

## **Speech of IDF Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir**

Soldiers of the IDF, my fellow combat soldiers – from your ranks I emerged, and to your ranks I return.

To you, the tank crews in the ranks of our tanks, the soldiers of the reconnaissance battalions, the infantry soldiers, the combat engineers, and the bulldozer operators in the alleyways; to the artillery positions, the field observers on the borders, our pilots in the skies, and our naval captains at sea.

You – the combat soldiers in active duty, career service, and the reserves – bear the greatest burden on your soldiers. You are the vanguard of Zionism and the defenders of the Jewish people.

My fellow combat soldiers, through your courage and sacrifice, you have been and remain the force that drives change for the IDF and Israeli society. We will make every effort to strengthen you. The entire IDF will work for you, the combat soldiers.

We are all united in one shared and sacred mission – defending the nation, achieving victory in battle, and achieving decisive outcomes in war.

Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu,  
Minister of Defense, Mr. Israel Katz,  
Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi,  
our dear friend, CENTCOM Commander – General Kurilla,  
dear bereaved families,  
distinguished guests.

I assume command of the IDF today with reverence and humility. I am fully aware of the immense responsibility placed upon me. This duty is unlike any other, as it is a moment of historical reckoning.

On the morning of October 7th, the IDF failed in its mission. The border was breached. Our enemies infiltrated our communities, massacring our babies, children, our women, our brothers.

Out of this devastation, the people of Israel rose, once again proving their resilience and unity in a time of trial. Civilians and soldiers alike initiated contact, charged into battle, and fought—some as individuals, others in small units—even at the cost of their own lives. They proved to us that we are brothers and sisters.

The IDF has achieved remarkable successes on the battlefield. We have won battles in Gaza and Lebanon. We struck further than ever in Yemen and Iran.

The murderous terrorist organization Hamas has suffered a severe blow, but it has not yet been defeated. The mission is not yet complete.

We will never lose sight of the memory of our sons and daughters, the beautiful, the pure-hearted, as they fled for their lives from a music festival in an unplowed field, hunted down by predators. We will engrave in our hearts entire families, the terror-stricken gazes of children and their parents, slaughtered and burned—in Nir Oz, Be'eri, Kfar Aza, and Nahal Oz, in Netiv HaAsara, Sderot, and Ofakim.

We will never forget the cries for help, pleading, in the face of the merciless, demonic evil of the murderers.

We will not forgive, we will not forget. This is an existential war. We will persist in our campaign to bring our hostages home and to defeat our enemies.

The mission placed upon me from this day forward is clear: to lead the IDF to victory. As it is written in the Book of Psalms: "I pursue my enemies and overtake them, and I do not turn back until they are destroyed." In full cooperation with all security forces, we will strike with overwhelming force against anyone who seeks to harm the State of Israel and its citizens.

Distinguished guests,

The IDF is a human mosaic, bringing together service-men and -women from all corners of the country. From the new immigrant from Katzrin, to the pre-military academy trainee from Eli, the pilot from Kibbutz Lohamei HaGeta'ot, and the young man from the south who grew up in Eilat, my hometown.

As a young officer in the Armored Corps, I vividly remember when Major General Talik was asked: What is the best tank in the world? His response was: "The best tank in the world is the one with the best crew in the world."

The IDF is the best army in the world because it is made up of the best soldiers and commanders in the world, in active duty, career service, and the reserves. Its people are its open secret, the IDF's greatest strength. They are equipped with an unbreakable spirit, faith, and unwavering determination that is irreplaceable.

From its very foundation, a principle that remains true to this day, the IDF has been the people's army, drawing its strength from the nation itself. The IDF ensures the existence and future of the State of Israel. In the face of external threats, we must stand united.

The power of the IDF lies in its unity, its values, its diverse composition, and the equal sharing of the national burden. Therefore, we will work to expand the integration of all segments of society into every unit of the military. The responsibility to defend the country must be shared fairly.

Let us not forget that the Jewish people are the People of the Book—a people of Torah, but also a people of action. I call upon all parts of Israeli society to take part in the sacred duty of defending our homeland. This is our shared responsibility.

Even today, the question arises once more: Will we forever live by the sword?

The State of Israel faces a constant, fundamental existential threat. Surrounded by ruthless, brutal, and murderous enemies who seek our destruction, we have no choice but to continue strengthening and fortifying the Iron Wall.

To that end, we must continue reinforcing the IDF. The IDF must be prepared for a wide range of scenarios, including the most complex, such as the multi-front war of attrition we have been engaged in since October 7th. The defense budget must grow, and our force structure must expand rapidly and responsibly. We cannot afford to live on the edge; we must maintain broad security margins for the day we are called to operate.

Israel will remain a democratic and thriving nation, but also a fortress state in a hostile environment. We must strive to eliminate existential and deadly threats while they are still developing. We must uphold the highest levels of readiness and vigilance at every level, at all times.

No one abandons their post. This applies to the soldier, just as it does to the General Staff.

I see the restoration of public trust in the IDF as a vital mission. The IDF will continue to examine itself with courage and depth. We will learn, draw conclusions, and grow.

My brothers-in-arms, citizens of Israel, difficult days still lie ahead, but I am certain that better days will follow.

We are called upon to show dedication, sacrifice, resilience, perseverance, and hope. The people of Israel are strong, "Behold, a people that rises like a lioness and lifts itself like a lion."

Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu,

Minister of Defense, Mr. Israel Katz,

I thank you for the trust in choosing me as the 24th Chief of the General Staff. We will work in cooperation, and only one consideration will guide us – strengthening the security of the State of Israel and ensuring the safety of its citizens and its future.

Dear bereaved families,

We will forever remember the beloved ones of your hearts, our brothers and sisters, who fought with courage, supreme bravery, and sacrifice. You are beloved by the nation.

From here, I send my wishes for full recovery to all the wounded, both physically and emotionally.

To the families of the hostages, I want to say – the faces of your loved ones are ever before my eyes, as they are among the soldiers of the IDF, every moment. Our moral obligation is clear – to bring everyone home, by all means possible and as quickly as possible.

We will do everything to safely return the residents of the south and north to their homes.

LTG Herzi Halevi, Sharon, and your family,

I would like to thank you for decades of service to the State of Israel. Herzi, only those who choose demanding service, entailing command and combat leadership, understand the heavy responsibility placed upon us. We navigate a thin ridge, with a deep abyss on one side and a peak rising on the other.

One fateful decision separates a fall into the deep abyss from reaching the summit.

For four decades, you walked along the ridge, leading operations and battles. The IDF under your command recovered after the failure and led it to achievements in the difficult campaign. On behalf of the IDF, I thank you, the 23rd Chief of the General Staff, for your dedicated service and your contribution to the IDF and the security of the state.

To my dear family – my wife Orna and my children, Ori, Roni, and Itai – I know that, as always, you are with me with great love and unwavering support for our shared mission.

To my dear mother, you and my late father raised me with great love. I love you very much.

As a graduate of the military academy, the motto that has accompanied me, upon which I was raised, is: "In calm and security, therefore we will walk humbly, our deeds will speak."

To the soldiers of the IDF and their commanders, I salute the flag and embark on the mission of my life, the mission of our lives.

"The Lord will give strength to His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace."