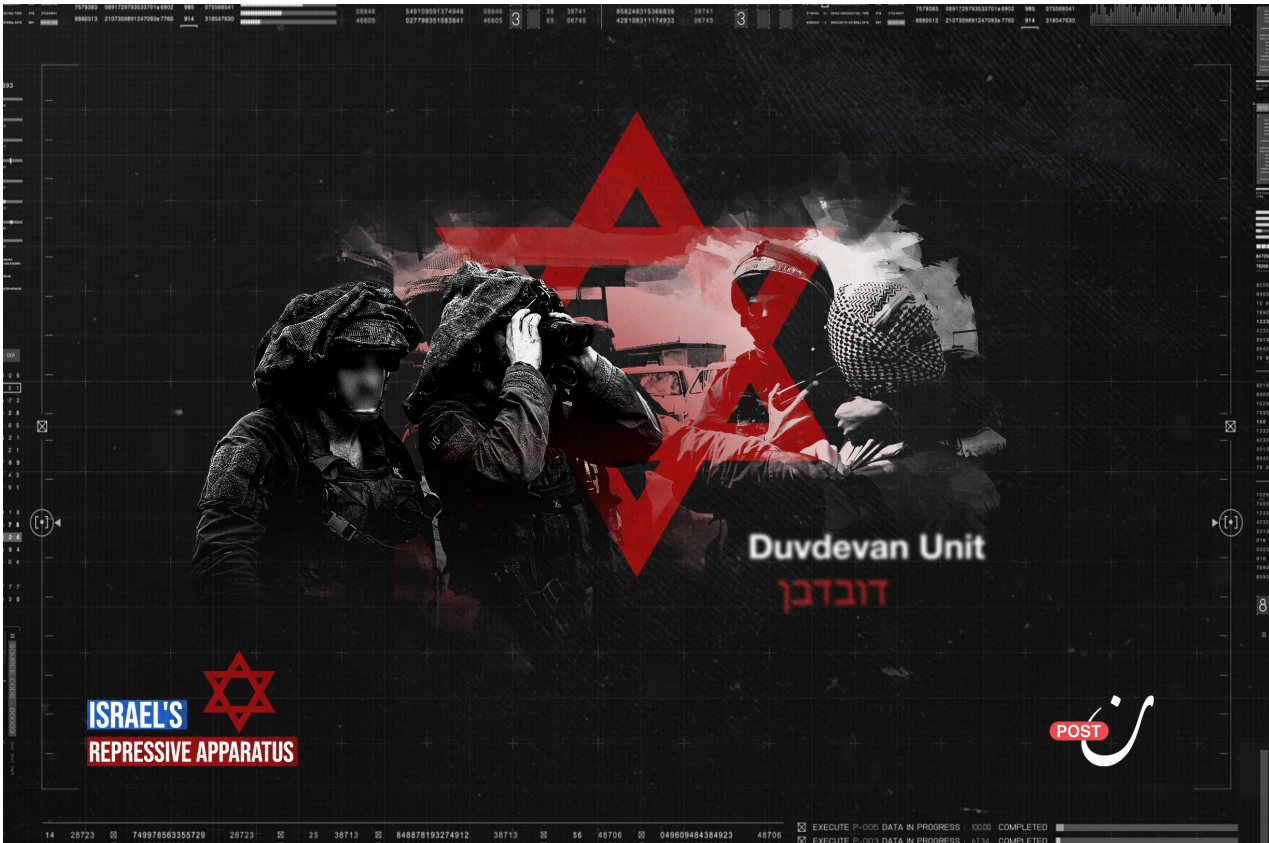


Duvdevan: the Israeli undercover unit that infiltrates Palestinians to kill them



Amid the ongoing assault on young Palestinians across the West Bank, the occupation army's campaign of violence along with the special forces that accompany it has escalated sharply and become a daily occurrence: field executions of Palestinian fighters, the siege and invasion of cities and villages for days and months, restrictions on movement and travel, and the erection of military checkpoints. During the current year, the number of martyrs has risen to 206 martyrs; the latest was Ammar Mufleh, in a crime documented by cameras.

In this article, we look at the unit known for its extensive ability to disguise itself and pass as Arabs, and one with a dark past and present in the liquidation of Palestinian fighters.

What is the Duvdevan unit?

Duvdevan is a unit affiliated with the Israeli occupation army. It was established in 1986 and remains active to this day. The unit was created under the leadership of then-Central Command chief Ehud Barak, who later became army chief of staff and prime minister of the occupation government. The main purpose behind its creation was to enable penetration deep inside the West

Bank, both on the intelligence and operational levels, in order to monitor the movements of resistance fighters, prevent operations and the uprising, and strike the Palestinian resistance through arrests and assassinations.

At the time, Ehud Barak laid out his instructions when forming the Duvdevan unit, defining the profile of its members by saying: “I want a unit whose members look like Arabs, speak Arabic like Arabs, ride motorcycles, and wear helmets in the heart of the casbah in Nablus as if they were on Dizengoff Street in “Tel Aviv” people capable of moving under partial cover that allows them to reach the target without the need for large forces that would be exposed on the ground.”

During the founding stages of the Duvdevan unit, Barak relied on volunteers from various army units, especially those of Mizrahi origin and Arabs fluent in Arabic and its local Palestinian dialects, in addition to special training from members of the Israeli intelligence service then known as the Shin Bet, now called the Shabak.

From the outset, the Duvdevan unit included soldiers from land and naval commando units. With the outbreak of the Palestinian Stone Intifada at the end of 1987, the unit’s activity increased and its name became widely known. It took part in the war on Gaza in 2012 and 2014, and on Dec. 27, 2015, it was placed under the Oz Brigade and integrated into all combat sectors. It was named Duvdevan a Hebrew word meaning “cherry” as a metaphor for being the “jewel of the units,” like the cherry that is always placed on top.

