



TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY
PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and individual donations. We believe that acting in solidarity and compassion with people everywhere can change our societies for the better.

© Amnesty International 2025

Except where otherwise noted, content in this document is licensed under a Creative Commons (attribution, non-commercial, no derivatives, international 4.0) licence.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>

For more information please visit the permissions page on our website: www.amnesty.org

Where material is attributed to a copyright owner other than Amnesty International this material is not subject to the Creative Commons licence.

First published in 2025

by Amnesty International Ltd

Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street

London WC1X 0DW, UK

Index: MDE 15/0282/2025

Original language: English

amnesty.org



Cover illustration: Relatives of Israeli hostages and demonstrators raise pictures and placards during a protest calling for action to secure the release of hostages held in Gaza since 7 October 2023, outside the Israeli Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv, Israel, on 6 August 2025. © Jack Guez / AFP via Getty Images

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	9
UNLAWFUL KILLINGS AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS	9
GROUND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS	10
INDISCRIMINATE ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE	12
HOSTAGE-TAKING AND SEIZURE OF BODIES	13
PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE	14
CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW	16
MURDER	18
EXTERMINATION	18
IMPRISONMENT	18
TORTURE	18
ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE	18
RAPE, SEXUAL SLAVERY, ENFORCED PROSTITUTION, FORCED PREGNANCY, ENFORCED STERILIZATION, OR ANY OTHER FORM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OF COMPARABLE GRAVITY	18
OTHER INHUMANE ACTS	19
INVESTIGATIONS	19
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
2. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	21
2.1 SCOPE	21
2.2 METHODOLOGY	21
2.2.1 SOURCES OF INFORMATION	22
2.2.2 ETHICAL AND SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH	23
2.2.3 VERIFICATION, CORROBORATION AND ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE	24
2.2.4 ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY	25
2.2.5 INVESTIGATING SEXUAL VIOLENCE	27
2.2.6 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS	28
2.2.7 ENGAGEMENT WITH HAMAS AND ISRAELI AUTHORITIES	30
2.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	30

3. BACKGROUND	31
3.1 SITUATION BEFORE 7 OCTOBER 2023	31
3.2 ISRAEL'S OFFENSIVE	34
4. OVERVIEW	37
4.1 ATTACKS AND AFTERMATH	37
4.2 LEGAL CONTEXT	43
5. UNLAWFUL KILLINGS AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS	46
5.1 GROUND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS	47
5.1.1 BE'ERI	51
5.1.2 HOLIT	56
5.1.3 KFAR AZZA	60
5.1.4 MAGEN	65
5.1.5 NAHAL OZ	66
5.1.6 NETIV HAASARA	68
5.1.7 NOVA FESTIVAL	71
5.1.8 OFAKIM	80
5.1.9 RE'IM	83
5.1.10 SDEROT	84
5.1.11 SUFA	88
5.1.12 ZIKIM BEACH	89
5.2 INDISCRIMINATE ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE	91
5.3 KILLING OF HOSTAGES IN GAZA	93
6. HOSTAGE-TAKING AND SEIZURE OF BODIES	97
6.1 ABDUCTION OF CIVILIAN HOSTAGES	99
6.1.1 CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES	100
6.1.2 NOVA FESTIVAL SITE AND SURROUNDING AREAS	108
6.2 SEIZURE OF MILITARY CAPTIVES	111
6.3 SEIZURE OF BODIES	113
6.4 HOLDING OF HOSTAGES AND BODIES	115
6.4.1 TREATMENT AS HOSTAGES	115
6.4.2 FATE OF HOSTAGES AND BODIES	117
7. PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE	118
7.1 ABUSE IN ISRAEL	119
7.1.1 BEATINGS AND OTHER ABUSE	119
7.1.2 MUTILATION AND OTHER ABUSE OF BODIES	122
7.1.3 SEXUAL VIOLENCE	124
7.2 ABUSE OF HOSTAGES IN GAZA AND FAMILY MEMBERS	130

7.2.1 VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST HOSTAGES EN ROUTE TO CAPTIVITY	130
7.2.2 PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST HOSTAGES IN CAPTIVITY	132
7.2.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE OF HOSTAGES AND FAMILY MEMBERS	137
8. CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW	141
8.1 WAR CRIMES	141
8.1.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK	142
8.1.2 APPLICATION	143
8.2 CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY	143
8.2.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK	144
8.2.2 APPLICATION	147
9. INVESTIGATIONS	153
9.1 PALESTINIAN INVESTIGATIONS	154
9.2 ISRAELI INVESTIGATIONS	156
9.2.1 INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTIONS	156
9.2.2 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS	158
9.2.3 PROSECUTIONS	161
9.2.4 INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE	162
9.3 INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS	163
9.3.1 UN MECHANISMS	163
9.3.2 INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MECHANISMS	165
10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	167
10.1 CONCLUSION	167
10.2 RECOMMENDATIONS	167
10.2.1 HAMAS AND OTHER PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS	167
10.2.2 AUTHORITIES OF STATE OF PALESTINE	168
10.2.3 INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS	169
10.2.4 ISRAELI AUTHORITIES	169
10.2.5 UN SECURITY COUNCIL	170
10.2.6 OFFICE OF PROSECUTOR OF ICC	170
10.2.7 THIRD STATES	171

GLOSSARY

WORD	DESCRIPTION
AL-QASSAM BRIGADES	The military wing of Hamas. Its full name is the Izz al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades.
AL-QUDS BRIGADES	The military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.
AL-AQSA MARTYRS' BRIGADES	Formerly, the military wing of the Fatah political movement.
COGAT	The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories, a unit within the Israeli Ministry of Defense tasked with administering civilian matters in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
EMERGENCY RESPONSE SQUAD	An armed team responsible for security in kibbutzim, moshavim and other small civilian communities. It is known as <i>kitat konenut</i> (<i>kitot konenut</i> in the plural) in Hebrew.
ICC	The International Criminal Court.
ICJ	The International Court of Justice.
ICRC	The International Committee of the Red Cross.
ICTR	The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.
ICTY	The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.
IDF	The Israel Defense Forces, Israel's military.
IHL	International humanitarian law.
ISRAEL SECURITY AGENCY	Israel's internal security agency. It is also known as Shabak or Shin Bet.
KAN	The Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation.
MARTYR ABU ALI MUSTAFA BRIGADES	The military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.
MFA	Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
MUJAHIDEEN BRIGADES	The military wing of the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement.
NASSER SALAH AL-DIN BRIGADES	The military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees.

WORD	DESCRIPTION
NATIONAL RESISTANCE BRIGADES	The military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It is also known as the Omar Al-Qasem Forces.
NCFM	Israel's National Center of Forensic Medicine.
NOVA FESTIVAL	An outdoor trance music festival, also known as the Supernova Sukkot Gathering, which took place on 6-7 October 2023.
OCHA	The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
OHCHR	The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
OPT	The Occupied Palestinian Territory, composed of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
RAVSHATZ	The Hebrew acronym for "civilian security coordinator", a role in the emergency response squad who liaises with the local Israeli military presence.
ROME STATUTE	The treaty that established the International Criminal Court.
RPG	A rocket-propelled grenade.
SMSG-SVC	The Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.
UN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY	The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.
UNGA	The UN General Assembly.
UNSC	The UN Security Council.
YAMAM	The National Counter-Terrorism Unit of the Israel Border Police.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than two years after the Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel on 7 October 2023 and in the wake of the release of all those seized alive on that day, accounts of the actions of Palestinian armed groups during the attacks and their subsequent treatment of those held in captivity in Gaza are still emerging. Survivors of the attacks, including those released from captivity, as well as the families of victims, continue to shed light on their own experiences, while seeking justice and redress. Amnesty International hopes that the findings of its investigation into the attacks and the treatment of those held in captivity, as well as its legal determination of the crimes committed, can support their efforts and contribute to the establishment of the truth.

The attacks of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent holding of individuals in captivity were part of a non-international armed conflict between Palestinian armed groups and Israel. They took place against the backdrop of Israel's prolonged occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and the widespread human rights violations perpetrated by Israeli forces against Palestinians, including the imposition of a system of apartheid on Palestinians and the long-standing illegal blockade of Gaza since 2007.

In the wake of the 7 October 2023 attacks, Israel embarked on a military offensive on Gaza unprecedented in magnitude, scale and duration, and intensified its illegal blockade on this part of the OPT. In December 2024, Amnesty International concluded that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. Its forces carried out acts prohibited under the Genocide Convention, with the specific intent to physically destroy Palestinians in Gaza. These acts included killings, causing serious bodily or mental harm and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction.

Hamas has claimed that its forces were not involved in the targeted killing, abduction or mistreatment of civilians during the 7 October 2023 attacks, that many civilians were killed by Israeli fire and that it did not plan to take civilians hostage. However, based on extensive video, testimonial and other evidence, Amnesty International has concluded that, while some civilians were indeed killed by Israeli forces, the vast majority of those who died were killed by Palestinian fighters. It considers that all those taken to Gaza were unlawfully detained as hostages and that all were subjected to psychological abuse. It has documented evidence that some of those captured on 7 October 2023 – both soldiers and civilians – were subjected to physical and sexual violence, either in Israel or in Gaza. It could not reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the sexual violence.

Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of these violations were carried out by members of Palestinian armed groups and constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder and torture. To date, no one has been brought to justice for them.

Around 1,200 people were killed during the attacks of 7 October 2023. They included more than 800 civilians, among them at least 36 children, and around 300 Israeli soldiers. The victims were primarily Jewish Israelis, but also included Bedouin citizens of Israel, and scores of foreign national migrant workers, students and asylum seekers. More than 4,000 people were injured, and hundreds of homes and civilian structures were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable.

Another 251 people – mostly civilians – were forcibly taken to Gaza on 7 October 2023. The majority of these 251 people were seized alive and held in captivity, but, in 36 cases, reportedly, they were already dead when captured. They were held for weeks, months or, in some cases, over two years.

Tens of thousands of residents from the attacked areas, as well as other parts of southern Israel, were displaced from their homes on 7 October 2023. Thousands remain displaced, having lost their loved ones and their homes, and face ongoing trauma.

Evidence including hundreds of videos and testimonies collected by Amnesty International and other investigators indicates that the majority of fighters taking part in the attacks were from the Izz al-Din Al-Qassam (Al-Qassam) Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, but also included fighters from the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement, as well as possibly other armed groups. Whether responding to calls made by Hamas leaders or acting spontaneously, hundreds of Palestinians in civilian clothing entered Israel from Gaza through the breached fence to join the attacks in what appeared to be a largely uncoordinated manner. The assailants in civilian clothing carried out widespread looting of homes and property in residential communities in Israel. Some also participated in killings, the destruction of property, abductions and other serious abuses.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

In this investigation, Amnesty International focused on the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in southern Israel beginning on 7 October 2023, as well as the treatment of civilians and soldiers seized during the attacks and held in Gaza. It assessed them within the framework of international humanitarian law. It also sought to establish whether there is sufficient evidence to support a conclusion that the conduct of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups amounts to crimes under international law and to identify crimes that were committed.

The scope does not include Israeli policies and actions against Palestinians in Israel and the OPT following the attacks, except where relevant to the analysis of investigations of violations by Palestinian armed groups, nor does it address repressive measures by Hamas against Palestinians in Gaza. Amnesty International has extensively documented crimes and violations by Israeli forces in Gaza and the rest of the OPT, as well as violations by Hamas against Palestinians in Gaza, in other outputs.

Amnesty International's research drew on a combination of remote and in-person interviews, photographs and videos that it verified, as well as other open-source evidence. It conducted interviews with 70 people. They included 17 people who survived the 7 October 2023 attacks, three of whom had been taken hostage. They also included nine family members of individuals who were killed in the attacks or taken into captivity, two forensic experts who were involved in examining bodies of people killed, seven medical professionals or therapists who treated people affected by the attacks, as well as lawyers representing survivors, journalists, researchers and academics.

Amnesty International reviewed 354 open-source videos and photographs of scenes from the 7 October 2023 attacks and of people held in captivity in Gaza. It also received and analysed several dozen images directly from survivors of the 7 October 2023 attacks and first responders. It carried out an extensive search and analysis of statements by representatives of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in relation to the 7 October 2023 attacks, rocket and mortar fire into Israel and the treatment of individuals held captive in Gaza. As part of the interviews it conducted, the organization consulted two independent forensic pathologists and benefited from their expertise in analysing over 45 images.

Significant challenges affected the investigation, including the refusal of Israeli authorities to cooperate with Amnesty International's requests for information, the reluctance of many survivors and witnesses to speak to Amnesty International researchers and the limited forensic evidence collected by Israeli authorities. However, Amnesty International was still able to collect a large amount of evidence that informed its analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

Amnesty International wrote to Hamas on 20 June 2025 to set out its findings, to ask for any comments on them and to request responses to detailed questions. It had not received a response as of 4 December 2025.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

The attacks of 7 October 2023 began at around 6.30am with a barrage of thousands of unguided rockets and mortars fired from Gaza into Israeli territory, striking small residential communities in the areas in Israel surrounding Gaza as well as nearby cities such as Sderot, Ofakim and Ashkelon. The rocket fire killed and injured several civilians, most of them children. Under the cover of this barrage, more than 3,000 Palestinian fighters breached the Gaza perimeter fence at multiple locations and entered Israeli territory by land, air and sea.

GROUND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

Amnesty International documented attacks by hundreds of fighters from the military wings of Palestinian armed groups on the kibbutzim of Be'eri, Holit, Kfar Azza, Magen, Nahal Oz, Re'im and Sufa, the moshav of Netiv HaAsara, the cities of Ofakim and Sderot, Zikim beach and the site of the Nova music festival and surrounding areas and escape routes. Over 650 civilians were killed in these attacks. Most of the assailants crossed into Israel in vehicles such as pickup trucks and motorcycles, driving through breaches in the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, while a small number arrived by air using motorized paragliders or by sea using inflatable rubber boats.

Heavily armed fighters carrying assault rifles, machine guns, grenades and rocket-propelled grenades carried out systematic and deliberate attacks targeting civilians. They shot and threw grenades into family homes, safe rooms and public bomb shelters where civilians had taken refuge and hunted down those trying to flee across fields and on roads. In several instances, they summarily killed civilians after abducting them. In one kibbutz, Be'eri, fighters used civilians as human shields when holding them inside a house during a battle with Israeli military forces.

Contrary to claims by Hamas leaders that their fighters only targeted military objectives, the overwhelming majority of those killed were civilians and most of the locations targeted were residential communities or other places in which civilians were gathered, namely two music festivals and a beach. In the attacks documented by Amnesty International, the victims were generally residents of the civilian communities targeted, including, in some cases, members of the local emergency response squads, or festival-goers.

Hamas has claimed that many Israeli civilians were killed by Israeli fire in application of the Hannibal Directive, an Israeli military protocol that puts Israeli forces at risk to prevent them from being captured. In some cases, Israeli civilians were indeed killed by Israeli forces in cases of mistaken identification and/or in application of the Hannibal Directive. In the context of two of the attacks documented by Amnesty International, those on Be'eri and Nahal Oz, up to 12 people and three people, respectively, were killed by Israeli military fire, according to Israeli military investigations.

However, in the vast majority of cases, those responsible for the killings in the attacks documented by Amnesty International were Palestinian fighters. The organization investigated in detail incidents in which around 100 people who were confirmed as civilians or presumed to be civilians died, concluding that they were killed by fighters. It reviewed and cross-checked evidence that fighters were responsible for killing the vast majority of the remaining civilians who died in the attacks it documented, including the fact that the Israeli military was not present when most killings happened.

In the incidents it investigated, Amnesty International concluded that the fighters most often were, or appeared to be, from the Al-Qassam Brigades. It also found evidence of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades, the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, being present at the scene of at least one killing and evidence of the Al-Quds Brigades being involved in another.

In Be'eri, 101 civilians were killed, including 10 children, the youngest of whom was nine-month-old Mila Cohen, shot dead in her mother's arms in the family's safe room. In many attacks, multiple family members were killed. Among them were two sisters, Yahel and Noiya Sharabi, aged 13 and 16, who were shot dead with their mother, Lianne Brisley-Sharabi, 48, in their home in the north-west of the kibbutz, after witnessing the abduction of their father, Eli Sharabi, 51, by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. Eli was held hostage in Gaza for 16 months and, upon his release in February 2025, learnt that his wife and daughters had been killed. Some of the attacks were captured by closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, dashboard cameras in vehicles and body-worn cameras used by assailants. Amnesty International verified 25 videos related to the attack on Be'eri, including footage showing armed assailants wearing green Al-Qassam Brigades headbands seen carrying out killings and abductions. Among the civilian residents who were abducted and paraded through the streets of the kibbutz with their hands bound and later killed at the end of the road were Marcel Kaplun and Dror Kaplun, aged 64 and 68, respectively, a couple who had lived in Be'eri for the previous two decades, and Kinneret Gat, a 67-year-old teacher.

In Holit, one of the smallest kibbutzim in the area, armed assailants killed 16 civilians, including a member of the kibbutz's emergency response squad and three migrant workers from Cambodia, Moldova and Thailand. One of the assailants who can be seen on video footage verified by Amnesty International was wearing a green Al-Qassam Brigades headband.

Sixteen-year-old Rotem Matthias told Amnesty International that assailants threw a grenade into his family home's safe room, killing his mother, Schahar Matthias, 50, and his father, Sholmi Matthias, aged 47, who

were both musicians, and severely injuring him. Rotem said that his mother made him lie on the floor in a small space between the bed and the wall and lay on top of him, shielding him and saving his life.

In Kfar Azza, less than 2km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, assailants arrived from Gaza by motorized paragliders and on foot, with residents describing fighters attacking homes and shooting through safe room doors. Sixty-two residents were killed, including 57 civilians. Among the victims were Hadar Rosenfeld, a 30-year-old accountant, and her husband, Itay Berdichesky, an electrical engineer also aged 30, who were shot dead in their home, leaving behind their 10-month-old twin boys. Hadar's cousin, Yahav Winner, a 36-year-old actor and filmmaker, was killed in his home while his wife escaped with their three-week-old baby girl and hid nearby for hours until they were rescued.

In Magen, CCTV footage verified by Amnesty International shows fighters on six motorcycles opening fire multiple times at a passing civilian vehicle, which slows to a stop near the Maon Junction on Road 232. The attack killed Fatima al-Talqat, a Bedouin resident of the town of Ar'ara in the Negev/Naqab region and mother of nine children. Her husband and infant son survived by hiding in an electricity junction box for six hours.

In Nahal Oz, where 13 civilians were killed, assailants targeted a row of houses on the northern outskirts, killing and abducting residents. Joshua Mollel, a Tanzanian agricultural student, was beaten and shot by fighters who appeared to be from the National Resistance Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. His body was desecrated and subsequently taken to Gaza, where it remained held until it was released on 5 November 2025.

Numerous other civilians of other nationalities, mostly Asian and African migrant workers, students and asylum seekers, were killed in the ground attacks on kibbutzim on 7 October 2023. Thai nationals, mostly agricultural workers, made up the largest group of foreign nationals killed on that day. Amnesty International documented the murder of two Thai agricultural workers in Re'im. Other notable cases include that of 12 Thai agricultural workers, as well as 10 Nepalese agricultural students, who were killed in the workers' living quarters of Alumim, and that of 11 Thai agricultural workers who were killed in Nir Oz.

In Netiv HaAsara, where Palestinian assailants arrived by paragliders at around 6.30am, 17 civilians were killed. Gil Taasa, a 45-year-old firefighter, was killed by a grenade thrown by an assailant into a safe room where he was sheltering with his two youngest sons, Shai, nine, and Koren, 13. Shai lost his right eye and Koren sustained multiple shrapnel injuries. The children's mother, Sabine Taasa, recounted that, after murdering her ex-husband Gil, the fighters tried to enter the main house, where she and her 15-year-old son Zohar were. In security camera footage verified by Amnesty International, there are images of the grenade being thrown and of two fighters armed with rifles, one wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband, walking around the yard of the family home shortly after. One of the fighters is seen confining the injured boys to a room of the house.

The Nova festival, north of Re'im, became the site of mass killings, where the largest number of people were killed on 7 October 2023. More than 3,000 people were attending the overnight outdoor trance music festival and 378 were killed at the festival site and a small section of Road 232 adjacent to the parking lot. They included 344 civilians attending the festival. They also included 34 members of military or security forces. Sixteen of them were soldiers: 12 of them were off-duty and attending the festival, while four were killed while fighting the assailants. Another 16 were police officers, 15 of whom were killed fighting the assailants; and two were agents of the Israel Security Agency (also known as Shabak or Shin Bet), one of whom was attending the festival. The figures do not include other festival-goers who were killed in other areas close to Gaza that day, including in bomb shelters and other locations where they sought shelter and on sections of Road 232 further from the festival site along which they were fleeing.

There is a broad consensus that the attack on the festival was not planned, as Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups did not know that the festival was taking place. Rather, fighters stumbled upon the Nova festival site as they drove along Road 232 on their way to attack kibbutzim and other localities. They fired into areas full of civilians, targeted terrified civilians who were trying to flee and hunted down others where they were trying to hide – in bomb shelters, public toilets, ditches and bushes. Fighters armed with rifles, machine guns, grenades and RPGs set up roadblocks to prevent festival-goers from fleeing and to intercept military and security forces coming to their rescue. Survivors described scenes of bodies strewn along Road 232, cars riddled with bullets and festival-goers hunted as they fled. CCTV and dashboard camera footage verified by Amnesty International documented the deliberate killing of civilians along escape routes.

Dashboard camera footage verified by Amnesty International shows three armed fighters, two of them wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades patch or headband, abducting one civilian and shooting at close range another apparent civilian hiding behind a car. Other footage from the same dashboard camera shows several assailants searching the body of the civilian who was shot in the previous video and abducting a woman who

was hiding inside the vehicle. The woman raises her hands and crouches down as bullets hit the ground nearby.

Older people were not spared and were among the civilians deliberately targeted. Sderot, a city of about 31,000 residents located less than 1km from Gaza at the closest point, was attacked by dozens of assailants, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, on 7 October 2023. Among those killed were a group of 13 civilians, most of them retirees from nearby areas, who were gunned down at and around a bus stop in the early morning, while they were starting a day trip to the Dead Sea.

According to an Israeli military investigation, 53 people were killed in Sderot, including two firefighters and 37 other civilians, as well as three soldiers. Two of the soldiers were killed in rocket attacks on Sderot in the days following the ground attack. Also among the 53 killed were 11 police officers; some were members of the local police, who were killed in an attack on a police station, while others were from units from outside the city who arrived later in the day in an attempt to rescue them.

At Zikim beach, a popular destination for fishing and other recreational activities, 3km north of Gaza, Palestinian assailants who arrived on inflatable rubber boats killed 17 civilians. Among them was Or Taasa, a 17-year-old boy whose father was killed the same morning in an attack on the family home in Netiv HaAsara that also gravely injured two of his younger brothers. His mother, Sabine Taasa, told Amnesty International that when she managed to reach him by phone, minutes before he was shot dead, he told her that he and his friends were under attack by Palestinian fighters in the public toilet where they were sheltering.

The armed groups who killed and injured civilians not directly taking part in hostilities in southern Israel violated, under international humanitarian law, the prohibition of murder and of direct attacks on civilians, in some cases, and of indiscriminate attacks, in others. In cases where they attacked homes and other civilian buildings, they also violated the prohibition of direct attacks on civilian objects.

INDISCRIMINATE ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE

On 7 October 2023, the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups launched some 3,000-5,000 unguided rockets and mortars towards populated areas in Israel. This was a barrage of unprecedented intensity in the context of repeated such attacks since 2001. Some 2,200 rockets and mortars were fired in the first four hours, according to the Israeli military.

The rocket attacks killed at least 10 civilians. The death toll would have been much higher were it not for Israel's air raid warning systems and public and private shelters. Seven of those killed were Bedouin citizens of Israel living in the Negev/Naqab region of southern Israel in communities which lack air raid warning systems and bomb shelters and have poor access to emergency medical services. Six of them were children aged between five and 15. Mai Abu Sabah, aged 13, as well as her grandmother Fayza Abu Sabah, aged 57, and four children from the Al-Kra'an family – brothers Malik Ibrahim Al-Kra'an and Jawad Ibrahim Al-Kra'an, aged 14 and 15, and their cousins Amin Akal Al-Kra'an, aged 11, and Mahmoud Diab Al-Kra'an, aged 12 – were killed when rockets landed on or near their homes in Al-Ba'at, an unrecognized Bedouin village. Yazan Zakaria Abu Juma'a, aged five, was killed by a rocket which struck the ground next to his home in Ar'ara, a Bedouin town located further south.

Another rocket killed three members of the same Jewish Israeli family, including one child, in the city of Netivot: Refael Meir Maskalchi, aged 12, his father, Netanel Maskalchi, aged 36, and his grandfather, Refael Fahimi, aged 63.

Palestinian armed groups continued to launch rockets into Israel at regular intervals, though at a gradually diminishing pace, apparently as a result of Israel's offensive on Gaza, which grew in scale and scope. According to the Israeli military, between 7 October 2023 and May 2024, some 12,500 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel from Gaza. Media reports indicated that rockets had killed another five civilians in Israel by the end of 2023, bringing the total to 15 civilians since 7 October 2023.

The armed groups who carried out these attacks violated the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks under international humanitarian law. As in many cases, there were no discernible military targets, they may have violated the prohibition of direct attacks on civilians and on civilian objects.

HOSTAGE-TAKING AND SEIZURE OF BODIES

Palestinian assailants, consisting of fighters in military-style clothing and armed or unarmed men in civilian clothing, seized 251 people during the Hamas-led attacks on 7 October 2023 and forcibly brought them to Gaza. The majority of these 251 people were seized alive, but, in 36 cases, reportedly, Palestinian assailants seized the bodies of people who were killed during the attacks.

Of the 251 people, 27 were soldiers on active duty at their assigned positions. The vast majority of the remaining 224 people were civilians. They comprised 124 men, 64 women and 36 children. Most of the 251 people seized were Jewish Israelis, including some with dual nationality. Seven were Bedouin citizens of Israel. At least 35 were foreign nationals.

Shoshan Haran, the founder and president of Fair Planet, an Israeli development NGO, and a member of Women Wage Peace, a grassroots peace movement, was abducted with six other members of her family, including three children (two of whom were her grandchildren). Shoshan, who lived in Be’eri and was aged 67 at the time, told Amnesty International that, after receiving a WhatsApp message warning of “an infiltration of terrorists” into the kibbutz at 6.29am, she sheltered in her safe room with members of her family who were visiting for the Jewish holidays.

Shoshan told Amnesty International that armed men forced them out of the safe room. One of them shouted at them in English, “Women, children, take. Men, boom-boom.” They were then taken out of the kibbutz, to Gaza. It was only when she and five members of her family were released from what she described as the “horrific 50 days of captivity” that she learnt the fate of her husband, Avshalom Haran, and other family members. She said: “My husband was murdered after we were forced out of the safe room, as were my sister, my brother-in-law and his [Filipino] carer, who also lived in my kibbutz.” Her son-in-law, Tal Shoham, who had also been abducted from her safe room but held separately in captivity, endured over 500 days in captivity before he was released.

Similar patterns of terrified individuals, couples and families being dragged or otherwise forced from their safe rooms occurred repeatedly across Be’eri, where 30 people were abducted, and multiple other kibbutzim. Palestinian assailants likewise abducted tens of young people from the Nova music festival and surrounding areas, after hunting them across fields or forcing them out of rocket shelters where they had taken cover.

Among those abducted were 16 children under the age of 10, and nine people aged over 80, according to a database produced by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. Some of the victims were clearly very badly injured, such as Hersh Goldberg-Polin, aged 22, who was abducted from Road 232 near the Nova festival site after fleeing the festival and seeking refuge in a rocket shelter. A video verified by Amnesty International shows Hersh being loaded onto a white pickup truck by armed men, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, while his left arm is freshly severed below the elbow and bleeding profusely, likely following an explosion. Four other hostages, all in civilian clothing, are seen in the same video, some being taken from the shelter, and one being dragged by the hair and beaten as he is loaded onto the truck. Hersh was killed in August 2024 with five other hostages while in captivity. Amnesty International has concluded, based on all available evidence, that they were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

Amnesty International also documented evidence that Palestinian fighters, likely including fighters from both the Al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, took to Gaza the bodies of people who had been killed or mortally wounded during attacks in southern Israel. This practice denied families the opportunity to bury their loved ones, created further uncertainty and suffering, leaving families not knowing, sometimes for months or longer, if their loved ones had been killed on 7 October 2023. According to a database produced by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Palestinian fighters brought 36 bodies of civilians and soldiers they killed to Gaza.

Hamas has claimed that it did not plan to take civilians hostage and that its forces were not involved in abducting civilians in southern Israel, while appearing to blame the abduction of civilians on unaffiliated civilians who crossed over from Gaza during the attacks. However, Amnesty International documented a wealth of evidence that refutes Hamas’s claims. While some unaffiliated civilians from Gaza may have been involved in abducting civilians, video footage, images and other evidence collected by Amnesty International identify a clear pattern in which the Al-Qassam Brigades abducted civilians, including children and older people, in multiple civilian locations.

Following the 7 October 2023 attacks, statements and actions by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad made clear they were holding both civilians and soldiers as bargaining chips to compel Israeli authorities to take specific actions, such as releasing Palestinian prisoners, or refrain from others. There is also some evidence

that the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement held hostages in Gaza. Amnesty International could not determine whether other Palestinian armed groups held hostages.

As of 4 December 2025, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups had released 158 living hostages and 34 bodies of people seized on 7 October 2023, mostly in the context of negotiated deals, the last of which was concluded in early October 2025. Eight living hostages and 50 bodies had been rescued or retrieved through Israeli military operations. This left one body held in Gaza. Of those recorded as taken into captivity alive, 48 died in Gaza; at least six were killed by their captors, while others died as a result of Israeli military operations. Hamas claimed it faced challenges in reaching the remains of some people because they were buried under rubble.

The abduction and holding of civilians as hostages, as well as the holding of soldiers as hostages, constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law. The seizure and ill-treatment of dead bodies is likewise a violation of international humanitarian law.

PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Palestinian assailants, consisting of fighters in military-style clothing and armed or unarmed men in civilian clothing, subjected people they captured on 7 October 2023 to physical, sexual or psychological abuse either in Israel or in Gaza. They also abused the bodies of people killed.

Amnesty International documented the physical abuse of 16 people: seven individuals – six men and one woman – during the 7 October 2023 attacks in southern Israel and nine individuals – all men – while they were being transported to captivity in Gaza. Most of those responsible were clearly identifiable as members of armed groups and some specifically as fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.

