

# The Spirit of the IDF

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After nearly fifty years' experience in waging war, fighting terror, and all manner of possible military confrontation, it was decided recently that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) needed a code of ethics. Without question, the formulation of such a code for an institution that plays so crucial a role in the life of the nation is a watershed in the process of defining the identity of Israeli society. The unique circumstances of Israel's existence have produced a reality in which the metaphor of "a nation in arms" is a true description of daily life—and not merely during national emergencies. There is probably no other country in the Western world in which the army experience plays such a critical role. Thus a code designed for both regular and reserve units touches intimately upon the lives of the majority of the population.

The IDF code of ethics, entitled *Spirit of the IDF*, is designed to be the credo of Israelis bound together within the framework of military service. A misformulation of the IDF's values system in such a code could therefore produce disharmony between the society's scale of values and that of the army, a confounding of moral principles and moral dissonance; or it could produce a code that would be essentially moribund—an irrelevant document that reflects neither the ideal nor the real. But the worst possibility is

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that the code will have a profound effect on the self-image of the Israeli military and its purpose, thereby doing untold damage to values of Israeli society as a whole.

The manner in which the IDF chose to compose its code of ethics is questionable at best. It is doubtful whether the size and composition of the committee selected to compose the code was appropriate to the importance of the task at hand. But even greater doubt hovers over the results of its handiwork: For the committee's final product, adopted formally as the code of ethics of the Israeli military two years ago, is without a trace of either Jewish or Zionist content. At best, this omission turns *Spirit of the IDF* into a mass of directives that have all too much "IDF" in them and not enough "spirit"; but it has a much more profound meaning as well: The omission of anything particularly Jewish in the armed forces of the Jewish state turns this document into a trophy for Post-Zionist ideology, and a milestone in its attempts to take root in the heart of the Israeli collective mindset.

## II

On December 26, 1994, the IDF distributed a code of ethics to all its units. The cover letter proclaimed that the code "constitutes the position of the army leadership regarding the spirit of the IDF, as well as the principles and basic guidelines that will serve as its beacon, guiding it in the full spectrum of its activities."

The idea of providing the IDF with a code of ethics originated with Maj.-Gen. Ilan Biran, who was impressed with the U.S. army's code of ethics. The concept was then adopted by then Chief of Staff Ehud Barak, who ordered that a committee be established to draft the code. The decision to compose a code of ethics and turn its military intuition into an explicit, written and clearly defined collective awareness was based on two goals, as delineated by the top command:

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*“I. Creation of a moral foundation for the soldiers’ behavior, as an alternative to the existential and coercive foundation which had previously guided the military’s actions.”* This may be interpreted as an abandonment of traditional catchphrases of the Israeli military, such as the biblically based injunction to “Kill the one who is coming to kill you,” and others from Zionist phraseology such as “Belief in the justice of the cause” and “It is good to die for our country.” The new motto can be summed up in a different biblical verse: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Among other things, this shift seems to be an attempt to maintain the attractiveness of the military among that sector of the population serving despite its increasing alienation from the coercive military system.

*“II. Minimization of incidents in which troops act in contravention of accepted IDF norms.”* In cases where an order may infringe upon a soldier’s belief system, an ethical code would make it difficult for soldiers to act according to their conscience, thereby reducing the incidence of disobedience by further delegitimizing it. One may assume that the IDF’s top officers surmised that in the years to come the army would face arduous tasks that would ignite moral polemics and disrupt the motivation to serve; this reinforced the need to define and hone the ethical norms of military operations.

The committee was chaired by Asa Kasher, a professor at Tel Aviv University, with the participation of the head of the IDF Personnel Division, the Chief Education Officer and the IDF Judge Advocate-General. After a year of deliberations, a final text was then approved by the General Staff, which also gave it its name, *Spirit of the IDF*. This constituted the first attempt ever made to take the existing but abstract set of concepts which underlay the operations of the defense forces and concretize them in a detailed and explicit fashion.

Of the four members officially appointed to the drafting committee, Kasher was the only one who represented academia, thereby providing a scholarly seal of approval for the code. All three of the others served on the committee in the line of their duty as career officers and as representatives of

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the defense establishment. It is not at all clear why, in the drafting of this crucial document, additional civilians were not involved, nor why the IDF did not see fit to deepen the academic part of the team, especially with additional specialists in philosophy and ethics. Nor did the defense establishment include individuals from other branches of the humanities or other cultural leaders. Considering that the topic under consideration touches the vast majority of the Israeli population, one could easily have understood appointing a broad forum; in what is supposed to be a virtual Magna Carta of the Israel Defense Forces, it would have been appropriate to seek the active participation, or at least the input, of a greater number of active and retired military personnel, philosophers, cultural figures, authors and others who, as a body, could truly have laid claim to being representative of all of Israeli society.

It should be noted that at least three rough drafts of the document were prepared. These were presented to various divisions within the IDF at different levels of command, but there was no parallel advisement process on the civilian side. Kasher himself said that he showed the drafts to some of his colleagues, but their criticisms and reactions were not brought before any forum superior to the four-man committee. The clear implication of all this is that one extremely limited body had the sole prerogative to determine the content and form of the code.

