



Ultra-Orthodox faction leader declares support for IDF draft exemption bill

Aaron Rabinowitz

The leader of a major ultra-Orthodox movement has decided in principle to support the government's bill to exempt Haredi men from service in the military, the Degel Hatorah faction announced on Wednesday, removing the last remaining ultra-Orthodox opposition to the measure.

Rabbi Dov Lando, co-leader of Israel's non-Hasidic ultra-Orthodox community, had previously instructed the faction's lawmakers to vote against the bill.

The personal and social

sanctions in the bill – proposed by Likud lawmaker Boaz Bismuth – are lighter than those in the original version of the bill and those in the proposal of former chair of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Yuli Edelstein, for which he was removed from his position and membership in the panel.

The spiritual leaders of the faction, one of two that form the United Torah Judaism (UTJ) party, will make a final decision on endorsing

the text formulated by Bismuth after its submission to the Knesset.

Lando's decision comes after Degel Hatorah co-leader Rabbi Moshe Hillel Hirsch earlier this month instructed the faction's Knesset members to advance the bill, subject to changes in several key clauses.

However, due to power struggles between Hirsch's and Lando's groups over who is the "boss," final approval was delayed and only given on Wednesday.

The decision is also expected to lead Sephardic ultra-Orthodox party Shas to officially announce its support for the bill, as leader Arye Dery wanted to wait until the Ashkenazi leaders approved it.

Chairman of Agudat Yisrael, MK Yitzchak Goldknopf, and MK Yaakov Tesler oppose the bill; however, their faction, the second to make up UTJ, intends to move forward with it.

A statement issued on behalf of Goldknopf wrote

that "Agudat Yisrael will not support any bill that includes sanctions or any harm to the status or rights of Torah scholars in the Land of Israel." Nevertheless, there are several MKs in the party who do support the bill.

Passing the bill in its second and third readings is expected to take a significant amount of time. The legal advisers of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and of the Knesset are seeking to introduce several changes to the text submitted by Bismuth, the committee chair, in the principles document for the exemption law.

Among other things, the advisers demand that sanctions for draft evasion take effect immediately upon the law's approval; that yeshiva students be required to prove attendance via fingerprinting; that combat-service recruitment targets be included; and that a higher recruitment target of about 5,700 people be set already for the coming year.

The ultra-Orthodox parties believe the targets can be met in the first two years, but are nevertheless trying

to secure approval for softer targets and to amend the other clauses mentioned.

According to the proposal, a yeshiva student who does not report for service and does not receive an exemption will not be able to obtain a driver's license or leave the country until age 23, unless he receives permission from a special committee. He will also not be able to apply for public-sector positions that include affirmative action for ultra-Orthodox people, and will be denied several tax benefits.

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High Court: Take criminal action against Haredi draft dodgers

Chen Maanit

The High Court of Justice ruled Wednesday that the government must swiftly implement criminal enforcement measures against ultra-Orthodox men who evade military service.

The unanimous decision requires the state to formulate economic and civil sanctions within 45 days. An expanded panel of the court stated that the measures would need to be effective, and ruled that the government would not be able to circumvent the financial sanctions by granting benefits, directly or indirectly, to yeshiva students who avoid the draft.

The ruling further stated that the government has neglected its duty to enforce Haredi conscription, effectively undermining the intent of the law mandating conscription into military service for all Israeli citizens and residents.

The ruling was made in response to petitions that demanded the government fulfill the court's 2024 decision, according to which ultra-Orthodox men must be drafted into the IDF.

The petitions, discussed by the High Court last month, argue that the state is not sending out draft notices to yeshiva students in a suitable scope, and is not applying sanctions against those who evade service.

According to the IDF, around 24,000 initial draft notices were sent to ultra-Orthodox men in 2024. The army stated that as of October 2025, 2,737 Haredi men had reported to an induction center, while 1,508 had completed the initial drafting procedures. Only 798 yeshiva students were eventually drafted.

The IDF also stated that since July, when it launched a crackdown on draft dodgers, 425 evaders were arrested.