A Bedouin citizen of Israel, Salem Naif, described to Amnesty International being beaten by Palestinian assailants in front of his children. He said fighters attacked Holit, where he had been working, and captured him and his children at around 11.30am. He said that the assailants took his money, wallet and car keys, and then decided to take him and his children hostage to Gaza, but that they were able to escape.

Video evidence shows fighters in military-style clothing, who are sometimes identifiable as members of the Al-Qassam Brigades, dragging unarmed men in civilian clothing from shelters, beating them with rifle butts, kicking and insulting them.

A Thai agricultural worker told Amnesty International that he was taken hostage with four others from Re'im by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. He said they were taken to an abandoned warehouse in Gaza, where they were handed over to a different group of men, who beat them with their hands and weapons "and fired warning shots to intimidate" them. He said the abuse lasted for about 20 minutes, before the same group of armed men put them back into a vehicle and took them to a tunnel.

Amnesty International also documented evidence that armed or unarmed Palestinian assailants committed sexual assault during the 7 October 2023 attacks. However, Amnesty International was not able to reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the sexual violence or, for the most part, to determine the affiliation, if any, of the perpetrators. It also found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups gave orders to their fighters to commit acts of sexual violence during the attacks.

Amnesty International spoke to one individual who had reported in the media being subjected to rape at the Nova festival. He chose to remain anonymous but confirmed the testimony he had provided to the media, in which he said that, at the Nova festival site, armed men pinned him down, stripped him and raped him. Amnesty International also spoke to his lawyer, who had twice accompanied him to speak to the police, first in June 2024 to report the assault and again in July 2024 for a follow-up visit, and viewed his medical records.

Two returned hostages have said publicly that assailants touched them in intimate areas during the attacks, a form of sexual assault. One of these women, Ilana Gritzewsky, told the UN Security Council in August 2025 that she was subjected to physical and sexual violence while being abducted from Nir Oz. She said that, when she was captured, gunmen "beat me, humiliated me, touched me all over, and threw me on a motorcycle and took me to Gaza... On the way to Gaza, when they started to touch me and sexually abuse me, I passed out; physically and mentally, I couldn't take it anymore." She described regaining consciousness in Gaza, partially naked on the floor and surrounded by gunmen.

Amnesty International spoke to a therapist with long-standing experience treating survivors of sexual violence who reported providing intensive treatment and support to three survivors of rape during the 7 October 2023

attacks. The therapist said that these assaults were carried out at the Nova festival site and in kibbutzim, by multiple perpetrators.

The organization reviewed media articles in which another woman, who chose to remain anonymous, reported she was raped during the 7 October 2023 attacks, five named people said they saw rape and five other people reported hearing what they understood to be sexual assault during the attacks, including, in one case, a woman shouting that she was being stripped of her clothes. Most of these reports related to the Nova festival site, surrounding areas or escape routes from it. Amnesty International also spoke to another three mental health professionals who reported that at least 13 of their clients said they witnessed rape or other sexual assault at or after fleeing the Nova festival site. Amnesty International could not determine the extent of any possible overlap between the clients of different practitioners or between those clients and individuals who spoke to the media.

Amnesty International faced challenges investigating sexual violence. Except for one case referred to above, it was not able to interview people reporting they had survived or witnessed sexual violence, despite efforts to do so. In seeking instead to collect information from a broad range of sources, Amnesty International worked in line with international guidance on documenting conflict-related sexual violence, which recognizes the value of testimony by medical professionals and therapists, among others, in sexual violence investigations, or of relying on pre-existing statements made by survivors where possible as an alternative to re-interviewing them.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel (UN Commission of Inquiry) concluded in June 2024 that, regarding the 7 October 2023 attacks, it had “identified a pattern of sexual violence” and that “these were not isolated incidents but perpetrated in similar ways in several locations primarily against Israeli women.” It also said it had found indications that members of the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups had committed acts of gender-based violence. It said it was not able to reach any conclusions about rape, noting limitations to its investigation, including a lack of access to victims and witnesses and obstruction by the Israeli authorities.

Amnesty International documented evidence that, on 7 October 2023, Palestinian assailants mutilated, burnt, beat or otherwise mistreated the bodies of 19 victims who were either confirmed as dead or may have been dead at the time, in Israel or in Gaza. In some cases, the perpetrators were identifiably from the Al-Qassam Brigades, the Al-Quds Brigades or the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades.

In one example that gained international attention, the unresponsive body of a German-Israeli woman, Shani Louk, is seen in a video verified by Amnesty International lying face down in a pickup truck, wearing only boots, black underpants or shorts and a bra that appears raised above her breasts and is surrounded by four men, one armed with a rifle and one carrying an RPG, while she is paraded through cheering crowds in Gaza. Shani’s mother, Ricarda Louk, told Amnesty International how she and her family learnt about Shani’s abduction from seeing this video. “We recognized her immediately. We were in shock. How could it be that she was on the back of a pickup truck in this humiliating way?” she said.

Amnesty International has concluded that members of Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, committed physical and sexual violence against hostages in captivity, amounting to torture or other ill-treatment. It was not able to determine whether other armed groups also did so.

The Thai agricultural worker mentioned earlier told Amnesty International that he and three other Thai hostages and one Israeli hostage with whom he was held were beaten and denied adequate provisions in captivity. He described how, after being taken to a tunnel in Gaza, fighters tied them up and beat them on multiple occasions over three days. He identified himself in a photograph showing five men held, with their arms restrained, at gunpoint by a fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades; he said the photograph was taken within the first few days of their arrival in the tunnel. He was released on 25 November 2023.

At least 18 other named hostages – 12 men, four women and two girls – reported publicly, after their release, that they were subjected to abuse in captivity that amounted to torture or other ill-treatment. Eleven of the men and one of the women described being subjected to beatings.

One of the 12 men, Eli Sharabi, who was abducted from Be’eri and released on 8 February 2025, told Israeli media that he was chained for the duration of his more than 15 months of captivity and subjected to multiple beatings, but that none of these beatings compared to the pain of the hunger to which he was also subjected. He also recounted that captors beat him and other hostages with whom he was held, denied them food and justified such ill-treatment by saying that it was what Palestinian detainees experienced in Israeli detention facilities.

The four women and two girls described in public forums or in the media that they were subjected to sexual violence, including sexual assault and threats of forced marriage. One of these women, Amit Soussana, said, to the UN Security Council, in interviews with a newspaper and in a documentary film, that the man guarding her forced her to perform a sexual act on him at gunpoint. Two named Israeli doctors and a social worker confirmed to the same newspaper that Amit reported the sexual violence to them after she was returned to Israel. Amit said she was held for the duration of her captivity by “armed Hamas guards”.

Five of the 12 men also described in media recordings being subjected to sexual assault, forced nudity and/or forcible shaving of body hair that constituted sexual violence. Four were held by Hamas; the other was held by Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Several other released hostages said they saw or heard the accounts of other hostages subjected to sexual violence.

Renana Eitan, a psychiatrist involved in treating hostages released in November 2023 in her then position as chair of psychiatry at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, told Amnesty International that some hostages reported being beaten, forced to witness or participate in violent acts, confined in isolation or total darkness and deprived of basic needs, leading to serious and long-term mental and physical health implications. She also said that some returned hostages were subjected to sexual violence, including forced nudity and sexual assault. Acts of sexual violence committed in such circumstances amount to a form of torture or other ill-treatment.

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad subjected all hostages they held, as well as their family members, to psychological abuse. They held all hostages incommunicado, sought to humiliate them through non-consensual videos and public parading. They denied the hostages’ families information about their loved ones.

Videos released by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad showed hostages in captivity, often weeping or pleading for release. The filming and broadcasting of such videos violates the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. Some of the content of the videos also indicates the victim was subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. A video of Eyyatar David, which was released by the Al-Qassam Brigades on 2 August 2025, shows him in a tunnel, emaciated, and being forced to dig what he says he believes is his own grave. He describes going days without food. Being forced to dig one’s own grave in these circumstances amounts to torture, as would intentional denial of food over extended periods of time in captivity.

In committing these acts of physical, sexual and psychological abuse during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages subsequently held in Gaza, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, as well as, in some cases, people whose affiliation Amnesty International could not identify, breached one or more of the following international humanitarian law prohibitions: the prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment; the prohibition on mutilation; and the prohibition on rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Hamas has acknowledged that mistakes occurred during the 7 October 2023 attacks, although in very general terms. However, it has denied that Palestinian fighters mistreated civilians. There is, however, a wealth of evidence that conclusively refutes this, including digital images circulated by the Al-Qassam Brigades, and other Palestinian armed groups, that show their own fighters perpetrating abuses. Some statements by Hamas spokespeople claimed that its forces treated hostages humanely, while other statements by spokespeople for the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups suggested otherwise and included threats of execution.

Hamas specifically denied that Palestinian fighters perpetrated rape or other sexual violence during the 7 October 2023 attacks or against hostages. As already noted, Amnesty International found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups gave orders to their fighters to commit acts of sexual violence during the attacks. However, it documented evidence that sexual violence was perpetrated during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages.

UN bodies and NGOs have, on the one hand, expressed concern that widespread scepticism surrounding reports of sexual violence may contribute to the silencing of survivors and, on the other, cautioned against the instrumentalization of reports of sexual violence to justify Israel’s military attacks against Palestinians in Gaza.

CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Many of the serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations documented by Amnesty International constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, for which individuals bear personal criminal responsibility.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

War crimes applicable to non-international armed conflicts are listed in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), in the study on customary international humanitarian law of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other sources. Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of the violations of international humanitarian law it documented amount to war crimes. They include the war crimes of: “murder”; “cruel treatment and torture”; “committing outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment”; “taking of hostages”; “making the civilian population or individual civilians, not taking a direct part in hostilities, the object of attack”; “pillage”; “committing rape... or any other form of sexual violence”; “making civilian objects the object of attack”; “destroying or seizing ‘property of the adverse party not required by military necessity’”; “launching an indiscriminate attack resulting in death or injury to civilians”; “using human shields”; and “enforced disappearance”.

Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the ICC sets out a list of prohibited, inhumane acts and the contextual elements that need to be established for such an act to constitute a crime against humanity. Accordingly, a prohibited act must be “committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.” The article further specifies that “[a]ttack directed against any civilian population’ means a course of conduct involving the multiple commission of [listed prohibited, inhumane] acts... against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit such attack.”

Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of the violations documented in this report that were carried out by members of Palestinian armed groups and unaffiliated civilians who joined the attack meet the contextual, material and mental elements required by Article 7 of the Rome Statute and therefore constitute crimes against humanity.

The overwhelming number of civilian locations targeted, statements from Hamas leaders and other organized armed groups, the repeated pattern of attacks deliberately targeting civilians, and the fact that most of those killed, injured or abducted in the attack were civilians, all point to the conclusion that the attack was directed against a civilian population. The scale, timing, coordination and spatial patterns further indicate objectives and organization.

Evidence collected and analysed by Amnesty International, including statements by Hamas leaders and the actions of fighters, points to Hamas leaders intending to carry out an attack on civilians, as well as on military targets, in Israel and to take hostages. Fighters from its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, and the military wings of other Palestinian armed groups acted accordingly when they attacked civilian locations on 7 October 2023 and took people into captivity.

The attack directed against the civilian population was widespread. Prohibited acts were committed during it in civilian communities throughout the areas surrounding Gaza, as well as the city of Ofakim, which lies further east. These communities are home to tens of thousands of people.

In addition to being widespread, the attack was also systematic. Amnesty International’s research documented patterns of identical or comparable prohibited acts committed in a similar manner. Perpetrators repeatedly treated victims in a similar way across many locations.

Prohibited acts documented by Amnesty International were committed “as part of” an attack directed against the civilian population, which was both widespread and systematic. Many inhumane acts, including murder, were committed as part of the attack on the civilian population. The temporal and geographical proximity of these inhumane acts is a clear indication of their nexus with such an attack.

Amnesty International’s findings indicate that, in many cases, perpetrators of inhumane acts knew that their conduct was part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population. In statements made on 7 October 2023 and its aftermath, Hamas leaders announced the attack and included civilian communities among the intended targets. Leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups invited Palestinians across the OPT to join the attack and commit acts of violence, including at civilian locations, with limited instructions to refrain from killing or harming civilians (and with no apparent instruction to limit their violence to military targets). Even if assailants had not known in advance that the communities they were attacking were civilian, it would have soon become obvious.

The organization’s findings strongly indicate that members of Palestinian armed groups, and, to a lesser extent, unaffiliated civilians committed the following inhumane acts as part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against a civilian population: “murder”; “extermination”; “imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law”; “enforced disappearance”; “torture”; “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity”; and “other inhumane acts”.

MURDER

Hundreds of civilians were deliberately and unlawfully killed during the 7 October 2023 attacks. Based on the evidence Amnesty International has analysed, most of the fighters who deliberately killed civilians were members of the Al-Qassam Brigades. Amnesty International found evidence of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades being present at the scene of one killing and evidence of the Al-Quds Brigades being involved in another. It has concluded that at least six hostages were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

EXTERMINATION

The acts of murder perpetrated as part of the 7 October 2023 attacks “were constituted, or took place as part of, a mass killing of members of a civilian population” and therefore amount to the crime against humanity of extermination.

IMPRISONMENT

Scores of civilians were systematically taken and/or held hostage in southern Israel and imprisoned in Gaza in violation of fundamental rules of international law. The holding of hostages was done as part of an explicitly stated plan explained by the leadership of Hamas and of other Palestinian armed groups. Based on the evidence Amnesty International has analysed, the Palestinian armed groups responsible for abducting civilians or holding civilians or soldiers hostage are Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and likely also the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement.

TORTURE

Scores of people who were held under the power of Hamas – both civilians and soldiers – were subjected to severe physical or mental pain, including psychological abuse against all hostages and physical abuse against some of them.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and likely also the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement failed to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those they abducted or captured from southern Israel and imprisoned in Gaza as hostages. While in some cases, hostages were shown alive in videos that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad released to exert pressure on Israeli authorities, in many instances, families of hostages reported having no information as to whether their loved ones were alive or dead.

RAPE, SEXUAL SLAVERY, ENFORCED PROSTITUTION, FORCED PREGNANCY, ENFORCED STERILIZATION, OR ANY OTHER FORM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OF COMPARABLE GRAVITY

Amnesty International documented evidence that Palestinian assailants committed, in both Israel and in Gaza, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence against people in their power. However, except for one case, it was unable to interview people who reported surviving or witnessing sexual violence during the attacks in Israel or while held hostage. It therefore could not reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the violence. It has concluded that members of Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, committed sexual violence against hostages in captivity, based on credible indications of their responsibility in several cases. It also documented evidence that Palestinian Islamic Jihad committed sexual violence in the case of one hostage. However, in other cases where Amnesty International documented evidence of sexual violence against hostages in captivity and during the 7 October 2023 attacks, it could not determine the affiliation of the perpetrators. In most cases, it also could not determine whether the perpetrators were fighters or unaffiliated civilians.

Amnesty International collected evidence that indicated that rape was likely committed as part of the 7 October 2023 attacks. This included the testimonies of one person who told the organization he was raped and of a therapist who told the organization she provided intensive treatment to three other survivors of rape.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

UN entities also reported finding evidence of rape during the attacks and against at least one hostage. Nonetheless, Amnesty International did not consider that it had collected enough evidence to definitively conclude that rape, as opposed to sexual assault more broadly, was committed.

OTHER INHUMANE ACTS

Through subjecting civilian hostages, as well as captured soldiers held as hostages, to inhuman conditions, including denial of adequate food and medical care, during their unlawful imprisonment, Hamas and possibly other Palestinian armed groups inflicted on them great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

INVESTIGATIONS

Despite the scale and gravity of the violations committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages, accountability has remained elusive.

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have generally failed to carry out investigations into crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages. Hamas's political as well as military leadership have failed to publicly recognize or condemn crimes committed and blamed wrongful acts on unaffiliated Palestinians from Gaza. They have even boasted about some acts that amount to crimes, such as the firing of unguided rockets into Israel.

Amnesty International is aware of one instance in which the Al-Qassam Brigades announced they had carried out an investigation into the killing of a hostage in Gaza. However, they issued few details about it.

Hamas has claimed that, following the end of the conflict, it will look into allegations of any “transgressions” that might have been perpetrated during it and will establish “accountability mechanisms” to address them. However, it failed to take such measures in the aftermath of previous Israeli offensives.

The authorities of the State of Palestine have also failed to take steps to investigate or bring perpetrators to justice. While President Mahmoud Abbas has called for the release of hostages and condemned the killing of civilians, Amnesty International is not aware of any recognition or condemnation by him or any other senior leader of the State of Palestine of the scope and scale of violations committed by Palestinian armed groups.

The Israeli authorities have taken steps to investigate the crimes committed by Palestinian assailants during the 7 October 2023 attacks, but crucial evidence was not collected. In many cases, in the rush to collect the bodies of people killed, the crime scenes were not effectively secured, bodies were moved by civilian volunteers before any documentation could occur, and information about the location and circumstances of the deaths was not recorded. While the Israeli authorities focused on the identification of the dead and timely burial, forensic examinations were limited and autopsies were not always carried out. In some cases, this has meant that family members of victims have been left without information about how their loved ones died.

Feminist groups have raised concerns regarding the shortcomings in the investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence crimes at all stages of the process. They include the lack of evidence collection and inadequate training for first responders in identifying signs of sexual violence in bodies. The Israel Women's Network and Women and War Collective criticized the government for prioritizing the “appropriation of CRSV [conflict-related sexual violence] crimes in service of national advocacy aims [which] diverted resources from efforts to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators and secure the return of the hostages.”

As of August 2025, Israeli authorities were reportedly detaining at least 200 Palestinians in detention accused of crimes committed during the attacks, but had not charged or brought any to trial. No decision had been made as to which legal system – civilian or military – the accused would be tried in or what the charges would be. They have not been able to receive visits by the ICRC. Amnesty International is also concerned about reports that Palestinians detained in Israel in connection with crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. This would be a serious violation of the rights of those detained and undermine the possibility of a fair trial and ensuring truth, justice and reparation for the victims, survivors and their families.

International mechanisms have also faced obstacles. The UN Commission of Inquiry and other bodies have been denied access to sites in Israel and cooperation from Israeli authorities. Despite these challenges, the UN Commission of Inquiry documented extensive evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Palestinian armed groups.

The Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC confirmed that an investigation it had opened before October 2023 into the situation in the State of Palestine was ongoing and included the escalation of violence and hostilities since 7 October 2023. It sought – and in one case the Pre-Trial Chamber issued – arrest warrants for senior Hamas leaders on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but these individuals have all been killed in Israeli attacks.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through its research findings and legal analysis, Amnesty International has concluded that Palestinian armed groups committed violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity during their attacks in southern Israel that started on 7 October 2023 and continued to commit violations and crimes under international law in their holding and mistreatment of hostages and the withholding of bodies seized. It considers that Hamas, including its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, was chiefly responsible for these violations and crimes. Other Palestinian armed groups, notably Palestinian Islamic Jihad, including its military wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement, were responsible to a lesser extent, as were unaffiliated Palestinian civilians from Gaza in some instances.

In light of these conclusions, Amnesty International makes a number of recommendations to secure justice and reparation for victims and survivors of crimes committed. Amnesty International has presented its recommendations in relation to the genocide and other crimes under international law committed by Israel in Gaza, specifically, and in Israel and the OPT, more generally, in other publications.

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups must unconditionally return the body of Ran Gvili, seized from Israel on 7 October 2023, as soon as it is located. They should seek international assistance if needed to locate it. They must investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law, committed by their forces during the 7 October 2023 attacks and since, including with respect to hostages. They must publicly acknowledge, denounce and halt the serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law, that have been and continue to be perpetrated, and commit to non-repetition of such violations. Amnesty International also calls on Hamas, as the de facto authority in Gaza, to ensure that all those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and crimes under international law committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and since then, including with respect to hostages, are brought to justice in fair proceedings conducted by an independent and impartial judicial mechanism.

Amnesty International calls on the Israeli authorities to end violations of international law against Palestinians in the OPT and Palestinian citizens of Israel. The authorities should continue criminal investigations into the 7 October 2023 attacks, hostage-taking and seizure and holding of bodies. Where there is sufficient admissible evidence, the authorities must bring those reasonably suspected of responsibility for crimes under international law to justice. The accused should be tried in civilian courts, in open proceedings that respect international human rights law and do not apply the death penalty. The Israeli authorities should take a survivor-centred approach to pursuing justice and accountability.

Israel, Hamas – as the de facto authority in Gaza – and the authorities of the State of Palestine should all engage with, cooperate fully with and provide access to all international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms investigating or monitoring violations of international law in Israel and the OPT, including the ICC, the UN Commission of Inquiry, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory Occupied Since 1967. All parties should share with these international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms all evidence they have collected that is relevant to the investigation of such violations, including those committed by Palestinian armed groups, for the purpose of pursuing accountability and redress.

2. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 SCOPE

This report focuses on the attacks that Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups carried out in southern Israel starting on 7 October 2023 and their treatment, over the following months, of Israeli and other civilians and Israeli soldiers, whom they took into captivity on that day from southern Israel and held in the occupied Gaza Strip (Gaza). It also covers rocket and mortar fire from Gaza into Israel on 7 October 2023 and in the months that followed. It assesses the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups within the framework of international humanitarian law. It also seeks to establish whether there is sufficient evidence to support a conclusion that the conduct of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups amounts to crimes under international law and to identify crimes that were committed. The report covers the period from 7 October 2023 until 4 December 2025.

This report does not cover the policies and actions that the Israeli authorities adopted and took against Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including Gaza, following the 7 October 2023 attacks. Amnesty International has presented its extensive findings and analysis on Israel's grave violations and crimes under international law against Palestinians in other outputs, including in a report concluding that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.¹ Consequently, this report does not address in detail concerns related to Israel's arrest and detention of Palestinians accused of involvement in the 7 October 2023 attacks, including due process concerns, torture and other ill-treatment and enforced disappearance, except insofar as they are relevant for an analysis of the investigations carried out by the Israeli authorities into those attacks.

The report also does not cover repressive measures taken by the Hamas authorities against Palestinians in Gaza or military actions by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in the context of armed hostilities that endangered the lives of Palestinian civilians.²

2.2 METHODOLOGY

Amnesty International began its investigation into the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in the days immediately following 7 October 2023, initially conducting remote research and interviewing families of hostages over the phone. The organization conducted visits to affected communities and started speaking to survivors and witnesses from March 2024. It completed the bulk of the research for this report in mid-2025, but made updates to the text until 4 December 2025 to reflect later developments.

¹ See Chapter 3 "Background" for details.

² See Chapter 3 "Background" for references to Amnesty International's documentation of such concerns.

2.2.1 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Amnesty International interviewed 70 people, some of them on more than one occasion, for this report. It conducted interviews with: 17 people who survived the 7 October 2023 attacks; seven people who were either searching for their loved ones after the attacks or collecting or receiving bodies of people killed; nine family members of individuals who were killed in the attacks or taken into captivity; seven medical professionals or therapists who treated people affected by the attacks, including a psychiatrist who treated people after their release from captivity; two forensic experts who were involved in examining bodies of people killed; 25 other professionals, including lawyers representing survivors, journalists involved in investigating the attacks and the treatment of hostages or following Israeli investigations, researchers and other representatives of NGOs in Israel, and academics; and three investigators or researchers from UN entities or international NGOs. Two other individuals – both first responders – sent information to Amnesty International, including one who said he was doing military service and preferred a written exchange, and a military reservist who said she did not receive permission from her unit commander to do an interview, but shared her written testimony. Another individual, a survivor of an attack on a kibbutz, confirmed to Amnesty International a detailed account of her experience that she had provided to the media, but preferred not to be interviewed.

The 17 people interviewed who survived the attacks include: 12 survivors of the attacks on kibbutzim or moshavim (10 who were living there and two who were working or visiting there),³ two survivors of the attack on the Nova festival, two survivors of the attack on the city of Ofakim and one survivor of the attack on the city of Sderot. Three of the survivors of attacks on kibbutzim who were interviewed were taken hostage and held in Gaza. Of the survivors, 14 are Jewish Israeli citizens, one is a Bedouin citizen of Israel and two are nationals of other countries who were working in Israel.

Amnesty International carried out many of the interviews in person in Israel and the rest remotely. The interviews were generally carried out in Hebrew or English, depending on the preference of the interviewee. Amnesty International visited some of the areas affected by the 7 October 2023 attacks from March 2024, including the Nova festival site and Road 232, the kibbutzim of Be’eri and Re’im and the city of Ofakim.

Amnesty International reviewed 354 open-source videos and photographs of scenes from the 7 October 2023 attacks and of people held in captivity in Gaza. They had been posted on various social media platforms, including the official accounts or channels of armed groups, and/or published in Israeli, Palestinian or other media outlets. These videos and photographs originated from several sources, including:

- Body-worn cameras used by assailants during the attacks, some of which were removed by third parties, including Israeli authorities, from the bodies of assailants who had been killed. Some of the videos from these cameras were posted online by those third parties, while others were posted online by Palestinian armed groups.
- The cameras of mobile phones belonging to victims and survivors of the attacks. In some cases, victims and survivors documented events with videos and photographs as they unfolded. In others, assailants took the mobile phones of people they were attacking and used them to record acts of violence, subsequently uploading these videos to the victims’ social media accounts.
- The cameras of first responders to the attacks. Some of them took videos and photographs documenting the aftermath of the attacks, including damaged or destroyed homes and bodies of those killed, and then shared them on social media or directly with Amnesty International.
- Closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras providing security for homes and communities and dashboard cameras in vehicles. These also captured scenes during the attacks, providing additional perspectives on the events. Often, footage from these cameras is timestamped. Some extracts from this footage were later shared on social media.
- The cameras of Palestinians in Gaza. Some filmed the arrival of Israeli and other nationals being taken into captivity in Gaza and posted the videos on social media channels.

In addition to open-source videos and photographs, Amnesty International received and analysed several dozen images directly from survivors of the 7 October 2023 attacks and first responders.

As part of the interviews it conducted, the organization consulted two independent forensic pathologists and benefited from their expertise in analysing over 45 images.

³ Kibbutzim and moshavim are village-like communities where residents live and work communally to different extents.

Amnesty International carried out an extensive search and analysis of statements by representatives of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in relation to the 7 October 2023 attacks, rocket and mortar fire into Israel and the treatment of individuals held captive in Gaza. As part of this, the organization analysed over 25 statements by representatives of the Izz al-Din Al-Qassam (Al-Qassam) Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, other members of the Hamas leadership, and a more limited number of statements by leaders of other armed groups. Where relevant, these statements are referred to in this report.

Amnesty International monitored media reporting relating to the 7 October 2023 attacks and the treatment of individuals held captive in Gaza, as well as critiques of some of these accounts. In some instances, where Amnesty International considered there were gaps in the evidence it was able to collect, it has quoted what individuals said in the media or in public forums, such as UN meetings. It has done so only after it sought to speak to the individual but was not granted an interview or was not able to reach them (or when it came to survivors of the attacks or their family members, if it had information indicating that requesting an interview would be unwelcome), and when the individual is recorded or quoted speaking at length and in detail.

In many of these cases, Amnesty International was able to corroborate at least parts of their testimony with other information it had collected. Amnesty International has not referenced media reports in which individuals made statements that it knew or suspected to be factually incorrect. It exercised due diligence to check there was no information in the public domain that might legitimately challenge the veracity of any such individual's account or suggest they no longer stood by their initial account or how it was broadcast.

Amnesty International also relied in some instances on individuals identifying themselves or family members in the media as the victim or survivor in some of the visual evidence it analysed. In almost all of these instances, Amnesty International has also been able to complement this with their own comparison of images of the individual with those in the visual evidence under analysis.

Amnesty International reviewed an extensive set of other documentary evidence, including reports, statements and other documents issued by: Hamas, notably "Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood";⁴ the Israeli authorities and military; Israeli and Palestinian NGOs; international human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch; UN entities, in particular the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (UN Commission of Inquiry) and the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). It considered carefully the methodologies employed by these entities and the limitations expressed about their findings. It also consulted a range of reports by Israeli and other media outlets that have investigated the 7 October 2023 attacks and the situation of hostages.

2.2.2 ETHICAL AND SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH

Amnesty International sought to prioritize the well-being of victims and survivors of the attacks and their families while conducting interviews and while presenting evidence in this report. In many cases, Amnesty International had multiple conversations with survivors and family members of victims of the attacks, including an initial conversation to explain its research, what sort of questions researchers would like to ask them and what it would do with the information. After an initial discussion, several people declined to speak to the organization, for reasons discussed below. In these cases, since they did not give consent, Amnesty International did not consider that it had conducted an interview with them, meaning they are not counted in the number of interviewees mentioned above, and any information they shared during these conversations is not included in this report.

Amnesty International has withheld the identity of some interviewees to whom it refers in the report. It gave interviewees the choice of whether they wished to be identified or not and has respected the decisions by interviewees who preferred to keep their identity confidential. Interviewees had multiple reasons for requesting this. Some judged that the appearance of their names in an Amnesty International report would, in a context of distrust of international organizations, have negative repercussions for them within their communities or within their workplaces. Among them were state employees who were concerned that sharing their accounts without the permission of their employers might create problems for them. At least one did not want the victim's children to see the details of their parent's death in a report. Amnesty International has chosen to withhold the names of several other individuals who did not provide explicit consent to be named.

⁴ Hamas Media Office, "Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood", 21 January 2024, available at <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/PDF.pdf>

Many of the people Amnesty International spoke to were concerned about how they would be represented if they were quoted in the report or that such quotations might lead to sensitive information being disclosed, particularly if it contained information about people still being held hostage in Gaza. In these cases, the organization committed to interviewees that it would share a draft of the text of their testimony before publication and has only published text when they provided explicit consent to its use.

Many of the photographs and videos that Amnesty International reviewed and has referenced in this report are publicly available. Where the organization considered it ethical to do so, it has provided the public web address where the photographs and videos appear for the sake of transparency and to facilitate access to potential evidence. However, Amnesty International has refrained from including such web addresses where the image or images showed victims of the attacks who could be identified. This is because these images were taken without the victims' consent, in some instances with the apparent intention to humiliate the victim or spread fear. While some families of victims have taken the position that it is important for people to see the images of abuse or killings of their loved ones so the truth be known, others have expressed horror and sadness about the distribution of these images.⁵ As Amnesty International was not in a position to confirm with most victims or family members if they consented to images featuring abuses against them or their loved ones being further disseminated, it has withheld web addresses containing these images. Nevertheless, in an effort to balance its commitment to both transparency and victims' dignity, it has referenced where the images were found, having made every effort to identify the original source or the first available online post.