With regard to discussions within the military, the three drafts were all shown to the General Staff, which was the only group that could impose its view on the committee of four. As far as is known, however, the contribution of the members of the General Staff consisted primarily of simplifying and sharpening the more cumbersome language. With regard to more substantive aspects, the main concern of the General Staff was the military aspects of the code, and not necessarily the “civilian” facets. And to a certain degree, it is only natural that the IDF’s top-ranking officers, constantly dealing with matters of life and death and supervising a colossal military bu-

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reaucracy, did not regard the formulation of a code of ethics as a mission of highest priority. To them, the code was just another batch of directives subject to their approval.

In addition to the fact that the IDF chose only one individual from outside the military to participate in the composition of the code, the selection of Kasher to be that particular individual must itself raise eyebrows. Although Kasher is considered to be among the leading ethicists in Israel, his public standing springs first and foremost from numerous controversial declarations which plant him firmly on the extreme political left.

For example, Kasher is on record as favoring the effective suspension of the Law of Return, which grants automatic Israeli citizenship to all Jews wishing to immigrate; the returning to Israel of hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees who have been living in Arab states for decades; as well as Arab political autonomy for large parts of pre-1967 Israel:

I would limit the automatic right to receive Israeli citizenship to Jewish refugees who are oppressed in their countries of origin for being Jews. Regarding other Jews seeking to settle in Israel, their requests should be considered in the same way as any other request for citizenship. Other countries proceed in this manner....

It is possible, in my opinion, to return [Arab] refugees to live in Jaffa in place of the [Jewish] garages and workshops that have opened up there. These are now a nuisance. They could be moved without causing any injustice. In their place, we could put in Palestinian refugees....

The Galilee will represent [for my grandchildren or great-grandchildren] the same dilemma as the West Bank does for us today. In order to preserve the Jewish majority in Israel and its democratic regime, there may be a need to give the Galilee a separate status, for example as an “autonomous region” that would be federated with Israel. I would not automatically dismiss such an option....<sup>1</sup>

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Kasher's airing of such views—as well as others criticizing Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem and declaring Jewish emigration from Israel to be healthy and natural—makes him a radical opponent of many of the most fundamental precepts of Israel's Zionist consensus.

Perhaps more important than his political radicalism, however, is Kasher's stance with regard to military service itself: Kasher is a long-time activist in *Yesh Gvul* ("There Is a Limit"), an Israeli group which systematically organizes conscientious refusal of military service in the Israel Defense Forces. Thus in one pamphlet published by the organization, Kasher specifically called for refusal to serve in the IDF as a protest against the Lebanon War, against Israeli military activities in the West Bank, and even against the creation of Jewish towns which he considers inappropriately located:

It is usually not obvious whether in each relevant case there is clear justification for employing conscientious objection.... But there are exceptions. The war in Lebanon was an extreme example. Withholding of numerous basic freedoms from the Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a classic example, and no less important. There are several additional cases.... The settlements are an outstanding case.... [In each of these cases, t]he deeds are not the same deeds, perhaps the people not the same people, but the war is the same war: The war of the enlightened against the forces of darkness.<sup>2</sup>

These and numerous other similar exhortations render Kasher, at the very least, a highly controversial figure in Israel, and make Chief of Staff Barak's decision to appoint Kasher as the sole expert in ethics responsible for formulating the IDF ethical code simply baffling. It goes without saying that Kasher became the moving spirit behind *Spirit of the IDF*. He worked diligently, according to the dictates of his own worldview, in order to provide the IDF with its code of ethics. And it is his ideological fingerprints that are discernible throughout the text of the code.

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### III

*Spirit of the IDF* lists eleven “values,” which are intended to instruct the essential system of behavior of an Israeli soldier: Tenacity, Responsibility, Integrity, Personal Example, Human Life, Purity of Arms, Professionalism, Discipline, Loyalty, Representation and Camaraderie. In addition, the document promulgates thirty-four “guiding principles” which impart to the serviceman a much more elaborated understanding of how these values are to govern his life in a wide variety of circumstances—including principles of soldierly conduct “In Military Service,” “Encountering the Enemy,” and “With Regard to Civilian Bodies.” (The complete text of the code is included at the end of this article.)

Although every declaration of fundamental principles evokes criticism and controversy, the main failing of *Spirit of the IDF* is the fact that it is purposefully devoid of any Zionist or Jewish content. The code is designed in such a way that the army of every democratic country in the world could adopt it without changing a word. The new IDF code does not reflect or demand any sense of commitment to any of the central tenets of the Zionist idea: It mentions nothing about the loyalty of the army to the Jewish state and Jewish national sovereignty, nor does it provide any expression at all of the country’s bond with world Jewry (as manifested, for example, in operations to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel over the last two decades, in which the IDF played a central role).

As far as actual ideological content, the code obligates the IDF to uphold and defend the “democratic character” of the State of Israel—and nothing more. It embodies no values such as “patriotism” or “love of the land,” and therefore signals an abandonment of the basic points of consensus that were the ideological heritage of the IDF up until the publication of the code.

