



The Perimeter

Soldiers' testimonies from the Gaza Buffer Zone
2023-2024

[**BREAKING
THE SILENCE**]



Breaking the Silence was established in 2004 by Israel Defense Forces veterans with the aim of collecting and publishing the testimonies of Israeli soldiers who have served in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip since the start of the Second Intifada. We endeavor to stimulate public debate about the price paid for a reality in which young soldiers face a civilian population on a daily basis and are engaged in the control of that population's everyday life. Our work aims to bring an end to the occupation.

All published testimonies are verified before publication.

For more details about Breaking the Silence:

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers who have contributed their time and energy to make the publication of this booklet possible, alongside all of our organizational activities. Without their invaluable assistance, these important testimonies would not reach the public.

Introduction

On October 7th 2023, following the horrifying attacks led by Hamas in the South of Israel, which included massacres and mass kidnappings of Israelis and foreign citizens, the State of Israel went to war in the Gaza Strip. The main objectives of the war, as determined by Israel's security cabinet, were to eliminate Hamas and return the Israeli hostages; but anyone who listened to the soldiers knew that many of their missions were entirely unrelated to those aims. One of these missions was to create a "buffer zone" inside the Gaza Strip, which in practice meant razing the area to the ground. Israel's political leadership avoided working towards a political arrangement that would end the war and usher in a new era for the "day after." This placed the duty for shaping the future of the Strip on the IDF, which, in turn, created facts on the ground with only the tools a military has at its disposal. This operation — with the actions required to carry it out, the risks involved, its ramifications, and the prices it exacted — remained largely unexposed to the public. Through widespread, deliberate destruction, the military laid the groundwork for future Israeli control of the area. A key element of this control was the creation of a new buffer zone separating Gaza from Israel, which soldiers referred to, simply, as "the perimeter."

The testimony collection that follows includes testimonies by soldiers and officers who took part in creating the perimeter and turning it into a zone of total destruction. The testifiers describe in their own words how they and their units transformed cultivated farmlands and residential areas into the new buffer zone, what mission objectives they were given, and how these missions played out on the ground.

Buffer zones have been a staple of Israel's defense strategy for decades. The military strategy that dictated the creation of the new perimeter in Gaza merely expands and replicates a significant element of the Israeli defense establishment's failed security approach that prevailed on the eve of October 7th, 2023. Before the war, the buffer zone between Israel and the Gaza Strip extended approximately 300 meters into Palestinian territory, and access to it was limited. The breadth of the new perimeter was not uniform, ranging from 800 to 1500 meters. To create this area, Israel launched a major military engineering operation that, by means of wholesale destruction, entirely reshaped about 16% of the Gaza Strip (roughly 55-58 square kilometers), an area previously home to some 35% of Gaza's agricultural land. The perimeter extends from the coast in the north to the Egyptian border in the south, all within the territory of the Gaza Strip and outside of Israel's internationally recognized borders.

As early as October of 2023, ministers and members of the Israeli government declared their support for a new, permanent buffer zone in the Gaza Strip, as well as their desire to make Gaza pay a "territorial price" for the October 7th attacks. The soldiers' testimonies included within this booklet show that the military did indeed get to work, razing to the ground the lion's share of what existed in the buffer zone from the very first month of the fighting until the new perimeter was fully established, in around December of 2024. While work was underway, the zone's name changed according to shifting political needs: "buffer zone," "security zone," "security space," and "perimeter."

The military purpose of the perimeter is to create an isolated strip that provides a clear line of sight, and with that, a clear line of fire, at anything the military defines as a potential threat. In other words — absolute military control over the area. The mission given to soldiers in the field, as revealed in their testimonies, was to create an empty, completely flat expanse about a kilometer wide along the Gaza side of the border fence. This space was to have no crops, structures, or people. Almost every object, infrastructure installation, and structure within the perimeter was demolished. Palestinians were denied entry into the area altogether, a ban which was enforced using live fire, including machine gun fire and tank shells. In this way, the military created a death zone of enormous

proportions. Places where people had lived, farmed, and established industry were transformed into a vast wasteland, a strip of land eradicated in its entirety.

