

IDF delivers new statue to Christian village

2 troops dismissed, jailed for smashing statue of Jesus in southern Lebanon

Soldier who damaged the statue and another who photographed the act given 30 days in military prison; 6 troops who 'did not act to stop the incident' called in for questioning

By [Emanuel Fabian](#) April 21, 2026



An IDF soldier smashes a statue of Jesus in southern Lebanon, in an image uploaded to social media on April 19, 2026. (X/used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

An Israel Defense Forces soldier who smashed a statue of Jesus with a sledgehammer in southern Lebanon, along with another soldier who photographed the act, have been dismissed from combat duty and sentenced to jail, the military announced on Tuesday.

An investigation by the military into the incident in the Christian village of Debel found that in addition to the soldier who damaged the statue and the soldier who photographed him, six other troops were “present at the scene and did not act to stop the incident or report it.”

“The inquiry determined that the soldiers’ conduct completely deviated from IDF orders and values,” the military said.

The military also said that troops had replaced the damaged statue with a new one.

The findings of the investigation were presented on Monday night to the commander of the 162nd Division, Brig. Gen. Sagiv Dahan, who is responsible for the sector in southern Lebanon where the incident took place. The IDF said Dahan accepted the findings and the commanders' recommendations.

Accordingly, he decided to dismiss the soldier who damaged the statute and the soldier who photographed the act from combat duty, and sent them to 30 days in military prison.



Israeli troops are seen near the southern Lebanon village of Ayta ash-Shab, April 19, 2026. (Emanuel Fabian/Times of Israel)

“The remaining troops who stood by have been summoned for clarification discussions that will be held later on, after which further command-level measures will be determined,” the military said.

The IDF said that “procedures regarding conduct with religious institutions and symbols were reinforced to the troops prior to their entry into the relevant areas, and will be reinforced again for all troops in the area following the incident.”

The investigation was also presented to IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir and Northern Command chief Maj. Gen. Rafi Milo. Zamir, who “condemned the incident and stated that it constitutes unacceptable conduct and a moral failure, far exceeding any acceptable

standard and contradicting IDF values and the expected conduct of its troops,” the military said.

The IDF said it “expresses deep regret over the incident and emphasizes that its operations in Lebanon are directed solely against the Hezbollah terrorist organization and other terrorist groups, and not against Lebanese civilians.”

In a separate statement, the military said that troops went to Debel to replace the damaged statue with a new one. The IDF said the move was carried out “in full coordination with the local community.”

“The Northern Command worked to coordinate the replacement of the statue from the moment it received the report of the incident,” the military said, adding that it “expresses deep regret over the incident, and is working to ensure that it does not happen again in the future.”



A statue of Jesus that the IDF delivered to the Christian village of Debel in southern Lebanon, to replace one destroyed by a soldier, on April 21, 2026. (Israel Defense Forces)

The photo circulated days into a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, the Lebanese terror group backed by Iran, joining other instances in which footage has been published of Israeli soldiers — oftentimes by the troops themselves — destroying or looting property.

Hezbollah began attacking Israel on March 2, shortly after the beginning of the US-Israeli war with Iran. Israel responded with heavy airstrikes and by expanding its troops' presence deeper into Lebanon.

The conflict entered a 10-day ceasefire on Friday. IDF troops are still operating throughout southern Lebanon, and Hezbollah explosives have killed and wounded Israeli forces in multiple incidents since then.