



Hebron Refusal

(Published in *Jerusalem Post*, August 9, 2007)

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Colaboraciones n° 1908

September 4, 2007

How can the IDF improve its standing among Right wing youth who have become increasingly less motivated to join the army, and at the same time harshly deal with any insubordination among its ranks, as was demonstrated in the Hebron marketplace evacuation?

The IDF is currently confronted by a series of major challenges.

In addition to rectifying the weaknesses exposed during the war, increasing numbers of youngsters are avoiding conscription. Eleven percent of those now eligible for military service are automatically exempt because they attend yeshivot and that proportion will double in less than 20 years. There is also a marginal but growing phenomenon of "celebrity draft evaders" from post modernist secular elites devoid

of Jewish and Zionist values. This trend could become infectious if it is not dealt with drastically.

Now we are confronted with a new crisis amongst national religious conscripts - probably the most highly motivated sector in the IDF.

They were already traumatized by the unilateral disengagement and alas, their greatest fears were realized. The disengagement proved to be politically and militarily counterproductive and to our eternal disgrace, most of the displaced settlers to this day remain without permanent homes or livelihoods.

So understandably soldiers who identify with or have relationships with settlers are desperately keen to avoid becoming engaged in future police actions against settlers.

Yet, with the army now poised for a possible conflict with existential implications for the nation, it is unconscionable to suggest that an individual soldier is entitled to determine which order – good or bad – he will accept or reject.

Soldiers must obey orders – even morally repugnant orders – as long as such orders will not lead to the death of innocents. That is being reiterated even by the mainstream national religious and Hesder Rabbis.

Yet it is surely high time for the IDF to learn from previous mistakes and take all possible steps to avoid needlessly alienating soldiers.

The role of an army is to fight the external enemy and defend the lives of civilians. Surely this particular action to remove two families could have been implemented by law en-

forcement authorities without recourse to the army.

Furthermore, if the IDF is obliged to deviate from its traditional military role and undertake policing roles, it should at least employ common sense and humanity and make every effort to avoid burdening soldiers with roles that genuinely conflict with their conscience or moral outlook.

We live in tumultuous times and Israel today faces critical external threats. The army and politicians must avoid polarizing situations which could undermine the nation's most important asset. We must avoid extending our crippling internal domestic conflicts to the IDF. It is a time for all parties to exercise maximum wisdom, restraint and tolerance. Our future may depend on it.