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## **Background**

On the eve of New Year 5762 (2001-2), an updated version of the "IDF Spirit" came into force, replacing the document called "The IDF Spirit - values and ground rules". This document, together with the rules of engagement derived from it, represents the IDF code of ethics.

The IDF Spirit presents the image to which the Israel Defense Force, all its officers and its soldiers of all ranks, in all professions, positions and units, aspires, and is intended to shape the actions of IDF officers and troops and help them deal with ethical dilemmas in routine and emergency. This is not a legal document, but rather an ethical and educational document aimed at formulating the professional and moral basis for military activity.

The importance of the document is that it creates a common ethical language for all IDF soldiers, and a clear and understandable system of value expectations between commanding officer and those under his command.

"The IDF Spirit - values and ground rules" was signed back in 1994 and it was decided that the document would be re-evaluated after 5 years and changed and updated as necessary. In October 1999, the Chief of Staff decided to examine the need for updating the document, and indeed certain values were emphasized and added, while also making changes to the structure and language in order to produce a concise and simple document that would be understood by every soldier.

Source: <http://www1.idf.il/oref/site/en/oref.asp?pi=21023>

## **The IDF Spirit**

The Israel Defense Forces are the state of Israel's military force. The IDF is subordinate to the directions of the democratic civilian authorities and the laws of the state. The goal of the IDF is to protect the existence of the State of Israel and her independence, and to thwart all enemy efforts to disrupt the normal way of life in Israel. IDF soldiers are obligated to fight, to dedicate all their strength and even sacrifice their lives in order to protect the State of Israel, her citizens and residents. IDF soldiers will operate according to the IDF values and orders, while adhering to the laws of the state and norms of human dignity, and honoring the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

Source: <http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/about/doctrine/ethics.htm>

### **Spirit of the IDF-Definition and Origins**

The Spirit of the IDF is the identity card of the IDF values, which should stand as the foundation of all of the activities of every IDF soldier, on regular or reserve duty. The Spirit of the IDF and the guidelines of operation resulting from it are the ethical code of the IDF. The Spirit of the IDF will be applied by the IDF, its soldiers, its officers, its units and corps to shape their mode of action. They will behave, educate and evaluate themselves and others according to the Spirit of the IDF.

### **The Spirit of the IDF draws on four sources:**

- The tradition of the IDF and its military heritage as the Israel Defense Forces.
- The tradition of the State of Israel, its democratic principles, laws and institutions.
- The tradition of the Jewish People throughout their history.
- Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life.

### **Basic Values:**

**Defense of the State, its Citizens and its Residents** - The IDF's goal is to defend the existence of the State of Israel, its independence and the security of the citizens and residents of the state.

**Love of the Homeland and Loyalty to the Country** - At the core of service in the IDF stand the love of the homeland and the commitment and devotion to the State of Israel-a democratic state that serves as a national home for the Jewish People-its citizens and residents.

**Human Dignity** - The IDF and its soldiers are obligated to protect human dignity. Every human being is of value regardless of his or her origin, religion, nationality, gender, status or position.

### **The Values:**

**Tenacity of Purpose in Performing Missions and Drive to Victory** - The IDF servicemen and women will fight and conduct themselves with courage in the face of all dangers and obstacles; They will persevere in their missions resolutely and thoughtfully even to the point of endangering their lives.

**Responsibility** - The IDF serviceman or woman will see themselves as active participants in the defense of the state, its citizens and residents. They will carry out their duties at all times with initiative, involvement and diligence with common sense and within the framework of their authority, while prepared to bear responsibility for their conduct.

**Credibility** - The IDF servicemen and women shall present things objectively, completely and precisely, in planning, performing and reporting. They will act in such a manner that their peers and commanders can rely upon them in performing their tasks.

**Personal Example** - The IDF servicemen and women will comport themselves as required of them, and will demand of themselves as they demand of others, out of recognition of their ability and responsibility within the military and without to serve as a deserving role model.