The testimonies demonstrate that soldiers were given orders to deliberately, methodically, and systematically annihilate whatever was within the designated perimeter, including entire residential neighborhoods, public buildings, educational institutions, mosques, and cemeteries, with very few exceptions. Industrial zones and agricultural areas which served the entire population of Gaza were laid to waste, regardless of whether those areas had any connection whatsoever to the fighting. In their testimonies, soldiers describe the systematic way in which the creation of the new buffer zone was planned and executed. One example of this was the way designated areas were divided into defined sections — "polygons" — within which soldiers were ordered to destroy structures. The military dedicated enormous resources to this endeavor, including the extensive use of bulldozers (excavators, D9 bulldozers, and other heavy equipment), along with thousands of mines and explosives.

Destroying civilian infrastructure and buildings is an integral part of the IDF's chosen method of warfare in the Gaza Strip. Many buildings were destroyed after being "incriminated" — meaning the IDF had deemed them to be buildings in use by the enemy's warfare apparatus.

However, many of the buildings within the perimeter were demolished without being incriminated. The destruction was geographically based: being located within a certain designated area was sufficient cause for a building to be marked for demolition. Unlike many other combat zones in the Gaza Strip, the annihilation of infrastructure and buildings in the perimeter sometimes occurred after the area was captured, when no immediate or concrete threat to the forces was present. Some soldiers even testified that certain commanders viewed the destruction as a way of exacting revenge and punishment for the atrocities of October 7th.

The intent of the perimeter's territorial contiguity is to create a "unilaterally demilitarized zone" of sorts, where the forces are theoretically able to detect any movement towards the fence and thwart it. The rules of engagement in this area changed over the course of the war, but the basic order was to prevent Palestinians from entering the perimeter by shooting at them — sometimes in order to drive them away, but mostly in order to kill. Like the systematic demolitions, opening fire in the perimeter was based on a geographical demarcation that was conveyed to the soldiers and applied to anyone entering the area. However, while the perimeter was defined and conveyed to the forces on the ground, there was no clear marking indicating its boundaries, putting the life of any Palestinian who crossed this imaginary line at risk.

A dark cloud hangs over the creation of the perimeter. Establishing and maintaining it cost many lives. And while it may seem odd to speak of the destruction of homes given the massive loss of life during this war, homes are more than just concrete boxes. A home is part of a person's life, their past, their future. Flattening an area, making it unfit for human habitation, has a tangible and immeasurable human cost. The residents of Gaza were those made to pay for Israel's new security demands. Destroying and expropriating this area constitutes collective punishment enacted on all those who previously lived there, as well as to Gaza's entire population. The seizure of this area presents a significant obstacle to rehabilitating the Gaza Strip and is therefore not only immoral, but will also perpetuate instability in the region. Among other things, this means that it will never be able to provide true security for the citizens of Israel. If history teaches us anything, it is that fences and buffer zones can never provide absolute protection; military occupation cannot replace political solutions.

The logic of maintaining military control and creating the perimeter led to the annihilation of more than 3,500 buildings, as well as industrial and agricultural areas which are critical for the fabric of life in the Gaza Strip, and would be vital for any attempt at reconstruction. All of them were wiped off the face of the earth. Annihilation, expropriation, and expulsion are immoral and must never be normalized or legitimized.



Rank	Unit	Area
Major	Gaza Northern Division	Northern Gaza Strip
Period	November 2023	

Do you remember anything related to a security zone? Yes, they talked about the perimeter. What they said in the operations room in November [2023] was that the war was expected to last a year, that it would be like Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) with localized operations throughout the Strip. And they talked about the perimeter in the northern Gaza Strip, that we were going to conquer an area that would be cleared of everything, and that would be a buffer between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Rank	Unit
Warrant Officer	Reserves – Armored Corps
Area	Period
Northern Gaza Strip	January – February 2024

During briefings, is there talk about civilians who might be in the area? There is no civilian population. They're terrorists, all of them.