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Let us take as a representative example the treatment of the basic link between the State of Israel and the land of Israel—a conceptual link that is a cornerstone of Zionism and even today appears to be at least acceptable to the vast majority of the Israeli public, including those who believe that a portion of the land should be given up for the sake of peace. The treatment of this traditional Zionist concept by the framers of the code can serve as an effective indicator of the worldview which can be found to undergird the entire document.

Loyalty to the Zionist idea of a strong commitment to the land of Israel is part and parcel of all previous norms of behavior as expressed in seminal IDF documents and in the various oaths of service, including those of the Jewish military units which preceded the formal founding of the State of Israel.

For example, the following appears in the memoirs of a member of the pre-state Hashomer, the first Jewish frontier militia, founded in 1909:

The new member would place his right hand on the flag and the rifle, swearing under oath that he is dedicated to his people and to his land, and that he obligates himself to defend the honor, property and freedom of his people.<sup>3</sup>

The oath of the Jewish Legion, which fought in World War I as part of British forces, declared:

I volunteer to serve with the national Jewish Legion, fighting alongside British forces to liberate our land, the land of Israel, swearing this blood oath to work truthfully and faithfully in the Jewish Legion to defend with honesty and integrity the honor of the land, the honor of the Legion and the honor of Britain....

Similar themes appeared in the oath of the main Jewish militia, the Hagana, which was the precursor of the IDF:

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I hereby swear to devote all of my strength, and even to sacrifice my life, to defense and war for the sake of my people and my homeland, for the freedom of Israel and the redemption of Zion.

Likewise, the oath of the Israel Defense Forces declares:

I swear and obligate myself on my word of honor to remain loyal to the State of Israel, its laws and its legitimate administration ... and to devote all of my strength, and even to sacrifice my life, in the defense of the homeland and the freedom of Israel.

In addition, the modern Israeli military itself did have various codes of ethics previous to *Spirit of the IDF*, such as the code of the officers' academy or the school for NCOs, although none aimed to define all of the basic ethical norms of the entire military. These previously existing codes, too, contained "love of the land of Israel" as a fundamental precept and as a matter of course, and this principle had stood at the core of the IDF experience from its inception.<sup>4</sup>

In contexts other than official IDF codes and oaths, the pattern is the same. The IDF's educational programs had always endeavored to instill "love of the homeland" in the troops, which was explicitly considered to be part of the effort to bolster "Zionist motivation." The Education Corps maintains a division whose express purpose is to teach soldiers the "knowledge and love of the land of Israel." All the personnel involved in IDF educational activities must pass a basic course in which they learn about the land of Israel and how to teach this same material to the troops. There is even a brigade, the Nahal, whose symbol is the sword and scythe, and whose mission is to combine military operations with settlement activity. More than anything else, the continued existence of Nahal as a legitimate branch of the IDF symbolizes the time-honored idea that the Israeli army is an integral part of the Zionist movement, and that the army's role in securing the land of Israel extends well beyond deterrence and combat operations.

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Even the legends which are learned as part of the process of becoming an Israeli soldier—the paratroopers weeping next to the Western Wall after its liberation in 1967, or the legendary scaling of Mt. Hermon by the troops of the Golani brigade in 1973, or the flag-raising ceremony at Eilat in 1948—every one of them has been perpetuated in order to express, in graphic and symbolic terms, the love of the land of Israel that is embedded deep within the IDF experience, an expression of the ties between the Israel Defense Forces and the land of Israel. It is clear that *Spirit of the IDF*, the preface of which insists that it draws upon IDF tradition, in fact signals a fundamental and glaring divergence from that tradition.<sup>5</sup>

The uprooting from the IDF code of ethics of what should have been one of its primary components was not the result of forgetfulness or negligence, but a deliberate rewriting of the meaning of the Israeli army. Indeed, one of the early drafts actually included an item on “love of the land,” which read as follows:

*Love of the Land*

*Central idea:* Complete loyalty in practice to the land and the state, derived from emotional attachment.

*Components:*

- Belief in the Zionist view that the land of Israel is the singular place for the existence of the Jewish people.
- Zionist fulfillment does not end with merely living in the land of Israel, but demands the personal involvement and creativity of the individual in the life of the society, and concern for what takes place in it.
- Loyalty stemming from a personal connection to the homeland in which live family, relatives and friends. In defending the borders of the country, soldiers and officers are in a direct way defending their loved ones back home.
- Love of the homeland will bring about increased identification with the aims of the mission.

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Yet nothing resembling this item appeared in the final, approved text. There were those who determined that, upon consideration, such an item did not belong in the code and must be eliminated.

The conscious removal of “love of the land” and “love of the homeland” from *Spirit of the IDF* carried with it an obvious and stunning implication: Love of the homeland is no longer a value legitimately demanded of IDF troops. What was once an unspoken tenet held by a tiny Post-Zionist minority has become the overt stance of the entire armed forces. The estrangement from the traditional concept of love of the Jewish homeland, and indeed from the traditional Zionist ideology as a whole, has paved the way for a marginal doctrine to transmogrify into a fully legitimate and authoritative belief. An officer today who educates his men to love the land of Israel and demands their loyalty to the Zionist idea generally will be aware that such behavior is a divergence from the IDF code. In the best case, it will be possible to interpret his actions as exceeding the permissible demands on troops as set forth in *Spirit of the IDF*; in the worst case, his actions may be interpreted as a contravention of the code.

