

# **A LIFE EXPOSED**

## **Military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank**

**Executive Summary and  
Selected Testimonies**

## A joint project by Yesh Din, Breaking the Silence and Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI)

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# A LIFE EXPOSED

## Military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank

Most of us think of our home as a place of safety. As night falls, we shut the door and gather inside with our family, safe in the knowledge that we are protected from the outside world within our walls. The knowledge that when our door is closed, no one can invade our private space without our permission enables the peace of mind and comfort we feel at home.

Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank, however, are constantly vulnerable to arbitrary invasion of their homes by Israeli security forces and the severe, resulting harm. Invasions by the Israeli military into Palestinian homes in the West Bank are an inseparable part of life under the occupation and the system of control over the Palestinian population. Among the variety of practices that characterize Israel's military control over the West Bank, the harm caused by home invasions is particularly severe as it robs individuals, families and communities of the fundamental certainty that their home is their castle.

A home gives its dwellers a sense of identity and security. Controlling what goes on inside it is a fundamental condition of personal liberty, perhaps second only to control over one's body. Forced intrusion by agents of the regime into the home is a severe violation of a person's dignity, liberty and privacy. For this reason, all legal systems that respect human rights place strict limitations on governmental authorities, designed to reduce the use of such actions as much as possible and protect individuals from harm.

Palestinians in the West Bank do not enjoy similar protections. Israel does not limit invasion into their homes to exceptional cases in which there are concrete suspicions against an individual and invading their home is critical to averting the threat they pose. Military law in the West Bank does not require a judicial warrant confirming the necessity of the intrusion in order to invade the private domain. As such, it leaves Palestinians constantly vulnerable to arbitrary invasions into their homes.

Almost every night, armed Israeli soldiers raid homes, wake women, men and children, and carry out different actions inside the homes of Palestinian residents. According to UN figures, these invasions occur more than 200 times each month. Beyond the harm suffered by individuals and families as a result of the intrusion into their homes, this practice effectively serves as a

means to oppress and intimidate the Palestinian population and increase control over it.

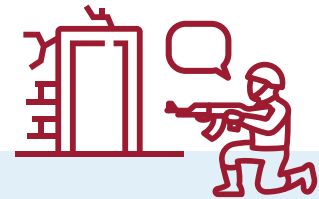
"A Life Exposed" is the product of a joint project launched by Yesh Din, Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI) and Breaking the Silence in 2018. It presents the practice of raiding Palestinian homes in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) and its impacts and offers an outline of the provisions within military legislation that regulate and enable it. This legal outline provides the basis for an analysis of home invasions in light of international law, which defines Israel's obligations as the occupying power in the West Bank and helps expose how this practice brazenly violates these legal provisions.

158



testimonies collected by Yesh Din from Palestinian men and women who experienced such invasions.

45



interviews (a sample selected from 80 interviews) conducted by Breaking the Silence with Israeli soldiers and officers substantiated and supplemented knowledge of how these invasions unfold and provided insight on their goals and on the directives given to the soldiers who carry them out.

31



interviews PHRI conducted with Palestinians whose homes were invaded by soldiers helped assess the serious impact invasions have on the mental health of individuals, families and communities.

## Military invasions into homes: Main features

# 01

**"They completely destroyed our sense, one that everyone has, that home is the most peaceful, safest place. What they did is a kind of terrorism."<sup>1</sup>**

It is possible to identify four main types of military invasions into Palestinian homes in the West Bank: Searches for money, weapons or other items in the home; arrest of one or more members of the family; "mapping" and documenting the physical features of the house and the identity of its occupants; and seizure for operational needs - for instance, setting up an observation or shooting post in a room or on the roof, or using the house as a hiding place. Although invasions for different purposes diverge in terms of their legal basis and the particular actions carried out during the invasion, they do follow similar trajectories.

The vast majority of these invasions take place late at night or in the hours before dawn: 88% of the incidents documented in the project began between midnight and 5:00 A.M. Israel openly admits that nocturnal invasions are conducted as a matter of policy, even though this modus operandi exacerbates the harm to members of the household. The number of soldiers intruding into the house ranges from a handful (about five) to about 30. The average duration of an invasion, in the cases documented, is roughly about 80 minutes.

The invasion usually begins with shouting and banging on the door, followed by an aggressive, violent entry of armed and sometimes masked soldiers into the home. In about a quarter of the documented cases, soldiers did not wait for the door to be opened by a member of the household, but forced it open by damaging or destroying it. Once inside the house, in most cases, soldiers order all members of the household, including children, to gather in one room where they remain under guard, helpless and unable to move freely (such orders were documented in 88% of the search invasions). In some cases, the soldiers themselves wake up members of the household, including children.

In the absence of an obligation, under military law, to obtain judicial warrants approving the intrusion into the private domain, soldiers do not present family members any warrant or other document as to why they are invading the home or who approved the invasion. The soldiers' conduct during the invasions is predicated on aggression, show of force and intimidation. In some cases,

physical force or violence was used (in about a quarter of the documented cases), or threats, including pointing firearms at the heads or bodies of members of the household (30% of documented cases). Use of threats or physical violence is an almost inevitable result of any disagreement or conflict between members of the household and the soldiers. The message relayed to Palestinians is that not only are their homes vulnerable to arbitrary invasion by soldiers without any possibility of resistance, but that their bodies are also constantly vulnerable to harm.

## Impact on mental health

# 02

**"I cannot provide for the needs of the home, and I have no control over it. I am cast away from my home, and my enemy is inside it, breaking things and hurting my children, and I can do nothing. [...] My home is mine. How can it be that they can remove me from it by the power of their weapons?"<sup>2</sup>**

Home invasions are potentially traumatic events as they involve a sudden, forced intrusion into the victims' private space (much like burglary), along with a real experience of threat and fear of physical harm. In fact, the main issue reported by interviewees who experienced a home invasion was the sense of loss of control - which is the core of the trauma. Loss of control was described both as part of the experience during the home invasion itself and as a lingering feeling after the event.

Adults who experienced home invasions reported post-traumatic stress and anxiety symptoms that could interfere with their functioning and daily life. Reports of reactions associated with hyperarousal (a state in which the body remains on constant alert and has difficulty relaxing) and possibly related sleep disruptions stood out. Symptoms associated with hyperarousal and sleep disruptions were also reported among children and adolescents (from infancy to age 17), along with symptoms of anxiety, increased dependency on parents and aggressive behavior.

Trauma recovery requires rebuilding a sense of confidence and trust in oneself and one's surroundings by turning to a safe environment. However, the association made between the home

1. Testimony collected by Yesh Din from Lutfi Ahmad, Silwad, April 2, 2018, Yesh Din Case 4096/18.

2. Testimony collected by PHRI from Hend Hemed, Silwad, January 21, 2019, Yesh Din Case 4348/19.

and the experience of loss of control within it makes it difficult to rebuild trust in it. This difficulty can be exacerbated in light of a possible return of soldiers to the same home. This aggravates the mental harm associated with home invasions, as it makes recovery extremely difficult.

Consequently, home invasions may seriously impede daily functioning and the emotional and mental development of both adults and children. In addition, frequent home invasions in a specific area (a city, village or neighborhood) may also interfere with relationships within society or the community and produce a climate of fear and intimidation.



Soldiers invade the Tamimi family home in the village of Nabi Salah, August 23, 2020. | Photo: From a video shot by Janna Tamimi

## Search and arrest: Military law ostensibly provides a legal framework that allows arbitrary use of force against Palestinians.

# 03

"When you conduct a search in a Palestinian's home – it's not that you need a court order. You need to want to do it, and then you do it. [...] In Hebron, if you're a Palestinian, I'll enter your house whenever I feel like it, and search for whatever I want, and I'll turn your house upside down if I want to."<sup>3</sup>

Military law takes an extremely permissive approach with respect to allowing Israeli security forces to enter Palestinian homes in the West Bank, contrary to the common approach in any legal system that respects human rights. This approach is clearly expressed in the fact that the Order regarding Security Provisions does not require a judicial warrant for the execution of such an act and allows

any officer to order a home search.<sup>4</sup> The circumstances in which homes may be searched are defined broadly and vaguely, and they are not confined to instances where an offense is suspected, or where there is concrete, substantiated suspicion. As a result, almost any situation could meet the conditions for approving a military invasion into a Palestinian home in the West Bank.

Likewise, arresting Palestinian residents does not require a judicial warrant and low-level suspicion suffices for approval. These provisions apply to any arrest, whether conducted by raiding a home or any other way. However, arrests during home invasions exacerbate the harm not just to the person being arrested themselves, but to the people around them as well. Whether or not this additional harm is necessary is never assessed by an external actor, allowing widespread use of the practice.

Judicial review is designed to limit the power of the executive branch to intrude into the private domain. It is an external mechanism that weighs the applicant's interests against the interest of protecting the individual and, as such, presumably prevents abuse of power. The absence of a requirement for judicial review, coupled with the broad, vague definition of the conditions in which home invasions are permissible, give the military a draconian, even despotic, power to use force, leading to arbitrary violations of Palestinians' rights, or, in other words, a violation that is not necessary and not founded on concrete, substantiated suspicions. The granting of such broad, unchecked powers creates a legal lacuna in military law, which means the act is carried out without any legal basis at all.