I understand that this is the general vibe, but is this what guides the unit on a systemic level? Yes. There are

no innocents. What business does he have coming within 500 meters of my tank?

What do they (the commander)s say? We go in and if we identify suspects, we shoot them. In the briefing, [they say] we're here to stand guard and we want them to learn they're not allowed to come out. The IDF has declared a buffer zone as far as it's concerned, 1.5 kilometers from the fence inwards (in the direction of Gaza), which is going to be a razed area and civilians won't be allowed to be there. It's all farmland. We come back with the tanks [while there are] piles of irrigation pipes in the [tank] tracks. Finished. No more. A building overlooking the fence will be demolished.

Why? Because it overlooks the fence, and they can shoot at the fence from there. We're done with that. Really, that's the order. We're done with the bullshit. No more games.

Did you happen to be around for a demolition of a building that "overlooks" [the fence]? Yeah. What is a building demolition? The "bear", the D9 (armored bulldozer), drives and mows down everything in its path. It's not something unusual or something you make special preparations for. You're going somewhere, that's the excuse. Essentially, everything gets mowed down, everything.

What is "everything"? Everything is everything. Everything that's built.

Orchards? Yes.

Cowsheds, chicken coops? Yes, yes.

Every building and every structure? Every building and every structure. Everything.

What does the area look like after? Hiroshima. That's what I'm saying, Hiroshima.

Rank	Unit	Area
Sergeant Major	Reserves – 5th Brigade	Khan Younis
Place	Period	
Khuza'ah	December 2023 – January 2024	

We advanced to maneuver at a place called Khirbat Ikhzaa, which is across from the kibbutz [communities] of Nirim and Nir Oz, with Ikhzaa being an area where there hadn't been maneuvers. We were the first force to go in there as a brigade operation. The timeline was to capture the place within a week, I think. We were done in three days. There was no significant resistance there. There was counterfire from RPGs (anti-tank rockets) here and there and stuff, all kinds of exits from tunnel shafts. There were wounded for sure, but there was no intense fighting in the sense of fire fights, one force shooting at another.

Encounters. Yeah, there were no encounters at all. In Khirbat Ikhzaa [there were] tons of items belonging to hostages, tons, like down to ID cards, military boots taken

from Nir Oz. There's no doubt about that at all. Things that you can, with basic knowledge, identify who it belongs to. And what happened in Ikhzaa, which I'd never seen before, is that you get a mission to clear up to the 800-meter line from [the] 'hourglass' (the border fence) — there must be no structures in Khirbat Ikhzaa. The exceptions to this were the UNRWA school and some other small water facility there. You have to understand, the IDF had been maneuvering at the time for almost two months. As a combatant, when something has to get blown up, you're used to having an explosives kit, and then engineers come and blow it up. But there's no more [explosives], [so] we do it with mines. You get an allocation of mines, and essentially, these are big, rusty limpet mines that were pulled out of deep storage — God knows where they were stored until now. Basically, our main mission was blowing things up, I'm talking up to hundreds of structure units (buildings). It's not like the high rises in Shati (Refugee camp in Gaza City). It's one-story or two-story cubes. But the destruction is total.

This was two weeks total? All in all, it was three weeks. Because after the conquest [stage], came the destruction-of-houses stage. It wasn't done simultaneously. First of all, there were the lines of advancement for the brigade and battalion offensives, and the clearing began only after that. There's a map that the Gaza Division made of polygons along the Strip fence that are marked in green, yellow, orange, and red. Green means that more than 80 percent of the buildings were taken

down — residential buildings, greenhouses, sheds, factories; you name it — it needs to be flat. That's the order. There are no structure, except for that UNRWA school and that small water facility — for everything else, the directive was "nothing left."

"Residential buildings, greenhouses, sheds, factories; you name it — it needs to be flat. That's the order."