2.2.3 VERIFICATION, CORROBORATION AND ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE

Although some accounts about the 7 October 2023 attacks that were reported in the media and widely circulated have since been proven false, Amnesty International was able to verify and corroborate a substantial amount of the evidence it received. It verified open-source videos and photographs. It examined the credibility and reliability of all the individuals whose testimonies it obtained directly or indirectly. It used information from interviews to contextualize and cross-check that in videos and photographs and, likewise, corroborated some information from interviews on the basis of videos and photographs.

Amnesty International examined alternative conflicting narratives about the events of 7 October 2023. In particular, it looked at public claims made by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups and engaged with their narratives, as well as seeking their response to its findings.⁶ It has reflected this engagement in the text.

Amnesty International was able to verify 230 of the videos and photographs it collected. The organization uses a range of discovery, collection, organization, preservation, digital analysis and verification methods.

In accordance with its standard methodology, the organization began its research process with the discovery and collection of relevant visual content. The organization conducted extensive online searches on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, X and YouTube. Palestinian armed groups used their official channels on Telegram to post videos, photographs and statements, as did first responders and others. The organization made every effort to find and reference the original source of a video or photograph by tracing where it was first posted. In many cases in this report, it has referenced the original source. In other cases, where the original source was no longer available at the time of the research, it has referenced the first source it could find in which the video or photograph was posted.

The organization then organized, catalogued and preserved all evidence, both for immediate research and for future accountability and justice mechanisms. All videos and photographs referenced in this report are available upon request. After this, the organization subjected each video and photograph to a series of verification procedures.

As a preliminary step, it used reverse image and video search tools to determine whether the material had appeared online before 7 October 2023 and whether it could be misattributed or linked to other contexts. All of the videos and photographs referenced in this report were first posted on or after 7 October 2023.

⁵ For example, on the one hand, the father of Shani Louk, a woman who was killed during the 7 October 2023 attacks, is reported to have said that it was good that a photograph of her body being transported in Gaza by fighters on a truck had won a prize because it would provide a lasting record of the event. Ynet, "AP photographer who took pictures of Oct. 7 massacre wins prestigious photography award", 27 March 2024, <https://www.ynetnews.com/culture/article/s1q11211z1c>; on the other hand, the father of Joshua Mollel, a Tanzanian national who was killed during the attacks, is reported to have said he wished the videos of his son being killed would be deleted from social media and that no one would watch them. Haaretz, "A Tanzanian father journeys to Israel to seek answers for his son's killing on Oct. 7", 1 January 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-01-01/ty-article-magazine/premium/a-tanzanian-father-journeys-to-israel-to-see-answers-for-his-sons-killing-on-oct-7/0000018c-c516-d4e1-ad8f-fdb7243a0000>

⁶ See section 2.2.7 "Engagement with Hamas and Israeli authorities".

It then sought to determine where a video or photograph had been taken, a verification procedure known as geolocation. It did so by cross-referencing the footage with satellite imagery, ground-level photography and other publicly available information. It looked at any landmarks, terrain, building architecture, street signs or trees that were visible and checked if they matched street views or other photographs from a known location. In most cases, it was able to geolocate the videos and photographs referenced in this report. Where this was not possible, Amnesty International has noted in the text that it could not independently determine where the video or photograph was taken.

Amnesty International also sought to determine when a video was taken, a verification procedure known as chrono-location. For this report, where many events took place over the course of 48 hours, the organization made every effort to verify the sequence of events as documented by the available digital evidence. They noted any timestamps on the video or photograph and, where visible, analysed the position of the sun and measured angles of shadows from objects in the images. In some cases in this report, the organization was able to establish the specific time at which a video or photograph was taken, particularly when a video contained a timestamp that could be confirmed by shadow analysis. In other cases, it was able to estimate the time, based on analysis of the position of the sun and shadows. In still other cases, the quality of the video or photograph did not allow for an estimate of the time. Amnesty International has noted these conclusions in the text.

The organization also conducted content analysis of videos and photographs. This is critical for establishing the context and actors involved in such evidence. It examined details relating to assailants such as the type of clothing they wore, including military-style trousers and tops, headbands and other items bearing insignia, and the type of weapons they used or carried, as well as analysing the languages, dialects and accents in which they spoke.⁷ The organization also contextualized and cross-checked videos and photographs with information from interviews.

2.2.4 ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Amnesty International sought, wherever possible, to identify the affiliation, if any, of those committing acts documented in this report.

In some cases, it was able to identify people as belonging to a named armed group or, more specifically, an armed group's military wing. It did so when it assessed, in videos or photographs it had verified, that the individuals concerned were wearing clothing consistent with that worn by fighters of armed groups (for example, green, khaki or camouflage-coloured military-style clothing and tactical vests) and that additional visual clues indicated affiliation to a specific group. It primarily used the following visual clues to attribute responsibility to specific armed groups:

- the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas: green or white headbands bearing the Arabic name of the group in, respectively, white or green and related insignia;
- the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad: black headbands bearing the Arabic name of the group in yellow and related insignia;
- the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement: yellow or white headbands bearing the Arabic name of the group in black and related insignia;
- the Martyr Abu Ali Mustapha Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine: red headbands bearing the Arabic name of the group in white and related insignia;
- the National Resistance Brigades or Omar Al-Qasem Forces, the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine: red headbands bearing the Arabic name of the group in white and related insignia.

In many cases, members of the armed groups or their accomplices were carrying weapons, such as rifles or rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs).

In some cases, other visual clues were available, such as the fact that the fighters were seen in footage bearing the logo of the military wing of a specific armed group. However, Amnesty International did not rely on this element alone in attributing affiliation.

⁷ See section 2.2.4 "Attribution of responsibility".



↑ These two video stills show examples of assailants whom Amnesty International identified as fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. Both fighters are wearing military-style clothing. The fighter in the first still (on the left) is carrying a rifle. He is wearing a green headband bearing the Arabic name of the Al-Qassam Brigades in white and related insignia on it (this is clearer in the video). The video also bears a logo related to the group reading “resistance revolution”. The fighter in the foreground of the second still (on the right) wears a tactical vest with a patch displaying the Palestinian flag. He is wearing a white headband bearing the Arabic name of the Al-Qassam Brigades in green and related writing on it (this is clearer in the video). In the background are other armed fighters, including one fighter with a visible green headband bearing markings in white.



↑ These two video stills show examples of where Amnesty International identified the presence of specific Palestinian armed groups in attacks on particular locations. The presence of the Al-Quds Brigades at a military base is identifiable in the first still (on the left) on the basis of the black headband left on the vehicle visible in the image. The headband bears the Arabic name of the group in yellow, as well as related insignia. The still bears the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Quds Brigades. The presence of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades is identifiable in the second still (on the right) on the basis of the yellow headband bearing the Arabic name of the group in black, as well as related insignia. The video bears the logo of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, although it is not visible in this still.

Amnesty International has referred to people as “fighters” where they are seen in images or reported in testimony to be wearing clothing consistent with that worn by fighters of Palestinian armed groups (for example, green, khaki or camouflage-coloured military-style clothing and tactical vests), but where there are no indicators of affiliation to a specific armed group. Amnesty International has referred to these individuals as “Palestinian fighters” when a Palestinian flag is visible on their clothing or when they are heard speaking in the Palestinian dialect of Arabic. In most cases, these “fighters” or “Palestinian fighters” were accompanied by others in similar clothing, were carrying weapons such as rifles or RPGs and/or were with

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

others carrying such weapons. In some cases, interviewees told Amnesty International they observed a command relationship between fighters in the same group, whereby one individual in the group gave orders that others appeared to implement.

Amnesty International has referred to assailants wearing civilian clothing simply as that (“assailants in civilian clothing”), unless they were carrying weapons, in which case they are referred to as “armed men” (Amnesty International did not see any images of women carrying weapons). In either case, the assailants may have been either civilians unaffiliated to an armed group, even if they had a weapon, or members of Palestinian armed groups not wearing military-style clothing. Without further information, Amnesty International was unable to make a clear determination.

In several instances where Amnesty International documented abuses, the perpetrators could not be seen in enough detail to determine their likely affiliation, if any. In other instances, bad quality footage, distance from the camera or intentional blurring of images when released by Palestinian armed groups meant that any markers of affiliation, if worn, were not visible. Several people with whom researchers spoke did not remember enough details to allow Amnesty International to determine the affiliation, if any, of the assailants referred to.

With regard to the holding and treatment of hostages, Amnesty International relied on several sources to identify the affiliation of individuals responsible for documented acts. This included videos released by armed groups showing persons in captivity and statements by armed groups on this subject. It also considered statements by returned hostages. Many identified the affiliation of those who seized or held them through interactions with their captors. For example, one returned hostage told Amnesty International that the people holding her were members of Hamas based on her conversations with her guards, who described why they joined Hamas and their role in the organization.

2.2.5 INVESTIGATING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In seeking to collect information on sexual violence from a broad range of sources, Amnesty International worked in line with guidance set out in the International Protocol on Documenting Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information About Systematic and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (Murad Code), which sets out a survivor-centred approach to documenting sexual violence.⁸ Both recognize the value of testimony by first responders, medical professionals and therapists, among others, in sexual violence investigations, or in relying on pre-existing statements made by survivors where possible as an alternative to re-interviewing them.⁹

Following reports of sexual violence perpetrated during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages, Amnesty International dedicated significant time, resources and expertise to seek to speak to relevant sources and collect information about sexual violence. It sought information about sexual violence when speaking to all victims, survivors, witnesses, first responders and medical and legal professionals about the 7 October 2023 attacks or treatment of hostages. It also made at least 20 requests, directly or through intermediaries, to speak to named individuals who were believed to have information about sexual violence because, for example, they had spoken to the media or were referenced in reports by Israeli civil society groups as survivors or witnesses of sexual violence or had reportedly seen bodies with signs indicating sexual violence or treated survivors of such violence. It also spoke to 20 Israeli feminist academics and activists, lawyers, NGO officials, service providers, journalists and film-makers for information about sexual violence and/or to request connections to individuals with first-hand information about sexual violence and sought but was unable to speak to five others.

⁸ International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2nd edition, March 2017, https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/report/international-protocol-on-the-documentation-and-investigation-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict/International_Protocol_2017_2nd_Edition.pdf; and Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information About Systematic and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (Murad Code), 13 April 2022, <https://www.muradcode.com/murad-code>

⁹ The International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict sets out the variety of witnesses who can have information about sexual violence that is relevant for investigation and analysis, including survivors of sexual violence, direct witnesses, service providers and relief workers who witnessed or have knowledge of the attacks through, for example, treating the victim after the incident. It also refers to doctors, nurses, counsellors and local leaders as possible pattern witnesses. International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict (previously cited), p. 147. The Murad Code states: “We recognise that finding alternative sources [to interviewing survivors themselves] removes the potential risks to survivors, those around them and to ourselves, of gathering such information directly from survivors, takes the pressure off survivors and provides more space for them to choose to participate or not.” Murad Code (previously cited), Principle 4.3. The Murad Code also encourages individuals gathering information on sexual violence to consider alternatives to gathering information directly from survivors, including using prior statements as an option or as an alternative to re-interviewing them. Murad Code (previously cited), Principle 4.8.

Amnesty International spoke to one individual who said they were subjected to sexual violence during the attacks, six professionals who said they provided services to victims and witnesses of sexual violence and six other people who said they saw bodies they thought may have been subjected to sexual violence. It has presented all of these accounts in this report, except in three cases where the witness reported seeing bodies because it found the account not to be credible or reliable. Other people it sought to interview did not agree to speak to the organization or could not be reached. Amnesty International reviewed recordings of statements made in the public domain by people describing being subjected to sexual violence during the 7 October 2023 attacks or while held hostage, and, in two cases, reviewed references in the media to named therapists or medical professionals reported to have said the survivor had previously disclosed the sexual violence to them.

Amnesty International also scrutinized all of the videos and photographs it collected for signs of sexual violence. It received and reviewed some 20 images that were specifically identified by people it spoke to as indicating, or possibly indicating, sexual violence. It considered multiple factors in assessing whether those images indeed indicated that they might have been subjected to sexual violence. It considered the location and time at which images of the body were recorded and reviewed other available images to judge if the body had likely been moved. It also discussed all of these images with one or two independent forensic pathologists. In most cases, it concluded that the image did not have evidential value, for reasons set out below, and in such cases, it has not referenced the image in the report.

As mentioned below, Amnesty International sought information from the Israeli government and military on its investigations into the attacks of 7 October 2023, including information on any physical evidence that was collected. It did not receive responses to its requests. It also tried, but was unable, to obtain any information about the legal status and access to legal counsel of the three Palestinian detainees who were recorded as “confessing” to committing rape during the 7 October 2023 attacks.

2.2.6 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Amnesty International faced numerous challenges to its investigation into the attacks of 7 October 2023 and the treatment of people taken hostage, many of which were also reported by other organizations carrying out human rights investigations on the same issues.

GENERAL CHALLENGES

Many of the victims of the actions of Palestinian armed groups within the scope of this report were killed and therefore cannot bear witness to what happened to them. Many surviving victims, witnesses, first responders, experts and others declined to speak to Amnesty International. The majority of victims and witnesses whom Amnesty International requested to interview (at least 45) declined to speak to the organization. This included people contacted directly or through intermediaries. Lawyers, NGO officials and others in direct contact with survivors and witnesses often declined to introduce Amnesty International to their clients or advised their clients against speaking to the organization. Where survivors and witnesses did agree to speak to Amnesty International, they often chose not to connect researchers to other people they knew who had relevant information, as they feared these people would not appreciate the request.

The reasons given as to why victims, survivors and witnesses did not want to speak to Amnesty International were various. Some said they were experiencing ongoing trauma or, conversely, as time passed, wanted to be able to move on from their trauma and rebuild their lives. Some had already spoken to the media multiple times and did not wish to repeat their account again; some specifically requested that Amnesty International review information they had already shared in the public domain. Some expressed distrust of international human rights organizations. Some former hostages still had loved ones held hostage at the time Amnesty International approached them and were afraid that anything they said could put their loved ones at risk. They described an impossible process of trying to weigh the benefits and risks of speaking to an international organization. Some former hostages were also hesitant to speak in case they inadvertently shared sensitive security information.

Amnesty International’s investigation was further challenged by the fact that the Israeli authorities collected limited forensic evidence after the attacks,¹⁰ and refused to share the information they did have or to give state employees authorization to speak to Amnesty International researchers. While the bodies of deceased hostages returned to Israel were given a forensic examination, Amnesty International was unable to obtain copies of the resulting reports. In some cases, family members preferred not to share them. In other cases, Amnesty International was unable to reach the families concerned. Forensic experts could not provide the

¹⁰ See Chapter 9 “Investigations” for details.

reports without the consent of the families. In any case, the bodies were generally of individuals who had been deceased for many months and forensic experts consulted by Amnesty International indicated that the elapse of time limited the forensic information they were able to obtain.

As noted in detail below, Amnesty International sought but did not receive the cooperation of the Israeli authorities and military for the purposes of this investigation. In the circumstances, it has referred to several reports mentioning information provided by the Israeli authorities. In relation to sexual violence in particular, it has referred to information documented by the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, which was given access to material not shared with Amnesty International.¹¹

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES TO INVESTIGATING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Amnesty International faced a number of additional challenges to its efforts to document sexual violence. Most people who described surviving or witnessing sexual violence to media outlets, medical professionals, therapists, lawyers or others, and whom Amnesty International was able to contact, declined to speak to the organization. The general reasons presented above for why people preferred not to speak to Amnesty International applied and appeared to be compounded by additional factors, including the stigma often associated with sexual violence and the intensity of the media coverage of reports of sexual violence on 7 October 2023.¹² Campaigning by Israeli feminist groups criticizing international bodies for failing to condemn sexual violence may also have exacerbated distrust of international human rights organizations on this issue.¹³

Other sources of information or evidence were also unavailable or limited. The available visual evidence does not depict acts of rape being perpetrated.¹⁴ At the same time, it only captures a small fraction of the violence perpetrated during the attacks. While some assailants used body-worn cameras, many did not, and not all of the images were made publicly available. Amnesty International also considers that sexual violence, including rape, may be less likely to surface in visual evidence than some other abuses for multiple reasons, including the fact that assailants may be less inclined to film such acts.

Other relevant visual evidence – including photographs or videos of bodies of people killed or captured with signs that could indicate sexual violence because of the nature of apparent injuries, unexplained missing clothing and/or the position of the body – is generally low-quality, blurred and inconclusive. Amnesty International consulted with independent forensic pathologists regarding the conclusions that could be drawn.¹⁵

The Israeli authorities collected limited forensic evidence following the 7 October 2023 attacks.¹⁶ There are many conflicts globally where forensic evidence is not collected and this is not a requirement to make findings regarding sexual violence.¹⁷ However, the fact that the Israeli authorities collected limited such

¹¹ See Chapter 7 “Physical, sexual and psychological abuse”.

¹² A few people said, for example, that they had already spoken to the media multiple times on this issue and did not want to give their account again. Amnesty International was told about some people who had reportedly been overwhelmed by requests from the media on this topic while they were still recovering from their own trauma from the attacks.

¹³ Several people said they did not want to speak to Amnesty International due to a lack of trust in international human rights organizations. Israeli officials and some Israeli NGOs had criticized international organizations for not speaking out on sexual violence. See Ms. Magazine, “A violent denial: Combating silence around Hamas’ sexual violence and preventing future war crimes”, 25 May 2024, <https://msmagazine.com/2024/05/23/hamas-war-crimes-rape-israeli-women>; London Review of Books, “What they did to our women: Azadeh Moaveni on sexual violence in wartime”, 9 May 2024, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v46/n09/azadeh-moaveni/what-they-did-to-our-women>

¹⁴ The same conclusion was reached by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), which also had access to video evidence held by some Israeli institutions. SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report: Official Visit of the Office of the SRSG-SVC to Israel and the Occupied West Bank – 29 January – 14 February 2024*, 4 March 2024, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf>, para. 74.

¹⁵ One independent forensic pathologist consulted by Amnesty International confirmed the difficulties in making conclusions in relation to the images it analysed of bodies of people killed with missing or displaced clothing, or signs of injuries to the crotch. For example, victims may not have been fully clothed when attacked; they may have been dressed minimally while at a party or while sleeping just prior to the attacks. Their clothing may have been burnt away or torn during their efforts to escape. First responders or security forces may have displaced or removed clothing to administer emergency medical treatment or to check the body for booby traps. Clothing may have come loose or otherwise been disturbed if the body was moved, particularly if it was dragged. Blood seen in the crotch may have originated from wounds to other areas of the body, apparent knife wounds to sexual organs may have been caused by tangential or otherwise atypical gunshots and gunshot injuries to sexual organs may not necessarily result from direct targeting of these body parts. Burning apparently focused on the genital region could be explained by the presence of clothes acting as a wick and concentrating the fire in this area. Oral communication with Derrick Pounder, independent forensic pathologist, 30 August 2024. The SRSG-SVC also identified several erroneous interpretations of the state of bodies by some volunteer first responders. SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 47.

¹⁶ See Chapter 9 “Investigations” for details.

¹⁷ The SRSG-SVC has noted that forensic evidence is not necessary to make findings of sexual violence. SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 47, fn. 12. Indeed, even where forensic evidence is collected in accordance with the highest standards, in peacetime contexts, sexual assaults cannot always be detected.

evidence following 7 October 2023 has meant that evidence that could have informed an investigation into sexual violence during the attacks is not available. The Israeli authorities' refusal to cooperate with Amnesty International also extended to and negatively affected investigations around sexual violence.¹⁸

2.2.7 ENGAGEMENT WITH HAMAS AND ISRAELI AUTHORITIES

Amnesty International wrote to Basem Naim, head of Hamas's Political and International Relations Department, on 20 June 2025, setting out the findings of this report, asking for any comments on them and requesting responses to additional questions. It had not received a response as of 4 December 2025.

Amnesty International also sought information and cooperation from the Israeli authorities and military for the purposes of this investigation. It made requests to various ministries, and wrote formally to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Spokesperson's Unit on 17 July 2024,¹⁹ the Ministry of Health on 22 July 2024,²⁰ the Israel Police Spokesperson's Unit on 23 July 2024,²¹ and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 8 October 2024.²² The letters made a range of requests, including to speak to key people with information Amnesty International believed would help its investigation into the attacks, and to access relevant information or evidence. Amnesty International also sent numerous follow-up communications by email or over instant messaging services in relation to the letters sent. The requests were either refused or ignored, or, in one case, redirected to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which then did not respond.

2.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Amnesty International is deeply grateful to all those who participated in, and assisted with, the research and provided information. In particular, it would like to thank all Israelis and other nationals who shared their experiences in the midst of grief and trauma or anxiety about the fate of loved ones.

Amnesty International also extends its appreciation to consultants who have supported the gathering of evidence and interviews in Israel and remotely, and independent forensic pathologists who provided their analysis.

¹⁸ In its request to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, on 8 October 2024, Amnesty International asked for access to the photographs and videos apparently shared by the Israeli authorities with the SRSG-SVC. It received no response.

¹⁹ Email to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Spokesperson's Unit sent on 17 July 2024. In the email, Amnesty International requested: interviews with a number of named military personnel whose testimonies relating to sexual violence appeared in the media; interviews with additional military personnel who witnessed injuries or evidence of injuries during the attacks or immediately after it; a viewing of two videos produced by the Israeli military, one showing the 7 October 2023 attacks and injuries to Israeli civilians, the second showing testimonies of hostages after their release; copies of documents produced by armed groups that participated in the 7 October 2023 attacks and were captured by the Israeli military. Despite multiple follow-up phone calls in July and August 2024, none of the requests were granted.

²⁰ Letter to the Israeli Ministry of Health dated and sent by email on 22 July 2024. In the letter, Amnesty International requested to speak to several named individuals, including one individual who had indicated a willingness to speak to the organization if the requisite permissions were obtained. After follow-up communications and a subsequent narrower request to ask the Ministry of Health spokesperson a few specific questions to corroborate other information received, the spokesperson told Amnesty International on 3 September 2024 that all such correspondence had to go through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

²¹ Email to the Israel Police Spokesperson's Unit sent on 23 July 2024. In the email, Amnesty International requested a meeting to share and receive information about their investigations, to which they replied saying they were unavailable "at this time" on 24 July 2024. Amnesty International responded that it remained interested in meeting at their earliest convenience on 29 July 2024, but received no further response.

²² Letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson dated and sent on 8 October 2024. In the letter, Amnesty International requested, among other things, access to any digital material relevant to its investigation on sexual violence, such as that which had been shared with the SRSG-SVC. It also referenced the requests for information shared with the police, military and Ministry of Health and asked for assistance with these requests. No response was received. Previous efforts made to request a viewing of the two videos produced by the Israeli military, one showing the 7 October 2023 attacks and injuries to Israeli civilians, the second showing testimonies of hostages after their release, were unsuccessful.

3. BACKGROUND

The 7 October 2023 attacks by the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, and other Palestinian armed groups occurred in the context of Israel's illegal occupation of the OPT and its imposition of a system of apartheid on Palestinians in Israel and the OPT, including an illegal blockade on the occupied Gaza Strip that began in 2007. In the wake of the 7 October 2023 attacks, Israel has waged a devastating offensive on Gaza, within which it has committed genocide against Palestinians, and increased settlement expansion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as attacks on and the forcible displacement of Palestinians living there.

Hamas has a history of violating human rights and international humanitarian law, including committing war crimes in the context of hostilities with Israel. Through its de facto governance of Gaza since 2007, it has also imposed severe restrictions on Palestinians' civil and political rights and endangered Palestinian civilians there during armed hostilities.

Amnesty International's presentation of this context, particularly the long-standing and widespread violations and crimes under international law perpetrated by Israel against Palestinians, does not seek in any way to justify attacks against civilians or other crimes under international law perpetrated by Palestinian armed groups. Violations of international law by one party to a conflict can never justify violations by another. However, factual background information is important to understand the context in which the attacks of 7 October 2023 were planned and carried out, and to make recommendations to end a long cycle of impunity for crimes under international law in Israel and the OPT.

3.1 SITUATION BEFORE 7 OCTOBER 2023

Amnesty International has documented extensively its concerns relating to the actions of both Israel and Hamas. For decades, Israel has committed grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the OPT with impunity. It has done so in the context of its unlawful occupation of the OPT, comprising Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, an occupation which it has maintained since 1967.²³ In July 2024, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion stating that Israel's occupation of the OPT is a clear violation of international law and must be rapidly brought to an end.²⁴

Israel has also adopted repressive and discriminatory laws, policies and practices that amount to a system of apartheid against Palestinians in the OPT, as well as on all other Palestinians whose rights it controls, including Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinian refugees. Israel enforces this system to establish and maintain Jewish demographic hegemony and control over land and resources while minimizing Palestinian presence. Israeli policies and actions fragment and segregate Palestinians into separate domains of oppression and control on account of their Palestinian identity and national status, while allowing unlawful

²³ Amnesty International, "Israel must end its occupation of Palestine to stop fuelling apartheid and systematic human rights violations", 19 February 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-must-end-its-occupation-of-palestine-to-stop-fuelling-apartheid-and-systematic-human-rights-violations>

²⁴ International Court of Justice (ICJ), Legal Consequences Arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, advisory opinion, 19 July 2024. See also Amnesty International, "ICJ opinion declaring Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories unlawful is historic vindication of Palestinians' rights", 19 July 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/icj-opinion-declaring-israels-occupation-of-palestinian-territories-unlawful-is-historic-vindication-of-palestinians-rights>

mass confiscation and exploitation of their resources for the construction and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT for the exclusive use of Jewish Israeli citizens.²⁵

In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew its ground troops from Gaza as part of a policy it termed “disengagement”. It retained, however, key aspects of effective control over Gaza, including sole control over its territorial waters, airspace and the inward and outward movement of people or goods via land, air and sea. Israel has also continued to control the supply of electricity, water and access to telecommunications in Gaza, while also controlling Gaza’s population registry. As a result, Gaza continues to be occupied under international law.

In June 2007, infighting between the two main Palestinian political groups, Hamas and Fatah, in the wake of Hamas’s victory as a political party in parliamentary elections in 2006, led to Hamas’s violent takeover of Gaza. Fatah and Hamas gunmen unlawfully killed and maimed captured rivals and hostages and used indiscriminate and reckless fire in and around residential neighbourhoods.²⁶ Hamas ousted from Gaza forces loyal to Fatah, while the then Fatah-led Palestinian Authority suspended the administration of official institutions in Gaza. Hamas subsequently established a parallel security and law enforcement apparatus, and has acted since as the de facto government in Gaza, and adopted retaliatory measures against former employees and supporters of the then Palestinian Authority.²⁷

In response, in September 2007, Israel declared Gaza a “hostile territory”, citing security concerns, and imposed an air, land and sea blockade, increasing the level of severity of the restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza to Israel and, by extension, to the West Bank.²⁸ While Israel claimed that its sanctions were aimed at the “Hamas regime”, and that “humanitarian aspects relevant to the Gaza Strip” would be taken into consideration in order to “avoid a humanitarian crisis”, they were, in fact, collectively punishing Gaza’s entire civilian population.²⁹

In 2008-2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021, Israel conducted four major military offensives on Gaza that killed at least 2,700 Palestinian civilians, injured and displaced tens of thousands of others, and caused widespread damage and destruction to civilian property and critical infrastructure. In August 2022 and May 2023, Israeli forces launched two lower-scale offensives directed at Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In all these offensives, Amnesty International documented a pattern of unlawful attacks by Israeli forces against civilians and civilian objects, including direct and indiscriminate attacks, failure to provide effective warning to civilians and wanton destruction of civilian property not justified by military necessity. In 2018-2019, Amnesty International also documented a pattern of unlawful killings and the intentional infliction of serious injuries by Israeli forces in the context of mass protests by Palestinians in Gaza, which became known as the “Great March of Return”. The Israeli authorities have failed to conduct an independent, effective and transparent investigation into violations of international law, including possible war crimes.³⁰

Impunity has also persisted for serious violations of international humanitarian law, including possible war crimes, perpetrated by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups during these armed conflicts with Israel, in a pattern documented by Amnesty International since 2006. Palestinian armed groups fired thousands of unguided rockets and mortars, which are inherently inaccurate, towards populated areas in Israel, killing and injuring hundreds of civilians, including Jewish Israelis, Palestinian citizens of Israel and migrant workers.³¹ Amnesty International has also documented several incidents over the years in which rockets launched by Palestinian armed groups that misfired killed Palestinian civilians, including children, in Gaza. In May 2023, for example, the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and smaller armed groups, fired hundreds of indiscriminate rockets towards Israeli towns, killing two civilians in Israel and three

²⁵ Amnesty International, *Israel’s Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity* (Index: MDE 15/5141/2022), 1 February 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en>

²⁶ Amnesty International, *Occupied Palestinian Territories: Torn Apart by Factional Strife* (Index: MDE 21/020/2007), October 2007, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde21/020/2007/en>

²⁷ Amnesty International, *Israel’s Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity* (previously cited), p. 42.

²⁸ Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Behind the headlines: Israel designates Gaza a ‘hostile territory’”, 24 September 2007, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/behind-the-headlines-israel-designates-gaza-a-hostile-territory>

²⁹ Amnesty International, *‘You Feel Like You Are Subhuman’: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza* (Index: MDE 15/8668/2024), 5 December 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8668/2024/en>, pp. 50-53.

³⁰ Amnesty International, *‘You Feel Like You Are Subhuman’: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza* (previously cited), pp. 53-56.

³¹ See, for example, Human Rights Watch, *Rockets from Gaza: Harm to Civilians from Palestinian Armed Groups’ Rocket Attacks*, 6 August 2009, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/08/06/rockets-gaza/harm-civilians-palestinian-armed-groups-rocket-attacks>; Amnesty International, *Unlawful and Deadly: Rocket and Mortar Attacks by Palestinian Armed Groups During the 2014 Gaza/Israel Conflict* (Index: MDE 21/1178/2015), 26 March 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde21/1178/2015/en>; Human Rights Watch, “Palestinian rockets in May killed civilians in Israel, Gaza”, 12 August 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/12/palestinian-rockets-may-killed-civilians-israel-gaza>; Amnesty International, *‘They Were Just Kids’: Evidence of War Crimes During Israel’s August 2022 Gaza Offensive* (Index: 15/6079/2022), 25 October 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/6079/2022/en>

Palestinian civilians in Gaza, including two children.³² Hamas forces also carried out abductions, torture and summary and extrajudicial executions, some of which amounted to war crimes, against Palestinians whom they accused of collaborating with Israel.³³

Outside these armed conflicts, air strikes and artillery shelling on Gaza by Israel and indiscriminate rocket attacks by Palestinian armed groups have occurred frequently since 2001, although there have been significant periods during which no projectiles were launched.³⁴ The range of the rockets they have fired has increased over time, from a few kilometres in the first years to R-160 rockets with a range of 160km by 2014.

