

# The Leaked IDF Memo: A Turning Point in the “Gideon’s Chariots” Operation

On August 31, 2025, at 19:40 UTC, **Channel 12 published a leaked internal Israel Defense Forces (IDF) memorandum** that dissected the ongoing “Gideon’s Chariots” campaign in Gaza. The memo, strikingly self-critical, was soon translated and summarized on X by political analyst Shaiel Ben-Ephraim (@academic\_la), giving it immediate visibility beyond Israel’s borders.

What emerged was not a standard after-action report but a withering assessment of the war’s failures. Written in a tone closer to legal brief than battlefield debrief, the document catalogues **eight key failures**:

1. **Deviation from Doctrine** – Israel abandoned its traditional doctrine of sharp objectives and rapid campaigns. Instead of striking quickly to end fighting, the operation lacked clear goals and dragged on, allowing Hamas to regroup.
2. **Hamas Resilience** – Despite the offensive, Hamas retained supplies, shelter, and tactical flexibility. Rather than collapsing, it endured.
3. **Unmet Goals** – The central objectives - defeating Hamas militarily and freeing hostages - remained unfulfilled.
4. **Unintended Support to Hamas** – Poorly managed supply lines and aid distribution inadvertently gave Hamas resources that sustained its defense.
5. **Troop Exhaustion** – Inefficient deployment wore down Israeli soldiers. Fatigue, casualties, and equipment strain steadily undermined the offensive.
6. **Lost International Credibility** – The war’s conduct triggered heavy international criticism, shrinking Israel’s diplomatic room for maneuver.
7. **Humanitarian Aid Mismanagement** – Aid was so mismanaged that it harmed rather than helped, with delays and errors causing civilian deaths and worsening Gaza’s crisis.
8. **Ineffective Redeployments** – Troops repeatedly re-entered the same areas - sometimes seven times - without holding them, wasting resources and morale while allowing Hamas to rebuild.

By early July, Israel had secured only 65% territorial control (Ynetnews, Aug. 5, 2025). By mid-August, UN reports put casualties above 70,000. In that bleak context, the memo is more than a critique - it is a political act, released as the campaign falters.

## Legal Accountability and a Preemptive Defense

The document reads less like strategy than like legal positioning. By emphasizing doctrinal deviation (point 1), unmet goals (point 3), and humanitarian disaster (point 7), the memo appears to shift liability upward to civilian leadership.

This is especially significant with the International Criminal Court already pursuing Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gallant (Nov. 21, 2024) on charges of starvation and civilian targeting. The generals seem intent on insulating themselves. By pointing to political constraints and the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) - a joint U.S.-Israeli initiative whose failures left over 2,000 dead (IRC, June 26, 2025) - the IDF casts blame outside the chain of command.

In legal terms, the leak anticipates the ICC's logic: portraying the military as resisting flawed directives, not executing them. Unlike the Nuremberg generals, who pled "superior orders" only after arrest, the IDF is going public early, presenting itself as a reformer rather than an accomplice.

## Geopolitical Realignments and UN Intervention

The timing intersects with looming UN action. With the U.S. having vetoed 14 ceasefire resolutions since 2020 (Security Council Report, Aug. 15, 2025), the General Assembly may now invoke **Resolution 377A ("Uniting for Peace")**, a rare measure last used decisively in the Korean War, to bypass paralysis and authorize sanctions or even peacekeepers.

The memo's acknowledgment of lost credibility (point 6) seems calibrated to align Israel with this inevitability, presenting the IDF as self-aware rather than defiant.

The GHF collapse, in which \$500 million in aid saw more than half diverted to U.S. mercenaries (Geneva Solutions, May 9, 2025), further erodes U.S.-Israeli coordination. If ICC warrants extend to GHF officials like managing director John Acree, Washington itself could face reputational blowback. That would strain a 70-year alliance and embolden the UNGA, where a 129-vote threshold for action looks increasingly attainable (Al Jazeera, Dec. 11, 2023).

In effect, Israel may be preparing to pivot - disentangling itself from Washington while conceding just enough fault to survive UN intervention.

## Domestic Political Shifts

Inside Israel, the leak deepens a widening rift. By describing the war as "political and genocidal," the memo draws a line between the IDF and Netanyahu. Nearly two years of conflict (since October 2023) have not eliminated Hamas or freed hostages (point 3), while troop exhaustion (point 5) forces retrenchment.

Public opinion is souring: 48% now disapprove of the government's handling of the war (Ynetnews, Aug. 10, 2025). With no SS-style parallel force to bypass the army, Netanyahu depends entirely on a military now publicly dissenting. That dynamic could fuel protests or a no-confidence vote, threatening his government's survival.

## Impact on Trump's Presidency and U.S. Policy

The repercussions ripple across the Atlantic. President Trump, in office since January 2025, must balance loyalty to Israel with U.S. domestic shifts. His pro-Israel legacy - the Jerusalem embassy move in 2017 - now collides with the fallout from a discredited GHF program.

American opinion is shifting: Pew data (Apr. 8, 2025) shows only 47% favorable views of Israel, down sharply from 65% in 2022. Younger voters and Muslim communities, particularly in swing states like Michigan, are increasingly critical. Blaming U.S. mercenaries for aid failures directly implicates Washington, potentially forcing Trump to distance himself. That risks alienating his evangelical base (66% supportive) even as it might court new blocs.

Meanwhile, AIPAC, long a Trump ally, faces pressure to register under FARA (Track AIPAC, Apr. 12, 2025). With \$100 million in lobbying power (OpenSecrets, July 15, 2025) under scrutiny, the president's political calculus may change. U.S. aid levels - \$3.8 billion annually (Congress.gov, Aug. 1, 2025) - could become bargaining chips, reshaping the bilateral relationship.

## **Conclusion**

The leaked IDF memo is a turning point - not just for the Gaza war, but for Israel's political and diplomatic posture. By cataloguing eight failures with forensic precision, it shifts blame from generals to politicians, from military doctrine to political interference, from Israel alone to the U.S.-Israeli aid apparatus.

Legally, it prepares the ground for ICC negotiations. Geopolitically, it anticipates UN action. Domestically, it exposes Netanyahu's fragile grip. Internationally, it complicates Trump's Middle East strategy.

"Gideon's Chariots" may thus be remembered less for its battles than for this memo - for the moment Israel's own army declared, in effect, that the war had already been lost on political, legal, and moral grounds.