

# BREAKING THE SILENCE

## Women Soldiers' Testimonies

Somehow, a female combatant has to prove herself more, on the ground too. Again, a female combatant who can lash out is a serious fighter. Capable. A ball-breaker. There was one with me when I got there, she'd been there long before, she was – wow, everyone talked about what grit she had, because she could humiliate Arabs without batting an eyelash. That was the thing to do.

... I think guys need to prove themselves less in this respect, but it was not clearly stated. We did talk about how the tough female-combatant has no problem beating up Arabs. It's obvious, you don't even need to spell it out. This one means business, you should see her humiliating them – there was no problem to say something like this out loud. Take a look at that one, a real 'ball-breaker,' see her humiliating them, slapping them, what a slap she gave that guy! You hear this kind of talk all the time.

**Breaking the Silence** is an organization of veterans who served in the Israeli army during the Second Intifada (since September 2000), and have taken it upon themselves to expose the Israeli public to everyday life in the Occupied Territories, a routine situation that is never reflected in the media. An alternative information-conduit thus becomes accessible to the public at large about what the daily goings-on in Israel's back yard. **Breaking the Silence** came into being in March 2004, and has since acquired a special standing for both the public and the media, bringing forth the voices of soldiers who had previously remained silent. The ultimate goal of **Breaking the Silence** is to stimulate public debate about the moral price that Israeli society as a whole has been paying for a reality in which young soldiers face a civilian population on an everyday basis and control its life. All the testimonies we publish undergo meticulous research, including cross-checking facts with additional eye-witnesses and/or archives of other human rights organizations which are also active in the field. True to our journalistic effort, the identity of our sources is not exposed and remains confidential. The testimonies published here are unedited and presented in their original form, except for details that are withheld in order to conceal the identity of specific testimony-bearers, and/or clarifications of military jargon.



## **Breaking the Silence**

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The content or opinions expressed in this booklet do not represent the EU or the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, and are solely the responsibility of **Breaking the Silence.**

This booklet is a product of “Soldiers Speak Out,” the testimonies collection project of Breaking the Silence. Since 2004, we have collected hundreds of testimonies from those who have, during their service in the IDF, the Border Guard, and the Security Forces, played a role in the Occupied Territories. We are talking about the best of the sons and daughters of Israeli society, sent by that society each and every day to control a civilian population. The encounter with those who have lived under military control for more than 40 years leaves an impression, but is nevertheless hidden from the eyes of society, which are inclined not to recognize the character of the mission on which it sends its youth. Only those who wear uniforms are acquainted with the daily realities. The cruelty required to fulfill the mission and the dissolution of ethical sensibility under the routine of controlling neighborhoods, communities and families are missing from the public discourse in Israel. In contrast to widely held beliefs, the mosaic of testimonies that only continues to expand proves that we are not dealing with a fringe phenomenon that touches only the bad apples of the military, but a gradual erosion of ethics in the society as a whole.

This booklet comes in a long line of publications and testimony collections that Breaking the Silence has published in the past few years; it is also the first of its kind. The testimonies collected here are all from women who served in various units and roles in the Occupied Territories since the year 2000. This collection uncovers a reality that many female soldiers were exposed to during their military service. Female officers, commanders and soldiers, who served as combatants and in supporting combat roles, describe how they dealt with complex situations on the ground.

Many of the testimonies in this collection alternate between a semi-external perspective, observing the action from the side, and full participation in what occurs. These perspectives shed additional light on what happens in the back yard of the State of Israel.

The booklet that is in your hands contains testimonies selected from interviews with more than 40 women breaking their silence, who join hundreds of soldiers whose testimonies have been published in the past. This booklet is an additional example of the ethical and societal cost of the missions with which the security forces have been charged.

These women breaking their silence shed light through their testimonies on how acts that were defined yesterday as “exceptional” become the norms of tomorrow, how Israeli society continues to slide down an ethical slippery slope together with the entire military system. This is an upright stance against the stubborn majority who refuse to know the facts that are created by the extant reality.

This is an urgent call to Israeli society and its leaders to wake up and evaluate anew the results of our actions.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers and supporters who made possible the publication of this booklet. Without their support and assistance, these important testimonies would never reach those who must come to know them.

## Testimony 1

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** General

Somehow, a female combatant has to prove herself more, on the ground too. Again, a female combatant who can lash out is a serious fighter. Capable. A ball-breaker. There was one with me when I got there, she'd been there long before, she was – wow, everyone talked about what grit she had, because she could humiliate Arabs without batting an eyelash. That was the thing to do.

### **The entry 'ticket'?**

Yes, kind of. When I got to the company they were on operations maneuvers, and I got the highest marks, guys included. I was in the top ten. They were all impressed and at first I had a really good reputation, until I was out in the field and they realized I wasn't that tough. On the ground I wouldn't apply my capabilities. Like, she's fit and she can punch and she's a 'karate-kid' and all that doesn't really show when she's out there. Not because I didn't give a shit. No, I was too wimpy. First of all, I didn't like to cut guard duty. I can't say I didn't fall asleep on any shift. We all do. But I wasn't too keen on cutting the job and going out to do this and that. Sure, let's take a ride to this or that village because you know, routine drives you crazy, but I wasn't too keen on going wild. So I had a problem. But right at first people really appreciated me.

### **What would you talk about with your roommates?**

Depends which. Again, it varies.

### **Was it obvious or implied that this was the 'entry ticket' for girls, to belong?**

I think guys need to prove themselves less in this respect, but it was not clearly stated. We did talk about how the tough female-combatant has no problem beating up Arabs. It's obvious, you don't even need to spell it out. This one means business, you should see her humiliating them – there was no problem to say something like this out loud. Take a look at that one, a real 'ball-breaker,' see her humiliating them, slapping them, what a slap she gave that guy! You hear this kind of talk all the time.

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## Testimony 2

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/Education Corps Officer | **Place:** Hebron

As an officer in Hebron, one day I went out to the gate to hitch a ride. It was extremely cold and I was wearing my fleece jacket, which does not show my officer rank. I stood there with the other guys. Across the road was this kind of bus stop where Palestinian detainees would be seated to wait for the Shabak to pick them up and take them to the \*\*\* detention center. The guys on guard duty at the brigade HQ base were on routine security shifts, they are assigned for these ongoing security runs from all kinds of office jobs in rear units like the air force and so on. They would stand guard at the camp gate. So, standing there I see these two guys pacing around a detainee – blindfolded, his hands shackled behind his back. Suddenly I see that one of the guys simply approaches him and, without any warning, knee-kicks him in the head.

My gut-reaction was instant: I leapt at this guy, caught him and said: “You’re coming with me now.” He didn’t understand what on earth a woman-soldier is doing ordering him around. He shoved me off, this was a big guy - he pushed me away and ran into the barracks. I was all wound up at that point. I left the gate, hurried upstairs straight to the brigade commander’s and deputy-commander’s office. The commander wasn’t there, the deputy was. I went up to him and told him what happened and he said, “Go with our deputy operations-officer and find that fellow.”

I went with the ops-officer, the guy must have hidden somewhere on the base, we couldn’t find him. When we returned to the deputy-commander and told him we hadn’t found him and that we’d go looking for him again in a few hours, he said: “Let it go, it’s pointless. Anyway there are and there will be many such cases,” or something in that vein. I don’t recall his exact words, but that was the message: let it go, no need to pursue this. It was one of the instances I had a very hard time with.

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## Testimony 3

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

There was this 5-1 patrol authorized around Umm al-Fahm. And there was a patrol

on foot, for some reason called 'lookout watch' although most of the time it was not doing that at all, it was simply a foot-patrol amongst the trees there, meant to seize as many illegals (Palestinians illegally inside Israel) as possible. In theory, catch every one of them, check his ID, and of course see if it's green or orange, namely Palestinian. Check it against the diarist who would check it on the computer and if some sort of investigation is called for – he is to be detained. If not – “go home!” get back. And of course make sure he doesn't go around the trees right back into Israel.

### **You said there are huge numbers of illegals.**

Sure, and it cannot be totally prevented. That's why when I'm asked for my opinion of the Separation Fence, politically I cannot oppose it one-hundred percent. Something has to set a border because it was really... And they crossed over, they crossed every single day. You cannot ignore the fact that they did. Our aim was to prevent the maximum possible, and especially by this 'lookout watch,' on foot, usually two soldiers, often neither of them a commander - simply two combatants. Often I'd be with a combatant who was younger than me and I was in command, and we simply hid in spots where we knew we would not be seen, among the trees, and we'd suddenly leap out, and “come here, show me your ID” and all of that.

### **Was there violence?**

All the time.

### **What kind?**

First of all, just plain harassment. Keeping them on their feet, because if you're really gung-ho and got up that morning rearing to go and catch some, you could easily hunt down thirty people in a half-hour. The point is you had to detain them. You couldn't get them and check them out one by one. You had to catch the guy, seat him and wait for others. And often they would come in large groups. Again, when they move in large groups obviously they're not out on a terrorist mission, that's not exactly the recommended mode of action... So you catch them and make them stand in formation.

### **Formation?**

Yes. Stand in formation, and there's that famous Border Patrol rhyme - Wahad hummus, wahad ful, ana bahibbak Mishmar HaGvul (One plate of hummus, one plate of beans, I love you Border Patrol)... They're made to sing it. Sing and hop. Just like rookies, the kind of hazing stuff in basic training, about which soldiers' parents are always raising hell. It's the same thing. Only much worse. If anyone laughs, or the soldiers decide he's laughed, he gets punched. Why did you laugh? Boom, a fist. He

doesn't really have to laugh to get that punch. I feel like punching him. Why did you laugh? Boom.

**How long does this last?**

It can last for hours. It depends how bored the soldiers are, they can stretch it out for two hours. It's an eight-hour shift. Got to get through it somehow.

**And who is made to stand in formation?**

Everyone, all age groups.

**Women? Children? Elderly people?**

Yes. Whoever shows up. Whoever shows up, stands in formation. There were the more sensitive soldiers who'd let the women and elderly go. I'd say the elderly were less harassed. And there were soldiers who'd harass the elderly. Like in any society, this company too, some soldiers abused more and others less. Some had absolutely no restraint and abused anyone.

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Testimony 4

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Gaza Division/ Education Corps Officer | **Location:** Gaza Strip

I can describe to you the everyday routine of combat service in very general terms; I wasn't a part of this combat routine. I can talk about my own routine and what it was like for me to be in Gaza. Since my second night there, I think – I was learning the ropes from the officer I was about to replace – during my first night I had a hard time falling asleep because I was constantly startled awake by mortar fire, after all, I originally came from a unit that is not exactly army in the strict sense and I didn't realize what that meant. She told me: "You get used to it." So the second night, I got used to it and even in my quarters, when I kept hearing blasts, I didn't turn my head, it no longer startled me. You do get used to it. It means traveling down to Ashqelon every Sunday morning (after Sabbath leave), and then getting into some secured bus to cross Kisufim Checkpoint and enter another world which – no matter how much time I'd spend there, a week or two at a time – always seemed like being inside a movie. And I realized I was in a movie every time I'd get out of there. Every time I realized I am free to move and can walk around, and people are not wearing ceramic

bullet-proof vests... And that I don't get home at 12 noon and there's shooting and the PA system announces we have to enter safe rooms and no one bothers to do that anymore because how much can you stand of this, or go get newspapers in this secured Mercedes they got out of Lebanon or I have no idea where, and looking, driving on a straight paved road and seeing a dangerous winding dirt track on my right and seeing Palestinian children going to school there, riding a donkey and watching me with frightened, hateful eyes, that's what my routine was like. And beyond that, there were all kinds of incidents.

**How does such constant routine pressure affect you? How did it affect you personally?**

The truth is I only confronted it in retrospect, after leaving. Suddenly I realized to what extent I had not been a human being out there. I read some of the emails I sent my girlfriends, and I have no idea who wrote them. I have no idea how I managed not to shoot myself in the head every morning. We'd stay up – some junior officers of the human resources section, let's say – every night until 3-4 a.m. just to be together, after the soldiers were gone, to vent and cry on each other's shoulder.

**What about? What is the difference between being a 'normal human being' and being there?**

I don't know, it's like a movie with a lot of death around you, an unreasonable reality, with soldiers doing inhuman things to others and to themselves. It means guarding and guarding and guarding and guarding and guarding, and doing irrational things to other people.

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## Testimony 5

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** General

I don't exactly recall my own deliberations, but I do remember not always managing to deal with my own reactions. I knew I was not real, I knew that something here was just not right. If I pass a seated person and spit at him, and call him a terrorist because I've decided he's a terrorist, then something here is just not right. And that's what I tell everyone: come take a look at the blood of someone who's dead, it's not right.

I remember having that feeling, but still you get carried away, people encourage

you. And that a certain incident has not been 'action' enough yet, let's turn this into 'action,' let's laugh about it and get our pictures taken with the detainees because it's okay for me to get this photo with two guys, our soldiers, smiling and someone with his eyes...

**Did they give this to you as a gift?**

Yes.

**What did you think of this gift?**

Cool. I showed it to my mom. Yes, cool. And I tell her: I was next to him, I saw it happen.

**Were you photographed too?**

No.

**Did you take pictures?**

No.

**Why not?**

Because it scared me. I was scared I'd get, I don't know, I'd get thrilled with guys who did get their pictures taken: Yes, take his picture, take his picture. But not, somehow something like this did seem a bit shocking to me. Having in my own camera a shot like that. I don't know, even though it's cool, I thought it was cool. Look what kind of action I'm a part of in the army, and I'm a woman-soldier with a low profile and look what kind of stuff I get to witness, and where I've gotten to and what fun.

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## Testimony 6

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Paratroopers | **Location:** Nablus

My boyfriend at the time lived in the central part of the country. We always traveled from my parents' place to his parents', and once on a bus he was really stressed.

I asked him: what's wrong? Normally he was always the clown, everything he did was really funny. So he said: "I'm troubled by some things that happened last week on one of our patrols." He was crew-commander, and they were off searching for a wanted man or something like that, he told me about some things that happened there, and suddenly it all opened up, and I think it was the longest ride I ever took to his place. Then he said they knocked on some house door, knocked hard and no one

opened. They said, okay, either people inside are busy hiding something, or they're getting ready to attack us. He wasn't sure whether to break in or not. They went on knocking on the door and then he pushed it open and saw a crippled old lady without legs, creeping on the floor and trying to reach them, she simply couldn't make it. He told me he had never seen anyone so terrified, and he'd seen a lot, this was after about four years in the army. And then he ordered everyone to move back and they closed the door and simply went away. But it doesn't always end that way.

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## Testimony 7

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Allenby Bridge

I enlisted on November 7th, 2001, doing my army basic training in Camp 80, near Hadera. I knew where I'd be assigned eventually, knew that I would eventually not be wearing army fatigues. I got this Border Patrol dress-uniform, and they told me where to report after my leave. I got there. It was some unfamiliar god-forsaken place and I had no idea whether I was still inside my own borders, I mean I didn't even know if this was still Israel, this amazing place I had reached. god-forsaken, but amazing.

### **Where?**

Northern Dead Sea. South Jordan Valley. Jericho. A 40 minute drive east of Jerusalem. That's where I was. I mean that's where I arrived. From the army base we were taken directly to the Bridge. The Allenby Bridge. I started after the course, I mean the course I took before enlisting, in Petach Tikwa.

In January 2002, I began my term as a border-controller, accountable to the following superiors: Ma'ale Adumim police, I mean the civilian police of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement; the Border Patrol of course, I was considered a Border Patrolwoman; the Israeli airports authority, the Ministry of the Interior, and others. My job was to try to detect hostile individuals,

I mean, the main thing here is to control the flow of people in and out of Israeli territory, or Jordan. Border control, travel documents, which means people that have no passports. East Jerusalem residents have no passports, okay? They come and go with either a laissez-passer or their blue (Israeli resident) ID, okay? Or say both they and the Palestinians proper, who are the absolute majority of those entering and

exiting. It means that until about half a year before I got there, the job I did vis-à-vis the Palestinians was done by Palestinian police who, since the Oslo Accords, they were accountable by law, along with the Israeli police, for everything connected with both borders and patrols.

### **Since Oslo? And when was this changed?**

I believe this changed in September 2000, along with everything else. My military service at Allenby Bridge from January 2002 until August 2003 was the height of the Second Intifada. And when I say the height of the Intifada I mean that all my friends who were then in the army as combatants, at checkpoints, and as Border Patrolmen – they all had much more work than I did, I was the Palestinians' last stop after waiting for hours and wilting in the heat at the checkpoints in Nebi Musa, sleeping there and washing themselves out of buckets before they reached me and then leave for Jordan. And the Jordanians, too, gave them trouble before returning. In other words, after they crossed the Jordanian border, they came to us and went home.

### **You would also check their permits?**

Check permits but also try to detect, you know, I mean you work there with Israeli intelligence people who try to detect stuff all the time, it's part of the whole thing. But that's not the point, I don't know to what extent I should go into details with you, it's not even that relevant. The point is the whole atmosphere there, and my own experience of this work at the bridge. When I got there I thought: What am I doing here, what is this nonsense? I want to be out there getting my nose dirtied, like other Israeli women-soldiers. What am I doing here in this dress-uniform? But with time, I counted my blessings for not being out there, it changed my idea of things. You see little children, you see fathers and mothers, and young and not-so-young men and you, as banal and obvious as it sounds – I didn't realize this before - you learn to look these people in the eye and they look at you, see? I don't think serving anywhere else would have changed my views so much and opened my mind to see what really happens, how complicated it really is to be Palestinian. I mean, they have a passport, an emblem, national colors and flag, they have it all – so what are we doing there? I mean, why am I there? I am not Palestinian, why should I be letting them in and out? I mean, the feeling, my presence there in those halls, was like: here I am, dominating you, from here on out I'm the policewoman in charge... When you realize you're supposed to seat a young woman or man just like that on a bench for five hours straight, and then release them, for what?

### **What was that incident?**

Strange to say it, but there are no problems with their exit. I mean, let them go, what

do we care? As soon as they want to enter, here too, at the airport, there are many more problems, right? More inspections. Most of the difficulties I ran into were around re-entry into Israel or the Territories or what have you. Say a man and a woman arrive and after we check their documents they are told they have to stay and be detained and I'm the one who has to keep going over there and telling these young men or women: listen, guys, you've got to wait here, on these chairs. Sorry, again, and then find out that all that waiting, those five hours, and they still were not called forth.

### **How come it dragged out for five hours?**

No answer. There is no answer. I don't know if it was five hours, or three, or two, or just an hour, right? Maybe it was more, maybe less. I don't think more, but certainly less. I couldn't go over and tell them what to do. I was just there as a kind of buffer, an instrument, and with that whole engagement, I was different there, the odd one out among the other girls who served there with me. I mean, I tried to be – to smile and be – I mean even if humaneness is not such a relevant idea here, I still tried. I really did try. I mean, there was this case where I had some chewing gum in my pocket and I saw these kids there and said, okay, I'll give them some. This was extreme. An extreme act. People stared at me there, I mean the other policewomen who were with me there, who served with me.

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## Testimony 8

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Jenin

There was this one occasion that was – to this day I don't know what exactly happened there but I don't think anyone tried to really find out exactly – there was this patrol where they detected someone near the fence. They chased him, saw him somewhere close to the fence, and began to chase him. He managed to escape, ran, jumped over the fence, they yelled at him to stop and fired. They shot in the air – as they say – shot in the air in the lungs... They chased him within the Israeli zone, near the fence, he jumped over the fence, and they shot and killed him. When he was already inside the Occupied Territories and constituted absolutely no threat. He was killed by the first shot so it was not shooting in the air but rather “the air in the lungs.” He was hit in the belly. The guys claimed he mounted a bicycle and that's why his

legs couldn't be targeted.

**Who was there?**

It was a patrol of four Border Patrolmen.

**And each had a different version?**

Same version. They fitted up their version that very moment.

**What were they concerned about? The investigation that would be held if someone got killed?**

An investigation was carried out. First they said it was really an unjustified killing. He was a child, about nine years old. Something like that.

**Nine?**

Pretty young, yeah.

**Where did this take place?**

Around Jenin. Eventually the army claimed he was doing something there, like checking escape spots for terrorists. I don't know how they suddenly came to that conclusion. I'm sure the patrol at that point didn't assume that anything explosive was involved. And that was that, the file was closed.

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## Testimony 9

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/Medical Corps | **Location:** Hebron

They (Palestinian detainees) were taken for medical examination before being arrested. I remember one case near Karmeit Zzur. We had a field headquarters there, with the brigade-commander and all the officers. There were trucks and Safaris and all kinds of vehicles, after this arrest operation, and detainees were brought in. There were many that night. Every once in a while, a detainee would arrive and was examined by the doctor. I was there all night, staying up with coffee and cigarettes, with occasional evaluations and checkups. I went to see what it's like, what it really looked like. Some detainees were sitting there in a Safari, blindfolded and shackled, that's how they were watched over, and some medics were there too. I don't remember this specifically, I mean I can't really recall details, but someone looked like he'd really been beaten up badly, and the doctor said: Now, what's this? He seemed to be

irritated with the soldiers, and they told him: Well, that's how these things go. Or, it happened during the arrest. And it was not that clear whether this happened during the actual arrest or afterwards. And he (the doctor) confirmed the examination and said: Okay, you can take him in.

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## Testimony 10

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Oketz (search dogs) | **Location:** General

### **Why are search dogs necessary at checkpoints?**

It is now more relevant because there are these back-to-back checkpoints, the larger checkpoints that are like a large structure, as in Bituniya. I don't know if you've seen it lately. It's very similar to a terminal. A closed compound where the trucks are unloaded, and the dog is supposed to be inside, going over everything. It's one of the inspections. So we also had this for vehicles. Especially when there were alerts, the dogs would be summoned and do the inspection. With us, at first, as a small crew, it worked especially around alerts.

### **You spoke earlier about the attitude of soldiers at the checkpoint.**

I'm an outsider there, since I don't do routine security patrols, I don't do eight-hour shifts at the checkpoint, I don't do all of that. So in a way I'm more objective at the checkpoint, I regard myself less as someone who's really getting burnout from being there so much and is sick of it all, seeing all that really takes place at the checkpoint, sees more Arabs and responds accordingly. There were many guys there, especially at checkpoints with Border Patrolmen and such and you'd see how they talk. You'd tell them: Okay they're Arabs, but still these are humans... Total disrespect. They'd make fun of them, harass them.

### **For example?**

Nothing specific, just a general dismissing attitude. I don't know, treating them as if they're a piece of shit, never mind if it's a family with children arriving in a car, I mean just wanting to get to their relatives or something. On the one hand it's understandable for you can't know, they might be transporting something in their trunk, but on the other hand these are people. You've got to check them, I'm not saying you don't, but to treat them like that... I don't know.

**Was your dog ever used to humiliate Palestinians?**

To humiliate them? I was told to “come, scare them.” I didn’t agree, it seemed unreasonable to me. If it’s just to stand there at the checkpoint, say after the dog has worked really hard and it’s tired, and I know it wouldn’t smell anything, and still I stand by for deterrence. But not to deliberately scare Arabs.

**I know that being inspected by a dog is humiliating.**

No, it wasn’t... The problem is that people were very sensitive about dogs. They said, I’ll open up the whole car for you, just don’t bring the dog in. Because they (Muslims) see it as a really unclean animal. But we wouldn’t use dogs on the people themselves, we’d just check their belongings. After all, it’s just a car, what’s a car? I mean, just the vehicle. Not their person. And we’d try not to dirty up stuff, if possible, inside the car. Still, it’s an inspection you have to carry out. (...) Or, say, until I realized this, there were vehicles where soldiers would tell me, “Go on, check it.” And there wasn’t too much stuff inside. I said, Listen... “Check it, check it.” And it was just someone the soldiers wanted to harass, so they used me for this and it took me a while until I realized this. At first I couldn’t figure out why they were sending me to these people.

**You’re in a different position?**

No. There’s a place, in every checkpoint, where you pass vehicles. Not everywhere, there are checkpoints where it was really checking the whole lineup. But they’d do random checks. They’d pick a vehicle and tell the driver: pull over here, and that’s where I’d check it. So it wouldn’t block the traffic and it’s easier that way for me too.

**How many vehicles get through there per hour?**

Depends on the day, depends on the alerts. Essentially there’s always a waiting line, nearly always. There’s always some kind of traffic blockage.

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Testimony 11

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

Say there was this procedure, before you released a Palestinian back into the Strip, you’d take him into the tent and beat him up.

**That was the procedure?**

Yes. Together with the commanders. The commanders took part in this.

### **How long?**

Not much. Within 20 minutes they'd be back on the base, but they'd stop at the outpost, on the hill there's this tent. They'd stop there, have coffee, a smoke, and the soldiers from the field headquarters would beat him up in the meantime. With the commander.

### **This would be done to every illegal caught on the ground?**

Not many came. It's not something you did all day long, but there was this procedure. I don't know if every single one was treated like that, there were some who were probably just released. But even if I let an illegal go at my side of the checkpoint, until he'd get to Gaza he'd go through hell. It took me a while to realize this, that it's not that simple. I noticed it took such a long time until they'd get to Gaza, until I had the report from the last outpost, these roads are so long. Until he got there, until I got the report that he entered the Strip, two or three hours could go by. In the case of that kid, it took all night long, which is crazy. It's no more than a ten-minute walk. They'd be stopped along the way and every soldier would take his turn beating him. Commanders, too.

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## Testimony 12

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Field Intelligence | **Location:** Gaza Strip

Binoculars, too, are considered incriminating equipment (namely, activating open-fire instructions – in case of incrimination, shoot to kill). It's called incrimination. Why? Because they're gathering pre-assignment intelligence about the army.

### **What happens if you see someone with binoculars?**

It's almost the same thing. Depending on alerts and all, but it's almost the same as with weapons.

### **You look for binoculars?**

I don't... Well, in a way yes. There are lots of binoculars. They stand at high places looking at the army forces always, all the time.

### **Children too?**

Yes. They're sent there. So what if it's a child? This child, eventually, in a few years,

he'll... What's a child? A 13-year-old is a child? Yes, sometimes children.

**I'm trying to understand how things work, how many binocular cases and how many weapons cases, and what is done about them.**

Especially when weapons are detected... First of all, binoculars – that means they're preparing, collecting preliminary intelligence to come and carry out a certain incident eventually, and that's how we can also tell where the next incident will take place. We're involved in assessing the situation and such. And weapons, when someone approaches our area with weapons, that means he intends to open fire on our forces, enter Israeli territory. He doesn't approach the fence armed, just for the sake of it.

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### Testimony 13

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Shimshon | **Location:** Gush Etzion

**As an education corps NCO, what is expected of you?**

Many things. Especially to explain the mission to the soldiers and educate them to really stick to their objectives.

**Isn't that what the commanders are there for?**

Okay, an education corps NCO works alongside the commander and helps him make his soldiers internalize Israeli army values. Again, perseverance in mission is first and foremost, and of course the purity of arms, comradeship, responsibility. I think there are eleven principles, I'm ashamed to admit I don't recall them all. And there was this whole thing about recuperation. Which means bringing the soldiers recreation and taking them on tours and visits. We really wanted to give them a chance to go swimming so we contacted various security-officers in settlements so they would let them use their pools. There's a whole thing about getting to know the region and its history in order to motivate the soldier, to make him realize what he's fighting for. Personally for me that was the toughest issue, and I also had quite a few run-ins with my superior officer. For example, in Gush Etzion there was this guy, I don't know if he's still alive. I don't remember his name. But he was the 'ranger' of sorts in the region, always on the move and followed by a swarm of kids all over the place. He really knows his stuff, and would always take everyone for a visit to the Gush Etzion springs. Anyway, to me he seemed like a real nutcase. And my officer kept saying "Go on, bring the soldiers to \*\*\* so he'll show them

around.” And naturally within ten minutes the tour would become hysterically political. There’s the lone oak tree there, right next to one of the main localities, and he’d start right away, telling the soldiers Gush Etzion’s battle-heritage stories. I don’t know, I had a hard time with this, because I come from the ‘wrong’ side of the political spectrum. He would begin to talk about the cradle of our culture, things like that, and I just sort of cleared my throat. And the commander was delighted, because all the commanders in the Shimshon Battalion were... there was no way you could have a different opinion on these things around them.

