



The Sabra Report

Defense Minister: All Must Bear Burden of Service, Including Haredim

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Recap:

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant broke ranks with his coalition and called on the government to include haredim in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

The Context:

- ✦ On October 7th, 3,000 terrorists killed 1,200 people and seized 253, mostly civilian, hostages of all ages while committing brutal atrocities including mass sexual violence. In response, Israel launched a wide-scale military campaign in Gaza. The IDF called up 287,000 reservists, bringing the economy, and their personal lives, to a halt [1].
- ✦ As Israel prepares for a long war in Gaza and an eventual war with Hezbollah in the north, the military plans to increase the amount of time conscripts and reservists serve in the military. Currently, male recruits serve 32 months, while women serve two years. The IDF also plans to raise the age for retirement from reserve duty for soldiers to 45, officers to 50, and special roles to 52 [2].
- ✦ In 1948, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion granted military exemptions to 400 yeshiva students. Today, most ultra-orthodox Israelis do not serve in the IDF, with this year's number of exemptions reaching an all-time high of 66,000. This week, The High Court of Justice ordered the government to explain why the IDF should not begin drafting ultra-orthodox Israelis. In 2017, a law granting exemptions was struck down by the court as violating the principle of equality [3].
- ✦ Haredi factions Shas and United Torah Judaism were "irate" at the defense minister's statement [4]. The issue of Haredi conscription complicates matters for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who must balance his voter's demand that Haredim share the burden of service and keeping his Haredi coalition partners pacified [5].

Conversation Points:

- ✦ Should Ben Gurion's 1948 exemptions serve as a precedent for current Haredi exemptions?
- ✦ Is it reasonable that Israel's fastest growing demographic does not participate in state service?
- ✦ Have Israel's recent security challenges demonstrated the need for all Israeli society to bear the burden in defending the country?
- ✦ Is Netanyahu's coalition, and by extension his political future, at stake if a conscription law is passed in the Knesset?

Notes:

1. [Amid Gaza war, IDF plans to lengthen mandatory and reserve service](#), Times of Israel, EMANUEL FABIAN 7 February 2024
2. [Ibid.](#)
3. [High Court orders the government to explain why its refusal to draft Haredim is legal](#), JEREMY SHARON, Times of Israel, 26 February 2024
4. [Ultra-Orthodox Jews must be drafted by IDF, Israel's defense minister says](#), JERUSALEM POST STAFF, FEBRUARY 28th, 2024,
5. [Exclusive: PM outraged after Gallant sides with Gantz on Haredi conscription](#), Amir Ettinger, Israel Hayom, February 25th, 2024

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