This is a directive that comes from...? I came across it as a command in the brigade, which got it from the division's operations branch. It wasn't some local invention. The allocations you got also came from the division. I think the brigade demolished something around 600-700 structures over there. Because we (the battalion) had our own sector [but] the whole brigade was basically demolishing in its sector. [In the end,] our area, Ikhzaa, [had been] marked green. There were three green polygons where the 5th Brigade had been, "great pride."

What's behind this? The rationale, as stated, is to create flat lines of observation and fire. If the famous SBZ (Security Buffer Zone) was 300 meters [from the fence] before, it was being expanded to 800 meters. That was the directive.

Is this the perimeter? Yes, it was just called a polygon. Khirbat Ikhzaa is more or less built "grosso modo" (roughly), parallel to the border, but some neighborhoods are diagonal. So it ends up being that one house will get demolished and

one won't. Obviously, it takes a shit ton of damage from the explosion, but it doesn't need to be flattened. They were very strict about the line at the time. As a soldier, you see the rationale; you say: "Okay, I get it, there's a military objective here." What's more, I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said that at least a few dozen of the houses we took down were houses that were full-on incriminated. We found hostages' belongings in them, which means, "Fuck you, I have no sentiment about this."

Dozens out of how many? Out of hundreds, by no means the majority. It's not a huge percentage either, but it's some. You know, that's life. You see the military rationale behind it. Especially given that there really was a [defined] line [for the destruction of the buildings]. It wasn't a company commander gone bonkers in the field or some out-of-his-mind battalion commander or a brigade commander who thinks he's Kilgore from "Apocalypse Now."

Every structure or anything that falls within this geographic area gets destroyed to its foundation? Destroyed to the foundation, yes, absolutely. In terms of the ethics of war and the laws of war, you can make it work. You say, "okay, this was used for a military purpose", you're now trying to serve a military purpose, you could swallow it. Not smoothly, not cleanly, not happily. What I'm trying to say is that in every military order, there is "such-and-such battalion will do this-and-that in order to-." So in this case, the "in order to" was to create a perimeter that allows unobstructed

fire and observation from the fence. You say, "this is also future-forward, we're not going to be in Gaza forever;" you're setting the stage for when you get out of Gaza in the future. These 800 meters get destroyed as a perimeter, so they can make sure, from the border, that no one is invading Israel.

And will it stay that way? Yes, absolutely. It was talked about, this being the new status of Khirbat Ikhzaa, a community that, in my opinion, if not 50, then 40 percent of it, is gone. It's an issue, leaving it like this, for posterity, so to speak.

What was until now 300 meters would be 800 meters from here on out. Exactly. That was also the rationale that was explained from the beginning of this mission of blowing up the houses. In no uncertain terms, this is not interpretation, this is the "in order to." In order to allow unobstructed fire and observation.

Rank
Sergeant First Class

Unit
Reserves – Combat Engineering Corps

Area
Northern Gaza Strip

Period
November 2023

We take down houses. Everything over there is in ruins, but the skeleton of the building is still standing — [so we] knock it down, so there's absolutely nothing left, a pile of rubble. It's really become like a day job: You get up in the morning, get the locations (a structure designated by the military as a point of interest). "One, two, three, four, five" — this platoon, "six, seven, eight, nine, ten" — another platoon.

Every day? Every day, except if we run out of explosives. And there was also a week-long ceasefire in the middle.

[Is there] a required quota of say, ten houses per platoon per day? [Per] platoon, around five to seven. The goal is as many as possible. That's simply the mission.

"You get the area and clear it. We finish a place, and a few days later, we're in the next place. It started with the houses that overlook the border. In the end, the neighborhood was no longer standing."

Could it, within a week, go up to 50 homes per platoon? Yes, it could be 40-50. On days we did have ammunition, it was a matter of half an hour per house. first thing, [When you blow up a house], the commander officer, or squad commander we

had, arrives. He goes in, looks at the house, marks where to put explosives. We load the Hummer, go to the house, unload and put it (the explosives) down where the markings are, connect the circuit, which basically means connecting all the mines to a central circuit so everything goes off all at once. We'd do several buildings in two beats a day. You connect everything together, back off to some safe spot, and blow it up. Our mission was only that. We back away 300-400 meters from the site where we sat with no [security] accompaniment. The place is, seemingly, completely empty. We weren't told too much, we didn't ask too much. Let's say that the narrative was [that we were demolishing] neighborhoods that overlook communities inside Israel, the kibbutzim, etc., on the ridge, the high ground, and they wanted to leave no points of control in this area. They also mentioned a security zone and stuff like that. Towards the end of our time there, they started clearing this space to install a [military] outpost in places where we blew up houses. I don't know what ended up happening with that.