**How do you mean, different?**

Different. Say, to be against war or against the occupation or something like that. No way.

**There’s no room for such opinions?**

Absolutely not.

**In a 400-man battalion, no one thinks differently?**

A few do, but they wouldn’t make a sound.

**What, they’re selected along their political views?**

Really, it’s nothing personal, but there was no room for this kind of thing and for anyone having that kind of opinion. It just wasn’t there. Not among the commanders, not at all. When you’re in the army there, inside the Occupied Territories, no way. There wasn’t a commander who... if a soldier would say something (different) – he would be silenced. You couldn’t talk about this.

**Did anyone ever say anything and was actually silenced?**

I did. (On that tour) I asked him not to go into this, and got a real scolding from the commander. Right then and there.

**Did he take you off to the side to do this?**

No, right there in front of the soldiers. Why off to the side?

**What did he say?**

Unpleasant things. He knew. He understood why I cleared my throat, and said: “Okay, we know your opinions, keep them to yourself.” Something like that.

**These tours take place all the time?**

Nearly every company stationed in this region has to go through a tour of the terrain and learn about the battle-heritage of Gush Etzion.

**Say I offer them a tour, I mean ‘Breaking the Silence’ guides a tour of Gush Etzion, would they let me?**

Not a chance.

**Why not?**

Because that's the problem. With them, it all has a certain orientation, a certain viewpoint. And this guy, although he lives in a settlement... again, the ties between the army and the settlers in the Territories are like, let's say all the hospitality, all the 'goodies' often came from the settlements themselves. In Tekoa, for example, families would host soldiers for Shabbat, bring home-cooked food to the army positions. I find it problematic. If they would ask for my opinion, I'm uneasy about this. On the other hand, afterall, the soldiers are there to protect them. So they want to spoil the soldiers in their own area, it's absolutely legitimate.

**A tour like the one that's held along the Separation Fence – as an education corps NCO you'd want to look for such events.**

That's right, I could. But still...

**Who would need to okay this?**

My superior.

**And she wouldn't?**

What, tours of the Separation Fence? No way. Impossible.

**Why not?**

I can tell you I wanted to bring that cute guy, Meirke Pa'il. A real pillar of Israeli society. He must already be eighty-something. He's also a military historian and as for his political orientation he's pretty much on the left, although he is a military historian and has been lecturing in the army for years. And I had a tough time convincing the battalion-commander to invite him for a lecture. We're talking about a real pillar of society here, this guy was a friend of Ben Gurion's. Again, the battalion-commander hates me personally, too, so perhaps he just wanted to abort my plans. But that was the problem, because in a way this might dislodge something in the soldiers' motivation, see? You undermine your own duty. If I tell them to think twice before they do something then I am actually... I can talk about the purity of arms, I mean I can propagate it, say how important it is, I don't know, not to hurt civilians (...) not to target innocents, but a mission is a mission. There's no two ways about a mission.

**But when you take someone on a tour of the Separation Fence, for example, then there are other values, for example violation of human dignity.**

I don't know, the fence wasn't there at the time.

**Right. Just an example.**

Protecting human dignity, as a topic of discussion? I wish I could do this, but that wouldn't be acceptable, the commanders wouldn't have that, ever. The job of an education corps NCO is Sisyphean enough as it is, always hearing 'no, no, no.' Until you finally get something approved that seems important to you.

## **What gets easily approved?**

Entertainment troupes.

## **A lazy education corps NCO takes this?**

No, we're supposed to provide everything, but let's say that the commanders are supposed to do the motivation talks, not me. All these topics of values and battle heritage – I prepare a whole file with information for the commander. If he's going to handle a topic, I provide him with a folder with all the information, simulations if there are any, and he presents it to his soldiers. Usually from the rank of platoon-commander and up. When there are terribly important things, the company-commander takes over. And they don't like doing it. They're tired. They couldn't give a damn. Especially the more veteran companies. Until you assemble all the "bones" (nickname for the older soldiers) from the auxiliary company to sit down and listen to this – no way. But if I bring an entertainment troupe, that doesn't pose any demands on the commander. There were even shows at Rachel's Tomb before the Intifada. When it broke out, that didn't happen. Two weeks before the Intifada there was the "Mom's Voice" broadcast which I brought the soldiers, live.

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## Testimony 14

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

I recall patrolling the Fence and a group of tiny children were standing near the fence and throwing these little stones at the vehicles of the fence construction firm. Never mind that most of these stones got stuck in the fence and they didn't even manage to really throw them. We got there with the patrol, and the commander's Jeep arrived and I was ordered: "Okay, load rubber ammo." Okay, I loaded rubber. I said, okay, let's aim for legs. For the ground in front of them, which is mostly just frightening. Naturally I've heard all the stories about taking apart the rubber ammo but had never done it. This ammo comes in units of three bullets each.

### **Tampon.**

Exactly. The Border Patrol tend to take them apart because that hurts more.

**They peel the pellet, too? (Some soldiers like to peel the rubber off the steel pellet, which makes it more lethal)**

Some do that, I didn't witness it. But we know it's unofficially legitimate. So, anyway, I inserted a cartridge of rubber ammo – one tampon, I inserted one tampon – doesn't that sound great? – into my gun, and fired at the ground in front of their feet. Again, these kids didn't seem to me to be an immediate threat to our lives. These were, let's say, boys in their very early teens. The operations officer got annoyed. He took my gun: "You don't know how to shoot." I said to him: where do you want me to shoot? "Let me." He came along, fired. "Where? Straight at the belly." Fortunately he missed. But he fired straight at their belly, and of course they ran.

### **Did he hit anyone?**

He hit someone in the leg, but his aim... Like what were they doing? Throwing these little stones at the fence. That's not something that would hurt or endanger anyone. Give it a laugh, drive off, they'll give up. They'll feel frustrated, get upset. If you wish, stick around to make sure it's not really some kind of distraction and that someone will really do something while they're throwing stones. But, seriously, shooting? Well, firing rubber ammo at their legs, okay. But he couldn't even conceive of the option of shooting rubber at their legs. I mean, why?

### **What were your open-fire instructions at that time around Katzir?**

There's the usual regulation of "Stop or I shoot!" then a shot in the air, then a shot at the legs.

### **Was there the idea of gradually scaling up the use of force? If he didn't stop? If he came any closer?**

No one really took this regulation seriously, let's say, for two reasons: One, to give us a free hand. And two, cover-up. Otherwise if I shoot someone and say that I was told the second shot should be to the legs, the officer might say, "No, but that's only if..." No one really got into that too much. There were briefings before our shifts, but it was something that people repeated.

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## Testimony 15

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Field Intelligence | **Location:** Etzion Regional Brigade

There were some weeks when Molotov cocktails were repeatedly thrown in that area,

always in the same area, at the same time, at the same spot. Every Sunday between 7 and 8 p.m. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the same place. They did this about three Sundays in a row. So on the fourth Sunday, an ambush was laid for them. The first three times the soldiers couldn't catch them, they ran straight from there to the village.

### **Whenever a Molotov cocktail is thrown, you see it right away?**

Well, you don't really see it from such a distance, a person looks about as big as an ant, a bit less. You can't really tell it's people. With stone-throwers it's hard to detect because you don't see their hands. If they throw a Molotov cocktail, it's very black, when ignited it makes a huge black spot and then it's hurled. So if the vehicle ignites, it looks very black.

### **Is there some preliminary sign you see before it's ignited?**

If I see kids there on Sunday between 7 and 8 p.m., I mean that's the lookouts' job, filming the routine. There's nothing to do in that region. If people are detected, that's already suspect, they're probably about to do something shady. That was the point, when I detected them. That was it. Even if I couldn't tell whether they were going to do something wrong. The history around there tells it all.

### **...And where do they run off to, every time?**

To a kind of a wadi, a ravine, there's this village there, Hussan, not far off.

### **What happened that day?**

Once more the same thing exactly. I detected several people there, and there was already a sniper ambush that had not detected them because he didn't look in their direction, so I said they were there, and then the snipers looked for them and saw them. They stood there for a minute or two and then one of them ignited a Molotov cocktail and threw it at the road. At that moment it's \*\*\*, one of the army's procedures.

### **What does that mean?**

It's an order that allows shooting to kill because people's lives are threatened. Then shooting started and I only heard it, I didn't see them. Just sometimes, these black spots. And that's it. They ran off the second the shooting started. That's what I saw.

### **How many Molotov-cocktail throwers were there?**

Five or four. The soldiers didn't see either. Because they appear tiny, ant-size. And that's it, that's where the event ended as far as I'm concerned. They (the soldiers) didn't even know they killed anyone, and then someone went to search the area and discovered...

### **Only this one child was killed?**

I think so.

**All the rest ran off?**

Yes I think so. And that's the point, this kid was killed after he took off. He was killed by two bullets while he was already escaping. At that point shooting is not allowed, for he no longer constitutes a threat against any movement on this road. And that's it.

**How many seconds did it take them from the moment they ignited until they threw the Molotov cocktail?**

It was a matter of seconds. Perhaps five seconds until running off.

**When did the shooting start? After they threw?**

I reported \*\*\* and then they were allowed to fire. And the point is he didn't shoot before that, otherwise the Molotov cocktail would not even be ignited. As soon as they hear shots they run off, that's why they could have been chased away any other way and the shooting would be avoided. A siren could be sounded somewhere, or shots in the air, or at their legs, but the army wanted to put up this sniper ambush – I was commander, I was present at the assessment briefings at battalion headquarters – this sniper ambush was put up for deterrence purposes. Usually a sniper ambush waits until shooting, that's its point. It does not deter. A patrol deters, I don't know, stuff like that. A sniper ambush is put up to... Later I had a talk with the battalion-commander, we were off to hold an event-investigation, and then he says to me: Did we really have to kill? Okay, you put up a sniper ambush, couldn't you... it's not that you planned something else. What else did you imagine would happen?

**What did he say?**

Well, earlier we went to see the film and check. We, or rather he, the battalion-commander and the operations officer and myself, we sat there and watched the film.

**After it happened.**

Yes. The same day. Again and again, to figure out what happened there, because none of us was really on the spot at the time. We sit in front of that television trying to understand how many there were, four or five? Four or five? And they bring the report on where the kid was shot. He was hit under both arms. Both sides. Can't tell which is an entry hole, or exit. Then the battalion-commander...

**He was shot under his right shoulder?**

Both shoulders. Two holes, one here, one there. They didn't know whether that was an exit hole, if it was two bullets, or one.

**Did they see the body?**

We had it for a very short time, this body. Then they tried to figure out how to make it all look all right, because they were not supposed to shoot the rest.

**What were the rest?**

\*\*\* is a situation in which someone constitutes a threat against the route, a hot threat: shooting or Molotov cocktail or explosive charge. So the rest of them, whose who still have no Molotov cocktails in their hands, they must not be fired at, the army rules do not allow for them to be shot. And only one Molotov cocktail was ignited. After that, the soldiers opened fire and one child died. And we don't know if it was the same kid. You can't tell. And we saw. Then we saw. They decided that the best story would be to say he came to throw the Molotov cocktail and then he was shot, and he tried to escape so he was shot once more.

**They ignited, waited for a vehicle and then threw?**

No, they ignite it when they see the vehicle. You cannot wait around holding an ignited Molotov cocktail.

**They see the vehicle coming from afar?**

They saw a vehicle arriving, ignited a Molotov cocktail, and threw it.

**Did they hit the vehicle?**

No. They never hit. And that was it.

**What was on the road?**

Nothing, just some black burning stuff.

**The road?**

Yes, a bit. No car.

**After the shooting, were there stones being thrown?**

After the shooting, those kids probably got home and found out that one of them died and then the whole village came out to throw stones at the road, on civilian traffic.

**How did the army do away with the stone-throwing at the road?**

I thought it would be proper to close this road, but I was not the one to decide. They simply stood on the side of the road and threw stones at Jeeps, and the Jeeps fired all kinds of stuff, I don't know what.

**The next day this stone-throwing was over?**

Yes.

**Back to normal?**

Yes.

**There were no sanctions against the village?**

It's a very quiet region. Someone was killed, that seemed to be enough. After that we didn't want to do to anything, we'd done our share. They didn't want to do anything anymore because we kill. That's it.

**That's what the battalion-commander said?**

No. That's insight. I mean, it also appeared on the situation assessments later, that

now everything will calm down and be all right.

**How long after that did they start throwing Molotov cocktails again?**

Several months later. At the very same spot I think about a year, a year-and-a-half.

**What was the atmosphere like in your crew?**

My crew? Both in the company there, and in the battalion and the brigade-commander himself – I doubt that anyone was unhappy about this.

**What is there to be happy about? What made them so happy?**

Shall I try explaining their train of thought to you? They're out to keep the region quiet and to deter, and that was the best deterrence possible.

**Did the brigade-commander say this?**

In so many words? I don't know. But yes, it was appreciated.

**Do you recall things that were said afterwards? What was the atmosphere in the crew then, besides joy? Did everyone shake your hand?**

Respect, respect. Every word I uttered at the situation assessment got everyone's full attention. Before that it had been harder. All these senior officers, and I'm a corporal. They just said 'respect,' and after that they worked better with us.

**What do you mean?**

The companies on the ground whom we are supposed to tell what they are to do out there, they have to trust us, to rush off to where we say they should. So after this they were saying, these girls know what they're talking about, sometimes. Although with stone-throwers it's more complicated. (...)

**Were you summoned for an investigation of the incident with the Molotov-cocktail-throwing boy?**

No. No one summoned me... I didn't say too much, I went to watch the film with them, explain to them how you can tell what's a hill and what's...

**Nothing official?**

No. (...)

\*\*\*

## Testimony 16

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Jenin

On the one hand, now I do feel guilty about not having said anything, on the other hand

I still believe it wouldn't have made any difference. I could have changed something for the moment. It's not the mentality of this force. Perhaps in other companies it would – I mean other companies are certainly less extreme. When I got to Jenin Border Patrol later on and saw less of this still it's not that different. There is still an air of violence and yes, 'things get boring so let's invent an incident.'

### **What do you mean?**

I don't know, make up an incident. Get on the radio and report: Stones have been thrown at me on this street. And then you detain someone and start questioning him. Eventually he's released, or not, depending on the person who invented this incident, if he'd identify him or not. There was this (Border) policewoman who'd say, I'm bored, let's say someone is throwing stones at me. She'd be asked, who? "I don't know, some two guys in grey shirts, I didn't see exactly." So two guys in grey shirts would be caught, and she'd be asked: "These guys?" Naturally, when they're caught, they're beaten up too. "These guys?" "No, I don't think so." Well, there you have a whole incident. People got beaten up. And nothing had happened there that day.

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## Testimony 17

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Field Intelligence | **Location:** Etzion Regional Brigade

### **What is done to stone-throwers?**

They get beaten up and taken to brigade headquarters. (...)

### **They know you take pictures.**

Who, the soldiers? They know... As soon as I see stone throwing, it happens at certain times, there's a history to this, you know the routine. So at that time the forces are closer, they're not napping in their Jeeps, say, they're patrolling. Or they're napping in the Jeep at a good spot, and then they arrive right away.

### **What happens to the stone-thrower?**

They beat the hell out of him or take him to division headquarters. Or they bring him to his father, which is the worst. It's worse than beating him up or taking him to brigade HQ.

### **Why?**

Because his father does worse things to him.

**Beats him up, I guess.**

No, worse.

**At situation assessments they say it's worse to take him to his dad?**

Sure. They talk about everything there. Bring up everything. Who's present? The battalion-commander, all the company-commanders, and yes, they discuss everything, every single event that has taken place.

**So taking the stone-thrower to his dad is allowed, or not?**

Depends on the commander at the time. Usually they prefer to take him into custody.

**There were battalion-commanders who preferred to take them to their dads?**

If there was a kid who didn't talk, or didn't tell on his friends, he'd be taken to his dad.

**After he had been in custody?**

No. Before. He'd be questioned on the ground: where are your buddies? I don't know, I don't know.

**Taking him to his father is an effective option?**

If you don't have too much on someone, not enough to really take him into custody, not too many incriminating evidence or legitimate reasons, you can take him to his father, you can close up the village. Many things were done there. If kids throw stones – all the shops in the village would be shut down.

**Who decides this?**

The battalion-commander... I think in our area there wasn't too much of this, it's a grey routine, you know? We also had about 40 illegals every day, in the morning, and there's also nothing to be done with them, nothing definite. Anyone decides on his own what to do at a given moment.

**What do you mean, anyone? The sergeant?**

If it's about illegals, it's the sergeant's judgment. In cases of stone-throwing, it's the company-commander. In cases of Molotov-cocktail throwing, it's the battalion-commander who intervenes, usually. About illegals, not a single battalion-commander will tell you what to do. So you can take your own initiative what to do with them at the checkpoint.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 18

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Reserves Sergeant

**Unit:** Hatikva | **Location:** Qalandiya Checkpoint

I'll start in a general vein, again because I really can't recall anything specific I could put my finger on. As I explained to you earlier, I came with certain guilty feelings and high motivation, and a very tough feeling of not having done enough regular service, so a mere two months after my discharge I already found myself there. A few words about this unit: These are rather older guys, even around 60-70 years old. There are some really ludicrous moments. These guys, when they're ordered to drop in an exercise, they say: Listen, I can drop but I'm not so sure I'll be able to get back up again. Really cool types who're brought there in fact to raise the humanitarian level at the checkpoint. The work is in eight-hour shifts, morning and evening. I can tell you things that for me were... Okay, I'm a pretty sensitive person, especially to the suffering of others, and somehow I can say about myself, maybe I'm starting with the end, that somewhere this sensitivity was entirely lost in those two weeks there. It felt like being in a world apart, where I did things which, after getting out of there, I suddenly realized: I mean, I didn't hit anyone or anything like this, but cases of disrespect that are not like me at all. All those retarded jokes of 'give me al bidubi' (expecting the Arabic-speaker to ask 'what is bidubi,' in Arabic, 'shubidubi') and stuff like that. Anyway, at that time I was really into photography, so I'd take pictures there, of people at the checkpoint. It sort of feels you're not imposing or anything. There were also people who'd cooperate, assuming, I guess, that it would ease up their treatment there. Something that really really bothered me – I can't begin to imagine what it's like to go through this for three whole years and now there are guys there from the Military Police units and there's nothing to relieve them, it's their whole military service – what really bothered me was the degree of disorder. I happen to know, I have a friend who was checkpoint commander before the MPs were brought there. Actually these guys were in the armored corps, on a sort of "front" period, with very orderly, informed briefings - today you let people from Jenin through, today you don't let people from here, another day you do, alerts and so on. When I was there, on the other hand, no soldier could give (a permit), he goes totally crazy. You're in this absurd situation where first of all, in the briefing you're not told anything really, it's just this hollow, minimal briefing – this is the area, and then you go on up to the checkpoint. And then the day's rumors begin, about alerts, I don't remember who, but suppose the intelligence officer says one thing, and the DCO

another. So everyone is certain of different things, not that they really care, I mean I'm talking about the soldiers at the checkpoint, themselves. So say you're coming from Bethlehem, and you want to cross the checkpoint. Possibly the soldier checking your line will let you through, and the soldier checking the other line will not because the one heard one thing, and the other heard a different instruction. They sit next to each other but there's no communication between them, and you feel that... you have to argue with the person, explain to him that he cannot cross over, and what are you arguing about, actually? I mean, what is your point in this argument if the guy next to you contradicts you? You feel that everything you're fighting for, as it were, that you want to have some sense of national mission or purpose in the mere fact that you're there, doesn't really hold water. Nothing is based on any kind of alert that you can rely on. All the information gets crossed, and that really drove me out of my mind. It was uncontrollable. I tried, I said: Okay, if I'm there anyway, I'd pass by the various checking posts with a notebook and update the soldiers, but it was impossible to get anything, any kind of coherent information. This is something that really worries me and I can only imagine it annoys the soldiers there too, very much.

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## Testimony 19

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Education Corps/Border Patrol | **Location:** Gaza Strip

I can begin with my experiences in the Border Patrol which are first of all, if we speak chronologically which is easier for me – my first experiences were of a lot of chauvinism and power play against me.

### **Specifically against you?**

Specifically. I came to the battalion as an education corps NCO of the unit. I mean, there were other women on the base: a literacy NCO, a welfare NCO, and a secretary, but all the rest there were guys. The first comments were really crass, I don't remember the exact words, but something like: Hey, a new NCO is here, now she can make us coffee. They were really crass. I was constantly picked on. Another officer, a captain, would show up in my office and blame me for not working at all, which was pure bullshit. As an 18-year-old girl, I was so delighted to keep writing

those weekly lectures; I was working incessantly. But he would say: You're sitting here all day, doing nothing. Every time he'd barge in, and constantly pick on me. Once he forced a kiss on me, and simply me stuck his tongue into my mouth, like 'Frenched' me, it was the most repulsive thing in the world. And I didn't react, as though... You know, he being a captain, and me – an NCO.

### **What was the hierarchy like?**

He was an officer in this unit and I was just beginning my duty there so I was sort of in awe. There was a very clear division between officers and NCOs.

### **How did you react to this sexual harassment?**

I wasn't familiar with this term. This was in 1998, it wasn't such a... When I told my mother, she said: you've got to complain. But I thought she was crazy to think of that, after all it wasn't such a big deal, and honestly I wasn't working as hard as they were, and I don't know, all kinds of excuses. But these were my very first experiences, I was very humiliated, belittled.

Slowly, with time, I grew closer to all of them, both officers and soldiers. I heard all kinds of stories from them, it was a time of the joint patrols, they were working 8-hour shifts intermittently. These were joint patrols with the Palestinians. 8 hours on duty, 8 hours off, and they were tired all the time. In their 8 hours off they'd play backgammon and watch porn and soaps, and told all kinds of stories from their joint patrols, which sounded to me especially humiliating to the Palestinians.

### **What kind of stories?**

These were just the stories they told on the base, and I don't know how true they were, but all kinds of boasting: how one guy threw a shekel coin and the other guy (Palestinian) jumped for that coin. One of the soldiers threw a coin and said to the people with them on the patrol to jump and do all kinds of humiliating things to get that coin. They said how the Palestinians would do anything for a shekel, something like that. And I asked: Were there officers there? Any officer? "Yes, sure." I don't remember the names, but "Sure we had an officer with us." I didn't have too much room to make myself heard, to resist. If I'd only say a word I'd be silenced right away.

Pretty soon I learned my place. When I heard this story, I went straight to the officers, quite upset: we have to write them a weekly lecture about this and discuss this. But the officers told me not to. I mean they didn't come outright and say it but I gathered from their conduct that they have no interest in bringing this up, opening it to discussion.

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## Testimony 20

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** General

### **So how do you feel, coming out of there?**

A bit ashamed.

### **From the beginning?**

When I got out of the army. Now, gradually, especially after seeing this film, I suddenly realized these were things I had experienced and didn't think about.

Except for the part with the stretchers - seeing blood, except for that one part which was extreme for me, as it were. The part that closed this whole circle for me was when that soldier told me - having asked him how many he had killed - except for those parts all the rest seemed normal, routine. Then, after seeing that film, "To See If I'm Smiling," I suddenly began to take note of things and realized how screwed-up this whole system is. No one is okay. Those aren't okay, and these aren't okay, and the army is not okay.

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## Testimony 21

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Hebron Hills

### **Did you meet Palestinians?**

It depends where. There are the roadblocks you put up daily, and then it's all about the illegals. 'Illegals with permits,' that was our in-joke. A million vans coming out of the checkpoint as well as bypassing it. At Tarqumiya Checkpoint this was a sort of local joke. There is a checkpoint between two forests, and everyone moves around it. Personally, I understood the construction of the Separation Fence. I left just around the time all those violations near the fence stopped and it was being constructed. When that region stopped being 'interesting.' That's it, I don't know, at the checkpoints...

### **What about the attitude towards Palestinians?**

They don't understand. They're not used to girls. Especially as a crew-commander, you've got to throw your weight, show authority. What kind of authority? I mean, I've never raised a hand against any of them. There are other ways to make them understand. Once, let's say, we were blocking a certain road and there were about ten vans, with

20-30 passengers each. We'd check them one by one against the GSS and police computers. They arrive in groups and there are only three of us and only the commander is authorized to go on radio. That means these vans have to stand waiting – say a van comes and everyone gets off with their belongings, their permits, and they're checked one by one – one soldier securing, another soldier checking – and they're waiting outside the cars. I'm supposed to be the backup. Now, as the crew-commander, I'm helping out inspecting. If not, I choose two who do the checking. Inspecting the whole vehicle. Sometimes there were detector dogs, trackers, explosive and weapons detectors that would join us, at certain times. There's a kennel at the regional police station, and they would come to our area and we'd do roadblocks with them, using these dogs. The roadblocks were not put up at regular times or spots, so as to increase the chances of catching illegals. We'd inspect the vehicle, send everyone back inside, take all the IDs and permits, bring them to me and I'd start checking them against the authorities. They would wait inside the cars, not disembark at all. Because there were three of us and sometimes about 300 of them, so they could easily take off with a soldier of mine. Once one of the drivers – these are usually Bedouins because residents of the Occupied Territories are not allowed to drive a vehicle with Israeli license plates, and they haven't got Israeli driving licenses. So this guy starts – even though it took us about ten minutes – this guy comes every morning and sees that I'm a girl so he goes up to one of the soldiers and they tell him he wants to talk to me because I'm the commander and I say when to let people go. I was right in the middle of an inspection so I replied: Sir, please wait inside the car. As soon as we're done here I'll have no reason to detain you, I have another ten vans like yours that need to be checked. I asked him to get back, he kept coming up again and again so I said, enough is enough. I checked him against the police computer and found out he was actually not authorized to drive. I said, cool. This is our chance. I mean, teaching him a lesson he'll be sure to remember. How many times can you take this? We really asked him politely, it's not that we took anything out on him. I don't believe they learn anything through violence, they learn through their pocket. He was unauthorized to drive. We summoned a traffic-police mobile unit. As soon as he came to us yet again, we told him everyone's free to go except for him. So about 30 people came out of his transit, who would be paying him 50 shekels fare each way. We already hit his livelihood. They simply ran off to other vans as soon as we let them go. Then he waited with us until the traffic police arrived, it took them about an hour-and-a-half. We're allowed to detain them for three hours. Police regulation. So the traffic police arrived and said this was a computer error, the lists were not updated, he was indeed authorized to drive. But since the traffic police is already here, let's run

a vehicle inspection. He had about three things that were not in order: a weight in the vehicle, a third mirror, something like that. Gave him three tickets and take him off the road – more money down the drain. And if he doesn't report to a traffic-police station within two days – there's one in Kiryat Gat, for the entire southern district – there would be an arrest warrant against him and more fines. He left the checkpoint with tears in his eyes after all those tickets. We detained him, and now he had to go to a garage for all those repairs, and it's a workday, he makes several such runs, with 50 shekels a fare. A lot of money. Okay, he learned his lesson. That's how all the rest learned to wait properly in line. It might sound disgusting, but we weren't out to get him personally... I have no other way to teach them, especially as a girl, which in their culture is really not – I mean women, it's, like, dishonorable. Okay, we have to make a stand somehow. Once a man like that gets what he deserves, as I see it, because really – we didn't just give him tickets and delay him, he really did come up on the computer – we weren't just picking on him. But he learned his lesson, I'll say. You know, word travels quickly, and they'd not mess with us any more.

