



Forty-three veterans of one of Israel's most secretive military intelligence units – many of them still active reservists – have signed a public letter refusing to serve in operations involving the occupied Palestinian territories because of the widespread surveillance of innocent residents.

The signatories include officers, former instructors and senior NCOs from the country's equivalent of America's NSA or Britain's GCHQ, known as Unit 8200 – or in Hebrew as Yehida Shmoneh-Matayim.

They allege that the “all-encompassing” intelligence the unit gathers on Palestinians – much of it concerning innocent people – is used for “political persecution” and to create divisions in Palestinian society.

The largest intelligence unit in the Israeli military, Unit 8200 intercepts electronic communications including email, phone calls and social media in addition to targeting military and diplomatic traffic.

The signatories say, however, that a large part of their work was unrelated to Israel's security or defence, but appeared designed to perpetuate the occupation by “infiltrating” and “controlling” all aspects of Palestinian life.

Written in uncompromising language the letter states: “We, veterans of Unit 8200, reserve soldiers both past and present, declare that we refuse to take part in actions against Palestinians and refuse to continue serving as tools in deepening the military control over the Occupied Territories.”

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