International law prohibits arbitrary impingement on the rights of individuals living under occupation and establishes that any such violation may be permissible only if it is based on concrete suspicion, serves a proper purpose, and has the narrowest possible effect. The permissive approval system set forth in the Order regarding Security Provisions is a far cry from the standards established by international legal institutions, and it allows arbitrary and disproportionate violations of the dignity and privacy of Palestinians in the West Bank. As such, this permissive system results in the abdication of the duties of the occupying power under international law to ensure public order and safety in the area under its control, a duty that includes preserving normal life for the occupied population and protecting its members' fundamental rights.<sup>5</sup> These legal provisions fail to meet the requirements set forth in the laws that give the military commander the power to legislate and operate in the occupied territory in the first place. In other words, this law violates norms of a higher order.

3. Testimony collected by Breaking the Silence from a lieutenant, Nachal 932, 2014. For the full testimony, see: Breaking the Silence, Occupying Hebron: Soldiers' Testimonies from Hebron 2011-2017, pp. 40–41

4. Order regarding Security Provisions[Consolidated Version] (Judea and Samaria) (No. 1651), 5770-2009, Section 67.

5. Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1907), Article 43 of the Regulations Annexed to The Hague Convention.

In practice, home invasions do take place in cases where there is only slight suspicion against household members or none at all. In many cases, perhaps most cases, a search ends in nothing, as clearly emerges from testimonies given by both Palestinians and soldiers. Home invasions without any concrete suspicions against household members occur in a number of circumstances, for instance, during routine patrols in the city of Hebron, or when widescale search and arrest raids are conducted in a particular village or area following unusual incidents, demonstrations or “riots”, as well as for the purpose of “mapping” (see below).

Even in cases where there are some suspicions against members of the household, the permissive approach in military law allows for disproportionate use of the power to invade private space for the purpose of search and arrest. In this context, the common practice of nocturnal arrest raids inside homes stands out. Despite the severe harm inflicted on entire families, the military does not limit the use of nocturnal arrests to particularly grave cases, for instance, when the person being sought is a flight risk, but rather, uses these as a routine method. Alternatives, such as a summoning for interrogation, are never seriously considered, even in the case of minors.

## “Mappings”

# 04

**“[A soldier] started taking pictures of all of us, including the women who came out to see what was going on. I protested that they were taking pictures of the women too, and all the rooms in the house. The commander replied that they were taking pictures without authorization, without reason, and without consent - just like that! The women were very frightened.”<sup>6</sup>**

“Mapping”, in the sense of creating a map, is a term the military uses for soldiers invading Palestinian homes in the West Bank and collecting information about the structure of the home and its occupants. The official purpose of “mapping” is gathering intelligence. Accordingly, these types of invasions are usually conducted in homes in which no occupant is suspected of illegal activities or considered dangerous.

The harm inflicted by “mapping” invasions is twofold: Like other invasions, they violate the dignity and safety of the occupants. However, these particular invasions also involve the collection of private information about a broad section of the population that is suspected of nothing, against its will. Invading private space and collecting information without reasonable suspicion contradict the fundamental logic underlying the rule of law in legal systems that respect human rights, which is that the regime may not violate the rights of individuals unless they are suspected of an offense or pose a real threat. We must state the obvious here: The very identity of Palestinian residents of the West Bank makes them neither suspect nor dangerous and cannot justify the violation of their rights.

Invasions of Palestinian homes for the purpose of “mapping” has no explicit legal basis either in military law or in the provisions of international humanitarian law. The military presumably considers “mapping” as falling under the laws of war - the legal framework that applies to situations meeting the definition of “armed conflict.” The laws of war do grant the occupying forces extremely broad powers to perform actions required for military purposes. However, these broad powers apply only in situations or needs that fall under the definition of armed conflict. They do not apply to situations that are better described as law enforcement or maintenance of public order.<sup>7</sup>

Despite this, testimonies show that soldiers view “mapping” mainly as a tool for intimidation, “making their presence felt,” and establishing control over the Palestinian population and that, in some cases, the information collected during these “mappings” is never used. Testimonies further reveal that these are routine military operations throughout the West Bank, and sometimes, “mapping” targets are chosen randomly. These testimonies reveal that at least some of the military’s “mappings” are done without any legal basis, even within the broad framework supplied by the laws of war and military law.

Moreover, actions that are taken due to military need are also subject to the principle of proportionality, which requires a balance between the harm expected as a result of the military action and its anticipated, concrete, direct benefit. In other words, even when there is a real military need, the military must strike a balance between the benefit gained by “mapping” and the harm it might cause.

6. Testimony collected by Yesh Din from Marshad Karaki, Hebron, August 21, 2019, Yesh Din Case 4506/19.

7. See, e.g.: The Public Committee to examine the Maritime Incident of May 31, 2010 - The Turkel Commission, Second Report: Israel's Mechanisms for Examining and Investigating Complaints and Claims of Violations of the Laws of Armed Conflict According to International Law (February 2013), pp. 68-69. For more see also: HCJ 3003/18 Yesh Din v. Chief of Staff, petition (Hebrew), April 15, 2018, paras. 36-46.

Home invasions for the purpose of “mapping” demonstrate how, in a reality of prolonged occupation, the Israeli military blurs the distinction between actions designed to protect against enemies and actions designed to retain control over the population and oppress any civilian resistance to it, even when such resistance does not include militarized action. This obfuscation results in severe violations of the rights of Palestinians. It is an immoral and frequently unlawful practice, both because there is often no justification to treat the mappings as wartime actions and because of the severe, disproportionate impingement on the rights of Palestinians.

## Seizure for operational needs

# 05

“For a year and a half now, soldiers have invaded the two top floors of the building. They come and go as if the building were their own [...] They are present in the building 24 hours [a day]. Military jeeps bring food and water during the day and night. The place has become a base full of officers and soldiers.”<sup>8</sup>

In these actions, the home, or part of it, is temporarily seized by the military (in some cases there is a seizure warrant) and, for hours or days, access to it is limited and movement inside it is controlled by soldiers. These invasions have no connection to members of the family - their actions or items they keep in the house - but rather to the structure itself or its location, which makes it useful from a military standpoint. In some of these seizures, soldiers display utter disrespect for the space they have invaded. Examples include sleeping in household members’ beds, using the washrooms and leaving them filthy, and even expelling bodily waste in stairwells or on rooftops.

The power to execute such a seizure comes from the laws of occupation under international law, which allow the occupying forces to requisition private property for urgent, imperative military needs.<sup>9</sup> Taking over the homes of innocent people and using them for genuine security purposes may be unavoidable in some situations. Still, the Israeli military makes frequent use of this measure in cases that do not involve imperative, urgent military needs, and does so disproportionately.

Home seizures frequently occur without giving proper weight to the severe harm they inflict on the family and without the military seriously considering less injurious alternatives. So, for instance, seizing a Palestinian home to provide security for a settler Bar Mitzvah celebration or a musical performance does not constitute an imperative military necessity, but is rather a patently illegitimate act and a clear breach of international law.

## Home invasions as a tool for deterrence, intimidation and collective punishment

# 06

“It produces fear and terror and this whole business of making [our] presence felt, which we were required to do - not just to be there, but to be seen to be there. So, just like you go into a village so they see you’re going into the village and you’re not afraid, and to show them you’re here, the same effect, in different form, happens when you allow yourself to enter homes every night, or every other night, or every week, even families that didn’t do anything and have nothing to do with anything.”<sup>10</sup>

Home invasions ostensibly have a purpose such as searches, arrests and even intel-gathering (mappings). However, soldier testimonies reveal additional purposes for these actions, first and foremost, creating deterrence and intimidation to increase military control over the population.

Using home invasions for these purposes is particularly evident in mappings. Testimonies given by soldiers and officers reveal that a key objective of these actions is what the military calls, “making its presence felt” and “creating a sense of persecution,” in other words, disrupting Palestinians’ daily lives and sense of safety in order to instill in them the sense that the military is on the ground and in control, thereby stubbing out any attempts at resistance or protest before they happen. Additionally, cases of mappings used in the context of incidents such as stone-throwing, clashes with the military and participation in demonstrations, in order to discourage the community or individuals within it from taking part in such incidents, have been documented.

8. Testimony collected by Yesh Din from Ghazi Shehadeh, Huwarah, June 26, 2016, Yesh Din Case 3652/16.

9. Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1907), Articles 52 and 23(g) of the Regulations Annexed to The Hague Convention. These articles prohibit seizing property or requisitioning services from the population of an occupied territory, unless “imperatively demanded by the necessities of war.”

10. Testimony collected by Breaking the Silence from a captain, Air Force Air Defense Artillery, 2000-2014 (including reserve duty), Testimony No. 51.



Soldiers invade the Tamimi family home in the village of Nabi Salah, August 23, 2020. | Photo: From a video shot by Janna Tamimi

Similar use of home invasions as a deterrent is made in search and arrest raids conducted in response to stone-throwing or attacks and attempted attacks on Israeli soldiers or civilians. Invading homes without concrete suspicions against any of the occupants is an element of military action designed to deter and sow fear in the community, and in some cases, collectively punish an entire community for the actions of individuals.

This practice may amount to a violation of the prohibition on collective punishment (the punishment of a person or a group of people for an offense they did not commit themselves) set out in international law as well as the prohibition on intimidating and terrorizing people living under occupation. Moreover, invading homes for deterrence is at complete odds with ICRC commentary on the Geneva Convention, which clarifies that intimidation must not be used to dissuade people from resisting military rule.