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## Testimony 22

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

Our girls got rather polarized, on both sides of the spectrum. Some came out and said plainly: 'Enough, I'm no combatant, I'm cut out to be a secretary,' and that's what they became. There was one who was re-assigned as a driver and was just driving the company Jeep. She didn't do guard duty, she handled no one, she was always there in the Jeep with the commanders. Others went psycho, and became worse, tougher than the guys.

### **What does that mean?**

An Arab says something to her that he shouldn't, for example - she calls some four guys from her company to come handle him. A Safari-load of guys comes down to beat him to a pulp, and then she detains the Arab.

### **Do you recall a specific incident?**

I'll tell you an interesting story. I was standing in the post and we were about to be replaced, one of the girls there was very extreme in her views and stuff. And it was

this time, I don't remember exactly why but we were on alert, with a bullet in the chamber. We had to be on standby with a bullet in the chamber the whole time. Gun cocked, bullet in the chamber and a finger next to the trigger. Not on the trigger. And then there was this boom, we heard a shot and of course I was on patrol so we ran over to see what happened, and there's a girl-soldier standing like this, facing an Arab bleeding on the ground, and she says something like: "He tried to attack me. He tried to attack me." We look at him and he's shot in the belly, and we tell her – I mean he has a bullet hole in his stomach – we ask her: What did he do? How did he attack you? What do you mean he tried to attack you? The soldier who was there with her was all confused and didn't know what to say: "Whatever she says, whatever she says." Something like that. This all happened when I was already there for quite a while. And she told some story about her asking him for his ID and he wouldn't show it, and then he attacked her and somehow she tried to get away and turned around and shot him in the belly, something of that sort. You look and see an Arab who's been shot at point-blank range and he's holding his ID. And you say to her: Listen, this is impossible. Your story just doesn't add up. And what happened to that other soldier that he's so afraid to talk? Then there were inquiries and stuff. Apparently she had asked to see his ID and he approached to hand it to her and he got too close – that's what came out in the last briefing we had. She then shoved him off with her rifle and a bullet shot out right in his belly. Now, first thing we hear, instead of 'Oh no! What have I done!' - we hear her saying "He tried to attack me." This girl finally admitted he really got too close to her, and the bullet was already in the barrel and she shoved him away in the belly so he got shot in the belly.

### **She admitted it?**

Yes. Eventually, at the inquiries she did. And she was not prosecuted, I think. She left that company. She was kicked out. Yes, she was re-assigned to the Military Police. That was her punishment.

### **What happened to this person?**

I don't know. He was driven away in a Palestinian ambulance... This incident shocked me. A girl shoots a guy in the belly and the first thing she says is 'he attacked me.' What did the guy attack you with? His ID? He was holding his ID, what did he attack you with? (...) I remember that right after that soldier shot the Arab in the belly and we all got there, I kept asking her: What do you mean, what did he try to do to you? And everyone – at some point suddenly the commander who was with me, who got there very quickly, said to me: "What do you want? What is this? Just stop it! Stop asking her what she means! Enough of this! She's telling you he tried to attack her,

what's there not to understand?" And I said, okay.

... That was the greatest fear, to end up in jail because of them, because of the Arabs. I'll go to jail because of them? So I'll shoot a guy in the belly, I'll spit in his face, but never get caught. I think that this determination 'never to get caught' really shows that what I'm doing is wrong – so I mustn't get caught. It pretty much says that, I think. It means everyone was pretty much aware of what went on there, and that it's not right.

**But people did it all the time.**

Yes.

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## Testimony 23

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

Also, to see those children in Hebron walking by, and to take pride in the fact that they are afraid... I mean, these are kids, and I can recall who they were afraid of. They feared the Israeli kids. Not that they did anything to them, but they (Jewish settler children) would throw stones at them as they passed by. And their parents would say nothing. The parents stood by, you could see a little kid standing there, throwing these small stones and shouting something at them. And it became routine. You would come to Tel Rumeida any day and see this. It had already become a norm. And their parents hanging out there, I don't know if these were parents, but anyway these adults would hang out there and say absolutely nothing to the little ones.

**Doesn't it seem strange to you to see a child throwing stones at another child?**

Since the one was Jewish, and the other Palestinian - it seemed 'all right.'

I remember saying aloud that it was sort of okay, but thinking to myself, what's this kid, screwed-up? And the Palestinian had done nothing to him. I would think: That's what brings about this whole mess, these quarrels, these things that the children bring on. I know this kid's parents teach him to hate Palestinians. They give him perfect legitimization to throw stones and swear at them. And obviously this would lead to a major mess. And you can't figure out whose side you're on. I'm a Jewish Israeli soldier, and I'm supposed to be against the Arabs who are my enemies, but

I'm here next to the house at the outpost, and I think that they're wrong. That the Jews are wrong. So wait a minute, no, I have to switch my mind and go on hating Arabs and justifying the Jews. But wait, they're still not okay, they (the settlers) start this, and we're here because of them, they make this all happen, they pester them (the Palestinians) and scare them. It's all so...

### **So why make the switch?**

Out of loyalty to your own kind.

### **What age children are you talking about?**

Little ones, five-six-year-olds run around outdoors.

### **Were there cases of adult violence?**

I remember someone on the bus, this was during the 'disengagement,' I don't remember the whole story there, but I was told about some woman who was crazy, her husband or boyfriend had been murdered by terrorists, I don't know exactly, but anyway she yelled at the soldiers. One of the soldiers wouldn't get up for her on the bus and I remember he took it and took it, and I think she even hit him. He didn't react, until at some point he yelled back at her: "Shut up, it's because of you that I have to be here!" They hated being there.

### **Who, the soldiers?**

Yes. And I think they were really mad at the Jewish settlers in Hebron. Really angry.

### **Wouldn't these people bring you pizza right to the outpost and stuff like that?**

They did. But occasionally I'd also hear soldiers saying: these shits are the reason we're here in the first place, wish they'd get out of here already. On the one hand you are angry at your own people for being here, at the Jews who live here. On the other hand you also hate the Arabs because they kill your buddies and give you a hard time.

### **So you end up hating everyone?**

Yes. And you don't really think, you just say whatever comes into your mind right then: I hate this guy so I'll swear at him, and then I hate that one so I'll swear at him, and now I hate him so I'll spit at him.

### **You would spit at Jews?**

No, why? They've done nothing to hurt me.

### **And Arabs?**

Well, they're Arabs, I mean, I don't know. True, the one specific Arab I spat at didn't actually do anything to me. Seems to me he'd done nothing at all to anyone. But again, it was a cool thing to do, and the only thing I could do. I mean I can't go around boasting of having arrested anyone, or be proud of having caught a terrorist,

or killing a terrorist, I can't go on some mission and find some weapons under a floor tile in a home. But I can spit at them and humiliate and ridicule them.

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## Testimony 24

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Hebron

That's the incident I remember most from Hebron. That day there were many Shabak (Security Services) guys on our base. Now, the combat companies in Hebron were the least belligerent. There were Nahal and Paratroopers, the Lavi battalion was still being formed while I was there, so we were less combative. Then one day when there were lots of Shabakniks on the base, you see stuff happening. I was driving the company-commander crazy, of this combat company, with my wanting to come along on a weapons-search mission. It took him a long time to finally let me come with them. Anyway, I was there and another girl, an ops-sergeant. We were the only two girls.

I was unarmed. The only one without a weapon. God knows how they took me along, and luckily nothing happened because they would have paid big time - for taking along an education corps NCO on a weapons search at 2 a.m. in the Occupied Territories. So anyway we went, I remember this like a movie, how we left the base. On the Jeep you're still inside a movie, like you're a part of some cool movie there. I tried to ask the Shabak guys who were there with me what's about to happen: We get to someone's house and then what, wake them up? The guys didn't really answer, they said: Just follow us, when we run, you run. That was the most frightening moment because that was when I realized we were there in empty, quiet Hebron in zones I'm not familiar with at all. It was sometime around 2 o'clock at night. And then they got off the Jeep, and we ran. I didn't know what to do with myself, suddenly I realized where I was, and God, I have no weapon, everyone there is wearing their helmets and bullet-proofs. There was this one large house and another smaller one next door, so first we climbed the steps to the large house. I clung in fear to the company-commander. Like suddenly I didn't know, I wondered what the hell I was doing there. We could be shot at from any direction here. That's it. So we woke them up, the guys woke them up. I kept clinging to the company-commander in sheer fright.

### **The company-commander himself entered the house?**

Yes. But he was not the first to enter. The Shabak guys were first, and I was with him, and he was not the first. There was the operations officer, too, who I was friends with, so the two of them, I kept switching from one to the other. Crazy. I'll never forget this. So we entered these people's home, the father opens the door for us, in his robe, and the mother and grandmother and two little kids woke up too. Now they look at you with this look, like you're entering our home at 2 o'clock in the morning! The kids were absolutely horrified. And we turned – I see this as if I was part of it because I was there – the soldiers turned their whole house inside out, I never imagined it like this. You go in, after all you could open a drawer and look inside, and you can open a drawer and throw all of its contents out, and leave it like that. Now, I was still asking the company-commander as we went from room to room, I'll never forget this – we found some porn tapes and the father's embarrassment as he went with us from room to room to room. So I asked the company-commander if we help them sort it all out afterwards. Just so you understand how naïve I was. Everything was just so messed up. And he answers, and the father tries to ask, the owner tries to ask questions and talk and none of us even bother to speak to him at all. The soldiers go on, opening and trashing and trashing just about everything in that house, turning the whole place inside out. A year ago, on Passover Seder night, my flat was broken into. I got home and everything was upside down. The first thing that came to my mind right there was that this is exactly what it looked like. All the drawers, the closets, everything. And we didn't find a thing. Nothing. In the first house they needed someone to search. So I was taken along, me and the female operations sergeant, to search the women for weapons, because men are not allowed to do that. We were there for about an hour and they hadn't found a thing and were going nuts because they were certain, they had information, I don't know what, they were confident they were going for a find. So they trashed and trashed and left not one thing in its place. Then we went on to the second house, and I couldn't understand why we do it this way. And that was the first moment I realized why we are looked at like that, and why we are so hated. You enter in the most disgusting manner, without a drop of humanity, because the disrespect in the answers the man was given – the wife and children were not even addressed – I mean, no one even looked at them. We were sent off to a side room near the kitchen to search the women for weapons. Now if I were in this position, I'd think: What the hell are you doing here? What weapons? And what if she explodes right there with you now?

### **That's what you were thinking at the time?**

Sure. Listen, originally I just said to them, for curiosity's sake, take me along, I realized something was going on. I wondered what would happen. How this works, this whole thing, what they do nights. That's why I also kept going to the Tomb of the Patriarchs, because it was really important for me to know how they relate to this, and what they do all day, what they do there for eight hours. Next to the Tomb of the Patriarchs there's this – I don't know if it's still there – but when you go up the stairway, there's this command post of the Border Patrol, a little one. I was really curious what goes on there and why they get so frustrated. What do they do all this time and why... The fact that the Jews there were fanatics and even tried to run me over once when I was crossing the road, and the soldiers would come back from patrol and their Jeep would be smeared with raw eggs the Jews would hurl at them, I mean those were routine things. You deal with it somehow, thinking, Okay, so this side is not my side. But I was a lefty when I enlisted, so I came there with this view that as far as I'm concerned you shouldn't even be here. That's how I started out.

### **So you are inside that house and searching that woman...**

I can't even begin to describe to you the shame I felt, ashamed of the way we were behaving, entering their home like that, that we... I'll never forget this as long as I live, I'm telling you. I have this picture in my head, of those kids staring at me. And I go, frightened to death. First of all, it was the first time I had ever been inside a Palestinian home. Everything there, I mean there were pictures of Jerusalem on the wall and it was so odd for me to see they had them too. So really, if until now they hated us, now that I enter their home and behave this way, and they're still looking at me like, I mean I was without a weapon, nothing. And these kids looked at me and I just wanted to die right then and there. Also when the company-commander asked me, when I asked him if we'd help them clean up afterwards, and he laughed, I felt even dumber, I realized I was far out of this whole thing, and that I'm upset because it's my first time to see such stuff, but they do it like machines. Soldiers go along, shake out drawers, turn out closets, trash-trash-trash, they don't regard the people at all, don't talk to them. And the owner keeps pleading with them, saying 'don't this to me.' Trashing the place.

### **Where was the whole family?**

The father went with us from room to room, and the mother, grandmother and two kids were not allowed to make a single move, they were placed in some corner, there was this hallway, and a first room we entered and then passing from room to room.

### **How did they react?**

They were silent. That's the point, they simply had this look. The children didn't

understand, I think they were sort of, like they were seeing live what they had always been told. There, now hate-hate-hate. Look, see why you hate. They were looking at us with such a look of not understanding, and they're too little.

### **How old were they?**

I think one was about five or six, he understood a bit more, and a girl who was younger, I think. Yes, the mother held her close. When I went, when they told us (girls) we had to go search – they didn't tell me ahead of time I would have to search her for weapons, only at this point did I realize that was the reason they agreed to have me on this mission with them, because they needed another woman to search for weapons, so only when we were told to go to a side room and search, did she let the little girl down. She was wearing a robe and clothes, and I remember my revulsion even at the mere smell of her, I was revolted to have to touch a stranger, and search her. I was laughing at myself for behaving like in the movies, that I don't know how to do it. What, I mean how do you search? So you touch like you see in the movies, because you really don't know what to do.

### **How far down did you strip her?**

Not much, I'll recall in a minute. My thought from a certain point on was this: I don't care if I get blown up, just let me not be here. Just to get this over with. The ops-sergeant with me was more skilled, she had already gone out with the guys once before and she had a gun and knew what to do with it. I didn't.

### **She knew what to do in a situation like this?**

She showed a lot more confidence, but we were both embarrassed. When the company-commander left the room and left us with this mother and then with the grandmother – it was this very little room so one came in and then out and the other came in. So we removed her blouse and she remained just in a shirt and pants. We stuck our hands in her pockets, touched her blouse, I remember that. I didn't care what it was then, at some point I thought: I don't care what she has, I don't care. And I also remember \*\*\* asking me: And if she had stuck something up her cunt, how would we even know it's there? I told her I didn't care, I just wanted to get out of there, just get out.

### **Did you think about where she was hiding things?**

Yes. I was terribly sick at the thought, and I was terrified suddenly, and I also couldn't believe I was really there. And then, no, I tried to do it. I tried but couldn't. When I was told that this is what I had to do I said: okay, so we went in and started to do this, I only wanted for this to be over already.

### **How long were you in there?**

It took a few minutes. Some minutes with the first one, and then the second and then

we left. I mean the younger woman, then the older and then we left. In the yard was another house, a smaller one which we entered also, but it was only two rooms.

**How long did the search take?**

The search? A few minutes.

**So you enter with one of the women, and you were alone in the room with her?**

No, myself and \*\*\*, the two of us with one woman.

**How did you talk to them?**

We didn't. That was just the point, you didn't need words. They may have talked, I didn't exchange a word with them and I remember even thinking about it, that you can't even talk to them, you can't say anything to her. I saw the kids. I saw the faces of those kids. I thought to myself: If I could just say something. Like now, when I walked around in Hebron and saw the kids I said, you can't even say anything to them. They hate you, they don't want to see you, they think you're the enemy, and you are wordless. You have nothing to tell them.

**Did you think about your not knowing Arabic?**

Yes. Especially about not being able to communicate. Because in this situation, even had I been able to speak Arabic I wouldn't know what to say because I was entering their home at 2 in the morning, I was waking them up, sticking them in a corner. The women and children were in the corner while we kept moving around the house and they couldn't go anywhere. I can't even tell you whether anyone told them not to move or that they were simply petrified. They kept following us with their eyes. I remember I had a really hard time because they were watching me. I had a hard time with the children and with the mother, she was watching me the whole time and I remember feeling I was doing something wrong as a woman. To her. I was going into her home and waking up her kids. I felt that men were much more crass than we were in this situation.

**Were you on other arrest missions?**

No way. I wouldn't, I didn't even want to go.

**So why did you go in the first place?**

I wanted to see what we do.

**Out of plain curiosity or for kicks?**

Listen, I remember the moment we disembarked from the Jeep and they began to run and I remember my panic as I suddenly realized where I was. Before I just thought, okay, there's plenty of Shabak guys if something does happen, so let's go. I used to ride around with them in their Jeep, ask them to take me along on patrols. All

that would take place in daytime. Nothing at night. Suddenly you're in those places. ... After we got back from this arrest mission I kept asking the company-commander, I walked with him and asked if this is what's done all the time. And he said there's no other way. He says to me: You have a gun, you have weapons here, how do you want this to be done? If you tell the guys that the education corps NCO says this or that, they just say: she's being self-righteous. Many of them. So I said, "Well, is this what we do, then? This way? Just like that?" I told you, I was a lefty when I enlisted, and this was the first moment I simply understood why they hate us. I would have hated us too. Perhaps I told him this: if you were to enter my home, no matter how old I am, and break into my life and into my privacy like that, I'd hate you too.

**Was there any slapping, kicking?**

Kicking yes. Just when the guys entered. They kicked the father. In front of the kids, yes. In front of the kids.

**What is so important about taking the mother into a side room and doing everything by the book, as it were, and hit the father in front of his own kids?**

Because as far as they're concerned, first of all I think they thought we stripped the women completely, I'm pretty sure, I mean the company-commander. He didn't really see us inspecting. I also thought if you take me along and let me inspect a woman, you don't even check to make sure I'm doing it right.

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Testimony 25

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/ Medical Corps | **Location:** Hebron

They liked to carry out all sorts of experiments on seriously wounded people. I mean trying resuscitation even though it was obviously too late, but just to let doctors and medics get some practice.

**What do you mean?**

A fellow seriously wounded, hemorrhaging all over, no chance. Or I don't even know if it was an already dead body. The reports are about... If the doctor decides to confirm death, he does it on the spot and there's no more treatment. If he says there's

a chance, they do continue. But sometimes it was sort of uncertain. They didn't confirm death although officially it was, in order to carry out some more treatment – practice intubation, emergency surgery. These kinds of field procedure. Sometimes the doctors would come back from their event and say, 'Yes, he was already finished, but we did practice some intubation,' or this or that. Practice. It's not that we tried to save the guy, he died on us. Practice.

**We're talking just about Palestinians, no settlers were in this kind of situation?**

No. Just Palestinians.

**You heard this and did nothing about it?**

I wasn't in any position to blame anyone. To check whether it was right or wrong. That was the given situation. Practice? Okay, practice is all right. I mean, no criticism was voiced anywhere. This was all very welcomed.

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## Testimony 26

**Name:** \*\*\* **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Binyamin Regional Brigade | **Location:** Binyamin Regional Brigade HQ

On our base there was this – what I call – pen. A small detention cell, a shed with a little yard, right across from the war-room, at the outer edge of the base.

**What base is that?**

Binyamin Regional Brigade, at Beit El. Now when they tell you there are arrests, at the end of the arrest mission the detainees caught in our area are brought to this detention spot until they are tried. Then they're taken to Beit El military court and that's that. Something like that. Anyway, there were always detainees there, and whenever we'd go out with the trash from the war-room, there would be people outside in the yard.

**It's fenced in?**

Yes, but open, I mean they see us, we see them. Sometimes they were blindfolded, sometimes not. When they weren't, we wouldn't go out. It was embarrassing. They'd make cat-calls and whistle. It was highly unpleasant. Once an arrest mission took place, I no longer recall which battalion did it, and the kid, I mean this soldier kid didn't know what to do with the person he arrested so he brought him to the war-room.

We were there four girls on the shift, maybe less, no officer, and it was nighttime. He simply brought in this detainee blindfolded, his hands shackled, and asked us what to do with him. There were screams, one of the girls started crying and ran out.

### **Why?**

Because when you dehumanize someone it seems to you as if Hitler just walked into the war-room. We didn't regard this as simply a person who's been detained. Everything gets blown out of proportion. We were terrified. We began to yell at him: What are you doing? You are not supposed to let them in here. Now this detainee stands there, it was really embarrassing and scary. Because it's scary when someone, never mind if he's an Arab or Israeli or Russian comes in blindfolded and shackled. It's not something you're supposed to deal with, not as an ops-sergeant or anything. But I have a problem when I see anyone being dehumanized, never mind what race or gender or whatever, I get really upset. I realized after some moments of hysteria – everyone was screaming, it was such a scare about this person who had been arrested, and I didn't know if he had done anything or not, he was standing there and everyone was screaming and he has no idea of his rights and what he's supposed to do – it really bothered me. I was also the only one who didn't panic after the initial shock of seeing someone standing there blindfolded.

### **A bit extreme, such a reaction...**

Yes, but don't forget this was at a time when you couldn't know. My friend had served as an officer in Gaza, and there were terrorists who had entered her base and blown themselves up. I mean we heard about stuff happening, and that's why the fear was so tangible. So here comes a soldier with someone you don't know anything about, maybe he's... Anyway it was very stressful. But for me, it was traumatic to see someone detained for some unknown reason...

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## Testimony 27

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

I was in Hebron once and there was this stunning little blond girl, “\*\*\*, the Little Demon” (a Jewish girl from one of the Hebron settlements). She would pass us by near the outpost in her Shabbat dress, all neat and cute, and smiling. And then she

saw some Arab walk by and she grabbed this huge rock and ran towards him, leapt and boom! She banged his head with it.

**Just like that, without throwing?**

Just like that, boom. She leapt up to him and banged his head with this stone. And this man was just an old man walking along the street. Then she started yelling: “Yuck, his blood is all over me, so sickening!!” And he turned to her and went like this, and the soldier who was with me charged at him and punched him as though he was threatening this little girl. I stood there in absolute shock. I didn’t know what to do with myself. An innocent little blond girl in her Shabbat-best has just banged an Arab in the head with a rock, and the soldier has punched him in the face for turning around and yelling at the girl. Not to mention another four types who came from their own base to spend Shabbat in the Jewish settlement and approached him like showing him, just try us. So the Arab just put his hand on his wound and ran for his life.

**How old was he?**

Elderly. Over fifty I think. Really old.

**How old was \*\*\*?**

About eight, I think. A little girl. Seven or eight years old. I remember she had a baby brother, in a pram. She’d hand him little stones and say: “Throw it at the Arab, throw it at the Arab.” And he was this tiny thing in the pram, and he’d go like that and throw. Naturally it would hit his toes because he was sitting and he was so little, but that’s what she’d show him: “Throw it at the Arab.”

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Testimony 28

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

On our first day in Hebron, it was a huge shock, just to realize you were inside the Occupied Territories.

**Had you ever been to the Occupied Territories before?**

No.

**Where are you from?**

Haifa. So then, on my second day in Hebron I was taken to Tel Rumeida to distribute storm-wear to the soldiers. And I was really excited to be inside the Territories and be

seeing things, and I asked to stay on the job.

### **And what did you see?**

Just as we got there, you know, it really hits you because I mean what do you get to know in basic training? The M-16, helmet and bullet-proof vest, which you don't really use anyway. So we got there and I had to put on a ceramic bullet-proof, as far as I remember we rode a Hummer or Jeep, don't remember which, one of those large ones. We get there and I'm told, "Come on out," and I say: No way, I'm not coming out. "Why?" Because I'm in Hebron, in the Territories, I'm not coming out. And they go, "Come on, what's wrong with you? We're in the middle of the job, get out." No, no, I'm scared. Anyway my sergeant came along, gave me his hand and got me out. And then I saw a little kid with a skullcap passing by and I thought, cool, it's a Jewish neighborhood, so sure I can come out. I got out of the vehicle and was still sort of scared, you hear a shot here and there, or something strange like that. I was really scared. My first two days in the army. So we got to the outpost and saw that this outpost – Tel Rumeida – was right next to the settlers' living quarters, and they live there really crowded together and there are these wire nets over the windows. So I got to the outpost itself and was in shock, I felt as though I was in the middle of a war. Looking around me, it all looked like one big ruin and they were living inside. And the outpost and the soldiers all with weapons drawn and at the ready and the children hanging around, and here and there I saw them talking with the soldiers. And this sight of houses with wired windows, it was really odd. But I was excited with it all and thinking, wow, I'm seeing things that no one else gets to see.

### **What follows fear?**

I calmed down afterwards and then, at other times when we got there, I mean you already know it's not you who should be afraid but they, the Arabs, who should be afraid. And you see how they behave too, they simply cross the street. I remember seeing them walking along, and we were riding, and they see Israeli kids, I mean Jewish settler kids, and they would switch street sides. And soldiers too. They are afraid, and then slowly you realize you're the stronger one here.

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## Testimony 29

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

Here's a specific incident. I don't quite recall exactly when it happened, but I believe it was late 2002. I was on a patrol with several combatants and another one was sitting in back with me. Could be we were on a foot patrol or something because usually on a Jeep we were only three of us. But anyway we were sitting two combatants in the back of the Jeep, another guy and myself. We caught some 5-year-old kid. I don't remember what brought this on, where we brought him from. He was Palestinian but I remember we went to bring him back into the Territories or something. So that kid was there and he was picked up and slapped around a bit, taken into the Jeep, and this kid is crying, so the guy next to me goes: "Why, don't cry!" He starts smiling at him so finally the kid smiles too, and then – boom, a punch in the belly. Wow, I wouldn't punch even a strong adult like that. A kid – all of five or seven maximum. Tiny. Boom. Why? "Don't you dare laugh at me!"

### **Was he laughing at the soldier?**

I don't think he was, I didn't see him laughing. Certainly not at the soldier, he was shaking with fear. All that "No, no..." pleading with them not to harm him.

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## Testimony 30

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/Medical Corps | **Location:** Hebron

There was an incident with a Palestinian baby brought in from Yatta to the gate of the brigade HQ base when he was already blue with an asthma attack. He'd had this happen twice. His father wanted to get him through the checkpoint but wasn't allowed through, and things really got tight. Finally he was breathing again, he was all right, and this time too, he thought, okay, I won't take him through the checkpoint, I'd have trouble. Then it was too late. Such stuff.

### **What do you mean?**

It was a real case... The story you get is something insignificant, background, it's not even recorded anywhere, between us. You only get this report: At such and such

hour a baby in severe asthma crisis reached the brigade HQ. Resuscitation attempts were made. The baby died. That's it.

### **And what really happened?**

The father already came out of Yatta twice with the child suffering an asthma attack, reached the checkpoint, was delayed, and again, again, by the time the soldiers decided to let him get through to hospital or not, the child regained his breathing capacity, the attack was over, they went back. Twice. The third time, the father said... the soldiers spoke about this regarding the father's anger, right? It's the father's fault. He didn't want to travel with the child because of the checkpoints. So it's his fault the child is dead.

### **And there was no inquiry.**

None at all. Such stories were a dime a dozen. But there was another story. Which I also heard from some officers at the brigade HQ. Junior officers. Curfew was announced in Hebron, a Palestinian came in, the first report we got during the incident was that...