#### IV

When complaints were raised that *Spirit of the IDF* insisted on exclusive allegiance to the democratic idea while omitting any reference to Zionist concepts, the authors of the text responded that it is impossible to include terms such as “love of the land” or “love of the homeland” in a code of ethics, because one cannot ask a soldier to internalize emotions. The term “love” has no practical substance, they said, being a personal and subjective feeling. This claim, however, did not prevent the authors from demanding that soldiers feel loyalty to the principles of democracy and camaraderie.

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In the official IDF manual of instruction distributed to officers regarding the code, the authors explained how soldiers should be answered if they ask why “love of the land” was omitted from the code. The official explanation reads as follows:

With regard to love of the land, the idea is this: The character of the professional code of ethics lies in the specific behavioral norms that it broadcasts, norms which are possible to demand so that they will in fact be put into practice. With regard to love of the land, since we are speaking of a concept that means different things to different people, *and justifiably so*, it is impossible to obligate people to love. [emphasis added]

In addition to the claim that one cannot obligate a soldier to feel love, there were those who alleged that the concept of “love of the land” contained a streak of fascism. According to this school of argument, the inclusion of this value in the IDF ethical code would be tantamount to sanctifying territory. Some of the more exuberant advocates of this line charged that the issue of whether one should love the land is actually at the core of the political debate over the future borders of Israel. In their view, the IDF cannot be a party to this argument, in effect taking sides in an ideological conflict. Those who rejected “love of the land” for this reason also did not agree to include the value “love of the homeland,” even though such a formulation deletes the specifically territorial aspect found in the phrase “love of the land”—which in Hebrew automatically connotes “love of the land of Israel.” It would seem that even love of the homeland generally—any homeland on any piece of territory whatsoever—was too politically charged a value to impart to soldiers.

But not only were “love of the land” and “love of the homeland” rejected by the code’s authors. The committee of four refused to accept any alternative principle which implied loyalty to the Zionist idea—or even to include the word “Zionism” in the code’s preface or main body—claiming

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that there is no consensus definition of the term, and no reason or need to include this concept in the code. There were also those who doubted whether Zionism is a doctrine that is acceptable to the majority of soldiers.

Moreover, the prospect that IDF troops would be asked to be loyal to the State of Israel as a Jewish state (or a “Jewish and democratic” state) was categorically rejected. The authors claimed that it is impossible to ask the non-Jewish soldiers serving in the IDF to be obligated to Jewish-national values, and even more so to religious values. Because the intent was to formulate a code that would be suitable—without exceptions—to all IDF troops, they maintained that there is no place in the code for even the slightest Jewish-national content. The sole compromise the authors were prepared to make, apparently under pressure from above, was to add to the preface an assertion that *Spirit of the IDF* draws its values and principles from—among other sources—“the tradition of the Jewish people throughout the generations.”

This feeble gesture constitutes nothing beyond lip service, and is no answer to the problem which dogs the document over its entire length, namely the characterization of the State of Israel as a democratic state only, and not as a Jewish-democratic state. The authors did not see fit to add that the eleven values and thirty-four basic principles in *Spirit of the IDF* are also drawn from the tradition of the Zionist movement. This matter may appear to be marginal, but in light of the cultural and moral struggle now taking place between the Zionist and Post-Zionist movements in Israel, this omission has more than merely symbolic significance.

## V

A reading of *Spirit of the IDF* and the official commentary on it reveals that no effort has been made to rank the values and principles invoked—indeed, they appear in alphabetical order. There is one exception,

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however: The General Staff decided that the value of “Tenacity” (literally, “sticking to the mission”) should appear at the head of the list, as the first among equals. It seems that this prioritization reflects the generals’ apprehension that the code might serve to undermine the centrality of the military mission by placing too great an emphasis on its manner of realization. After all, the role of the IDF was and remains to carry out the missions demanded of it.

Although the General Staff singled out “Tenacity” for emphasis, there is little doubt that the key concept in the remainder of the list of values is “Loyalty,” which appears as follows:

The soldier will act with utter devotion to the defense of the State of Israel and all its citizens, in accordance with IDF orders, within the framework of the laws of the state and the principles of democracy. The loyalty of IDF soldiers lies in their devotion, in all their deeds, to their homeland the State of Israel, to all its citizens, and to its army, and in their continual readiness to fight, to devote all their strength, and even to sacrifice their lives in defense of the lives of its residents and their well-being, and in defense of the sovereign State of Israel, in accordance with the values of the IDF and its orders, and while upholding the laws of the state and its democratic principles.

