

# Opinion | In Gaza, Israel's Dehumanization of the Palestinians Has Reached a New Height

Tuesday 20 August 2024, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 14 August 2024).

*An Israeli soldier operates in the Gaza Strip with a dog from the army's canine unit in January, 2024. Credit: IDF Spokesperson's Unit*

The Israel Defense Forces has decided to downsize the Oketz unit, Unit 7142, ahead of its cancellation. The unit for dogs and their trainers has been suffering from a shortage recently. Quite a number of dogs have been killed in the Gaza Strip, and it was therefore decided to use cheaper, more efficient means. It turns out that the new unit, which has yet to be given a name by the IDF computer, brings the same operational results. There's no need to train dogs for months, no need for the iron muzzles that shut their frightening jaws, and their food will be cheaper, too: Instead of expensive Bonzo dog food, leftovers from battle rations.

And the money for burial and commemoration will also be canceled: The Oketz dogs were generally given ceremonial military burials, with weeping soldiers and tear-jerking articles on the first page of the IDF newsletter Yedioth Ahronoth. The replacements have no need for burials, their bodies can simply be tossed out. The annual August 30 memorial ceremonies for the dogs can also be dispensed with. The new dogs will have no monument. The sensitive souls of the soldiers who handle them will no longer be damaged when they die.

The pilot project is now in process and there's already one dead in the new unit. Soon, the IDF will export the knowledge it has acquired to other armies worldwide. In Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen and maybe even in Niger, they'll be happy to rely on it.

According to the Oketz Wikipedia page: "The unit activates unique war materiel - the dog, which provides unique operational advantages that have no human or technological substitute." Oops, a mistake. There may be no [technological substitute](#), but a human substitute has been found. "Human" is an exaggeration of course, but the IDF has a new type of dog, cheap, obedient, and far better trained, whose lives are worth less.

The IDF's new dogs are the residents of the Gaza Strip. Not all of them of course, only those that the army scout chooses carefully, out of 2 million candidates; the auditions take place in the displaced persons camps. There is no age restriction.

The army's headhunters have already found children and elderly people, and there are no restrictions on the activation of the new manpower. They use them and then toss them out. Meanwhile they haven't been trained for attack missions and for identifying explosives by smell, but the army is working on that. At least they won't bite Palestinian children in their sleep [like the previous Baskerville hounds](#).

On Tuesday, Haaretz published a photo of one of the new dogs on the first page: a young resident of Gaza in handcuffs, dressed in rags that were once uniforms, his eyes covered with a rag, his gaze

downcast, armed soldiers standing next to him. Yaniv Kubovich, the most courageous military correspondent in Israel, and Michael Hauser Tov revealed that the IDF uses Palestinian civilians to check tunnels in Gaza. "Our lives are more important than their lives," the commanders told the soldiers, repeating what is self-evident.

These new "dogs" are sent to the tunnels in handcuffs. Cameras are attached to their bodies, and from them one can hear the sound of their frightened breathing.

They "cleanse" shafts, are held in worse conditions than Oketz dogs and their activity has become widespread, systematic. Al-Jazeera, [boycotted in Israel](#) for causing "damage to security," revealed the phenomenon. The military denied it, as usual, with its lies. Two Haaretz reporters brought the full story on Tuesday, and it's terrifying.

There were soldiers who protested at the sight of the new "dogs," several brave ones even gave testimony to Breaking the Silence. But the procedure, which was once specifically forbidden by the High Court of Justice, has been adopted on a broad scope in the army. The next time that the public protests the fact that Benjamin Netanyahu ignores High Court rulings, we should remember that the army also brazenly ignores its rulings.

The process of dehumanization of the Palestinians has reached a new height. Haaretz reported that the IDF senior command knows about the new unit. In the opinion of the army, a dog's life is worth more than a Palestinian's. Now we also have the official version.

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**P.S.**

• Haaretz. Aug 14, 2024:

<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2024-08-14/ty-article-opinion/.premium/in-gaza-israels-dehumanization-of-the-palestinians-has-reached-a-new-height/00000191-519b-dc60-a397-57ff2c3e0000>