### **The story you're telling me now, took place as you were sitting in the brigade HQ war-room?**

Yes. And then I hear or see it on video at the Gutnick Center (in Magen David Adom's video) in Kiryat Arba (Israeli settlement adjacent to Hebron). Moked (medical emergency unit) 4. Together with the medics there. They loved videotaping stuff, especially when a Palestinian was involved. In this case, there was curfew in town. We got a report: A Palestinian is hurt, hit in the leg, there was open-fire procedure, he didn't respond, he was suspect, hanging around ... During curfew, got shot. That was the report. We sent an army ambulance, the guy was hurt. Later he was taken to a hospital in Jerusalem to get fitted for prosthesis. Then, I don't know how long after that, certainly a few days, I get to the Gutnick Center, around noon we were talking with some people we met there with whom we had good contacts. Suddenly they show us this film on a video camera, we see that guy just after he got shot. A soldier stands there next to him, in absolute shock after having shot him. What was the story? This too I heard from people who stood around and told that this Palestinian was a drunk whom they knew. A guy who was always hanging around and he was ordered to stop in Hebrew, and in Arabic, and he wouldn't hear them, he was flying high, and they shot him. The soldier stands there, you can see him standing there stunned and looking at him for some minutes. After quite a few minutes he was approached and given treatment. I don't know about you, but as far as I'm concerned it was as if... According to our directives, you're to immediately rush over and take care of the

guy, and if his leg spurts blood, you're to bind a tourniquet etc. So it was this kind of negative model. They were standing around with the camera and joking: look at that, look at that blood spurting and this and that...

### **Who was filming?**

The video was kept at the medical emergency unit in Kiryat Arba. I understood this from one of the medics there who filmed instead of treating the guy.

### **A settler or army medic?**

Settler medic. Moked 4 at Kiryat Arba was manned by civilian medics.

### **Was that the only case you recall where help was not offered to Palestinians?**

I seem to remember this case in particular because of the video camera. It was etched in my memory. There were many other cases... I call them small incidents because I wasn't there and didn't witness them myself. You simply note something down and later you get the stories. There was this and that and the other. There were many cases where... In Hebron, on the seam-line between H1 and H2, when a Palestinian got hit, the first procedure was to summon the Red Crescent. Not even alert us. The medics of Kiryat Arba - Hebron do not approach Palestinians to give them aid.

They said outright.

... There was this incident, for example, in which a Palestinian was hurt, the Red Crescent was delayed, it always takes them hours to arrive, and I'm talking with Moked 4, and they say: No way! There's some rally elsewhere, if we send an ambulance to you for a Palestinian, and something happens over there, no one will be around to take care of it. Are you crazy? Us send someone over there? For a Palestinian? So I get annoyed and want to send in an army ambulance that is further away. There was some bureaucracy to get him confirmed. You need to get confirmation from division HQ through the telephones, and they need it from Regional Command, and the command orders me back to get a civilian ambulance. So finally I spoke to the division medical officer-in-charge, acting on my own judgment considering I was the only commander in the area on duty, the brigade doctor was out. I spoke to him on the phone and he yelled at me, no way! We don't confirm such events. So still I activated MDA Kiryat Arba, sent them in after all, in other words lied to them and said it was authorized, and yes, go on, take the guy in. I got yelled at on every possible echelon later on. It felt like the last straw, after that they just couldn't stand me there any longer.

### **Who yelled at you?**

The division medical officer.

**There was this event of a wounded Palestinian and the medical officer in charge of the entire West Bank...**

Tells me to forget it. Who cares... Yes... Right.

**He's a doctor?**

He's a doctor.

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Testimony 31

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

**You're supposed to handle the women?**

Everyone. I mean, if body checks are called for, then of course it's the women, but most of the time there are no body checks. Just hand over your ID, and that's checked against the computer.

**What happens to people who don't have their ID with them?**

They would usually be sent back home.

**Were there also cases of harassing women?**

That, too.

**What?**

Slaps. Especially slaps.

**Slaps, by men?**

That, too. Whoever was there. The women-combatants, in particular, were doing the slapping. There were two of them who really enjoyed hitting out. But the guys, too, had no problem slapping women. If she would scream they would go: shut up! and slap her. It was routine violence there. Again, there were guys who didn't, but everyone knew about this. Perhaps someone would say he didn't. In that case he'd need to get checked, urgent - he must be blind, deaf.

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## Testimony 32

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

Let's say I put together this bulletin-board for the soldiers, and wanted to post some excerpts of 'Breaking the Silence' testimonies. The company-commander had some on his computer.

### **What did he do with them?**

I don't know, read them I guess. The company-commander is a very moral guy, but also extremely militant. Very loyal to the system. So, on the one hand he had that stuff on his computer, on the other hand he wouldn't let me post it up for the soldiers to read. He did say, though, it's 'not because I don't think the soldiers should know about this, I just don't want them reading that stuff a minute before they go out on a mission. I don't want them to have that on their mind when they go on a mission.' He wants them to focus on their objective, see?

### **Did you ask him why?**

It creates empathy and could cause a soldier to say 'I don't want to go on this mission.'

### **And that's what he was afraid of?**

I think so. Or how it would affect his own conduct on a mission. I suppose there was that too.

### **Why did you want to post this?**

That was in the beginning, and it seemed right to me to understand where you are from a slightly critical point of view, one that no one else would discuss with them, wouldn't expose them to.

### **And did you ever try again since, to open this...**

No.

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## Testimony 33

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

I think that perhaps on my second or third shift I was with some guy, we stopped someone, again, on that foot patrol. So the soldier caught him and said: "What are

you laughing at?” Again, the guy was not laughing. “You’re laughing? Really, well, no problem,” he took off his shirt and said: “Now I’m not a Border Patrolman, let’s fight.”

Obviously the guy is not going to punch him back, what does he mean he’s no longer a Border Patrolman?? The fact you’ve taken off part of your uniform doesn’t make you just someone on the street, does it? He beat him to a pulp.

### **And the Palestinian didn’t hit back?**

No. The soldier lashed out whole-heartedly and the Palestinian did not hit back, only pleaded and pleaded with him to let him go. And the Borderman goes: “Come on, come on, hit me back.” I think he knew quite well, as did the Palestinian, that he wouldn’t. What could the Palestinian do? Hit a Border Patrolman? What is he, an idiot? He could get arrested for something like that, as absurd as it is, and I remember standing there and he goes, “Come on, show your stuff.” I say: leave me alone, it makes me sick. I don’t want to touch him. Let him get out of here. Again, right away I realized I wasn’t going to hold any political discussions here about my own views. (...)

### **And he wasn’t wearing his shirt?**

Right, so he picks up his rifle and starts using it to hit the guy. You don’t need a shirt to hold your gun. This was routine there. Again, after about half a year I hardly went out on patrol, most of the time I stood at outposts.

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## Testimony 34

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

That’s it. We got to the checkpoint, to Erez Crossing. How can I describe it to you? It’s constructed as a vast compound with lots of concrete ledges, but not too high. The checkpoint is huge. It’s a giant installation you can see from very far off. Say there are certain observation points when Beit Hanoun is being shelled – then everyone goes off to watch houses being demolished, how the air force attacks them and so on. But that’s on special occasions. But even if you’re just hanging out on the base you can always see the Palestinians moving around. Besides, if you’re plain bored, you can be at the checkpoint in two minutes flat, and all that movement in the base is

that of soldiers coming back or going to the checkpoint itself. All the combat soldiers who secure the checkpoint are not on the base with us, they're at a base five minutes drive away. So that's the Erez Crossing.

**What was it like for you, at first?**

I think it seemed to me like a jail. There's – not everything has been destroyed and newly built – there are these metal pens, with people, soldiers scattered along several strategic points. Below them, say a soldier stands like that on top of a concrete ledge, and people walk along beneath him. Everyone's armed of course. At the end of each pen stands an armed soldier ordering people to pivot, lift their shirts, take off their shoes, all of that.

**At what distance do they stand?**

It's all metal doors, a highly upgraded checkpoint as it were, hardly any human contact at all.

**What, loudspeakers?**

Yes, loudspeakers. They start from the point – I'm not too good at directions – like the spot closest to Gaza. They start there, and there's something called a sleeve. This whole matter of crossing the checkpoint, it starts at 3 a.m. and ends at 5 a.m. and then they return at 5 p.m. the next day. You realize what kind of a life they lead, these people, right? They go home, say they get back home around seven. At three in the morning they already have to show up at the checkpoint. The buses are there waiting to take them to work inside Israel, on the other side. You see?

**If I am Palestinian...**

You'll get there early to stand in line.

**How early?**

We open the gates at three a.m. There's already crowding around one a.m., they'll wait and quarrel and all. Because they're not told how many will be allowed in. We have a meeting about this.

**There's a quota?**

Sure. Back in the good old days... At the checkpoint they were always saying back in the good old days, tens of thousands of people came through. I don't remember exact figures but something on the order of 15,000, 20,000 a day. When I got there, it was already during the Second Intifada, 2000. It was quiet. At the checkpoint, except for one incident in 1996, a shooting, supposedly – not a bombing, a shooting – nothing happened there since 1996 when this press photographer was hurt. So when I got there the situation was very different not because of anything that happened at the checkpoint, but because of the Intifada. And then the State of Israel decided. I mean,

every day at noon we'd meet and decide what was going to happen at the checkpoint that evening. It depended on State policy, not in the hands of the commander on the ground. So the quota was lowered to 3,000 or 5,000. Which meant that people would arrive and whoever got in, got in. They wouldn't be arranged ahead of time.

### **No special permits?**

There's something called 'humanitarian' permit, which is the most, like, troublesome. No one would, I mean it was treated very... What is humanitarian? Ambulances. There are no humanitarian work permits. So let's say today they are letting 3,000 or 5,000 people in, right? Or 6,000 max. And lots of people arrive, crowding, thousands, standing on the other side.

### **How many?**

I don't see them. They're on the other side, in Gaza. I don't see them but the Palestinians inform us know how many. There's the DCO (District Coordinating Office) who do the coordination of this whole thing. And they're the weakest link at the checkpoint. They're the ones no one gives a damn about. They're pests. But they're the ones who fill out the daily report, around ten pages, of exactly how many people got in, how many humanitarian permits were issued, those were always around two or three or four. And we had to fill out this report, our part of it. Every day, this very detailed report that the night shift filled out. What kind of cases, ambulances, special events, how many illegals, detainees or prevented from entry. In short, regulations have gotten much tighter since I got there.

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## **Testimony 35**

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

They (the Jewish settlers in Hebron) were horrid. I don't know, I was shocked by the fact that they would always invite the paratroopers to visit. Never the Nahal soldiers. I remember their resentment when some wanted man was caught, it was winter, this crazy snow in Hebron. We were absolutely freezing. That's what I remember from the snow, and the Nahal guys caught this wanted man, everyone already knew about this on radio, and somehow the Jewish settlers got there for some reason, straight from their homes. I don't know, I think they had our radio frequencies or something like

that. And they came and saw the wanted man with a blanket and got really annoyed: What is this, he's being given a blanket!? No one even knew what he had done. His ID number came up for questioning. Whether he was a terrorist or something else...

**This was not after an arrest?**

No, not at all. A man whose ID was checked and he came up 'wanted.' There were plenty of people wanted for questioning, whose relative so and so, not necessarily, you know, collaborators, all sorts. And these settlers were furious why these Nahal guys brought him that blanket, and they simply boycotted the Nahal. All the Jewish settlers there. Really mean. They were terribly angry about this. Then soldiers from our unit came along, took away the blankets the Nahal guys had brought, took the cup of tea that the soldier had given him and spilt it on the ground, humiliating him. They made him sit – you wanted to warm up a little? – they made him sit on the snow – there, sit on the ice.

**What did the Nahal guys say about this?**

Nothing much. They were saying, hey – that's our detainee, move, stuff like that. But our guys were already, you know – we're here in Hebron for three years inside, and this is our turf.

**So what did they do to this detainee?**

Took away the blanket, made him sit on the snow to realize that who cares if he's cold, until the police came for him. It took about half an hour, the whole story. Not much longer.

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Testimony 36

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

As an NCO I slept at the outpost of one of the companies based in Hebron. Because there were no girls' quarters I shared a room with guys. I remember that one night, around 4 a.m., one of the commanders came in, I think he was a sergeant, and sat on my bed, waking me up. I jumped up, he sat, with his ceramic bullet-proof vest, his helmet, his gun, just down from guard duty. I ask him: "Has anything happened?" He sits there, his eyes glazed, and says: "I had this dream." I ask: "What did you dream?"

"I dreamt that the Jews are beating me up and Arabs beat me up and I stand in the middle and can't do a thing about it." Then I asked him: "It was no dream, was it? You've just come down from guard duty and something has happened." He said, "Yes." The soldier was stunned. They just removed some settlers who had entered Palestinians' shops in Hebron. The Palestinians came to protect their own shop. The settlers tried to break in, and the soldiers were there right in the middle of things, getting hit by both sides. And the soldier was simply in shock. I had to actually help him remove his vest and helmet and go to sleep, and forget about it. He came back stunned from this incident. It was one of the things that really got etched in my memory.

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## Testimony 37

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Gaza Division/Education Corps | **Location:** Gaza Strip

I used to visit the war-room quite a lot as well as the look-outs' screen-rooms and see all kinds of films. And I remember that the first time I was really shocked, I saw a video recording that showed some old Palestinian farmer who got too close to the fence by mistake, too close to the fence, and you simply see the tank shell coming and blowing him up. I looked at the Palestinian and at the female look-out watching it, and thought about the soldiers in that tank and it was simply, I don't know... When you get out of things for a second it just doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense and it's inhuman. When you're in it all, if you don't... When you're inside it's got to be normal, otherwise you can't function. (...)

**And tank fire, shelling people, is that routine there? Part of the open-fire instructions?**

I think these instructions were changed quite often while I was serving at the division HQ. But I think they were changed so frequently that they never managed to reach the rank and file soldiers before they were re-modified again. But, I mean, it was pretty common. He got close to the fence? The look-out detected him, what does that mean? It means he has to be taken down somehow or another.

**Do you recall other such incidents?**

There were many I heard about but I think that after that one time I decided I wouldn't watch any more.

### **What cases?**

Cases where Palestinians didn't mean to infiltrate or anything like that, as it came out in inquiries after the fact, but were shot because they got too close to the fence or were suspected. I mean, I'd seen enough films of terrorists who did try to infiltrate the fence and you see their head popping up and disappearing, and again, and it's obvious they're on a hit mission. And I also remember it looked to me like some kind of video game, you're not really seeing a human being, you see someone running but it doesn't look like a real person, like it's not happening.

### **And what was the reaction to cases where people were hurt, and the inquiry revealed they hadn't intended to carry out any terrorist activity?**

I don't remember anyone except for myself who reacted to this, I never heard anyone talk about it, respond, think, feel. Nothing at all. It's something I absorbed and seemed wrong to me. But like this was war, and there are no laws in war, it's like the general spirit of things.

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## Testimony 38

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Army Spokesperson | **Location:** Yitzhar

### **Were there incidents that happened during your service? That left their mark?**

Yes. The first was the evacuation of the settlement outpost Shalhevet near Yitzhar, on January 3rd, 2005. It was the first time I was actually on intensive filming. I had never before filmed anything that was news, where the happening was so intense and comprehensive... I came there in the morning with a camera crew—it was a video cameraman, a sound man and a stills photographer. I was the stills photographer. We went up with a convoy of soldiers from the settlement, from the guard post of that settlement, to the outpost that was a bit lower down. And then at some point we got away from the convoy. There's this path leading down into the outpost, where people were removed and the whole riot was taking place. When we arrived all hell had broken loose, beatings, rioting.

## **Between the army and the settlers?**

The army and the settlers.

### **Was there police, too?**

The police was there and had already brought all kinds of heavy equipment to remove the... I mean, some silly trailer was all there was. And then, at some point, going down, we got detached. Somehow the soldiers were further away and we were descending, and the camera crew was standing there, the cameraman and soundman were standing at the bottom, filming something that didn't interest me, and I began to go down alone, I was with my camera, in uniform, and people saw I was a soldier. Then at some point while going down, some five or six settlers surrounded me and began to yell at me. Anyway, the camera crew couldn't see me, I was surrounded by these guys and they were yelling, I couldn't say anything, so I just stood there and didn't move or say a word. Until at some point one of the settlers – I was carrying two cameras, one on my shoulder and another around my neck. So one of the settlers gripped the camera I had on my shoulder, and pulled. I pulled and he pulled, and that went on for about ten seconds, but he was stronger. He went off, escaped and that was that. Then I must have started to scream. I was in shock.

### **Did they touch you?**

No, but it was terrifying. They surrounded me and I couldn't utter a word, I couldn't move. What most shocked me was, I remember saying to some soldier who was near me: "Help me, they've stolen my camera!" I guess he was scared, because it seemed he just wasn't interested, he turned around and then I started yelling for my friends from my own unit who saw me and came running.

### **Did you talk with anyone after that?**

Yes. Besides I had to go to the police and be questioned by the army deputy-spokesperson, and by the way nothing happened, the camera was not returned, none of the kids...

### **Didn't you photograph them?**

I photographed one boy who wasn't the one who... I photographed several boys, not the one who grabbed my camera, that one ran off to the fields and was taken into custody, but he was a minor, so there was nothing to do about it. The army spokesperson people did not really fight this out, and it was equipment worth a lot of money, and I don't know, I think they tried to stay on good footing with the...

### **Surely yours was not the first case, to what extent did they try to stay on good terms with the settlers?**

I don't know, they didn't really go out of their way to get army equipment back,

they're not... I was the one who went to the police. Beyond an inquiry that was done mainly for official appearances, I think, and to draw conclusions, nothing was done on the part of the spokesperson's office.

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## Testimony 39

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Allenby Bridge

There was this one case I recall of a boy, sixteen or seventeen years old, perhaps even younger, who decided to get fresh with a Border Patrolwoman, okay? What do I mean by fresh? I don't know, be loud, say stuff, I don't know what he said to her exactly. Apparently he had to be detained, he couldn't leave. She went off to call the person in charge at the police station and I was asked to escort him to the station.

I was present, but not involved in what happened between them. So I followed him and the officer in charge of the police station inside the Allenby Bridge Terminal. It belongs to the Ma'ale Adumim police, like I said earlier. We got to the station and they went into a room and I was outside. I didn't know why I had to stay there in the first place. I didn't. I don't know, something made me stay, I recall now. Across the closed door I heard everything that went on inside. There was yelling: What are you doing? How dare you behave this way? Anyway, I started hearing blows, a beating.

I didn't know what to think. I felt quite frozen, didn't know what to do. What, could I break in and tell the commander to stop it? It wasn't... You know, there was this respect for superiors, there's no way you'd open up and talk. Tell them how to behave? Who, me? I was just a controller.

### **What did you do?**

I told you, I wasn't even supposed to be there. I didn't leave, I stayed. I wanted to see if he really hit him or anything. I don't remember whether I saw him hurt or anything, I think this was a very sturdy boy. Anyway, he was sitting there for some minutes, then he was detained for a few hours, until things calmed down and he was released.

### **No investigation? Nothing?**

You realize it was all about one word he said to a policewoman there. The point is that at first he was certain it was all in jest. We're talking about young people our age, what were we? Girls. The policewoman too was young. These are army-age people serving

in the civilian police instead of the army. Police staff doing their regular army service.

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## Testimony 40

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Golani Brigade (Infantry) | **Location:** Training Base

I can tell you a funny story. Before we went out to the Occupied Territories we had some training. I sat in on an Arabic class my soldiers were getting.

### **They had classes in Arabic?**

They had these lessons in very basic Arabic, to learn the most fundamental stuff like 'open the door' and all that.

### **Checkpoint Arabic?**

Exactly. So I sat there with these guys who were really gung-ho, extremely militant about anything Arab. And their songs, I mean – I cringe at them to this day. Never mind. Anyway, there was this really delicate girl-soldier, 'a yellow' as they're commonly called here. She comes and tells them how to tell people to stop, teaches them the 'open-fire instructions' in Arabic. I'm sitting there in class with them, and she's saying: "Stop! Stop or I shoot!" trying to explain this to them. Exactly five minutes into class time, a guy stands up – I won't say his name, but he was a true-blue Golanchik (nickname for Golani Brigade soldiers) – he got up and said to her: "Listen, cutie, forget it. Stop... Stop or I shoot... We don't talk. We shoot. Then maybe we talk."

Why am I telling you this story? It's a would-be laugh. But come to think of it, it isn't that funny at all. In actual fact, even suspect-arrest procedure isn't that respectful, guys don't really take it seriously. They slip through it. I mean, the bit about calling out 'Stop, stop or I shoot!' – they don't do that. At least not from what I can gather talking to them. They seem to find that a kind of fairy-story bullshit.

### **How do they respond to the killing of innocents?**

They don't see them as innocents. It's not that these people are guilty of anything as far as they're concerned, but for them it's very common to compare this to our side: Why, don't children die in suicide bombings? Don't suicide bombers kill innocents? It's a reaction that keeps coming up. There were often stories about situations where innocents got killed. That's something that happened big-time.

## Testimony 41

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant

**Unit:** Oketz | **Location:** Menashe Regional Brigade

When I was – this is something I really didn't like and it was when I just started out in the Menashe regional brigade. Detainees were brought in by Golanchiks who had really abused them. Really. I don't know, it was... They were outside the war-room. You see detainees, and soldiers standing guard over them, and all the guys came over to make fun of these detainees. Ordering them around, say this, say that, kicking them. They weren't too...

### **How many detainees and how many Golanchiks?**

There were two detainees shackled, blindfolded, the works, surrounded by at least fifteen guys who were harassing them, who came out to make fun of them. It seemed to me, I don't know, somehow there's this atmosphere of 'It's fine, because they're Arabs so they're terrorists, they're shits and this and that.' On the other hand, I mean they'll be punished, that doesn't mean... It's like you're making a fool of yourself. I felt these soldiers were making fools of themselves treating them that way. A guy is shackled, blindfolded, and you come out and tell him to say this and say that, a guy who's terrified because he's detained. Okay, true, he's a terrorist and all, but really, put him in jail, why do you have to come along and behave like retarded children and start telling him to say this and say that, say 'I'm a whore' and stuff. What are you, idiots? That's how I felt.

### **Did you say anything?**

No, I didn't.

### **Why not?**

Because I was young. You know, in the army there's this thing that you're young and these were all guys from the older company and all. Why should they listen to some girl ops-sergeant?

### **Were you afraid?**

No. They wouldn't have done anything. But I told the girls in the war-room when we talked about this, and they said – some actually had a laugh, went along with this. Others didn't agree. I don't know. I found it out of line.

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## Testimony 42

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Field Intelligence | **Location:** Gaza Strip

### **What about detainees?**

Detainees? I don't know. We hadn't that much to do with them. They'd just be brought in and questioned on the base, so we'd see it. Just see it. The fact that I took pictures of them? I have nothing to say about that. Yes, it did feel strange, but...

### **Did you use your cell phone to take pictures?**

My digital camera. I'll tell you why. We girls sort of sit there, we see a lot of this, it's part of what we experience. We watch, I don't how to explain this to you. It's like something we're actually experiencing, part of what we go through every day. Even if it's, I don't know, a souvenir for myself to see where I was in the army and what I saw. It's not necessarily...

### **... That's close to the war-room? They're brought into the war-room?**

Yes. Not the war-room itself, no way. But they're held close-by. The base isn't that big, either, so they're either placed in the sports court, they're made to sit in there, or next to the rooms where they're questioned.

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## Testimony 43

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

It's terrible at the checkpoint. The whole business of 'purity of arms' and the fear of violating the dignity of people being inspected at the checkpoint was terrible, there were lots of problems with that. At the checkpoint, say Palestinians came with bags of clothes, they'd be ripped. The women are stripped in a sort of, not a room, there's this partition, by female-soldiers of course. It could be done more gently than it's usually done.

### **Stripped down to what extent?**

Stripped, what do you mean to what extent? They're left in their bra and underpants.

It may have been possible – I suppose there just wasn't enough money left in the budget for this – one could have put in air-conditioning at this checkpoint, but it wasn't done. So say it was summer, it's not pleasant to sit there for hours waiting. Really not. And there's this thing with food that they'd be bringing along, and sometimes their stuff is opened, and sometimes say they had falafel in bags, so often soldiers would open the food packs.

**And help themselves to it, too?**

Yes. Why, at the checkpoints in the Territories they do this all the time. You'll not see a soldier without prayer beads. Never. And that's something they often hand over, it already happens as if perhaps the Palestinians are so anxious to get through, they'll sort of bribe the soldiers a little to show some consideration.

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Testimony: 44

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant (Reserves)

**Unit:** Hatikva | **Location:** Qalandiya Checkpoint

I'll tell you a little about how it works. There are several checking posts, four or five, which are simply concrete slabs, and some chairs, uncomfortable ones if any. The whole experience is not exactly pleasant, the helmet grinding your head, the eight hour shift. At the side there is an armored booth for inspecting women, in more intimate circumstances. It's not, well, I don't know other setups, but it is certainly not done up nicely or looks good in any way, or seems as though anyone gave a thought to how to put down belongings. Basically it's all just very shocking. I had a hard time, I told you, I felt uneasy from the first, found it difficult to think about.

**Did you get to do women's inspections in this booth?**

Yes.

**You were there for two weeks. How did you feel?**

It's what I've been describing to you, you're in this state, personally I think I wasn't very much my own self at that time because it was a sort of... It's work and even more so if you're doing it for three years, and even if you do it, say, for a week. So it's them, and they're your job, and it's not about us. It didn't really bother me, say I was a bit ill at the time, so I wasn't exactly eager to lie flat on the floor right there and them

see that, or that I cared too much what they're thinking or feeling. Again the sly remarks, the teasing, the disrespectful speech. I mean yes, I suppose it depends how many hours you spend there. I guess for the first few hours, yes, I may have kept some kind of human manner, polite and all. But about these juvenile little jokes, that make kids laugh, after all that's what I am. I'm maybe 21 which is also a kid, all the more if you're 18. So what I do remember about this is a kind of detachment from what you usually are in your life. Perhaps these guys, these soldiers whom I saw there who behaved disrespectfully or condescendingly or uncaringly, perhaps at home with their mom they're angels. Again, I can only say about myself that I experience a kind of emotional barrier when I'm there.

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## Testimony 45

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

I recall once we had this talk when we got back to our quarters, and one girl said she had slapped an Arab. That was the first time I heard about a girl-soldier who actually slapped an Arab.

### **What did you say to her?**

It opened up quite a discussion in our company. The girls asking, like how did you dare? She was in a company with a guy who was not one of the more violent types there. He was rather one of the finer fellows in the company. And I remember her saying, "Yes, he was rude to me." Something like that. "He answered me rudely, so I gave him a slap in the face." And I'm thinking about that Arab, a grown man, who is approached by a good-looking blond girl who slaps his face at the checking post.

I don't know, the mere thought was just so shocking. And she said it so... Later we talked about this and girls said to her: How could you have dared, I could never do such a thing. We had this round going, who would and who wouldn't. Barely ten seconds later two other girls already admitted having done this, one of them once told an Arab to get down on his knees, something like that, another said she occasionally cocked her weapon right in the face of an Arab, threatening him. He stood facing her and said: Okay, what do you want now? Something of that nature. So she aimed her rifle at his face and cocked it right there. I was shocked that these

were my friends.

**Did you feel like an outsider?**

I remember coming home to my grandma and telling her: I've got to get out of there.

Got to leave.

**So how does one get used to this, when you realize all those girls had slapped people?**

Slapped? There's this man, and you're cocking your gun in his face. Although that in itself was pretty common, guys were doing that often, cocking their rifles while threatening children, grownups, everyone.

**Did you see weapons being cocked?**

Sure. It was procedure. Like: Where are you going? Click-click. Like: Where do you think you're going? Click-click. You do it to kids, to everyone.

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Testimony 46

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Gaza Strip

Once I took the soldiers to the theater, on a 'culture Sunday,' to see a play. It was thrilling. There were guys from different places, rural areas, it was their very first visit ever at "Habima" (Israeli national theater). And it was really nice, I came out feeling really good, and then we got back (to the Gaza Strip) through Kisufim Checkpoint in this open truck, open in the back I mean. We came back from Habimah Theater to Gaza, and the minute we crossed the checkpoint it was like entering another world. As soon as we got through they changed. There were Palestinians walking with their carts and wagons and donkeys on the roadside, some on foot. So the Border Patrolmen in the truck took these crates of left-over food they had there and began to throw stuff at the Palestinians. It was my most shocking experience in the Occupied Territories.

