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Mohamed Nader Al-Omari

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Short on troops, Israel turns to mercenaries

Protracted and unprecedented Arab resistance has depleted Israeli troop and reservist forces and forced Tel Aviv to seek out unconventional methods – including the recruitment of foreign mercenaries – to sustain Israel's weary military and escalatory war goals.

Facing increasing domestic pressure to reveal the true extent of their military losses in Gaza and Lebanon, Israeli officials have released figures that are likely to only reveal minimal numbers. The data claims that since the beginning of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on 7 October 2023, around [12,000 soldiers and officers](#) have been injured or forced into rehabilitation under the occupation state's Ministry of Defense.

This includes 910 wounded during what Israel calls a "limited ground maneuver" launched by Tel Aviv on the Lebanese border, in addition to the deaths of over 760 officers and soldiers and 140 left completely disabled. These admissions, although selective, have stirred growing skepticism within Israeli society, already at its most politically [divided](#) since the inception of the state in 1948.

The struggle to maintain power

Following the [sacking](#) of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, questions are mounting: how does Israel plan to sustain its fighting force amidst the Lebanese resistance's deadly daily attacks on them?

Opposition against compulsory military service from religious groups, particularly the Haredim, has compounded the army's challenges – so has the removal of Gallant, an army dropout rate soaring above 17 percent, a wave of [reverse immigration](#) that has reached one million people in a single year, the highest since 1948, and increasing reluctance among shell-shocked reservists to return to the horror of battlefields in Gaza and the Lebanese border.

The treacherous northern front, especially, has become a symbol of perpetual fear for Israeli soldiers stationed there against Hezbollah, as [history repeats itself](#) in south Lebanon.

The “[huge shortage](#)” of capable fighters has forced Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to explore a range of unconventional options, especially after the Haredim conscription law passed in mid-July proved insufficient in addressing the manpower gap.

Turning to mercenaries

Many of these options are centered around utilizing [tens of thousands of mercenaries](#), drawing on assistance from western intelligence agencies, and enlisting unconventional fighters, including Jewish militias.

For the past seven decades, successive Israeli administrations have been reluctant to encourage a wholesale migration or naturalization of African Jews – the ‘[Falasha](#)’ from Ethiopia – to an Israel rife with racism, citing their 'lower status' to Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews.

As a result, only around 80,000 Ethiopian Jews, 20,000 of whom were born in the occupation state, hold Israeli citizenship. But today, desperate for manpower, the Ministry of Defense has begun granting amnesty to Falasha currently imprisoned for attempting illegal entry into Israel or for overstaying their visas.

These men, aged between 18 and 40, are being fast-tracked for citizenship on the condition that they enlist. The Zionist organization ‘Al-Harith’ has also been active in Ethiopia, recruiting and training Ethiopian Jews with promises of citizenship, job opportunities, and residence within Israel after the war. It is estimated that by October 2024, more than 17,000 Falasha, including only 1,400 women, have been recruited.

Germany’s collaboration in exploiting asylum seekers

Another initiative by the Netanyahu administration involves cooperation with German intelligence and Zionist organizations in Germany to [recruit asylum seekers](#) from Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria. Over the past seven months, the Values Initiative Association and the German–Israeli Association (DIG) have worked to enlist these refugees from war-torn Muslim-majority countries as mercenaries for Israel.

Offered monthly salaries ranging between €4,000 to €5,000 and fast-tracked German citizenship, many have joined the fight. Reports suggest that around 4,000 immigrants were naturalized between September and October alone.

This shift highlights a significant change in Berlin’s position – which once served as a mediator in prisoner exchange deals between Israel and Palestinian or Lebanese factions, but now vocally and materially leads global support of Israeli military objectives, under the guise of a moral obligation toward the occupation state.

Germany's policy of supporting genocide in Gaza and terror in Lebanon was expressed by none other than Berlin's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock during her recent visit to Lebanon and then in her speech in the German Parliament, the Bundestag, in late September:

“Germany considers Israel’s security to be an extension of its national security. Therefore, Germany is committed to Israel’s right to defend itself and to provide all possible assistance for that.”

The German government's overt backing extends beyond policy statements. The Ministry of Defense announced that German warships in the Mediterranean – operating under UNIFIL – had shot down unidentified drones and provided logistical aid to the Israeli Marines in operations such as the [kidnapping of a Lebanese naval captain](#) suspected of being linked to Hezbollah.

The militaristic alliance and Germany's role in gathering intelligence to counter Hezbollah rocket attacks have further solidified [Berlin's support for Tel Aviv](#), driven by a desire “to make amends for its Nazi past.”

After the start of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, Germany imposed further restrictions on citizenship applicants from Arab and Muslim countries, requiring them to make [pledges not to criticize Israel](#) or show sympathy for Palestinians as a litmus test for naturalization.

In early November 2024, Germany introduced a law for compulsory conscription of these Arab and Muslim applicants, claiming an intent to fill manpower shortages. Yet, this conscription would not involve service in Germany – a stipulation that has left many of these refugees wary of who and where they could end up fighting.

Desperate times

Israeli intelligence agencies, including the Shin Bet and Mossad, have also [reconnected](#) with remnants of the disbanded [South Lebanon Army](#) (SLA) militia to help recruit allies inside Lebanon. These recruits would either spy on Hezbollah positions or potentially take up arms against it should a regional escalation, akin to what happened during the war in 1982, materialize through provocations.

Meanwhile, Israeli intelligence has collaborated with European agencies and mercenary recruitment companies – including Blackwater, led by the Zionist Eric Prince – to enlist European mercenaries for the occupation army.

Although this practice dates back to 2023, recruitment efforts have surged lately. As reported by the Spanish newspaper [El Mundo](#) in late November 2023, a 28-year-old Spanish mercenary named Vidio Diaz Flores admitted to being recruited by Blackwater for approximately [€4,000 per week](#) to fight in Palestine. Israel sought to keep these kinds of recruitment initiatives under wraps, especially after five 'foreign workers' were killed when a resistance rocket targeted the Metula settlement.

These factors combined reveal an urgent desperation within Israel to address its human resource crisis in the ranks of its military forces, all while authorities are covering up their use of foreign mercenaries, likely to protect the image of their “invincible army.”

Tel Aviv's reliance on mercenaries resembles the US strategy in Iraq post-2003 – not only as a stopgap for declining manpower but also as a method to deflect criminal accountability since many of these mercenaries do not hold Israeli citizenship.

The cracks in the once-unshakable image of the occupation army are widening, and whether it can hold together under mounting internal and external pressures is far from guaranteed.

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