The Hamas authorities in Gaza have praised the killings of Israeli civilians by Palestinian assailants. Between March and April 2022, for example, attacks by armed Palestinian individuals killed 18 people in cities and towns across Israel. While the attackers appeared to have no direct affiliation with Palestinian armed groups, Hamas leaders in Gaza praised them.³⁵ Hamas leaders have also made public calls for Palestinians to attack Israelis. On 30 April 2022, Yahya Sinwar, then head of Hamas in Gaza, called on Palestinians to use any means available to attack Israelis.³⁶ His call reportedly contributed to attacks carried out afterwards.³⁷

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups previously held Israeli civilians and soldiers hostage, and withheld the bodies of hostages, in order to force the Israeli authorities to release Palestinian detainees in exchange.³⁸ On several occasions prior to the 7 October 2023 attacks, Hamas seized Israeli civilians and soldiers and held them as hostages to pressure Israeli authorities into signing a prisoner exchange deal. They systematically denied these hostages access to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or communication with the outside world. Avera Mangistu, a Jewish Israeli, and Hisham al-Sayed, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, went missing after crossing into Gaza in 2014 and 2015, respectively, and were held hostage by the Al-Qassam Brigades.³⁹ Avera and Hisham were both released in February 2025,⁴⁰ in the framework of a broader deal between Israel and Hamas.⁴¹

Hamas held Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit hostage for over five years after Palestinian fighters captured him in a cross-border raid in June 2006. It released him in October 2011 in exchange for 1,027 Palestinian prisoners.⁴² It seized and held for over 10 years the bodies of two other Israeli soldiers, Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul, who were killed during military operations in Gaza in 2014. The body of Oron Shaul was recovered by Israeli forces during a military operation in January 2025.⁴³ The body of Hadar Goldin was returned to Israel in November 2025 as part of a hostage-prisoner exchange.⁴⁴

Israel has also held the bodies of Palestinians as bargaining chips in a practice dating back to the 1960s. In recent years, it has institutionalized this policy following a government decision that the Israeli Supreme

³² Amnesty International, "Palestine (State of)", *The State of the World's Human Rights*, April 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/7200/2024/en>

³³ Amnesty International, "Strangling Necks: Abductions, Torture and Summary Killings of Palestinians by Hamas Forces During the 2014 Gaza/Israel Conflict (Index: MDE 21/1643/2015)", 27 May 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde21/1643/2015/en>

³⁴ See, for example, IDF, "Rocket Attacks on Israel From Gaza", 2001-2014, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140804022213/http://www.idfblog.com/facts-figures/rocket-attacks-toward-israel>

³⁵ Amnesty International, "Palestine (State of)", *The State of the World's Human Rights*, March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/5670/2023/en>

Amnesty International documented a similar pattern in 2015. Amnesty International, "Palestine (State of)", *The State of the World's Human Rights*, February 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/2552/2016/en>

³⁶ MEMRI, "Hamas Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar", 30 April 2022, <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-leader-gaza-yahya-sinwar-defend-aqsa-opening-salvo-lone-wolf-attacks-prepare-guns-knives>

³⁷ Amnesty International, "Palestine (State of)", *The State of the World's Human Rights*, March 2023 (previously cited).

³⁸ The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, "A history of hostage and prisoner swaps in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", 10 October 2023, <https://globalaffairs.org/commentary-and-analysis/blogs/history-hostage-and-prisoner-swaps-israeli-palestinian-conflict>; Sky News, "Israel's long history of hostage negotiations – and how it's dealt with them in the past", 27 February 2025, <https://news.sky.com/story/israels-long-history-of-hostage-negotiations-and-how-its-dealt-with-them-in-the-past-12986095>

³⁹ Amnesty International, "Israeli civilians abducted for more than 2 years" (Index: MDE 15/6460/2017), 31 July 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/6460/2017/en>

⁴⁰ Haaretz, "October 7 brought Avera back. I don't think he would have come back any other way", 23 February 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-23/ty-article-magazine/.premium/october-7-brought-avera-back-i-dont-think-he-would-have-come-back-any-other-way/00000195-339b-d09e-a3ff-779b0cf70000>

⁴¹ Haaretz, "After 10 years, longest-held Israeli hostages due to come home as part of Gaza agreement", 16 January 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-01-16/ty-article/.premium/after-10-years-longest-held-israeli-hostages-due-to-come-home/00000194-6b97-d876-affe-7fbfe5570000>

⁴² Amnesty International, "Israel-Hamas prisoner swap casts harsh light on detention practices of all sides" (Index: PRE 01/524/2011), 18 October 2011, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pre01/524/2011/en>

⁴³ Times of Israel, "Body of soldier Oron Shaul, killed and captured by Hamas in 2014, recovered from Gaza", 19 January 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/body-of-soldier-aron-shaul-killed-and-captured-by-hamas-in-2014-recovered-from-gaza>

⁴⁴ Haaretz, "Body of Hadar Goldin, IDF soldier killed and abducted over 11 years ago, returned to Israel", 9 November 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-11-09/ty-article/.premium/hamas-says-it-will-return-hadar-goldins-body-idf-officer-killed-held-in-gaza-since-2014/0000019a-6823-dd4f-a9db-6aa315ac0000>

Court approved in 2019.⁴⁵ The court ruled that it was constitutional for the Israeli military to hold the bodies of deceased Palestinians, regardless of their political affiliation and regardless of whether they had carried out a deadly attack or not, in order to compel Hamas to release hostages.⁴⁶

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have enjoyed impunity for the serious violations of international humanitarian law they have committed in the hostilities with Israel, including possible war crimes. The Hamas authorities have consistently failed to carry out any sort of investigation into serious violations committed by its forces and other Palestinian armed groups during previous conflicts with Israel.⁴⁷ Amnesty International is not aware of the existence of any independent body in Gaza tasked with investigating such violations and holding alleged perpetrators to account.

In addition to violations of international humanitarian law in its conduct of hostilities against Israel, Hamas entrenched its rule over Palestinians in Gaza by imposing severe restrictions on freedom of association, expression and assembly, and arbitrarily detaining and torturing dissidents.⁴⁸ In 2019, for example, Hamas security forces violently cracked down on peaceful Palestinian protesters, activists, human rights workers (including an Amnesty International research consultant) and local journalists. Hundreds of protesters were subjected to beatings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture and other forms of ill-treatment after Palestinians took to the streets across Gaza to protest against the rising cost of living and deteriorating economic conditions under the Hamas administration.⁴⁹ The Hamas authorities continued to carry out the death penalty in Gaza, despite a moratorium imposed by the State of Palestine since 2005.⁵⁰ The death sentences, issued by courts in Gaza mostly for alleged crimes of “collaboration” and murder, were often reached in proceedings that failed to comply with even the minimal standards of due process and fair trial, and without the ratification of the Palestinian President, as required by Palestinian law.

3.2 ISRAEL’S OFFENSIVE

In the wake of the 7 October 2023 attacks, Israel embarked on a military offensive on Gaza unprecedented in magnitude, scale and duration, and intensified its illegal blockade on this part of the OPT. Meanwhile, there were instances where Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups endangered Palestinian civilians inside Gaza by launching rockets towards Israel from or near civilian areas or by locating fighters and military targets in or near densely populated civilian areas. Israel has also increased settlement expansion and attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank.

In its offensive, Israel carried out relentless aerial and ground attacks, many of them with large explosive weapons, which caused massive damage and flattened entire neighbourhoods and cities across Gaza, along with their life-supporting infrastructure, such as hospitals and other medical facilities, along with agricultural land, and cultural and religious sites and symbols deeply engrained in Palestinians’ collective memory.

Israel’s military offensive has killed and injured over 240,000 Palestinians, many of them in direct attacks on civilians or indiscriminate attacks, often wiping out entire multigenerational families. Between 7 October 2023 and 3 December 2025, more than 70,000 people were killed, according to the Gaza-based Ministry of Health; the vast majority of them were civilians. The Ministry of Health also reported that over 170,000

⁴⁵ Jerusalem Legal Aid Center (JLAC), *Warmth of Our Sons: Necropolitics, Memory and the Palestinian Quest for Closure*, <https://www.jlac.ps/en/Article/888/The-Warmth-of-our-Sons>

⁴⁶ Israel, Supreme Court, *Alyan v. The Military Commander of the West Bank*, Judgment, 9 September 2019. See also Adalah, “Israeli Supreme Court reverses earlier ruling, authorizes Israel to hold bodies of Palestinians as bargaining chips”, 9 September 2019, <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/9808>

⁴⁷ Amnesty International, “Amnesty International’s assessment of Israeli and Palestinian investigations into Gaza conflict” (Index: MDE 15/022/2010), 27 September 2010, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/022/2010/en>; Amnesty International, “Amnesty International’s updated assessment of Israeli and Palestinian investigations into the Gaza conflict” (Index: MDE 15/018/2011), 18 March 2011, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE15/018/2011/en>; Amnesty International, “Time to address impunity: Two years after the 2014 Gaza/Israel war” (Index: MDE 15/4199/2016), 7 July 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/4199/2016/en>

⁴⁸ Amnesty International, “Gaza: Journalist facing prison term for exposing corruption in Hamas-controlled ministry”, 25 February 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/gaza-journalist-facing-prison-term-for-exposing-corruption-in-hamas-controlled-ministry>; Amnesty International, “Gaza: Hamas must end brutal crackdown against protesters and rights defenders”, 18 March 2019, <https://amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/03/gaza-hamas-must-end-brutal-crackdown-against-protesters-and-rights-defenders>; Amnesty International, “Palestine (State of)”, *The State of the World’s Human Rights*, April 2024 (previously cited); Amnesty International, “Palestine: Hamas security services must stop targeting protesters in reprisal and respect freedom of peaceful assembly in Gaza”, 28 May 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/palestine-hamas-security-services-must-stop-targeting-protesters-in-reprisal-and-respect-freedom-of-peaceful-assembly-in-gaza>

⁴⁹ Amnesty International, “Gaza: Hamas must end brutal crackdown against protesters and rights defenders” (previously cited).

⁵⁰ Independent Commission for Human Rights, “ICHR condemns the execution of five citizens in Gaza and demands compliance with fair trial guarantees”, 4 September 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20241205014840/https://mail.ichr.ps/en/statements/6625.html>

Palestinians were injured during that period, including thousands who have been left with life-changing injuries resulting in permanent disabilities. More than 20,000 of those killed were children.⁵¹

Israel forcibly displaced some 90% of Gaza's 2.2 million inhabitants, many of them multiple times, into ever-shrinking, ever-changing pockets of land that lacked basic infrastructure, forcing people to live in conditions that exposed them to a slow and calculated death. It deliberately obstructed or denied the import and delivery of life-saving goods and humanitarian aid. It restricted power supplies that, together with damage and destruction, led to the collapse of the water, sanitation and healthcare systems. It also subjected Palestinian women in Gaza to a range of gendered forms of bodily and mental harm, including reproductive and other gender-based violence.⁵²

Between 2 March and 19 May 2025, Israel imposed a total siege on Gaza, completely blocking the entry of humanitarian aid and commercial supplies, including food, medicine and fuel, re-intensifying the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.⁵³ It then introduced a militarized aid distribution system, while preventing UN and other key humanitarian organizations from distributing certain essential items, like food parcels, fuel and shelter, within Gaza.⁵⁴ It thereby continued to use starvation of civilians as a weapon of war.⁵⁵ On 22 August 2025, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, the world's foremost expert group assessing the risks of famine, confirmed: "Famine (IPC Phase 5) is currently occurring in Gaza Governorate and projected to expand to Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis governorates by the end of September."⁵⁶

On 10 October 2025, a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect. Nevertheless, Israeli forces killed and injured hundreds of Israeli civilians in the following weeks.⁵⁷ While the ceasefire led to the entry of more humanitarian aid, the situation in Gaza remained critical. Some 1.5 million people were in need of emergency shelter items; 81% of all structures in Gaza were destroyed or damaged and 87% of cropland was damaged.⁵⁸ In the days following the ceasefire, reports emerged of Hamas and affiliated armed groups engaging in extrajudicial executions of Palestinians in Gaza.⁵⁹

Israel has subjected thousands of Palestinians from Gaza to incommunicado detention and acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment, including rape and other sexual violence in detention.⁶⁰ The UN Commission of Inquiry found that Israel has employed sexual, reproductive and other forms of gender-based violence against Palestinians as part of a broader effort to undermine their right to self-determination and carried out genocidal acts through the systematic destruction of sexual and reproductive healthcare facilities.⁶¹

In December 2024, Amnesty International found that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza; its forces carried out acts prohibited under the Genocide Convention, with the specific intent to physically destroy Palestinians in Gaza. These acts included killings, causing serious bodily or mental harm and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction. This finding was based on a detailed review and holistic assessment of Israel's violations in Gaza over nine months between 7 October 2023 and early July 2024, and analysis of statements by senior Israeli

⁵¹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Reported impact snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 December 2025)", 4 December 2025, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-3-december-2025>

⁵² Amnesty International, *You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza* (previously cited); UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 13 March 2025, UN Doc. A/HRC/58/CRP.6.

⁵³ Amnesty International, "Israel/OPT: Two months of cruel and inhumane siege are further evidence of Israel's genocidal intent in Gaza", 2 May 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/israel-opt-two-months-of-cruel-and-inhumane-siege-are-further-evidence-of-israels-genocidal-intent-in-gaza>

⁵⁴ Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed in attacks by Israeli forces along food convoy routes and near food distribution sites managed by the new Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. See UN News, "Gaza: Nearly 1,400 Palestinians killed while seeking food, as UN warns airdrops are no solution", 1 August 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165552>

⁵⁵ Amnesty International, "Gaza: Evidence points to Israel's continued use of starvation to inflict genocide against Palestinians", 3 July 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/07/gaza-evidence-points-to-israels-continued-use-of-starvation-to-inflict-genocide-against-palestinians>

⁵⁶ Integrated Phase Food Security Classification (IPC), "Gaza Strip: Famine confirmed in Gaza Governorate, projected to expand", 22 August 2025, <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/countries-in-focus-archive/issue-134/en>

⁵⁷ OCHA, "Humanitarian situation update #340: Gaza Strip", 12 November 2025, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-340-gaza-strip>

⁵⁸ OCHA, "Reported impact snapshot: Gaza Strip (3 December 2025)" (previously cited).

⁵⁹ Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Gaza: ongoing violations and risks to civilians", 15 October 2025, <https://palestine.un.org/en/303276-gaza-ongoing-violations-and-risks-civilians>

⁶⁰ Amnesty International, "Israel/OPT: Horrifying cases of torture and degrading treatment of Palestinian detainees amid spike in arbitrary arrests", 8 November 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/11/israel-opt-horrifying-cases-of-torture-and-degrading-treatment-of-palestinian-detainees-amid-spike-in-arbitrary-arrests>; Amnesty International, "Israel must end mass incommunicado detention and torture of Palestinians from Gaza", 18 July 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/israel-must-end-mass-incommunicado-detention-and-torture-of-palestinians-from-gaza>

⁶¹ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 13 March 2025, UN Doc. A/HRC/58/CRP.6.

government and military officials, and official Israeli bodies.⁶² The UN Commission of Inquiry similarly concluded that Israel was committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza in September 2025.⁶³

On 21 November 2024, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, then Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and (in the absence of confirmation of his death) Mohammed Al-Masri (known as Mohammed Deif), then head of the Al-Qassam Brigades, for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Gaza and Israel from at least 7 October 2023.⁶⁴

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups were also responsible for endangering Palestinian civilians inside Gaza. Amnesty International found instances where Hamas fired rockets from densely populated areas, including camps for displaced civilians. They operated from, or in the vicinity of, residential areas, including makeshift tented camps. Their fighters were present in schools and camps where internally displaced people were taking shelter, including places designated by Israel as “humanitarian zones”. They therefore violated their obligations to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks, and to avoid locating, to the extent feasible, military targets in or around densely populated areas.⁶⁵

Hamas has also been responsible for summary killings of Palestinians in Gaza. For example, on 21 November 2023, armed men affiliated with Hamas rounded up approximately a dozen men, alleging that they worked for Israeli forces, and summarily killed them.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, since the start of the offensive on Gaza, the Israeli authorities have rapidly – and unlawfully – advanced Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, forcing Palestinians from their homes and historic land. They have done so through the adoption of new seizure orders, plans and other measures, in line with long-standing apartheid policies and practices; the demolition of Palestinian homes and other property; and by backing, or failing to prevent, the dramatic increase in attacks by Israeli settlers perpetrated against Palestinian farming and herding communities at an unprecedented rate. Between 1 January 2024 and 30 September 2025, OCHA recorded 2,660 attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians that resulted in casualties and/or property damage.⁶⁷

These state-backed attacks, coupled with increased movement restrictions by Israel following 7 October 2023, the destruction of homes by Israeli forces and operations by Israeli or Palestinian forces, have resulted in significant displacement. Between 1 January 2024 and 30 September 2025, 39,843 Palestinians had been displaced across the West Bank.⁶⁸

⁶² Amnesty International, *‘You Feel Like You Are Subhuman’: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza* (previously cited).

⁶³ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 16 September 2025, UN Doc. A/HRC/60/CRP.3.

The International Association of Genocide Scholars had passed a resolution in August 2025 declaring that “Israel’s policies and actions in Gaza meet the legal definition of genocide in Article II of the United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)”. International Association of Genocide Scholars, “IAGS resolution on the situation in Gaza”, 31 August 2025, <https://genocidescholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/IAGS-Resolution-on-Gaza-FINAL.pdf>

⁶⁴ In February 2025, in light of confirmation that Mohammed Deif had been killed, the Chamber terminated proceedings against him. See section 9.3.2 “International justice mechanisms”.

⁶⁵ Amnesty International, “Israel/OPT: Israeli attacks targeting Hamas and other armed group fighters that killed scores of displaced civilians in Rafah should be investigated as war crimes”, 27 August 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/israel-opt-israeli-attacks-targeting-hamas-and-other-armed-group-fighters-that-killed-scores-of-displaced-civilians-in-rafah-should-be-investigated-as-war-crimes>

⁶⁶ Amnesty International, “Palestine (State of)”, *The State of the World’s Human Rights*, April 2024 (previously cited).

⁶⁷ OCHA, “West Bank monthly snapshot: Casualties, property damage and displacement – September 2025”, 16 October 2025, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-monthly-snapshot-casualties-property-damage-and-displacement-july-2025>

⁶⁸ OCHA, “West Bank monthly snapshot: Casualties, property damage and displacement – September 2025” (previously cited).

4. OVERVIEW

4.1 ATTACKS AND AFTERMATH

The attacks launched by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups against southern Israel on 7 October 2023 were the deadliest in a single day since Israel's establishment in 1948.⁶⁹

Some 1,200 people were killed during the attacks. Over 800 of them were civilians, including at least 36 children. Most of the civilians killed were Jewish Israelis, but scores of Asian and African migrant workers, students and asylum seekers and dozens of Bedouin citizens of Israel were also among the fatalities. Around 300 of those killed were Israeli soldiers.⁷⁰

More than 4,000 people were injured in the attacks,⁷¹ with some 2,000 requiring hospital treatment and 630 requiring hospitalization.⁷² The assailants destroyed civilian infrastructure and property, such as by burning houses and making them uninhabitable.⁷³ They also seized 251 people – civilians and soldiers – and forcibly brought them to Gaza. The majority were taken alive and held hostage, but, in 36 cases, reportedly, Palestinian assailants seized the bodies of people killed during the attacks.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ UN News, “UN officials remember brutal 7 October attacks, reiterate need for peace”, 7 October 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1155421>; IDF, 7.10 The Inquiries, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/7-10-the-inquiries> (accessed 30 April 2025).

⁷⁰ Amnesty International conducted a comparative analysis of the following sources to compile these approximate figures: Human Rights Watch, “*I Can’t Erase All the Blood from My Mind*”: Palestinian Armed Groups’ October 7 Assault on Israel, 17 July 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/07/17/i-cant-erase-all-blood-my-mind/palestinian-armed-groups-october-7-assault-israel>; Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en> (accessed 30 April 2025); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre, <https://oct7map.com> (accessed 30 April 2025); Sagi Or, Keren Yalin-Mor and Yuval Harpaz, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023, https://yuval-harpaz.github.io/alarms/oct_7_9_eng.html (accessed 30 April 2025); Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Swords of Iron: Civilian Casualties”, 8 October 2023 (updated 27 February 2025), <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-civilian-casualties>; Israel, National Insurance, “Data at the six-month mark since the beginning of the war”, <https://www.btl.gov.il/English%20Homepage/About/PressReleases/Pages/NetunimHaziSHanaShellLehima.aspx> (accessed 30 April 2025); AFP, “How many children were killed in Hamas’s October 7 attack?”, 11 October 2024, available at <https://www.barrons.com/news/how-many-children-were-killed-in-hamas-s-october-7-attack-9c1d8239>. Around 100 were members of emergency response squads (*kitot konenut*), the Israeli police and other Israeli security forces, excluding the Israeli military.

In addition to those killed by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, around 14 civilians were killed by Israeli fire. See UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26.

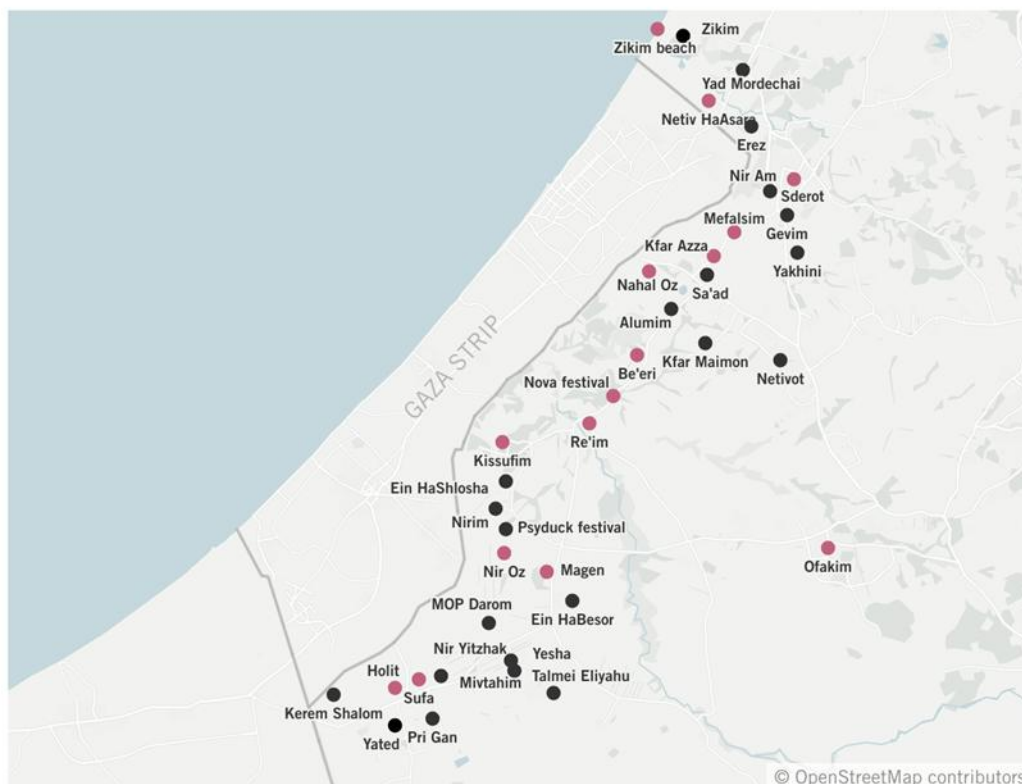
⁷¹ According to The Times of Israel, “At least 4,834 people were injured on October 7”. Times of Israel, “The Israel we knew died on October 7. The new nation will be scarred for generations”, 7 November 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/the-israel-we-knew-died-on-october-7-the-new-nation-will-be-scarred-for-generations>

⁷² Sharon Goldman and others, “October 7th mass casualty attack in Israel: Injury profiles of hospitalized casualties”, September 2024, Annals of Surgery Open: Perspectives on Surgical History, Education, and Clinical Approaches, Volume 5, Issue 3, https://journals.lww.com/aosopen/fulltext/2024/09000/october_7th_mass_casualty_attack_in_israel_injury.27.aspx

⁷³ See Chapter 5 “Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians” for details.

⁷⁴ See Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies” for details.

Sites of ground attacks on civilians in Israel on 7 October 2023



- Sites of ground attacks on civilians on 7 October 2023 that were investigated by Amnesty International
- Other sites of ground attacks on civilians, based on Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project (<https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en>); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (<https://oct7map.com>); and Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (https://yuval-harpaz.github.io/alarms/oct_7_9_eng.html)

Israeli military targets attacked



✕ Breaches of the fence

- Israeli military targets subjected to rocket and ground attacks on 7 October 2023, based on Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project (<https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en>); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (<https://oct7map.com>); and Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (https://yuval-harpaz.github.io/alarms/oct_7_9_eng.html).

The attacks started with a barrage of indiscriminate rockets and mortars being launched by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza into Israel just before 6.30am on 7 October 2023. The thousands of rockets mostly struck southern Israel, killing and injuring several civilians, most of them from the Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab region of southern Israel, but some reached Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.⁷⁵

Shortly after, as rockets continued to be fired from Gaza, more than 3,000 fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, and fighters from other Palestinian armed groups breached the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza at multiple locations, having disabled the surveillance system along it, and entered Israel.⁷⁶ They overran and attacked key Israeli military positions near the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza: the Erez crossing checkpoint, the adjacent Gaza-focused base of the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), a unit within the Israeli Ministry of Defense tasked with administering civilian matters in the OPT, and the Zikim base, all north of Gaza; the military bases or outposts of Kissufim, Nahal Oz, Paga and Re'im, all to the east; and the military bases or outposts of Kerem Shalom and Sufa, both to the south-east.

At the same time, they attacked around 30 kibbutzim and moshavim, as well as the city of Sderot, in the areas in Israel surrounding Gaza, and Ofakim, which lies further east.⁷⁷ Some of these communities were

⁷⁵ See Chapter 5 "Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians" for details.

⁷⁶ Israeli military assessments claimed that some 3,800 fighters were from the Al-Qassam's elite Nukhba forces alone. Times of Israel, "Report: New IDF assessment shows some 6,000 Gazans invaded Israel on Oct. 7", 31 August 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-new-idf-assessment-shows-some-6000-gazans-invaded-israel-on-oct-7>

⁷⁷ Amnesty International counted 21 kibbutzim and nine moshavim among the localities attacked, based on the following sources: Human Rights Watch, "I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind": Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel (previously cited); Kan,

only a few hundred metres from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza; others were further away. They also attacked the Nova music festival, also known as the Supernova Sukkot Gathering, which took place north of Re'im, and Psyduck, a small trance music festival that took place between the kibbutzim of Nir Oz and Nirim, as well as Zikim beach, which had been the site of a party the previous night.

The fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups mostly entered Israel in pickup trucks and other vehicles through the breaches they opened in the perimeter fence.⁷⁸ A small number flew over the fence using motorized paragliders.⁷⁹ Some entered Israel by sea on boats, while others were stopped at sea before they could reach land.⁸⁰ They were heavily armed, well trained and equipped.⁸¹ They carried heavy machine guns, assault rifles, hand grenades, RPGs and other weapons, as well as instructions and maps, emergency medical kits and food and water supplies.⁸²

Before 8.20am local time on 7 October 2023, Mohammed Deif, then head of the Al-Qassam Brigades, announced that they had launched "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" to end Israel's military occupation and "its crimes".⁸³ Other leaders of the political wing of Hamas later confirmed the leadership role of the Al-Qassam Brigades. Saleh Al-Arouri, then Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, stated on 12 October 2023:

"It [the 7 October 2023 attacks] was an organized and disciplined operation, in which the Al-Qassam leadership instructed the brothers who participated in the operation to attack the [Israeli army's] Gaza Division."⁸⁴

Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project (previously cited); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited). In most cases, the assailants entered the localities concerned; in others, they fired weapons at the localities but were repelled before they could enter.

⁷⁸ Amnesty International verified several videos of fighters entering Israel in pickup trucks, for example: video posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 16 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 22 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷⁹ Inside Edition, "Hamas fighters enter Israel with motorized paragliders", 9 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9X1wF0cOUQ>

⁸⁰ Ynetnews, "We knew this was point of no return – then the hunt began": The soldiers who stopped Hamas at sea", 3 April 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/bkfdreijg>; Haaretz, "On October 7, Israel's navy was only ready for a limited attack, IDF probe reveals", 28 February 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-28/ty-article/.premium/on-october-7-israels-navy-was-only-ready-for-a-limited-attack-idf-probe-reveals/00000195-4b1d-dfb4-a1f7-fbbd5b330000>

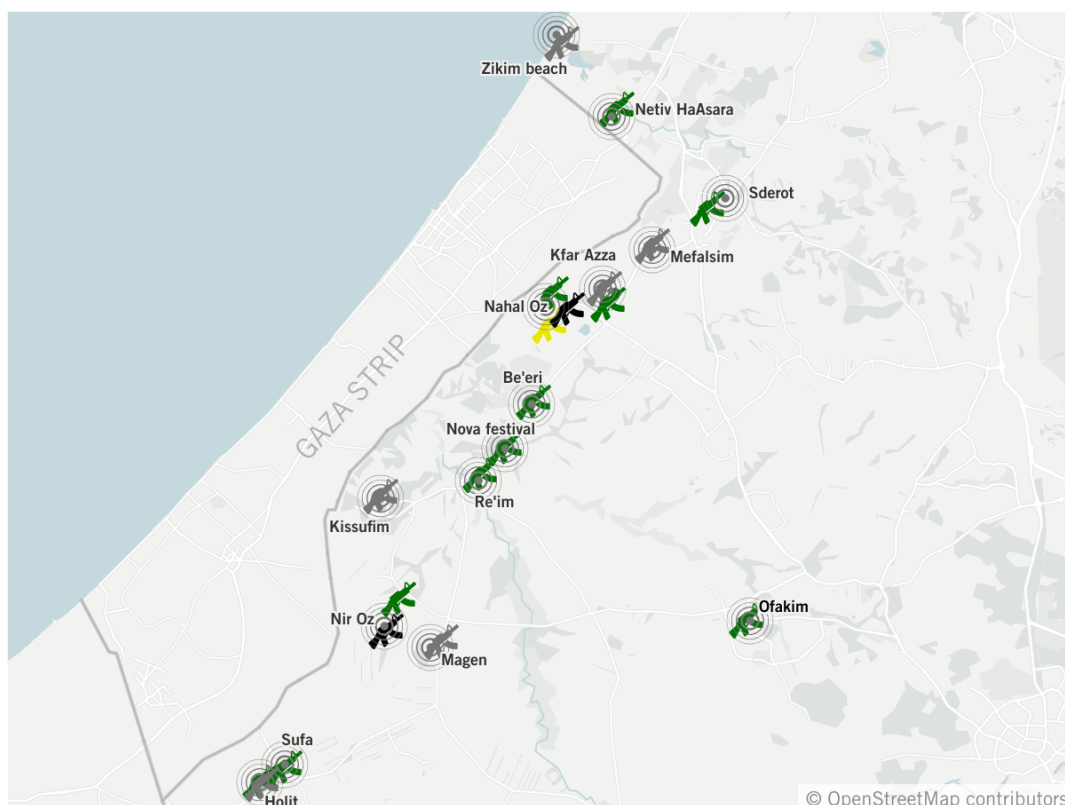
⁸¹ BBC, "How Hamas built a force to attack Israel on 7 October", 27 November 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67480680>

⁸² ABS-CBN News, "RPGs, thermobaric grenades: Israel displays weapons used by Hamas during Oct 7 attack", 21 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjHajOzT5fU>; Human Rights Watch, "I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind": Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel" (previously cited), pp. 54-57.






