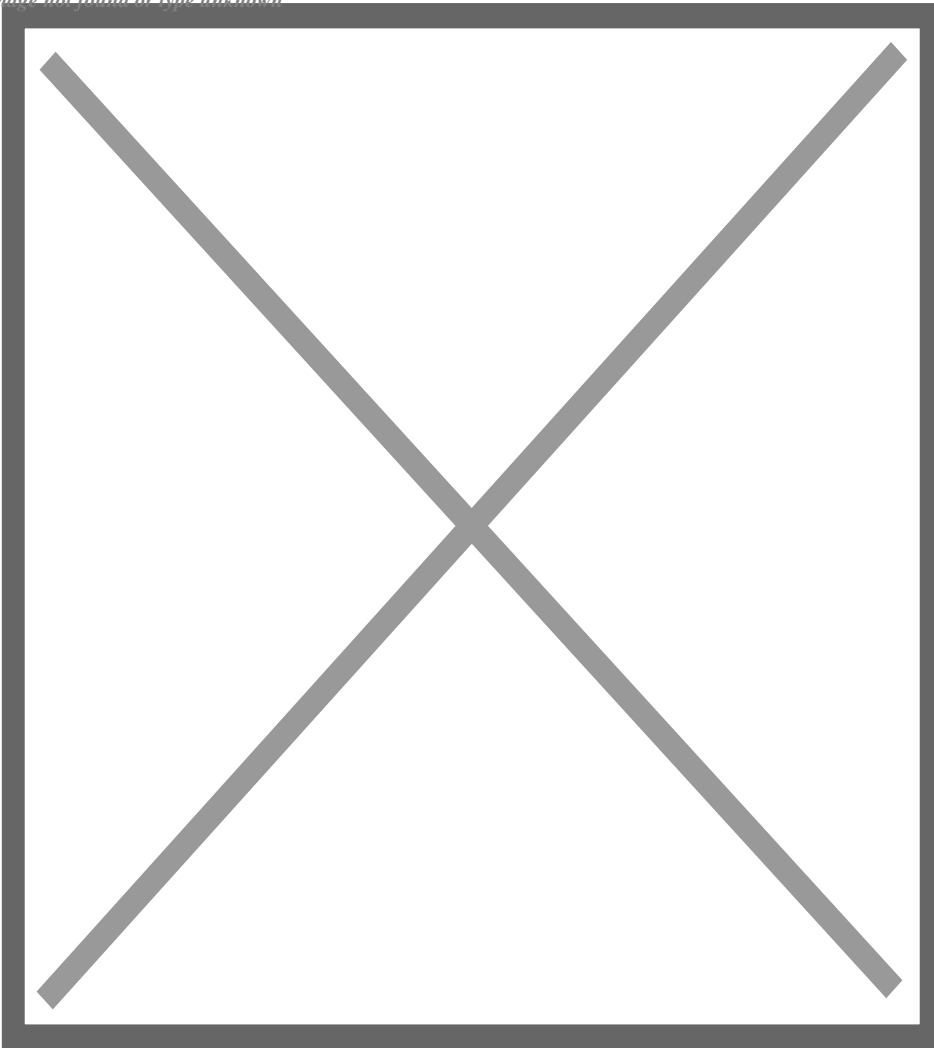


Israeli soldier flees Brazil amid probe into Gaza war crimes

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21-year-old Israeli army reservist Yuval Vagdani fled Brazil with the help of the Israeli embassy in Brasilia

Brasilia, January 6 (RHC)-- An Israeli soldier accused of committing war crimes during the regime's genocidal war against the besieged Gaza Strip has fled Brazil where authorities were pressing for an investigation.

Despite a court order, 21-year-old Israeli army reservist Yuval Vagdani who was vacationing in Brazil, managed to leave the Latin American country and is reportedly en route back to the occupied territories, Israeli broadcaster KAN said on Sunday. Details of how he evaded arrest remain unclear, except that it appears he was assisted by the Israeli embassy in Brasilia.

A Brazilian court earlier directed police to investigate the soldier over war crimes in the Gaza Strip, where the regime's genocide has killed at least 45,800 Palestinians over the past 15 months.

In a statement on Sunday, the Hind Rajab Foundation (HRF), a Belgium-based group advocating for justice for Palestinian victims, condemned the soldier's escape, accusing Israel of orchestrating his departure to obstruct justice.

The organization said it has "verified information that Israel is imminently attempting to smuggle suspected Israeli war criminal Yuval Vagdani out of Brazil, because of a Brazilian court order for police to take investigative measures against him."

"There are also indications that evidence is being destroyed," it stressed. "This is not only a scandal but an affront to Brazil's sovereignty and rule of law. Israel has employed similar tactics before."

The organization, which has been named after the six-year-old Palestinian girl who was tragically killed last year along with half a dozen relatives and rescue workers in Gaza, called on Brazilian authorities "to fulfill their responsibilities, protect their judicial process, and ensure justice prevails."

The HRF earlier submitted over 500 pages of evidence to the court, including video footage, geolocation data, and photographs that show the suspect planting explosives and participating in the destruction of entire neighborhoods across the besieged Palestinian region.

"This individual actively contributed to the destruction of homes and livelihoods, and his own statements and behavior align with the genocidal objectives in Gaza," said Maira Pinheiro, the HRF's lawyer.

Palestinian families whose homes were destroyed by the Israeli army have joined the HRF case as plaintiffs.

The foundation has submitted similar complaints in other countries, including one against Israel's military attache in Brussels and another involving a soldier traveling in Sri Lanka.

Fears in the Israeli-occupied territories have been growing that decisions by the International Criminal Court (ICC) could lead to arrests and investigations into war crimes.

Last month, the Israeli military advised dozens of soldiers against traveling abroad after reportedly tracking around 30 war crimes complaints and legal actions targeting its personnel for their roles in offensives in Gaza. Officers and soldiers have also been instructed to remove any photos or videos documenting their involvement in Gaza from social media platforms.

Additionally, they have been told to refrain from sharing their locations while abroad amid fears of retaliation from pro-Palestinian organizations, which have reportedly compiled blacklists of individuals involved in the war.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics says Gaza has lost about 6 percent of its population due to Israel's campaign of genocide.



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