**How did you see it?**

I was sitting with them in the back of that truck. An officer was sitting up front in the cabin and I don't recall whether there was another officer in back with me or not.

I got hysterical, I yelled at them: What are you doing?! We're on our way back from such a civilized event, what is going on with you? They only laughed and forced me back into my seat, like. Sit down. I knocked on the cabin to get the officer's attention and demanded that the truck stop immediately, not to go on driving. The officer told me to be quiet, like 'don't interfere.' I yelled about what was happening, I yelled: They're throwing vegetables at Arabs, stop. They didn't stop the truck, they didn't mind it, they did nothing. The officer didn't get off, nothing happened. And the guys went on doing this the whole way. They were throwing cottage cheese, rotten vegetables. I got to the base extremely upset. I don't remember if it was immediately afterwards, but at some point I had a talk with the unit commander. I think he was a major or lieutenant-colonel, I don't know. He didn't seem too perturbed: "Forget it." And I talked to other people there and no one... Everyone tried to hush it up somehow. I wrote a new weekly bulletin on the topic and no one agreed to pass it on. Not one commander wanted to have it. So I told this to my superior and other officers from the Southern Command came and I told them too, and in no time I was off to officers' training. Like within one week. I don't know what went on there. I felt I had been thrown out. I remember that after this whole storm, when I tried to talk to all the commanders and no one wanted my bulletin, then they no longer paid me any attention at all. There was not much time left but they really avoided me. When I told this to people from the Southern Command who came visiting, they ignored it too.

### **You didn't keep still.**

No, no. Well, it was sort of like keeping still. It's not like I went to the press and told someone. But when officers from the Southern Command came, these were education corps people, and I felt they were from my 'home base,' among them was the person responsible for education corps activity throughout the Southern Command. So I told them about this, I told him and his whole entourage. And I felt, or they made me feel as though I was circumventing authority, as though I was out of line telling them about this.

### **Whom were you supposed to tell, by the book?**

I don't know... It was really difficult. Especially realizing now how small I was, but I felt big. It was very hard. All those feelings there, it wasn't new, every Saturday night I would cry my heart out at home.

### **What was so hard for you there?**

Their male-chauvinism, the incessant humiliation, especially this power-play that was on all the time, my feeling that I was the weakest, weirdest creature in the world, and complaining all the time.

## Testimony 47

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Binyamin Regional Brigade | **Location:** Binyamin Regional Brigade HQ

I finished a 14-hour shift. It was morning. We had trackers at the brigade HQ. We joined them, they were cool, always taking us along for tours of the area so we'd get our bearings a bit. Once, one of them said: Come along for a ride. So we started out on patrol, driving along a road that only Israeli cars are permitted to take. That too is an amazing thing I ignored during my whole time in the army. There were roads for Jews and roads for non-Jews. Just for Palestinians.

### **Did you accept that?**

Yes, it seemed reasonable to me.

### **When did you realize this was not reasonable?**

When I got out of the army, later, at the university. When I grew up. It's amazing how different a person you can become during your army service, when you're told and ordered what to do, and you don't doubt anything, even if you consider yourself an adult, a curious, politically aware person. This always seemed very reasonable to me. Why not? There's fear. I didn't realize how terrible this is, but thought it was so important security-wise. Anyway, we were riding along this Jews-only road, and a Palestinian truck passed by loaded with fruit and vegetables. So the tracker – now these trackers are cool people but they're also very eager machos, and driving along with a girl in their Jeep – "I'm arresting this guy." I asked, why? "He's not allowed on this road." We stopped him. He says, come, get out of the Jeep. I said, Why? I'm not in this. And he says, come on out, it's okay. We're in a calm spot. We got out of the Jeep and there were fruit and vegetables in that truck. We see that he (the driver) is the fruit vendor. We reach the door, he opens it, a driver about the age of my father, a bit older, even, an elderly man. He comes out, pale, holding out a bag of – I think it was grapes, or oranges. Not saying anything, just 'take it, take it,' in Hebrew. He hands it to us. I'm standing there, I'm not... He says: Please, just take it. He only wanted to bribe us, to calm us. I couldn't stand it. In the meantime the tracker asked him for his ID. The man was shaking. Shaking. I ran back to the Jeep. I told him: I'm not... To this day when I think about it I feel sick. I mean, nothing happened there, the tracker let him go, he'd noticed my reaction, the tracker, so he calmed down and

quickly let him go. He explained that he wasn't supposed to drive on this road. He realized that he... And the only thing I had in mind was that this person who could have been my father was afraid of me because I was wearing this uniform, because I was there in an army Jeep, and he was willing to give up his livelihood so that we wouldn't harm him. Like, what could we have done? But apparently he knew very well what we could have done to him, so that's why he was so upset. It's followed me for all these years. And that's nothing. After all we didn't hit him or anything... But it was extremely meaningful to me. It gave me a true slap in the face. Really.

### **Where did it move you?**

It made me understand that I'm simply – that there's this deep dissonance between what I'm told, between the justice that I'm being taught, and what really takes place out there, on the ground. Everyone's monstrous, they're all terrorists, all suspects, they have to be checked every last one of them, they must not be treated as our equals. It is not right. This person wanted to make a living. That's respectable. It's much more respectable than what many people are doing not only in our country, but – in fact – in our government. Honestly. And what am I? Here I come, young enough to be his daughter, and he's so stressed out to see me that he goes all pale and tries to give me fruit, in an attempt to persuade to leave him alone.

### **Did you talk about these things with people?**

In the army? No.

### **Why not?**

I don't know. I think that was a very confusing time for me, I mean I didn't really know where I stood, what was right, what wasn't. I know that personally it traumatized me, but I didn't know how to develop it into an idea, I mean to turn this into a certain ideology, a certain opinion.

### **This doesn't have to become an ideology.**

No, but I didn't know how I could come to my friends on the base or to my superior officer and tell her: Why are we doing what we're doing? After all, my whole job, the essence of my life in the army was to work a certain line. I mean, to show my belonging to a certain line, not to deviate, because the moment you do deviate, we know that, you're no longer a good soldier.

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## Testimony 48

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

These children with their plastic bags, (Palestinian boys trying to get into Israel around Umm al-Fahm with bags of toys and various accessories for sale), the soldiers were always stealing their stuff out of the bags. “Go on, empty the bag.” Now, we know exactly what’s in those bags. Okay. You could say this is security procedure. They can smuggle arms in those bags. “Okay, empty the bags. Oh, cool, I need some batteries.” And they take them. Whatever’s there.

### **What else did they take?**

Toys, batteries, anything they had there. Little things.

### **Money? Cigarettes?**

Cigarettes, yes. Money I’m sure, yes. But I don’t remember specific cases. Also, they certainly didn’t pay for the stuff. There was one case that TV Channel 2 happened to be around and filmed some crew doing this. So then the company-commander had us stand in formation and scolded us, the whole company. He said: “How could you possibly think you wouldn’t be seen?” Not, how you could possibly do such a thing, what were you thinking... “How could you possibly think you wouldn’t be seen?” (...)

### **And then, back to business as usual?**

Yes, the patrol that was caught was tried by the area commander and some of the guys were punished, but not really...

### **How’s that?**

One was re-assigned to a better unit, a “terrible punishment” of course... And another guy, professional army, was off the job for about a month. That was more or less the extent of their punishment, and very soon everything was back to normal, meaning it was quite all right to slap, hit, humiliate and harass.

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## Testimony 49

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

There’s this toy pistol that shoots these tiny pellets, right? It shoots these plastic

pellets that really hurt you? Soldiers would call a kid over, cock a weapon in his face and say: get me that kind of pistol. Not even ask, order him. The kids would get us these pistols. You'd give the kid 15 shekels and he'd be happy and get you such a gun. Bags of 100 pellets would cost us 3 shekels. We had plenty of these pistols in the company, lots. And it was pretty idiotic of the kids to buy them for us, because many of the soldiers would then use them on the kids. You'd sit on guard duty and – pop – shoot a kid, pop – shoot a kid.

### **With these pellets?**

Yes. They really hurt. They're bad-bad-bad. This went on until a rule was passed in the company to prohibit this. Whoever bought them would be prosecuted. We once had this case where someone jokingly shot a kid with several pellets like that. He called out to the kid and pointed this toy pistol at his head and these two soldiers got their picture taken. Then some time went by, and we were at the post, I was on guard duty with the guy who had played with the kid, and suddenly this “witch” comes to us, a Palestinian reporter who was really well-known. So she comes to him, calls out to him, I have no idea how she knew his name, she calls to him and shows him his picture pointed that pistol at the Arab kid's head. She asked him: “Where shall I take this, Yedioth or Ma'ariv? Ha'aretz? BBC?” He went like that with these pictures. And we got back to the company pretty upset that she was going to get him into jail or something. It was a toy gun, and he was sure to end up in jail. He told our commander about this. So they went out, a special patrol, to look for her in Hebron, for this reporter. She was no sucker, and I think she was paid to get those photos, because they came with the pictures and she wouldn't have given them. I think they paid her for the pictures. I'm assuming this. They said she handed them over. But surely they wouldn't have beat her up, she has a big mouth, and just to get those pictures like that, why should she hand them over? She had a gold mine right there. It sounded strange to me, her just handing them over. Perhaps they threatened her. I have no idea, but they came back with the pictures, with all the pictures she had shown us, and it wasn't publicized anywhere. She didn't give them just part of it. It was not printed.

### **And the pictures made the rounds in your company?**

No. They were destroyed that very day.

### **What did the company-commander have to say?**

That if this reaches the army spokesperson, we've had it. That's what the company-commander said.

## Testimony 50

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** General

### **How do you feel, leaving the Border Patrol after two and a half years?**

Lots of guilty feelings, I think. Because I can keep saying all day that I couldn't do anything and that this is the mentality there and the fact is that it hasn't changed for years and the fact is that anyone I mentioned Border Patrol to knew right away what I was talking about. I mean, it's not like I say Border Patrol and people go, wow, is that what goes on there?? There's a guy... People tell me they never thought it was that extreme. And I'm sure that the really extreme stories are not being told, because there are plenty of stories about trashing vendors' stalls and all and I know these are true stories. (...) Again, how did I come away from all this? There are the guilty feelings about not being able to do anything. That you're witnessing something you know is wrong, and even if I keep repeating there was nothing I could do about it, and this is in thousands of situations, not even necessarily harassment, because on the one hand the Palestinian population suffered harassment and revenge for everything they had done to us, and on the other hand guard duty was really neglected. If you honestly want to defend your country, then do the job. Between beating up Palestinians you better do your guard duty properly. Don't go off to sleep or split to go eat hummus. So it's the actual awareness of the injustice and the fact that, well I was sure there were terrorist attacks that could have been prevented if soldiers, let's say, if these areas were not in the hands of a force that is problematic to begin with.

### **You felt guilty while still on the force?**

Yes and no. I suppose the guilty feelings were there to a certain extent but not enough to be too conscious of them. Then I was more aware of this sense of helplessness which is now behind me. I think it was mainly in order to survive. As a good friend of mine said, she was with me from the beginning, that we were very busy looking out for ourselves, we had no time left to look out for others.

### **What do you mean?**

It was said in another context, of girls trying to survive this situation. In my unit, again, the atmosphere was very sexually problematic.

### **There was sexuality too?**

Yes. Especially in the first unit I was assigned to.

## **What do you mean by 'survive'?**

It means a lot of things. Again, it depends. Every unit, every company, to what extent – again, the Border Patrol has a very certain reputation but obviously every single unit is different. If in the first unit I was in they were saying, like, you gotta be limber in your legs. Not necessarily every unit was like that. In some, girls did manage to do well for themselves, I'm not denying it. But there was also this very sexual atmosphere and that was very heavy. So I'm saying yes, that's true, Border Patrol has had girl-combatants for years now but there is also this very sexual, very problematic atmosphere. I keep saying that I had to fight more on base in than out on the ground, and it's like that in many respects. At the time I had to protect myself so I had not too much energy left to protect others. But it stuck. I mean the memories stick at some level or other. I do know that I have repressed a lot of stuff, I usually remember things very specifically, from childhood, from high school, names, everything. However, I do not recall the names of lots of people I knew in the army, even guys who were with me for a whole year on operations company, some of them I don't remember. And I know that lots of events I remember only vaguely or partially, lots of stuff is blurred. So I realize that somehow I tried, I preferred to forget it. It's not something you want to remember. Then gradually... At first when I just got out of the army it was mainly: I'm out, I'm out of there and I didn't let them win. I constantly had that feeling they really tried to show me I wasn't up to it.

... Possibly if I thought that getting re-assigned would really change something, I'd have considered it, but it wouldn't have changed reality. It would have changed my own reality, perhaps, but not the facts. Again, it is something that troubles me, these are thoughts that, well, I know these things keep happening to this day. And every time you hear stories about a policeman who did this and a Border Patrolwoman who did that, well, it's maybe one percent or ten percent of what really happens out there. It's true that if a television crew happened to come by and film you, well, great, you found out. But first of all, I don't know what difference that makes. You found out, okay, so those two BPmen will get punished. I mean, it's not like after that crew was there some crazy earthquake took place in our company and things changed. After all we were told to watch out and not be filmed. Okay, so there's the guilty feeling, in spite of knowing there's not much I could have changed.

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## Testimony 51

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

I was in the battalion war-room, the Erez Crossing Battalion, commanding seven companies, which is a lot of soldiers. So you get there at 3 o'clock and there are thousands of people waiting, and a soldier yells in Arabic to open the door. It's a huge iron door. Think about it, it's nighttime, and cold and stinking and everything there is made of concrete and metal. It's a horrid place. It looks like, I don't know how to describe it, horrible. So he yells to open.

### **And what happens to the people?**

They all rush in, shoving each other and falling all over each other and running forward to the first checking post. When they run, there are soldiers standing above them with their rifles drawn. In the top position. I was there with my commander.

### **What ages are these people?**

Mostly older guys. They don't get permits when they're younger. At that time they didn't get a permit if they were under 24 and without a family. There were these very strict regulations. But these are mostly older men, very poor, tattered clothes, poor. All I remember is that they looked really ragged and terribly poor, they always looked really miserable, holding these plastic bags, with some food for the day. And that's it. They would all run together and like first come first serve. Then they would start getting checked. Now this checking took place at about three or four posts. At the first one was a soldier facing them with his rifle, telling them to pivot, check them. After that there's the metal detector, this kind of gate. So the guy has to go through. Then the soldier tells him to pivot and checks him, he goes through this other metal door to the next stop. There were the crossing inspectors, checking their permits, sitting in the booth, and being shown the permits and magnetic cards. And that's where all the jokes took place. The permit was this sheet of paper... We had a DCO representative sitting with us all the time, but the Palestinians couldn't reach him because he was on the Israeli side. So he was there with the DCO and I really don't know how the Palestinians got their permits issued to them, I think they had to go to the DCO who did it. But he sat beside us and they had no access to him. Good question. Anyway this whole thing with permits was in the hands of the DCO. It's taken care of by the weakest person around, who is the DCO, and the DCO officer, too, has the lowest rank there, no one pays any attention to him whatsoever. And I remember their commander. He was the weakest authority there. (...)

**First station – the gate is opened, Palestinians run some six meters, go**

**through the inspection. Second station – permits. And third station? Now they walk through that iron cage?**

Yes. They are still in the cage. They have one more check towards the end, I don't know why, the last one, and then they're out. Then they come out into the parking lot where the buses wait for them... At Magen 12, the inspections really and truly include body searches. There was this thing with women, I don't remember where the women's inspection booth was. There were often complaints from the women-soldiers having to inspect women.

**The women (Palestinians) never complained?**

They must have. But who ever heard them? No, there was a lot of criticism about that, you know, there were all these horror stories about women, and some of it was part of the joking around. Women who are totally concealed and they're stripped for inspection. They'd take off their shoes and belts and it was a sort of humiliating situation. Yes, as in every checkpoint. We must say there were much fewer women who came there than men, of course. But say at Magen 12 there was a special chamber for inspecting women. Every woman who arrived would be sent right to that room. There they would be totally stripped. I know they were because the women-soldiers told about this with real revulsion, like they really had to inspect them, under their clothes and all.

**To what extent were they stripped?**

I don't know if they even kept their underpants on. Well, definitely they took everything off under their dress and all.

**And the woman-soldier remained with the woman inside this room?**

Yes, the soldier would check her inside. They had rubber gloves.

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Testimony 52

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/ Education Corps NCO | **Location:** Hebron

A month and a half after I began my job as an officer at the Judah regional brigade, there was the event at the Prayers' Route where the brigade-commander was killed. From that moment a mad wave of terrorist attacks began and lasted about half a year

on and off, events that mostly ended with fatal and wounded casualties. At that time, the normal conduct of the people at the regional brigade was a bit odd. For example: the intelligence guys used to photograph terrorists' bodies, after they were killed, for intelligence purposes. These photos would somehow find their way to all the computers on the base, through the army email, and would serve as screen savers in various computers in the adjutant's offices and so. Simply pictures of insurgents' bodies. In general there was this thing where people would come to intelligence to watch bodies, the burnt body of an insurgent, the picture of a D-9 bulldozer demolishing a home. These were the engineering corps's screen saver. Everyone was doing this. There was this culture that started. I'm calling it a culture on purpose here, a highly cynical culture around these events. We had all these moments at the brigade that symbolized various events. For example, there was an incident where Magellan soldiers accidentally shot and killed two Jews and perforated their car, like I've never seen a car sprayed that way in my entire life (the interviewee is referring to the event in 2003 where Magellan soldiers and an air-force helicopter fired at two Israeli security personnel in the South Hebron Hills, having mistaken them for armed Palestinians). That vehicle was brought to the brigade HQ and stood there about two months and all the soldiers would come and get their pictures taken with it, with that vehicle, with the blood all over it. Everyone would get their pictures taken, sit on it and make all kinds of, stand there with hammers and get photographed in poses as if they had smashed this vehicle, or with pointed weapons as if they had shot it full of holes. I'm telling you about headquarters troops, yes, the guys who serve right there inside HQ the whole time.

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### Testimony 53

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Gaza Division/Education Corps | **Location:** Gaza Strip

A good friend of mine, an intelligence officer on our base, had a huge Palestinian flag. I don't recall whether there were drops of blood on it or not, she had it hanging in her office. I once asked her why she had it up there, and she said: "I don't know, looks cool to me." Once I took a ride with...

**Where was that flag from?**

A search in some house.

**The guys simply brought it?**

Yes. Once I caught a ride with some intelligence guys in a Jeep, they gave me a ride to the base and there was this terrible stench so we asked them what it was and they said there was, they told me: See that black bag hanging outside the Jeep by the hood?

I said, yes. So they said, it contains the clothes of an insurgent who was killed yesterday near Kisufim. So I said, why do you take it? And they said, what do you mean? We collect it for the office. But don't tell anyone you saw it. Like, they simply keep these things.

**Just the clothes?**

That's what they said. I don't know. It stank. I don't know what it contained. But I've seen this pretty mechanical behavior, pretty bestial, like, not one of the people serving inside the brigade HQ, or on the division HQ base had any daily contact with Palestinians or with combatants whom he could beat up at the checkpoint or something because he'd had enough or anything. But this was more like, "Hey, guys, want to watch the film of that peace activist getting killed in Rafah? Rammed by that bulldozer?" (The interviewee is referring to the event on March 16th 2003, when American activist Rachel Corrie was killed.) Let's go see it! Like they're detached.

**Was that part of the morale?**

Yes, a part of it. Sometimes it seemed like the social thing to do. I mean, not on the level of pictures of bodies as screen savers, but still, keeping the clothes of a dead insurgent in the office, seems pretty sick to me.

**There's no difference here between officers and enlisted men?**

No. None.

**... How do you explain people's behavior, your own behavior? All the guys sitting there watching the filming of someone's death?**

These are perfectly normal people, if there is such a thing at all. It's a defense mechanism, because I've seen myself fall into it all the time. You can't cope after that. That one time when I was there in the event of the tank, because I chose not to escape and not to use that defense mechanism that says let this slip, let's not see humans quite as humans, I really didn't manage to function afterwards. It means that if you want to function, you have to protect yourself somehow. You mustn't feel too much. You have to be quite mechanical, quite detached. So I don't think these are bad people or beasts or I don't know what. It's everyone, each to a different extent

and in a different manner, but this kind of detachment was pretty common.

**...How did the soldiers react to this situation, what did you notice?**

The truth is I happened to see, I mean I didn't serve together with those soldiers, so I saw two main types of situations: either all sorts of demonstrative activities, bringing them entertainment shows or stuff like that and then I'd see wild behavior, like really throwing themselves into a wild state, or when we'd visit outposts and talk with a soldier alternating 8-hour guard duty, 8-hour rest. They're frustrated, exhausted, I don't know, I'll tell you in general – I don't understand how and why the army thinks it can do an effective job if it assigns soldiers to do guard duty in such a frustrating, exhausting and desperate way. And I realize the soldiers were extremely frustrated and took it out God knows how. I don't justify it for a second, but I think I would go crazy under such circumstances. I can understand, I can imagine why a soldier might fall asleep on guard duty, do drugs on duty, beat people up, go home and beat up the whole world, drive a car like a maniac, because in a way they've lost it much more than we have. Like, if I myself lost it and I simply don't know, I didn't care about things, then they must have, and at least from where I see it they simply lost it. They're constantly in this state of tremendous anger that is directed at anything, and desperation and frustration. Once I visited some outpost that was facing the sea, it was this sunny day, some Saturday in spring, a charming day and the dunes and the sea were so lovely and they looked just so sad, so terribly sad, they couldn't understand what they were doing there, didn't understand what was required of them. They didn't seem to care too much about the ten families living in that settlement which they were supposed to protect, they only wanted to sleep, to go home, like this is much more intense than the way we experienced it but it's also a kind of detachment, I think.

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## Testimony 54

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

There was a soldier with us, it was really an extreme case, I remember it was also one of the things that most frightened me, I was going around among people and thinking: How is it possible for people not to be talking about this? No one dares to

speak out. There was a soldier of ours on this post. At first this was a raised post, and then it was lowered down. When we were lowered down, they were shot at actually, but still it was better to check people who were passing there. As soon as you're up in the higher post you're only shouting at them from above and getting watermelons from the guy passing there with his watermelons. Every time he would give us a watermelon. A man with a donkey and watermelons, yes. So there was this soldier of ours, and some Arab boy came along and yelled at him: "Soldier, soldier, look, look!" He made this gesture showing him he was holding a grenade. Now that must have been a dud grenade or something, I don't know where he picked it up, it was no good, that grenade wouldn't have done anything. So this kid goes, "Soldier, look, look, you're dead!" and threw it over to the outpost, and our soldier leapt down from the post to the road below and broke his leg. I don't know who, and I don't know how it happened, but I do know that two of our guys got him into a Border Patrol Jeep, and hardly two weeks later this kid was moving around with his two arms and two legs in plaster casts, in a wheelchair.

### **Who chased him?**

They didn't catch him right that moment. They just knew who he was. We already knew him, he was quite a trickster. He would always do stuff like that. He'd come, throw stones at our outpost. The story was that the Border Patrolmen got him into the Jeep for us, and I'm nearly certain that it was someone from our company who had done the 'final act.' They spoke about it quite a lot in the company, how they sat him there and put his hand on the seat and simply broke it on the seat.

### **How old was he?**

He was one of the older ones, about 14 years old or so, one of the relatively older kids who hung around us. And this was his punishment for making our soldier break his leg by jumping from the outpost.

### **Why did this story shock you? Accounts being settled?**

Not quite that, I expected these people to settle accounts with whoever harmed any of us, but to take someone and break their arms and legs? That's super-Mafia. Like, what? And this description was running through the whole company, how they placed his hand on the chair and broke it.

### **Do the commanders hear about this? Is this supposed to be concealed from them, or do they look away?**

I think it was kept from them, but do you actually believe they wouldn't know, in such a small company? I think it's very reasonable that they do know, but didn't openly talk about it. There were always these hush-hush talks and no one quite said

who did it. We knew that the guy to whom it happened, the one whose leg was fractured, was one of the older guys, he was just about to get discharged from the army and that's what made the older guys so furious. Like, the kid had to be taught his lesson. Otherwise he'd go on doing this again and again. He'd threatened them with a grenade. The guy thought he was about to get killed. The kid showed him that he was throwing a grenade into the post, and the guy jumped down, not just for kicks, he really thought he was going to be killed. So I did expect some sort of retribution, but to see that kid pass by in a wheelchair down the street with his arms and legs in casts...

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## Testimony 55

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Jordan Valley

When our shift at the Bridge Terminal (Allenby Bridge) was over, a vehicle would come to pick us up and take us back to the base. We didn't do much on the base except for hanging out with the guys, the combatants. Cool. That's where I'd hear about what they do at the checkpoints and stuff, I mean I would ask them, I'd sit around with them and they'd tell me about their experiences. What sort of experiences? That one vehicle came along and for him to be let through I'd always take the prayer-beads hanging from his rear-view mirror. Little lootings and stuff that they find amusing and thought would amuse me too. Like, what?

### **Tell it matter-of-factly?**

These are stories that aren't like: Listen, I'm sitting and telling you this because I think you're a person who's going to laugh at this, a person who appreciates a good laugh. No, these were told just so, by the way, nothing specific that they wanted to get across. They were really told by the way, stuff you hear. There was a specific incident I recall, happened a few years before my time on the base. About their making a group of Palestinians stand at the checkpoint, giving them their Border Patrol green berets and making them sing Hatikva (Israeli and Jewish national anthem). He told this and laughed.

## Tewstimony 56

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Golani Infantry Brigade | **Location:** Gaza Strip

This happened in the hothouses of Kefar Darom (Israeli settlement). A company was positioned there, assigned to defend the hothouses of Kefar Darom. I'm talking a mass of soldiers here, some 30-40 men. The guard shift was changing, someone climbed up the watchtower, someone else climbed down, and just then a Palestinian Police officer got under the fence, shot the guy who came down from the tower, right between the eyes. The guy who came to replace him shot the officer and he fell to the ground. Before he hit the ground he managed to shoot the second soldier. So the upshot was two dead soldiers, one died on the spot, the other died some three days later. And someone from the soldiers' encampment – the terrorist also held a grenade, and the third soldier killed him before he managed to throw it. So theoretically – this is not that far-fetched - theoretically it could all have ended very differently. This was very close to the soldiers' encampment where they were all asleep. It was the middle of the night. There were about twenty soldiers in that encampment. And he killed those two soldiers and seriously wounded the third. And this event had serious impact on these soldiers and on me too, both personally and in my perception of them. This entailed a certain ideological crisis, at least for me. Because this was the first time at least I, myself – I'm talking about myself now, not about the soldiers – it was the first time I realized the real meaning of all of this. Like it's easy for you to be asking these questions, as if it's all so casual. In your everyday you're in this kind of social game.

### **So all of a sudden you realize this is no game?**

Exactly, yes. It suddenly hits you that all this bullshit you're into in your everyday life is, the whole point this exists, that we're here at all, is a reason we're not aware of, but suddenly two soldiers are killed. And suddenly you are conscious, and suddenly two soldiers are dead, and it's something that at least now I absolutely cannot accept, that this was standing guard over the hothouses of Kefar Darom. The fact that I suddenly woke up to this, that's one thing, because I'm not the one who has to go fight. But that the soldiers deserve this, that's already something else entirely. (...) Anyway, that was a real turning point for me. Suddenly I started thinking about it all, where is our own humanity expressed in this whole thing, what's the point of

everything we do here, but it was obvious for me that this isn't something I'd bring up with the soldiers. That's not my role. I didn't feel a need to do this. These are issues I have with myself. But I definitely wanted to make room for their conflict.