**Human Life** - The IDF servicemen and women will act in a judicious and safe manner in all they do, out of recognition of the supreme value of human life. During combat they will endanger themselves and their comrades only to the extent required to carry out their mission.

**Purity of Arms** - The IDF servicemen and women will use their weapons and force only for the purpose of their mission, only to the necessary extent and will maintain their humanity even during combat. IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property.

**Professionalism** - The IDF servicemen and women will acquire the professional knowledge and skills required to perform their tasks, and will implement them while striving continuously to perfect their personal and collective achievements.

**Discipline** - The IDF servicemen and women will strive to the best of their ability to fully and successfully complete all that is required of them according to orders and their spirit. IDF soldiers will be meticulous in giving only lawful orders, and shall refrain from obeying blatantly illegal orders.

**Comradeship** - The IDF servicemen and women will act out of fraternity and devotion to their comrades, and will always go to their assistance when they need their help or depend on them, despite any danger or difficulty, even to the point of risking their lives.

**Sense of Mission** - The IDF soldiers view their service in the IDF as a mission; They will be ready to give their all in order to defend the state, its citizens and residents. This is due to the fact that they are representatives of the IDF who act on the basis and in the framework of the authority given to them in accordance with IDF orders.

## **Military Ethics for the War on Terror**

In 2004 a team of professors, commanders and former judges, led by the holder of the Ethics chair at Tel Aviv University, Professor Asa Kasher, developed a code of conduct which emphasizes the right behavior in low intensity warfare against terrorists, where soldiers must operate within a civilian population. Reserve units and regular units alike learn the following eleven rules of conduct, which are an addition to the more general *IDF Spirit*:

1. Military action can be taken only against military targets.
2. The use of force must be proportional.
3. Soldiers may only use weaponry they were issued by the IDF.
4. Anyone who surrenders cannot be attacked.
5. Only those who are properly trained can interrogate prisoners.
6. Soldiers must accord dignity and respect to the Palestinian population and those arrested.
7. Soldiers must give appropriate medical care, when conditions allow, to themselves and to enemies.
8. Pillaging is absolutely and totally illegal.
9. Soldiers must show proper respect for religious and cultural sites and artifacts.
10. Soldiers must protect international aid workers, including their property and vehicles.
11. Soldiers must report all violations of this code.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel\\_Defense\\_Forces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces)

## **First original document**

### **The Spirit of the IDF - values and ground rules**

#### **Preface**

1. Spirit of the IDF is the moral and normative identity card of the IDF as an organization, which stands as the foundation for all actions carried out by all men and women soldiers in the framework of the IDF.
2. Spirit of the IDF includes eleven IDF values, presenting the essence of each one of them, and detailing its definition and parameters. Spirit of the IDF also contains basic principles that express these values.
3. Spirit of the IDF draws its values and basic principles from three traditions:
  - a. The traditions of the Jewish people throughout the generations.
  - b. The traditions of the State of Israel, as expressed in its democratic principles, its laws and its institutions.
  - c. The traditions of the IDF and its battle heritage as the defense forces of Israel.
4. Spirit of the IDF is the code of ethics according to which all the IDF's soldiers, officers, units and forces will comport themselves, and it will serve in molding their patterns of action. They will educate and critique themselves and their fellows in accordance with Spirit of the IDF.
5. The complex nature of military activity in general, and of combat in particular, is liable to produce conflicts among the values and basic principles of Spirit of the IDF, and to raise problems in judgment and decisionmaking regarding the balance required among them in practice.

The obligation to execute the mission and to win in the war will be the compass in every effort to arrive at a proper balance within the system of values and basic principles of Spirit of the IDF. The effort to attain the proper balance in light of this compass will permit the preservation of the IDF as a principled and high-quality organization, which properly executes all its obligations and missions.