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The government persecution committee Editorial Page 5

Analysis **Zvi Bar'el**

As U.S. allies with Saudi Arabia, Israel is being sidelined

The extraordinary display of respect that U.S. President Donald Trump extended to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman may not have involved a sword dance, but it did include an impressive flyover by F-35 and F-16 fighter jets.

Hezbollah sites targeted by IDF

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The F-35s, the same model of plane that struck Iranian nuclear sites only six months ago, do more than showcase the cutting edge of American technological prowess; they have become a central pillar of the new political architecture that Saudi Arabia and the United States are striving to build in the Middle East and beyond.

Until now, the jet deal has been entangled in a dense web of political requirements imposed on Saudi Arabia: from normalizing relations with Israel, to joining an exclusive U.S.-led coalition meant to curb Chinese and Russian influence, to positioning the kingdom as another solid brick in the anti-Iranian wall, and contributing its financial share to the implementation of the Trump plan.

Trump's announcement that he will sell F-35s to Saudi Arabia, without linking the sale to the other conditions, may indicate his intention to dismantle the traditional stipulations package and reassemble it. Under the president's new model, every deal and every political or economic move will be independent and not necessarily dependent on a regional context.

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A Gazan girl injured in an Israeli attack being brought to a field hospital in Khan Yunis Wednesday. Palestinian medical sources report 28 killed in Israeli strikes across Gaza on Wednesday, which the IDF said came after militants opened fire on troops near Khan Yunis, violating the cease-fire. Mahmoud Bassam/Anadolu via Reuters

Levin promoted son of nominee to oversee Sde Teiman probe

Michael Hauser Tov

Justice Minister Yariv Levin pushed for a judicial appointment for the son of his preferred candidate to oversee the probe into the leaked video showing IDF soldiers abusing a Palestinian detainee at the Sde Teiman detention facility, Haaretz has learned.

According to sources on the Judicial Appointments Committee, Levin submitted Tomer Ben-Hamo's candidacy for a seat on the Haifa traffic court in July 2024 and tried to secure its approval. The Israel Bar Association sought to appoint a different candidate and submitted an alternative nomination.

Committee sources told

Haaretz the judges showed little interest in the position, viewing it as relatively junior within the judicial system.

Ben-Hamo was ultimately selected unanimously, consistent with most appointments brought before the committee since the start of the war in Gaza.

Ben-Hamo is the son of retired district court judge Yosef Ben-Hamo, whom Levin chose on Tuesday to oversee the investigation of former Military Advocate General Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi after she admitted to leaking the Sde Teiman video.

Ben-Hamo's appointment was made through an unusual process: The committee met in June solely to dis-

cuss two appointments – his and that of one other judge – while it typically meets to approve several appointments simultaneously. Contrary to standard procedure, the protocol from the meeting in which Ben-Hamo was approved has not been published on the Justice Ministry's website.

According to the Judicial Authority's website, Ben-Hamo completed his internship in family law, his father's area of expertise. In recent years, he worked as an attorney in the police prosecution unit, handling criminal cases until his appointment as a traffic court judge.

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Gov't ordered to explain

Over failure to convene state commission of inquiry



Tomer Appelbaum

St. George's Day in Lod

The holiday offered the town a rare moment of beauty

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Predatory Sparrow attacks Charming Kitten?

Massive leak exposes elite Iranian military cyber warriors

Omer Benjakob

A massive leak exposing an elite cyber unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guards has been published online, exposing the identities of the soldier hackers and their commanders, their tools, the hacking infrastructure they established around the world – including in Israel – and the operations they conducted.

The cyber unit's nickname is Charming Kitten, and it's considered one of three leading Iranian hacking groups. This one specializes in identity theft used mainly for breaking into email accounts, remote systems and sensitive infrastructure.

Haaretz analyzed the leaked documents, which reveal how the hackers tried to penetrate networks and websites of targets like arms maker Rafael, the Israel Airports Authority and the Transportation Ministry. Some attempts succeeded.