## Wholesale prioritization of military need over reducing rights violations

# 07

"We never talked about entering homes during training [...] Nothing is said about how to communicate with the population, how to go into a home in an area that is not a combat zone. Absolutely zero training on service in the Territories."<sup>11</sup>

Unlike wartime actions, military invasions into homes take place in the wider context of an area with a civilian population – innocent

children, women and men - that is held under military occupation. Despite this, it appears that the military does not make a clear distinction between combat action engaging an enemy and home invasions. Soldiers and officers receive no designated training on conduct vis-à-vis Palestinian civilians or the protection of their rights. The result is that Israeli soldiers invade Palestinian homes in the West Bank with only one toolbox - the toolbox of soldiers engaging with an enemy.

The manner in which invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank are carried out reflects an absolute prioritization of operational needs, or even the convenience of the soldiers who are invading the home at that moment, over minimizing the impingement on the rights of the home's Palestinian occupants. This precedence is reflected in the protocols the military follows during home invasions, which automatically impinge on rights, most prominently, the practice of confining family members to a single room.

The secondary importance the military ascribes to protecting Palestinians' rights when intruding into their homes is reflected in the absence of binding, publicly accessible directives on protecting these rights, such as directives intended to prevent arbitrary damage to property. It is also reflected in soldiers and officers' lack of familiarity with directives concerning the protection of minors when their homes are invaded or when they are arrested. Without such directives, the extent to which the rights of household members are violated varies according to the personality and whim of the commander on the ground.



Soldiers invade the Tamimi family home in the village of Nabi Salah, August 23, 2020. | Photo: From a video shot by Janna Tamimi

11. Testimony collected by Breaking the Silence from a staff sergeant, Nachal Brigade Battalion 50, 2012-2015, Testimony No. 46.



## Systemic discrimination on the basis of ethnicity

# 08

Intrusion of police officers into the home of an Israeli family living in a settlement or in an unauthorized outpost is carried out under Israeli law, which is dramatically different from the military law by virtue of which an invasion of a Palestinian family's home takes place. This is the case despite the fact that both settlers and Palestinians live in the occupied West Bank, sometimes just hundreds of meters from one another.

Unlike military law, Israeli law takes the approach that law enforcement agencies should have difficulty entering civilians' private spaces. A clear example of this gap can be found in the dramatic disparity between military law provisions on the power to search a person's home (as described above) and the provisions of Israeli law on the same power. Israeli law stipulates that searches should be conducted according to a judicial warrant issued on the basis of evidence and concrete information that point to substantiated suspicion and in keeping with a limited list of offenses. Searches without a warrant are permitted in rare cases, for instance, when there is a substantiated fear that a crime is underway at the site.

The prohibition on discrimination is a fundamental principle of both international and Israeli law. The existence of two separate legal systems in the West Bank produces blatant discrimination on a national-ethnic basis between two populations living in the same territory under one rule. Applying a different legal system to Israelis and Palestinians on the basis of national distinction means inequality before the law and constitutes a clear violation of the prohibition on discrimination on the basis of nationality set forth in international human rights law. Moreover, the presence of two legal systems and the systemic discrimination this produces can also be identified with the crime of apartheid. This observation is supported by the fact that this dual legal system is not a standalone questionable practice, but one of many practices designed to establish and perpetuate a regime of Israeli domination and oppression of Palestinians.

## A Life Exposed

# 09

The Israeli practice of invading Palestinian homes in the West Bank and the procedures governing it strip Palestinian residents of their right to live free, safe and secure in their own homes. It leaves them exposed to the constant threat of harm by armed soldiers who represent a military regime that controls them against their will. This policy severely violates the rights of adults and children, harm their health and contravenes the provisions of international law concerning the protection of individuals and communities from arbitrary violations of their dignity, liberty, privacy, customs and bodies by the occupying forces.

The consequences of this practice go beyond any separate instance of harm caused to an individual or a family. The ever-present threat of possible invasion makes this policy a violent, oppressive tool that serves as a central element in Israel's system of control over the Palestinian population. These invasions are part of the lived experiences of many in the West Bank, producing a general climate of fear and intimidation. As such, their potential impact on Palestinians stretches beyond the present and into the future.



# **Selected testimonies of Palestinians and Israeli soldiers on invasion of homes in the occupied territories**

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The testimonies of Palestinians presented in this booklet were edited from interviews conducted by Yesh Din field researchers and volunteers. Testimonies from soldiers were collected by the team at Breaking the Silence, and the full interviews appear on the organization's website. In certain cases, identifying information was omitted in order to comply with witnesses' requests and when necessary, when such details could identify the testifier.

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# My wife and I were helpless while our house was being destroyed

Lutfi Ahmad, 56, married father of eight | Silwad | April 2, 2018.

I live in Silwad, I work laying tiles. I live in the eastern neighborhood in the village. My sons and daughters have left home, and I live with only my wife. One son is a security prisoner, he was sentenced to 13 years in jail for being affiliated with a Fatah organization, which is illegal according to Israel. He's served ten years and will be released in three years.

Over the years we've gotten used to the army coming into our home. Last year they did it three times. They never presented a warrant or any document or said why. The last time was the most violent.

On April 2 at 2 A.M. while my wife and I were asleep, I heard very, very loud and scary knocking on the door and shouting in broken Arabic: "Iftach, iftach!" [Open up, open up!] I jumped out of bed and hurried to the door before they'd have a chance to break it down. Outside stood 20 unmasked soldiers, weapons drawn and aimed at my head. One of them asked for my ID card and took it.

After that they demanded I sit in the corner of the living room and they called my wife and told her to sit and not move. I asked them - "Why have you come? What do you want?" The answer was - "Shut your mouth." They presented no warrant or document.

Two soldiers with weapons drawn guarded us so we wouldn't move. We couldn't see what was going on. The rest of the soldiers spread out in the 170 square-meter apartment. This went on for two hours and fifteen minutes. During this time, we

could hear things falling and breaking, and when I asked: "What are you doing?" They silenced me. My wife and I were helpless while our house was being destroyed. I started picturing the destruction that would be waiting for us when they left, and it was very difficult for me. My wife was in hysterics, and when she shouted, they silenced her too.

Suddenly they left the house with my ID card, and when I asked when I would receive it, the soldier silenced me and told us not to leave the house until they left completely. At 5:00 A.M., they left completely.

The house looked like there had been an earthquake. Everything was broken, the upholstery on the sofas was torn, cupboards and drawers were broken. The kitchen was covered in shattered glass from glasses and plates. There was mud everywhere because it was raining, and they came in with muddy shoes. They didn't take anything, but the damage was immense. This was the first time they raided our home so violently and caused so much damage. When I went outside, I found my ID card lying in the yard.

My wife nearly fainted when she saw the damage. They completely destroyed the feeling that every person has that home is the quietest and safest place. What they did was a kind of terrorizing. If soldiers could imagine someone doing this to their homes, maybe they wouldn't behave this way. I don't want to file a complaint against the army. Because nothing will happen and because I'm afraid they'll harass me.

# You choose the house randomly

First sergeant | Bislamach Brigade (School for Infantry Corps Professions and Squad Commanders) | 2012-2015

We went into the house, we were 15 soldiers, knocking or not knocking on the door, I think we did knock and we'd say, we don't speak Arabic, we tell them to call the whole family, these are relatively large houses but they're pretty rich in this area. We call everyone, I really didn't like it, but it was like a kind of a period, when I really felt we were just entering people's homes and taking the kids, house after house.

What happened was there were a few children there, a few women, an older man and an older woman. There was one man there. I called everyone to go into one place. And then I told my soldiers like: go do a search. Really, they went to turn the house upside down.

In the meantime, this family, I said right, I'll stay with the family and I don't want anyone else staying with them, like so I could see they were fine. I'll like guard them. Then, I'm like, aiming my weapon at them, so they don't startle me or something like that, and they start speaking Arabic to me, and they try to tell me something; the older man is trying to tell me something, and I don't understand Arabic; there's no one who knows Arabic. In the meantime, they [the soldiers] are searching and I say, I don't understand, I don't understand. They [the Palestinians in the house] repeat it again and again and again, trying to tell me something and I like don't understand. And it gets frustrating at some point, and I feel that they, that it's not calm, so I tell them to shut up at some point, and I point my weapon at them, so they shut up.

They [the soldiers] are performing the search and I'm making sure that they stay there. And then after about say 20 minutes or so, most of the soldiers come back and they tell me they haven't found a suspect, and this family is stressed out and all the soldiers are next to them again and it got chaotic and I didn't like that. In the meantime, they [the Palestinians] start up again, the family is really crying and telling they want - and I don't understand what they want. Then the old man gets up and I tell him to sit and he starts seizing, he was having an epileptic seizure and I realized they wanted to bring him his

medicine and I didn't agree, I told them to shut their mouths, shut their mouths, and they tried to explain it to me and I don't understand Arabic and I really got scared, I got goosebumps and he was shaking on the floor, I didn't know what to do.

And the old woman starts crying and ripped her shirt, as though he were dead and she's looking at me like I murdered him, and I was just in shock. I was wondering what I should do and he was choking and his whole family was crying hysterically and I was thinking, I called the Red Crescent, the ambulance, it took time [for them to arrive]. And you also know it's all checkpoints out there, it's all army out there. It took a little while for the ambulance to arrive and the family is like, I'm not letting them move and he's lying there and the ambulance arrives and by that time he's like not breathing or I don't know what condition he's in, I felt like really, I couldn't understand whether he was dead or alive.