⁸³ The first mention of the message was on Al Jazeera at 8.18am local time (5.18am UTC). Al Jazeera, محمد الضيف: أطلقنا خلال نصف ساعة ٥ آلاف صواريخ تجاه مستوطنات ومدن العدو ["Mohammed Deif: We launched within half an hour 5,000 rockets in the direction of settlements and cities of the enemy"], 7 October 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxL5_Nw1i0 (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁸⁴ Al Jazeera, نائب رئيس المكتب السياسي لحركة حماس للجزيرة: هذه معركة متقدمة على طريق حرية شعبنا ["Deputy head of Hamas's political bureau to Al Jazeera: This is an advanced battle on the path to our people's freedom"], 12 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAqZAQGD1M> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International). See also Hamas Media Office, "Our narrative... Operation Al Aqsa Flood" (previously cited).

Recorded presence of armed groups



Sites of attacks where Amnesty International identified the presence of fighters from the following Palestinian armed groups:

-  Al-Qassam Brigades
-  Al-Quds Brigades
-  Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades
-  Unidentified armed groups
-  Sites of ground attacks on civilians on 7 October 2023 that were investigated by Amnesty International

Evidence, including hundreds of videos and testimonies collected by Amnesty International and other investigators, indicates that the majority of fighters taking part in the attacks were from the Al-Qassam Brigades, but also included fighters from the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement.⁸⁵

There is evidence that fighters from other Palestinian armed groups joined the attacks, including: the Mujahideen Brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement;⁸⁶ the National Resistance Brigades or Omar Al-Qasem Forces, the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine;⁸⁷ and the Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation

⁸⁵ Videos verified by Amnesty International show fighters with signs of affiliation to these three groups involved in attacks in southern Israel on 7 October 2023, as set out in subsequent chapters in this report. Where affiliations are evident, the fighters are most often from the Al-Qassam Brigades. Each of these armed groups has claimed publicly to have been involved in the 7 October 2023 attacks, including on their social media accounts. See also UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, paras 237-246.

⁸⁶ The Mujahideen Brigades posted several messages on their Telegram channel on 7 October 2023. In them, they stated that they were fighting alongside the Al-Qassam Brigades, fighting with the "enemy" inside the "occupied territories" and killing and capturing "Zionist soldiers". Mujahideen Brigades, Telegram posts, 7 October 2023, <https://t.me/darebmojahden/3787>, <https://t.me/darebmojahden/3788>, <https://t.me/darebmojahden/3789>, <https://t.me/darebmojahden/3790> (translations from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International). See also UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 247.

⁸⁷ Amnesty International verified one video taken during the 7 October 2023 attacks in which an armed man has a patch on his vest that appears to be that of the National Resistance Brigades. See section 5.1.6 "Nahal Oz". It verified another that bears the logo of the National

high-ranking ones, wear military-style clothing. Leaders of Hamas have also indicated that both fighters and civilians entered Israel after the initial wave of attacks.⁹⁶

The assailants in civilian clothing carried out widespread looting of homes and property in residential communities in Israel. Some also participated in killings, the destruction of property, abductions and other serious abuses.⁹⁷

The date of the attacks, 7 October 2023, was a Sabbath and Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, immediately following the seven-day Jewish holiday of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles), an important national religious holiday when more military personnel than usual would have been on leave and communication would have been impaired as many practising religious people would have been offline and off their phones. The attacks came as a major surprise to the Israeli military. The military surveillance system and military bases and facilities around Gaza were taken over and dismantled quickly, impeding an immediate Israeli military response. It took the Israeli military several hours to reach the locations under attack, in some cases until the end of the day. In the meantime, local emergency response squads (*kitot konenut*), armed teams responsible for security in kibbutzim, moshavim and other small civilian communities, and local armed police tried to resist the assailants. The Israeli military regained control of the border with Gaza and over most of the areas surrounding it by 8 October 2023. However, in some places, fighting continued for several days. The Israeli military estimated that it killed more than 1,600 assailants and captured 149 others during the attacks launched on 7 October 2023.⁹⁸

Following the start of Israel's offensive on Gaza,⁹⁹ the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza continued to fire unguided rockets and mortars, which are inherently inaccurate, towards populated areas in Israel, as well as Israeli forces inside Gaza.¹⁰⁰

Tens of thousands of people living in the areas attacked on and after 7 October 2023, as well as other areas of southern Israel, were displaced from their homes.¹⁰¹ Many were still displaced months later.¹⁰² Many have since returned to their communities, in some cases after rebuilding their homes.

4.2 LEGAL CONTEXT

The attacks launched on southern Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent holding of hostages were part of a non-international armed conflict between Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, on the one hand, and Israel, on the other. This occurred in the context of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, which is itself an ongoing international armed conflict.

Members of the military wings of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, whether they were wearing military-style clothing with identifying insignia or were wearing civilian clothing, acted as fighters in the conflict, as did members of the Israeli military.

Other individuals were civilians. In general, civilians should not be targeted in an armed conflict, but they can lose their immunity from direct attack when, and only for such time as, they directly participate in

⁹⁶ Saleh Al-Arouri, then Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, said on 12 October 2023: "When... the people in Gaza awoke to the fact that the borders were open and the [Israeli] army in the [Gaza] Envelope had collapsed, a number of civilians, young men and armed men entered from Gaza. There was some chaos... and people reached the kibbutzim and settlements [referring to Israeli civilian communities in the areas surrounding Gaza]. Then some security guards there, soldiers and settlers clashed inside these kibbutzim and settlements with Al-Qassam [Brigades] youth, which led to civilian casualties." Al Jazeera, *نائب رئيس المكتب السياسي لحركة حماس للجريدة: هذه معركة* ("Deputy head of Hamas's political bureau to Al Jazeera: This is an advanced battle on the path to our people's freedom") (previously cited).

Basem Naim, head of Hamas's Political and International Relations Department, also stated that this wave involved "Gaza residents and armed forces" who "rushed in without coordination with Hamas". Basem Naim, letter to Human Rights Watch, 14 April 2024, available at: Human Rights Watch, *"I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind": Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel* (previously cited), p. 242 (translation from the original Arabic into English by Human Rights Watch).

⁹⁷ See Chapter 5 "Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians", Chapter 6 "Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies" and Chapter 7 "Physical, sexual and psychological abuse".

⁹⁸ Times of Israel, "IDF's Oct 7 probes show it misread Hamas for years, left southern Israel utterly vulnerable", 27 February 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ids-oct-7-probes-show-it-misread-hamas-for-years-left-southern-israel-utterly-vulnerable>; Times of Israel, "Entire Gaza Division was overrun for hours, and IDF didn't know it; 767 troops faced 5,000 terrorists", 27 February 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/767-troops-faced-5000-terrorists-gaza-division-was-overrun-for-hours-idf-oct-7-probe>

⁹⁹ See Chapter 3 "Background".

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter 5 "Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians".

¹⁰¹ The UN Commission of Inquiry noted: "Approximately 150,000 people were evacuated from their homes in southern Israel on and immediately after 7 October." UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 29.

¹⁰² See, for example, Haaretz, "The tragedy of Israel's 135,000 displaced citizens", 27 February 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-02-27/ty-article-magazine-premium/what-makes-the-plight-of-israels-displaced-citizens-different/0000018d-ea95-d1e0-a1dd-fbf529ed0000>

hostilities. Palestinian civilians who participated in the attacks, whether armed or not, lost their immunity from direct attack when and only for such time as they were directly participating in hostilities.

Local police officers in the cities of Sderot and Ofakim, members of emergency response squads in the kibbutzim and moshavim and other civilians in southern Israel, who only were acting in individual self-defence or defence of others against direct attacks against civilians or other acts prohibited under international humanitarian law, generally would not be considered as directly participating in hostilities and thus would not have lost their immunity as civilians.¹⁰³

Some other Israeli security forces had military roles and participated in operations of the Israeli military. They included units of the Israel Border Police, such as Yamam (its National Counter-Terrorism Unit) and Yamas (its undercover tactical unit), and the Israel Security Agency (also known as Shabak or Shin Bet). They often directly participated in hostilities and therefore lost any immunity from direct attack for the duration of their participation.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW APPLICABLE TO NON-INTERNATIONAL ARMED CONFLICTS

Gaza is militarily occupied by Israel.¹⁰⁴ Under international humanitarian law, occupations are international armed conflicts. Israel's conduct in Gaza is governed by the rules of occupation law – a part of international humanitarian law – and by international human rights law and, during hostilities, by the rules on the conduct of hostilities – another part of international humanitarian law. However, in the fighting between Hamas and other Palestinian non-state armed groups, on the one hand, and Israeli forces, on the other, whether it is taking place in occupied Gaza or in Israel, all parties are bound by the rules of international humanitarian law applicable in non-international armed conflict.¹⁰⁵

Drawing on the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the ICRC has defined a non-international armed conflict as “protracted armed confrontations occurring between governmental armed forces and the forces of one or more armed groups, or between such groups arising on the territory of a State. The armed confrontation has reached a minimum level of intensity, and the parties involved in the conflict must show a minimum of organisation.”¹⁰⁶ Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and several other Palestinian armed groups involved in the fighting that began on 7 October 2023 meet the criterion of being sufficiently organized for the purpose of being a party to a non-international armed conflict.¹⁰⁷ It is also clear that the armed confrontations that began on 7 October 2023 in Israel and Gaza meet the intensity criterion required for classification of a situation as a non-international armed conflict.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, the fighting between Hamas and other armed groups and Israeli forces is governed by the rules of international humanitarian law applicable in non-international armed conflicts. These rules are

¹⁰³ If they joined the operations of the military outside of these parameters, they would also have been directly participating in hostilities and thereby have lost their immunity from direct attack for the duration of their participation.

¹⁰⁴ ICJ, Legal Consequences Arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, advisory opinion, para. 94.

¹⁰⁵ ICC, “Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I issues warrant of arrest for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (Deif)”, 21 November 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-issues-warrant-arrest-mohammed-diab-ibrahim>

Israel is bound by its obligations under international human rights law, as well as international humanitarian law. See ICJ, Legal Consequences Arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, advisory opinion, para. 100.

¹⁰⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *How Is the Term “Armed Conflict” Defined in International Humanitarian Law?*, March 2008, <https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/other/opinion-paper-armed-conflict.pdf>; and International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Fatmir Limaj*, Case IT-03-66-T, Judgment, 30 November 2005.

¹⁰⁷ The ICRC has identified, based on ICTY jurisprudence, the following factors as indicating that an armed group is sufficiently organized to be a party to a non-international armed conflict: “the existence of a command structure and disciplinary rules; the existence of a headquarters; the fact that the group controls a certain territory; the ability of the group to gain access to weapons or other military equipment, recruits and military training; the group's ability to establish a unified military strategy and use military tactics; the group's ability to plan, coordinate and carry out military operations, including troop movements and logistics; the group's ability to speak with one voice and negotiate and conclude agreements such as ceasefires or peace accords.” The ICRC notes: “The identification of an armed group as sufficiently organized for the purpose of IHL [international humanitarian law] classification thus does not require the fulfilment of all indicative factors nor of any one in particular.” ICRC, *How is the Term “Armed Conflict” Defined in International Humanitarian Law?*, April 2024, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-opinion-paper-how-term-armed-conflict-defined-international-humanitarian-law>, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁸ Based on ICTY jurisprudence, the ICRC has identified the following factors as indicating that fighting between parties is sufficiently intense to be classified as a non-international armed conflict: “the number, duration and intensity of individual confrontations between them; the type of weapons and other military equipment used; the number and calibre of munitions fired; the number of persons and types of forces partaking in the fighting; the number of casualties (including, inter alia, all persons killed, wounded, displaced or missing); the extent of material destruction; the number of civilians fleeing combat zones the involvement of the UN Security Council, which may also be a reflection of the intensity of a conflict.” ICRC, *How is the Term “Armed Conflict” Defined in International Humanitarian Law?*, April 2024 (previously cited), pp. 14-15.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

codified in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II). The State of Palestine is a party to the Geneva Conventions and to Protocol II. Israel is a party to the Geneva Conventions, but it is not a party to Protocol II. In any event, all the rules cited in this report form part of customary international humanitarian law and are legally binding on all parties, whether they are state forces or non-state armed groups.¹⁰⁹

Common Article 3 is “a minimum yardstick” which applies in all situations of armed conflict to all parties.¹¹⁰ It provides fundamental guarantees to all persons taking no active part in hostilities, including civilians and captured, sick, surrendered or wounded members of armed forces or armed groups. It prohibits murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, hostage taking, and outrages upon personal dignity.

The protections of Common Article 3 are supplemented by customary international humanitarian law applicable in non-international armed conflicts, which also include rules on the conduct of hostilities. A fundamental rule of international humanitarian law is that parties to an armed conflict must at all times “distinguish between civilians and combatants”, especially in that “[a]ttacks may only be directed against combatants” and “must not be directed against civilians”.¹¹¹ A similar rule requires parties to distinguish between “civilian objects” and “military objectives”.¹¹² These rules are part of the fundamental principle of distinction.

Civilians are persons who are not members of the armed forces. The civilian population comprises all persons who are civilians.¹¹³ Civilians are protected against attack, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.¹¹⁴ According to the ICRC, “the causation of harm in individual self-defence or defence of others against violence prohibited under IHL [international humanitarian law]” should not be considered direct participation in hostilities.¹¹⁵

“Civilian objects are all objects that are not military objectives”.¹¹⁶ Military objectives are “those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralisation, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.”¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹ ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law (IHL), Volume 1: Rules. This is available as a database (<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl>), an online version of the ICRC’s study on customary international humanitarian law, originally published in 2005. The rules remain the same. Information on the practice underlying them is regularly updated.

¹¹⁰ ICJ, Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (*Nicaragua v. United States of America*), Judgment, 27 June 1986, para. 218.

¹¹¹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 1. See also Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), Article 48; Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), Article 12(2).

¹¹² ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 7.

¹¹³ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 5.

¹¹⁴ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 6. The ICRC identified three cumulative criteria for a specific act to qualify as direct participation in hostilities: 1. The act must be likely to adversely affect the military operation or military capacity of a party to an armed conflict or, alternatively, to inflict death, injury or destruction on persons or objects protected against direct attack (threshold of harm); 2. There must be a direct causal link between the act and the harm likely to result either from that act, or from a coordinated military operation of which that act constitutes an integral part (direct causation); and 3. The act must be specifically designed to directly cause the required threshold of harm in support of a party to the conflict and to the detriment of another (belligerent nexus). ICRC, *Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law*, June 2020, <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/0990-interpretive-guidance-notion-direct-participation-hostilities-under-international>

¹¹⁵ ICRC, *Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law* (previously cited), p. 61.

¹¹⁶ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 9.

¹¹⁷ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 8.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

5. UNLAWFUL KILLINGS AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

Amnesty International documented ground attacks on civilians and civilian locations throughout the areas surrounding Gaza, as well as the city of Ofakim, which lies further east, on 7 October 2023. It found that those responsible for the overwhelming majority of the killings of civilians in these attacks were Palestinian fighters. They most often were, or appeared to be, from the Al-Qassam Brigades. Amnesty International found evidence of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades being present at the scene of at least one killing and evidence of the Al-Quds Brigades being involved in another. In the attacks documented by Amnesty International, the victims were generally residents of the civilian communities targeted, including, in some cases, members of the local emergency response squads, or festival-goers.

The armed groups who killed and injured civilians not directly taking part in hostilities in southern Israel violated, under international humanitarian law, the prohibition of murder and of direct attacks on civilians, in some cases, and of indiscriminate attacks, in others. In cases where they attacked homes and other civilian buildings, they also violated the prohibition of direct attacks on civilian objects.

On and following 7 October 2023, the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups based in Gaza fired thousands of unguided rockets and mortars, which are inherently inaccurate, towards populated areas in Israel, as well as at Israeli forces. The attacks had killed 15 civilians in Israel by the end of 2023. These attacks violated the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks under international humanitarian law. As in many cases there were no discernible military targets, they may have violated the prohibition of direct attacks on civilians and on civilian objects.

The Al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Quds Brigades repeatedly threatened to kill the Israeli hostages they had been holding since 7 October 2023 in retaliation for Israeli actions and to prevent rescue operations by the Israeli military. Amnesty International has concluded that, based on all available evidence, at least six hostages were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades. Such killings also violate the prohibition of murder under international humanitarian law.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

International humanitarian law prohibits direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects and requires parties to a conflict at all times to distinguish between civilians and civilian objects and combatants and military objectives. Attacks may only be directed against combatants and military objectives, and not against civilians and civilian objects.¹¹⁸ Indiscriminate attacks, that is, attacks of a nature to strike

¹¹⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 1 and 7.

military objects and civilians or civilian objects without distinction, are prohibited.¹¹⁹ The use of weapons which are by nature indiscriminate is prohibited.¹²⁰

All members of the armed forces, except medical and religious personnel, are combatants.¹²¹ Civilians are persons who are not members of the armed forces.¹²² Civilians are protected against attacks, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.¹²³ Acts of self-defence in individual self-defence or defence of others against violence prohibited under international humanitarian law do not, however, constitute direct participation in hostilities, and do not trigger a loss of a civilian's protected status.¹²⁴

International humanitarian law prohibits "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds" against persons placed *hors de combat*.¹²⁵ Attacking hostages and captive soldiers, who are recognized as *hors de combat*, is prohibited. A person *hors de combat* is a person who is no longer participating in hostilities, by choice or circumstance. It includes anyone who is in the power of an adverse party, anyone who is defenceless because of unconsciousness, shipwreck, wounds or sickness, and anyone who clearly expresses an intention to surrender, provided they abstain from any hostile act and do not attempt to escape.¹²⁶ Killings of civilians or persons *hors de combat* are prohibited.¹²⁷

International humanitarian law also prohibits the use of human shields. This is the intentional co-location of military objectives and civilians or persons *hors de combat* with the specific intent of trying to prevent the targeting of those military objectives.¹²⁸

5.1 GROUND ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

Amnesty International documented ground attacks on civilian locations throughout the areas in Israel surrounding Gaza, as well as the city of Ofakim, on 7 October 2023. It did so by reviewing and mostly verifying 110 videos and 28 photographs, reviewing satellite imagery and conducting 17 interviews with survivors, including people who were injured in such attacks, and six relatives of victims who were killed in the attacks, as well as reviewing and cross-checking written accounts by survivors and witnesses, Israeli civil society documentation initiatives, media reports and the findings of Israeli military investigations.¹²⁹

It documented attacks by hundreds of fighters from the military wings of Palestinian armed groups on the kibbutzim of Be'eri, Holit, Kfar Azza, Magen, Nahal Oz, Re'im and Sufa, the moshav of Netiv HaAsara, the cities of Ofakim and Sderot, Zikim beach and the Nova festival site, surrounding areas and escape routes from it. Some fighters wore military-style clothing and sometimes body armour vests; others wore civilian clothing. Most carried weapons, including assault rifles, machine guns, grenades and RPGs. Over 650 civilians were killed in these attacks.

It found that fighters arrived to attack these civilian locations from around 6.30am on 7 October 2023, generally amid rocket fire from Gaza.¹³⁰ Most came overland in vehicles such as pickup trucks and motorcycles, driving through breaches in the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza. However, a minority arrived by air using motorized paragliders or by sea using inflatable rubber boats.

In the context of two of the attacks, those on Be'eri and Nahal Oz, up to 12 people and three people, respectively, were killed by Israeli military fire, according to Israeli military investigations. However, in the vast majority of cases, those responsible for the killings in the attacks it documented were Palestinian fighters. Amnesty International investigated in detail incidents in which around 100 people who were confirmed as civilians or presumed to be civilians died, concluding that they were killed by fighters. It reviewed and cross-checked evidence that fighters were responsible for killing the vast majority of the remaining civilians who

¹¹⁹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 11 and 12.

¹²⁰ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 71.

¹²¹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 4.

¹²² ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 5.

¹²³ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 6.

¹²⁴ ICRC Interpretative Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities Under International Humanitarian Law, May 2009, <https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/external/doc/en/assets/files/other/icrc-002-0990.pdf>, p. 69.

¹²⁵ Geneva Conventions, Common Article 3.

¹²⁶ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 47.

¹²⁷ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 89.

¹²⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 97.

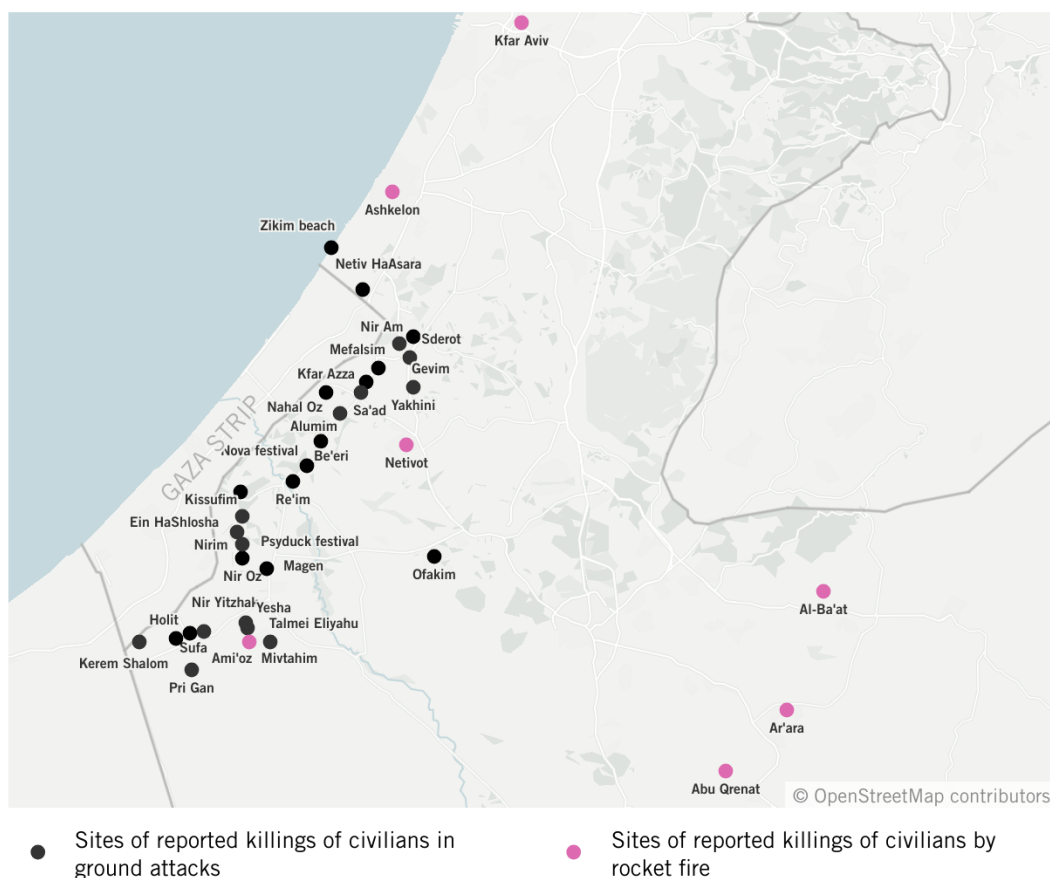
¹²⁹ See Chapter 2 "Scope and methodology".

¹³⁰ See section 5.2 "Indiscriminate rocket and mortar fire".

died in the attacks it documented, including the fact that the Israeli military was not present when most killings happened. Its assessment of the evidence regarding the killings of civilians in other communities indicated similarly that the vast majority were killed by fighters.

Amnesty International identified a number of patterns. In civilian communities, fighters targeted civilians in their homes, including in safe rooms, sometimes setting houses on fire, either to kill or to drive out the inhabitants. In some places, they appeared to have a plan to target members of the emergency response squad first. In one kibbutz, Be'eri, they used civilians as human shields. Both within civilian communities and at other civilian locations, notably Zikim beach and the Nova festival site, surrounding areas and escape routes from it, fighters fired into areas full of civilians and targeted terrified civilians who were trying to flee. They killed civilians in cars, by firing at them with guns or burning them alive. They hunted down others where they were trying to hide, such as in bomb shelters and public toilets. They also abducted and summarily killed some civilians. In many of these locations, they also abducted civilians and took them into captivity in Gaza.¹³¹ Overall, they targeted and killed civilians of different ethnicities, nationalities and ages, including children and older people. Some fighters filmed their attacks, apparently as a means of propaganda, intimidation and glorification of violence. They left behind shattered communities.

Sites of reported killings of civilians in Israel on 7 October 2023



Source: Sites of reported killings of civilians, based on Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project (<https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/>); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (<https://oct7map.com/>); and Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (https://yuval-harpaz.github.io/alerts/oct_7_9_eng.html)

In the cases documented by Amnesty International, the assailants perpetrating the killings most often were, or appeared to be, from the Al-Qassam Brigades. Amnesty International also found evidence of fighters from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades being present at the scene of one killing and evidence of the Al-Quds Brigades being involved in another.

¹³¹ See Chapter 6 "Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies".

In the cases documented by Amnesty International, the victims were generally residents of the civilian communities targeted, including members of the local emergency response squads, or they were festival-goers or other visitors to the area. A few of those whom it could not identify may conceivably have been soldiers on leave.¹³² However, the attackers were highly unlikely to have had any way of knowing that they were soldiers when they killed them. In one case, the person killed was a member of Yamam (the National Counter-Terrorism Unit of the Israel Border Police), who had been sent to the area to investigate the attacks.¹³³

In all the cases Amnesty International documented, the victims were killed in the hours between the start of the attacks and the arrival of the Israeli military. It considers that fighters directly attacked civilian locations in these cases and deliberately and unlawfully killed civilians. While some victims in these cases picked up and used firearms, Amnesty International considers that they did so in self-defence or in defence of others from unlawful acts of violence, and should not therefore be considered to have been directly participating in hostilities.

These patterns of unlawful killings reflect those documented by the UN Commission of Inquiry, other international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, and Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.¹³⁴

The UN Commission of Inquiry also recorded evidence of the killing of soldiers who were *hors de combat* at the Nahal Oz military base.¹³⁵ Amnesty International did not manage to obtain such evidence and was thus unable to conclude whether the assailants committed such acts.

Some 30 children were killed in the ground attacks on civilian communities on 7 October 2023.¹³⁶ Many appear to have been killed in deliberate attacks by assailants who shot at and/or set on fire the safe rooms or other places where they were sheltering or the vehicles in which they were travelling. Amnesty International documented the killing of Or Taasa, aged 17, in a public toilet where he was sheltering on Zikim beach.¹³⁷ It has also referred to media reports of the killings of Carmel Becher, aged 15, and Mila Cohen, aged nine months, in the safe rooms of their homes in the context of its documentation of killings in Be’eri.¹³⁸ In another notable case, three children, twin girls Arbel Siman Tov and Shachar Siman Tov, aged five, and their brother Omer Siman Tov, aged two, were likewise killed, along with their parents Tamar and Yehonatan (Jonny) Siman Tov, in the safe room of their home.¹³⁹ Two children, Noiya and Yahel Sharabi, aged 16 and 13, were killed with their mother, Lianne Brisley-Sharabi, in their home in Be’eri, and two others, Liel and Yanai Hetzroni, may have been killed by Israeli tank fire in Be’eri.¹⁴⁰ In at least four cases, those of the Vital-Kaploun family in Holit, the Berdichesky family in Kfar Azza, the Taasa family in Netiv HaAsara and the Karp family in Re’im, fighters appeared to spare young children, while killing adults around them.¹⁴¹

Also, among those killed in the ground attacks on civilian communities were individuals of other nationalities, mostly Asian and African migrant workers, students and asylum seekers. Thai nationals, mostly agricultural workers, made up the largest group of foreign nationals killed on 7 October 2023. Amnesty International documented the murder of two Thai agricultural workers in Re’im.¹⁴² Other notable cases include that of 12 Thai agricultural workers, as well as 10 Nepalese agricultural students, who were killed in the workers’ living

¹³² Twelve soldiers on leave were killed at the Nova festival. See section 5.1.7 “Nova festival”.

¹³³ See section 5.9 “Re’im”.

¹³⁴ UN Commission of Inquiry, Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3; Human Rights Watch, *“I Can’t Erase All the Blood from My Mind”: Palestinian Armed Groups’ October 7 Assault on Israel* (previously cited); Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project (previously cited); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

¹³⁵ UN Commission of Inquiry, Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, paras 113-116.

¹³⁶ According to AFP, a total of 37 children were killed in the attacks of 7 October 2023. AFP, “How many children were killed in Hamas’s October 7 attack?” (previously cited). Seven of those children were killed as a result of rocket attacks. See section 5.2 “Indiscriminate rocket and mortar fire”.

¹³⁷ See section 5.1.12 “Zikim beach”.

¹³⁸ See section 5.1.1 “Be’eri”.

¹³⁹ CNN, “Israeli woman recalls speaking with her family as they were killed by Hamas”, 11 October 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2023/10/11/israel-woman-family-members-killed-hamas-attack-sot-cnc-vpx.cnn>; Times of Israel, “Entire Siman Tov family: Murdered by Hamas in Kibbutz Nir Oz”, 12 October 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/terrorists-murdered-entire-young-family-sheltering-in-kibbutz-nir-oz-saferoom/>; Channel 13 news report, available at: Kibbutz Nir Oz, “Entire Siman Tov family: Murdered by Hamas in their ‘saferoom’ in Nir Oz – Channel 13”, 15 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqPOiTOa1pg>

¹⁴⁰ See section 5.1.1 “Be’eri”.

