

# Why Israelis Love Their Army So Much - Despite the Abject Failures of October 7

Sunday 21 January 2024, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 21 January 2024).

**Israelis love their army with a blind, boundless, unconditional love. The Zionist left loves the Israel Defense Forces even more than the right does.**

*Israeli soldiers walk past houses destroyed by Hamas militants in Kibbutz Be'eri in southern Israel. Credit: Ariel Schalit/AP*

It would seem that one might have expected a sweeping wave of rage, criticism, and a desire to punish the army that abandoned us on [October 7](#).

Thousands of people, Israelis and Palestinians, would have been saved if only there had been an army on October 7. There would have been no deaths, no abductions, and no war.

It would seem that one might also expect that the right, whose goals – the conquest and destruction of the Palestinian people – the army serves much more than it does the goals of the left, would love the army more than the left does. But this doesn't happen.

The left is always with the IDF – and the right is as well, but less so. And nothing in this golden ratio changed after October 7.

This is wartime, a time when it's easy to understand the people's love for its soldiers. It's a time of care packages for soldiers, of discounts, of sighs, of the stories of heroism and of grief. There is nothing more human than that.

*Israeli soldiers visit a bomb shelter in which people were attacked while they sought refuge during October 7. Credit: Amir Cohen/Reuters*

And yet, at the same time, one may wonder how it was that after the October 7 [fiasco](#), the trust, the admiration – not to say worship – of the army remained as before. After its commanders took responsibility for what happened, the prewar level of adoration continued as if nothing had happened.

It's obvious that the political leadership, and above all Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), bear the brunt of responsibility, but it was the army that was revealed in all its nakedness, yet the disgrace of October 7 did not cling to it.

Despite the massive amounts of money poured into it, despite the prestige and self-importance, there was no intelligence before October 7 and there was no army on the day of the massacre. The IDF vanished, evaporated, dematerialized, and Israel forgives it. Its commanders, past and present, are the heroes of the hour.

*An IDF soldier walks past a destroyed car in Kibbutz Be'eri.Credit: Alex Levac*

Why are we so forgiving of the army? Israel's history is of course filled with militarism. After the Yom Kippur War, the era of the personality cult of the army's commanders ended, but not the love for the army. It is portrayed as the army of the people, but it never was that.

The IDF is the army of half the people, on a good day. Only after subtracting the Arabs, [the Haredim](#), the sick, the refuseniks, and the draft dodgers can it be called the people's army.

It represents some of the worst ills of Israel, and to a large extent is also responsible for them. And yet it is worshiped.

*Ultra-Orthodox Israeli soldiers praying.Credit: IDF Spokesperson's Unit*

If Israel has a bad reputation – and it does – it is the army's fault. If Israel has become a pariah, the army bears considerable responsibility for it. It defames the state, as it is doing now through the indiscriminate death and destruction it [wreaks in the Gaza Strip](#) – and we forgive it.

As an army whose core nature is expressed in the occupation, it shows Israel's dark side. It bullies, torments, [humiliates](#) and kills indiscriminately, and still the IDF and “values” are synonymous in Israel. We have nothing that is more “values-oriented” than the IDF.

Even the mother of all debacles did not crack its reputation. The media sucks up to it as before no other organization. No type of correspondent is as far from any journalistic principle as the military correspondent. No journalism is more fawning than that practiced by most of them. Every soldier is a hero, every commander is revered.

*Israeli troops in Gaza in January.Credit: IDF Spokesman's Office*

In wartime, these characteristics are heightened, naturally; the army is fighting to defend us and its soldiers courageously sacrifice their lives to protect the country. But sometimes the army also endangers security, as it is doing now in [the West Bank](#), where it is fanning the flames of the next uprising.

After all, healthcare workers also protect our welfare with infinite dedication (albeit without risking their lives), and we do not value them this way.

It's time to ask which army we love so much. The soldiers I saw last week tormenting Palestinian drivers at checkpoints? The units that disappeared on October 7? It's time we treat the army as an organization that embroiled Israel in the most terrible war in its history, and not forget this.

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**P.S.**

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