Who talked about a security zone? It's not like some commander comes and says: "This is your mission," but if you ask the officer why these houses are being blown up, then this is the stuff they'd talk about. If anyone needed a reason, this was it.

Was there a systematic vector of advancement? You get the area and clear it. We finish a place, and a few days later, we're in the next place. It started with the houses that overlook the border. In the end, the neighborhood was no longer standing.

Rank	Unit
Captain	Reserves – Armored Corps

Area	Period
Southern Gaza Strip	October – November 2023

The borderline is a kill zone, a lower area, a lowland. We have a commanding view of it, and they do too. At first, the IDF designated a certain area that was forbidden to cross. The IDF decides on a certain line, and conceptually, anyone who crosses it is considered a threat. It happened at the Netzarim Corridor and it happened on the border, too. There are no clear rules of engagement. There is some room for discretion on the ground. Like, ultimately, it's down to the company commander and the battalion commander.

"There is no system of accountability in general. Anyone who crosses a certain line, that we have defined, is considered a threat and is sentenced to death. That did exist. It was an IDF definition. There was a line."

There is no proper combat procedure like there is in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). Company commanders make all kinds of decisions about this, so it ultimately very much depends on who they are. But there is no system of accountability in general. Anyone who crosses a certain line, that we have defined, is considered a threat and is sentenced to death. That did exist. It was an IDF definition. There was a line.

Rank	Unit
Sergeant First Class	10th Brigade

Area	Period
Southern Gaza Strip	October – November 2023

At first, the commands were: We're at war. If you detect a threat or something — you shoot. At first, you could also shoot 2,000 meters [away].

When a threat is detected? When a hot spot is seen (with thermal binoculars).

Is a hot spot a human being? Supposedly, that's how the Armored Corps thinks. Then you fire a shell, tons of ammo.

How many shells a day? That depends. There were missions, I'm just throwing [out an example], on a razing mission, I fired 12 shells, just my tank. The razing is like half a day. It takes 8-12 hours because ultimately, it's a D9 (armored bulldozer) that scrapes the soil, makes strips.

Does every tank fire at a rate of fire like yours, more or less? More or less. If there are no malfunctions, let's say.

Does [shooting towards] a hot spot require a commander's approval? In the early days, it was the tank commander's decision. Say, cameras are detected on a building, you fire a shell to take them down. So like, anything that's suspicious as something that could be a risk to our forces, you shoot.

Is there anything else besides hot spots? After a month, it turned into: If you're not threatened [don't shoot], because ammo economics had set in. Suddenly, the army was like: Oh shit, I need the shells for a maneuver. I don't think it was a moral call.

Rank First Sergeant	Unit Reserves – 5th Brigade
Area Northern Gaza Strip	Period November – December 2023

What was done in the area between the fence and Gaza?

There were missions of searching for corpses, and there was also razing.

What's razing? What you do is bite off a kilometer west along the strip, from the fence inward. Essentially create a sterile strip — where there once used to be fields, groves, all kinds of things — nothing, sterile.

If there are houses there, agricultural structures?

Demolished.

You destroy everything? If it's within this kilometer, yes.

Was anything said about a security zone? A lot of times, it would be compared [to the former Lebanon Security Zone], I always disagreed because it's not a correct comparison. Because in the security zone (the testifier refers here to an

area in Southern Lebanon which Israel occupied between 1985-2000, with the intention of creating a security buffer from terrorist activity) we were inside, we held it from within, and it also had a civilian population. I don't think that's what's happening right now [in the Gaza buffer zone], as far as I know. The problem is that there will be nothing there.

