

My esteemed colleagues,
The General Staff Forum,
Commanders,
Personnel of the Northern Command,
Bereaved families,
The Gordin family and the Milou family,
Ori and Rafi,

The command banner being passed here today embodies the spirit that beats within the Northern Command, the spirit carried by the men and women of the north wherever they are: people of labor and land, of tradition alongside progress.

The people of the north have never known a generation that was not called to battle. A historic chain of spirit and sword stretches from the roar of the fighters of Tel Hai and the defenders of Degania, from the pioneers of Kinneret and the guards of Safed, from the conquerors of Mount Hermon and the defensive battles in the Valley of Tears, to the trail of squadrons in Operation Rising Lion. Each generation, in its time, took a full part in bearing the burden, whether in defense or in offense, with the plow or in the tank.

So too with the current generation of combat soldiers — over the past year and a half, combat in the north has been shaping a new and uncompromising security reality for the residents of the north and for all the residents of the State of Israel. In all arenas of the command, an unprecedented and historic change has taken place — from a renewed deployment in the Lebanese arena to the strengthening of defensive and offensive systems in light of developments along the Syrian border.

Dear Ori,
You led determined, resolute, and precise combat, grounded in both personal and unit courage, which dealt a heavy blow to Hezbollah in all its components, military, logistical, and cognitive, and placed the IDF in a clear position of advantage on the ground.

These achievements were made possible following a profound shift in the IDF's and the State of Israel's national security concept. No longer containment and waiting, but the use of force in pursuit of contact, coordinated employment of ground, air, and naval forces, and an understanding that neutralizing the threat also requires striking at its sources. All these have created a new security reality that we must continue to develop and preserve. Alongside the response to the Lebanese front, the deployment along the Syrian border was adapted proactively to changing trends in the political and military arenas, while maintaining constant vigilance and the ability to respond rapidly.

On the eve of October 7, 2023, we faced a tangible existential threat. The determined and immense combat, the courage of our troops and commanders, and the spirit that drives all our formations, reduced and repelled the threats. The IDF's activity in all arenas, and in the northern arena in particular, created a renewed balance of power, enabling Israel to ensure a stable and lasting security reality, as well as the ability to prepare properly for future challenges.

These achievements are not solely the result of military capability; they are a testament to unity, determination, and a security vision that bridges the front and the home front. This is also the place to extend deep thanks to the heads of the northern municipalities, who are

leading their residents during this time with strength, devotion, and an awe-inspiring sense of responsibility. Since the dawn of Zionism and pioneering, the northern home front has been a symbol of a steadfast front and a source of inspiration for us all.

From here I say to you, Rafi, who is taking command here today, and to all the civilians of Israel, we will not retreat.

Our defensive concept for our northern border will be integrated with relentless offensive operations, through a variety of actions both overt and less visible, and with constant readiness to neutralize any threat without delay.

Gordin,

You have been a fighter all your life, from the moment you enlisted in the reconnaissance unit, through your command of brigades and divisions, in a series of senior positions in the IDF, and up to joining the General Staff table. I want to thank you for decades of service and for defending the country you served, and under whose guiding principles you led the command to unprecedented security achievements in one of the most significant campaigns the State of Israel has ever known.

The ground operations, accompanied and supported by the air, naval, and intelligence arrays, succeeded in creating a new security and physical reality in southern Lebanon. Based on these successes, it was possible to carry out an operational move for which we had prepared for many years, Operation Rising Lion against Iran, in which the nuclear, ballistic missile, and other critical arrays were severely damaged.

I also wish to thank Miri, Ela, Yuval, and Alon, who are not here today, for the giving, the support, and the sacrifice; for the resilience you give to the entire IDF as you stand at home as your father's shield. Now is the time to make up for the lost time together until the next mission you will face as a family.

Rafi,

I have known you for many years, one of the IDF's finest fighters. I remember you in your younger days, leading covert operations deep inside Lebanon. You are returning to a sector well known to you, from both land and sea. You come to this role after one of the most significant tenures in the Home Front Command, nearly two years in which the slogan "Home Front as a Front" became a daily reality. Under your leadership, the command will continue to shape the border line, prepared and ready, proactive and offensive, with powerful capabilities held by a human force that understands the responsibility resting on its shoulders. Now is the time to ensure the flourishing of the north, the security of its communities, and to continue building and strengthening the trust of the residents returning to their homes during this period, every single day.

Sivan, Ido, Asaf, and Mor, you are your father's backbone, and therefore the backbone of the entire north. We are deeply grateful for your sacrifice and dedication, and we know that the mission you have chosen, alongside the families of all IDF servicemembers, carries heavy costs but also profound meaning for all the people of Israel.

My esteemed colleagues,

over the generations we have known sorrow and bereavement, and as a nation and as an army, we have paid an unimaginable price since the war broke out. We will continue to embrace all bereaved families and accompany the wounded, in body and in spirit, and to do all that is required and possible to be worthy of the price paid by the bereaved families and the wounded. This is our commitment, this is our responsibility, this is the spirit of the IDF.

Alongside our grief for our fallen fighters, we have also suffered a heavy civilian loss, including in the terrible attack on Majdal Shams, in which children and innocent civilians were murdered, an event seared into our hearts and that will never be erased from our memory. As we stand here today, the IDF's combat continues across all arenas, with an ongoing effort in the Gaza Strip. This is a daily reality of bravery, led with courage and dedication to the mission, to ensure the security of the residents of the south, to dismantle Hamas' rule completely, and to bring all the hostages home, some for a dignified burial, and others for full rehabilitation. These goals remain our compass, always before our eyes.

Here and across all arenas, the core strength of the IDF lies in our human capital, fighters and commanders, conscripts and reservists, all driven by a profound sense of mission to defend the people and the state, standing guard without compromise even under prolonged and challenging combat. The voice of the IDF is heard loud and unceasing. This is a clear message we convey to our people, and, in a different way, to our enemies as well: the IDF is strong, proactive, strikes, and dismantles threats already in their early stages of formation. The chokehold that has constrained us for years is reversing, tightening instead around our enemies. This is a new reality we implement not in words, but in actions. We will continue to shape the reality in the north with humility informed by the past and with boldness looking toward the future, to stand guard and keep the historic lion's roar alive and strong.

My esteemed colleagues,

The words written by Aba Khoushy in his song about Trumpeldor were born from this very soil and from the spirit that pulses within it, and they echo with the northern winds to this day, to us, here, in this very moment: "In every place and at every moment you will remember me, for I fought and also fell for my homeland. All day I tilled the land, and at night I held a rifle in my hand until the very last moment." Thus, in every generation, fighters and commanders from the north, sons and daughters of this region, have stood here, carrying on their shoulders the mission of defending the northern border of the people of Israel. They tilled the homeland's soil by day and held their weapons at night, carving a wall of defense with their bodies and their spirit. They did not retreat even in the face of heavy challenges and great costs.

Today, we - their successors, stand guard with the same spirit, the same commitment, and the same clear pledge to the security of the north and the State of Israel as a whole, now and forever.