

An investigation by Israeli investigative journalism outlet Ha-Makom:

Israeli officer orders the field execution of a bound and blindfolded elderly Palestinian woman; ties an explosive belt around the neck of a Palestinian man in his eighties and forces him to serve as a human shield, threatening to blow his head off. The elderly man and his wife are subsequently killed by soldiers from another battalion.

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■ The elderly woman was being transported towards Israel in a Humvee accompanied by soldiers from Battalion 50, bound and blindfolded, when the accompanying officer received a telephone call. Testimonies collected by Ha-Makom describe what happened in the minutes that followed. One soldier said: “It was the execution of an elderly woman who needed to be evacuated.”

■ In the summer of 2024, soldiers from Battalion 50 of the Nahal Brigade were in the midst of the ground operation in Rafah and the southern Gaza Strip. They were searching neighbourhood after neighbourhood, house after house, after the Israeli military had ordered hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to evacuate the area. The houses they occupied were empty. Those who could had fled for their lives towards the “humanitarian” zone, but not everyone had managed to leave.

■ One day, while on their way to collect equipment and supplies for the battalion, the soldiers encountered an elderly Palestinian woman who had remained alone in the area. She was sick and weak and posed no danger to anyone. A decision was made to evacuate her.

■ Nahal soldiers placed her in a Humvee that formed part of that day’s logistical supply convoy. The elderly woman travelled in the military vehicle with three servicemen, bound and blindfolded. But everything changed when one of the officers received a telephone call.

■ According to the testimonies collected by Ha-Makom, the officer stopped the vehicle midway through the journey, took the elderly woman out, shot and killed her, and then continued driving. The two soldiers under his command were stunned by what they had witnessed. The officer explained: “Orders from Lasri.”

■ **The order to dispose of the elderly Palestinian woman reverberated through the battalion. A soldier familiar with the details of the incident explained:**

“It was the execution of an elderly woman who needed to be evacuated. This is brutality at its worst. It is not demolishing a house, or even using someone as a human shield, because in that case you could say you are protecting your own life. This is not an incident you can explain in any way. Usually, behind every atrocity committed by the Israeli military, there is some kind of rationale or a tactical or strategic explanation. There is no way to justify an act like this.”

The officer who tied an explosive belt around an elderly man’s neck

Major Menachem “Mendi” Lasri was serving at the time as deputy commander of Battalion 50. Soldiers who served under him described him as a fearless, aggressive and hot-tempered fighter.

According to testimonies received by Ha-Makom, Lasri was also the officer who tied an explosive belt around the neck of a Palestinian man in his eighties and forced him to serve as a human shield, threatening to blow his head off. The incident was revealed by journalist Eili Parry in Ha-Makom in February 2025.

■ Soldiers from the battalion had found the 80-year-old Palestinian man and his wife hiding inside a building. Lasri decided to use the elderly man as a human shield—or a “shawish,” in the soldiers’ terminology—to search buildings suspected of being booby-trapped.

■ Under threats such as “One move and I’ll blow your head off,” the elderly man was forced to accompany a group of soldiers for eight hours, relying on a walking stick, with an explosive belt tied around his neck.

■ According to Parry’s reporting, the elderly man and his wife were killed shortly after Lasri and his soldiers released them, as they made their way towards a “humanitarian” zone. Battalion 50 had not informed the other forces operating in the area. The couple had barely walked 100 metres before soldiers from another battalion shot and killed them.

■ A month after the investigation was published, the Israeli military spokesperson announced that the Military Police Criminal Investigation Division had opened an investigation. More than a year and a half after the incident was exposed, the military maintains that the case remains open. However, Ha-Makom’s inquiries among soldiers who served under Lasri found that they were unaware of any soldier having been summoned for questioning.

In response to Ha-Makom’s inquiry, the military spokesperson said that the investigation was ongoing.

On the deputy battalion commander’s orders

■ According to the testimonies collected by Ha-Makom, the shooting of the elderly woman was neither a “mistake” nor a “failure.” It was a deliberate shooting directed “from above”—on the orders of the deputy battalion commander.

■ Shortly after the incident, the officer who fired the shots was promoted. According to the report, he continues to serve in the Israeli military.

■ Lasri, meanwhile, completed his assignment as deputy battalion commander in the summer of 2024, shortly after the incident and for reasons unrelated to it. After completing the assignment, he was sent on a battalion commanders’ course and the prestigious Command and Staff course, and also pursued studies at an academic institution at the military’s expense.

■ Despite being on a promotion track, he posted a photograph on his Instagram account in January showing himself and soldiers from his field command team spending their pre-discharge leave in Sri Lanka.

■ The circumstances of his departure from the Israeli military are unknown. In response to Ha-Makom’s inquiry, he claimed that he had been “living abroad for five years.”

■ Following Ha-Makom’s investigation, military police begin examining allegations against former Battalion 50 deputy commander Major Menachem “Mendi” Lasri

■ Following the allegations presented in Ha-Makom’s investigation, the Military Police Criminal Investigation Division began a preliminary examination preceding a formal investigation. An officer from its National Unit for Operational Investigations requested access to the materials gathered during the journalistic investigation, but the request was refused.

■ Both the officer and the military spokesperson declined to comment on the delays in the investigation into Lasri's alleged use of a person as a human shield.

According to Ha-Makom's inquiries, the investigation has made no progress, and soldiers from the battalion have not yet been summoned to testify about the incident.

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