



↑ Israeli soldiers operate, amid the ongoing ground invasion in a location given as the Gaza Strip in this screengrab obtained from a video released on November 17, 2023.

● REUTERS

Violation of war rules

The spokesperson of the Israeli army told CNN that Israeli soldiers violated war laws; they should not have opened fire near captives... Hamas uses all sorts of tricks to confuse our soldiers and kill them, which played a role in the deaths of the kidnapped. Hamas tries to use loudspeakers broadcasting in Hebrew to lure our soldiers into ambushes.

The more significant admission of this military official is the acknowledgment of the exhaustion of the army: Our soldiers suffer from fatigue and the burdens of war, and some of them have been in battle for a month and a half.

Avi Dichter, a former head of the Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet or Shabak) and the current Agriculture Minister in Netanyahu's cabinet, said to Channel 12 that Israel has paid very high costs in the Gaza war and military operations there are very challenging. Israel's use of this amount of force in a war and the unprecedented volume of bombs is remarkable.

On November 20, The New York Times reported, citing US officials, that Israel's quick decision to start ground operations in Gaza prevented sufficient planning to minimize the risk of civilian casualties, but what it ensured was a high number of deaths among non-combatants.

However, the prolonged war and the high number of civilian casualties in Gaza, reaching around 19,000 people, do not guarantee the realization of Netanyahu's and the Israeli army's objectives. General Kenneth McKenzie Jr., the retired head of US Central Command, claimed that Israel is achieving its goals, but he emphasized that, strategically, it may not necessarily be in Israel's favor.

Unprecedented losses for Israeli army

Now, since the ground invasion into Gaza, the remarkable and unprecedented statistics of Israeli army casualties testify to the claim that time has not been in favor of Israel. According to BBC Persian, the number of Israeli military personnel killed after the start of the ground operation and entry into Gaza until December 16 has reached 121. The Israeli army has confirmed the death of 426 military personnel from the beginning of the war on October 7 to December 18.

Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, on December 18, reported, citing Israeli military sources, that more than 5,000 Israeli soldiers have been injured since the beginning of the war. However, Ariel Shimon, an Israeli journalist, believes that Israel does not disclose the true casualty figures. According to this Israeli journalist, the actual number of casualties is more than three times what has been announced.

According to military experts, Israel's main strategy in its various conflicts over the past seven decades has been "surprise" and striking in a short time. However, on October 7, Israel itself fell victim to Hamas's surprise attack. After that, due to Hamas's resistance, it could not quickly achieve its goals as in the past. Therefore, the prolongation of the war, especially in a confined region and in the style of guerrilla and urban warfare, has made the Israeli army vulnerable. On December 16, one of the Israeli commanders who participated in the 2014 war told Reuters, that the broader range of ongoing ground operations in Gaza means the presence of more forces on the ground, allowing for defensive tactics and inflicting more casualties on the invading forces for Hamas.

Friendly fire

It seems natural that fatigue resulting from the prolongation of the war, in addition to increasing casualties for the Israeli army, might also result in more violence due to failures and violations of customary rules of war, lack of necessary focus for planning, and mistakenly attacking its own forces. On December 12, the Israeli army announced in a statement that 20 Israeli military personnel had been killed by their own fire in the Gaza Strip. According to the army's statement, the reasons for the deaths of these soldiers include the large number of forces in the field, the duration of the war, fatigue, lack of operational discipline, and lack of coordination among the forces, among other reasons. The Times of Israel also wrote 13 of these 20 soldiers targeted by their own forces were killed due to the mistakes of fighter jets or tanks. One soldier was killed when a comrade accidentally shot him, two were killed in Israeli explosions, two in collisions with armored vehicles, and two were mistakenly targeted. According to Israeli military analysts, severe fatigue of the soldiers after about two months and a few weeks of war and not adhering to military rules are additional reasons.

However, the incident of the killing of three Israeli captives in the north of Gaza reveals the psychological state and vulnerability of the Israeli army further.

The prolongation of the war and the failure to achieve declared objectives have also caused psychological problems for Israeli soldiers. Maariv newspaper wrote that grief, sorrow, pain, and problems related to sleep and breathing are seen in soldiers. Soldiers returning from the war suffer from mental and physical problems. With the advancement of the war, which is likely to continue for a long time, the level of damage and pain of the military will increase.

↑ An Israeli soldier takes position during the ongoing ground invasion at a location given as Gaza, in this picture released on November 17, 2023.

● REUTERS