They took him away and I remember them looking at me, and the way we felt during those moments stayed with me for a while, and I was very angry at myself, like all they really wanted was for me to let them bring his medicine and I wouldn't let them, I told them to shut up and that was the decision I made at that moment as the commander. You choose the house randomly anyway.

## How did the incident end? Was he taken by the ambulance?

The ambulance took him. In the end nothing came out of it, but what did happen was that this family must have experienced pretty serious trauma and if I were a kid, knowing that my family is a pretty normal family that hasn't done anything bad to anyone, and if 20 soldiers were to come into my house and make a huge mess, emptying drawers, and if someone aimed a weapon at me and then I saw my grandfather humiliate himself like that, that's definitely an experience you remember for the rest of your life, it's traumatic and this certainly isn't the only time such a thing happened. It was really painful because it was unnecessary.

# At three A.M. [...] soldiers broke down the door

I.R, 57, married mother of seven | Yatta | May 31, 2018

I'm the mother of seven, three of my sons are in prison. Two of my sons are married and live in the neighborhood, and two girls live with us – one is 33 and the other is 14. My husband is deaf and mute, he uses sign language and needs crutches to move around. A while ago he was shot in the knee by soldiers when he couldn't hear their order to stop, and so he didn't obey their order to stop. Since then he's been raising and training songbirds, he makes a living from selling them. We have a lot of birdcages at home.

We live in a two-story apartment in a building where three other families live. My husband and I live on the top floor and my daughters live on the bottom floor. We suffer from the army coming into our home frequently. I can't tell you the number of times exactly, at least ten times a year. When it happens, they violently take us into the living room and guard us so that we don't interrupt their searches or arrests. So far they haven't taken anything from our home, they've only arrested, hit, made a mess and caused damage. We don't have any problems with settlers - they're far.

On the night of May 31, 2018 at three A.M., as I was getting up to prepare the meal we eat before the fast for those who leave to pray, I heard strong knocking on the door. I shouted at them to wait for me to get dressed. In the meantime, soldiers broke down the door and entered. I don't know how many, a lot, I estimate there were about 50 soldiers in the house and in the yard. Three wore masks and one spoke Arabic. There was a female soldier with them, and two or three police officers. They didn't show us any documents.

My husband stayed with about ten soldiers on the top floor and I ran downstairs to wake up the girls. In the meantime, my married sons who were on their way to the mosque spotted

the soldiers and came over. The soldiers seated in the hall of the stairwell and guarded them. The Arabic speaker yelled, where is Hamas' money? We answered that we don't have any. The girls and I were taken into a room on the bottom floor, and the [female] soldier demanded we strip and then searched us. She demanded we take everything off, even our underwear. In F's (33) wallet, the soldier found 2,000 ILS, which is her seamstress salary from the sewing workshop. The soldier then turned to me and demanded I strip. I took all my clothes off. I had no money on me. A. (14) refused to strip, and the soldier cuffed her, pushed her and took her clothes off, and didn't find anything on her either.

After the soldier finished with us, we went out to the hallway. That's where I saw the soldiers taking money from my sons without strip searching them. One works as a plasterer, they took 200 ILS from him and 2,000 ILS from my other son. The neighbor's son, who was on his way to the mosque, the soldiers put him with us and took 350 ILS from him. The Arabic-speaking soldier translated the police officer who interrogated us: "Was all the money received from Hamas as support for the relatives of prisoners [in Israel]?" We said no. He tried to force us to sign a document in Arabic saying they confiscated Hamas money from us. We refused.

At about 4:30 A.M. the soldiers left after saying they were sorry they had left a little bit of a mess behind... From my husband I understood that they searched the top floor thoroughly for money, turning over the birdcages, but they didn't find anything. When soldiers enter our home, I get very anxious about my children's future. I'm the only one in our entire family who regularly visits my three sons who are in different prisons in Israel. I have a Jerusalem ID card, and so at least they can't stop me from doing that.

# Sometimes you knock on the door and sometimes you break down the door

First sergeant, Nahal 50th Battalion | Nablus | 2011-2014

Usually the house is circled by soldiers who are positioned so that they are supposed to seal off all possible exits or entrances, identify people who are trying to either enter or leave the house. And then sometimes you knock on the door and sometimes you break down the door.

## How do you decide whether to break it or knock?

There's rarely an operational motivation for it. Often, the motivation is practice, meaning we got a breaching tool for the first time; no one knows how to use it, so it is decided that we break into a house now. Usually, I think with one exception where it was clear to me why a breach was necessary, everything was completely random.

With the breaching equipment we have it usually took longer to breach than to knock, meaning it could take three or four minutes and it makes a lot of noise. That means it wasn't operationally effective. Half of the times we broke the door using these breach mechanisms, by the time the door was broken the people inside the house had already offered to open the door. There was even one time we couldn't break down the door, it was already damaged so that it couldn't be opened and we got stuck, meaning the door got stuck and whoever was inside couldn't open it for us and we couldn't open it from our side, we had to wait to understand how to break it completely.

We had a giant deputy company commander and at some point, we discovered that when he kicked doors that weren't very strong, they fell. For example, say we went to a house, one with a relatively large yard right at the entrance to Balata Refugee Camp, we walked down to the house from [the settlement] Yitzhar, arrived at the yard, gathered around, there was a small gate at the entrance closed with a tiny bolt, the kind you could reach your hand around the door and unlock, it's actually a gate for animals, for a little homestead. Then the Shin Bet [Security Service] officers asked the deputy company commander to break that door and he gave it a serious kick and it fell in entirely. And made a lot of noise, it woke up the people inside the house, we went into the yard, reached the door and when we got to the door they were still busy being excited about how he knocked down the door to the yard, and we managed to just knock on the regular door and wait for it to be opened.

# My younger son, who is eight [...] saw the soldiers and immediately got scared and wet his pants

S.E, 40, married mother of three | Beit Ummar | June 9, 2018

I'm 40 years old, I live in al-Baq'a neighborhood in Beir Ummar, I'm married and the mother of two boys and a girl. My eldest son is ten, his brother is eight and my daughter is three. I'm a homemaker, I live on the second floor with my husband and our children. My brother-in-law and his family live on the first floor.

We're used to the army being in the village. The army comes into houses a lot, also in our neighborhood. The army came into our home four times. The last time was two and a half years ago. Usually they enter and perform a search. Sometimes violently, sometimes not. They always come at night. In two out of the four times, the soldiers were violent and damaged the furniture.

Yesterday, Saturday June 9, 2018 at 5:30 A.M. we were all asleep. Suddenly I heard knocking at the door, there was noise and shouting in Hebrew. I jumped out of bed and woke my husband up. I got dressed and opened the door. A soldier stood at the entrance, his face wasn't covered, and he trained his weapon on me. A lot of soldiers were standing behind him, more than I could count.

Five or six soldiers came inside. They didn't show us a warrant. The soldiers ordered everyone who lives here to come to the entrance. The soldier spoke in broken Arabic and I spoke in broken English. I told the soldier that my husband is sick with a heart condition and recently had heart surgery, and that my ten-year-old son has asthma, but he didn't listen.

This soldier went into the kitchen and started looking for the people. My son got scared, had an attack, started trembling all over, he was in bad condition. He was afraid, he came to me, hugged me and didn't want to let go. My younger son, who is eight, has been wetting himself ever since our home was invaded two and a half years ago. He saw the soldiers and immediately got scared and wet his pants, again. I felt terrible.

I wanted to calm the children, but I also wanted to see what the soldiers were doing in the house. The soldiers brought us all to one room and a soldier stayed and guarded the entrance with his weapon drawn so make sure we didn't leave. Before I went into the room, I saw two female soldiers come into the house with dogs. The children started yelling and I lost control over them. When I tried to look for a blanket to cover the children, the soldiers threatened that if I wandered around, they would shoot me.

They started to search the house. They stayed inside the house until 8 A.M. They didn't let us go to the bathroom. While we were shut in the room, we heard things falling in the house again and again. At about 8 A.M. they left. They didn't say anything, no explanation, just left.

After we left the room we could see that the house was in complete disarray, as though there had been an earthquake. They poured the bags of sugar in the kitchen. They didn't do any body searches and they didn't take anything. They talked aggressively but they didn't cause damage.

We're still traumatized. My children are afraid to sleep by themselves. They're irritable and don't have an appetite.



# The parents get angry and confused, and the children cry and often pee their pants

First sergeant | Duvdevan Unit | 2005-2008

[In my unit] there was this thing that for the end of your course of training, after you finish up your training, we'd go out on a last activity that is a kind of exercise. They'd tell us: you're going out to train, it's something the battalion [soldiers] do, it's called "mapping". What's its purpose? [Its purpose] is to map the house, that's what they told us. And then they'd tell us: in order for you to be prepared for the serious arrests you are about to perform, 'pressure cooker' arrests<sup>12</sup> and all sorts of things like that, start, practice mapping, the simple activity battalions perform, a routine [activity], and it'll prepare you.

Every team would get a target inside some village and would go map it. Now, this usually means a raid in the middle of the night, sneaking into the village. And in this village, there would be a house you'd get, and this house was by definition uninvolved [Palestinians not involved in fighting]. They would tell us in advance that they are uninvolved, people who aren't actually involved in terrorism, innocents to use a euphemism, but everyone without exception was always a potential threat. You never know who might do something, so in this case too they were a potential threat.

