

*Foreign mercenaries fighting for  
Israel in genocidal war on Gaza  
accused of war crimes*

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Taken from an article by Dr Mustafa Fetouri / MEMO \*\*\* Middle East Monitor

In December 2023, Thomas Portes, a member of the French National Assembly (Parliament) revealed a letter he had sent to the Minister of Justice, Eric Dupond-Moretti , asking him to investigate some 4,185 French citizens believed to have been fighting with Israel's Defence Force (IDF). The letter, posted on X, calls for the investigation of "war crimes" the French volunteers might have been participating in while fighting in Gaza, where war crimes have widely been reported.

What Mr. Portes's letter did not mention is the fact that French volunteers make up some 45 per cent of the total foreign volunteers joining the Israeli murderous army—a fact very few French people know about. The same French people who have been pouring, in their hundreds of thousands into the streets in support of Palestine, would be very angry had they known about this.

According to Israel's Defence Ministry report, published in 2016, Americans contribute 29 per cent of the foreign contingent joining the IDF annually, followed by the British, at 5 percent. Some 100 Brits are currently serving in the IDF as it continues its criminal murder campaign in Gaza.

80 per cent of these "enemy combatants", to borrow Donald Rumsfeld's description, usually serve for 18 months within the ranks of the IDF and get the same pay and treatment as regular IDF personnel. The majority of them join the IDF's combat infantry, responsible for the daily shooting of Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and, of course, Gaza. The late war criminal, Rumsfeld, used the term "enemy combatants" in reference to foreign fighters caught in Afghanistan and elsewhere during years of the US's failed global war on terror, which was terrorism in itself. No term has yet been coined to label those foreigners committing war crimes in Gaza—they should be called mercenaries, since each one of them, on top of their regular monthly salaries and bonuses, if any, receives nearly \$7,000 after they complete their training.

The issue of foreign fighters helping the IDF to kill more Palestinian women and children is rarely reported on in the mainstream media in France, or in any other country known to support Israel's Occupation. Furthermore, not a single European country, or the US and the UK, have publicly warned their own citizens against joining the IDF. They did more than warning when the issue came up in 2011, with hundreds of Europeans flocking to Syria to fight its government.

According to a study published in the journal of Sociological Forum in June 2022, at least 1,200 Americans are serving in the IDF at any given time. The study found that, on any given year, some 3,500 foreign Jewish soldiers have been serving in the IDF over the last two decades—in military terms, that is the equivalent of a full army brigade. Those figures are expected to have increased in the current war in Gaza.

21 American soldiers were killed last month when the IDF suffered its biggest single day loss in Gaza at the hands of the Palestinian Resistance fighters, who killed a total of 24 soldiers of the invading IDF. Given the scale of destruction and the number of innocent civilians killed in Gaza, it is almost certain that these foreign fighters have participated in the war crimes taking place in Gaza.

While precise number of American citizens fighting in Gaza is unknown, they are thought to be in their hundreds. Since the Israeli attack on Gaza started on 7 October, at least 10,000 people living in the US have received draft notices from the Israel army to report for duty. Many of them do have dual Israeli citizenship, making accountability for possible war crimes a tricky legal issue, despite America's Neutrality Act, dating back to the founding days of the US, making it illegal for any American citizen to take part in any foreign war, or establish a militia for that purpose. However, the Act has not been reinforced recently, as hundreds of Americans have participated in wars in Ukraine, in Libya in 2011 and, now, in Gaza.

Besides the US, foreign fighters joining the IDF come from at least five European countries, including Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. According to Italy's Foreign Minister, Antonio Tajani, there were some 18,000 Italian nationals working and living in Israel when the war started, among them 1,000 who work for the IDF.

Most of the foreign fighters tend to be Jewish, with or without Israeli citizenship. Their own countries seem to look the other way while their citizens volunteer to fight a foreign war with the great potential for war crimes of unprecedented proportionality.

However, some actions to hold such individuals to account are being taken. In The Netherlands, for example, March-30 Movement, a pro-Palestinian group supporting Palestinian rights, has already filed a court case against a Dutch woman, named as Leah Rachmani, in court documents. The lawyer filing the case, Haroon Raza, said Ms. Rachmani “should be investigated for war crimes”.

His colleague, Nabila Saaman, told MEMO, in an email message, that the Movement has already filed “eight cases in the Netherlands against individuals believed to be involved in crimes in Gaza.” Ms. Saaman also wrote that her Movement is preparing similar cases in “Belgium and other [European] countries”. The March-30 Movement is working to widen its activities to include the entire European Union bloc in its pursuit of justice for the poor Palestinians in Gaza, and beyond.

France, on other hand, has been the only known EU country where judicial authorities opened an investigation of war crimes in relation to Israel’s attack on Gaza in 2014, but such legal venues are, usually, complicated and time consuming. This particular French investigation, for example, only started in September 2023, and it is not expected to end any time soon.

The IDF runs a program called “mahal,” serving as a pool for foreign volunteers wishing to join the IDF. People do not even have to be citizens or dual citizens of Israel to join the training program. For British citizens, for example, any man of the age of 24 and any woman of 21 years of age, with one Jewish parent or grandparent, is eligible to enlist in the program. A rabbi, instead of any government, including that of Israel, confirms this requirement.

At the same time, all EU countries, the UK and the US, have taken harsh criminalising measures to punish their citizens who were found to have fought in Syria, for example, or to have joined the terror organisation, Daesh. Many such individuals were even stripped of their citizenship and left to survive in the harsh northern Syrian camps just because they travelled to Syria back in 2011, without any evidence that they have fired a gun—the case of Shamima Begum is a well documented example of double standards and selective justice. On the other hand, not a single Western government has, so far, taken any action to punish its citizens fighting for Israel as it carries out the worst genocide ever seen since World War II.

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<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/375002-foreign-mercenaries-fighting-for-israel-in-genocidal-war-on-gaza-accused-of-war-crimes>



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