The missions of the Duvdevan unit

The Duvdevan unit’s missions focus on intelligence work, complex arrests, and the liquidation of wanted targets, activists, and resistance fighters in the West Bank and Gaza, using advanced technological and intelligence capabilities. It became known for employing the musta’ribeen tactic in cooperation with the Shabak: members of the Duvdevan unit pose as Arabs by wearing clothes similar to theirs, speaking Arabic, and adopting other behaviors associated with Palestinians, as a form of deception and concealment to carry out their attacks.

Since the beginning of the Duvdevan unit’s operations, its members have received special training courses that include learning to use firearms and bladed weapons, as well as disguising themselves as Arabs, firing from vehicles, speaking Arabic, and moving covertly through Palestinian camps and cities.

Duvdevan operations during Oslo and the second intifada

Since its establishment, the Duvdevan unit has carried out thousands of operations and received major support after the signing of the Oslo Accords, which created a new reality: the Israeli army could no longer remain in the

centers of Palestinian cities, creating the need for an elite force capable of entering population centers covertly.

From that point on, the Duvdevan unit assumed a dual role on behalf of the army and the Shabak in carrying out the most complex missions: locating wanted men in the West Bank, especially those who had not been assassinated and had to be interrogated, along with others described as “ticking bombs.” The unit killed Iyad Batat, who was a military commander in Hamas in Hebron.

The failure of the Duvdevan unit

In July 1992, a first sergeant from the Duvdevan unit was mistakenly killed by friendly fire in the village of Barta’a during an arrest operation targeting resistance fighters. The family petitioned the Supreme Court in the case of Sgt. Eli Isha’s killing. In 2000, the unit also faced a crisis of failure after a flaw in the plan led to an exchange of fire among the unit’s own members from both sides — the soldiers were hit by fire from their own force.

The incident took place during an operation the Israeli media dubbed “Symphony of Life,” which aimed to capture Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, the No. 1 wanted man in the West Bank and commander of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades’ military wing. The occupation had failed many times to assassinate him.

During the operation in the village of Asira al-Shamaliya, the unit’s snipers believed that five of their colleagues positioned on rooftops in the operational area were resistance fighters and opened fire on them, killing unit members, including three sergeants, in a failed attempt to assassinate Abu Hanoud. He managed at the time to withdraw to Nablus after suffering a shoulder wound. The unit then declared its failure and temporarily halted its work, but it resumed activity during the intifada.

After the intifada

With the outbreak of the second intifada, Duvdevan returned to full activity after about three weeks, once again becoming the spearhead of the occupation army, which had suddenly obtained diplomatic approval for military operations. Duvdevan used force extensively, arrested hundreds of resistance fighters, and its operatives carried out assassinations in the West Bank. The unit was also the first to storm the Muqata’a, considered the fortified stronghold of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In 2009, the unit took part in its first military operation in Gaza, then joined subsequent operations in 2012 and 2014. Since Duvdevan was established, the activity of the musta’ribeen has been confined solely to being part of its capabilities.

During 2018, the unit carried out arrest operations in the Am'ari refugee camp near Ramallah, where a marble slab was dropped from a height onto soldier Ronen Lubarsky. He was initially seriously wounded and died of his injuries about three days later. After his death, he was promoted to the rank of sergeant.

The series "Fauda"

The Zionist series "Fauda" which means "chaos" in Arabic, depicts the life of an undercover musta'ribeen unit, how it operates, plans, disguises itself, and raids Palestinian villages and cities with the help of military intelligence and Unit 8200 in the army.

The series presents a picture of how these undercover operatives speak Arabic, the Arabic music they listen to, how they deal with targets, and their daily lives at home and in military work. It attempts to portray the contradictions of their different daily and family lives outside the framework of the military unit.

Screenwriter Lior Raz says the series was written in partnership with and with the assistance of Zohar Ben Yitzhak, a former head of general intelligence and a graduate of the Sayeret Matkal unit, a commando unit that operates under the orders of the intelligence and military intelligence services, and "Aviv Elad," a graduate of the undercover "Duvdevan" unit, which was active from 1986 to 2015.

"Duvdevan" and its counterpart "Shimshon"

The unit was adopted as the main force for killing field leaders of the intifada under the cover of a special unit, amid Palestinian accounts of the unit storming their homes during the first year of the intifada to kill more than arrest activists in the first intifada. Only in 1988 did the Israeli media begin leaking the truth about the unit's existence, alongside another parallel unit called "Shimshon," a reference to the legendary Jewish hero who brought down the temple on those inside it. That unit specialized in liquidation operations in the Gaza Strip.

Killing Shireen Abu Akleh

On May 11, 2022, in what became one of the most shocking moments for Arabs across the region, Al Jazeera correspondent Shireen Abu Akleh was assassinated in cold blood by a bullet fired by an Israeli sniper that struck her directly in the face, as she was preparing with a group of correspondents and media workers to cover the occupation forces' raid on the city of Jenin in the West Bank, as video clips documenting the assassination which were widely circulated showed.

At the time, Haaretz reported that a preliminary examination by the occupation army concluded that members of the Duvdevan unit in the Israeli army were the ones who fired shots in Jenin camp toward the northern area where Shireen and

fellow journalists were present. Israeli expert Amos Harel indicated that “the army does not intend to open a criminal investigation by the military police investigations unit into the circumstances of the killing of Palestinian journalist Abu Akleh.”

[رابط المقال](https://www.noonpost.com/en/375744/): <https://www.noonpost.com/en/375744/>