealing with it, but it must be a part of any responsible process of healing of IDF organizational culture.

9. Public Confidence in the IDF

The element of surprise in the Simchat Torah attack (October 7, 2023) and the conduct of the major military frameworks (the IDF as a whole, the Southern Command, the Gaza Division, etc.) in the first 24 hours of the war have caused substantial damage to public confidence in the IDF.

Let there be no illusions about the significance of "public confidence in the IDF." I am not referring to the complex attitude of many Israelis to the IDF, in which they and their families have served, and whose children are serving in the regular army or the reserve forces.

This attitude has many diverse elements, some personal and some general, some rooted in memories and others reflecting sensitivity. The significance of “public confidence in the IDF,” which the IDF should address as soon as possible after the war and postwar inquiries, is something else. Civilian confidence in the IDF is the belief that the IDF is performing competently, and will continue to do so, in carrying out its missions. “Performing competently” refers to both the operational sphere and the moral and ethical sphere of maintaining the IDF’s values.

The initial stages of the Iron Swords war, which began as a surprise, undermined the basis that civilians had for relying on the IDF—for thinking that the IDF would always act competently in carrying out its missions. The IDF did not act as expected in defending civilians and the state at the beginning of the war. Later in the war, the IDF acted professionally in executing missions of defending civilians and the state, thereby causing a substantial rise in civilian confidence, albeit not to the same level as in other periods.

More than a few events led to a decline in civilian confidence in the IDF insofar as the moral and ethical aspects of activity were concerned. There were numerous cases of soldiers behaving in a way that contravened the IDF’s values and allegedly crossed the dividing line into criminal activity. The IDF must repair civilian confidence in the loyalty of commanders and soldiers to the IDF’s values, after some soldiers clearly damaged it and won public admiration as a result.

There is no doubt that the IDF will undergo substantial reform in the effort to restore civilian confidence in it. It is generally known that this confidence is not an expression of affection or appreciation; it is an essential element in the relations between civil society and the IDF. Without such confidence, the IDF will be weak in both the operational and moral and ethical spheres. The IDF must extricate itself from this situation soon and do so with significant success. Anyone who can aid in this process

must do so. Senior officers in uniform who express personal views along the lines of “Our endurance is steadfast, in absolute contrast to Israeli culture” are hindering the restoration of civilian confidence in the IDF. Such a statement by an officer arouses doubt whether the orders that they issue really reflect professional military considerations, rather than their own private superficiality and arrogance.

When the time comes, both the IDF and the public will have a clear picture of the war, its political background, military readiness before 7.10, the military conduct in its first 24 hours, the political decisions about the war’s continuation, the military activity during the many months of war, and above all the political policy and military activity with respect to the hostages. In view of this complex picture, the work of the commanders in making the necessary improvements in the IDF and restoring public confidence in the competence of military activity throughout the command structure will be difficult, prolonged, and full of diverse social and political obstacles. At this early stage, when public discourse has room for general demands and there is no place for subtleties, the duty of constant, complete, profound, and uncompromising adherence to IDF values should be stressed; and the obligation to defend these values against any danger of erosion or change that may bring us to resemble our enemies, rather than the soldiers of Israel’s past wars in whose footsteps we tread.

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