

Israel Rocked by New War Crimes Revelations

by Nina Ogden

March 27—The most explosive revelations have hit Israel about atrocities against civilians, since 1982, when Gen. Ariel Sharon orchestrated the mass murders of Palestinians in the Lebanese refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. In the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, Israel is being warned, from inside and outside the country, that its policies are not only killing Arabs, but destroying the nation of Israel itself.

New exposés, published since the Gaza attack in January, document the truth of Lyndon LaRouche's charges of war crimes, immediately following the launching of the war. As more details emerged, along with threats of new attacks against Gaza by incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, LaRouche stated on March 1: "The Israeli military policies, in the case of the West Bank in 2002, Lebanon in 2006, and Gaza in 2008, are explicitly modeled on how the Nazis dealt with the Warsaw Ghetto uprising [in 1943]. The policy is being manipulated by the British. The Israelis are killing themselves as well as Arabs. They are driven by a mad compulsion that is suicidal for Israel. They are the toys, not the players. They think they are running the games, but through the trap of 'effects based military planning,' they are destroying themselves. The policy, if continued, will destroy Israel."

In the past week, the Israeli press, led by the daily *Ha'aretz*, published a series of stunning revelations, coming from inside the Israeli military itself, about the

shooting and killing of unarmed women, children, and the elderly, by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) snipers and soldiers. The testimony was given by soldiers who served in Operation Cast Lead, to a gathering at the Yitzak Rabin Pre-Military Preparatory Academy at Omanim University (known in Hebrew, as the *Mechinat Rabin*). The testimony was taped, transcribed, and then turned over to the chief of state of the IDF, and to the press.

Fundamentalist Penetration of the Military

It has also been exposed that rabbis of the fundamentalist yeshivas that have trained soldiers of the Jewish terrorist underground—including those who were implicated in the murder of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, and in the plot to blow up the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the holy places of Islam in Jerusalem—have deeply penetrated the Israeli military, and published pamphlets that constitute the real "rules of engagement" used in Gaza. This is not a "parallel" structure inside the IDF, but goes up to the chief IDF rabbi, Brig. Gen. Avichai Ronsky, the former chief rabbi of a West Bank settlement, who is affiliated with Ateret Cohanim, one of the key training centers for Jewish fundamentalist terrorists (see box).

This week, the UN special rapporteur on Palestine, Prof. Richard Falk, filed an official report to the UN

Human Rights Council, and gave a press conference calling for an official “expert inquiry” to investigate whether war crimes were committed in Gaza by the State of Israel. Falk joins scores of international non-governmental, humanitarian, and religious organizations, in calling for a war crimes investigation. At a press conference in Geneva, Falk stated: “There should now be an expert inquiry and not just another further investigation as to whether the Israeli Defense Forces committed war crimes in Operation Cast Lead... To lock people into a war zone is something that invokes the worst kind of international memories of the Warsaw Ghetto.”

As readers of *EIR* who have followed this tragedy know, this issue goes deep. In January 2002, *EIR* reported on an Israeli exposé, also by *Ha’aretz*, that the IDF was using a Nazi account of the suppression of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto as a training document for operations the IDF was planning in the West Bank against the Palestinians. Operation Cast Lead was the next stage in the “Warsaw Ghetto” model. This article reports on three major developments: the revelations from the veteran soldiers of Gaza; the exposé of how the religious fanatics of the settlers’ expansion movement have taken over religious indoctrination of the IDF; and comments from a well-informed Israeli expert on what must be done following the Gaza atrocities.

Don’t Allow a Cover-Up

On March 25, this reporter had a lengthy discussion with an expert Israeli analyst who outlined steps that must be taken for an “expert inquiry,” such as that demanded by Falk. Investigators must demand to know *where the orders came from* for the atrocities described by the veterans of the Gaza operation. He said that such an investigation must not be sidelined in what he called “a typical Israeli way.” The IDF, he explained, usually says they will open a criminal investigation of the matter, and the public believes they will get to the bottom of it. However, they investigate only the conduct of *some* soldiers, the so-called “few bad apples,” and leave it at that.

He emphasized that the media, in both Israel and the United States, must break its silence on these crimes—and put a spotlight on *the orders and rules of engagement*, from the defense minister and chief of staff, on down, about when to fire, who is a threat, etc. He said that when one sees such a pattern of civilian killings—

up to 960 out of 1,400 killed were civilians—it reflects something from the top. What is at stake, he said, is nothing less than saving the peace process, and Israeli society itself. He called on the American and Israeli media to put pressure on the governments make sure these terrible crimes are not swept under the rug.

