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Nighttime raids, pointed guns, arrests often accompanied by beatings, kicks, curses and painful and extended handcuffing. The ordinary behavior of Israeli children in uniform.

Children in the West Bank throw stones at army vehicles and Israeli cars, mainly those belonging to settlers. That is the undeniable truth. Throwing stones is the classic way of telling the occupier, who is armed from head to toe, that he has forced himself on the occupied. Sometimes it's part of a sweeping resistance movement, sometimes it's a ceremonial remnant of such a movement, not devoid of braggadocio and adolescent boredom, while also a reminder to adults not to adapt.

The armed occupier bellows that this is violence, an offense just a step away from firearms. The violence of the occupier is the norm that no one questions, so much so that it becomes invisible. Only the response to that norm is presented and perceived as criminal, and the occupying nation wallows pleasurably in its eternal victimhood to justify its violent actions.

The army, especially the military justice system, has abundant means to deter young people from taking part in those ceremonies to ward off adjustment. Nighttime raids, pointed guns, arrests often accompanied by beatings, kicks, curses and painful and extended handcuffing. The ordinary behavior of Israeli children in uniform, completely normative. From the frightening conditions of such arrests, Palestinian children are taken straight to interrogation. This, too, involves intimidation, threats and sometimes a blow, sometimes temptation: Admit that you threw stones and we'll let you go. Because detention until the end of legal proceedings might be longer than the sentence itself, sometimes it's preferable to admit to something you did not do.

Eight 16-year-old students at the El-Arub agricultural school refused to be part of the statistic of confessions under pressure in the so-called military justice system. Three soldiers who arrested them in October 2008 testified to the police that their detainees had thrown stones on Route 60, and the soldiers caught them on the road after chasing them. The indictments were tailored to the soldiers' account of events.

But the truth was that the teens were pulled out of their classrooms by soldiers who drove into the school compound. The police did not bother to question the principal and his teachers, the prosecution did not append corroborating evidence to the "stone-throwing incident" (such as documentation of the incident by the police or an army war room). And still, the military judge

extended the remand of the eight teens until the end of the proceedings. A soldier's word against the word of a Palestinian boy.

The appeals judge was somewhat discomfited by the vague testimony the soldiers gave the police and ordered the boys released on very high bail. The military prosecution tried, as usual, to get the defense attorney (from the Ad-Damir human rights group), to sign a plea bargain (you confess, we'll ask for a suspended sentence and a fine), to save everyone's time, especially the court's. The boys were adamant in their refusal. The three soldiers, therefore, had to testify in court after they were warned to tell the truth, and they were very unconvincing.

On July 12, after almost two years of "wasting the court's time," the prosecution asked that the indictments be dropped. According to the IDF Spokesman's Office, "there was no determination by a court of law that the soldiers lied in their testimony," which is true, and that "in agreeing to drop the indictment there is no implication regarding the credibility of the soldiers' testimony." Sure.

Indeed, the soldiers acted the way many had acted before them. What they did is not devoid of the adolescent braggadocio that their society accepts affectionately and leniently. In particular, they are obeying unwritten orders to deter potential activists against the occupation. Blows, twisting the truth and intimidation are all part of the system they did not invent.
