Israeli group to submit IDF soldiers' testimonies of Hamas war crimes to ICC

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Thirty-three testimonies of IDF combat soldiers were set to be submitted to the International Criminal Court in The Hague on Thursday as proof that Hamas terrorists carry out war crimes and use Palestinian civilians as human shields.

For months, members of the My Truth organization have collected testimonies from Israeli combat soldiers that paint a shocking picture of Hamas' activities in the Gaza Strip spanning from 2014 - the year when the Palestinian Authority became a party to the ICC's Rome Statute treaty - to 2018, when thousands of Gazans took part in the violent Hamas-organized "marches of return" on the border with Israel.

This will be the first time detailed testimonies from IDF soldiers who served in the field have been submitted to the ICC.

My Truth founder Avichai Shorshon said, "We've decided to move from defense to offense."

Israel Hayom has seen some of the testimonies, which seek to change the court's approach toward Israel.

The soldiers' testimonies describe how Palestinian children are used as human shields and ambulances are used to transport weapons, as well as other war crimes.

One soldier who fought in Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014 describes how "while running, I turn around and see a kid, who I believe was around 10 years old, tied up. It looked like the kids completely lacked self-awareness and stood [by] nonchalantly as shells and missiles fell in the background."

The soldier said, "It could be that Hamas tied him up at that spot because there was something very specific in that building."

In another testimony describing an incident that took place during the border protests this past summer, a solider recounts that "a terrorist threw a grenade at our jeep. As soon as he realized he had been seen, he grabbed a child and held on to him tightly, so we wouldn't fire at him."

Attorney Uri Morad, who heads the Jerusalem Institute of Justice's legal department, was preparing to submit the soldiers' accounts. He also plans to submit testimonies that implicate Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in crimes against his people, as well as a request to open a criminal investigation into the Palestinian leader for those alleged crimes.

In September, Israel Hayom reported that the JIJ had filed a lawsuit against Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh accusing him of[actively exploiting children under 15 for military purposes](https://www.israelhayom.com/2018/09/16/israeli-group-files-war-crimes-lawsuit-against-hamas-leader-haniyeh/), using them as child soldiers, encouraging them to commit and assist in carrying out terrorist attacks, and using them as human shields and as military targets.

The testimonies collected from IDF soldiers in recent months are expected to bolster the lawsuit against Haniyeh.

"The International Criminal Court now has a rare opportunity to send the world a message that torture and similar acts are unacceptable," Morad said.