#### **The Values**

##### **Tenacity**

The soldier will fight and otherwise act with the utmost bravery, notwithstanding any and all dangers and obstacles in his path. He will move forward and be tenacious and brave in the pursuit of his mission, persistently and intelligently, and will not flinch from risking his life. The tenacity of IDF soldiers means their ability and readiness to fight bravely, even in the face of danger and in the most arduous of situations, carrying on and pushing ahead to reach their objective, in accordance with the circumstances, fully and efficiently, with thoughtfulness and without haste, despite any difficulty, pressure or suffering, or even danger to their lives.

##### **Responsibility**

The soldier will see himself as an active partner in the security of the country and its citizens, carrying out his duties decisively and quickly within the bounds of his authority. The responsibility of IDF soldiers means their effective partnership and readiness to fully

utilize their maximum ability to defend the country and its sovereignty and the life and safety of its citizens, within the bounds of their authority. They will demonstrate complete and rapid implementation of their functions, with continual involvement, initiative and perseverance, and with absolute readiness to take part in every endeavor.

## **Integrity**

The soldier will aspire, in all his actions, to fulfill his orders in the proper fashion, with the highest professional standard, from meticulous and painstaking preparations for the mission up through accurate, honest, complete and exact reporting of its results.

The integrity of IDF troops means that they carry out all military operations to the fullest possible extent, on the basis of their expertise, with a belief and awareness that they are acting in the proper professional manner, with unflagging eagerness to be scrupulous in planning, implementation and accurate reporting, exhaustively and meticulously, bravely, frankly and fairly.

## **Personal Example**

The soldier will behave according to what is expected of him, and will act in the way that he himself demands of others, with sympathy and intelligence, aware of his ability and responsibility to be a shining beacon for all those around him.

The personal example of IDF soldiers means acting according to the highest standard in whatever is demanded of them, from them and by them, with genuine and unshakable readiness to serve as an example to all those around them, in their actions and their behavior; to produce, perpetuate and expand mutual understanding and joint responsibility for implementation of assignments and attainment of objectives in the proper manner, in all areas of military endeavor.

## **Human Life**

The soldier will do his utmost to preserve human life, with an awareness of its supreme importance, and will endanger himself and his colleagues only to the extent necessary for implementation of the mission.

The sanctity of life in the eyes of IDF troops will be manifest in all of their actions, in thoughtful and precise planning, in astute and safely conducted exercises and in proper implementation, in accordance with the mission, with the appropriate level of risk and caution, and with continual effort to restrict the loss of human life to the extent required by the mission.

## **Purity of Arms**

The soldier will use his weapon and his power to vanquish the enemy only to the degree required, and will exercise self-restraint in order to prevent unnecessary harm to human life, body, honor and property.

Purity of arms among IDF troops means the restrained use they make of their weapons and their power in the implementation of missions, only to the extent necessary for their attainment, without unnecessary harm to human life, body, honor and property, whether to troops or civilians (especially the defenseless), during war and security operations as well as during times of peace and tranquility.

## **Professionalism**

The soldier will aspire to be aware of and understand the expertise involved in his military role, and will be competent in all skills connected with the performance of his duties.

The professionalism of IDF soldiers means their ability to carry out their military function properly, with an effort to attain excellence and continual upgrading of their accomplishments and those of their units, through broadening of knowledge and sharpening of skills, taking into account the cumulative lessons of experience and research, while continually broadening and deepening their military know-how.

## **Discipline**

The soldier will strive towards complete and successful implementation of all that is demanded of him according to his orders and their spirit, in the framework of the law.

The discipline of IDF troops means their readiness to act with all their faculties to carry out what is demanded of them, fully and successfully, according to their understanding of the orders and in keeping with their spirit, with the continual aspiration to understand and internalize, while taking care to give lawful orders and repudiate those that are clearly illegal.

## **Loyalty**

The soldier will act with utter devotion to the defense of the State of Israel and all its citizens, in accordance with IDF orders, within the framework of the laws of the state and the principles of democracy.