What does this space look like when you get there, and what does it look like when you leave?

Fields or groves before. After — sand, dunes, destruction. It really didn't surprise me, it was clear to me that this is what's going on, that we're going to take a bite out of the [Gaza] Strip.

Rank Sergeant First Class	Unit Reserves – Armored Corps
Area Northern Gaza Strip	Period August 2024

In the perimeter, what are the orders? Adult, male — kill. Shoot to kill. For women and children, shoot to drive away, and if they come close to the fence, you stop [them]. You don't kill women, children, or the elderly. Shoot to drive away means a tank fires, takes 30 thousandths (moves the cannon at a slight angle from the target), and fires a [machine gun] volley at a concrete wall, so they hear something is going on and run away, to try to drive them away from the perimeter. There wasn't [a case] where a shell was fired 50 meters from

a woman. Most of the time, the people who breach the perimeter are adult men. Children or women didn't enter this area. The reservists also always raised questions over whether this was communicated to them (the Palestinians): "Do they know such a thing exists?"

**"It's not like the Palestinians were told:
The ridge before the border is the line.
I don't know. You say: 'What kind of idiot would
enter this area when they know it's a dead zone,
other than someone who apparently wants to die
or is prepared to risk his life?'"**

And what do you think the answer was? There wasn't really an answer to that.

Is there a marking on the ground they know about? No, no. Of course not. There's like, a geographical marking, because the thousand meter [line] can, for example, be on a ridge. But it's not like they (the Palestinians) were told: The ridge before the border is [the line]. I don't know. You say: "What kind of idiot would enter this area when they know it's a dead zone (kill zone) other than someone who apparently wants to die or is prepared to risk his life?"

Rank Captain	Unit Reserves – Armored Corps
Area Southern Gaza Strip	Period October – November 2023

What is the area [that can't be crossed]? We get called up at the 1,000 [meter] line, I think, forces get called up. And then there's some leeway with the command, but it's relatively aggressive, meaning it isn't permissive. There are no clear rules of engagement at any point, I feel.

Did you not receive rules of engagement? There are some, at a localized level. Meaning, the battalion commander can say: there's an escalation of measures, but I don't think anyone cares.

So what actually happens? We hold the borderline. Basically, there is intense activity taking place in the area, but there's also a generally massive use of firepower, especially, like with tanks.

What does that mean? There was a lot of instigating fire for the sake of instigating fire, somewhere between [wanting to produce] a psychological effect and just for no reason. Sometimes, there were cases where we did observe people moving. But then again, what is "people moving"? Any movement of people was suspect because we said so.

But what do you shoot at? At... something. It's not like... sometimes you see people, sometimes there's a specific ID from the scouts or radar or whatever, and then there could be a specific target to shoot. But sometimes it's like, I don't know, we fired. What do you shoot at? Find something relevant and shoot at it.

Are these suspicious points? [It's] everything. Because the IDF's system has failed and fallen apart — the diagnostic system [for] classifying suspicious sites and what's civilian and what isn't. Maybe it's Hamas's fault that this diagnosis is complex. But we set out on this war out of insult, out of pain, out of anger, out of the sense that we had to succeed. This distinction [between civilians and terrorist infrastructure], it didn't matter. Nobody cared. We decided on a line which is the borderline, past which everyone is a suspect, but it's not clear to me how familiar Palestinians are with this line.

Is there any marking on the ground? What do you mean marking on the ground. It's just a kilometer from the border.

So how do they know? How they know is a really good question. Enough people died or got injured crossing that line, so they don't go near it.