Shortly after the Israelis ended the war, Danny Zamir, director of the Rabin Pre-Military Preparatory Program, invited Operation Cast Lead veterans, who were graduates, to speak with the students in the program.

Zamir said he did not expect to hear such anguished reports from the veterans, who reported they felt they were complicit in cold-blooded murder. Zamir told them, “You are describing an army with very low value norms,” noting the high level of civilian killings in Gaza, and what seemed to be extremely lax rules of engagement, which led to moral and possibly legal violations of the rules of warfare. Zamir took his concerns to IDF chief of staff Gabi Ashkenazi, who promised to investigate, but who dismissed these accounts as “anecdotal,” insisting that the IDF is “the most moral army in the world.” Zamir also took the transcripts to Channel 10 TV and to *Ha’aretz*.

From the Transcripts

On March 19 and 20, *Ha’aretz* reporter Amos Harel began publishing articles on the transcripts from Mechinat Rabin. Some excerpts follow (the names of the veterans were changed to preserve their anonymity):

“A squad commander called Aviv said, ‘We were supposed to go into a house with an armored personnel carrier called an Archzarit (which literally means ‘cruel’) to bust through the lower door, to start shooting... I call this murder... We were supposed to go up floor by floor and any person we identified we were supposed to shoot. From above, they said this was permissible, because anyone who remained in the sector in Gaza City was in effect condemned. They were a terrorist because they hadn’t fled. I tried to exert some influence from within my subordinate position to change this.’

“Aviv proceeded to warn the families with a megaphone to leave the houses, and to check them for weapons as they left, rather than just go in and shoot up the families. But younger soldiers asked him why he was doing this, and when he answered, ‘We don’t want to kill innocent civilians,’ another soldier answered, ‘Yeah? Anyone who’s there is a terrorist, that’s a known

fact.' Aviv says, 'and his buddies join in, "yeah, we need to murder any person who's there. Yeah, any person who's there is a terrorist," and all the other things they stuff our heads with in the media'....

"Aviv describes an old woman, 'on whom I didn't see any weapon,' walking down the road, and said, 'The order was to take the person out ... the moment you see her.' Another soldier, Zev, explains, 'Logic says she shouldn't be there.'

"A soldier named Ram recounts the killing of a mother and two children by a sharpshooter because they walked in the wrong direction, when told to leave the area. Ram says he didn't think the sharpshooter felt too bad because 'he did his job according to the orders he was given ... the atmosphere was, the lives of the Palestinians, let's say, is something very, very less important than the lives of our soldiers,' he said."

Radical Rabbis: Killing Is Holy War

Ram also told the gathering at Mechinat Rabin that a significant factor in creating the culture that justifies the killing of Palestinian civilians, is the brigade rabbis who made the Gaza battle a religious mission. "Their message was very clear: We are the Jewish people; we came to this land by a miracle. God brought us to this land, and now we need to expel the gentiles who are interfering with our holy land."

The analyst who spoke to *EIR* emphasized that his biggest concern, for some time, has been the role of the military rabbinate, and the growing influence they exert over soldiers going into battle. He stressed that this is new, with the coming of IDF chief rabbi Brig. Gen. Avichai Ronsky (aka Rontski, Ronski, and Roznik), in 2006. Previously, the IDF rabbinate had not been involved in "spinning battle orders," but in appropriate activities, such as conducting religious ceremonies and setting up kosher kitchens.

But under Ronsky, the doctrine has become "Eretz Israel" (Greater Israel), and the fundamentalists in the military rabbinate were encouraging the conscripts to fight in Gaza as if it were a religious war. The documentation for the rise of this doctrine as being behind the war crimes can be found in a book published by the Military Rabbinate, especially for Operation Cast Lead, called *Go Fight My Fight: A Daily Study for Soldiers*. It dictates:

"When you show mercy to a cruel enemy, you are being cruel to pure and honest soldiers. These are not

games ... where sportsmanship teaches one to make concessions. This is a war on murderers."

Another representative quote is: "There is a biblical ban on surrendering a single millimeter of it [Eretz Israel] to gentiles, through all sorts of impure distortions, foolishness of autonomy and other national weaknesses. We shall not abandon it to the hands of another nation, not a finger, not a fingernail of it."

