

11/8/2023

To:

UN woman

CRC - Committee on the Rights of the Child

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery

Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children

Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Special Rapporteur trafficking

Special Rapporteur racism

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Special Rapporteur torture

Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls

Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

**RE: One Month After October 7th -
International Action Needed Now to Release and protect the Hostages held by Hamas**

Today marks one month to the atrocities that Hamas committed on October 7. In what was the most brutal attack ever experienced by Israel since its independence, thousands of terrorists crossed into Israeli territory, raged the streets, capturing and murdering more than 1,400 of innocent civilians, entered homes, murdered, slaughtered and burned alive entire families, and kidnapped more than 240 women, men, babies, infants, children, and elderly.

As evidence of the atrocities that occurred on October 7th come to light, we learn about the horror of the gender-based war crimes that Hamas committed in this attack. During the attack, Hamas has released numerous horrific visuals and live videos of its brutal crimes, including videos of acts of torture of innocent children and women, murder of babies, abuse of women's bodies, violent rapes of young women, naked bodies of women dragged through the streets of Gaza, acts of violence towards children, kidnappings and killings in the most inhumane ways possible. In the interrogation room, terrorists captured by Israel disclosed that they were sent on this mission with an order to use rape as a tactic of war. Testimonies of survivors and rescue teams as well as evidence found confirms that young children and women were brutally raped and abused in their homes before being executed, young women were raped beside their friends' dead bodies or were gang-raped as others were forced to observe.

Hamas terrorists also documented the abduction of more than 240 women, men, infants, children, and elderly and have been holding them in captivity for 30 days. Young children, babies, and toddlers were taken hostage. Some of the children were abducted without their parents and are completely alone, surrounded by strangers. Moreover, we have grave concerns that some of the women who were physically and sexually abused were abducted and are now prisoners of Hamas. We still have no information about their physical condition. Many of the hostages require medical treatment for their injuries and the violence they have undergone, medicine for their chronic illnesses, and special infant formulas. Several of the hostages are dual citizens (and hold passports of various countries including US, France, Italy, Thailand, Germany, or the UK) and others like the caregivers taken hostage with the elderly they care for, are not Israeli citizens. The thoughts of what these hostages are going through at this moment are heart wrenching.

Today, one month after October 7, we urge the international community, and UN agencies that regularly advocate for women and children to take action: Time is of the essence. We are extremely concerned about the hostages' well-being. Until today, no international agency representative has visited any of the hostages. In view of the barbaric and heinous war crimes committed by the Hamas on October 7, we can only imagine what atrocities are being committed to these women, children, elderly, and men at this moment.

The horrific acts committed by the Hamas terrorists in Israel, and their holding of the hostages are in clear violation of international law. A series of UN Security Council resolutions — including UNSCR 1325, 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), and 2493 (2019) — demand special treatment for women and children. UN Resolution 1325 “calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict.”

UNSCR 1820 (2008) explicitly (a) recognizes sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war, (b) notes that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide, (c) stresses the need for the exclusion of sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions in the context of conflict resolution processes, (d) calls upon the Member States to comply with their obligations for prosecuting persons responsible for such acts, to ensure that all victims of sexual violence, particularly women and girls, have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice, and (e) stresses the importance of ending impunity for such acts as part of a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, justice, truth, and national reconciliation.

The international community has a moral obligation to do everything in its power to push for the immediate release of these hostages. It must protect all women, wherever they are, from the worst evils that can be inflicted on them. This is a matter of humanity — and has nothing to do with whether one is critical of Israel’s policies or not.

Finally, here is a personal request from Maya Roman whose cousin Yarden Roman Gat was kidnaped and being held by Hamas:

“I do not understand how a month passed. A month, that feels like a day, and a year, all at the same time. I would like to write about everything that happened since, but there is no time, because there is one thing we did not do - the only thing that matters - we still did not bring Yarden back. I have no Idea what she’s going through, in what feels like a lifetime. We need to bring everyone home now. Every day is a day too much. Every month is a disgrace for humanity. I won’t stop and the rest of the families won’t stop until all the hostages are back and safe. I am asking you to not stop either.

Please do not forget them and do not let anyone else forget. “

Respectfully,

Israel Women’s Network | the Civil Commission on Oct. 7th Crimes by Hamas against Women and Children | The Briah Fund | Kolech - Religious Women's Forum | Murder Victims Families Organization | TFHT- The Task Force on Human Trafficking & Prostitution | Israel Council women Union | NA'AMAT - Israel’s women movement | Women's Spirit - Financial Independence for Women Survivors of Violence | Women and their bodies | Hiddush - for Religious Freedom and Equality | The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel | Dvora Institute for Gender Sustainability Studies | Project Keshet | Kol Achotenu | jGirls+ Magazine | Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey | The woman’s courtyard | Achoti (Sistet) for Women in Israel | HBI Project on Gender, Culture, Religion and the Law, Brandeis University | Rackman Center, Bar Ilan University | JYEP | NA'AMAT USA | Jewish Women’s Aid | Lada'at - Choose Well | The Forum for Law, Gender and Policy | Elluminate | Women Activists Online | Israeli association of victimology | Mothers with Meaning | Women of the Wall | The Sophie Davis Forum on Gender, Conflict Resolution and Peace | Directors Leading Change | NIVCHAROT | Hope Center | Council of Women's organizations in Israel | Soroptimist Israel | The Clinical Legal Education Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem | Forum of Hope | International Women Forum - Israel Chapter | Bonot Alternativa | CCW - Counseling Center for Women | WIZO | Her Academy: A vocational school for women coming out of prostitution | Supersonas | The Clinic for Law, Gender and Social Change within the Clinical Center for Law and Society, The Israeli College of Management Academic Studies | 5050 Partnership for Equity | Mavoi Satum - Dead End | Avoda Shava | Zengo | Chochmat Nashim | El HaLev | Emunah | Medonna | Jewish Council for Public Affairs | Na'amat Brazil | Na'amat Mexico | Kiverstein Institute | Turning The Tables | Woman to Woman - Jerusalem Shelter for Battered Women | WiSpace - Israeli Women In Space | Na'amat Canada | People & Growth | Givatayim Observatory, Givatayim | Wispace | Jewish Federation | Center for Women's Justice