**Did they bring it up?**

Sure they brought it up. It wasn't easy, like: Guys, what does this do to you?

**And they actually said: we're here, guarding the...**

No. It was from a place of – I'm not talking here about the first days, where the emotional pain is just so great, it overpowers everything, when you lose a friend.

**Revenge?**

Revenge too. But at a later phase, I'm talking say about a good few weeks later, when the initial phase is over and you realize things are not getting back to normal. You realize people are bewildered and tense and confused. And you try to talk with them and they don't show any emotion whatsoever. (...) It wasn't simple. I had to really pressure them into it. I said to them after this event: What are you, animals? Monsters? Don't you feel anything? You want to tell me you're totally indifferent to what happened here?

**They were obeying orders. (At another point in this interview, the interviewee talked about the Golani brigade-commander who issued an order to his soldiers, forbidding them to cry in public).**

No, not that. This was later, not seeing this again. But regardless of the crying bit, I'm saying I was trying to have them float what they were feeling beyond the actual pain of losing a friend: Look, you're animals. Don't you feel anything? Are you totally indifferent? You're like this, and not saying anything? Slowly things began to emerge, to be externalized. People began to talk and started bringing up all kinds of conflicts and personal feelings.

**Individually?**

No, I'm talking about a group. I'm sitting with a group of men and we're talking, openly. Not once and not twice I got a real talking-to about this from the officers and the company-commander.

**What did he tell you?**

He said: "You're turning my men into cunts." I'll never forget this as long as I live. After about three hours of sitting with the guys, and they talked and talked and talked, and he realized what this talk was about. The mere fact that I come and talk with them about their feelings, that turns them into cunts, plain and simple. I was not your ideal welfare NCO you know, the other NCO works by the book. She does welfare, she's very politically correct. She has her work cut out for her with the soldiers and she

does her job with the commanding echelons. I wasn't like that. Again, I'm not judging here, good or bad – I just wasn't like that. It's a fact. Whether it's good or bad, I'm not getting into that at all. Often in this context, exactly around these things, around the emotional-human aspects of their activity, this thing kept coming up of my being the girl who screams and says: I'm not a rubber-doll, no one's rubber-stamp, not a robot. You want a robot? Get yourself a male clerk who'll do the job. You cannot open my eyes to something and expect me not to respond. I experienced this mad emotional storm there, really mad. Not necessarily in this context, in general. But it did happen at this point too. And yes, these are words I'll never forget, the company-commander summoning me to him and telling me: "You turning my men into cunts. And if you don't hold back I'll not let you see them, you'll have to do everything through me." He gave me an ultimatum: "If you don't change your conduct, anything you need from the soldiers, you call me. A form that a soldier needs to fill out, whatever – everything goes through me. You'll have no interaction with them whatsoever."

### **How did you react?**

Like a true-blue Golanchik.

### **Turn the table on him?**

Not physically. But I told him no way, and with all due respect, there's not a chance in the world, it's not within his jurisdiction, it's not in his hands, I'm not his subordinate, I'm not under his command and he cannot prevent me from seeing the soldiers. It's a soldier's right to have a welfare NCO whom he can meet, and not limit her time, just as you cannot keep him from seeing a mental health officer. It's the law. I knew my instructions inside-out. (...) Anyway, there's no room for this as far as the commanders are concerned, and I also understand why. Listen, today I can tell you I understand this. If the commanders were to give this free rein, obviously things would change. Obviously, if they were to give the soldiers legitimacy to think about their action and look for the meaning behind it, I assume many people would be against such actions. Not everyone. When he tells me "You're turning my men into cunts," his subtext is this: If you don't shut up, I'll lose control. I will no longer be able to command them. They would no longer be combatants. They will no longer be able to carry out missions. That's my own interpretation of his telling me: Don't you turn my men into cunts. What are you turning them into? What is this bullshit? What is this crying about? What is this 'what are you feeling' stuff? It was what it was, war, casualties, nothing to do about it. We're not asking questions, it's not our place to ask questions about what we do. And I quote: "It's neither the question nor the non-question, what

we're doing here. It doesn't matter. It's the army, the army is the arm..."

He parrots to me a whole manifest about the role of the army as the arm of the government and all that shit. What is shit? On the one hand it's not. Clearly we're not in a position to afford total chaos where anyone who feels like it can come along and ask questions. But it's absolutely legitimate for them to think about what they're doing.

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## Testimony 57

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/Medical Corps | **Location:** South Hebron Hills

We were summoned after an exchange of fire, on some hill on Road 60 heading towards the Otniel settlement. I remember this location. We drove there with the ambulance and a doctor and a regular vehicle. All the who's who of the regional brigade arrived. It was some wanted man, an armed insurgent who had fought to the very last moment, hid behind some rock on some hill. We went up there, the doctor checked him immediately. Moved him, touched his wound, established the cause of death. We took him down on a stretcher, put him inside the ambulance. I was sitting there with a medic facing me and the body between us, covered with a blanket. We drove to brigade HQ. There, first thing, he reached the infirmary, near the toilets. The brigade intelligence people came around, took some pictures for the Shabak. Their orders were... Yes, clean him up in order to hand him over to the DCO to give his body back to the Palestinians. After having photographed and identified it and all the rest. Yes, I and several other medics who were reluctant at first, I had told them it was optional, if you want to, help me, if not – just stay in your rooms but make sure no one peeks out. We will not have a jubilant crowd in the infirmary. We cleaned him up. Some people came around, a few ops-sergeants and other interested parties. It was new for all of us, and they photographed him. They took pictures of me next to him, and of me with other soldiers. So there were photos.

**...In general, when you consider your time in the army, in the Occupied Territories, what do you think?**

Depends who I'm talking to.

**What do you mean?**

I mean that if someone who's a stranger to the system, not familiar with the situation comes along and says: You soldiers, you did this and that and the other thing. And I know that on the one hand many of the claims are justified. On the other hand, I don't know. I was there. When I was there, I did not understand. Five years later I still don't understand. I don't know. I don't know. The only thing I have left in theory, as a mantra, is that one needs to talk about it five years later, you see? Something must be said. It is buried so deep inside so many people somewhere.

### **What is Hebron for you?**

Lots of blood. A nightmare.

### **Have you thought about it since? Is it something that keeps coming up?**

'Since' is a long time. There are times. Directly following the army, I was still thinking about it in army terms, in other words, as if I had not yet gotten out. I was employed as a security guard so I carried a weapon and I was in the north, in Metulah, and there was anti-aircraft shelling the whole time. It meant hiding from Katyusha rockets time and again. And I only wanted to erase everything. Later, after a while, it began to pop up again. I would recall pictures. I don't know if it was that or other things, but I think this is a part of it, yes. That suddenly, okay, there's evidence. I mean, no one speaks about it, no one tells. As though it's over. I can talk and talk about washing bodies, but this doesn't interest a soul. It's like those battle-heritage stories. But I have a photo of myself with a body. And I think that at that time, I began to think more about what I did there and why I did it and how I did it.

### **And what's your answer today, to why you did it?**

There's no one smooth answer. It's a combination of many factors - of being unaware, of my immaturity, of extremely heavy responsibility. That one needs to be there all the time, that one cannot let it, cannot think about it. Today you see a body, tomorrow you see a body, day after tomorrow you're treating a wounded man, the day after you hear of ten wounded men. So no, you're there waiting for a phone call any minute that will lead you to the next incident, so you block everything. And that's what happened there as well. You cross the line in Jerusalem, you unload your weapon and that's it, it's over. And no one wants to hear about it, no one even asks you. It's okay. That's the Territories. Everyone knows that something is going on in the Territories, but it's in the Territories. So you let yourself off and say, okay, that was in the Territories. A different world, different rules, different manners.

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## Testimony 58

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

### **Who does the inspections, is it a special assignment?**

The Crossings Inspectors. I can tell you there's enormous frustration, enormous. It's really scary.

### **I'd take it out on someone. My commander or a Palestinian or my boyfriend \*\*\*.**

Often on my boyfriend \*\*\* and on my commander. Commanding these soldiers is not that simple. I know that the Border Patrolmen take out more of their own frustration on the Palestinians. They are armed, it's the easiest way out. The slave with the scepter, kind of. I mean, you have the gun, the Palestinian doesn't. Usually he's holding stuff because he's at the checkpoint since 2 in the morning, and he hasn't seen his wife for three months already and he can't even remember his kids' names. The Border Patrolmen were much more... I must say now, they did have their frustrations, but they took it out especially in making fun of the Palestinians behind their backs, calling them names. There were the things, I don't remember, somehow if I try to reconstruct, I see my soldiers in the Shimshon battalion harassing the Palestinians at the checkpoint, more than the Crossings Inspectors. Again, we're talking about humiliation. Big-time abuse? No. But this is not easier. I mean, if it means grabbing someone's falafel sandwich which he put in his bag, that's both harassment and humiliation. If he took along a falafel at five in the morning, that means he wanted to eat it at ten, right?

Or – by the way, although the Border Patrolmen secured the inspections, I recall times when I went down to the checkpoint and saw Border Patrolmen tearing bags with their hands, so that the Palestinian could then no longer use that plastic bag for the clothes he took along. This might not sound too harassing, I don't know, I think it's horrible. I thought it was horrible then, too.

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## Testimony 59

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Field Intelligence | **Location:** Etzyon Regional Brigade

### **When children threw stones, were you questioned? Did you ever have to**

**testify?**

Yes, once. Because we had no video. If there's video, that's enough. You watch the video and see the stone-throwing and that's enough. If there's no video, someone has to testify.

**What happened then? Is it like the movies?**

No. They (the children who were caught) sat outside and waited for whatever was to be done with them. And I went to talk to some Shabak guy or investigator or however you call it, and that was that. He asked me to write down the whole event as it was, and that was it. Then you have to sign on the dotted line, and finished.

**What did you write?**

What I had seen. But I wasn't sure of what I'd seen, but it did happen.

**What did you see?**

There are all kinds of stone-throwing. Picking up and throwing stones, like I told you, when they're on their way home and they throw a few stones. Then there was this case, where they just threw a stone to make it jump outdoors, things like that, where you can hardly notice. So they were walking along home and played around throwing three stones. They didn't even run away. Then the patrol came. They didn't even run off at the sight of the patrol because it wasn't close so they didn't think they had been seen somehow.

**You wrote that you were uncertain?**

No. I said what I remembered happening and then asked him what happens if that wasn't what happened. And he said that even if it hadn't been, they would confess.

**What did you think afterwards? What did you suppose would happen to these kids?**

First of all I saw them earlier as they were sitting there and it was cold, it was winter in Jerusalem. They were tied, these poor kids. And that was that. What had been done to them before that? I know they were beaten up. What happened to them afterwards? I no longer recall.

**What does that mean, 'they would confess'?**

I asked no more questions.

**Why not?**

First I asked him: What do you mean, they would confess? And he said: They will confess. So I chose not to know.

**He didn't want to say?**

No, I didn't want to hear. I think he was rather eager to talk about it.

## Testimony 60

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

We were the least of all evils, do you understand? Compared to the Border Patrol we were the good guys. Who's there in Hebron on a permanent basis? Sachlav and Border Patrol. They're the only ones – males – stationed in Hebron three years straight. So compared to them we were like the good guys. They were the bad guys.

### **What did you do?**

They would settle accounts in a big way. As for hitting – they were on Jeeps the whole time, less on foot, so they would simply take people into their Jeeps and beat them to a pulp. You'd see a Jeep pass by and a person thrown out of it suddenly.

### **You saw that?**

People thrown out of Jeeps? Yes. Beaten to a pulp. A Jeep drives by and a person is thrown out into the street.

### **What did you think of the Border Patrolmen then?**

They didn't come close to me. They didn't dare get close to my post at all. They hated me, I tell you. Like I said, they enjoyed booing when I was cited for excellence by their own brigade commander.

### **So how did you react when you saw someone thrown out of a Jeep?**

Once a guy was thrown out of a Jeep right next to me, and I pretty much ran over to him and the soldier who was with me said: Don't touch him, don't touch him, they have all these skin diseases. That's what he yelled at me from a distance as I was running over to a man lying on the ground. Nothing, I poured some water on his face and left him my canteen, that's what I did. No more than that. I didn't summon anyone. I didn't call an ambulance. Nothing. And he got up and ran away. Took the water.

### **Was there a case where you thought: I'll have no more contact with the Border Patrolmen because of what they did?**

No. My quarrels with the Border Patrolmen were on a personal basis, I mean, get away from here, don't stand around my post, move on. They would come along and check someone right next to me, say, and do it a bit more brutally: move over here, get a shove, move over there, stand here, when I'm checking you, you've got

to stand with your face to the wall, stuff like that. Stand on your knees while I'm checking your ID, that sort of thing. And I was there saying this is my post, I'm the commander here, you're not going to check anyone in my post. This way, right in their face, I'd go over to a man and tell him: Get up. They would say to him: Get down. I'd tell him: Get up. They'd say: Get down. We'd drive that person crazy, and then I'd start yelling at them to split.

**How are the Border Police humiliations different from yours, if you were the good guys?**

Ours weren't that extreme. Ours were, say a guy would get fresh with us, we'd punish him. With us it was more like punitive action. They were about dominance. That was their thing. They come around to show who's in charge: first of all get down on your knees when you talk to me. Like, not everyone, but yes, it was like that. That's what I'm saying, we would be more punitive, they were all about taming, educating, I don't know, whatever you want to call it.

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## Testimony 61

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Hebron

I came to Hebron many, many times, and when I was told I would be assigned to Hebron I came fully motivated, I took it as a compliment to be assigned to handle this difficult population. I was a bit scared, a bit stressed because it's Hebron, and everything that is being said about this town, I mean, the fear thing. And Border Patrolmen, too, can be quite a problematic population, quite threatening at times. But I was welcomed, that's the point, it was like I was welcomed. Have you been at the Mishmarot Yitzchak base? You actually see Baruch Goldstein's tomb from the base, you have to cross this hill, right across from the tomb. We weren't allowed to go there, not allowed to get close. Now I was there for the first time. In uniform. Yes, it was forbidden. I would be eating at the meat-sandwich stand and not go over to look.

**Why?**

Because it was not allowed. As a soldier or Border Patrolwoman, I don't recall if regular army were allowed to approach, but for us Border Patrol it was out of bounds. So people in uniform would not be seen at this site of the "saint" Baruch Goldstein.

Anyway, the guys received me with open arms but that's between individuals. At critical moments they always waved me off, wouldn't let me get close to things really, not to know. That's why I really wanted to go and see things, because they were always rounding corners, hiding things. You'd ask questions, they'd answer you to a certain point. And there was always this: You wouldn't understand, and you don't know because you don't do the alternating eight-hour shifts here. And you don't do the sixteen-eight hour shifts.

**You said there was talking to a certain point, and then you thought: I've got to go to the checkpoint, to the detention site, to more places in order to get a better idea? Did you know what that extent was that they were talking about?**

They had been there, and I was the newcomer. I also think that a lot of the reactions of Border Patrolmen I saw now, when we were in Hebron now, really reminded me of that time back then, because you're walking along felling that on the one hand you really want to do something and you feel that... the guys really liked us – me and the welfare NCO – and as soon as I made it clear to myself, the moment I got to Hebron and to the Border Patrol, I realized this was not going to be anything like we learned in our training, there was nothing of that here, you simply can't educate anyone here like this. So I thought, okay, just personal talks, with the company-commanders as well. Like, go make local, specific bulletins. I'm a person who believes that one by one by one by one – eventually I will affect them. It was important for me to give them a good time too. I realized this from the very start. I remember that on the day when these settlers tried to run me over, literally, at the curve of the road near Kiryat Arba, I was crossing the street and they couldn't care less, then I thought: wait a minute, suddenly I felt as if they were repeating their egg-throwing on army Jeeps and all those stories about what the Jews do to them and how the Jews...

**And you felt you understood?**

Yes. And when I got to that point I said: Okay, so you realize how problematic this is, you can't even begin to imagine it when you just see them. Often I'd go down to the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and there was no one to drive us back up so we'd stay stuck there, me and the welfare NCO, for two hours, three. You hang out there, it's cool. You hang out at the various posts or sit at - it had a name, I don't remember what they call that little part, this little war-room up there, but it had some name. And you suddenly realize you could go crazy there, you're there, these settlers swear at you from every direction, and the Palestinians too give you a hard time. I understood this and at that point I really tried to give them a good time. Take them to Massada.

I'll never forget that, explaining Massada to the Border Patrolmen.

### **Why?**

Because they live in another world, what can you do, they live in another world. I had a group of people many of whom I met later in the army prison. It was a problematic population. These are people who, first of all you've got everything there. As though Hebron and its problems isn't enough trouble as it is, all the people there were with problems of their own. New immigrants with problems, Druze, Beduins, all mixed together. And there were always those Ashkenazis (Jews of European origin) who no one really knows what they're doing there.

### **You were considered Ashkenazi?**

Not I, I'm half Yemenite and everyone knew that. I'm half-half. But that's what I'm saying, for them I was the girl. They called me 'Sunshine,' I was blond-blond then. I'd hang around them smiling to one and all. And at critical points, at certain moments they shared stuff with me, but when they realized I think differently because I can't really understand what it's like for them, they would clam up or disappear or just not cooperate.

### **Do you know now what drew that line there?**

One simply has to go through the experience, as is. To be there for the whole alternating eight-hour shift and then talk. Spend a month or two doing eight-eight shifts and then talk about what it's like to be in this situation. The fact that I made the rounds in the posts – cool. Every week on Thursday afternoon, I'd be on my way home and they would stay there all week. I'd come back on Sunday morning or noon, I had to be there by 12 o'clock, and you see their faces and say: Wow, what can you say, what can you say to make them feel better than they're feeling now? Most of them have endless problems at home. They are barely managing to survive this week and get home and make it to next week.

### **And what happens in between? Stories of slapping, looting?**

All the time.

### **And you let them off?**

No, I kept saying, I tried to say my stuff without sounding patronizing. That's what, say, I kept trying all the time. So there were those who would wave me off pretty fast, whenever we'd get to these topics they'd go onto to other things, but at these specific points it would always end up with 'You don't understand, you don't know, there's no other way to do things here.'

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## Testimony 62

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

In Charish there was this famous story about Baq'a al Gharbiyya, actually in the two Baq'as where soldiers trashed stands and stole cell phones.

### **What that, trashing stands?**

Vegetable stands.

### **That's a shop. Going into a shop and trashing it?**

Sometimes the stand is outdoors, like watermelons or something.

### **In town?**

Yes, in town, sometimes on the main street. That happened.

### **Why trash them?**

Because the owner employed an illegal (a Palestinian illegal working in Israel), to teach him a lesson. Or all kinds of goods when vehicles are inspected, so the goods are trashed. There's a lot of goods and vegetables passed along, so that's trashed. What would he do? Or just little humiliations, throwing his ID on the floor so he has to bend down and pick it up. There's the 'honor games,' which could start little with throwing an ID on the ground and reach the point of trashing a whole stand. What could he do? He employed an illegal, I'll trash his stand, he'll complain about me, he'll have to admit he employed an illegal.

### **People didn't come back to the base with loot?**

Again, in our situations, especially out of those plastic bags. But still, it could be toys, or batteries in packs of 20, not bad. So yes, it's looting, and for such a kid it's a lot of money. "What a cool toy, I'll bring it to my kid sister. Now, beat it!" At times, generosity was at its peak: "Wow, what a toy, you give it to me, I let you in." You know this stuff, letting them into Israel in return for something you wanted from their stuff.

### **Did they offer straight away, those kids?**

Yes.

### **How did guys react to this?**

They went for it. They would make fun of these kids. The kids who offered were those who didn't want the contents of their bag to be scattered on the ground. So 'Come see what I got in here instead of throwing it all on the ground.' Also, you throw everything on the ground, and "Come on, you got three seconds to gather it all up again. Okay, out with it, once more."

### **What happened if they wouldn't?**

What happened if they wouldn't? They'd get slapped around or have their stuff

thrown out again and they'd be forced to run off without it.

**Leave their stuff and go?**

Yes. "What you manage to pick up, you take, and now off with you."

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Testimony 63

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Mevo Dotan

I recall once, this was after we moved to Mevo Dotan, to the base there, some Palestinian was sitting on a chair and I passed by several times. Once I thought: Okay, why is he sitting here for an hour? I feel like spitting at him, at this Arab. And they tell me: Go on, spit at him. I don't recall whether anyone did this before I did, but I remember spitting at him and feeling really, like at first I felt, wow, good for me, I just spat at some terrorist, that's how I'd call them. And then I recall that afterwards I felt something here was not right.

**Why?**

Not too human. I mean, it sounds cool and all, but no, it's not right.

**You thought about later, or during the act?**

Later. At the time you felt real cool.

**Even when everyone was watching, you felt real cool.**

Yes, and then sometimes you get to thinking, especially say on Holocaust Memorial Day, suddenly you're thinking, hey, these things were done to us, it's a human being after all. Eventually as things turned out he was no terrorist anyway, it was a kid who'd hung around too long near the base, so he was caught or something.

**A child?**

An adolescent.

**Slaps?**

Yes.

**Blindfolded and all?**

Yes. I think that at some point no one even stood watch over him.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 64

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

There was another Border Patrolwoman with me. Again, we're talking about women so I think the women combatants are more violent than the guys. There was this Patrolwoman with me, let's say we were managing an observation post, on some hill near this patch of trees. And the kids came along with their bags and she called out to them: "Come here!" So they came, they climbed the hill. She opened their bags and found this kind of fly-swat inside. So she goes: "Okay, up and down the hill in ten seconds." Again, they're scared. You see those kids, what, they'll dare to refuse? So he ran, went down, came up. Now, he tried to do it with a smile. He tried, I don't know, to be like a kid and believe she was human. So she tells him: "Now do this with your fingers, squeeze them together." I don't know how to explain this, like signaling someone to wait a second, with the fingertips all together – boom! She hit him there with that fly-swat. The kid began to cry. She said, "What, you're crying? Off with you, run again, down, up, if you don't make it in time, you'll get beaten up." She hassled him about five times. Finally she says to me: "Well?" I said, leave him alone, let him get away from here. Pretty soon, I understood that talking to them – I got it? Again, what is it that I finally got? I was scared, and I didn't feel that if I came and told them listen, this is out of line, it wouldn't interest anyone and wouldn't change a thing. It's not that I can come tomorrow, and I'm not saying, maybe the regional commander, if I went to him he'd take care of it. But later, I couldn't reach any one of the companies on the ground, and I had no access to the regional commander.

### **Why no access?**

Why? I had to go by the company-commander first. I always tried their language: No, let them go, leave it alone, I can't deal with this. All sorts of things, as if I'm not concerned with the people's condition, just that it's below me to even deal with them. Sometimes it worked, other times it didn't. There were guys with whom I felt more able to talk and reach some kind of understanding, and that they were acting this way to conform to their environment, because everyone else was like that, and with a little talking this could change. And there were the guys whom I told: Listen, why are you beating up this kid, tomorrow a Hamas member will catch him and tell him to come, and take revenge on that soldier. Why shouldn't he? If you treat this kid well, I'm not telling you to let him in, he's not supposed to go in? Send him home. But treat him like a human being, so he won't want to blow himself up on you tomorrow. There were guys who did listen, not everyone on the force are like all they do is beat

up Arabs. But there was definitely that atmosphere and it was totally routine.

### **Patrolwomen, too?**

Also.

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## Testimony 65

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

They would ask the Palestinians for cigarettes or Coke in return for... Because they'd see the people, in those good old days they knew the people, they would see them time after time and again. They would be working 8-hour shifts: "You want to pass tomorrow? Bring me a pack of cigarettes."

### **That was the norm?**

Cigarettes, food. That's what I know about. It was the norm. They weren't ashamed to talk about it, on the level of cigarettes and food. But my brother, when he was posted at the checkpoint as an inspecting soldier, securing there, he came there from Military Investigative Police and filed a complaint with the chief complaint officer of the army. When he got out of there after one month of security assignment, he complained. You can get a copy of the letter he wrote. It was much more serious because he was checking not at the normal checkpoint, it was where trucks were being inspected, a checkpoint that was already closed when I was in the army. It was serious, passing goods and trucks, inspecting these huge lorries. Not the people themselves. There was real bribery going on there, much more serious than where we were. That was already dealing with cargo.

### **They did it next to commanders or officers?**

No, not next to commanders and officers.

### **So where would they put the packs?**

No, first of all it took place on night shifts. Besides, it was fun. You go down to the checkpoint and your bullet-proof vest has "Death to Arabs" written on it. Stuff like that. So you go down, and you tell them, depending on the pressure at the checkpoint, that you haven't time for that bullshit because your commanders are near you so go on, get this through. You can't begin to negotiate with them now. But at slower times, or when they come back slowly, when things are quieter, we would be watching how

many people were coming through, what the situation was like. In quieter times, the guys told me they would really have a laugh, pull practical jokes, pretending they were tearing up their permits but not really doing it, just hiding them. The whole gamut of things you can pull on someone to humiliate him. I don't remember. But mainly I do recall how everyone would talk about the loot he'd bring back from the checkpoint. It was very much like that, with girl crossings-inspectors too. Yes, most of them were girls. Anyway, about sweets they demanded. Anything you wanted. You could ask more or less anything you wanted and the next day he knew that if he wanted to be let through, he'd have to bring you. Someone asked for a pack, another would ask for a carton. It's not about money, I never heard anyone asking for money. That's it, and I can hardly reconstruct the jokes, I don't remember that much, but there were a lot of those, and everyone was laughing, smiling about them when they talked. Because it's boring there, so you laugh it up at the checkpoint.

### **No one would say, come on, that's not nice?**

The Arabs are the enemy. The more you make them suffer, the better.

### **Why?**

Didn't I explain why? Because first of all, if I'd say something I'd be left with no friends, I think. Really, I'd have no friends. People on the base didn't like me too much as it was, they couldn't figure me out, I was too weird for them. They couldn't figure out this service year I did before my army time. They didn't know what that was. Anyway I was a strange bird among them. But really, talk was very strong on how we're here... Look, for everyone, including the commanders, it was very obvious: we're here facing an enemy, and we're in danger and that's why we have to do the job as best we can. Okay? That's the basic reasoning, right? Now, practically speaking, you don't have an enemy at Erez Crossing, these are only poor people passing through every day and you know them and you see how miserable they are. Their clothes are torn and all they have in that bag are this flatbread and yoghurt, and even that you order him one day to throw away because "we're on alert today." There were always special instructions: now you're not allowed to go in with oregano, now no flatbread, not this, not that.

### **Who would issue these instructions?**

My commander.

### **Not the government.**

That's right. But today, I recall a meeting where I asked him: Why not let them in with oregano? They all have it, not just this guy. "Forbidden."

### **So, the soldiers just took out the oregano...**

Picked it out, put it on the side. Then bring it to the base. Not cool?

