

# Parents, MKs call for probe into IDF refusal to heed surveillance troops' warnings

**A investigation is needed 'to bring the truth to light because nothing else can give us all rest,' Eyal Eshel, whose daughter Sgt. Roni Eshel was killed on Oct. 7, tells lawmakers**

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Families of young female surveillance soldiers killed on October 7 attend a hearing in the Knesset, January 9, 2024. (Sam Sokol)

Decrying what they called a “culture of dismissing women,” lawmakers and bereaved parents on Tuesday demanded an investigation into the Israel Defense Forces’ apparent disregard for the warnings of the female surveillance soldiers tasked with watching the Gaza border in the weeks before the brutal Hamas massacre of October 7.

“You need to demand today, and yesterday, and also tomorrow, to investigate and examine this failure,” Eyal Eshel, the father of the late Sgt. Roni Eshel, 19, an observation soldier in the Combat Intelligence Collection Corps’ 414th unit, told lawmakers, adding that his daughter was “no more because they didn’t listen to her.”

For weeks before Hamas’s onslaught — when thousands of terrorists streamed over the border, killing some 1,200 people and kidnapping some 240 more — surveillance soldiers reported signs of activity along the restive Gaza border, situated a kilometer from them.

While the surveillance soldiers provide real-time intelligence information to soldiers in the field, earning them the name “the eyes of the army,” members of the all-female force believe that they [weren’t taken seriously due to their gender](#) — an oversight that they say led to the deaths of 15 of their number at their base in Kibbutz Nahal Oz on October 7.

Speaking at a special hearing on the surveillance soldiers, referred to in Hebrew as *tatzpitaniyot*, Eshel, like other parents present, said that his daughter had told him about some of the problems along the Gaza border, such as non-functioning cameras, but had asked him not to contact the IDF on her behalf so as not to embarrass her.

“I listened but didn’t act. I told her we have the best and strongest army in the world,” he recalled.



Roni Eshel, an IDF soldier who was stationed at a military base near the Gaza border when Hamas attacked on October 7, 2023. She was murdered in the onslaught. (Courtesy of Eyal Eshel via AP)

An external investigative committee is needed “to bring the truth to light because nothing else can give us all rest,” he declared.



Eyal Eshel, the father of IDF soldier Sergeant Roni Eshel, an observation soldier in the Combat Intelligence Collection Corps, from Tzur Yitzhak, killed in the Hamas onslaught of October 7, hugs his son during Roni's funeral, on November 12, 2023 in Kfar Saba. (Gili Yaari /Flash90)

Ilana Nissani, whose daughter Sgt. Shahaf Nissani, 20, also served as an observer at Nahal Oz, recalled bringing food to the base for her daughter's pre-discharge party on October 6, less than a day before her death.

The soldiers were "neglected" but like Roni Eshel, Shahaf did not want her parents to intervene, Nissani said. "Now it's too late."

Holding up two documents, Gili Leibushor, the mother of [Sgt. Yael Leibushor, 20](#), told lawmakers, "The first document is Yael's birth certificate. The second document is her death certificate... One document we are responsible for. The second document you're responsible for."

While MKs from across the political spectrum expressed sympathy to the families, it was mostly members of the opposition who came out in support of an investigation. Members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government have previously voiced opposition to launching any probes prior to the end of the war.

Israel had [multiple sources of information on Hamas's drills and other preparations](#) for an assault in the weeks ahead of October 7, reportedly including a 2022 attack plan by the terror group.

If the army had only listened to its observers, October 7 “would not have happened,” argued minister without portfolio Yifat Shasha-Biton (National Unity), calling the soldiers “heroes of the entire Jewish people.”



Soldiers are seen monitoring surveillance cameras at a command center at the IDF's Re'im camp in southern Israel, November 5, 2023 (Israel Defense Forces)

“We Knesset members are obliged to hear and learn all the stories — the heroism, but also the omission and neglect,” MK Merav Ben Ari (Yesh Atid), the organizer of the special hearing, tweeted following the meeting. “No one came to the rescue until they were killed on the spot.”

“We need to investigate and leave no stone unturned, not only to see who brought on the neglect” but to prevent it from happening again, said MK Pnina Tamano-Shata, the chairwoman of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality.



Sgt. Yael Leibushor (IDF)

Denouncing what she described as a “culture of dismissing women,” Tamano-Shata (National Unity) called for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry — separate from the IDF’s recently announced [plan to probe its own mistakes](#) in the lead-up to Hamas’s devastating onslaught — to investigate the matter.

Yisrael Beytenu MK Yulia Malinovsky agreed, slamming the “broken culture” that led to the observers’ reports being ignored.

“If we don’t learn from this terrible tragedy and don’t take away any lessons... will this happen again?” she asked.

*Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.*