The loyalty of IDF soldiers lies in their devotion, in all their deeds, to their homeland the State of Israel, to all its citizens, and to its army, and in their continual readiness to fight, to devote all their strength, and even to sacrifice their lives in defense of the lives of its residents and their well-being, and in defense of the sovereign State of Israel, in accordance with the values of the IDF and its orders, and while upholding the laws of the state and its democratic principles.

## **Representation**

The soldier will see himself always as the representative and agent of the IDF, acting only within the bounds of his authority and orders.

Representation of IDF soldiers means the awareness, manifest in all of their actions, that the military power in their hands and the right to use it are given to them only by virtue of their belonging to the IDF, in their capacity as responsible agents carrying out their functions in its service, within its authorities, according to orders and decisions made by the IDF, the army of the State of Israel, acting according to its laws, and subject to the authority of its government.

## **Camaraderie**

The soldier will always come to the aid of his comrades when they are in need or dependent upon him, notwithstanding any danger or difficulty, even to the point of self-sacrifice.

The camaraderie of IDF soldiers means esprit de corps, everlasting devotion to one another, readiness to extend deserved help, even to endanger their lives for their comrades in arms.

They will act to preserve and bolster the cohesiveness of their unit, with full cooperation among different units, maintaining uniformity of aims throughout the IDF.



## **Guiding Principles**

### **A. Values**

1. The soldier, in all of his actions and deeds, will incorporate the basic values of the IDF: Tenacity, responsibility, integrity, personal example, human life, purity of arms, professionalism, discipline, loyalty, representation and camaraderie, in accordance with their definition and with the circumstances encountered.
2. The soldier will take into account, in all his activities during his military service, that he bears responsibility not only for the results of his actions and omissions, but also for the patterns of behavior that he helps to produce, through his orders or his personal example, explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally.

### **B. In Military Service**

3. The soldier will see himself, in all his various actions, as bearing full and pivotal responsibility for the lives of the troops and all others who are dependent on his actions and decisions.
4. The soldier will be prepared to endanger his life when encountering the enemy, and to save human life (to the extent necessary), but will do everything possible to preserve his life and that of his comrades in any other military activity.
5. The soldier will take into account, in all relevant contexts, not only proper concern for human life, but also the influence his actions have on the spiritual and physical integrity of the individual, and on his honor.
6. The soldier will endeavor to utilize all of his faculties to the maximum degree possible, in line with the demands made of him and with the preference given by the IDF to combat and command roles.
7. The soldier, in all his deeds, will scrupulously protect the honor of the country, its institutions, sites and symbols, including the IDF's honor and symbols.
8. The soldier will show particular reverence for his fallen comrades. He will act respectfully at cemeteries, memorial displays and remembrance ceremonies, and will treat the bereaved families with deference.
9. The soldier will preserve the IDF tradition of honoring disabled and wounded IDF veterans.
10. The soldier will preserve the IDF tradition of learning IDF battle lore and of helping to boost the spirit of his unit.
11. The soldier will not express his personal opinions on issues beyond his area of responsibility, authority and professional skill, and certainly not his personal opinions on political, social or ideological topics subject to public debate.
12. The soldier will use his power and his military, command or professional status only for the good of the IDF, never using them illegitimately in order to advance a personal interest or any other objective that is beyond the boundaries of his authority and responsibility, whether by the letter or spirit of the law, within or without the IDF.
13. The soldier will see himself as responsible for the results of actions taken under his orders, and will stand behind anyone acting in line with them or in an otherwise proper fashion. The soldier will see himself as responsible for behavioral patterns that he has instilled.
14. The soldier will stand by his unit and its commanders in every effort necessary to fulfill the unit's missions, and in building, developing and utilizing military force. The soldier will obey his superiors as required by law and will respect his superiors, colleagues and subordinates.
15. The soldier will not conceal any infraction or mishap and will dismiss any suggestion to



be a partner in such enterprise. In the face of an infraction or mishap, the soldier will act intelligently and do whatever is needed to remedy the misdeed.