\*\*\*

## Testimony 66

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Training Base

When I came to Nahal Battalion 50 as a young NCO, I arrived at \*\*\* and no one was on the base, the whole battalion was in Qalqiliya on some mission, and when they came back it was the first time I saw them all. I walked around among the various companies, all smiles and happy, and talked a bit with the soldiers and saw that almost all of them have these Arabs' prayer-beads, and little Qurans. I asked them, where do you get these? They said, what do you mean? We were in Qalqiliya just now, we took souvenirs from houses. So I, young female-soldier that I am, go in for an interview with the battalion-commander the next day, and he asked me: What is your first impression of our battalion? I said, okay, except that I saw soldiers with prayer-beads and Qurans from Qalqiliya which they took as souvenirs. He got annoyed, almost threw the table, picked up the phone and called the company-commander in question that very moment. So the company-commander said: I never saw this girl in my life, she's lying, making it all up. No way, my soldiers would never do something like that. He hands me the receiver, I tell him: Listen, this happened. He says: Who are you anyway? You little runt, you don't understand a thing. He was really yelling at me. And that was that, I came out from the battalion-commander's office and from that moment on that company ignored me, for four months I couldn't go near them. The company-commander passed it on down through his chain of command, that the education corps NCO is a rat and she rats to the battalion-commander, and at that time that's how I was treated. Four months I couldn't get near that company, for any purpose whatsoever, even for work. I remember we finally had to collect pictures of soldiers for a battalion evening, and this company refused to pass their pictures on to me because I was a rat-fink, they spat at my feet for having told the battalion-commander on them. That was a serious shock, right when I arrived there.

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## Testimony 67

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Sachlav | **Location:** Hebron

There was this one single time I harassed an Arab brutally. I threw his car keys into a garbage truck that just happened to pass by. There was this thing, when I just got to the company there were guys who wouldn't share guard duty with me because I kept saying about everything: this should go to the army spokesperson. You go on like that, I'll call the army spokesperson, I don't care, you're not going to slap this person while you're next to me. Such stuff, like really extreme. They were, if I went to the bathroom for a second, someone would go with me, and when I got back there would be someone inside the armored booth as if they're questioning him on something. So I'd open the door and make some noise to make them leave him alone. There were lots of soldiers punishing Arabs. You were out walking during curfew. I'm going to punish you.

### **For example?**

Making them stand facing the wall, such stuff. Like punishments in school. A guy forces a 50-year-old man to stand in the corner, as punishment. Stand there with his face to the wall, looking. It was very common to punish them for things they had done. A guy showed his ID, we'd check on radio, he's clean, nothing on him. Then we'd start harassing him. Tell him we didn't get an answer on him, start emptying your pockets, stuff like that, just because the guy pulled a face, rolled his eyes. Punishment. You didn't speak nicely, we'll punish you. Really... So this Arab came along and he was very, he was driving during curfew and tried to explain that his mother had needed this medicine and he was going to get it for her and this and that. So I said to him: Okay, but stop. He drove on. Stop! The soldier with me already cocked his gun, and I said: What are you, crazy? Why are you cocking your gun at him? Then this man came out of his car, like: Nothing, nothing. The soldier said to him: Give her your keys. So he gave me the car keys and I don't know what happened then and we said he couldn't keep driving, so he got really annoyed and came to grab the keys from my hand. I reacted instantly - a garbage truck was just passing by there - I simply went like that and threw the keys into the garbage truck and it drove away.

### **Did he get angry?**

Angry? He stood there, looking at me like this. He didn't show anger. He just stood there. So I said, bye-bye. You can't drive like that anyway. And only afterwards, when I got back to the company and the guys were taking turns on that car for days and

nights on end.

### **What do you mean?**

The soldier who was with me asked the soldiers at the outpost to stop the garbage truck, and they got the keys out. That person walked away, he left the car, closed it, locked it like that and left. So we had the key, and the soldiers would drive it nights. All the soldiers there already knew that this is a car driven by soldiers, even though it's a Palestinian car.

### **Who knew?**

The soldiers at the posts knew we were driving that car around. We had a girl-soldier without a license and they tried to teach her to drive on that car.

### **So you throw the key and the whole company takes turns driving.**

The whole time we were thinking that as soon as the guy would come back to get his keys, reach the post or something, someone would know it was he. But the guy never came back. Every night the soldiers rode around and then parked the car across from that same post, and no one came to get it.

### **How did it end?**

How did this end? We brought the car to the police.

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## Testimony 68

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

From where I am I can say that I often found out, soldiers would annoy me because they wouldn't follow certain instructions we gave them. There were many cases where say we'd ask them to let someone go and they wouldn't. I was making those women wait anyway, at least for a while. My shift was eight hours long, and I'd make them wait for eight hours.

### **Eight hours just waiting?**

At least. The way my commander would put it, how long – at first I'd call him, say I went on duty at six in the morning, I'd wait for him to get up, you don't wake up your commander because some woman wants to cross. Why did I get HQ on the phone? Because it was someone with whom there was some problem – someone, male or female, who had some kind of trouble. They had a permit to enter Israel, but I don't

know, now it's orange-colored and not whatever, some permit, some problem with the permit, right? So it's six in the morning, I'm not going to wake up my commander right? Anyway I'd have to wait a few hours until he gets up and is available and I can ask him. So that's already a few hours waiting. And then he asks me: "How long has she been waiting?" Four hours. "Four hours? Before she has waited for six or seven hours, don't even bother talking to me." That's procedure. Don't even bother talking to me. Six-seven hours at the least.

### **People used to wait even longer?**

That's what I'm saying, when the shift changed, if I started at six in the morning and finished at two in the afternoon, an eight-hour shift – I'd tell the shift coming in to replace me: That one, and this one, they've been waiting since we opened the checkpoint at five in the morning.

### **And the next shift would let them go?**

They'd check what to do with them, let them in, keep them out, take them to the Shabak for questioning, what to do with them. There are all kinds of possibilities. It's like goods. You take it, you pass it along. We'd talk IDs. What's your ID? You know how it is. What's his ID number. They are not considered human beings. And lots and lots of cases, our operations log, filled every few days, would be full of things whose meaning we just didn't get. That's all that log was. I think we never even gave it a thought. I don't know that maybe they were warm. I don't know, we never gave them a second thought. It was simply the least important thing on our minds. We were told: This guy you take care of last.

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## Testimony 69

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Allenby Bridge

There was this case inside the lobby for Palestinians (at the Allenby Bridge Terminal), someone once came up with a knife. This case really offended all the security personnel at the Bridge. What do I mean? Someone came back from Jordan, a Palestinian, and he had a knife on him. You're looking indifferent, but this guy had a knife. When I say it like this, I mean this was an exceptional case. Alarm was on, we were thrown back to the dining hall, it was most unusual. The moment they saw

that knife... All hell broke loose. Even Ali at the kiosk was startled and everyone started yelling, and this guy was beaten to a pulp. He was left there on the chair, bleeding. We couldn't look at it. He was left there. He wasn't even taken in for some medical care, into a sterile room. He was left out there. What finally came up? At the Shabak questioning apparently they learned that this guy did not come to Israel on any terrorist mission but to kill someone for a 'family honor' issue.

**Who beat him to a pulp?**

The security guys. That's what offended security means. When I say they were offended, lost face. I mean, you have to get my semantics. I'm being sarcastic, right? I'm talking about the very disappointing case of the Shabak. What a downer. Finally something happens at the Bridge, and it turns out not to be terrorists.

**Did you ever lodge a complaint about something that happened there?**

No.

**To the commanders?**

No.

**Why not?**

Because I thought it was all legitimate. I wasn't important. This case shocked me. The case I saw with my own eyes, a person lying there on the chair, all bloodied.

**Didn't you think he should get some medical attention?**

Listen, nobody really paid any attention there to what I or other girls thought, like if we'd come and challenge the status quo. No way. I mean this is army, simple, this is an army thing. I was working with civilians and all, but as soon as I'd go to my company-commander and tell him: Listen? No, it didn't cross my mind at the time. The only thing I did think of was to behave a bit differently than the people who were with me and show some empathy. But it wasn't something I thought about at all. We were pretty scared. We were even excited with this fear, you could say.

**What do you mean?**

We'd say: finally some action here. We're going off now, hiding somewhere... It was pretty, I mean, it wasn't like the real checkpoints where you guys served, I told you.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 70

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Golani Infantry Brigade | **Location:** General

### **You spoke of passing around photos of bodies. In what format, cards?**

No, a photo album.

### **Did you actually see this album?**

It wasn't secret or anything. It was lying around in the dorms.

### **Did you take a look?**

Yes.

### **What did you see?**

Dead terrorist bodies.

### **Who took these pictures?**

The soldiers who were present at the event. You open an album, you see a terrorist's head, you see the body of a terrorist, you see him at the same incident from different angles, you see pictures of a soldier holding the body, the head.

### **How do people refer to it? Get me "the album"?**

No. You're turning it into something much more grand that it really is.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 71

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/Medical Corps | **Location:** Hebron

### **Is there anything that embodies your memory from there?**

Yes, the body. I had more than one body. I've examined and checked and looked into this and I'm not done yet, but there's this one incident of many, nothing special about it. I was washing a body. Who's going to hear this? It's not something that... The people I told, who are close to me, appreciated knowing we return the body of a wanted man who was shot in an exchange of fire, he did something, a terrorist or – never mind, he reached you at the infirmary and your job, a 20-year-old or 19-year-old girl, was to clean him up and get him into some respectable shape for his family. Very humane of us. Aesthetic. So you find yourself in this position, trying to explain that it isn't, but people don't want to hear. It's your own private business. They don't

seem to care.

### **Because?**

Because, how can you explain this. I know now that if someone says: yes, this is our army, very nice, it's a humane gesture to return even the body of a terrorist so aesthetically treated. But it was a Muslim, right? and if a woman touches him that is already a desecration of the dead. That's one aspect of it. There are many others. And personally, you look at your hands every morning and say: Wow, you washed him all over...

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## Testimony 72

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Oketz | **Location:** Nablus

Some of the Arabs there brought us sweets or coffee, not that the soldiers asked for it or anything. They just came, they had some and they brought it, and it didn't seem extraordinary in any way. Although, I don't know, it may have been wrong.

### **Were there soldiers who took advantage of this?**

This thing with cigarettes, I saw soldiers doing that. Maybe. Several occasions where cigarettes were taken, specifically.

### **Prayer beads? Watermelon?**

Yes, there were such cases, with goods and stuff.

### **Can you talk about a specific case?**

No, because it was a routine thing. It happened several times, here, there. It was nothing extreme, not like they asked for anything way-out, not really taking advantage. But little things, plenty. I especially remember cigarettes, more than watermelon and such.

### **Cigarettes were an everyday matter?**

Yes.

### **When we went public with our photo exhibit and told our stories, the army spokesperson said these things do not happen.**

They do. I've seen them happen. I've seen such things happening.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 73

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** General

I think a barrier went up. I can't say I didn't have the guts for this, I don't think it was guts, but I just wasn't able to hit people. I pretended it amused me, the hassling and all. But I constantly tried to find a way to avoid it. Laughing, saying okay guys, now let them go. It's gross, come on, get them out of here. I didn't try to come out, I didn't dare show that I found it a terrible thing to do.

### **What were you afraid of?**

Being 'dissed.'

### **Was there a physical threat as well?**

There would be a physical threat had I told on them, sure. Once a guy came to me specifically and said: "Listen, if you rat on me, I'll take you down too."

### **For what?**

I don't remember. He came up to me one day, very annoyed. At that point, already, whenever the slightest thing happened in the company, guys would come to me with "You ratted on us, you ratted on us." I wish I had had the guts to do so. What frustrated me most there was that if I already had the reputation of a rat-fink, at least I should have had the guts to do it. But I didn't. I had neither the guts nor did I believe this would change anything. (...)

### **What had happened to suddenly tag you as a rat-fink?**

There were a few guys in the company who disliked me. Again, even my being a kibbutznik played a role, and they must have noticed I wouldn't cooperate, that I wasn't taking part in bashing Palestinians. I suppose they did worry that I'd open my mouth.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 74

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Jenin

While I was in Jenin, I was on a patrol with three other guys, and we knew that

a demonstration protesting the 'Separation Fence' was planned, organized, and coordinated with the DCO. We were briefed that they were allowed to demonstrate, may not destroy the fence, that we must keep them away from the fence. We had a briefing with the regional brigade-commander. Which is an army briefing of course, this was an activity coordinated with the army, and he said explicitly not to use any crowd-dispersal means unless we get official confirmation. I was with the squadron-commander who some months earlier had shot that kid, yes. Shot a kid on a bicycle riding near the fence. (Earlier in the interview, the interviewee told about an incident where soldiers of her unit shot to death a boy who ran away from them on the Palestinian side of the fence.) He remained squadron-commander. In a while I'll explain how, but there are things that – after certain things happen, you can't remain a squadron-commander. Anyway, we were on patrol, and suddenly we heard that they're already reaching the fence and we have to get there, from within, from inside the Territories, reach the fence. We got there as fast as we could, and I was loading rubber bullets and everything as we drove. Okay, we get there and the squadron-commander, behaving like a good boy after all the trouble he had got into previously, asks for confirmation to use crowd-dispersal means. In the meantime they get to the fence and begin to tear at it. The deputy brigade-commander had just gone out for coffee or something. We're sitting in the Jeep, and on the other side of the fence were army guys, probably from the DCO, yelling at us: "Do something, do something!" Finally it took a few minutes – three or five minutes – until we got our okay to use crowd-dispersal. From our company-commander. The deputy brigade-commander didn't respond. So we got out and he threw a concussion grenade towards the fence, and it didn't go off. That happens. So just to get some attention, because they more or less ignored us, he shot one bullet in the air, really in the air, and then threw a teargas canister. Then they really let go of the fence and went back a bit. Another patrol arrived by then, intervened and helped push them back. Then at some point we really got them back with teargas, I didn't shoot any rubber bullets. He gave me an order, I jumped in. I would have shot rubber only if stones had been thrown at us. Only if there were any real danger would I have shot rubber, aiming at legs. Again, this really highlights the difference between the two companies. But yes, I was at standby. They were pushed back mainly by shooting in the air, 180 degrees in this case.

### **Live ammo fired in the air?**

Live in the air, and teargas. They moved back and then guys came to us and yelled at us for not using physical force and not shooting rubber ammo. They did manage to get six of the demonstrators who got within a meter of the fence. We had them

moving back, and again, we were on standby and didn't shoot anything. But that squadron-commander was downgraded because he didn't function properly.

**What do you mean?**

He didn't push off demonstrators fast enough.

**But you said it took three minutes.**

No, we got our go-ahead after three minutes, but it took us some more minutes to push them away. But the fact that he waited, that he didn't act right away, never mind instructions. That was a reason to downgrade him, unlike the fact that he had killed a Palestinian boy.

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Testimony 75

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant

**Unit:** Hebron Regional Brigade/Medical Corps | **Location:** South Hebron Hills

There was this confiscation of IDs. At Yatta Checkpoint or...

**Which you took part in?**

Re-enforcing roads was something every part of the brigade did, to show more presence. This was in the days of brigade-commander Dror Weinberg. Basically girls did not take part in this, but since the medical corps staff there had no officer besides the doctor and he didn't do this kind of duty, it was beneath him, I got a special okay from the brigade-commander to do it, myself and a few other medics, and an ambulance crew. We stood at the Sheep Junction, Elias Junction. 4-6 hours of road-blocking every time. By order of brigade-operations. Sometimes orders were to prevent passage of any Palestinian vehicle, or to check IDs, to pass along every suspect vehicle's number to operations, make sure the driver wasn't wanted. You do what you're told because you're no expert, you say a number and you're told: get his ID, make him cut the engine, and take his keys. And that's what you do. He stands there until your shift changes and you leave his stuff with your replacement. I don't know what and how, but I remember that when I got out of the army I still had some two or three IDs in my gear that I hadn't even noticed... There were such checkpoints, especially at Sheep Junction, where people passed from Yatta to Hebron, to the market. With carts and the elderly and children and everyone, whole

families. And there too we had to check every single ID, check their gear. And there too it wasn't standard procedure, at least not in my medical corps unit, but I recall at least one case where Muslims' prayer beads were taken. The soldiers asked for them. Or cigarettes, we're out of cigarettes, give us cigarettes. There were a case or two or three, but... that I didn't even notice.

### **Do you remember cases of violence towards Palestinians?**

I remember many stories by Border Patrolmen. Stories I heard from them. They would come in after a long work day, come into the infirmary, the battalion medic had some close friends among them, and they'd say 'listen to what we did today' and told and boasted and raved.

### **To what extent?**

They'd patrol the town, someone would annoy them, so they'd bash the hood of his car with their rifle-butt and throw in a concussion grenade, or catch someone, put him on the Jeep, carry him around town, throw him out at the end and beat him up. Or boys who'd thrown stones, they'd take them to... wherever, to the base, tie their hands with plastic shackles, blindfold them, slap them around, dry them out in the sun.

### **You hear this and do nothing?**

No. I wouldn't like to explain this now or make up excuses. I know myself: I didn't understand what was going on there, at all. Either that or I didn't want to understand. These children would be made to stand in front of the Border Patrol company post, and some Border Patrolman would come along and smack him on the head. This would happen in broad day light with everyone hanging around. It wasn't something that made me think: oh my, what are they doing, perhaps I should say something. Like... It was something I felt or thought to be the norm here. Either that or I wasn't aware enough to say: Okay, this is out of line and I'm going to change it. Or I only cared about my own little corner and my own cup of coffee.

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## Testimony 76

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Hebron

In the Border Patrol that year, a lot of attention was dedicated to human dignity. They

changed the topic, but when I was there this was it – human dignity in the Border Patrol. Lots of lecture guidelines.

**Which you give?**

No, the commanders. That's the whole point. Supposedly, the education corps NCO works behind the scenes to support the commander facing his soldiers. Then you go talk to the commanders and realize there's no point.

**Really? Why not? They're supposed to understand their responsibility, aren't they?**

They would realize it up to the point where they went out into the field. When they were out there, they didn't really understand at all, in spite of being the older and stronger ones. So the company-commander wasn't the one to trash the place and all and didn't shove the father when they came in, but he was there. He saw it happening. (At another point in the interview, the interviewee described a house-search she took part in). He waved me out of the room when I tried to understand what had just occurred, and the situation where they kept going back to the same shop again and again. (At another point in the interview she talked about a shop in Hebron that the soldiers would loot on a regular basis.) He waved me out. He could sit with me for hours over the men's psycho-technical ranking exams (threshold tests for commander training courses in the Border Patrol), that he wanted me to sit over this or that, and this and that, he could answer my questions about that or the other mission, what they do and what they look for, but about this specific point, where he should set a personal example...

**And he would still give that class?**

He would, to get it over and done with. He talks, he says the things I noted down for him to say to them.

**What about setting a personal example?**

That's what I'm saying, there is no personal example.

**You also need to set a personal example. Couldn't you say something of the sort?**

I could. That's what I would say when I talked. The talks I had with the soldiers in the company, if I heard certain things, when certain problems arose inside the company, with a certain soldier at home, I'd go straight away and speak with the junior officers, the platoon-commanders. With the company-commanders I spoke less, but still. I can tell you that the commander of the Border Patrol in Hebron at the time cared about human dignity, that it's really important. But when it comes to facts on the ground, it's all bullshit. People behaved as they pleased.

## **Being out in the field is not just conducting weapon-searches.**

No, it's also standing guard-duty at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where you meet civilian population every single day.

### **How is it shown?**

Disregarding people, shoving them, cursing them. I told you, I saw this picture – now when we were in Hebron – a guy has a shop there or something, he says soldiers picked up stuff, trying to talk to the Border Patrolman, and the guy waves him off. It's exactly the same. Six years have gone by and it's just the same situations I'd see, when the Palestinians came to talk to them and no matter what rank the commander was – yes, yes, nod with their heads and shoo them off. Just like that. You can tell them anything, you can talk about human dignity until you're blue in the face, but in actual fact they only pretend to care, they couldn't care less. Border Patrolmen commanders as well. I think anyone stationed in Hebron longer than... I can't even say how long, but you feel you're going crazy.

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## Testimony 77

**Name:**\*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

### **How many detainees would reach the base every week?**

There was something every day. Any time there was an arrest, and there were lots of those in Hebron. Every day. At any time of day. Any day. That's why it turned...

### **Turned to what?**

It's like in the beginning – I say it as I look back now, recalling the changes I went through – at first you're afraid and then you pass by them as if they're: Yuck! They brought some more in? This never ends? What, them, again? It gets to be like peanuts.

### **Peanuts?**

Something like that, you know.

### **Comes and goes?**

Yes.

### **How long does it take to get used to it?**

Not long. I think it's because it would happen every day, I have these flash memories

of all those events. I remember they once brought in a young woman.

**Shackled?**

No, like that. Brought in by two women-soldiers, to their quarters at Harsina, and our rooms were the first ones there, where I was. We had these four rooms and toilets and showers. So they brought her in, I don't know what her story was. Something, I think someone beat her up at home. She ran away from her father, and she had a knife in her bag. But I do remember that afterwards they told us she ran away from home for some reason, that her father beat her up, it was – well, Palestinians. She was taken to the bathroom and I was asked to go in with her, because I was armed. At first it stressed me out, and I said... no, at first. Straight away, the first thing I said was: Ugh, I'm not going in there with this Arab. No way. After that I also felt a bit, I was a bit scared of her. Like I'm going in there alone with her, to the bathroom, and she came with a knife, and I don't know if the knife was taken away from her or not, it wasn't. And so we're standing there arguing who's going to escort her to the bathroom.

**Who's arguing, the girls?**

Yes. And she stands there waiting, watching us with this strange look, she was really miserable.

**How old?**

I think she was twenty-something. I remember it always started with "Yuck, these Arabs, Ugh, these terrorists."

**Does that change at some point?**

No, that's the way it always was, there.

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Testimony 78

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

**How many girls were you?**

First there were four of us.

**In a company of how many?**

60. This whole thing with girls, the Border Patrol is terribly proud of having female combatants and all. There are many guys, and there's a special problem with, there are a lot of Druze and Beduin guys in the Border Patrol and they have a mentality

problem with the fact that suddenly there are girls who are their equals. In general, some of the girls are squadron-commanders and these guys' superiors. Again, there are guys that have adjusted and have no problem with that. But often it spells trouble, in many situations. So not all of them brutalize people, not all of them are full of hate, but the atmosphere legitimizes such things. And the girls, there was another one with me who wouldn't take part in the fun, so they would pester her no end.

### **Why didn't she?**

She too didn't believe in this. She was sort of a lefty and I guess it was against her principles. There was some story that took place there before my time, but they used to make fun of her because of it, that one day they caught a group of illegals and one of them asked for some water because he had a headache, so she offered him an aspirin. And that became a running joke for at least half a year after I got there. And this incident had taken place before I arrived. Like, what are you doing giving an illegal an aspirin? Next you're going to be taking care of him. That was like the worst disgrace. Such was the general attitude.

### **The officers were a part of this?**

They were really, like it had nothing to do with them. "We don't know that." Like see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing, but it was obvious. Once every few months the company-commander would give this lame speech that he won't tolerate this and that. But they hardly dealt with this, it wasn't a topic of discussion at all, and not for lack of incidents. I mean, if it was the children, or... When it suddenly came up for all sorts of reasons, say like that video (at another point in the interview, this interviewee described a case in which soldiers were filmed brutalizing children), how much did they deal with it? Talked about it for two days and that was that, okay, let's carry on.

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## Testimony 79

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

People's motivation had to be constantly pumped up, this was critical. We had serious motivation problems at the checkpoint, at Erez Crossing. Insane. The number of AWOLs we had there, or I don't know what they're called, when the soldiers ditch the base and go home? A guy runs away, home. And jail, every second person would

go to jail for refusing an order. There was a real motivation problem.

**What orders did they refuse?**

They got sick of working like a dog. There were times they were working four hours and resting four hours. They were slaving away for three years. The soldiers, some of them did three years at Erez Crossing. These are sit-down jobs, without the combat glamour. They go home with nothing, not even some badge to be proud of, just their regional brigade insignia. So that, and slaving away, and being on short leash, and having to clean up for inspection a month before their discharge. No scheduled promotions, no platoon sergeant, like a company of slaves, really. So one had to pump up motivation. How do you pump up motivation? The soldiers would be allowed, the way the commanders put it – I sat in on commander briefings about a year into my time there. Every day the commanders would sit together. And there was this expression: Okay, let the soldiers let off some steam. Let them release a little. Let them take the Jeep, say, without a commander, no mission, just go to some industrial zone and harass the Palestinians.

**What was the Jeep's mission?**

Nothing. The commanders would take it just to make the rounds and often take the girls from operations along – I often rode out with them, or soldiers, whoever he felt like having along.

**So they would let a soldier work off some steam away from the checkpoint?**

**Take him along on a mission?**

No, he'd take the Jeep and he could then drive up to Ashqelon to eat out. Once he'd go for shawarma in Ashqelon, another time he'd go – for example, there was this slight mission to pick up some illegal at Erez and throw him off in Gaza. That's right, illegals would reach us at the checkpoint, they'd come walking. Then he'd have to pass them over a few kilometers over to the other side, to Gaza. Cross that whole huge checkpoint compound. Not inside the crossing. One can also drive around it. So say they let the soldiers take some illegal and drive him over to the other side. Let's say they did it often.

**What other activities for letting off steam?**

Driving around, making the rounds in the Erez Industrial Zone, just for kicks. Look around. Going visiting, like visiting other outposts, it's all the same level, you know.

**Get away from the checkpoint for a while.**

Yes, but say this was the command Jeep. Now the soldiers, what I meant to say about the soldiers at the checkpoint, what happens is that the officer can't stand it any longer either, so he goes up – everyone always wants to leave the checkpoint

and go up to the base. So he leaves someone in charge at the checkpoint, say a sergeant, to be the commander of this huge checkpoint. And then also there's this point that soldiers should also be allowed to exercise their own judgment, because there are officers and commanders there all the time, a whole base right on top of the checkpoint. It's not this godforsaken couple of concrete blocks at some roadside, it's state regulations on this checkpoint of ours. Extremely controlled. So sometimes they step back and say: Okay, let them handle it for a while. Once I spoke to one of the commanders. I asked him why his soldiers were detaining some woman for I don't know how long, many hours. It was nighttime and she had been waiting there since morning. So he said: "My soldiers know what they're doing. Just let them handle it. They know. Let them be." That's what he said. (...) The soldiers were usually clinically depressed, really. They were in terrible condition. They hated their job, they hated being at the checkpoint, they would get drunk at night just to forget they were there and did everything they could to get away every night, to Ashqelon, over the fence, just to get away and not be there for a while.

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## Testimony 80

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

As an education corps NCO of the battalion I did lots of kitchen duty, and on one Friday night dinner, the auxiliary company came back with spoils, I think it was two terrorist bodies, and I recall coming out the dining hall door on my way to my tent, and I saw them holding it, holding the body and getting their picture taken with it as if it were hugging them, they were striking poses for the camera and laughing. There was simply a dead body lying there near the dining hall, where people wash their hands before they eat.

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## Testimony 81

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Golani Infantry Brigade | **Location:** Gaza Strip

### **How was the checkpoint run?**

Forcefully, with a forceful feeling. Drunk on power, control... What is hierarchy at the checkpoint? You always have the more veteran soldier who sits there and doesn't do too much. And there's the soldier who does the actual physical job, usually two of them, at the pedestrian checks. So I wasn't witness myself to brutal or inhuman treatment of people beyond the actual orders, which I don't know how humane they are come to think of it. But on the level of obeying orders – it's control. It's a sense of 'it's my word that counts now and if I say fuck you then fuck you and if you're not polite to me or if I don't like the way you're looking at me, I'll fuck you. And if I want to hang you out to dry here, I will. And let's say someone complains it's too hot in here, or asks what's happening – they make him wait. Like, who are you to talk? You're nothing. It can be just dragging things out, or enjoying actually doing things very slowly and fuck around and pick up IDs and laugh at them or stuff like that.

### **Did they play games at the checkpoint?**

Plenty. What are games? They had games like stretching time. That was really strong. They're sitting there and you have this huge waiting line and the weather is scorching hot. Kisufim Checkpoint is right next to the army post, I'd walk there. So I was walking and I would want to spend some quality time with my soldiers. So through that I'd actually experience what they would be doing. Wasting time. You're not concrete, not professional, it's not like you have some... You've been at the social security bureau, haven't you? There's a very correct way of talking, you can't play around with anything that's irrelevant. At the checkpoint it's not like that. You do what you please. You talk any way you want, you do whatever you want, you exercise your judgment any way you want. Unless there's something extraordinary and then of course you get on the radio, but in general you're your own boss. And that's a pretty intoxicating feeling for an 18-year-old kid who may have had his head bashed in the bathroom, I don't know. It definitely shows.

