ISR103096.E

Israel: Call-up notice for military service; rules and mechanisms; consequences of delay to respond; extent to which failure to respond to a call-up notice is reported to government authorities

Response Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is mandatory for Israeli men and women, who serve terms of three and two years respectively (Israel 1 Apr. 2008; Global Security n.d.). However, Israeli Arabs, students in accredited religious institutions, and various categories of women are exempted from mandatory service (ibid.).

When they receive their preliminary call-up notice at age 16 (New Profile 23 Feb. 2009a; Child Soldiers 2008) or 17, Israeli citizens must report to the nearest regional recruitment centre or, if they are abroad, the nearest Israeli consulate (Israel n.d.b). The IDF calls up Israeli citizens who are over 17 years old according to the Jewish calendar, "for registration, medical examination and other examinations" (ibid. 2008, 8).

The government of Israel indicates that the first step for persons called up to serve in the IDF is to visit a recruitment bureau, where medical examinations, a personal interview and a series of tests will take place (ibid. n.d.d.), if possible in a single day (ibid. 2008, 8). Persons who are called up must bring with them the following documents: a piece of identification, their "reporting decree" (the call-up notice), a completed medical questionnaire, a recent urine analysis report, an eyesight examination report (for those with corrective eyewear), details on the person's health care organization, the parents' personal details, a foreign passport (if he or she has one), and academic and immigration papers (ibid. n.d.d).

Preliminary screening and placement involves filling out a questionnaire which seeks to match a new recruit's personality and personal preferences with the military duty to which they will be assigned (ibid. n.d.c). Further tests include identifying various types of intelligence, Hebrew language ability and medical fitness for duty (ibid.). In some situations, further tests (such as, for example, specific medical exams) may follow these preliminary tests (ibid. 2008, 9).

Once Israeli citizens reach the age of enlistment (18 years), they are called up to begin their service through an enlistment order (ibid.). Starting from the day that their service begins, new soldiers receive basic training before being sent to their military unit (ibid.).
According to an article published by the Associated Press (AP), call-up for reserve duty may involve "computerized calls to [reservists'] cell phones" (22 July 2006), although this could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

**Consequences of delay to enlist and notification of government authorities**

In 23 February 2009 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a representative from New Profile, a pacifist non-governmental organization (NGO) opposed to the compulsory military draft (New Profile n.d.), stated that there are several kinds of call-up, including preliminary call-ups beginning at age 16 which are treated quite differently than enlistment (ibid. 23 Feb. 2009a).

Persons who are "designated for security services" (DSS) are permitted to leave the country, without specific authorization from the recruitment bureau, for a period of no longer than three consecutive months (Israel n.d.a). However, these persons must return to Israel at least three days before they are required to report for duty (ibid.). Similarly, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007* notes that Israelis are free to travel abroad if they have no outstanding military obligations" (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2d).

According to New Profile, a person who receives an enlistment order but fails to report for duty would immediately be considered absent without leave (AWOL) and after 14 days, he or she would be considered a deserter (New Profile 23 Feb. 2009a). The New Profile Representative noted that if a person fails to heed an enlistment order, the military police will receive this person's file and shortly thereafter the civilian police database will be updated as well (ibid.). The Representative added that the "deserters" may be arrested at any time by the police, such as during a regular traffic inspection, or while attempting to leave or enter the country at an airport (ibid.).

In addition, the New Profile Representative indicated that the person's corresponding military unit would then put him or her on trial before a judge who is a military officer (ibid.). Decisions are often disciplinary in nature, involving prison sentences of 14 to 35 days, depending on the rank of the judge (ibid.). Persons who have been found to be AWOL for a more lengthy period (over two months for conscripts, or a longer period for other types of recruits) may be court-marshalled and may theoretically be imprisoned for a maximum of 15 years; however, the Representative from New Profile indicated that the longest such sentence that he was aware of is 18 months (ibid.). According to the Representative, prison sentences "are proportional to the time a person spent being AWOL, with the sentence often matching that time, doubling it, or corresponding to half of it" (ibid.).

According to the New Profile Representative, "[n]o double jeopardy provisions hold for conscientious objectors repeatedly refusing to enlist, and they are sentenced repeatedly" (ibid.). A person being released from prison in such circumstances will later be called up once again, normally from the same military base that called him or her up the first time (ibid.). A second representative from New Profile added that such repeated incarcerations cease only when a person obtains a discharge or when the military decides, often after three to six prison terms have been served, to send the person to an "incompatibility committee" that may discharge him or her from further duty (ibid. 23 Feb. 2009b). The information provided by the New Profile representatives could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

An 18 August 2006 article appearing in the *The Jerusalem Post* describes the phenomenon of draft-dodging called "'gray refusal,'" whereby reservists pretend to have a physical or psychological impairment, or temporarily leave the country under a false pretext in order to avoid a call-up, "thereby avoiding reserve duty without paying any price." According to a Tel Aviv University philosophy professor cited in the article, there are approximately ten "'gray-refusers'" for every draft resister (*The
Jerusalem Post 18 Aug. 2006). Further or corroborating information on this type of draft-dodging could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Associated Press (AP). 22 July 2006. Aron Heller. "Israeli Civilians Rally as Army Calls to Arms." (Factiva)


The Jerusalem Post. 18 August 2006. Larry Derfner and Ariel Jerozolimski. "Brothers in Arms?" (Factiva)

New Profile. 23 February 2009a. Correspondence sent by a representative.

_____. 23 February 2009b. Correspondence sent by a representative.


Additional Sources Consulted
Oral sources: The Embassy of Israel in Ottawa, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), a lawyer specializing in military law and two Israeli professors specializing in military affairs did not respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

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