Even before the onset of Operation Cast Lead, Ronsky was identified as a dangerous radical element. Israeli civil rights organizations have brought complaints to try to have him removed. And Amos Harel, the senior *Ha'aretz* reporter who broke the story of the Mechinat Rabin testimonies, wrote, in October 2009,

Rabbi Ronsky, Ateret Cohanim, And Benjamin Netanyahu

The attorney for the Israeli human rights organization Yesh Din, Michael Sfed, has written to Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi demanding the resignation of the Chief Military Rabbi Brig. Gen. Avichai Ronsky. Yesh Din charges that officers in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are officially prohibited from expressing controversial political positions, but that Ronsky has used his position to spread such positions. The chief IDF rabbi was the rabbi of Itamar, a Samaria settlement on the occupied West Bank, and a former head rabbi of Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

For more than two decades *EIR* investigators have documented the dangerous networks the chief IDF rabbi has led. Two excerpts are printed here.

The Invisible Chain of Command

From "Temple Mount Fanatics Foment a New Thirty Years War," by an EIR Investigative Team, EIR Nov. 3, 2000.

It is no secret that Sharon is the most visible and prominent "godfather" of the Temple Mount fanatics inside Israel. The Ateret Cohanim yeshiva, located in

that Ronsky was brought in as a concession to the far-right-wing settlers, and was “brainwashing the troops.”

The Israeli analyst mentioned above made clear that the violations of laws governing warfare, are part of a cultural change in the military, which comes from the long-term occupation. The growing perception among Israeli soldiers is that Palestinians *are* the enemy, or are *supporting* the enemy; therefore, the soldiers are dehumanizing and demonizing all Palestinians. The attitude, which is instilled in young conscripts, carries over to later years, when they remain in the reserves. This was a factor, he said, in the February 2009 election, in the large vote for the right-wing parties, including that of

the fascist Netanyahu, which are increasingly racist, inflammatory and violent.

As a result of the occupation, the analyst said, Israel is becoming a more violent society, and professionals are just beginning to recognize this. The racist, brutalized mentality goes beyond a military posture, or how people vote, into daily life, where not only is violence against Arabs increasing, but violence of Jews against Jews is also growing. It threatens society itself, and has become worrisome to patriots who cherish Israel, with all its flaws, for its ideals as a humanist democracy.

Michele Steinberg and Dean Andromidas contributed to this story.

the Old City of Jerusalem, is one of the hubs of Jewish underground guerrilla warfare activity, directed against the Islamic holy sites on the Temple Mount. Sharon has been a fixture at New York fundraisers of the Friends of Ateret Cohanim, as has his ostensible rival within the Likud, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Sharon has reportedly been the conduit of millions of dollars to the Gush Emunim movement of Rabbi Moshe Levinger and the late Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook, which serves as a religious fundamentalist death squad, out of the Kiryat Arba settlement near Hebron, on the West Bank, and out of at least 130 other settlements dotted throughout the Israeli occupied territories, which Gush Emunim cadre have founded since the late 1960s.

(In February 1994, shortly after the signing of the Oslo I Accords at the White House, a Kiryat Arba fanatic in the Israeli Defense Forces reserves, Baruch Goldstein, massacred scores of Islamic worshippers as they prayed at the Cave of the Patriarchs mosque in Hebron. Goldstein is heralded as a hero and a martyr by the Gush Emunim.)

Netanyahu's Network

From “Israel: Renewed Peace Effort or Another Assassination,” by Dean Andromidas, EIR, Nov. 21, 2008.

The Likud is filled with dyed-in-the-wool advocates

of the Zionist Revisionism of the late Vladimir Jabotinsky, who was a devotee of Italian Fascism; there are also members with links to the even more extreme religious fanatics and rabbis who were the spiritual guides of Rabin assassin Yigal Amir.

Take for example Limor Livnat, former education minister under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Her brother is Rabbi Noam Livnat of the Joseph Still Lives Yeshiva (Od Yosef Chai) in Nablus, one of the most radical settlements on the West Bank. He reportedly inspired in Amir the zeal for religious Zionism that led him to murder.

If Netanyahu wins the election, he will gather together the Israeli right. High on his list are the “settler parties,” which include the National Union and National Religious parties, and other smaller factions which are currently considering forming one party. Among their leaders is Rabbi Benny Elon, another of Amir's spiritual guides. His niece was convicted for complicity in the murder of Rabin, because she did not inform the police when Amir confided in her his intention to kill the Prime Minister. Elon has served as the chief rabbi of the Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva.

Located in the Old City of Jerusalem, it is at the center of the fanatic “Temple Mount Faithful,” who wish to destroy the mosques on the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, which is Islam's third holiest site. These parties promote the notorious call for the “transfer” of the Palestinian population from the West Bank—ethnic cleansing.