¹⁴¹ See sections 5.1.2 “Holit”, 5.1.3 “Kfar Azza”, 5.1.6. “Netiv HaAsara”, and 5.1.9 “Re’im”.

¹⁴² See section 5.1.9 “Re’im”.

quarters of the kibbutz of Alumim,¹⁴³ and that of 11 Thai agricultural workers who were killed in Nir Oz.¹⁴⁴ Amnesty International also documented the murder of Tanzanian agriculture student Joshua Mollel in Nahal Oz.¹⁴⁵ Fellow Tanzanian agriculture student Clemens Felix Matanga, who was living in Nir Oz, was also killed.¹⁴⁶ Among those killed in the city of Sderot were two Eritrean asylum seekers.¹⁴⁷

Hamas has denied that its forces carried out targeted killings of civilians during the ground attacks of 7 October 2023. In “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”, issued on 21 January 2024, it stated:

“What the Israeli occupation promoted of allegations that the Al-Qassam Brigades on Oct. 7 were targeting Israeli civilians are nothing but complete lies and fabrications... It is also a matter of fact that a number of Israeli settlers in settlements around Gaza were armed, and clashed with Palestinian fighters on Oct. 7. Those settlers were registered as civilians while the fact is they were armed men fighting alongside the Israeli army... When speaking about Israeli civilians, it must be known that conscription applies to all Israelis above the age of 18 – males who served 32 months of military service and females who served 24 months – where all can carry and use arms. This is based on the Israeli security theory of an ‘armed people’ which turned the Israeli entity into ‘an army with a country attached.’”¹⁴⁸

Hamas uses the term “settlers” and “settlements” in this document to refer to Israeli civilians living in civilian communities in Israel. It is true that many of them have completed military service and, up to the age of 40, can be called for reserve duty. Some of them have access to arms, either because they own personal weapons or because they are members of emergency response squads. Some used those weapons in self-defence, as already noted. Members of emergency response squads were posthumously recognized as “fallen soldiers” by the Israeli state and given ranks in the military. However, these facts do not remove the civilian status they enjoyed at the time of the attacks and their killing.

Consequently, Hamas wrongly characterized all adult Israelis liable for military service as combatants, thereby implicitly justifying their killing. The justification is unacceptable and, moreover, cannot explain the killing of children, older people, Bedouin citizens of Israel, who generally do not serve in the Israeli military, foreign workers and students or individuals of other nationalities who did not hold Israeli citizenship. It also cannot explain the murder of people after they had been captured or otherwise rendered *hors de combat*.

Hamas has also claimed that many Israeli civilians were killed by Israeli fire. It stated:

“The Israeli occupation army bombed the houses in the Israeli settlements where Palestinian fighters and Israelis were inside in a clear application of the Israeli army notorious ‘Hannibal Directive’”¹⁴⁹

As noted above and, in some cases, as acknowledged by Israeli military investigations, some Israeli civilians were indeed killed by Israeli forces in cases of mistaken identification and/or in application of the Hannibal Directive, an Israeli military protocol that puts Israeli forces at risk to prevent them from being captured.¹⁵⁰ However, as explored below, available evidence indicates that the vast majority of civilians were killed by Palestinian assailants, not Israeli military forces.

¹⁴³ Times of Israel, “Working through the trauma, Thai farmhands who survived Oct. 7 return to the fields”, 29 January 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/working-through-the-trauma-thai-farmhands-who-survived-oct-7-return-to-the-fields>

¹⁴⁴ Global News, “32 Thai nationals killed in Hamas’ Oct. 7 attacks, 25 being held hostage”, 21 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq3BqHaaxxY>; Times of Israel, “Thanakrit Prakotwong, 35: Thai laborer was youngest of 8 murdered by Hamas terrorists in Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7”, 23 March 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/thanakrit-prakotwong-35-thai-laborer-was-youngest-of-8>

¹⁴⁵ See section 5.1.6 “Nahal Oz”.

¹⁴⁶ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre, Clemence Felix Matanga, <https://oct7map.com/ClemenceFelixMatanga> (accessed 12 May 2025); Haaretz, “Tanzanian man whose body was recently identified was killed on Oct. 7, not kidnapped as first reported”, 18 November 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-11-18/ty-article/premium/tanzania-announces-death-of-one-of-its-citizens-kidnapped-by-hamas-in-gaza/0000018b-e24b-d168-a3ef-f7fb6b530000?lts=1745584610199>; BBC, “Clemence Mtenga tributes: Tanzanian student killed in Israel was a ‘leader’”, 24 November 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67512484>

¹⁴⁷ Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Swords of Iron: Civilian Casualties”, 8 October 2023 (updated 27 February 2025), <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-civilian-casualties>

¹⁴⁸ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁹ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ Jerusalem Post, “‘All means are kosher’: A look at the IDF’s controversial Hannibal Directive – explainer”, 27 February 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-844045>; Haaretz, “IDF Ordered Hannibal Directive on October 7 to Prevent Hamas Taking Soldiers Captive”, 7 July 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-07-07/ty-article-magazine/premium/idf-ordered-hannibal-directive-on-october-7-to-prevent-hamas-taking-soldiers-captive/00000190-89a2-d776-a3b1-fd45520000>; Times of Israel, “IDF officers invoked defunct ‘Hannibal Protocol’ during Oct. 7 fighting – report”, 7 July 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-officers-invoked-defunct-hannibal-protocol-during-oct-7-fighting-report/>; Jerusalem Post, “IDF carried out Hannibal Directive, new ‘Sword of Damocles’ operation on October 7”, 28 February 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-844008>

5.1.1 BE'ERI

Be'eri, a kibbutz located around 4km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and home to some 1,140 residents,¹⁵¹ experienced one of the deadliest attacks on 7 October 2023. According to an Israeli military investigation into the attack, 101 civilians were killed, in addition to 31 members of the Israeli military and security forces who came to fight the assailants.¹⁵² The figures broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.¹⁵³

Some families were almost annihilated, among them the Sharabi family. Lianne Brisley-Sharabi, a 48-year-old British-Israeli woman, and her two daughters, Noiya Sharabi, aged 16, and Yahel Sharabi, aged 13, were shot dead in their home, in the north-west of the kibbutz, after witnessing the abduction of the girls' father, Eli Sharabi, then aged 51, by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades who had broken into their home. Eli was held hostage in Gaza for 16 months, until his release on 8 February 2025.¹⁵⁴ Lianne's brother, Stephen Brisley, told Amnesty International that the only information he had about the killing of his sister and nieces was from two photographs and a short video which had been taken by a kibbutz resident the day after 7 October 2023 and shows the bodies of Lianne, Noiya and Yahel next to each other in a corridor on the ground floor of their home. The family dog had also been shot dead in the kitchen. Stephen told Amnesty International:

"When the Hamas terrorists broke into their home, Lianne, Eli and the girls were in the safe room, which was Yahel's bedroom, and Eli decided that he would not resist; he knew they would take him and hoped that Lianne and the girls would be safe. He believed that they were alive until his release. He thought he was going home to his wife and daughters. And the Hamas terrorists told him so as they made him practise what he was going to say at the time of his release. That was the last vicious thing they did before releasing him."¹⁵⁵

Amnesty International verified 25 videos related to the attack on Be'eri, which depict killings, abductions, burning of homes and vehicles, and looting of property.

Armed fighters reached Be'eri shortly after sunrise. CCTV footage from a security camera at the entrance gate to the kibbutz shows two armed men in camouflage-coloured military-style clothing – one wearing a green Al-Qassam Brigades headband – arriving at approximately 6.55am.¹⁵⁶ One of them breaks the guardroom window using a rifle, apparently to gain control of the gate, while the other guards the gate. Seconds after they seize the gate, a blue car approaches the entrance. The fighter wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband then runs towards the car and fires directly at the people inside. The driver appears injured and motionless in the next few frames, and the car, riddled with bullet holes, moves slightly forward. The gate then opens, and the fighters enter the kibbutz. CCTV recording from another security camera taken roughly two hours later shows the same car with the doors wide open and debris surrounding it.¹⁵⁷ Two fighters approach the vehicle and remove the bodies of three young men dressed in civilian clothing – two from the front seats and another from the back – violently dropping them on the ground. They then drag one of them away from the car before driving away in the same car. The men, Benayahu Bitton, aged 21, Maor Graziani, aged 22, and Yonatan Samerano, aged 23, had just fled the attack on the Nova festival.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Census Data 2022, Be'eri, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=dbfef74> (accessed 12 May 2025).

¹⁵² See Times of Israel, "Failure and slaughter: IDF's Be'eri probe shows army's colossal errors, residents' bravery", 11 July 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/failure-and-slaughter-idfs-beeri-probe-shows-armys-colossal-errors-residents-bravery>

¹⁵³ See Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Beeri, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/beeri> (accessed 30 April 2025); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

¹⁵⁴ See section 7.2 "Abuse of hostages in Gaza and family members" for details.

¹⁵⁵ Interview by voice call with Stephen Brisley, 7 July 2025.

¹⁵⁶ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 10 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "10-07-2023 Sat 05:55:30". However, Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it, along with sunrise data, and cross-referencing with witness testimony and other available reporting indicated that the camera used to record the footage was set approximately one hour behind the actual time of the event.

¹⁵⁷ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "10-07-2023 Sat 09:05:51", which is consistent with Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

¹⁵⁸ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre, Benayah Biton, <https://oct7map.com/BenayahuBiton> (accessed 30 April 2025); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre, Maor Graziani, <https://oct7map.com/MaorGraziani> (accessed 30 April 2025); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre, Yonatan Samerano, <https://oct7map.com/YonatanSamerano> (accessed 30 April 2025). See also The New York Times, "The Day Hamas Came", 22 December 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/12/22/world/europe/beeri-massacre.html> Yonatan Samerano's body was taken to Gaza. See section 6.3 "Seizure of bodies".



These three stills from CCTV footage taken by two security cameras in Be'eri show an attack on civilians on 7 October 2023. The first still (top) shows two fighters, including at least one from the Al-Qassam Brigades, arriving outside the kibbutz. The second (middle), taken by the same camera a minute later, shows a fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades pointing a rifle directly at the people inside a blue car approaching the entrance of the kibbutz. Other images from the same video show him firing it. The third (bottom), taken by another camera, shows fighters removing the bodies of three young men dressed in civilian clothing from the same blue car roughly two hours later.



Additional CCTV footage from the southern entrance to the kibbutz, recorded around 7.40am, shows at least 10 vehicles – mostly white pickup trucks – driving past the gate, carrying armed fighters.¹⁵⁹ A separate group of fighters is also seen on three motorbikes, with two already inside the kibbutz gate.

Amnesty International also verified footage showing armed fighters in the western area of the kibbutz. Three videos verified by Amnesty International appear to show instances of hostage-taking and possible killings of individuals who had been abducted by fighters and forced to walk through the streets. In one video filmed by an assailant, a group of people in civilian clothing – four women and one man – are seen walking with their hands tied behind their backs, some barefoot.¹⁶⁰ They are escorted by a group of fighters. One is wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband and most are armed, but three, including one on a motorcycle, are dressed in civilian clothing. Another video filmed by an assailant who is heard communicating over the radio, posted online by a news agency affiliated with Hamas, suggests that some of those initially abducted were later

¹⁵⁹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 16 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “10-07-2023... 07:39:50”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

¹⁶⁰ Video posted by Michael A. Horowitz on X on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

killed on the outskirts of the kibbutz.¹⁶¹ At least four bodies – who appear to be women – are shown lying on the ground, with clothing and hair consistent with that of the four women seen in the earlier footage. According to Kan, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, among those paraded through the streets of the kibbutz with their hands bound and later killed at the end of the road were Marcel Kaplun and Dror Kaplun, aged 64 and 68, respectively, a couple who had lived in Be’eri for the past two decades.¹⁶² Among the others identified as walking in the same line, also with her hands tied and later killed on the same road, was Kinneret Gat, a 67-year-old teacher from Be’eri.¹⁶³



↑ These two stills from a video filmed by an assailant show fighters escorting women in civilian clothing along a road in Be’eri with their hands tied behind their backs on 7 October 2023. Some are barefoot. Some of those abducted were killed later the same day on the outskirts of the kibbutz.

Videos filmed in the same western area of the kibbutz show more violence. In one video, fighters are walking among residential houses and firing rifles and an RPG.¹⁶⁴ Several cars are in flames. In another video, numerous fighters, at least one wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband, are walking on a street with multiple burnt and burning vehicles.¹⁶⁵ Satellite imagery from 10.35am and 11.18am local time on 7 October 2023 shows that homes along this street, on the west side of the kibbutz, are on fire at the time the imagery is taken.¹⁶⁶ Another video shows burnt bodies inside vehicles.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Video posted by وكالة شهاب للأخبار [Shehab News Agency] on its Telegram channel on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

¹⁶² Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Beerli, Kaplun Family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/beerli/kaplun> (accessed 12 May 2025). See also Times of Israel, “Marcelle Frailich Kaplun, 64: Longtime high school science teacher”, 21 October 2023 (updated 22 September 2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/marcel-frailich-kaplun-64-longtime-high-school-science-teacher>; Times of Israel, “Dror Kaplun, 68, death confirmed 2 months after Oct. 7 murder”, 27 November 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/presumed-captive-dror-kaplun-last-heard-from-in-his-safe-room>

¹⁶³ Times of Israel, “New Oct. 7 footage shows victim sticking tongue out at terrorists before her murder”, 27 September 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/new-oct-7-footage-shows-victim-sticking-tongue-out-at-terrorists-before-her-murder>

¹⁶⁴ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by Laarabi on X on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

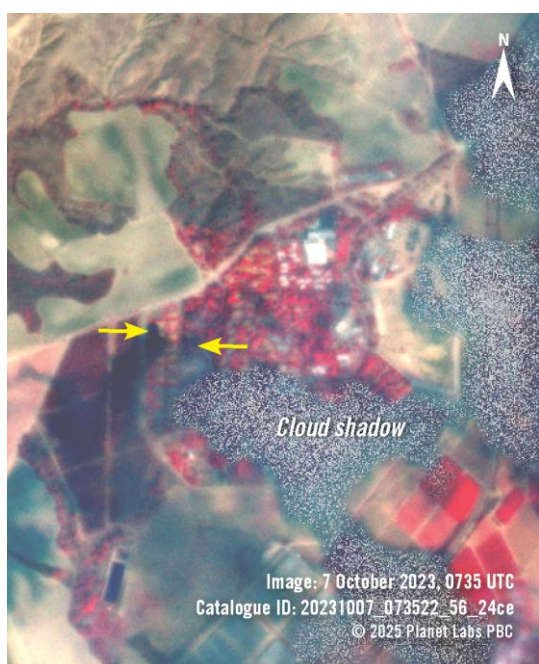
¹⁶⁵ Video posted by PetyrTrollish on X on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

¹⁶⁶ Planet Labs PBC, Catalogue ID 20231007_073524_89_24ce, 7 October 2023; ESA, Sentinel-2, Catalogue ID S2A_MSIL2A_20231007T081821_N0509_R121_T36RXV_20231007T113602, 7 October 2023.

¹⁶⁷ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 11 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.



↑ This still from a video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades shows burning homes and cars along a road in the western area of Be'eri on 7 October 2023.



↑ This false-colour, near-infrared satellite imagery from 10.35am local time (on the left) and 11.18am local time (on the right) on 7 October 2023 shows smoke – highlighted with arrows – rising from homes on the west side of Be'eri on fire.

Another Be'eri resident, 27-year-old Amos Alon, told Amnesty International that, when the attack started on the morning of 7 October 2023, he was staying at his brother's home in the “youth” neighbourhood and hid in a safe room there, while frequently exchanging messages with his parents and two brothers, who were sheltering in the safe room of the family home in a different neighbourhood:

“Some 20 to 30 Hamas guys entered the house [where the parents and two brothers were]. This was 6.45am. They immediately started breaking stuff and tried to open the safe room door. We never knew the door couldn't be locked.¹⁶⁸ So, my father and my two brothers held the handle for around six to seven hours. There were a lot of

¹⁶⁸ Safe rooms in residential houses and apartments, which often serve as bedrooms, do not have locks as they were designed to protect residents from rockets fired from Gaza by Palestinian armed groups rather than to impede the forcible entry of assailants.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

people, some of them civilians – a lot of movement. They were breaking things, opening the fridge, eating – as if they did not feel like they were in a war zone... They moved furniture, were getting ready for the army, placing their people on the roofs. The emergency [response] squad couldn't do anything... couldn't put their noses out because they would get shot from the roofs... There were maybe 10 [assailants] in the house... They couldn't get into the safe room but for some reason they did not shoot at the door... That was the first miracle. At 2.30pm they decided to burn the house so that the family would have to go out of the safe room. These were the worst hours for me; my parents wanted to go out of the room, and I had to argue with them. I told them to wait until they saw smoke inside the safe room. It was very hot but there was no smoke. And the second miracle is that this room has a different air conditioning system than the rest of the house. And the third miracle is that there was not a lot of furniture in the house, so the fire eventually started to die down, and the safe room door handle became less hot.

“At 5pm the fire decreased, and by then, there were no terrorists in the house. Then I focused on myself and my survival.

“Around 6pm terrorists came back, tried again to open the safe room door, but they couldn't open the door; the handle was melted, as you saw. So, that was the fourth miracle. At 9pm the last phone was dead so they couldn't communicate with me any more. We had an agreement: they should send me something every five minutes so I knew they were alive. Needless to say, sometimes 15 minutes went by without anything. For me that was the hardest time. I didn't know anything...

“At 11.30pm the special forces got to the house. They couldn't believe someone came out alive because of the state of the house. The terrorists had opened the main gas line, but it didn't explode. That was the fifth miracle.”¹⁶⁹

Amos also said that the assailants seemed to have a clear plan and to know the kibbutz's layout. He said they climbed onto the roofs of two-storey houses to control the area and set several houses on fire, possibly to drive people out of safe rooms. Video and drone footage verified by Amnesty International and satellite imagery analysed by it suggest that the fire, which burnt several houses in the kibbutz, had been deliberately caused on the morning of 7 October 2023.¹⁷⁰

Fourteen civilians were held by fighters in the house of Pessy Cohen. Around the house, there was shooting between fighters and Israeli military forces, who arrived in the afternoon, after the fighters had reportedly killed another civilian in the house.¹⁷¹ The fighters used the civilians as human shields and positioned them at risk of gunfire; one fighter surrendered, using one of the civilians being held, Yasmin Porat, as a shield. Finally, an Israeli tank fired two shells at the house. After the fighting, it was ascertained that 12 of the 14 civilians being held had been killed, including twins Liel Hetzroni and Yanai Hetzroni, aged 12, and Suhaib Abu Amer Razeem, a 22-year-old Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem and bus driver, who was abducted by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades while waiting to collect Nova festival-goers and taken to Pessy Cohen's house to act as a translator between the fighters and Israeli forces.¹⁷² It is not known exactly how many of the 12 were killed by the Israeli tank fire and how many were killed in the exchange of fire before that. Yasmin Porat and another civilian, Hadas Dagan, survived.¹⁷³

In addition to Liel and Yanai Hetzroni, some eight other children were among the civilians killed in Be'eri on 7 October 2023.¹⁷⁴ Avida Becher is recorded in the media saying that his 15-year-old son, Carmel Becher,

¹⁶⁹ Interview in person with Amos Alon, 26 March 2024, Be'eri, Israel (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

¹⁷⁰ A collapsed roof and fire damage on one house is visible at: Wion, “Israel-Hamas war: Drone footage shows devastation of Be'eri kibbutz”, 30 November 2023, <https://youtu.be/nr5ttKmMaks>; Planet Labs PBC, Catalogue ID 20231007_073524_89_24ce, 7 October 2023; ESA, Sentinel-2, Catalogue ID S2A_MSIL2A_20231007T081821_N0509_R121_T36RXV_20231007T113602, 7 October 2023; Planet Labs PBC, Catalogue ID 20231015_122436_ssc17_u0002, 15 October 2023.

¹⁷¹ Times of Israel, “Families of 13 people killed in October 7 Kibbutz Be'eri firefight demand probe”, 6 January 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/families-of-13-people-killed-in-october-7-kibbutz-beeri-firefight-demand-probe>

¹⁷² Video posted by Michael A. Horowitz on X on 1 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. See also Times of Israel, “Suhaib Abu Amer Razeem, 22: Minibus driver from East Jerusalem”, 1 April 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/suhaib-razeem-22-driver-from-east-jerusalem-killed-near-gaza>

¹⁷³ New York Times, “The day Hamas came”, 22 December 2023 (previously cited); AP, “Friendly fire may have killed their relatives on Oct. 7. These Israeli families want answers now”, 11 January 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-hostages-investigation-friendly-fire-3b6fdd4592957340b32a8ee71505b8e9>; Times of Israel, “Failure and slaughter: IDF's Be'eri probe shows army's colossal errors, residents' bravery” (previously cited).

¹⁷⁴ Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

was killed after being shot through the safe room door as they both tried to hold it shut; Avida's wife, Dana Becher, was also killed in the attack.¹⁷⁵

The youngest child killed in the 7 October 2023 attacks was nine-month-old Mila Cohen, who was killed alongside her father, Ohad Cohen, in Be'eri. The UN Commission of Inquiry reported:

“At the onset of the attack [on Be’eri], the family hid in the safe room of their house. At 11:47, Ohad texted to his cousin that militants were massacring residents and burning homes... The Commission assesses that at approximately 12:50 militants broke into the safe room, shot and killed baby Mila Cohen, who was held in her mother’s arms, and shot and killed Ohad Cohen. Attackers then captured Ohad’s wife and their two sons and brought them to the back gate of the kibbutz, where they encountered Israeli Security Forces’ firing in their direction. All three were seriously injured in the crossfire but survived.”¹⁷⁶

5.1.2 HOLIT

In Holit, one of the smallest kibbutzim in the areas surrounding Gaza and home to some 220 residents,¹⁷⁷ 16 civilians were killed when it was attacked on 7 October 2023, including a member of the kibbutz's emergency response squad and three migrant workers from Cambodia, Moldova and Thailand, according to Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.¹⁷⁸

The first time fighters were seen in Holit, located around 3km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, was around 6.45am, according to resident Moti Kakon, who spotted them from the window of his house.¹⁷⁹ Footage published by Kan, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, shows three fighters walking around the kibbutz; one has a green headband around his head, as worn by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.¹⁸⁰



This photograph, taken on 26 October 2023, shows a view of a burnt kitchen in one of the houses in Holit that were attacked by Palestinian assailants on 7 October 2023. © Yuri Cortez / AFP via Getty Images

¹⁷⁵ Reuters, “Hope and pain endure on Israeli kibbutz hit hard by October 7 attack”, 3 October 2024,

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=838625535106131>

¹⁷⁶ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3.

¹⁷⁷ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Census Data 2022, Holit*, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=dc33b77> (accessed 14 May 2025).

¹⁷⁸ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, *Mapping the Massacre* (previously cited). See also Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Holit, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/holit> (accessed 30 April 2025); Sagi Or and others, *Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023* (previously cited).

¹⁷⁹ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Holit, Kakon Family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/holit/kakon> (accessed 9 May 2025).

¹⁸⁰ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Holit, Kakon Family (previously cited).

Among those killed were 33-year-old mother of two Adi Vital-Kaploun and 32-year-old scholar and peace activist Haim Katzman. Survivor Avital Alajem confirmed to Amnesty International her testimony to media describing how fighters burst into her home at about 1.30pm, murdering her neighbour Haim Katzman. She said that the fighters “started bombing the door” of her home and then shot at the closet where they were hiding:

“We were hiding in the shelter. Haim Katzman, who was a friend of mine living next to me, and me – we were hiding in the closet... And then the terrorists came and they bombed the door. The bullets – they all entered into Haim Katzman’s body so I was saved thanks to him... He was murdered... I was saved because he was next to the door and they shot him and... I don’t know why – they [the fighters] just took me out of there and I was saved. He absorbed all the bullets into his body and when I went out I saw him dead.”¹⁸¹

The fighters brought to her home four-and-a-half-month-old Eshel Vital-Kaploun and his four-year-old brother, Regev Vital-Kaploun, sons of her neighbour Adi Vital-Kaploun, with whom she had been exchanging messages earlier that morning and who she later learnt had been killed in her home by the fighters.¹⁸² Upon hearing the warning sirens, Adi took the rifle of her absent husband, Anani Vital-Kaploun, and called him to ask him how to use it, and was subsequently killed.¹⁸³ Her relatives told media that she was shot dead by fighters in front of her children and that her son Regev remembered everything.¹⁸⁴

A photograph and videos recorded by the fighters show them holding Adi’s two children as they move around the house and the garden, and bandaging Regev’s injured foot; two of them are wearing green Al-Qassam Brigades headbands.¹⁸⁵ The children were subsequently left in the care of Avital. Avital and the two children were abducted by the fighters and taken on foot towards Gaza, with Regev injured and crying, but they were released and told to walk back before reaching Gaza.¹⁸⁶



↑ This still from a video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades shows an assailant holding one of Adi Vital-Kaploun’s two children as he moves around their house in Holit on 7 October 2023.

¹⁸¹ CNN, “Woman abducted by terrorists recounts harrowing experience”, 10 October 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2023/10/10/avital-alajem-israel-abducted-children-ac360-hnk-vpx.cnn>

¹⁸² Interview by voice call with Avital Alajem, 24 March 2024, confirming her testimony to Channel 13. Channel 13 news report, 9 October 2023, available at: barak6, 9.10.23 חטיפתה לעזה שחוררה סיפורה של אביטל אלדג'ם מחולית. [“The story of Avital Alajem from Holit. Her kidnapping to Gaza, her release 9.10.23”], 9 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cw14e6UImg> (in Hebrew).

¹⁸³ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Holit, Vital-Kaploun family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/holit/vital-kaploun> (accessed 9 May 2025).

¹⁸⁴ Globe and Mail, “Loved ones recount horrifying murder of Canadian Adi Vital-Kaploun who was shot by Hamas in front of children”, 11 October 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-family-recounts-last-moments-before-canadian-womans-kidnapping-by>

¹⁸⁵ Photographs posted by Yoseph Haddad on Facebook on 30 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades posted by Lebanese News and Updates on its Telegram channel on 13 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades posted by Abu Hothaifa on X on 13 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Holit, Vital-Kaploun family (previously cited).

¹⁸⁶ Al Jazeera news report, available at: Quds News Network, Telegram post, 12 October 2023, <https://t.me/QudsNen/81986> (in Arabic); Times of Israel, “IDF says Hamas video of hostages being released is propaganda”, 12 October 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-says-hamas-video-of-hostages-being-released-is-propaganda>

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

Another survivor, 16-year-old Rotem Matthias, recounted to Amnesty International how fighters killed both his mother, Schahar Matthias, aged 50, and his father, Shlomi Matthias, aged 47, who were both musicians.¹⁸⁷ They were among the founders of a bilingual school that taught children in Hebrew and Arabic, under the slogan: “Jewish Arab Education for Equality”.¹⁸⁸ Rotem also confirmed to Amnesty International what he had said to media.¹⁸⁹

Rotem said that, as all three were sheltering in the safe room of their home, Rotem’s mother made him lie on the floor in a small space between the bed and the wall and lay on top of him, shielding him and saving his life. He told Amnesty International:

“From about 7.10am we were aware on 7 October morning that this was different [to previous attacks]. My parents locked the front door, spoke to the two older sisters [who were in their own apartments elsewhere in the kibbutz]. At some point, my father left the safe room to get a hammer, and we moved a heavy mattress to try and bar the safe room door [which did not lock]. They told me to lie down hidden between the wall and the bed, where the mattress had been. My mother was on the bed next to me, shielding me, and my father was standing by the door. I could hear shots fired outside – automatic fire – and screams. We heard people entering the house – you can hear every step – then shots into the room, then a blast: a grenade was thrown into the room. I heard humming and a lot of dust in the air. I saw figures with weapons in the room, with headbands. Everything appeared grey. They were in the room for 45 seconds and then left, and I knew my mother had died; I heard her convulsing. I was in the small space between the wall and the bed and she was on top of me and the terrorists did not see me. She shielded me. There was so much blood, so much. I had a strange taste in my mouth, which was blood and body parts that had flown into my mouth. I wrote on the family WhatsApp group around 8.40am: ‘Mom and Dad are dead, sorry.’ At first my sisters thought it was my dark humour.

“I had a hole in my stomach and shrapnel in my ankle. I went to the laundry room to look for cloth to make a tourniquet. I had been on a first aid course that summer. Full of adrenaline, which I later understood explains why there was no bleeding at first. For three hours I hid between the bed and the wall in my parents’ bedroom, covered with a blanket. Two more people came in and went away again: they took a lens but not the camera, some weights, alcohol.

“I spoke to Magen David Adom [Israel’s national emergency medical service and member of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies] and to family by WhatsApp. I could not get hold of my sisters. I kept hearing shots and explosions. I saw an RPG fly by the window. I waited for hours hiding in the laundry room.

“Finally, soldiers took me to the neighbours, who were also looking after a girl in second grade who had been rescued from the closet in her house. Around 6pm I was evacuated to the front gate, then in another armoured vehicle to a junction, then in a different armoured vehicle. I saw a burning tank on the way, many bodies, a head burst open. I was taken in an armoured vehicle with an older couple to Ofakim then in an ambulance to Soroka hospital. There were so many wounded there, people holding their limbs. I met my uncle and grandfather there in hospital and was wheeled into surgery.

“When I came out [of the operating theatre] I had to say for the first time that I had no parents to the staff, for the consent. Then I spoke to my sisters for the first time in many hours and cried; I thought they were dead. They spoke to me from the Gvulot Junction [on Road 232] where they were evacuated from the kibbutz.”¹⁹⁰

Rotem showed Amnesty International the bullets and casings which the fighters fired in his home, and the ball bearings from the grenade they threw inside the safe room, which killed his parents. There were nine or 10 oxidized bullets and 20 bullet casings. He also had the bullet taken from his stomach and the fragment taken from his ankle. He said he kept them to remember.

¹⁸⁷ Interview in person with Rotem Matthias, 29 January 2025, Mazkeret Batya, Israel.

¹⁸⁸ Guardian, “‘My parents sacrificed their lives for me’: Agony of 16-year-old survivor of Hamas attack”, 14 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/14/hamas-attack-survivor-testimony-killed-my-parents-and-laughed>

¹⁸⁹ CNN, “‘Mom and dad are dead. Sorry’: Teen texts sister that their parents were killed by Hamas”, 12 October 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2023/10/12/matias-siblings-intv-hamas-parents-killed-text-vpx.cnn>; Israel in USA, TikTok post: “16-year-old Rotem Eliyahu Matthias from Kibbutz Holit witnessed both his parents get murdered by Hamas terrorists”, 11 May 2024, <https://www.tiktok.com/@israelinusa/video/7367047146425601311>; Montana Tucker, “Meet Rotem Matias”, undated, <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1174529706948537>

¹⁹⁰ Interview in person with Rotem Matthias, 29 January 2025, Mazkeret Batya, Israel (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

Salem Naif, a dairy farm manager and Bedouin citizen of Israel, told Amnesty International that he arrived in Holit at about 6am with four of his children, who sometimes accompanied him on Saturdays, as it was a quiet day and they could play on the farm.

“I took a tractor. My daughter took the milk tank. She gave milk to half of the calves and me and the little ones gave milk to the young calves. Then my phone started ringing with alarms – it was maybe 6.27am – showing rockets coming in from Gaza. I thought at first it was a mistake.

“I called the kids to come quickly. It was fun at first. We ran to a shelter and I called my wife first of all: ‘Listen, there’s rockets. Don’t stress out! I’m going to get the kids back home to you.’ I promised her I would get the kids back to her...

“But it didn’t end, and now we hear light weapons... It doesn’t end – rockets, smoke – I’ve only seen things like this in the movies. Then I start getting incoming calls – over 300 calls, I counted later. It’s my brothers, family members, the director of the dairy. They all say, ‘Hang in there! The army will get there soon.’ It’s like this all the way to 8.30am. Around then, my brother calls, says, ‘Are you alone? Is your wife there?’ They caught [three members of the Zayadna family who were abducted from Holit and taken into captivity in Gaza]¹⁹¹ and two Thais. We saw it on Telegram. So I knew they were kidnapped. Before then, all I knew is that he’s not answering... So we go to the office; it’s a light tin structure. We walk in. I give the kids some water and I charge up my phone; my battery had gone by then. The office is not protected – just the base is concrete – so I get the kids to lie down on the floor – there’s like 30cm of concrete.

“Around 11am, we hear light weapon fire and shouts, and we see in the videos people send to us that they’re inside, there’s bodies, they’ve killed children. At 11.30am, I talk to the rear guard [military]. I say, ‘Come, help me!’ He says, ‘The army will get there. Just don’t come out!’ I heard voices, and the girl says, ‘Dad, this must be the army.’ I raise up my head to look and I see that the cows’ bales of straw are on fire and armed people are walking around. I say to her, ‘That’s not the army.’

“They open the door, shout at me, ‘Don’t move!’...

“I think there were four or five; I remember five, my kid remembers four. He asks, ‘Are you armed?’ ‘No.’ ‘Don’t do anything and I won’t do anything’... He knew I’m Muslim; my daughter has a hijab. I told him, ‘I’m Muslim. I’m not a threat to you. They had army clothes, armed with weapons’...


“He called his friends over. They say, ‘Don’t be afraid! We won’t do anything to you if you have no weapons.’ I say, ‘I have nothing.’ He gave the kids some water. They say, ‘We’re getting you out of here. We need to take you to Gaza.’ ‘Why?’ ‘This will soon be a battlefield. The army will get here and there will be fighting.’ I started begging, ‘Help me, my kids’... He says, ‘I have to take you.’ They start taking us, maybe 200m... But then we see a helicopter above the kibbutz. To this day, if my kid sees a helicopter, he runs into the house. So, they said, ‘OK, we take you back. Don’t come out until it’s quiet.’ And they start talking among themselves, and I’m listening. One guy suggests, ‘Let him take his car home.’ The second guy says, ‘No, the team will kill him.’ I didn’t understand them. They ask me, ‘How would you go home?’ I said, ‘I go like this, through this road.’ I didn’t understand. They meant the roads, that there are their people there. They left me, took the tractor and went. They left one guy, and he keeps eyeing me and playing with his weapon, like he wants to kill me. But there’s one guy in charge, he gives orders, they call him *muallim* [“boss” in Arabic]. So we felt more comfortable, the army will come...

“Just then – maybe you heard about this – four women soldiers got there with tanks. One of them got with her tank right here and they [the fighters] start being afraid... And now they flipped 180 degrees. They started being nice... I said to myself, maybe they’re Shin Bet [Israel Security Agency], because they changed so suddenly; before they were bad and now they’re nice. They say to me, ‘How would you drive home?’ I didn’t understand the question. I said, ‘I turn the car on and I drive.’ They said, ‘Let’s go, and if you shout, we kill the little boy.’ I didn’t say anything, but in my head I was thinking about driving home. Outside, I only saw them, but I felt strong because the army had arrived, and they were afraid. And the whole time I’m focused on the kids, because of what we see. We saw the Thai [workers’] dorms; the houses were burnt. We get to the car, and all four doors are open. I said to them, ‘I’m not touching this; maybe it’s boobytrapped. You do it.’ I thought they put a bomb inside it or something. And the kids – they went into the dairy offices right by there, drank some water. So, he turns on the car; I gave him the code. He drove a few metres ahead and said, ‘We’re going.’ And we’re supposed to climb in

¹⁹¹ See section 6.1 “Abduction of civilian hostages”.

and go to Gaza. In that moment, I said to the kids, 'Let's run. Remember what I said before, if it's our day to die or not? And we haven't died, so maybe it's not our day to die. We ran and hid under some bushes, each one of us with a stone or two in our hands. We wait, and then we're not sure where to run to. We see the helicopter and the tank, but no soldiers. And on the way, one of the girls says, 'There's army at the entrance.' 'How do you know?' 'Because I see an Israeli flag waving.' So we walk towards them. But it's very dangerous; we walk very slowly. I don't run and hug the children; it was very dangerous. We talk, and they agree that I can come closer...' ¹⁹²



 ↑ This photograph, taken on 1 November 2023, shows burnt personal belongings in a house that was set on fire during the attack on Holit on 7 October 2023. © Alexi J. Rosenfeld/Getty Images

In Holit, as elsewhere, fighters attempted to kill and abduct many more civilians, both Israeli residents and foreign workers.

Moti Kakon managed to shoot one of the fighters who broke into his home and to redirect towards them a grenade they had thrown at the safe room where he and his family were sheltering, likely preventing them from being killed or taken hostage. ¹⁹³

In another incident, Withawat Kunwong, a 30-year-old agricultural worker from Thailand, told media that he was injured by an assailant in civilian clothing who tried to decapitate him with a kitchen knife, but did not succeed because he fought back and the knife was blunt. ¹⁹⁴

5.1.3 KFAR AZZA

The population of Kfar Azza, a kibbutz located less than 2km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and home to a population of some 900 residents, ¹⁹⁵ was heavily impacted when it was attacked on 7 October 2023 by assailants, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. According to an Israeli military investigation into the attack, 62 of the kibbutz's residents were killed; 57 were civilians, including seven of the 14 members of the kibbutz's emergency response squad, while five were soldiers and one was a

¹⁹² Interview in person with Salem Naif, 5 August 2024, Beersheva, Israel (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

¹⁹³ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Holit, Kakon Family (previously cited).

¹⁹⁴ CNN, "Traumatized Thai farmers recount horror of Hamas massacre as families wait for news of loved ones held hostage", 30 October 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/30/asia/thailand-hamas-survivors-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹⁹⁵ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Census Data 2022, Kfar Azza, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=a01b4bc> (accessed 14 May 2025).

member of the Israel Security Agency (also known as Shabak or Shin Bet).¹⁹⁶ The figures broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.¹⁹⁷ Most people were killed in the first hours of the attack, before the arrival of Israeli military and security forces.¹⁹⁸

Also killed were 18 members of the Israeli military and security forces who reached Kfar Azza several hours after the attack began and clashed with fighters until the late afternoon of 10 October 2023, far longer than in most of the other locations attacked on 7 October 2023.¹⁹⁹

Kfar Azza was one of two localities where fighters arrived in motorized paragliders (the other was Netiv HaAsara). Six fighters arrived on three paragliders shortly after the opening salvo of rockets fired from Gaza landed in the area around 6.30am. They were shortly after joined by scores (some 250 in all according to the Israeli military investigation) of other fighters, some of whom barricaded themselves in homes from where they engaged in armed clashes with the Israeli military and security forces for three days.²⁰⁰

Amnesty International analysed 11 videos and 19 photographs taken during the attack on Kfar Azza, before and after the arrival of the first Israeli military and security forces.

Three videos verified by Amnesty International confirm that Palestinian fighters used paragliders to land in the kibbutz between 6.30am and 6.45am. In one of them, residents of Kfar Azza recorded three paragliders approaching the kibbutz.²⁰¹ In the other two, two paragliders are seen abandoned on the streets in the west and north of the kibbutz.²⁰² According to footage from a security camera, a white truck entered the kibbutz through one of its northern gates at 7.01am.²⁰³ This footage was initially shared on the kibbutz's WhatsApp group and later posted on Telegram.²⁰⁴

In three other videos verified by Amnesty International, heavily armed fighters are seen roaming the kibbutz on foot. In one of the videos, apparently filmed by one of the assailants, at least 10 armed fighters are walking around residential homes in the kibbutz.²⁰⁵ They carry AKMS, AKS-74U and other AK-pattern rifles. Loud gunshots are audible in the background. In another video, which also appears to have been recorded by an assailant, a group of at least 10 armed men, some of whom can be seen in the first video, stand behind houses in the kibbutz.²⁰⁶ As the sound of gunshots and Israeli warning sirens is heard in the background, some of the fighters appear to take cover behind trees and between homes. The fighters carry PK-pattern general-purpose machine guns, an RPG launcher and customized AKM-pattern rifles. A third video, recorded in the same location, shows two armed men trying to reload an RPG, while two fighters approach homes in the background and others stand in the foreground.²⁰⁷

Most of the men visible in the videos are wearing green camouflage-coloured military-style clothing and body armour vests, while several are dressed in civilian clothing. At least one individual is wearing a green headband, typically associated with the Al-Qassam Brigades.

¹⁹⁶ See Times of Israel, "Terrorists took Kfar Aza in an hour. Recapturing it took the IDF days, probe finds", 3 March 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/terrorists-took-kfar-aza-in-an-hour-recapturing-it-took-the-idf-days-probe-finds>

¹⁹⁷ See Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Kfar Aza, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/kfar-aza> (accessed 30 April 2025); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

¹⁹⁸ New York Times, "The long wait for help as massacres unfolded in Israel", 11 October 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/11/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-hamas-attack-timeline.html>

¹⁹⁹ Times of Israel, "Terrorists took Kfar Aza in an hour. Recapturing it took the IDF days, probe finds" (previously cited); Haaretz, "IDF's Kfar Azza investigation" (previously cited).

²⁰⁰ Haaretz, "IDF's Kfar Azza investigation" (previously cited).

²⁰¹ Ynetnews, "'A professional, sane voice': Ynet bids farewell to slain photographer", 20 October 2023, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/h1xccmlzt>

²⁰² Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 14 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by GeoRaccoon on X on 28 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁰³ Video posted by מבזקי רעם - מבזקי חדשות בזמן אמת ["Thunder flashes – Real-time news flashes"] on its Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video shows a television screen playing timestamped CCTV footage, which, at the start of the video, displays the time as "07:01:35". The Israeli military investigation noted: "Surveillance cameras were installed only at the armoury, the entrance gate, and a few homes but did not record footage, making it difficult to obtain visual documentation." Haaretz, "IDF's Kfar Azza Investigation" (previously cited).

²⁰⁴ Kan, Kfar Aza, Bar Kislev, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/kfar-aza/kislev> (accessed on 9 May 2025).

²⁰⁵ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 12 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁰⁶ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 14 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁰⁷ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 12 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.



↑ This still from a video apparently filmed by one of the assailants shows armed fighters walking on foot through Kfar Azza during the attack on the kibbutz on 7 October 2023. Other images from videos apparently recorded by assailants show at least 10 armed fighters moving among residential homes.

According to the Israeli military investigation, by the time the kibbutz's emergency response squad reached the armoury to take the weapons stored there, the place had already been ransacked by the attackers, seemingly indicating that the latter knew where it was.



↑ This photograph, taken on 4 January 2024, shows burnt homes in Kfar Azza, following the 7 October 2023 attack on the kibbutz. © Noam Galai/Getty Images

Among the civilians murdered in Kfar Azza were Hadar Rosenfeld, a 30-year-old accountant, and her husband, Itay Berdichsky, an electrical engineer also aged 30, who were killed in their home, leaving behind their 10-month-old twin boys, who survived despite spending hours alone without food or water; and Hadar's cousin Yahav Winner, a 36-year-old actor and filmmaker, who was killed in his home while his wife

escaped with their newborn baby girl (three weeks old at the time) and hid nearby for hours until they were rescued.

Hadar's brother, Dvir Rosenfeld, who lived next to Hadar, told Amnesty International that he was in touch with his sister over WhatsApp throughout the attack but could not help her or her family. During the attack, Dvir, his wife and their 11-month-old baby boy were in their home. Dvir told Amnesty International:

"We woke up at 6.15am and I organized our baby to go out for a walk and at about 6.30am the Red Alert alarms [warning of rocket fire] sounded as hundreds of rockets were falling. We went to our safe room and immediately started to hear shooting and explosions and shortly after that – at about 6.50am to 7am – I heard Arabic being spoken outside our safe room and the electricity was cut off and we were left in the dark. I tried to ring first the kibbutz's first responders [emergency response squad], but there was no answer. Meanwhile, messages were coming through on WhatsApp from neighbours calling for help, saying their family members were killed: 'My mum was shot', 'I am injured', etc. We realized that this attack was much worse than usual. Rockets fell in and around the kibbutz and also on houses. I started receiving messages from residents of other places in the region, not only from our kibbutz.

"The last message I received from my sister was at 6.55am, when she said, 'How delightful to be stuck in the safe room with two diapers full of poo.' She had not yet realized at that time what was really happening. With no electricity and everyone sending messages, many messages were not getting through.

"I tried to ring the army, the secret service [Israel Security Agency, also known as Shabak or Shin Bet] to get news as we were stuck with no air, no light and no water. Our safe rooms were just another room in the house, but made of concrete, designed to protect from rockets. Many doors and windows did not lock and were not blast-proof, and the terrorists shot through the doors and also used mines [referring to explosives].

"Itay, my brother-in-law, was shot from outside the safe room and Hadar was shot dead while she was in the kitchen preparing milk bottles for the babies – her body on the kitchen floor with two empty milk bottles. The terrorists first shot her from outside and then went in and shot her at close range. The bullet holes in the house tell that story.

"They also shot through the door of the safe room and injured Itay and then went in and shot him dead. The twin boys were left alone for almost 14 hours with no food or water. The terrorists used them as bait. People who heard them cry and went to try to help got shot; some of them were injured and others were killed. Neighbours heard this from inside their homes.

"Itay was shot twice – two bullets in the body – and then shot in the head. There were blood traces on the floor of the safe room, where he seemingly tried to move away from the door to the corner of the room, and a bullet hole in the floor suggests that he was then shot in the head at close range.

"My cousin Yahav resisted the terrorists' attempts to open the window of the safe room and that gave his wife, Shaili, time to run away with the baby. She managed to hide under some bushes and then in a house until they were rescued. While in hiding, she had no food or diapers for the baby. Yahav was killed; he was shot in the back and then the terrorists set the house on fire.

"We (me and my wife and our baby) survived by pure luck. We stayed in the safe room of our home for 24 hours, until the army came to rescue us. I went out of the safe room after 12 hours to get some food and water for the baby, but we had little food in the house as we had just come back from abroad the previous evening.

"Luckily, the terrorists did not try to come into our home. Our neighbour said that he saw them in our garden, but they did not come in. I had left the front door wide open so that our dog, who had run away scared from the rocket explosions, could come back in, and so perhaps the terrorists thought that we had fled or that other terrorists had already got into our house."²⁰⁸

Ziv Stahl, who was visiting her sister in Kfar Azza on 7 October 2023, told Amnesty International about the shock of realizing the scale and gravity of the unfolding attack and the impossibility of fleeing as the

²⁰⁸ Interview by voice call with Dvir Rosenfeld, 19 September 2024.

assailants broke into the kibbutz while rockets launched from Gaza were raining down on the area and residents were seeking cover indoors:

“After 15 minutes or so, the alarm [warning of rocket fire] stopped, and it seemed to be quiet. We left the safe room and I went outside to smoke a cigarette on the front porch. I heard shots, but from a distance. It was 6.40am, maybe 6.45am, so I assumed they were from the area of the fence because you can sometimes hear them... After two to three minutes, there was another alarm, and I was rushing inside, and my brother-in-law is right behind me. As we entered the safe room, he says that he saw terrorists on the sidewalk near the house. He goes away again, and he went to get the revolver from the bedroom, and then we shouted to him to get in the safe room, and he didn’t come in, and we heard a really loud shot... My sister wanted to go see what was up with him, and her daughter and I shouted at her not to go... And then [my brother-in-law] came back and we shut ourselves in the safe room, and he lay down outside the safe room with the revolver drawn, and that’s how he stayed the whole time; he lay down on the floor guarding us.

“We were worried for my other brother, who was camping in the open in Assaf Simhoni forest; he’s got a camper van. We were worried for him, and worried for my sister-in-law, Mira, who was home alone and wasn’t answering. But we weren’t very worried about her; she was always going to help people in these situations, as she was part of the resilience support group, we assumed that’s what was going on. As the hours went by it became more worrying... We knew about Mira only after two and a half days. The neighbours were the last to see her, and they knew from the morning of 7 October. We had written to them. We said, ‘Mira’s not answering. Can you go check up on her?’ He went into the house and saw that they had thrown a grenade and shot her – shot her and the two dogs. He just didn’t want to tell us like that, but we know that he saw for sure that she was dead. The official announcement from the state came two weeks later.

“At 12.30pm my niece... – she was 20 – and her boyfriend... showed up at the house; we didn’t even know that they had slept in the kibbutz... Her apartment is in the “young generation” neighbourhood [in the north-east of the kibbutz, where single young adults lived]. They arrived with him bleeding really badly. My sister and her husband placed him in the living room and then moved him to another room. He’s a medic, and one of my nephews is a paramedic, so he explained how to do a tourniquet. Then they brought him back to the safe room. My brother-in-law brought water – salt water – and my sister and I each held a tourniquet over one hand.

“They knew that the terrorists were breaking into houses one by one. They told us that they were in the safe room and heard them [the assailants] enter the apartment. He held the door and she hid under the bed. They shot him, and he fell. They somehow escaped from the window. She put a tourniquet on him, made with her pants... It was only by a miracle that there was no one there. They were shot at, lost each other in the melee, found each other again. They made their way across the kibbutz. It’s quite a distance... Most of what we did was take care of [my niece’s boyfriend]. So, there was the business with the tourniquet, keeping it on and tight, and he was suffering and in pain, so we tried to calm him, to distract him, do breathing exercises with him, because – we asked – they explained to us we can’t give him painkillers. So, we keep him talking to keep him conscious. It was about finding a position – the towels were soaked with blood – and keeping him calm so he doesn’t cry out. He had been shot, he had a bullet in one hand that just went through his hand; and a bullet through his other hand, which exited in his arm. I held his left hand; the little finger was shattered... there was no bone left. As the hours passed, it becomes more difficult, he becomes more impatient. He also understood the consequences of so many hours with a tourniquet, and he could only take Optalgin [a mild painkiller] for the pain.

“I called the police shortly after and my niece and her boyfriend arrived – around noon. I told them we have a gunshot wound here – we need treatment and extraction – and they told me, ‘That’s impossible. It won’t happen. We can’t come.’ At 9.30pm, a Yamam [National Counter-Terrorism Unit of the Israel Border Police] unit came in thanks to a cousin of [my niece’s boyfriend]. They were a long while in touch with my niece until they arrived. [My niece’s boyfriend] has only now been released from hospital; he has had seven operations, and it’s been six months, and is now having physiotherapy.”²⁰⁹

Another resident of the kibbutz, 22-year-old Neta Portal, told media that the attackers shot through the door of the safe room where she and her partner, Santiago Peres, were sheltering with other neighbours and broke into it: “They were shooting people. They were shooting the kids. And the people were shouting, ‘Please no, please no.’” As the attackers threw a grenade into the room, she and Santiago jumped out of the

²⁰⁹ Interview in person with Ziv Stahl, 3 April 2024, Tel Aviv, Israel (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

window and fled while the attackers shot at them. She said: “The terrorists saw us and began to shoot like we were nothing.” She was shot multiple times in her leg and her hand and he was shot in his leg.²¹⁰

Testimonies of other surviving residents describing to media the messages they received from neighbours during the attack indicate that fighters went from house to house to attack residents. One was reported saying:


“In the neighbourhood WhatsApp group, everyone started sending messages, like dominos falling one after the other: ‘They’re in my house, they’re in my house’”. Another left a voice message on the chat: “They’re shooting at all the houses. Report it, call people. They’re breaking into all the homes.”²¹¹

Two videos verified by Amnesty International show the extensive destruction to residential property in Kfar Azza.²¹² The footage depicts destroyed homes, broken windows and doors and, in some cases, signs of burning. Marks of apparent bullet impact are also visible on walls, doors and furniture.

5.1.4 MAGEN

Ten people – five civilians, including three emergency response squad members, and five soldiers – were killed in Magen, a kibbutz located around 5km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and home to some 540 residents,²¹³ and the nearby Maon Junction on Road 232 when it and other nearby communities were attacked by fighters on 7 October 2023, according to Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.²¹⁴



 ↑ This still from CCTV footage shows fighters on six motorcycles opening fire multiple times on a passing civilian vehicle, which slows to a stop. The attack at the Maon Junction on Road 232, near Magen, on 7 October 2023, killed Fatima al-Talqat, a Bedouin resident of the town of Ar'ara in the Negev/Naqab region and mother of nine children.

CCTV footage verified by Amnesty International captured an incident approximately 1km north of Magen.²¹⁵ The video shows fighters on six motorcycles. As they reach a junction, identified as the Maon Junction on

²¹⁰ BBC, “Kfar Aza kibbutz massacre: Father saves daughter he hadn’t seen for six years”, 13 October 2023

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67089114>

Amnesty International could not corroborate the statement that children were shot in this incident. However, it is aware of several cases in which children were killed when fighters shot into safe rooms in residential homes knowing that children might be present. See also Ynetnews, “Technion-developed device helps Neta walk again after being injured in Hamas attack”, 24 February 2024, https://www.ynetnews.com/health_science/article/skein5vhp

²¹¹ Times of Israel, “‘Like dominos falling’: Young Kfar Aza residents recall carnage of Oct. 7”, 18 January 2024

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/like-dominos-falling-young-kfar-aza-residents-recall-carnage-of-oct-7/>

²¹² Two videos posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 10 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²¹³ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Census Data 2022, Magen, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=e65cb3b> (accessed 14 May 2025).

²¹⁴ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre, <https://oct7map.com> (accessed 30 April 2025). See also Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Kfar Aza, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/kfar-aza> (accessed 30 April 2025); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

²¹⁵ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 17 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

Road 232, and turn east, away from Magen, they open fire multiple times on a passing civilian vehicle, which slows to a stop.

The attack killed Fatima al-Talqat, a Bedouin resident of the town of Ar'ara in the Negev/Naqab region and mother of nine children. Her husband, Hamad Abu Arar, told Human Rights Watch that, at the time, his wife was driving him to work at the moshav of Mivtahim. Also in the vehicle was their eight-month-old son, Elias. Hamad said he managed to escape with his son and hid in an electricity junction box on the side of the road, where they stayed for six hours until help arrived.²¹⁶

5.1.5 NAHAL OZ

Twenty-four people – 13 civilian residents, including two emergency response squad members and two foreign nationals, and three members of the military and security forces that came to fight the assailants – were killed during the attack on Nahal Oz on 7 October 2023, according to an Israeli military investigation into the attack.²¹⁷ The military investigation's figures for the death toll in the kibbutz, located less than 2km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and home to some 550 residents,²¹⁸ broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.²¹⁹

Bari Meirovich, the head of the kibbutz's emergency response squad, who was in the kibbutz at the time of the attack, told Amnesty International that the attack began in the early morning hours. Yair Yifrah, another resident of Nahal Oz, told Amnesty International that he tried calling Ilan Fiorentino, the security coordinator (*ravshatz*)²²⁰ of the kibbutz's emergency response squad, shortly after 8am, but obtained no response. At the time, Yair was escaping from the attack on the Nova festival, which he had attended.²²¹ It turned out that Ilan had been killed trying to repel the assailants.²²²

Bari Meirovich identified three other families who had members who were killed and taken hostage that morning – the Arava family, the Idan family and the Zohar family – as living in a row of houses located on the northern outskirts of the kibbutz.²²³ “They [the assailants] just zeroed in on that area. They were prepared; it wasn't random.”²²⁴

Amnesty International verified segments of two separate videos live-streamed on Facebook accounts of captured residents of Nahal Oz. The footage was recorded by fighters using residents' phones after seizing them during an assault on their homes.

In an eight-minute segment of the first video, which was recorded inside the house of Dikla Arava, her partner Noam Elkayim and his two daughters, Ella Elyakim and Dafna Elyakim, along with Dikla and her son, Tomer Eliaz-Arava, are being forced by armed fighters to sit near a window and remain still. Noam is visibly injured and bleeding from his leg. The armed fighters demand identification documents and ask for information about the layout of the neighbourhood. At minute 4:31 in the segment, one of the armed men orders 17-year-old Tomer to stand up and leave the house with him. Before departing, the fighter tells Dikla: “I don't kill children.” Tomer is then taken outside and compelled to search for neighbours in the area and knock on doors under the direction of the fighters, who thereby endangered him. Several armed fighters can be seen moving between houses, at least one of whom is from the Al-Qassam Brigades.²²⁵

²¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, “*I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind*”: Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel (previously cited). See also Israel Nitzan, X post: “On October 7th, Hamad Abu Arar, a Muslim Arab citizen of Israel, was stopped at an intersection when 8 Hamas terrorists fired at his car and murdered his wife.”, 10 November 2023, <https://x.com/IsraelNitzan/status/1722962370392138017>

²¹⁷ See Times of Israel, “*Civilians, police stopped 1st wave of terrorists at Nahal Oz; IDF arrived 7 hours later*”, 4 March 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/civilians-police-stopped-1st-wave-of-terrorists-at-nahal-oz-idf-arrived-7-hours-later>

²¹⁸ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022 Census Data, Nahal Oz, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=6fde5d9> (accessed 14 May 2025).

²¹⁹ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited). See also Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Nahal Oz, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nahal-oz> (accessed 30 April 2025); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

²²⁰ *Ravshatz*, a Hebrew acronym for “civilian security coordinator”, is a role in the emergency response squad who liaises with the local Israeli military presence.

²²¹ Interview in person with Yair Yifrah, 16 May 2024.

²²² See Times of Israel, “*Civilians, police stopped 1st wave of terrorists at Nahal Oz; IDF arrived 7 hours later*” (previously cited); Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Nahal Oz, Fiorentino family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nahal-oz/fiorentino> (accessed 30 April 2025); October 7 Memorial, Ilan Fiorentino, <https://october7memorial.com/memorial/ilan-fiorentino> (accessed 9 May 2025).

²²³ On the Idan family, see BBC, “*‘Hamas said they wouldn't shoot, then murdered my daughter’*”, 23 October 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67192885>

²²⁴ Interview in person with Bari Meirovich, 8 May 2024 (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

²²⁵ Video posted by The Slaughter 710 on its Telegram channel on 30 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. Two and a half minutes of the same segment was posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 12 October 2023 and is also held on file by Amnesty International.

In a two-minute segment of the second video, Tomer is seen sitting on the floor inside the Idan family home, alongside Gali Idan and Tsachi Idan and two of their children, Yael Idan, aged 12, and Shachar Idan, aged nine. Gunfire is heard in the background. The armed men ask for family members' identification documents and place of birth.²²⁶

What is not visible in the video is the body of Gali's and Tsachi's 18-year-old daughter, Maayan Idan, who, according to an interview Gali gave to the BBC, was shot and killed by the attackers inside the family home earlier that day. Additional footage shared by the Idan family depicts Gali and Tsachi on the same floor, attempting to shield their children with their bodies as loud gunshots are audible in the background. In the video, Tsachi has blood on his hand. According to Gali, the blood belonged to Maayan.²²⁷

In a television documentary, Yael recounted that she and her sister Maayan were hiding under a bed when Palestinian assailants arrived at their house and demanded that the family open the door.²²⁸ According to Yael, their father, Tsachi, attempted to hold the door shut.²²⁹ Maayan then left the hiding place to assist him. The fighters reportedly opened fire at the door and Maayan was struck in the neck by a bullet. According to multiple interviews, armed fighters transported Tsachi out of the kibbutz, leaving Gali and the children at home.²³⁰ Tsachi was killed while in captivity in Gaza on an unknown date and, although his body was returned to Israel on 26 February 2025 in a hostage-prisoner exchange, the cause of his death had not been established as of 4 December 2025, with Hamas alleging that he was killed in an Israeli air strike while the Israeli government claimed that he was killed by his captors.

Shortly after, Tomer Eliaz-Arava managed to escape armed fighters and hide in the kibbutz, according to an Israeli military investigation into the attack on Nahal Oz, which concluded that it is highly likely that Tomer was mistakenly killed by Israeli military fire due to a misidentification.²³¹

According to findings from the same investigation, his mother Dikla, her partner Noam and his two daughters, Ella and Dafna, were abducted by Palestinian fighters and forced into a vehicle. During the attempted transfer toward Gaza, the vehicle came under fire from behind. Dikla was killed during the incident. The fighters subsequently abandoned the vehicle within the kibbutz, leaving her body behind. The investigation concluded that there was a reasonable possibility that Dikla was killed by Israeli fire, after the vehicle was identified by Israeli forces as one used by fleeing attackers.²³²

Noam was also killed on that day, but under unknown circumstances, and his body was found seven days later.²³³ The last confirmed sighting of Noam is in a video, verified by Amnesty International, that features the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Quds Brigades and the flag of the Al-Quds Brigades. His leg is injured, with blood surrounding the wound. In the background, two other bodies lie motionless on the dirt road.²³⁴ Residents of Nahal Oz who viewed the footage confirmed to Israeli media that it shows Noam being carried by two armed assailants along a dusty road on the outskirts of the kibbutz.²³⁵

Bari Meirovich and the deputy coordinator of the emergency response squad fought for most of the day. Bari's wife and four children were hiding in the safe room, together with two other children who were staying with them, fearing for him and occasionally asking him for a sign of life. With the coordinator killed at the outset of the attack, they were almost alone. They were joined by a small undercover Israel Border Police force, which happened to be staying in the kibbutz that weekend, numbering 11 (four of whom had already been wounded in the fighting), who provided them with more ammunition and protected vehicles.²³⁶ Together, they tried to save civilians and fend off the attackers. A larger military force arrived at around

²²⁶ Video posted by חדשות ישראל בטלגרם ["Israel News on Telegram"] on its Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²²⁷ Video posted by BBC News on YouTube on 23 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²²⁸ CBS News, "Documentary 'The Children of October 7' chronicles stories of young survivors of Hamas terror attack", 19 April 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/children-of-october-7-documentary-paramount-israel-hamas-gaza>

²²⁹ Video posted by Montana Tucker on Instagram on 27 February 2025 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²³⁰ Video posted by BBC News on YouTube on 23 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by Montana Tucker on Instagram on 27 February 2025 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²³¹ IDF, "Summary of findings from the inquiry into the deaths of Tomer Eliaz-Arava and Dikla Arava on October 7th at Kibbutz Nahal Oz", 10 January 2025, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/january-25-pr/summary-of-findings-from-the-inquiry-into-the-deaths-of-tomer-eliaz-arava-and-dikla-arava-on-october-7th-at-kibbutz-nahal-oz>

²³² IDF, "Summary of findings from the inquiry into the deaths of Tomer Eliaz-Arava and Dikla Arava on October 7th at Kibbutz Nahal Oz" (previously cited).

