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Israeli man chooses military prison over Gaza bombardment

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Nov. 20, 2012 NCR Today

Over the weekend, as Palestinian casualties from the Israeli bombardment of Gaza mounted, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of a "significant expansion of the operation" if the Hamas rockets did not stop. Speaking to his cabinet Sunday, Netanyahu said thousands of young Israeli conscripts and reservists are at the ready "for any order they might receive."

Not Natan Blanc. The 19-year-old Israeli, whose draft notice required him to report for military duty Monday morning, is refusing to serve and has been sentenced to a week and an half in military prison. Blanc's refusal is a spark of sanity and hope amid the darkness of this war. Here's his statement explaining his decision:

> I began thinking about refusing to be conscripted into the Israeli Army during the "Cast Lead" operation in 2008. The wave of aggressive militarism that swept the country then, the expressions of mutual hatred, and the vacuous talk about stamping out terror and creating a deterrent effect were the primary trigger for my refusal. Today, after four years full of terror, without a political process [towards peace negotiations], and without quiet in Gaza and Sderot, it is clear that the Netanyahu Government, like that of his predecessor Olmert, is not interested in finding a solution to the existing situation, but rather in preserving it. From their point of view, there is nothing wrong with our initiating a "Cast Lead 2" operation every three or four years (and then 3, 4,5 and 6): we will talk of deterrence, we will kill some terrorist, we will lose some civilians on both sides, and we will prepare the ground for a new generation full of hatred on both sides.
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> As representatives of the people, members of the cabinet have no duty to present their vision for the futures of the country, and they can continue with this bloody cycle, with no end in sight. But we, as citizens and human beings, have a moral duty to refuse to participate in this cynical game. That is why I have decided to refuse to be inducted into the Israeli Army on November 19, 2012.

Israeli refusenik Moriel Rothman, who blogs at The Leftern Wall [1], said Blanc is the first draftee of this current invasion of Gaza to oppose his conscription. Military duty is compulsory for all Israeli Jews upon turning 18, and Rothman said "to refuse the army is very, very, very unpopular, even among liberals."

The blogger just concluded three weeks in military prison for his own refusal to participate in an "occupying force." The occupation, Rothman wrote in his declaration of refusal, is "anti-God, anti-Love, and staggeringly, constantly violent."

Blanc is being held at a military base outside the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. His email is nathanbl@walla.com [2].

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Links:
[1] http://thelefternwall.com/

[2] mailto:nathanbl@walla.com