

Two Israeli troops guilty of using human shield in Gaza

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An Israeli military court has convicted two Israeli soldiers for using a Palestinian child as a human shield during an offensive in Gaza in 2009. The soldiers were found guilty of reckless endangerment and conduct unbecoming for forcing the nine-year-old boy to check suspected booby-traps.

It is reportedly the first such conviction in Israel - where the use of civilians as human shields is banned. The sentencing will be decided at a later date, the court said.

On Sunday, the southern command military court found the two Israeli soldiers guilty of "exceeding their authority to the point of endangering life" and conduct unbecoming in the incident in Gaza City's suburb of Tel al-Hawa on 15 January 2009.

A summary of the verdict said that - when rounding up residents of Tel al-Hawa - the soldiers came across bags in a home and ordered the Palestinian boy to search for suspected booby-traps.

"The boy, who feared for his fate and was under the stress of the situation, wet his pants," the three-judge panel wrote in the summary of the verdict. "The court has noted that, unlike the soldiers, the child was, naturally, bereft of any form of protection."

However, the court acknowledged that at the time the soldiers - whose names have not been released - had been under "difficult and dangerous conditions".

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