

# Breaking the Silence

## “What You Should Know” Series

Breaking the Silence (est. 2004) is an organization that poses as a human rights watchdog comprised of IDF veterans who speak out against Israeli policies. In reality, Breaking the Silence draws most of its funding from European governments and anti-Israel organizations to disseminate anonymous and unverifiable accusations against the IDF. Their unwillingness to work with the IDF to look into these matters as well as the lack of evidence for these alleged crimes disqualify their credibility and their content should not be accepted as fact.

According to NGO Monitor, only 7% of Breaking the Silence’s funding for the last three years is from Jewish organizations, with another 14% from private donations. The remaining 79% came from foreign governments or anti-Zionist Christian aid agencies.

Unlike other human rights monitoring groups, Breaking the Silence does not work with the IDF to investigate alleged abuses. To do so would require BtS to provide evidence of their claims, which could then be investigated by others.

By not working with the IDF, Breaking the Silence does not sincerely wish to correct the alleged misdeeds of the IDF. Instead, by facilitating scores of events in foreign countries each year, BtS clearly has an agenda of slandering Israel to foreign audiences.

Breaking the Silence claims that they have their own verification process for soldiers’ testimonies, but it refuses to elaborate on it — aside from claiming to cross-reference the testimony with other anonymous testimonies! It does not allow independent cross-examination.

A research project found that out of 10 testimonies, “two claims of beating detainees and shooting innocents were complete lies, two were exaggerated and four were impossible to verify. Only two of the ten were accurate.” These results do not bode well for their claims that their own verification process is accurate.

In January 2016, Israeli investigative journalists filmed radical Palestinian activist Ezra Nawi receiving a check from Breaking the Silence at their Jerusalem office; the reason for the check was unclear. Nawi was then filmed paying Palestinians to participate in violent demonstrations against Israeli soldiers. When asked to comment on this, BtS offered no explanation, and compared the journalists to the Stasi, the East German secret police.

BtS exists purely to spread hysteria and to feed anti-Israel groups with more false narratives. The interviews themselves explain and demonstrate the cautious measures taken by the IDF in order to protect civilians, which are rarely taken by other military throughout the world. These precautions include roof-knocking, spreading leaflets, phone calls, and many other warning tactics used by the IDF before any target is pursued.

In June 14, 2016, Israeli news site NRG published a video documenting BtS co-founder, Yehuda Shaul, telling tourists in Israel that “Yeah, One of the villages, this village actually, its new that they came back, because few years ago the settlers basically poisoned all the water cisterns of the village...” This allegation is completely unsubstantiated, and was never proven. It appears to be based on a single compliant from 2004 which investigated by the Israeli police and was closed due to lack of evidence.

“The activists from Breaking the Silence aren’t journalists, and their report is intended not to explain but to shock. It’s propaganda. That’s fine if you understand what you’re reading, but I suspect most people don’t. Equally important, at least to me, is the question of whether the soldiers who cooperated with Breaking the Silence understood what kind of use would be made of their stories abroad.”

“If anyone is guilty of anything, it is Breaking the Silence. They are the culprits in the vilification of the Jewish nation. The Nazis themselves could not have been prouder.

“What Breaking the Silence does is most often present anonymous testimonies. These are in fact indictments, where Israel and its citizens stand accused without due process and without a possibility to defend themselves before a kangaroo court of public opinion. This is done to no other country.

**Sources:** “Breaking the Silence Funding” NGO Monitor. Jul. 19, 2015. Available: <http://ngo-monitor.org/data/images/File/BtS%20Funding%20Chart%281%29.pdf>

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