If one examines these words carefully, it is evident that they do not mandate specific behaviors, but offer instead an ethical underpinning for every deed of commission or omission by IDF troops. Indeed, the value of loyalty is the very basis for the functioning of the entire military framework, and is a necessary precondition for its success. A soldier who fails in one of the other values—one who is not tenacious in the pursuit of certain military aims; or who does not display responsibility, integrity or professionalism; or who does not serve as a fitting personal example—can nevertheless function as a soldier most of the time. It is reasonable to assume that he would be considered a substandard soldier, and it is doubtful whether he could com-

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mand troops, but he could still find himself a useful niche at the periphery of the system. But the soldier who is not loyal to the state cannot serve in the military. Here there simply can be no compromise.

The value of loyalty was meant to serve as a more universal alternative to the Zionist values such as “love of the land” or “love of the homeland.” The code’s authors apparently believed that the ideas encapsulated in the value of loyalty include the notions implied in love of the land of Israel, and even exceed them—and it is for this reason that soldiers questioning the absence of a patriotic or Zionist facet from the code are directed to the loyalty clause.

But upon closer examination, the deficiencies of the loyalty clause become clear. According to *Spirit of the IDF*, a soldier’s loyalty is not only to the state as it is currently constituted, but rather to a state with democratic principles. The democratic system is thus entrenched in the loyalty clause governing the soldier’s most fundamental obligations, and this is a positive step. But this, the core clause in the code, lacks even a nod to the Zionist or Jewish-national principles—as they appear, for example, in the Declaration of Independence and in basic constitutional legislation—which are no less the basis of the State of Israel than are its democratic principles.

The purging of the Jewish character of the state is rendered complete in the handbook distributed to the officers to help them teach *Spirit of the IDF* to their troops. Regarding the loyalty clause, it reads:

The intention regarding this value is that every action that we take within the military framework will be carried out with absolute loyalty to the *democratic State of Israel*. The army is an arm of the state, which is meant to provide it with security and defense. It is incumbent on the soldiers serving within it to be loyal to the state, to its laws, and to the fundamental values of the professional military. There is here an obligation to the *democratic principles* of the state and to the professional principles of the army. [emphasis added]

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This is the official commentary given to the loyalty clause, and it is the most widely held interpretation among the troops. But it immediately conjures up an absurd hypothetical scenario: On the one hand, IDF soldiers are sworn to loyalty to the state even if an elected government decides to close the gates of Israel to future Jewish immigration and to erase every trace of the Jewish and Zionist character of the country. On the other hand, they would *not* be sworn to loyalty if the same government were to decide, for example, to reimpose military government in Arab portions of the Galilee as prevailed up until the mid-1960s—an act that could hardly meet the test of Israel’s democratic principles.

It is clear that the above examples represent extreme and hypothetical cases, which do not negate the validity of the loyalty clause. Nonetheless, the fact that IDF troops are not sworn to loyalty to the Zionist-Jewish aspect of the State of Israel is an error whose consequences in the field are potentially quite serious. There are more than a few missions imposed on the IDF which are of a Jewish-national character, and the only justification for their execution is loyalty to the Zionist idea upon which the state and the Israel Defense Forces were built. It is this Zionist idea alone which justifies asking IDF soldiers to devote their resources and even risk their lives in large-scale military operations on land, air and sea to gather Jews in distress into Israel, as happened again in recent years in the case of Ethiopian Jewry—operations which involved neither the defense of Israeli sovereignty nor that of Israeli citizens. It is also the justification for less dramatic IDF activities, such as the establishment of Nahal settlements in regions which are dangerous or not sufficiently attractive to civilians; for the thousands of soldiers working as teachers in immigrant absorption centers and development towns; for the assistance the military provides to farming communities in situations of natural disaster; and so on.

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## VI

The decision by the defense establishment to redefine the State of Israel and its armed forces based exclusively upon humanistic and democratic principles, without reference to Zionism or Judaism, is completely unprecedented. In every official document or declaration mentioning the character of the State of Israel, one has traditionally found the Jewish-Zionist character of the state and its democratic nature invoked side-by-side. Jewish nationalism and democratic humanism—these two pillars have supported Israel since its inception. To eliminate one is to create imbalance and distortion in the self-conception of Israeli society. This was understood by the members of the assembly that declared the independence of the State of Israel; it has also been clear to the country's judiciary in interpreting the law of the land in years past.<sup>5</sup> But it was not understood, apparently, by the committee that drafted *Spirit of the IDF*. Without question, the IDF code of ethics represents an important victory for Post-Zionist ideology, which sees Israel as a democratic country belonging equally and exclusively to its citizens, and not as a Jewish-democratic country with important responsibilities to the Jewish people in Israel and abroad.

It is doubtful whether every one of the code's authors actively sought to transform *Spirit of the IDF* into the first official document of a Post-Zionist Israel, and it is not clear that each of them was aware of the harsh consequences that are likely to stem from their decisions. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the severe deficiencies of *Spirit of the IDF*. If necessary adjustments are made quickly—before the code becomes widely known and its implications internalized—it is still possible that this effort will have resulted in creating an important tool for building a stronger and more moral armed forces.