Rank	Unit
Warrant Officer	Reserves – Armored Corps
Area	Period
Northern Gaza Strip	Beit Hanoun

The IDF uses defense positions (a barricaded compound of sand and earth embankments to protect combat vehicles and soldiers). A soldier getting killed is one thing, but it could be worse. A soldier getting kidnapped — that scares them (the army) to death. Movement is very, very protected all the time, and you have to be safe at all times. For example, in the first operation when they went in [to Gaza], they set up a defense position. What's a defense position? The "dubi" ("teddy bear" in Hebrew), the D9 (armored bulldozer), comes, digs up dirt mounds in the shape of a square, and there you have it, a base. It makes ramps for tanks too, for the infantry, and it takes two hours to do it. They'd sit there at the base for two or three days and then move on. In the case of more elite units, it's [going] deeper into Gaza, and in our case, it was backtracking, but you leave the defense position behind. From that moment on, anyone who goes near the defense position — what business do they have being there? Suspect.

Was this after you'd already left the defense position?
After we were [back] in Israel.

And then you watch the defense position from Israel?
Yes. [If] there's someone at the defense position, the tanks

are called up and they fire. There was one time where we actually fired [shells].

"People were incriminated for having bags in their hands. Guy showed up with a bag? Incriminated, terrorist. I believe they came to pick hubeiza, but the army says 'No, they're hiding.' Boom (shells were fired in their direction). That's considered a miss. They were supposed to shoot (hit) them."

Is this an incident you were present in? Yes. They (the Palestinians) kept going back to the defense position again and again after we fired at them. Like — What the fuck? There was hubeiza (mallow) there because no one went near there. People (Palestinians) are hungry, so they come with bags to pick hubeiza, I think.

And what happened to them? They managed to get away, they managed to jump. The thing is that, at that point, the IDF really is fulfilling the public's wishes, which state: There are no innocents in Gaza. We'll show them. People were incriminated (labeled a target by the military) for having bags in their hands. Guy showed up with a bag? Incriminated, terrorist. I believe they came to pick hubeiza, but [the army says], "No, they're hiding." Boom (shells were fired in their direction). That's considered a miss. They were supposed to shoot (hit) them.

Who shot them? A tank. At around 800 meters.

Rank	Unit
Sergeant First Class	Reserves – 5 th Brigade
Area	Period
Northern Gaza Strip	November – December 2023

The plan they started forming [was] to create a kilometer of nothing from the fence inwards [the strip] — no agriculture, no houses, no nothing. And then we started doing it. You come, go in for three days on "achzariot" (a type of APC, the name of which roughly translates to "a cruel one") and raze a specific area. Where we worked was facing Jabalya, where it's mostly agriculture.

The D9 took down mainly fields, agriculture, olive trees, eggplant fields. A very large excavator just comes through and takes out all the soil, kind of rolls it up, flattens it."

Achzariot and tanks provide security, and the D9 (Armored Bulldozer) just mows down everything within a certain square, and then you move on northwards. [The D9 took down] mainly fields, agriculture, olive trees, eggplant fields. A very large excavator just comes through and takes out all the soil, kind of rolls it up, flattens it. It was a shame, great agriculture, beautiful eggplants and beautiful cauliflowers.

What is the razing supposed to produce? As I understand it, the goal is for it to be, like, impossible to come near. You have a kilometer where every movement is visible, and if you have a scout or "sky riders" (short-range drone unit), then they have a kilometer of a pretty clear line of sight. Up until that point, there really were crops right up to 300 meters from the fence, and you don't even need a tunnel; you can go through the olive groves and get up to 300 meters from the fence. I'm assuming there's also a general deterrence objective.

Rank	Unit	
Sergeant First Class	Reserves – 5th Brigade	
Area	Place	Period
Northern Gaza Strip	Shuja'iyya	December 2023

We did cross-border missions that were essentially to destroy the Shuja'iyya Industrial Zone.

What does that mean, to destroy it? There is an industrial area there. Which made me really sad. For me, it was symbolically sad, because it's an industrial zone which, if I'm not mistaken, was set up following [the] Oslo [Accords], when there was hope for peace and the thinking was that tons of goods would pass through the crossing.