What you do, after we infiltrate the village, is we surround the house completely. As opposed to what we do during arrests - when we try to lure people out of the house by escalating the situation - we use, this time we go knock on the door to the house. Just like that. I had the team commander and I went with him. We went and knocked on the door to the house and the head of the family opens the door. We tell him, "We're here to perform an activity, please go inside, open all doors, turn all the lights on, bring everyone in the family to the living room, we're here to investigate you." Someone [a soldier] is told that he needs to draw the house, he takes a piece of paper and tries to draw the entrances, exits, rooms and that kind of thing.

## Was it on a page designed for this?

No, I recall it being a very crumpled piece of paper, we drew very badly, it was impossible to understand anything from it [later] I'm sure.

## Was there any explanation for how to sketch a house, was there a briefing?

Not really, and also like, this was the only time we really did it this way, the mapping. It was just training in the end. Live practice.

## What do you do with it?

I have no idea what happened to the paper. And then after we go inside, somebody scribbles something, I remember it being very embarrassing, that picture. Simultaneously we had to map the family, and this is what always happened again and again when we went into houses, you go into the house, and panic starts. The parents get angry and confused, and the children cry and often pee their pants; you actually see them peeing their pants. Screaming, crying, and you have to get them to quiet down as fast as possible: if it's an arrest - you can't have them waking up the whole area, and in this [mapping] too, we had to silence them.

And, you like find yourself either yelling at children or trying to calm children down, or you order the parents to shut their kids up. It was always a super stressful, super complicated situation. You move them quickly to a spot where they're less likely to be heard, to a side room. But you see, again and again, every time you enter a house, whether it's an arrest or mapping, what it does to the kids.

## What tools do you have to cope with that?

Your weapon. It's your most powerful means for successfully handling the situation.

12. A method in which forces surround the house and pressure the wanted person to come out in various ways, which sometimes include gunfire and even use of heavy machinery to demolish the house.

# The man kept hitting me in the face with his hands, which were covered, maybe with brass knuckles

Munther Mazhar, 47, married father of four | a-Doha | February 20, 2019

I'm blind and disabled. On February 20, 2019 early in the morning, sometime between 3:30 and 4:00 A.M., I heard sounds from the direction of the living room in my apartment. My wife and I were sleeping in our bed in our bedroom. When I heard the sounds, I asked my wife if it was our kids who had woken up early and were making noise. Before my wife could answer, she started screaming. I didn't understand why, but just then, someone started hitting me in the face. He held my hand with one of his hands and beat me with his other. I didn't know who it was because I couldn't see him. My wife kept screaming. I thought the person who was beating me was a burglar, because I got beaten without being told who was beating me and why. I was in shock. I was afraid of the blows to my head.

After a few minutes, I heard my wife asking the person who was beating me if he couldn't see that he was hitting a disabled man. The man kept hitting me in the face with his hands, which were covered, maybe with brass knuckles. After my wife told him again that I was blind and disabled, he replied to her in Arabic: "We are from the Israeli army". I didn't understand their words right away. They didn't sink in. But my wife told me they were Israeli soldiers. I yelled at them, why did you enter my apartment and why were they beating me? I asked to speak to their supervising commander.

Then my wife helped me sit up in bed. I ran my hands over my body and noticed I was wet and that my side of the bed was also wet. I realized it was blood. I told my wife that first of all we had to check on our children. I asked her to take me to the living room. It was there that I realized the soldiers broke into our living room, the children's room and our bedroom. I sat on a chair in the living room and told the soldiers I wanted to speak to an officer. Nobody replied or paid any attention to me.

All the beatings I got were on the left side of my face. My chin was broken on the left side and so I couldn't eat for a week, I was only able to have soup. While I sat on the chair in the living room, my nose kept bleeding for about a quarter of an hour. They broke my left arm and I also have back problems. None of the soldiers offered or provided any aid during the entire time. I heard from my wife and son that they had handcuffed a relative on the floor above us. The neighbor came down to see how I was and told me that the soldiers had really come to arrest his son.

The neighbor told us that when the soldiers came to his apartment, there was an ISA [Israel security agency] officer with them. The neighbor begged the ISA officer not to go to my apartment because of my bad health. And anyhow this was all about his son, and he asked they not involve the neighbors. Apparently, the officer didn't take him seriously and they ended up breaking into our apartment in spite of that.

The soldiers didn't search my apartment, but they did beat my son. It was only three hours later that they left our apartment. In the morning, at about 8 A.M. I was taken to Al Hussein hospital in Bethlehem, where I was treated.



Munther Mazhar at home approximately a week after soldiers raided his home while he was asleep and violently assaulted him in his bed, February 2019. Photo: Alex Levac

# It's a question of mood, how the commander shows up

First sergeant, Nahal 50th Battalion | Ramallah | 2012-2015

## Can soldiers decide what the arrest will look like?

Really, really. It could look like two completely different pictures. Like, an arrest is an arrest [but] it can be a polite, reasonable thing that happens or it can be a barbaric incident, regardless of the situation.

## What are the variables? What would turn it into one or the other?

The mood. In riots, in arrests, or various other kinds of entries into homes, it's a question of mood, how the commander shows up, whether he's in a combative mood that day or shows up in a good mood. It changes the picture for everyone taking part in the arrest.

## And how does that apply in practice?

In the house he can decide to turn everything upside down without us searching for anything. Go into a room: take everything out of the closet.

## Are you saying that because it happened?

Yes, yes, sure, sure. There was an arrest when we went into a home, we arrived in a very combative mood, right away neutralize the father, get rid of the mother, their son wasn't at home, he probably went to pray or something.

# Then I saw two dogs and two female soldiers in my room

K.O, 48, married mother of seven | Madama | July 4, 2018

We've been suffering because of the settlers from Yitzhar for a long time. Our family has land but we're afraid to go farm it because when we get to our land, the settlers come and attack us. We also suffer from soldiers entering our homes. The time I remember most was six or seven years ago, they broke the windowpanes and broke into the house.

On the night of Wednesday July 4, my husband and I were sitting in our garden, which faces south. The children were inside playing on the computer. At 11:30 P.M. I heard a noise from outside our iron gate and saw a soldier standing there. I told my husband: "The army is outside the house". There were other soldiers. They walked over to our garden and told us, 'Ruh al beit! [Go home!]' My husband speaks Hebrew and told them, "I'm in my home." The soldier put his gun next to my husband's mouth.

The soldiers came on foot. At that moment, my 11-year-old nephew came down the stairs from the second floor and wanted to go out to the garden. He found himself surrounded by soldiers. They yelled at him to go home. He was so frightened that he ran to us crying. My husband calmed him down. The soldiers banged on the side gate and broke it forcefully. My husband went over to the gate and spoke to them in Hebrew but they pushed him aside and came into the garden. I asked my nephew to run to the girls' bedroom and tell them to quickly get dressed.

About ten soldiers came inside. They pushed us. I told them in Arabic to wait a minute until the girls get dressed. The soldiers only spoke Hebrew and demanded that everyone in the house come to the living room. We all crowded inside the hallway.

My daughters and I moved to the girls' room, we sat on the floor there and a few soldiers guarded us. They seated my husband and three sons on the floor in the living room. I held on to my phone. I didn't open it. One of the soldiers came right over to me and demanded the phone. I was so scared that I gave it to him. And then some of the phones rang because our

neighbors saw the army and started calling us. Every phone that rang, the soldiers immediately took and put in the sink. My husband and two sons' phones were taken. They also took my ID card, and my husband's and my sons'.

There were more soldiers walking around outside our house. When they came inside our home, they were violent - shouting and pushing. The soldiers who guarded us had blue plastic gloves on. I was very worried because I thought they would do a body search. I was in the girls' room when they searched our bedroom. There's a problem with the lock on the door there, it doesn't open, so I went over to help and then I saw two dogs with two female soldiers in my room. Unmuzzled dogs. They put me back in the girls' room.

Later, I saw them taking one dog into the kitchen and bathroom. To us dogs are unclean, so to bring it into the kitchen! After I saw the dogs in the kitchen, I got very discouraged and weak. After that they moved me and the girls to our bedroom and searched the girls' room. They took all the winter clothes that were packed in bags out of the closet and made a mess. After they left, I noticed they had gone into the boys' room and took apart the closet doors. The search went on until about quarter to two A.M. They didn't take anything, money, nothing. When my husband asked: "What are you looking for?" they replied: "We're searching for weapons". Last year my husband, our eldest son and I were in Hebron, visiting. They stopped us for a search and arrested my son. He was put on trial and was sentenced to eight months in prison. He was released in February. While our house was being searched, I was very worried that they would take him to prison again, but that didn't happen.

The next day I cleaned and scrubbed the bathroom and the kitchen, I simply threw out anything food related, including a bag of flour I had in the kitchen. I didn't throw away food that was in the refrigerator because they didn't touch it and the dogs didn't sniff there. I scrubbed all the dishes. It took me the whole day to put the house back in order.

# The kids were very scared of the dogs

First sergeant, Armored Corps Reconnaissance Unit 401st Brigade | Nablus area | 2010-2013

We went to Nablus for an arrest. We arrived there with an Oketz unit [canine unit] and a breaching unit, in order to find weapons, there was information.

