



2008 Shministim from left to right: Omer Goldman, Tamar Katz, Sahar Vardi, Raz Bar-David Varon, and Yuval Oron.

## Israeli twelfth-graders declare their refusal to support the Occupation.

The letter below has been signed by over 60 young Israelis. These conscientious objectors are starting to go to jail, often with multiple terms, for refusing to support Israel's occupation of the Palestinian people. Join the Jewish Voice for Peace campaign to free the Shministim. Go to [www.December18th.org](http://www.December18th.org) to send a letter that will be hand-delivered to the Israeli Minister of Defense on December 18, 2008, the Shministim Day of Action.

We, Israeli youth who have just graduated from high school, declare that we will work against the policy of occupation and oppression of the Israeli government in the occupied territories and in the area of the state of Israel, and will therefore refuse to take part in these actions, which are conducted in our name as part of the Israeli military.

Our refusal to serve in the military comes first and foremost in protest of Israel's state policy of separation, control, oppression

and killing in the occupied territories, from an understanding that oppression, killing and the sowing of hatred cannot bring peace to the world, and which stand in contrast to the fundamental values of a society that purports to be democratic.

All members of our group are involved and believe in the importance of social work. We do not refuse to serve the society in which we live, but protest the policies of occupation and methods of action of the military

apparatus as it exists today—violating rights, discriminating on the basis of race and acting in contravention to international laws.

We object to the means of “defense” of the Israeli society (checkpoints, the extrajudicial killings, apartheid roads for Jews only, the closures, etc.) which serve the policy of holding onto territory, annexing even more occupied lands to the state of Israel and violating the rights of the Palestinian population in an

aggressive manner. These actions, both as band-aids on a bleeding wound and as providers of a temporary, limited solution which over time, result in a worsening of the conflict.

We protest the theft and vandalizing of Palestinian lands for an expansion of the settlements, all done in the name of defending Israel. Additionally, we object to the transformation of Palestinian villages and towns into closed ghettos due to the Separation Wall and the checkpoints, in which no conditions for making a basic living exist.

We further protest the humiliating and contemptuous attitude taken by the military toward Palestinian residents of the West Bank. This attitude is expressed in severe violence against demonstrators, humiliations, detentions, the destruction of private property, etc., in an unnecessary manner that further violates international law.

The Wall and the checkpoints encircle the territories and constrict like a noose around the neck of the Palestinians, and the soldiers who commit crimes under the protection of their commanders are seen as the face of Israeli society, a society that tramples and oppresses and which does not succeed in seeing the other people living beside it as a partner and not enemy.

**SPREAD THE WORD!**

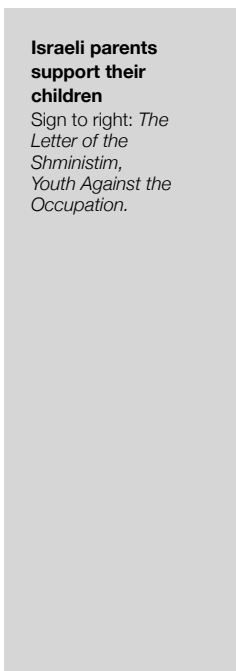
**Help the Shministim who are being sent to military prison for refusing to support Israel's 40-year occupation of the Palestinians. Go to [www.December18th.org](http://www.December18th.org) to write a letter to the Israeli Minister of Defense. Tens of thousands of letters will be hand-delivered on December 18th, the Shministim Day of Action.**

In order to conduct a true dialogue between the two societies, it is incumbent upon us, the more established society, to strengthen the other side. It is only together with a more stable society—socially and economically—that we can hold an informed discussion, instead of committing unilateral actions. Instead of strengthening the hands of citizens who still have a hope of peace in their heart, the military imposes terrible sanctions and drags more and more people in the direction of impermeable and violent radicalism.

We call on every citizen who wonders whether the military policy in the occupied territories promotes the peace process, to check for herself the situation on the ground, to look for the humane side in it and in the society next to us, to break through the myths which are rooted in us, concerning the necessity of the military being in the territories and to protest every action found to be illogical and illegal.

In a place in which there are human beings, there is someone with whom to talk and therefore, we request to create a dialogue that rises above the power struggles, the unilateral acts of payback and attrition, to break the myth that “no partner exists,” which leads to a dead end of ongoing frustration, and to turn to more humane paths.

It is contradictory to aggress in the name of defense or to imprison in the name of freedom, and thus it is impossible to be moral and to serve the occupation.



**Israeli parents support their children**

Sign to right: *The Letter of the Shministim, Youth Against the Occupation.*