16. The soldier participating in a discussion or argument connected with IDF activity, before, during or after implementation, will take a stand and express his opinion in line with his knowledge and professional belief, honestly, bravely and fairly.

17. The soldier will use the force at his disposal towards another person only in a fair, restrained, intelligent and professional fashion, showing the proper respect for the privacy of the body and life of the other.

18. The soldier will see his appearance in IDF uniform as a symbol of his loyalty to the principles and basic guidelines of the IDF.

### **C. Encountering the Enemy**

19. In every encounter with the enemy, the soldier will use the force at his disposal bravely and wisely, while demonstrating tenacity, and with ongoing readiness to fulfill all his duties, notwithstanding danger to his life or any other obstacle.

20. The soldier will be prepared to do whatever is necessary, even risk his life, in order to rush to the aid of his comrades and not to abandon wounded troops on the battlefield.

21. The soldier will act, in every encounter with the enemy, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the laws of war, preserving the purity of arms and ethics of warfare.

22. The soldier will treat enemy soldiers and civilians, in areas controlled by the IDF, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the laws of war, and only within the bounds of his duties.

23. The soldier will act fairly, restrained to the extent necessary, wisely and professionally, within the bounds of his duties, in every contact with civilians residing or otherwise present in areas controlled by the IDF, whether during combat or thereafter. The soldier will respect, as much as possible, the beliefs, values, and holy and historical sites of these civilians, according to the principles and basic guidelines of the IDF, and to military necessity under the given circumstances.

24. The soldier will fight and strive up to the limit of his endurance, even when his life is threatened, in order to avoid surrendering to the enemy; on the contrary, the enemy must be overcome. The soldier will not surrender to the enemy as long as he has a chance to carry out his mission. Even barring this circumstance, the soldier will not surrender as long as he is in communication with his commander or is able to evacuate.

25. The soldier who, despite everything, falls captive, will act in accordance with IDF directives, responsibly, thoughtfully and honorably.

### **D. With Regard to Civilian Bodies**

26. The soldier will give preference to the aims of the IDF, in keeping with its directives, orders, principles and basic guidelines, over the advancement of any civilian organization, in any case of conflict between the aims of the IDF and those of the organization.

27. The soldier will conduct all official contacts with civilian bodies in a professional manner and without impairing the principles, basic guidelines and honor of the IDF.

28. The soldier may be connected with a commercial or civilian body only in accordance with existing orders and practices, in their letter and spirit, and within the bounds of his duties.

29. The soldier will refuse personal favors derived from his role, rank, status or actions. The soldier will not request and will not agree to receive favors of any kind from any source, within or without the IDF, directly or indirectly, whether for himself or for someone else, except in line with existing orders and practices.

30. The soldier will take care, in any public appearance (especially in the media), to secure prior approval, to express absolute and unflinching loyalty to the principles and basic guidelines of the IDF, to represent the policies and decisions of the IDF, and to contribute to the public's faith in the IDF.

31. The soldier will be certain that his behavior in private circumstances cannot be interpreted as detrimental to the IDF's principles and basic guidelines, nor harmful to the public's faith in the IDF, nor contributing to the creation of behavioral patterns liable to impair the realization of the IDF's principles and basic guidelines.

## **E. In Reserves and Retirement**

32. The soldier will act, during his reserve duty, according to the same IDF principles and basic guidelines that apply to the soldier in regular service.

33. The discharged soldier may use privileged or sensitive information coming into his possession during his military service only with appropriate permission to use this information for commercial, media or other purpose outside the framework of IDF service, to advance a personal or other aim.

34. The discharged soldier will make use of his military status, including his reserve or retirement rank, or will give others permission to do so, after finishing his tour of active duty, only in civilian contexts in which there is no harm to the IDF's principles, basic guidelines, honor or trust placed in it by the public.