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## Testimony 82

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Oketz | **Location:** Nablus

### **Did you run into instances of exploiting power positions at the checkpoint – what was that smile, now you'll wait here for four hours?**

Not quite like that, but he did something out of line: today you don't get through the checkpoint, you stay on that side.

### **What does that mean, out of line?**

He didn't listen to the soldiers, he tried to pass although they told him to wait in line, stuff like that which I think is reasonable. Like, I mean, he made trouble – he won't pass. If everyone started to make trouble like that we'd have a problem because still we're much fewer than they are. So that's okay. Something that is just arbitrary, I don't think I've seen. I haven't witnessed such use of force... Confiscating car keys, I have seen that. Also, the Border Patrolmen. But it was for, say, 20 minutes or something like that.

We were at a checkpoint once, also near Nablus, but from another direction, I don't remember what it was called, I was only there once. The guys there were real fanatics. This was Duchifat or Haruv (units constantly in the Territories), I'm not sure which. I forgot their unit name now. I saw the same soldier on the same day saying to various Arabs: Give me a cigarette. Not: Hey, got a cigarette? He'd say: Give me a cigarette. Also making people wait endlessly. There was a case of a guy who would make someone stand and wait. I was there for four hours that day, no, five hours. The first two hours there was someone he made stand aside, like on the vehicle checking lane, he made him pull over and wouldn't let him pass. I don't know why, he was there already before I got there.

### **Did you ask why?**

"He was out of line, so he's standing here." The soldier was playing this big he-man and running the checkpoint.

### **What rank?**

Nothing, maybe a sergeant. A 19-year-old with some authority so he got excited.

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## Testimony 83

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Hebron

I remember coming out of Hebron feeling suffocated.

### **Why?**

You suffocate because you can't take it any longer. On the one hand you've got these, the Jews because of whom you're there, protecting them. I remember the first time I saw Tel Rumeida, and it's nothing when you come to think of it. The Jews live there in such conditions, completely surrounded with Palestinians, and we're there to do it, to watch over them. So on the one hand these are the people who throw eggs and tomatoes at you, curse you and your mother and all, and on the other hand you've got that population and you're supposedly destined to be their enemy. You're supposed to hate them and you're somehow expected to navigate between the two. The commanders, too, no one in Hebron Border Patrol really wanted to be there. No matter whom you talked to. The company-commanders only sought chances for promotion and getting re-assigned elsewhere, they didn't want to be there. No one wanted to be there. So how could you ask some company-commander or platoon-commander to discuss this with his soldiers?

### **But he's there, what can he do?**

Nothing. Pass the time until...

### **How do they pass the time?**

Nothing, look the other way. Say, okay, do it your way.

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## Testimony 84

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

I recall once I thought it was a trifle but I remembered it while watching the film "To See If I'm Smiling." I sat with guys from the auxiliary company, I don't know if they were just back from some mission or something, but we were sitting together, I also liked to sit and listen to their combat stories and be let in on things they did. It fascinated me. If I can't do it myself, at least let me hear about it from the source. So we sat there and they played around with these prayer-beads, and then someone came in

and said: “Hey, look at my loot,” something like that. He either said that or I asked where it was from. I remember asking, and knew that these were prayer-beads. So they said: “From the Arabs.” So I say: What do you mean, from the Arabs? What, you bought them? “No, we took them.” But it’s theirs, I said. “Okay, what do you mean theirs?” As if it was all right. And I thought, no, that’s not all right. It’s theirs, after all. Did they do anything to you, that you took them? “No, we just took them, we always do.” I didn’t know there was such a phenomenon. After seeing that film I suddenly realized, this was a phenomenon indeed. And then suddenly it hooked up, and it’s most weird when I link it to things that happened in the Holocaust, when skullcaps were taken off men’s heads. Come on, this is important, have some respect. But these are the things that make you think it’s okay. When these combatants say it’s okay, and they suffer more than I do, they’re out in the Territories all the time and staying out weekends and all, so what they do is all right.

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## Testimony 85

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

### **Were people creative?**

Again, hassling Palestinians was the creative part of heating up the ground, let’s say.

### **What’s that?**

It’s done a lot in squadron-commander training in the Border Patrol. You stand and have to run in place, mustn’t stop.

### **How do you say it in Arabic?**

They’re addressed in Hebrew. They’re forced to understand Hebrew. You don’t understand me? I’ll hit you.

### **Finally they understand?**

Look, many of them know Hebrew, at least partially, and some of the Patrolmen speak Arabic because there are a lot of Druze and Bedouins on the force, so sometimes they spoke Arabic. But there were quite a few Patrolmen who wouldn’t speak Arabic, even if they did know the simple words for ‘hand over your ID’ which we all knew. “No, I won’t speak Arabic. He’s entering my country, let him speak Hebrew.” Even the simplest things. And really, it was routine. I mean, the specific events I remember

were the one with that kid, and also detaining older people for a long time.

**How long?**

Sometimes for an hour. Sit here for an hour. Stay.

**What do they do while they wait?**

Nothing. Sit.

**Can they let them go?**

They can. But they're passing the time. They don't want to let them go. Lunch is here, wait, we're sitting down to have lunch. You sit here, wait.

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Testimony 86

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

When the checkpoint was closed, demonstrations started. We had a new chief, a deputy battalion-commander. He didn't know the open-fire regulations, so he shot someone in the chest instead of in the legs. He didn't know that our open-fire regulations were specifically to aim at the legs.

**A deputy battalion-commander doesn't know the open-fire regulations?**

They would change every day. They were hard to follow. What are open-fire regulations? We get a call from brigade HQ, and we're told: today the open-fire instructions are to shoot anything that moves, or, today it's at the feet, or whatever... This was a heated time in the region, not necessarily at the Erez Crossing itself, but it affected it us a great deal, everything that went on around us. The checkpoint was a relatively quiet place until the October Intifada began, we didn't feel it yet. And then tens of thousands of Palestinians were barred from entering Israel and people still showed up wanting to get in, to work, so they had to be kept away somehow. And this turned into crowding, and stone-throwing. Or let's say first of all someone threw stones, okay, but it started happening on a daily basis, so snipers were called in. I don't know how far they stood, but they stood there, placed themselves to watch the checkpoint area below, the people. And they kept getting different instructions. Say once there was some confusion even in the snipers' orders. I don't know, yes, it was like this, open-fire instructions, first of all they're not that interesting, because if you keep changing them every other day, no one really pays them any attention.

That distance doesn't look so big. So okay, I can hit and say I was shooting in the air. Understand? It's not that relevant. It's not something that was really right.

### **Did you note down the open-fire instructions?**

We would write them down, in our logs. Too bad I don't have those logs, operations logs. I'd get you piles of them. No, we threw them out. You know, just like, at the war-room. Why waste time? Let's go to the war-room, get out some of those operations logs, it's all written down there, really: this woman waited for so and so hours, a kid was killed, the sniper hit him accidentally, it's all there.

### **A kid hit accidentally, that's how it's written in the log? That goes straight to Military Police investigations.**

Well, no, the record is not that carefully detailed. What they do take trouble about is say, beeper messages. My own commander at the time, in Border Patrol, I once sent in a message, when I was still pretty new there: At the demonstration this morning, our forces, I don't know if they returned fire, anyway they must have done something. Shot somehow because a child was killed, a child was taken down. I don't know if he was killed, he fell. So I wrote down 'a child fell' on that beeper. I sent the message. My commander was furious. He really yelled at me never again to write down 'child.' I said: He was eight years old, that's what the Palestinians said, shouldn't I write 'child'? Of course I didn't use these words with him. But I was supposed to say youth, never 'child.' Since that time, for two years, I never wrote down 'child,' even though children were still getting killed.

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## Testimony 87

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Lieutenant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Hebron

As an NCO in Hebron I'd make the rounds. I'd go in with the patrols to the casbah area, teeming with life, with all its fruit and vegetable stalls, a real market, with heads of oxen and camels and all that stuff. A year later, coming there as an officer, I saw none of that any longer. The casbah was deserted, not one stall open. All those Palestinians' shops, there were no longer Palestinians' shops, everything was shut down. One of the things I most clearly remember from Hebron is graffiti. Everywhere you look there's graffiti, extreme text of one kind or another.

## Testimony 88

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Hebron

I tried to reach them from another place, not the self-righteous one. I tried to make them trust me by showing them that I wasn't that. I would listen, I simply don't recall now but I would listen a lot to their frustrations, their problems, what a downer it was to be stationed in Hebron. To do 8 hour-8 hour shifts running. I thought, and do so now too, that if I had to do it all over again, I think that's how I would choose to act. I was constantly trying to calm them down...

### **Even though it didn't work?**

Yes. I think that had I stayed there longer, I don't believe I would have managed to change much, but perhaps I'd change a little. I told you, every time I see those films, the only thing I want is to be education corps NCO in Hebron once more, and reach these people again, and somehow try to reach them. Again, from a place of, like I say, as soon as I realized how problematic their situation was, I also realized I couldn't change the world, I can't revolutionize anything, you know, on the spot. I could try to reach people in a way that will perhaps make them do things a little bit differently, perhaps they will start thinking. I remember I told the welfare NCO: as far as I'm concerned, it's good enough if they give a thought to what I told them, later. Like, just hear me out, get through this barrier of: you're a girl, you're army, you don't know from nothing. That's why every week I went down to the Cave of the Fathers, so they wouldn't say 'you have no idea what it means to be there, you don't understand, you don't see things with your own eyes.' But in moments when we weren't picked up to return to our base, or had no other way of traveling, and had to stay down there for two-three hours, I'd go crazy. I realized I don't understand a thing. You can think you understand, and you still don't understand, but that's why I think this should be handled very... On the one hand they're placed inside a highly problematic system, and again I think they're in contact with the population which is a problem in itself, it enables them to take out their tensions, they even kept fighting between themselves. Plenty. I keep remembering those you see starting up in jest as it were, but the conduct itself is brutal. Somehow I think man's brutality comes out in the toughest situations. And I think the Border Patrolmen I lived with for half-a-year were people whose very language is violence. They also communicated violently with each other.

Verbal aggression, plenty of dirty talk, and all those slaps and claps on the back, no wonder they always get there and that's what they do. Go down to the post and that's how they behave, for as far as they're concerned it was just an extension of their natural behavior, just taken further. Whether it's the Palestinians or each other. Never in their lives would they beat up Jews.

### **Was there something extreme they said that crossed the line?**

There was no line. No line. There was no line. I'm telling you, if I were able to remember why I say this with such certainty, then it was even more so. But I can't recall. I'm telling you there were no limits. If there was a line, it was individual. Not something dictated.

### **Are there rules?**

The rules are just for appearances. There are no rules. There are would-be rules. I don't remember, I tell you, I remember that situation where he waved me off, because I remember him sitting on the edge of the table and I came to talk to him, I approached, I spoke to him and then: Go on, let it go, like leave me alone with that stuff. And he could talk to me for hours on end, this company-commander, for hours, and all the while I was trying to reach them, having them appreciate me and not regard me just as a girl who came to talk with them. To reach them. In a million other things they could be totally open with me. Talk with them about sex, about their wives, about this or that – no problem. But when it came to raising this subject... I mean, it was very important for them that the soldiers be looked after as far as their welfare status was concerned. But about what happens on the ground...

### **And about the way Palestinians are treated? No talk?**

As I told you, even if Hebron Border Patrol was an assignment no one wanted, as far as they were concerned, they were doing everything because they must. I don't remember any incident investigations that ended up with any conclusions. I recall some investigations that were... I remember reading them in retrospect. I remember I was terribly shocked at how this would happen all the time. How constant these little incidents were. But it's not something that was regarded very...

### **Did this shock wear off at some point?**

Yes. I think that now, in retrospect, I can really think about it. About leaving there feeling suffocated. Think about it, I wasn't there for long, just half a year, it's not a long time. Not for someone who does not do this Sisyphian job day in-day out, okay? When you're living this 8-hour/8-hour shift plan, half a year is a long time. But the fact that you somehow adjust to the stress, to the fear, you get used to it all being so sensitive, to things happening without...

### **So in what shape do you get out of there?**

Mainly want to get away. I just wanted not to be there. I told you, suffocated. When I went back now, if when you're a soldier it feels like home, there's this sense of there being something terribly special for me about the Cave of the Fathers, and I'm not into religion in any way. I mean it energetically, there's something energetically very strong about Hebron. When I came back I recalled how I got out of there feeling only the urgent need to get away because I'm not... because you're put in a position where you just can't do anything.

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## Testimony 89

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Reihan

And then Shaked army base, that's where Reihan is. That checkpoint, there.

### **You were assigned to checkpoints?**

Yes. That's where I also got a real sense of pride, because you see them (the Palestinians) standing there, waiting, while we get to pass through like nothing, walking around among them, see how they're strung out there, while we're free to go.

### **What's there to be proud of then?**

That my lot is better than theirs, something of the sort. I recall that towards the end of my army service, what really made me think twice about this feeling, all this enthusiasm, was that apparently even \*\*\* was the person I asked this question. But there was some operation and they came back and often I'd come to the war-room to hear what was up. Just to hang out with the guys in the war-room, I loved to be in on things. Really. To know what's what, who goes where. Also because the guys from our own group were in one of the companies there, I was always interested to know who was where. So I knew they'd just come back from a mission. I came around and heard they had killed, and got really excited. Even when we were in Beit Lid, still the missions were around Jenin. So I came up to one of the guys and said, asked him: "Did you kill? How many?" And he looked at me sort of startled, and says: "You don't ask such things. What are you thinking when you say this?" Suddenly it dawned on me, I began to think about it, and realized that all this joking around, the way I see it, all this joking about the Arabs and this and that, is perhaps a way to cope. Because suddenly I'm talking with a person who I know with certainty has just killed someone

today, and he doesn't answer me, and only says: what's with you, to be asking such things? I recall saying to him, at first: "Why, what's the problem? Everyone's into this, no? They joke about it and it's cool, so why not tell me how many you killed? Why not take pride in it?" That's what I was thinking, why aren't you proud of this, why aren't you telling us? And he looks at me: "You don't talk about it, you don't ask such questions." Suddenly I realized they don't want to be like this, that this is their way of coping.

### **Did you think about yourself, as well?**

I felt really bad, I felt I was out of line asking such a question, and that this is human lives we're talking about here, all of a sudden, human lives. Not simply Arab, human beings. I remember, not sure if this was before or after, they would catch some kid hanging around outside the base, I recall this was in Dotan. I remember they caught him and brought him in, and eventually he turned out to be just a kid who hung around too much so they suspected him. So suddenly I began to think, hey, wait a minute, not every Palestinian is a terrorist and not everyone has really done something wrong. And after I found out that girl had simply run away from home because something really bad happened to her (earlier in the interview the interviewee told about a detained Palestinian woman whom she refused to escort to the bathroom), all of a sudden I felt really embarrassed, why didn't I help her go to the bathroom, I didn't go with her. Slowly you catch on...

### **Did anything else happen, after this process, which you saw differently?**

I don't remember. I recall that after I asked the guy how many he'd killed and how, I remember I started feeling really bad about the whole situation.

### **What did you want to know, a number? More than that?**

Yes, if he had done it. It seemed cool to be talking to a guy who'd just killed someone.

### **You wanted to know how it felt?**

Yes. I kept asking them questions. They would go out on arrest missions and I'd ask them for details.

### **What details?**

Where did you sleep? I remember they told me, for example, we got into a house, "And what, you spent the whole night there?" Yes, we had to stay there through the night. No, not asleep. So I go, "And where was the family?" And they'd tell me: We had them in another room. They sat in another room. "So where, I mean, you sat on..." No. Say they told me: The battalion-commander didn't let us sit on the sofas so we sat on the floor or something like that. So I remember saying: "What? Why

not? I mean, you deserve it, why not sit on their sofas?" This was during those arrest-missions, that they had killed those guys.

### **In Hebron?**

No. This was already in Jenin. Then suddenly I realized they were calmer than I was. I suddenly felt uneasy. Here it's the prayer-beads they picked up, and there they tell me it's all right to spit at a shackled Palestinian. Suddenly I realize that I'm too extreme and they're okay, like.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 90

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

There were actions in Umm al-Fahm. Inside the town, we made the rounds for a while. Again, that meant suddenly going into a home, with or without official permission.

### **But Umm al-Fahm is Israeli territory.**

So what? It's Israeli, so you have to use more sense, you can't beat them up because they complain to the MaHaSh (Department of Police Officer Investigations of the Israeli Ministry of Justice). That's the only difference. You don't beat up Israeli Arabs because they complain to the MaHaSh.

### **But you enter their homes.**

If you find a good enough excuse, yes.

### **What kind of excuses?**

Usually, we're hunting someone and he's hiding out in your house. But we're more careful over there. Again, we were always going in to local population, but more in Barta'a village, which is a greyer area. It was our opportunity to come in and take stuff and upset market stalls. It happened less, much less, but there was some time when there was also action inside Umm al-Fahm. Meaning we'd drive the Jeep wildly inside the town.

### **As a show of presence?**

Yes, sure.

### **Was that an expression you used?**

Also. (...) Especially driving around at an insane speed, mostly that. Again, it was like fun. How did someone put it? A Border Patrol Jeep coming into town is more

frightening than an army tank.

### **Why is that?**

Look, truth is I saw it later when I got to Jenin. It really was like that, an army tank could move along the street and no one would even turn around, just looked on. When a Border Patrol Jeep entered Jenin, there would be no one in the street. You would think the town was deserted. Once in a blue moon... someone would perhaps throw a stone, but no, not one would dare face a Jeep and really throw stones. Against a tank – sure, what would the soldier do? A Border Patrol man is already someone who wouldn't...

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## Testimony 91

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

There was the child, the most shocking story about a tank-commander, you've got to find him. Anyway, he was sitting there Saturday around noon, that most boring of times, sitting there in 'Magen 12,' in his tank, and some kids threw stones at the tank, which sounds fun, right? Kids throwing stones at a tank. It annoyed him, though.

### **That doesn't exactly jeopardize a tank...**

No, but it annoyed him. So he got on the radio with us: "There are kids here throwing stones." He was expecting some kind of response. That's it. Eventually he did shoot, we heard shots. I remember being surprised at the sound of shooting, because if there is any shooting at 'Magen 12' you hear it at the war-room, although it's a 3-minute drive away. Not adjacent. But you hear. So we did hear shots. We got on the radio to all the companies. The tank fired and the kid fell.

### **He fell?**

Fell. They always 'fall.'

### **He saw him fall?**

Yes. And then he had to be retrieved.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 92

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Nahal | **Location:** Reihan

I remember there was some rioting at Reihan Checkpoint – I don't recall the incident so very well – there was some rioting by Palestinians, and the guys, the soldiers – it was a relatively young company – didn't do anything. They didn't, I don't remember why. Perhaps another unit came along as reinforcement. The battalion-commander arrived, but they didn't do anything. I remember them coming back and hearing talk about why they didn't shoot in the air, this and that. And then I remember we laughed at them, like this is the army so you know, faggot, wimp, stuff that really offends a soldier, hurts his pose, his pride. I remember us laughing at them: What, how could you not beat them up and why did you not shoot in the air and scare them? I remember the company-commander was jeered for having such cowardly men.

### **So what did they finally say?**

I think eventually it appeared the soldiers were shocked by the rioting so they didn't do anything. We just jeered at them: Ah, you didn't do anything. You really walk around feeling and proud and mighty.

\*\*\*

## Testimony 93

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

They're detained for hours. You can stick someone in a Jeep, start driving, continue your patrol. Do your routine while he's inside your Jeep.

### **Why make him get in the Jeep?**

Just for the sake of it. An illegal was caught inside Umm al-Fahm, so theoretically they're supposed to get him in the Jeep, take him back (into the Territories) and continue the patrol. So we get him in the Jeep, but wait a minute, we were planning to go buy some coke and rolls, so okay, we go shopping, hang around, we can detain him for hours, there's no instructions about it.

### **Where is he left eventually?**

Sometimes he's dumped near the garbage dump of Umm al-Fahm to get on his way back, sometimes a little closer to a village relatively near, a Palestinian village.

Wherever we felt like it.

**No logging, nothing?**

Sometimes we'd log it. At other times we wouldn't. I mean, we did have detention report forms and all that stuff.

**There's a detention report form?**

There are detention reports. Detailed. First of all, these served primarily for the investigation department. Supposedly for every illegal we caught, we were to question him, fill out his data, his ID number and why he came and who his employer was and how much he gets an hour and that kind of questions.

**Any other questions?**

That's mostly what I remember. Mostly about the work, I mean.

**How much he gets an hour?**

Yes.

**And this would be written down?**

They would often tell us.

**How much?**

A pittance, they could be getting up to twenty shekels for a day's work. Embarrassingly low wages, really. They worked for nothing, more or less, according to what they told us. And there's the detention report where the circumstances of detention must be noted down, and if he was an illegal, we'd note the reason he was illegal. Again, there are the would-be regulations that a person may be detained up to twenty minutes without a report, and beyond that time a detention report must be filled out, including detailed circumstances for its taking over twenty minutes. But it was not problem finding such circumstances.

**What did you write in these reports?**

An illegal. Circumstances: inspection. Extended inspection. Log extension. No one went over these reports one by one. We could sometimes fill out fifty reports a day.

\*\*\*

Testimony 94

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant | **Unit:** Erez Crossing | **Location:** Gaza Strip

The high-rise buildings in Beit Hanoun, every time there was shooting out of the

orchards, there are these very tall, very white high-rises in Beit Hanoun. They're called the Officers' Quarters. Sometimes there would be shooting from there too. And we'd shoot into those houses. Later, some year or two ago, I saw a television report on Channel 2 about a girl who was hit by this shooting and lost her two legs. Shooting into the Officers' Quarters was routine, standard. We didn't think about the fact that people lived there. That Officers' Quarters means there are families there.

### **You shot in warning?**

Yes, it's shooting that... No, warning shots are when you spray the orchards... listen, this gunfire stuff is very much up to the commander. Very much so. Really, one of the things I realized was that both the shooting and the definition of the zone, that was the most amazing thing, I found. Because the new commander who arrived, he's really a person you should interview, lieutenant colonel \*\*\* ... When he came, he was a nutcase, in short. He was the most psycho, violently aggressive. His predecessor had been very gentle-handed to everyone, even to soldiers who brutalize Palestinians, who beat them up. (...) What I mean to say is that the army commander who replaced him, first of all rerouted the road. Which is amazing, re-routing the road. I think it was set in the Oslo Accords that this is the delineation road between the State of Israel and Gaza. So he took it, I mean it was this no-man's-land or grey area, into which they were not supposed to enter, true, if anyone entered it, we would shoot. There was someone who got in and was shot. It was an insane night. We were on radio with our commander who was following him. We heard him until he could reach the guy and shoot. We were certain we had caught a terrorist who was about to enter the settlement, but he had nothing on him. And what did they say? Well? A tracker/guide. I believed it. Everyone believed it. That he's a tracker, that terrorists sent him ahead to learn the route and tell them where they should enter when they come to attack the settlement.

### **What did they find on him?**

Nothing. He had nothing on him. We said, if he's a guide, there must be a map on him, something. No. Weapons? A knife? Nothing at all. He had absolutely nothing. It was really, that whole night we were like really, because the commander kept reporting constantly: I'm ten meters away from him. I'm two meters away from him. It was cool. Then he re-routed the road. He changed it – the base was angry at this commander for having changed fundamental orders. So a part of this meant keeping a really tough hand over the Palestinians. Then he changed the open-fire instructions. He decided. He came to the brigade HQ with a lot of force and said: I am commander not only of Erez Crossing, give me Dugit and Eley Sinai (Israeli settlements). So our

zone was expanded. When he arrived he decided that every single evening, without any special reason, we'd fire at the orchards. As soon as it got dark.

**Are these orchards tended?**

That's it, that's the interesting part. I never thought about whether anyone worked there. It's crazy. For me these were orchards. Orchards. What are orchards? Enemy ground. An area we have to fear. I didn't think that perhaps people worked there. I remember coming on shift and being informed that open-fire instructions for now were to shoot at the orchards every night, just in order to – I don't know – scare them. Warn them. I don't know why, but to us this sounded surreal and terribly amusing.

**How do you know you didn't shoot homes?**

I don't know, we must have shot homes too.

**What were the zone limits of this shooting procedure?**

There weren't any. You shoot, listen, you shoot straight. You're up there in your high position, facing the orchards. Yes, it's a huge area. I passed on the instruction to shoot warning shots at the orchards, and the ridiculous part of what I'm saying here is that this was warning fire at nothing. Nothing happened. The time simply came and you'd shoot, that's what's so ridiculous. But when I passed on the order to shoot at the orchards, everyone knew what it meant.

\*\*\*

Testimony 95

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** First Sergeant | **Unit:** Border Patrol | **Location:** Seam Zone

Most of the time I saw violence around Katzir, before the fence was constructed, then it was simply routine – emptying the children's plastic bags and playing with their toys. You know, grabbing the stuff and throwing the toys among us like balls.

**The children cried?**

Constantly. They cried and were terrified. I mean, you couldn't miss it.

**Adults cried too?**

Sure. To humiliate them. One of our goals was this: I made him cry in front of his child, I made him shit in his pants.

**You saw cases of people soiling their pants?**

Yes.

### **Why?**

Especially at beatings, beating them to a pulp and threats and yelling, where the guy is terrified, especially in front of the kids. They would yell and threaten and terrify so you're afraid for your kids too. There was this once, again, an adult detained with his child, a tiny kid, about four years old. The child was not hit, but the Patrolman was annoyed that the adult was taking the kid with him so he'd be shown consideration, and told him: You're taking the kid along so as to be pitied, let's show you what's what. And he beat him to a pulp, yelled at him, said: "Why, I could kill you right in front of your kid, maybe you'd feel more..." That's horrifying. And again, there are lots of 'respect' stories.

### **And he wet his pants for sheer fright?**

Yes.

### **In front of his child?**

Yes. There are lots of honor stories like, I made him shit in his pants, I made him do that, such talk was routine, not anything special...

### **Where would this be told, in the dining hall, in the presence of the officers?**

#### **Openly in public?**

Openly in public. I think that if an officer says he didn't know, he's lying. At least the senior officers knew. Again, the platoon-commanders dealt with this less, but the company-commander, the deputy company-commander, the operations officer – they encouraged this even in a big way. Again, not directly, they didn't actually come out and say, go on, beat them up, but there was this legitimacy, otherwise it wouldn't have happened. Again, the fact is that in Jenin there were less cases of this kind, and not just because there was less work with the population, I think.

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### Testimony 96

**Name:** \*\*\* | **Rank:** Sergeant

**Unit:** Shimshon Battalion | **Location:** Etzyon Regional Brigade

### **Were you out in the field with the soldiers?**

Yes, every NCO does that. Again, I don't know if it's connected, but the girls' job in the army often begins and ends with being girls and smiling at the guys. It surely

doesn't come as a surprise to you. It was relief, the greatest relief of all – to see girls in the army post.

**Were you told about this in your training, earlier?**

No way, never. But that's what you're told at the battalion. When I arrived at the battalion, the guys yelled: "Fresh meat, fresh meat!" This was on the Ketzioth base. Think about it, that enormous place, and we had arrived, two new girls. I mean, girls in the army... now that's a topic for research, never mind. But obviously it didn't make any difference if you prepared education guideline-bulletins.





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