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Ethiopian IDF recruits to undergo placement testing by external body Move prompted by the consistently low scores achieved by Ethiopians in standard placement test for military recruits.

By Gili Cohen | Feb. 12, 2015 | 5:19 PM



Starting next month, all Ethiopian recruits to the Israel Defense Forces will be tested by a non-military body to determine where they will serve in the army. The testing, which determines a ranking known by its Hebrew acronym Kaba, will be conducted by the Feuerstein Institute, based in Jerusalem.

The army's decision to apply a different testing procedure to Ethiopian recruits was the result of consistently low placement scores by members of the community in the regular Kaba testing, which is conducted by the **IDF** itself.

In 2013, more than 57 percent of female recruits of Ethiopian origin and about 55 percent of the males had a Kaba score of less than 47 percent. In previous years, some 65 percent of Ethiopian female recruits and 60 percent of males had low Kaba scores.

The minimum Kaba score for officer training is 51 percent, a level that was reached by only 10 to 16 percent of Ethiopian recruits in recent years.

The Kaba score is not only used indicate who will be suitable for army service. It is also used to determine where recruits will serve and whether they will take command courses.

In 2011, it was decided that members of the Ethiopian community could enroll in officer training on the basis of recommendations from their commanding officers, rather than being required to meet the minimal Kaba threshold. However, the numbers remained low. In 2013, for example, the number of Ethiopian recruits doing officer training was roughly one-fifth of the corresponding number from the population as a whole.

Army officials concluded that the Kaba placement test, in its current form, was not suitable for recruits from the Ethiopian community.

In recent years, recruits to non-combat units — most of them women of Ethiopian origin and a few men — have done a preparatory course for military service. The results of the so-called Amir course, provided by the Feuerstein Institute, have determined the recruit's placement, rather than Kaba scores.

According to the latest decision, all testing of recruits from the Ethiopian community will be conducted by the institute, with an alternative test prepared by the army's Behavioral Science Department.

Transferral of both testing and the sorting process to an outside body is a pilot program. The army is expected to decide at a later stage whether it should be expanded to women recruits designated for combat roles.

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