Karni [Crossing]. Right. Tons of goods went through there, and there were warehouses that were meant to receive them and from there distribute them to Gaza. Because the

situation deteriorated, there wasn't so much trade with Israel, but it still functioned as an industrial zone and apparently, from what we were told, also as a Hamas base during the October 7th attack. So because it falls within what the State of Israel has designated as the new buffer zone, the perimeter, [and it's] too close to the Israeli border, Israel has decided that there will be nothing there from now on. I saw guys who did some razing work, taking down olive groves, so obviously they took down an industrial zone. [It] was a huge industrial zone with a Coca-Cola factory, and I think there was a pharmaceutical company, lots and lots of stuff. Engineering [Corps] lay down explosives, detonate them, and the the building crashes down. Not just explosives. There's a D9 (armored bulldozer) too and stuff, depending on the structure. So, we'd go in, secure the Engineering [Corps] while they laid down the explosives, or the D9 while it was demolishing, go back into Israel, blow it up, and that was a sortie. We didn't do many of those, I think fewer than five.

What does this industrial zone look like before and after the work? We arrived after some [demolition] had already been done, but like I said, a huge industrial area, huge factories, and after it's just a pile of rubble, piles of broken concrete. The most astonishing thing was the Coca-Cola factory, because it was just mountains of broken glass, insane. To the point where it was difficult to find a safe spot on the ground to sit on.

Rank	Unit	
Sergeant First Class	Reserves – 5th Brigade	
Area	Place	Period
Khan Younis Area	Khuza'a	December 2023 – January 2024

What is the goal of your operation [according to the briefing]? So the goal of the mission is two[fold]. One central [objective] is the razing. Basically Khirbat Ikhzaa is situated literally 300 meters from the fence. It means that it is within the kilometer range, which means that it needs to be flattened, or at least all of its eastern neighborhood. That's the first and main objective that we dealt with. That already became Sappers (combat engineers) because you need explosives for that. Because it's a neighborhood, because it's like multiple-story buildings. And the second goal is captives and missing people. The common intelligence claim was that the hostages and victims of Nir Oz went through Khirbat Ikhzaa. The goal [is] to enter houses to see if there are no longer terrorists but also to search for intelligence information about participants in the 7th of October [attacks] or captives and missing people from the October 7th, and to find hostile activity tunnels. And to not die — that's a meta-goal. The Company Commander came and said: We're going to look for terrorists and if we find them, [then we] kill them. We're going to look for signs of captives and missing people so that we can find them, locate them, or give certainty to their families. And the top-top-top

goal, that was always stated, is to create a sense of security for the future residents of Nir Oz who will return. The village that massacred you, we massacred it back.

Why do you say that? That's the connection that was made, Khirbat [Ikhzaa] killed Nir Oz, we're going to kill Khirbat.

Was that something that was said by officers? Yes, yes, yes. Khirbat was perceived as the refuge of terrorists who murdered Nir Oz.

"The top-top-top goal, that was always stated, is to create a sense of security for the future residents of Nir Oz who will return. The village that massacred you, we massacred it back."

Around 12 thousand people live there. Of course, I'm not saying everyone, I'm just saying if there are terrorists who massacred Nir Oz, they probably came from Khirbat. That connection was made. The energy was of, like, we're on a just path and we're going to do the right thing. That I also felt that.

Breaking the Silence's activities are made possible through the generous support of individuals and foundations including:

The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), Bertha Foundation, Broederlijk Delen, CAFOD, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Dan Church Aid, The Delegation of the European Union to Israel, Entraide et Fraternité, Foundation for Middle East Peace, Misereor, New Israel Fund, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, SIVMO, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Trocaire, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), zivik, and countless private individuals who have made contributions over the past year.

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To contact us to give testimony:
edut@bts.org.il

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SWIFT: POALILIT
IBAN: IL3501253200000069083

Printing: A.R.Printing Ltd
Design: Lee and Tamar Studio
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Over 50% of our funding last year came from foreign governmental entities.
100% of our testimonies came from soldiers who served in the occupied territories.

"This distinction between civilians and terrorist infrastructure, it didn't matter. Nobody cared. We decided on a line which is the borderline, past which everyone is a suspect, but it's not clear to me how familiar Palestinians are with this line."

Captain, Armored Corps, Southern Gaza Strip