## What is a breaching unit?

Midron Mushlag [the engineering corps' breaching unit]. So we get there, there was information about weapons in the house, we go inside the house, all of us. When we were unexperienced soldiers, we performed arrests without facemasks on, but once we got it, we started wearing masks. In a way, when you put a facemask on, it makes you anonymous, it's easier for you to do the things the occupation asks you to do. We went inside the house there, we were told to find weapons. First of all, the family looked pretty poor, you see a family with a lot of kids living in one house with the grandmother.

You go inside the house in the middle of the night and say: men in one room, women in another. The men – they were taken to a room and if they made trouble, we'd handcuff them, and if they didn't, they were left to just sit. We were in that house and there was a photograph of a kid who must have been killed in something IDF related, he was 15 or 16, maybe younger. [They] said: some Israel Defense Forces, you killed our child, you killed our child. And then some grandmother who was sitting there said: don't blame them, it's not their fault.

## Did she say it in Hebrew?

I think she muttered something like that in Hebrew, or maybe I understood from context. But they kind of silenced her. Now the dog with the guy [from the canine unit] came in, the kids were very scared of the dogs [so] they moved the kids farther away from the dogs. This dog was a propellant explosives dog, trained to detect explosives. The dog walked around the house as instructed by his handler, it was wandering around the house sniffing and it didn't find anything, didn't find any indication of a scent or anything. An officer or someone from Midron Mushlag, if I'm not mistaken, walked by and started like banging on the wall, where was he supposed to discover explosives? They just took the walls apart, they just broke walls to search for explosives.

## What do you mean broke?

With a five [kilogram demolition] hammer.

## Did they start pounding the walls, breaking holes and searching?

Yes, yes, breaking holes in the walls, pounding on the walls. I'm not even mentioning how the house is in ruins because the rooms have been searched, but the clothes were searched pretty neatly. But walls were broken and nothing was found. The family is shouting, angry, why are you breaking our house, we don't have anything here, I don't have anything here. And that's just the way it was.

## What do you mean they broke walls? Do you mean a small part of a wall?

Not all the walls in the house. There was one hallway where I remember clearly that they just broke the wall, it was a wall that was at least two meters by a meter and a half. They didn't find anything and like I said, we just left. It didn't seem strange to us because we were given an indication that there was someone with a weapon in the house, so you have to search for weapons in the house. But there were no weapons, just a family, that's it.

## Did you arrest anyone from the family?

No, nobody was arrested.

## And what happens during debriefing, say after such an incident, do you talk about what happened?

Nothing, you don't talk about it. What is there to say? Nothing bad happened, nothing happened to the soldiers. There's no need for a debriefing. No, they don't do a debriefing in such cases.

# The whole time we were shut in that one room [...] five [soldiers] were sleeping in the living room and the porch

A.A. 37, married mother of five | al-Mughayir | April 10, 2018

My husband works as a construction contractor, I'm a homemaker and am pregnant. Our house has three rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. My husband is renovating the house and it's been taking a long time. We have a goat pen by our house.

The house isn't far from the eastern entrance to the village, and we suffer from the army entering the village, shooting tear gas grenades and even if we're at indoors we choke on the gas. My children were hurt by tear gas several times and were treated at home. In the past, soldiers have come into our house. They only came inside, walked around and left.

On Tuesday, April 10, 2018, at 1:45 A.M., we were all asleep. I heard knocking on the door. I got up and woke up my daughter. My husband woke up too and went over to the window overlooking the street and opened it. Soldiers jumped inside through the window, grabbed my husband and covered his mouth with their hands. Seven soldiers came in through the window. Some of the soldiers were masked, and some weren't. They had a lot of equipment and weapons. They didn't present any document. They spoke in broken Arabic. My husband speaks some Hebrew.

When the soldier came in, two kids were still sleeping. They woke them up. My husband asked the soldiers why they had come. The answer was: "Because kids go all the way up to Allon Road and throw rocks." When the soldiers came in, they were violent. They took everyone's cell phones. They didn't search anybody.

They put me, my husband and the kids in the north room, and two soldiers sat at the entrance smoking. We sat in the room from 2:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. Anyone who wanted to come out of the room and go to the bathroom was frisked. I didn't want to be frisked, so I didn't go to the bathroom. The youngest, who is five wanted to go to the bathroom. My husband went with him, and then the soldiers frisked him, and one of the soldiers went with him, sat at the entrance to the bathroom, waited for my son to come out, and escorted him back to the room where we were staying.

The soldiers didn't curse us. They only threatened my 15-year-old son, telling him that if he went back to the road and threw rocks they would shoot him or break his arm. They said, "tell that to your friends too".

The whole time we were shut in that one room, and two soldiers guarded us. The other five were sleeping in the living room and the porch. One of the soldiers who were guarding us asked my husband for cigarettes and also coffee. He sat smoking and drinking coffee. We were scared. Mostly, the little one, who's five years old and had been woken up by the soldiers, was scared. The soldiers let my daughters bring me water. They didn't do any damage to the house, they didn't take anything.

At 7 A.M. the soldiers woke up. They started talking on their radio. We sensed that something was happening. Then the soldiers put on gas masks. Suddenly we heard voices outside and explosions. Then there was an explosion by our house, in the yard. A soldier threw a tear gas grenade on the street and it exploded in our yard and gas seeped in through our window. We inhaled gas, my husband asked them to let him go to the kitchen and bring onions, because it helps when you put an onion to your mouth and nose. They refused. My husband pushed one of the soldiers, went to the kitchen, brought some onion and it helped me and the children. My neighbor poured water over the grenade.

The soldiers stayed until 9 A.M. They told us not to leave the room until everyone had left the house from the front door. That morning they threw a lot of grenades in our village. Only one exploded in our yard.

After the soldiers left, we checked the house. They didn't take anything. I don't understand why they even came to us. Our house is in the middle of the village, it's low and small.

# It [the mapping] was totally arbitrary; I could choose whatever house I wanted

Major, Air Force Defense Command | 2000-2014 (including reserve duty)

It [the mapping] was totally arbitrary; I could choose whatever house I wanted, like checking the wind, when you lick your finger and put it up to see where the wind is blowing. There was no guidance. I think that at certain times there was a quota [a number of mappings the company was required to perform in a certain timeframe], which was flexible. Nothing would happen if I did one less or two extra or something like that. But there was an impetus to do it.

I think, for the system, it [mapping] serves two purposes. One, it serves gathering intel on buildings and people. Two, it produces fear and terror and this whole business of demonstrating presence, which we were required to do - not only be there, but to be seen. So just like you go into a village so they see you're going into the village and you're not afraid, and to show them you're here, the same effect, in different form, happens when you allow yourself to enter homes every night, or every other night, or every week, even families that didn't do anything and have nothing to do with anything: "Look, we're here."

This isn't something we were told. The [official] line we were told was "We need information, it's for the brigade's intelligence and for the Shin Bet." But the mission of demonstrating a presence - applying to our service there in general - was clear and we were also told that. It wasn't linked to mapping, but it was part of the message from the leadership in these matters.

## **In your opinion, were these missions beneficial say for the security of the region or the area?**

No, [it's] horrible. In my opinion.

## **And what's your opinion as company commander?**

As a company commander, at a certain point during active duty I started to avoid mapping. I mean that I didn't initiate them anymore and performed them only when we were required

to, and even then I argued. I had no problem searching for weapons, and I still don't when it's necessary to do something like this, with arrests - I don't have a problem. It's necessary and that's the way it is. I have a serious problem with mapping, and I did then too. There are young children there and all they'll remember for the rest of their lives is how much they hate the soldiers because they were at home with their mom and [soldiers] came like in the middle of the night and put them in one room and a soldier stood over them, threatening them with a weapon when they were four years old. And they won't forget it for the rest of their lives, and that's what will lead them in how they think about Israelis - this is it. And there was one mapping that changed everything.

## **Tell me.**

It was certainly in Idhna. We went, decided [on the house], entered. The person who opened the door for us was a woman, I think in her thirties, and it turned out that other than her, there were two or three small children in the house. The oldest must have been 10, and I'm exaggerating, three, four, five, six, somewhere around there, just her and the kids. "Where's your husband?" Her husband is a fashion designer, and he's trying to sell his collection in Jordan right now, and she's alone with the kids in the house, and her husband is a fucking fashion designer who's trying to make a living by trying to sell what he's making in Jordan. And there's half a company raiding his house in the middle of the night with small children who are sitting and crying hysterically, with two soldiers standing next to them while the rest are mapping the house. And I just wanted to die. I just wanted to die like.

# They put us all in the living room, and five soldiers guarded us. They didn't let us get up, drink water or use the bathroom

B.H, 58, married mother of six | 'Azzun | May 15, 2018

I live in 'Azzun. My house is in the town's western neighborhood. Ours is one of the last houses towards 'Izbat a-Tabib. The house has two floors: I live on the first floor with my sick husband. He has advanced Parkinson's disease and it's hard for him to walk or talk. He used to be a bus driver in Qalqiliyah. My son, who is married, lives on the second floor with his wife and three young girls.

We've suffered the soldiers harassing us and entering [our home] for many years. Between 1990 and 2000 soldiers entered our home about ten times, mostly at night. Since 2000 the army has entered our home constantly, countless times. That's our life here. Fearful and harassed.