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## APPENDIX: THE SPIRIT OF THE IDF

### *Preface*

1. *Spirit of the IDF* is the moral and normative identity card of the IDF as an organization, which stands as the foundation for all actions carried out by all men and women soldiers in the framework of the IDF.
2. *Spirit of the IDF* includes eleven IDF values, presenting the essence of each one of them, and detailing its definition and parameters. *Spirit of the IDF* also contains basic principles that express these values.
3. *Spirit of the IDF* draws its values and basic principles from three traditions:
  - a. The traditions of the Jewish people throughout the generations.
  - b. The traditions of the State of Israel, as expressed in its democratic principles, its laws and its institutions.
  - c. The traditions of the IDF and its battle heritage as the defense forces of Israel.
4. *Spirit of the IDF* is the code of ethics according to which all the IDF's soldiers, officers, units and forces will comport themselves, and it will serve in molding their patterns of action. They will educate and critique themselves and their fellows in accordance with *Spirit of the IDF*.
5. The complex nature of military activity in general, and of combat in particular, is liable to produce conflicts among the values and basic principles of *Spirit of the IDF*, and to raise problems in judgment and decisionmaking regarding the balance required among them in practice.

The obligation to execute the mission and to win in the war will be the compass in every effort to arrive at a proper balance within the system of values and basic principles of *Spirit of the IDF*. The effort to attain the proper balance in light of this compass will permit the preservation of the IDF as a principled and high-quality organization, which properly executes all its obligations and missions.

### *The Values*

#### *Tenacity*

*The soldier will fight and otherwise act with the utmost bravery, notwithstanding any and all dangers and obstacles in his path. He will move forward and be tenacious and brave in the pursuit of his mission, persistently and intelligently, and will not flinch from risking his life.*

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The tenacity of IDF soldiers means their ability and readiness to fight bravely, even in the face of danger and in the most arduous of situations, carrying on and pushing ahead to reach their objective, in accordance with the circumstances, fully and efficiently, with thoughtfulness and without haste, despite any difficulty, pressure or suffering, or even danger to their lives.

#### *Responsibility*

*The soldier will see himself as an active partner in the security of the country and its citizens, carrying out his duties decisively and quickly within the bounds of his authority.*

The responsibility of IDF soldiers means their effective partnership and readiness to fully utilize their maximum ability to defend the country and its sovereignty and the life and safety of its citizens, within the bounds of their authority. They will demonstrate complete and rapid implementation of their functions, with continual involvement, initiative and perseverance, and with absolute readiness to take part in every endeavor.

#### *Integrity*

*The soldier will aspire, in all his actions, to fulfill his orders in the proper fashion, with the highest professional standard, from meticulous and painstaking preparations for the mission up through accurate, honest, complete and exact reporting of its results.*

The integrity of IDF troops means that they carry out all military operations to the fullest possible extent, on the basis of their expertise, with a belief and awareness that they are acting in the proper professional manner, with unflagging eagerness to be scrupulous in planning, implementation and accurate reporting, exhaustively and meticulously, bravely, frankly and fairly.

#### *Personal Example*

*The soldier will behave according to what is expected of him, and will act in the way that he himself demands of others, with sympathy and intelligence, aware of his ability and responsibility to be a shining beacon for all those around him.*

The personal example of IDF soldiers means acting according to the highest standard in whatever is demanded of them, from them and by them, with genuine and unshakable readiness to serve as an example to all those around them, in their actions and their behavior; to produce, perpetuate and expand mutual understanding and joint responsibility for implementation of assignments and attainment of objectives in the proper manner, in all areas of military endeavor.

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### *Human Life*

*The soldier will do his utmost to preserve human life, with an awareness of its supreme importance, and will endanger himself and his colleagues only to the extent necessary for implementation of the mission.*

The sanctity of life in the eyes of IDF troops will be manifest in all of their actions, in thoughtful and precise planning, in astute and safely conducted exercises and in proper implementation, in accordance with the mission, with the appropriate level of risk and caution, and with continual effort to restrict the loss of human life to the extent required by the mission.

### *Purity of Arms*

*The soldier will use his weapon and his power to vanquish the enemy only to the degree required, and will exercise self-restraint in order to prevent unnecessary harm to human life, body, honor and property.*

Purity of arms among IDF troops means the restrained use they make of their weapons and their power in the implementation of missions, only to the extent necessary for their attainment, without unnecessary harm to human life, body, honor and property, whether to troops or civilians (especially the defenseless), during war and security operations as well as during times of peace and tranquility.

### *Professionalism*

*The soldier will aspire to be aware of and understand the expertise involved in his military role, and will be competent in all skills connected with the performance of his duties.*

The professionalism of IDF soldiers means their ability to carry out their military function properly, with an effort to attain excellence and continual upgrading of their accomplishments and those of their units, through broadening of knowledge and sharpening of skills, taking into account the cumulative lessons of experience and research, while continually broadening and deepening their military know-how.

### *Discipline*

*The soldier will strive towards complete and successful implementation of all that is demanded of him according to his orders and their spirit, in the framework of the law.*

The discipline of IDF troops means their readiness to act with all their faculties to carry out what is demanded of them, fully and successfully, according to their understanding of the orders and in keeping with their spirit, with the continual aspiration to understand and internalize, while taking care to give lawful orders and repudiate those that are clearly illegal.