The leak was published on GitHub – a hosting platform for coders – by an anonymous account calling itself Kitten Busters. The leak includes activity logs of the hacker unit, source code for malicious software (malware) and spyware, as well as files – including ID cards and photos – on the soldier hackers in the Revolutionary Guards.

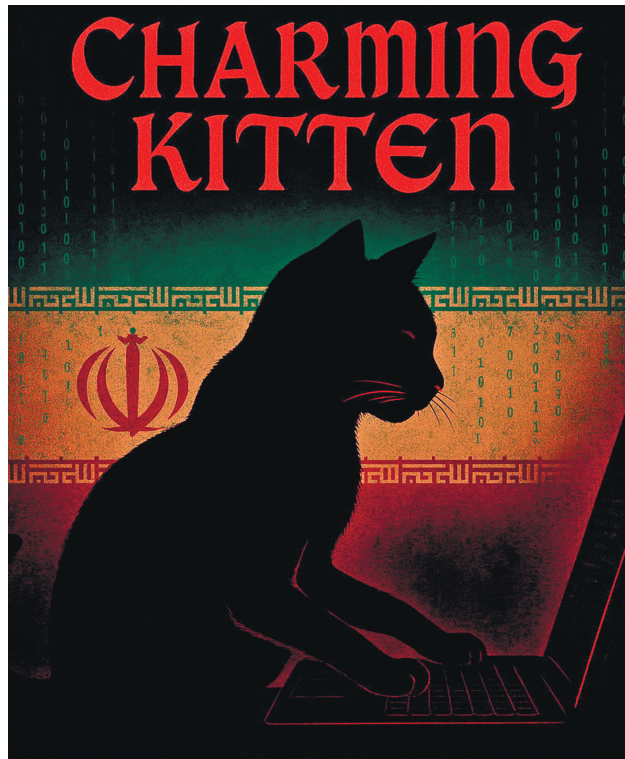
Together with organized reports, it's a detailed documentation of cyberattacks and influence operations

that the group led against Israel and other countries from 2022 to 2025. The documentation, organized into weekly and monthly reports, was submitted to the hackers' superiors, senior officials in the Guards.

The Iranian hacking unit's designation by cybersecurity researchers and intelligence officials is APT35. The group has a long history of activity and had already been caught trying to hack into the files of nuclear scientists. The leak confirms assessments by cyber researchers at Google, Microsoft and Israel's Check Point, as well as in Western and Israeli intelligence assessments, that this group is just an online persona used by Iran as a proxy for its intelligence operations.

"This is a real military unit, not a hacker group receiving state support – not state-sponsored but literally state," said a senior Israeli researcher who examined the leak and has long followed the group's attacks in Israel. "Not a proxy, but real soldiers – with dog tag numbers and ranks, writing daily reports to their commanders, whose mission is to conduct state terrorism against citizens of an enemy state."

It's unclear which entity or country is behind the leak. Immediate suspicion falls on Predatory Sparrow, one of several anonymous pro-Israel cyber groups that disable strategic facilities, expose



Charming Kitten, a prominent Iranian hacking group. DALL-E

secret information, leak videos and embarrass the ayatollahs. The shadow war between these proxy groups and Iran's has been extensively covered in Haaretz.

But there is no proof that Predatory Sparrow actually attacked Charming Kitten or is behind the leak. Israeli cybersecurity researchers believe it's also plausible that the United States or another Western country like Britain might be behind the leak, or

that it's the result of an internecine hacker conflict in Iran.

The massive leak is divided into four "episodes," each exposing another facet of the hacker group. Thus the leak is an influence operation in itself, designed to embarrass Iran using the same methods its hackers use against Israel. "This is one of the largest exposures of Iranian offensive

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Felix Klein at an event in Berlin last month. Tobias Schwarz/AFP

Judy Maltz

BERLIN – Germany's commissioner for combating antisemitism is promoting legislation that would criminalize chants that call or could be interpreted as calling for Israel's destruction, including "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free."

"I think we want to have a political debate that is fair and rational, but to call for the death of a country means to calls for the death

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