On May 15, 2018 on the night between Monday and Tuesday on the day after the incidents at the Gaza border there was a general strike all over the West Bank. At 1:55 A.M., I heard stun grenades exploding in the neighborhood, outside our house. We woke up, and then we heard knocking on the front door. They also banged on the door with a kind of big hammer we call a "Mahdi." We opened the front door. One of the soldiers came up to me and pushed me with his weapon, and I fell down. I think there were maybe 30 soldiers in the house and several others in the yard. There were also two jeeps and a kind of large pickup truck. There are streetlights and the pickup truck's lights also lit up the area.

They didn't have any paper [warrant]. Some of the soldiers were masked. Others had black paint on their faces. There were no civilians or female soldiers with them. I could hear dogs outside. They put us all in the living room, and five soldiers guarded us. They didn't let us get up, drink water or use the bathroom. We sat on the couches.

My son went to one of the soldiers and asked to speak to him, so they went to the kitchen together. Other soldiers continued to search the house. One soldier went into our room and closed the door. I got angry and said, "How dare you enter my room without permission and close the door?" He was surprised by me and he left. After that, they left the doors open to every room they entered.

I asked, "Where is the officer?" One of them came over and said, "I'm the officer. My name is Gabi." I said, "If you are searching the rooms, I need to accompany you." Still, the soldiers kept on making a mess in the rooms and didn't let us move, drink or use the bathroom. There was no body search. They were looking for "something illegal", so they said.

They didn't take anything, they didn't map or take photos, which they did do when they came in 2017.

They arrested the two boys, M. and Mh. They handcuffed and blindfolded M. They took them both to the police station in [the settlement of] Kedumim, and they were released the next day. They took them away without giving them a chance to say anything or take any clothes with them.

What would I achieve by complaining? If I complain, the judge will be an army man! What could come of that?



# I remember the scared look and that sense of helplessness

Sergeant first class, Paratroopers | 1998-2010 (including reserve duty)

Usually when you enter a home you arrive very late at night, when people are asleep, because really you want to surprise them, if it's to bring in someone who's wanted. You arrive with a pretty large force. This force can really be spread out throughout the village at all kinds of places that are crucial security points so that you can leave with some kind of general backup of other forces that take part in the maneuver.

Ultimately, when you go to some house and then you send in a force that is at least comparable to a platoon, at least about 20 people, and two people spread out to cover every corner of the house, meaning eight people secure the house and the yard so that if anyone runs – they'll be able to stop him. And a second force enters the house. Usually it's led by an officer and he leads the maneuver of breaching the house, and you enter securely with weapons drawn, a bullet in the barrel, and move from room to room to sweep the whole house.

The way it's done is that the first thing you do is gather the family from all the rooms and separate them, the women and the men, and if it's necessary to handcuff some of them – you handcuff them. And the children who are there, it's the most terrifying and traumatic thing for them, maybe for me too, but especially for them. It's waking up children and babies, all kinds of toddlers in the middle of the night, and seeing women in their pajamas, without their hijabs or whatever it is. You know, waking them from sleep, and I remember the scared look and that sense of helplessness. Separating the men and the women inside the house. [The goal] is first of all to control the house, never mind that you also bring inside a ton of filth with all the boots and mud and it all. And then you start sweeping the rooms in pairs or cells. We make sure there's nobody jumping out at us from some corner, and we take the guy [who was arrested], handcuff him, separate him, blindfold him and put him in the jeep. And if necessary, sometimes, like during compulsory service, I remember that usually there's a Shin Bet officer with you and he does some kind of initial interrogation.

## Of the person?

The family. He speaks Arabic too and you are mainly supposed to secure him and realize the mission through him. That's basically the situation.

## Does anyone explain to the family anything about what you're doing?

No.

## You mean you enter, do everything you just described without saying anything?

You maybe communicate in a very basic way. I don't remember what we said but I think you say: we're going to take someone for an arrest, or something like that. Or the specific name of the person, [you ask] whether he's here, bring him, wake him up or we will. You know, something like this, and it's done very quickly. Besides that, there's no conversation.

And you see how the people who are inside the house are frightened, usually they're a clan, usually several generations, it's multi-generational in there. And you take the person, load him [into the vehicle] and a lot of time we don't have any clue for why this person, what he did. We are excluded at a certain level – he could be a terrorist, or not. I have no idea, I have no understanding of what's happening there. And that's it.

## Do you remember the relatives' responses?

I mostly remember the scared looks, even vaguely, maybe I'm trying to repress it. I remember their surprise, their surprised looks, fear, terror, I remember these things to some extent.

## Did you search homes?

Yes, during compulsory service. I remember a few incidents when you're searching inside a home and really, you're taking the entire house apart, of course you don't put it back in order. It means going through and taking closets apart, just dismantling them physically and rummaging through all sorts of equipment and leaving a mountain of mess behind you, as though a typhoon had passed through.

# During the search they took all the gold, worth about 20,000 ILS, and 4,700 ILS in cash

Samer al J'abari, 44, married father of five | Hebron | June 22, 2018

I live in al J'abari neighborhood. This area is volatile and the houses are occasionally invaded at dawn, and after these raids valuables disappear. The day of the incident was my son's wedding day. He and his new wife were in their apartment on the ground floor, and I was home with my wife, two daughters and two sons. Because we had taken care of permits, the army knew the wedding would be held that day. The wedding itself was held in a hall in the city and we decorated our home with flickering candles to welcome the new couple and make it a happy occasion.

At 1:45 A.M. on the young couple's wedding night, about 40 soldiers arrived on foot. Some of them wore masks. I woke up when I heard loud knocking on the young couple's apartment door. I ran to the window and called out to the soldiers that a young couple lives in the apartment, and this was their wedding night. I asked them not to break the door because I was coming right down to open it. The soldiers didn't wait and barged in. Some of them had dogs with them.

I tried to explain to the two [male and female] officers who headed the squad that this was a young couple on their wedding night, and I promised to bring them out. The female officer, we recognized her because she had issued the permits for the wedding, tried to talk to the soldiers and allow the young couple to leave the house with my assistance, but the officer in charge of the soldiers refused.

The soldiers demanded we all go into one room in my apartment. Before we all went up to my apartment, I asked the officer to come along with the soldiers on the search and asked what they were looking for. He did not let me go with the soldiers and refused to say what they were looking for. We went up to a room in my apartment where they put all members of the family and put a soldier with a weapon drawn at the entrance to guard us. Of course there was no bathroom in the room where we were held, and we couldn't drink water.

The sounds of objects breaking were heard from the young couple's apartment, and later we saw they had cut the sofa and broken chairs and the young couple's bed. The bride started crying, it was her wedding night. We had to explain to her that this was not unusual. It happens after almost every wedding.

The soldiers stayed in the house for about an hour and a half. Before leaving, they photographed my 11-year-old son. They wanted to photograph me and my wife and the young couple, but we refused. My wife is a brave woman and isn't afraid of soldiers. She stood her ground not to have her photo taken: "We aren't animals!!" Later, we understood the soldiers argued over taking photos, but we were photographed during the search, in secret.

After the search, as the soldiers were on their way out, I noticed one of the soldiers holding a phone I recognized as my son's. The soldier hid the phone behind his back to prevent me from seeing what he did. I addressed the male officer and said to him: "Look, he stole the phone and a USB memory stick, which both have wedding photos on them". The female officer intervened and she demanded the soldier return the phone and he did. The soldiers took the cigarettes that were in the room and smoked them.

Immediately after the soldiers left, I asked my new daughter-in-law and my son to go downstairs to their apartment and check whether the money they received as wedding gifts and the gold was still there. We discovered that during the search they took all the gold, worth about 20,000 ILS, and 4,700 ILS in cash. When we discovered the damage, I asked the officer to take me to the Hebron Police so I could complain about the theft. The officers consulted with someone over the phone and ordered me to go inside my house. The soldiers started walking away from the house on foot and my cousin and I followed them. My cousin asked the officer to search the soldiers. The matter ended by the officer telling my cousin: "Don't make trouble", and the soldiers walked off.

# The procedure is five or six houses per night

First sergeant, Artillery Corps, Meitar Unit | Tekoa | 2013-2016

## The practice of mapping, how does it happen and how is it performed?

You begin by preparing, trying to really understand what's going on in terms of where we are going to be [situated], for how long, which houses, etc. and once the action itself happens, say x number of soldiers, say a platoon, I don't know, 12-13 soldiers get into a kind of...what's that vehicle called?

## Safari [armored transport truck]?

Safari, yes. We get into the Safari and of course put on our vests, put on all our equipment, assemble for an equipment parade, you have this, you have that, you have this. We personally never wore face coverings. Whoever wanted to [could have], I mean, it wasn't an order by definition. There were a few who thought they were in a movie and wanted to cover their faces, so they wore face masks.

That's it, and like you just arrive in Tekoa, say, and start splitting up into say groups of four, each commander takes four soldiers, you know you have to go to five houses, so you go to the first house, knock on the door and wait for the response: if there's a response – great, like, you begin. No response – you knock harder on the door and yell: IDF, IDF, IDF, open the door. "IDF" in a pretty aggressive tone, that's what I'll say. The goal is obviously for them to open the door.

The instant someone opens the door, immediately the procedure is, I say hello but it isn't really hello, like it isn't: hi, how's it going. It's a kind of: ahalan [hello], wake the kids up, wake up the wife, bring everyone, so we can see everyone, everyone who lives here. They line up, all the people in the house and then there's a soldier who does a good sweep of the rooms to make sure there's nobody in any of the rooms, and then you separate the women and children. Women and children shut in one room with a soldier to guard them, men outside – you search them, leave them outside the building.