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### *Loyalty*

*The soldier will act with utter devotion to the defense of the State of Israel and all its citizens, in accordance with IDF orders, within the framework of the laws of the state and the principles of democracy.*

The loyalty of IDF soldiers lies in their devotion, in all their deeds, to their homeland the State of Israel, to all its citizens, and to its army, and in their continual readiness to fight, to devote all their strength, and even to sacrifice their lives in defense of the lives of its residents and their well-being, and in defense of the sovereign State of Israel, in accordance with the values of the IDF and its orders, and while upholding the laws of the state and its democratic principles.

### *Representation*

*The soldier will see himself always as the representative and agent of the IDF, acting only within the bounds of his authority and orders.*

Representation of IDF soldiers means the awareness, manifest in all of their actions, that the military power in their hands and the right to use it are given to them only by virtue of their belonging to the IDF, in their capacity as responsible agents carrying out their functions in its service, within its authorities, according to orders and decisions made by the IDF, the army of the State of Israel, acting according to its laws, and subject to the authority of its government.

### *Camaraderie*

*The soldier will always come to the aid of his comrades when they are in need or dependent upon him, notwithstanding any danger or difficulty, even to the point of self-sacrifice.*

The camaraderie of IDF soldiers means *esprit de corps*, everlasting devotion to one another, readiness to extend deserved help, even to endanger their lives for their comrades in arms. They will act to preserve and bolster the cohesiveness of their unit, with full cooperation among different units, maintaining uniformity of aims throughout the IDF.

## ***Guiding Principles***

### *A. Values*

1. The soldier, in all of his actions and deeds, will incorporate the basic values of the IDF: Tenacity, responsibility, integrity, personal example, human life, purity of arms, professionalism, discipline, loyalty, representation and camaraderie, in accordance with their definition and with the circumstances encountered.

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2. The soldier will take into account, in all his activities during his military service, that he bears responsibility not only for the results of his actions and omissions, but also for the patterns of behavior that he helps to produce, through his orders or his personal example, explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally.

*B. In Military Service*

3. The soldier will see himself, in all his various actions, as bearing full and pivotal responsibility for the lives of the troops and all others who are dependent on his actions and decisions.

4. The soldier will be prepared to endanger his life when encountering the enemy, and to save human life (to the extent necessary), but will do everything possible to preserve his life and that of his comrades in any other military activity.

5. The soldier will take into account, in all relevant contexts, not only proper concern for human life, but also the influence his actions have on the spiritual and physical integrity of the individual, and on his honor.

6. The soldier will endeavor to utilize all of his faculties to the maximum degree possible, in line with the demands made of him and with the preference given by the IDF to combat and command roles.

7. The soldier, in all his deeds, will scrupulously protect the honor of the country, its institutions, sites and symbols, including the IDF's honor and symbols.

8. The soldier will show particular reverence for his fallen comrades. He will act respectfully at cemeteries, memorial displays and remembrance ceremonies, and will treat the bereaved families with deference.

9. The soldier will preserve the IDF tradition of honoring disabled and wounded IDF veterans.

10. The soldier will preserve the IDF tradition of learning IDF battle lore and of helping to boost the spirit of his unit.

11. The soldier will not express his personal opinions on issues beyond his area of responsibility, authority and professional skill, and certainly not his personal opinions on political, social or ideological topics subject to public debate.

12. The soldier will use his power and his military, command or professional status only for the good of the IDF, never using them illegitimately in order to advance a personal interest or any other objective that is beyond the boundaries of his authority and responsibility, whether by the letter or spirit of the law, within or without the IDF.

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13. The soldier will see himself as responsible for the results of actions taken under his orders, and will stand behind anyone acting in line with them or in an otherwise proper fashion. The soldier will see himself as responsible for behavioral patterns that he has instilled.

14. The soldier will stand by his unit and its commanders in every effort necessary to fulfill the unit's missions, and in building, developing and utilizing military force. The soldier will obey his superiors as required by law and will respect his superiors, colleagues and subordinates.

15. The soldier will not conceal any infraction or mishap and will dismiss any suggestion to be a partner in such enterprise. In the face of an infraction or mishap, the soldier will act intelligently and do whatever is needed to remedy the misdeed.

16. The soldier participating in a discussion or argument connected with IDF activity, before, during or after implementation, will take a stand and express his opinion in line with his knowledge and professional belief, honestly, bravely and fairly.

17. The soldier will use the force at his disposal towards another person only in a fair, restrained, intelligent and professional fashion, showing the proper respect for the privacy of the body and life of the other.

18. The soldier will see his appearance in IDF uniform as a symbol of his loyalty to the principles and basic guidelines of the IDF.

### *C. Encountering the Enemy*

19. In every encounter with the enemy, the soldier will use the force at his disposal bravely and wisely, while demonstrating tenacity, and with ongoing readiness to fulfill all his duties, notwithstanding danger to his life or any other obstacle.

