

## Israel: Shas Party Encourages Ultra-Orthodox Conscripts to Ignore Military Service

The ultra-orthodox Israeli Shas party urged Wednesday to possible recruits to ignore a call from the Israel Defense Forces, as the political divisions over the controversial issue showed signs of widening.

Ultra-orthodox Jews or Haredi have traditionally been exempt from military service to study the Torah. But a Supreme Court ruling in June said the government must conscript ultra-orthodox Jews of suitable age for military service, reversing a de facto exemption in force since the country's founding 76 years ago.

The measure sparked protests in Haredi communities.

Shas described the military service calls as outrageous and added: "The great rabbis have instructed, categorically, that, from now on, since no new law has been promulgated that defines the status of students of the Yeshiva, no one should respond to any call or even to a call for first order, and for that reason, do not present themselves at recruitment stations."

"Our duty now is to remain firm like a wall that cannot be toppled and to make it clear to the world that there is no force in the world that will succeed, God willing, in disconnecting students from the Torah of their studies."

The Israel Defense Forces said this week it will begin issuing initial calls on Sunday to those designated for security service in the ultra-orthodox sector "for selection and evaluation in preparation for recruitment" for next year.

The Israel Defense Forces said it "works to recruit to its ranks from all parts of this society in fulfillment of the obligation of recruitment in the state of Israel, as the army of the people and in light of current operational needs, taking into account the security challenges."

The announcement provoked more protests. Nine people were arrested Tuesday for blocking a highway.

Monday, senior Israeli army officials were assaulted by dozens of ultra-orthodox protesters who threw bottles and other objects after a meeting in Bnei Brak.

Israel's training command chief, Major General David Zini, and Major General Shay Tayeb, were attacked at the end of a meeting with rabbi David Label, who has been working in the last few days to establish an ultra-orthodox division in the Israel Defense Forces.

The delicate coalition government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu depends on two Haredi parties - United Torah Judaism and Shas - to govern. Netanyahu has been trying to advance legislation through the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, that would codify in law an exemption from the draft for Haredi men.

### Informe anterior de Mick Krever.

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