After this procedure you just start sweeping, like on paper, like a pad: you count the number of rooms, you count how many doors, you make a general map. There was always someone who drew a map of the house and the way it looks and we search for suspicious things and turn things upside down and say: now search for something that seems suspicious to you. So we really start lifting things, moving things, I don't know – rugs, beds, taking off sheets, kitchen, drawers you take out to see what there is. Everyone does it more or less according to their own discretion, the discretion of the commander on the ground. I can say that when I wasn't the senior commander of the force, there were situations where there was chaos, and if it's, say, a company commander on the ground, or something like that, who feels like showing he has power, [then] that's what it looks like. The house is a complete mess, and no one ever makes sure to tidy up either: there's no time, no time, on to the next house, on to the next house, thanks, bye, go back to your homes and on to the next house. The procedure is five or six houses per night. Every team. [It] takes times and is no fun at all, especially the part... you wake kids up in the middle of the night. They don't understand your language at all, you try to communicate with them somehow. If there's someone who speaks Arabic it's a bonus.

I don't know, in my personal experience this situation in general is not a positive one. It becomes a kind of routine, I'd say that once a week or two you find yourself mapping, I'm not talking about arrests, which is different. Say you complete the five or six houses for the night, we meet back, go back to the base, joke and continue to morning tasks.

# We're going to punish the whole village

Fadel Tamimi, 58, married father of nine | Deir Nidham | August 1, 2019

On August 1, 2019 I woke up at 1:30 A.M. because I heard noise outside. The girls had woken up before I did and told me that there were soldiers in the village. The boys kept on sleeping. I got up and opened the kitchen window, which faces the street. I saw two or three soldiers with weapons. Fifteen minutes later, six or seven more soldiers appeared and walked down the street away from the village center. I continued to watch them from the window of the living room as they approached the house closest to the entrance to the village. Fifteen minutes after that, I saw a large armored army vehicle drive up and stand by the soldiers.

After that, I saw two army jeeps driving down the road from the center of the village. Soldiers got out and went into my neighbor's house. After that, they went into the next house and walked up the street until they got to the houses closest to ours. Later, I heard from our neighbor that when the soldiers came into his house they asked whether there were any children under the age of 15; when he said no, the soldiers left.

At about 4 A.M. I left to pray. I didn't see any soldiers on my way to the mosque. There were about 15 people in the mosque. We prayed until nearly 5 A.M. When we left the mosque there were about 20 soldiers standing outside the entrance. The soldiers didn't talk to us and we didn't speak to them. We went home. I saw about ten more soldiers walking towards the village's eastern neighborhood. When I had almost reached our house, I saw my son leaving the gate with two soldiers. He wasn't handcuffed and he didn't look threatened. He pointed to me and said, "Here's my father". One of the soldiers came up to me and demanded I give him my ID card. I said it was at home and asked if he wanted me to go get it. He let it go and kept walking.



Soldiers arresting children and adults from Deir Nidham during a large-scale arrest operation, and posting flyers in the village, August 1, 2019. Photo: Deir Nidham city council

When I walked through the gate to my house, I saw the 20 soldiers who had earlier been standing outside the mosque walking down towards our house. One of them tried to enter our house and my son said to them in Arabic, "You've already been to our house". And then one of the two soldiers who asked for my ID told them, "We've already been to this house". When the soldiers left, my son said that while I was at the mosque, he stood on the roof and saw the soldiers coming to our house. He went downstairs and opened the gate and the soldier standing outside laughed. He asked, "Why are you laughing?" the soldier said, "You're opening it so soon?" My son replied, "I saw you from the roof. What do you want me to do, go to sleep?" The soldier asked him whether there were any children under 15 at home. My son told him that he has a younger brother who is 12. The soldier told my son to wake up his brother. When they came downstairs, the soldiers photographed the three children and the older children's ID cards. The soldier also asked them where their father was.

When morning came, we saw they had posted flyers in different places and also scattered some. The flyer said, "This village causes trouble and if the residents don't calm things down, we're going to take action against them".

From conversations with people in the village, I gathered the soldiers entered about 90% of the houses in the village. In every house they entered, they asked for the ID cards of the sons and the fathers. They took photos of the sons and fathers and their ID cards. They also photographed people without ID cards. The soldiers had a list. If one of the children on this list was at the house, they arrested him and his father.

I heard that mostly the soldiers didn't even go into the houses, they stopped at the gate and didn't cause damage. By around 5:00 A.M., they had arrested 15 boys already. Then a large armored car came, and the men and boys were put in the truck and taken to a nearby military camp north-west of the village. The soldiers who interrogated them threatened the men that if their sons continued making trouble, they would close the entrances to the village. They said, "If you let your kids do whatever they feel like, we're going to punish the whole village." At 7:30 A.M., they released everyone.

# We go back to them every so often, all the time, because nobody writes it down

First sergeant, Egoz Unit | 2014-2017

We had an evening of mapping, which means a disgusting evening of mapping. The function [of mapping], on paper, is to map each house and say who lives in it, so the Shin Bet knows about every house, little by little, who lives there, so they have the information. I think it's just some kind of deterrence.

## Why is it deterrence?

Because when we'd go inside a home, we used to explain to them that we were there for that. There's always one interpreter on the team, they send someone who speaks Arabic with the team, and he explained why we were here. And then they [the family] said: what, why didn't anyone document this? A month ago, they came to us and another time before that. We go back to them every so often, all the time, because nobody writes it down. Or really because there's a very large security body and often things get overlooked.

## What did you do?

What you do is you go into a house, at first you knock on the door, you don't break in, you knock a lot on the door, trying. Most times they don't open, people are asleep, people don't want to open and stuff like that. And then usually once we take out the breach kit and they start to hear you trying to break in then...

## A hydraulic breach kit?

Yes, the moment you bring it and start hooking it up, there was also an electrical one that makes noise, then they hear it and come downstairs, open the door before you break down their door. You say, "everyone inside", you stand every person by the window with his ID, holding it by the side of his head and take a picture of every person who lives in the house.

## Do they say why these houses specifically?

They tell you these are houses the Shin Bet doesn't have any information about.

## In terms of the structure of the house and things like that, do you deal with that or only photograph the people?

It sounds logical that we were supposed to do that, but I don't remember actually doing that.

# It hurts us, emotionally

A.S, 28, married mother of three | 'Urif | May 9, 2019

We live in my mother-in-law's house. The building has four floors and we live on the fourth floor. There are storage units and a supermarket on the ground floor. My mother-in-law lives on the second floor. The third floor is vacant, and my husband and I live on the fourth floor with our children. My husband has worked in construction in Rawabi for the past three and a half years, he leaves for Rawabi every morning at 6 A.M. in his private vehicle and returns at 5:30 or 6 P.M.

We live here, we're relatively far away from the settlers so we don't suffer from them, but we do suffer from the army a lot. I've lived here in 'Urif for six and a half years and in that time army soldiers have come into our home six times. In 2014, after the youths were kidnapped, soldiers came into our home and caused a lot of damage to the house. In addition, they confiscated our minibus, which my husband used to drive children to daycare in 'Urif. It's Ramadan now and life adapts accordingly. My husband leaves at 4:30 A.M. to his construction job and comes home at 2 P.M.

On Thursday May 9, 2019 at 4:30 A.M before my husband left for work, we heard noise coming from the neighbors' house. The army came to their house and soldiers arrested their son. We saw the soldiers coming towards our house so my husband shouted to them, "Don't break down the door, I'll open it." They didn't listen or respond to his request, they trained their weapons on him and broke down the door to our house.

Some of the soldiers stayed downstairs at my mother-in-law's apartment and some came up the stairs to us. There were somewhere between 18 and 20 soldiers. I didn't have enough time to get dressed and cover myself up before they came in. They didn't show us a warrant. Five or six of them were masked. They spoke Arabic to us, in a violent manner, and threatened us with weapons drawn.

My husband asked them, "Did you come to arrest us?" They didn't respond. They told my husband, me and the kids to sit in the living room downstairs while two soldiers stayed with us, and the rest started searching all of the floors in the house. They didn't let us come with them during the search. They wouldn't say why they came into our house. When they came inside, they immediately demanded my husband and I give them our phones but they didn't ask for our IDs. They didn't steal anything from the house.

We were already fasting [for Ramadan]. There was a water bottle in the room, and the soldiers agreed to let the children drink. When my four-year-old son approached the soldier, the soldier yelled at him, "Go back to your place." My husband and a soldier had an exchange in Hebrew and there was yelling. I didn't understand but I was afraid for my husband and I begged him to move away from the soldiers and stop talking to them. The children were scared. It was the first time they experienced such a thing and were aware of it. Previously they were younger and didn't understand. The kids keep telling their friends about what happened and heard similar stories from them.

The soldiers left at 5:30 A.M. after staying here for about an hour. They didn't explain why they had come, they didn't say anything. While the soldiers were on their way out, my husband followed them to ask where our phones were. Then we heard ringing from the balcony and realized they threw the phones there.

The masked soldiers were worse. When my husband asked them what they were searching for and what they wanted, they never answered him. It hurts us, emotionally. It takes a long time to recover. Right after the soldiers left, my husband left for work, his workers were waiting for him.