20. The soldier will be prepared to do whatever is necessary, even risk his life, in order to rush to the aid of his comrades and not to abandon wounded troops on the battlefield.

21. The soldier will act, in every encounter with the enemy, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the laws of war, preserving the purity of arms and ethics of warfare.

22. The soldier will treat enemy soldiers and civilians, in areas controlled by the IDF, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the laws of war, and only within the bounds of his duties.

23. The soldier will act fairly, restrained to the extent necessary, wisely and professionally, within the bounds of his duties, in every contact with civilians residing or otherwise present in areas controlled by the IDF, whether during combat or

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thereafter. The soldier will respect, as much as possible, the beliefs, values, and holy and historical sites of these civilians, according to the principles and basic guidelines of the IDF, and to military necessity under the given circumstances.

24. The soldier will fight and strive up to the limit of his endurance, even when his life is threatened, in order to avoid surrendering to the enemy; on the contrary, the enemy must be overcome. The soldier will not surrender to the enemy as long as he has a chance to carry out his mission. Even barring this circumstance, the soldier will not surrender as long as he is in communication with his commander or is able to evacuate.

25. The soldier who, despite everything, falls captive, will act in accordance with IDF directives, responsibly, thoughtfully and honorably.

#### *D. With Regard to Civilian Bodies*

26. The soldier will give preference to the aims of the IDF, in keeping with its directives, orders, principles and basic guidelines, over the advancement of any civilian organization, in any case of conflict between the aims of the IDF and those of the organization.

27. The soldier will conduct all official contacts with civilian bodies in a professional manner and without impairing the principles, basic guidelines and honor of the IDF.

28. The soldier may be connected with a commercial or civilian body only in accordance with existing orders and practices, in their letter and spirit, and within the bounds of his duties.

29. The soldier will refuse personal favors derived from his role, rank, status or actions. The soldier will not request and will not agree to receive favors of any kind from any source, within or without the IDF, directly or indirectly, whether for himself or for someone else, except in line with existing orders and practices.

30. The soldier will take care, in any public appearance (especially in the media), to secure prior approval, to express absolute and unflinching loyalty to the principles and basic guidelines of the IDF, to represent the policies and decisions of the IDF, and to contribute to the public's faith in the IDF.

31. The soldier will be certain that his behavior in private circumstances cannot be interpreted as detrimental to the IDF's principles and basic guidelines, nor harmful to the public's faith in the IDF, nor contributing to the creation of behavioral patterns liable to impair the realization of the IDF's principles and basic guidelines.

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*E. In Reserves and Retirement*

32. The soldier will act, during his reserve duty, according to the same IDF principles and basic guidelines that apply to the soldier in regular service.

33. The discharged soldier may use privileged or sensitive information coming into his possession during his military service only with appropriate permission to use this information for commercial, media or other purpose outside the framework of IDF service, to advance a personal or other aim.

34. The discharged soldier will make use of his military status, including his reserve or retirement rank, or will give others permission to do so, after finishing his tour of active duty, only in civilian contexts in which there is no harm to the IDF's principles, basic guidelines, honor or trust placed in it by the public.

## **Notes**

1. *Koteret Rashit*, October 31, 1984. For Kasher's claim about the temporary nature of the Law of Return, together with invectives against Menahem Begin, see the interview with Kasher in "Symbolism Itself," in *Al Hamishmar*, December 20, 1991, p. 15; for his condemnation of the religious sector and of the idea of the land of Israel, see "How Far Asa Kasher?" in *Ha'aretz* weekend supplement, September 16, 1988, p. 16; on his feeling that the country is a lost cause morally and socially, and on emigration out of Israel as an expression of normalization, see "The Right Wing in Transition," in *Al Hamishmar*, April 17, 1992, p. 8; for his condemnation of Basic Law: Jerusalem, see Asa Kasher, "There Are Limits," in *The Limits of Obedience* (Tel Aviv: Yesh Gvul, 1985).

2. Kasher, "There Are Limits," pp. 71, 74-5.

3. Yitzhak Nadav, *Memoirs of a Hashomer Member* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Defense, 1986), p. 70.

4. It is worth noting that the public education system is also charged with the responsibility of instilling love of homeland, as manifest in Article 2 of the State Education Law of 1953: "The aim of public school education is to infuse the educational process in this country with the values of the culture of Israel ... love of the homeland, the state and the Jewish people...."

5. This does not refer merely to the Trumpeldorian ethos that the IDF inherited from the pre-state militias, at the core of which stands the declaration that "it is good to die for our country." The intention is rather that in the army's day-to-

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day functioning lies the assumption of an emotional bond between IDF soldiers and the homeland and state. The IDF's working assumption has been that in the eyes of those who serve in it, the army is not merely a workplace or a forced-labor camp, nor is it even an organization of professional soldiers such as the Foreign Legion. Rather, it is an almost voluntary organization, within whose framework the individual fulfills his moral, personal and communal obligation to serve society, to carry the burden of settling and defending the land, in accordance with traditional Zionist ideology. These assumptions seem, at first glance, to be a far cry from the realities of army life, when one examines the spectrum of motivating factors prevalent among Israeli soldiers today.