²³³ Times of Israel, "Noam Elyakim, 46: Devoted family man who loved to sing", 23 July 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/noam-elyakim-46-devoted-family-man-who-loved-to-sing>

²³⁴ Video posted by Twist on X on 8 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²³⁵ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Nahal Oz, Elyakim Arava Family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nahal-oz/arava> (accessed 9 May 2025).

²³⁶ Eleven members of Yamas, the undercover tactical unit of the Israel Border Police, were stationed in the kibbutz, as part of preparations for weekly protests that had been taking place in Gaza near the perimeter fence surrounding it. See Times of Israel, "Civilians, police stopped 1st wave of terrorists at Nahal Oz; IDF arrived 7 hours later" (previously cited).

1.30pm and assisted them as well. Bari told Amnesty International that another member of the emergency response squad, Ran Poslushni, was mistakenly killed that day by Israeli soldiers from that force, who thought he was an attacker. This is corroborated by the deputy coordinator's testimony, the Israeli authorities and media reports.²³⁷

Bari described the attack they faced on the kibbutz as consisting of about 50-150 armed attackers and distinguished them from civilians joining and looting, which he estimated at hundreds, "maybe 300." Fighters were distinguished as they had "an ammo vest, Kalashnikovs and RPG, lots of grenades, lots of magazines – not two or three, lots." Some of them had a green headband on their forehead, marking them as fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. A white vehicle with a Gazan licence plate that entered the kibbutz was full of military equipment such as explosives, RPGs and magazines. The fighters walked around in units of two or three. To him, there was no question that they were trained; they knew how to shoot and were very well equipped. It was evident that they had intelligence on the kibbutz in advance. He noticed that attackers began opening the boots of multiple cars. Later, he learnt that, in other locations, fighters had removed spare tyres after opening the boots of multiple cars, set them on fire and rolled them into houses. The civilians, on the other hand, were dressed in civilian clothing without military equipment; some of them even came barefoot.²³⁸

Among others killed in Nahal Oz was Tanzanian agriculture student Joshua Mollel, aged 21. Joshua, who had only been in Israel for three weeks prior to 7 October 2023, was killed in Nahal Oz, where he was staying as part of his internship at a dairy farm there, and his body was taken to Gaza, where it remained until it was released on 5 November 2025 as part of a hostage-prisoner exchange deal.²³⁹ For several weeks, his family believed and hoped that he was alive in captivity in Gaza, until video footage emerged which shattered those hopes.²⁴⁰ Amnesty International verified two videos related to the murder of Joshua Mollel on the outskirts of the kibbutz.²⁴¹ In the first video, a group of heavily armed men dressed in civilian clothing and carrying weapons are seen beating and pushing Joshua.²⁴² He is held by four men. Two of them are carrying type 56-1 rifles, one is carrying an AK-103 pattern rifle and a fourth is carrying a heavily customized AKM-pattern rifle. Joshua is not resisting or fighting back. One of the armed men holding him has a patch on his vest that appears to be that of the National Resistance Brigades, while, in the background, another man wears a yellow headband of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. In the second video, Joshua's body is seen lying on the road, some 200m south of the place where he was first recorded being captured and held by the fighters.²⁴³ His body has bleeding wounds on the chest. One assailant dressed in civilian clothing stands next to the body, wielding a knife with visible traces of blood. Meanwhile, a fighter places his foot on Joshua's stomach and discharges his rifle directly at his head.

5.1.6 NETIV HAASARA

Seventeen civilian residents, including three members of the local emergency response squad, were killed in Netiv HaAsara, a moshav located a few hundred metres to the north of the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and home to some 1,280 residents,²⁴⁴ according to an Israeli military investigation.²⁴⁵ The figures broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.²⁴⁶

²³⁷ Interview in person with Bari Meirovich, 8 May 2024; the deputy coordinator's testimony to the Edut 710 documentation project. See Kibbutz Nahal Oz, *מלחמת חרבות ברזל: עדות 710: השבת השחורה: נחל עוז: חבר קיבוץ נחל עוז: הרבש"צ וחבר קיבוץ נחל עוז: עדות 710: Iron Swords War*], 24 April 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-LgtRZOPs> (in Hebrew). See also October 7 Memorial, Ran Poslushni, <https://october7memorial.com/memorial/ran-poslushni> (accessed 9 May 2025); Times of Israel, "Ran Poslushni, 48: Father of 4 with a sharp sense of humor", 20 May 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ran-poslushni-48-father-of-4-with-a-sharp-sense-of-humor>

²³⁸ Interview in person with Bari Meirovich, 8 May 2024.

²³⁹ Guardian, "Body of dead Tanzanian hostage remains in Gaza", 14 November 2024, <https://ippmedia.com/the-guardian/news/local-news/read/body-of-dead-tanzanian-hostage-remains-in-gaza-2024-11-14-104447>; BBC, "Israel says Hamas returned body of dead Tanzanian hostage", 5 November 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgidwie0ywd0>

²⁴⁰ PBS NewsHour, *War in the Holy Land*, 4 December 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/video/war-in-the-holy-land-thai-1701731386>

²⁴¹ BBC, "Joshua Mollel: Tanzania says student killed in Israel by Hamas", 14 December 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67713520>

²⁴² Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 17 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁴³ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 17 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁴⁴ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Census Data 2022, Netiv Haasara, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=224ae0b> (accessed 14 May 2025).

²⁴⁵ See Times of Israel, "37 armed Israelis failed to stop 3 terrorists from murdering 17 in Netiv Ha'asara", 4 March 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/37-armed-israelis-failed-to-stop-3-terrorists-from-murdering-17-in-netiv-haasara>

²⁴⁶ See Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Netiv HaAsara, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nativ-haasara> (accessed 30 April 2025); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

The first contingent of fighters reached there using three motorized paragliders.²⁴⁷ Four videos and images reviewed by Amnesty International show fighters landing in Netiv HaAsara in motorized paragliders. One video, verified by Amnesty International, shows two paragliders landing in the south-western extension of Netiv HaAsara, while the sound of multiple rockets and warning sirens triggered by rockets can be heard in the background.²⁴⁸ Two other videos, recorded by residents on their cameras, captured the paragliders, as well as clouds of smoke from the rocket fire.²⁴⁹ One of the two, Gilad Kfir, a wildlife photographer, was killed later that day.²⁵⁰ The paragliders landed around the same time as the sirens warning residents to go to shelters went off at 6.29am, according to multiple testimonies.

Sabine Taasa, a 48-year-old mother of four boys aged nine to 17, told Amnesty International that her two youngest sons, Shai Taasa, aged nine, and Koren Taasa, aged 13, were both gravely injured when a Palestinian fighter threw a grenade into the room where the boys were sheltering with their father, Gil Taasa, in the yard of the family compound (Sabine and Gil, her ex-husband, were living in two separate houses in the same compound). The explosion killed Gil, a 45-year-old firefighter and former member of the moshav's emergency response squad. Nine-year-old Shai lost his right eye in the attack – a life-changing injury – and his brother Koren sustained shrapnel injuries in various parts of his body.²⁵¹

Sabine recounted that, after murdering Gil, the fighters tried to enter her house, where she and her son Zohar Taasa were sheltering in a safe room. She opened the door and found two fighters there, but managed to shut the door and lock it. She described one attacker as wearing a green headband with white Arabic writing, a type associated with the Al-Qassam Brigades, and a military-style vest that was stained with blood. She said he held a “Kalashnikov” rifle in his right hand and a grenade in his left hand and wore khaki military-style clothing. The other one was short and bald.²⁵²

The description fits that of two fighters seen in footage from security cameras at the family compound that was broadcast by an Israeli news channel and verified by Amnesty International. Different extracts show: Gil and his two children running from their beds to the shelter in the yard when the warning siren sounds at 6.29am, a grenade being thrown into the shelter at 7.10am; an armed fighter wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband climbing over the fence and entering the yard; another fighter wearing a body armour vest marked with a Palestinian flag forcing the two boys to return across the yard to the house and confining them to a room at 7.13am, before typing on a mobile phone; and the two boys in the room with blood traces visible on the floor at 7.16am.²⁵³ According to Koren's testimony, his brother, Shai, was injured in his eye and foot and was not able to see from the injured eye.²⁵⁴

In other extracts, the two attackers are later seen walking around the yard, using phones and a radio and talking to each other. One of them carries an M-4 pattern rifle, likely taken from the Israeli military. The other carries an AK-pattern rifle. One of the fighters is later seen returning to the room where the children were held and taking Koren's phone. He asks the boys to speak in Arabic. The older boy responds that he does not speak Arabic, wants to go home to his mother, and asks about his father. The fighter leaves once again and returns at 7.25am. He takes a large Coca-Cola bottle from the refrigerator, drinks from it and walks back

²⁴⁷ See Haaretz, “Three terrorists murdered 17 Israelis: How Kibbutz Netiv Ha’asara’s defenses failed on Oct. 7”, 5 March 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-03-05/ty-article-magazine/premium/three-terrorists-murdered-17-israelis-how-kibbutz-netiv-haasara-was-failed-on-october-7/00000195-620a-da4c-a9f7-fa8f11e70000>

²⁴⁸ Video posted by [הימין הלא מתנצל של הצל](#) [“The unapologetic right of the shadow”] on its Telegram channel on 29 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁴⁹ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Netiv HaAsara, Ronen Avisror, “A sunrise shoot turned into capturing terrorists”, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nativ-haasara/avisror> (accessed 9 May 2025).

²⁵⁰ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Netiv HaAsara, Gilad Kfir, “Went to record terrorist infiltration and was murdered”, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nativ-haasara/gilad-kfir> (accessed 9 May 2025).

²⁵¹ Interview by video call with Sabine Taasa, 28 October 2024.

Sabine told Amnesty International that she heard Gil fire eight shots before being killed in the grenade attack. She said that he only had his personal pistol and had no access to the moshav's armoury because he had left the emergency response squad in 2021, so that in case of an attack he could stay his family. She said that assailants took his pistol and that the police later informed her that the Israeli military had found Gil's pistol in the city of Rafah in the south of Gaza.

She also mentioned these details in her interview with Jewish News. Jewish News, “I lost everything: Israeli mother tells her October 7th story – Sabine Taasa full interview”, 4 June 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tgWEPK593Y>

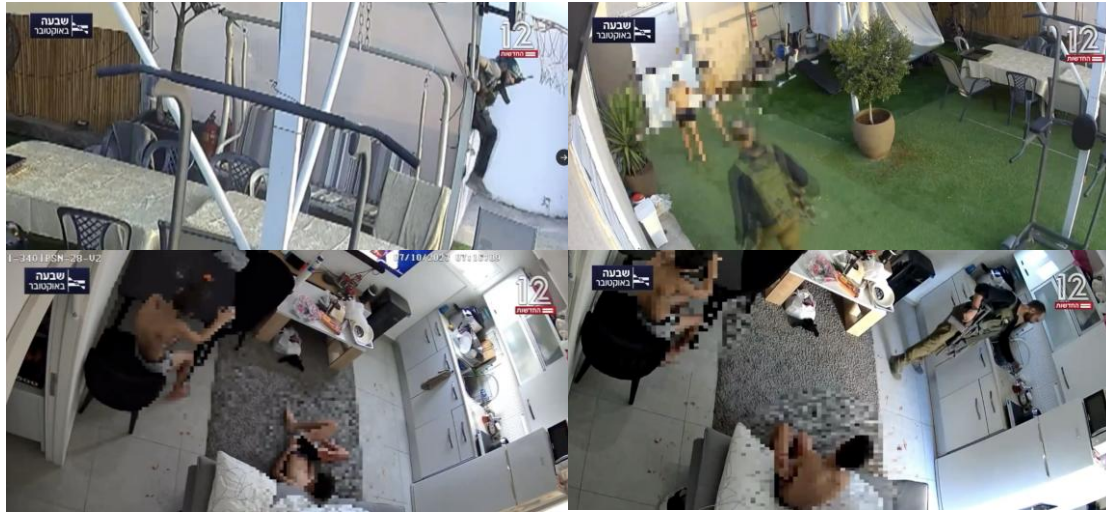
²⁵² Interview by video call with Sabine Taasa, 28 October 2024.

²⁵³ Channel 12 news report, video reposted by Fabian [פביאן](#) on X on 6 October 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International. The footage from the cameras is timestamped. See also Channel 12, “חזר לרגעי האימה: המחבלים אכלו איתנו? אני יודע מה קרה שם” [“13-year-old Koren Taasa recalls moments of horror: ‘Did the terrorists eat with us? I know what happened there.’”], 29 March 2024, https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/2024_q1/Article-f7f4482d2f68e81027.htm (in Hebrew). One of the gunmen in the images was subsequently reportedly killed by Israeli forces in Gaza. See, for example, Times of Israel, “Oct. 7 survivor tells UN to ‘stop blaming us’ for war, focus on harm to Israeli kids”, 4 September 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/oct-7-survivor-tells-un-to-stop-blaming-us-for-war-focus-on-blow-to-israeli-kids>

²⁵⁴ All Israel News, “Ta’asa (13), whose father jumped on the grenade to save his sons on October 7, shares his story”, 31 March 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNCRL3xg_6U

to the yard. There, he offers the drink to the second fighter, pours out the remaining contents and throws the bottle on the ground next to the shelter into which the grenade was thrown.²⁵⁵

According to testimonies, Koren tried to use the online translation tool Google Translate to communicate with the fighters, who reportedly shot his father twice to ensure that he was dead after the grenade attack on the shelter.²⁵⁶



↑ These four stills from CCTV footage taken by security cameras show the attack on the family compound of Sabine Taasa and Gil Taasa in Netiv HaAsara on 7 October 2023. The first still (top left) shows a fighter wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband entering the yard next to the compound's shelter. Shortly before, at 7.10am, a grenade was thrown into the shelter, killing Gil Taasa and injuring two of his and Sabine Taasa's sons. The second still (top right) shows a Palestinian fighter forcing the two boys to return across the yard to the house at 7.13am. The third (bottom left) shows the two boys locked in the house at 7.15am, with blood traces visible on the floor. The fourth (bottom right) shows a fighter returning to the room where the two boys were locked at 7.25am. © Israeli Channel 12

Sabine told Amnesty International that the fighters also tried to open the front door of the main house, where she was sheltering with her 15-year-old son, Zohar. Images from security cameras captured the presence of fighters outside the house.²⁵⁷

After some 25 minutes, the gunmen left and the children ran to their mother in the safe room. Sabine recounted to media:

"I heard, 'Mama, open the door, it's me, Koren.' I look at Zohar and Zohar looks at me and I say, 'It's Koren. I must open the door.' 'Mama, I'm begging you, don't! It's them [the attackers] with Koren. It's a trick. They will kill you, Mama. Please don't open the door! I'm begging you.' And I look in his eye and I say to him, 'Zohar, do you know I'm a mother that knows that her boys are in danger?... If I will die, I will die with my boys, but you must stay alive. You understand me? Now you have 10 seconds... and, if you see that I'm not coming back, you lock yourself [in the safe room].' I open the safety room and go to the entrance... I [expected] that I will open the door and then they will shoot my head. But, thank God, I saw only my two little boys, bleeding from the head to the feet. Shai, my little one, with the eye outside [its socket], many pieces of grenade in all his body and he's quiet. And Koren was bleeding from the arms, from the side, under the arms... Koren said to me, 'They killed Dad... Why they didn't kill me?'... I took both of them... to the safety room... I took the sheets of the bed [to dress their wounds]... The same terrorists that killed my husband and want to kill me came back to my house and start again to try to open the windows... I was desperate... Suddenly, I heard another knocking on the door... I recognize this voice... I open and all the *kitat konenut* [emergency response squad] was around my house – and the Yamam [the National Counter-Terrorism Unit of the Israel Border Police]... [They] took my boys and me [to safety]."²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Channel 12 news report, video reposted by Fabian פביאן on X on 6 October 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁵⁶ Israel National News, "October 7th: 12-year-old tried to speak with terrorists using Google Translate", 28 March 2024, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/387523>

The footage from the security cameras that was broadcast by Channel 12 do not show the moment when Gil was killed.

²⁵⁷ Interview by video call with Sabine Taasa, 28 October 2024.

²⁵⁸ Jewish News, "I lost everything: Israeli mother tells her October 7th story – Sabine Taasa full interview" (previously cited).

A video taken by Sabine Taasa in the safe room of her home shows her two wounded children, Shai and Koren, and records her saying that they are losing blood and need to be urgently evacuated. Video on file with Amnesty International.

Among the others killed in the attack on Netiv HaAsara were Bilha Inon, a 75-year-old art teacher, and her husband, Yakov Inon, a 78-year-old agronomist, whose home was just 500m from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza. The couple's home was hit by an RPG or other projectile, which set it on fire and, being a wooden house, it burnt down very rapidly before they could escape.²⁵⁹ Bilha's body was so burnt that it took 10 months for forensic experts to find any remains.²⁶⁰ One of the couple's five children, Maayan Inon, told media that she received a WhatsApp message from her father, Yakov, at 7.30am saying that he and Bilha were in the safe room and were hearing a lot of shooting and rockets, and that "by 7.45am they were already disconnected and not answering. The house got a direct hit and was on fire within minutes. This was a house built with light materials like plaster and plywood."²⁶¹

5.1.7 NOVA FESTIVAL

The location where the largest number of people were killed on 7 October 2023 was the area around a parking lot just north of Re'im, where more than 3,000 people were attending an overnight outdoor trance music festival called the Nova festival (also known as the Supernova Sukkot Gathering).²⁶² According to an Israeli military investigation, 378 people were killed in the attack on the Nova festival site and a small section of Road 232 adjacent to the parking lot. They included 344 civilians attending the festival. They also included 34 members of military or security forces. Sixteen of them were soldiers: 12 of them were off-duty and attending the festival, while four were killed while fighting the assailants. Another 16 were police officers, 15 of whom were killed fighting the assailants; and two were agents of the Israel Security Agency (also known as Shabak or Shin Bet), one of whom was attending the festival. The figures do not include the killing of festival-goers in other areas surrounding Gaza that day, including in bomb shelters and other locations where they sought shelter and on sections of Road 232 further from the festival site along which they were fleeing.²⁶³ The figures broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ Images of the burnt remains of the house are visible at: Global News, "Israeli officials conduct guided tour of Hamas attack site," 18 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuZnG6fJyIE>; and Daily Mail, "Exclusive: Inside the peaceful kibbutz where Israeli couple murdered by Hamas lived in peace for 32 years before their home was obliterated by grenades: Mail is shown ruins of community opened up for the first time since October 7 attacks", 21 November 2023 (updated 22 November 2023), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12776623/kibbutz-Israeli-couple-murdered-Hamas-grenades-ruins-community-October-7.html>

²⁶⁰ Ynetnews, "IDF confirms Bilha Yinon, listed as missing, was murdered on October 7", 6 August 2024, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/rknhbzg5r>

²⁶¹ Times of Israel, "Final unaccounted for October 7 victim died in onslaught, IDF confirms", 6 August 2024 <https://www.timesofisrael.com/final-unaccounted-for-october-7-victim-died-in-onslaught-idf-confirms>

²⁶² Tribe of Nova, Supernova Sukkot, available at <https://www.eventer.co.il/event/novaparellotranslate/wCqCL> (accessed 12 May 2025).

²⁶³ See Times of Israel, "IDF okayed Nova music festival, but didn't inform troops deployed at border, probe finds", 3 April 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-okayed-nova-music-festival-but-didnt-inform-troops-deployed-at-border-probe-finds>
See also Maariv, "Police investigation reveals: This is how the nature party became the largest terrorist attack in Israeli history", 18 November 2023, <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/military/Article-1053124>

²⁶⁴ See Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Netiv HaAsara (previously cited); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).



 ↑ This aerial photograph, taken on 10 October 2023, shows the site of the Nova festival after the attack by Palestinian fighters. © Jack Guez / AFP via Getty Images

There is a broad consensus that the attack on the festival was not planned, as Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups did not know that the festival was taking place.²⁶⁵ Rather, fighters stumbled upon the Nova festival site as they drove along Road 232 on their way to attack kibbutzim and other localities. They fired into areas full of civilians, targeted terrified civilians who were trying to flee and hunted down others where they were trying to hide – in bomb shelters, public toilets, ditches and bushes.²⁶⁶ Fighters armed with rifles, machine guns, grenades and RPGs set up roadblocks to prevent festival-goers from fleeing and to intercept military and security forces coming to their rescue.²⁶⁷

Virtually every survivor and every rescuer who spoke to Amnesty International, to other investigators or to the media said that they had been traumatized by the scale and extent of the brutality they saw at and around the Nova festival site. One woman (name withheld at her request) described what she saw when she approached the Nova festival site along Road 232 to look for her friend:

“This whole area – the road – there were cars on both sides, some of them burnt, some of them... with bullet holes. As many as eight minutes from where she [the friend] was, there were bodies. I remember that the first vehicle I saw was a terrorist van – white – and two terrorists were dead on the floor there, and then – really – on the right, on the left – the whole road – bodies, bodies, bodies, bodies. On the right, cars with bodies; on the left, cars with bodies – along the whole road. Then we had to go through Sderot, because you couldn’t – it was impossible to carry straight on, so we got to Sderot and there were still terrorists shooting. They had taken over the [police] station. Then, from the villages, we entered towards [Road] 232... It was a bloodbath what went on there. Simply horrifying. The whole road: bodies, on the left and the right of the road. I won’t forget it; it was very


²⁶⁵ See Times of Israel, “IDF okayed Nova music festival, but didn’t inform troops deployed at border, probe finds” (previously cited). See also Haaretz, “Israeli security establishment: Hamas likely didn’t have advance knowledge of Nova festival”, 12 November 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-11-18/ty-article/.premium/israeli-security-establishment-hamas-likely-didnt-have-prior-knowledge-of-nova-festival/0000018b-e2ee-d168-a3ef-f7fe8ca20000>; Jewish Chronicle, “Nova festival ‘surprised’ Hamas, former Negev police commander says”, 3 September 2024, <https://www.thejc.com/news/israel/nova-festival-surprised-hamas-former-negev-police-commander-says-jz3d1koz>

²⁶⁶ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Nova, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nova> (accessed 12 May 2025); CNN, “How a rave celebrating life turned into a frenzied massacre”, 14 October 2023 <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2023/10/middleeast/hamas-music-festival-attack-investigation-cmd-intl>

²⁶⁷ Guardian, “‘A circle of death’: Nova festival survivor recalls 15-mile barefoot escape from Hamas”, 4 January 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/04/nadav-hanan-nova-festival-survivor-recalls-25km-barefoot-escape-from-hamas>; Reuters, “Abandoned cars underline panic at Israeli music festival where Hamas gunmen killed hundreds”, 10 October 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/abandoned-cars-underline-panic-israeli-music-festival-where-hamas-gunmen-killed-2023-10-09>

traumatic. I... I don't sleep at night. I don't sleep. It haunts me. The sights I have seen – they really haunt me. I'm not a cowardly person! But... in the end, these are people like me and like you. Humans. And I see them thrown on the road like animals. Why did they deserve this? Bodies without heads. Bodies without limbs. Bodies that were desecrated. They were run over again and again. Pieces, really, there were pieces of bodies – something really horrifying. Horrifying, horrifying.”²⁶⁸



 ↑ This aerial photograph, taken on 13 October 2023, shows abandoned and torched vehicles at the site of the Nova festival. © Jack Guez / AFP via Getty Images

Road 232 is a major road in southern Israel that runs approximately 80km from the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza, near the border with Egypt, to the outskirts of the city of Ashkelon. It connects with various highways and smaller access routes to kibbutzim and moshavim targeted by the Al-Qassam Brigades and the military wings of Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October 2023 attacks, including – from south to north – the kibbutzim of Holit, Sufa, Magen, Re'im, Be'eri and Kfar Azza, followed by the city of Sderot.

Amnesty International verified 40 videos that were recorded along Road 232, including areas surrounding the Nova festival site, on 7 October 2023 and show killings and their aftermath. They indicate that, in addition to those fleeing the attack on the Nova festival, civilians from the kibbutzim of Alumim, Be'eri, Kfar Azza, Nahal Oz, Nir Oz and Re'im, as well as Sderot and other locations, attempted to use Road 232 to escape attacks on their communities. The footage – captured by assailants, eyewitnesses, survivors and first responders – documents deliberate killings and the bodies of those killed along the road. It shows fighters shooting at and killing civilians who were fleeing on foot or in vehicles, some of them in ambushes, and the summary killing of abducted civilians.

Fighters involved in the attack on the Nova festival site and surrounding areas were predominantly dressed in camouflage-coloured military-style clothing, but some wore civilian clothing, typically black or otherwise darkly coloured T-shirts. The majority were armed, primarily with automatic weapons, including variants of AK-pattern rifles and AMD-65 assault rifles.


One of the earliest pieces of footage from Road 232, a seven-minute video recorded by a dashboard camera in a vehicle in which assailants are travelling, shows a convoy of fighters in pickup trucks on which heavy machine guns are mounted moving through a nature reserve near Be'eri around 7am.²⁶⁹ The footage

²⁶⁸ Interview in person with rescuer (name withheld at her request), 26 June 2024, Ashdod, Israel (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

²⁶⁹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 22 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

includes at least seven pickup trucks and five motorcycles, transporting at least 20 armed men, some displaying Al-Qassam Brigades headbands and armbands. Around 4:50 minutes in, the convoy turns onto Road 232, where assailants in the vehicle from which the footage is being recorded open fire on a white civilian pickup truck with an Israeli licence plate that they are overtaking. The vehicle comes to a stop as two of its doors open. This incident is one of the first verified attacks on civilian vehicles along Road 232. Similar attacks were documented at multiple points along the road.



 ↑ This still from footage taken by a dashboard camera in a vehicle in which assailants are travelling shows a convoy of fighters travelling in pickup trucks, on motorcycles and on foot through a nature reserve near Be'eri around 7am on 7 October 2023.

The attack on the Nova festival started at approximately 6.30am on 7 October 2023, when at least six paragliders were observed in the sky above the festival site.²⁷⁰ Footage posted by survivors on social media and verified by Amnesty International shows the paragliders descending, while the sound of rocket fire is heard in the background.²⁷¹ Video evidence indicates that the festival organizers shut off the music shortly afterwards.²⁷² Attendees can be seen fleeing toward the parking lot in an attempt to escape.²⁷³ As large numbers of festival-goers are attempting to escape the festival site, sustained gunfire can be heard in multiple videos, with some individuals visibly injured as they run.²⁷⁴ Videos recorded by the attendees and verified by Amnesty International also show armed men chasing and shooting directly at people attempting to escape the site.²⁷⁵ In another video verified by Amnesty International, footage recorded by a body-worn camera used by one of the assailants shows a group of armed men – some in civilian clothing, others in camouflage-coloured military-style uniform – entering the festival site and firing directly into a row of portable toilets.²⁷⁶ A photograph later published by Israeli first responders shows a blood-drenched portable toilet.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁰ Video posted by War Report on X on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁷¹ Video posted by n.t.noamtal on Instagram on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by millet_bh on Instagram and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 2 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁷² Video posted by etoptimist on X on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁷³ Video posted by etoptimist on X on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by OSINTtechnical on X on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁷⁴ Video posted by CaucasusWarReport on X on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by etoptimist on X on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁷⁵ Two videos posted by Malchira Division on X on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁷⁶ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 13 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁷⁷ Photograph posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.



↑ These two stills from two videos posted by survivors on social media show festival-goers attempting to escape on foot and by car from the site of the Nova festival on 7 October 2023.

The killing, as well as the abduction, of festival-goers continued for nearly three hours at the Nova festival site after the first paragliders appeared. A video recorded by a dashboard camera and verified by Amnesty International shows, at around 9.23am, three armed fighters equipped with Type 56-1 and other AKMS-pattern rifles, two of them wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades patch or headband, abducting one civilian and shooting at close range another apparent civilian hiding behind a white car.²⁷⁸ The body of the victim, who is seen moving before being shot, jolts from the impact and then goes limp. In another video captured by the same dashboard camera and verified by Amnesty International, at least eight men, most of them not carrying visible weapons, can be seen looting two vehicles, searching the body of the civilian who was shot in the previous video and taking small items out of his pockets at around 12.09pm.²⁷⁹ They find a woman hiding inside the vehicle and lead her away, off camera. Minutes later, the woman comes back into view, raising her hands. After a few seconds, she crouches down as bullets hit the ground nearby. It is not known if she survived or was killed. Thick smoke and shooting are visible in the background.

A survivor of the attack on the Nova festival, Yair Yifrah, told Amnesty International that initially he had not worried about the sound of rockets because, as a resident of nearby Nahal Oz, he was used to hearing rockets being fired from Gaza. However, he soon realized that this attack was different because of the intensity of the rocket fire and, shortly after, the gunfire, which was sounding increasingly close. He said:

“I called my dad at 8am and, by then, I was already running for my life and they [the assailants] were shooting at us... I see people running and I don’t understand why but I’m running with them, and everyone’s crying... I’ve got my back to the shots, and I start hearing the bullets bouncing off the cars: ting, ting. We’re running, and I see a policeman get a bullet in the shoulder, and that’s when we understood it was fucking real. We’re running and

²⁷⁸ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a stationary car and, at the start, displays the date and time as “2023-10-07 09:23:29”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

²⁷⁹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a stationary car and, at the start, displays the date and time as “2023-10-07 12:09:38”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

bullets are flying around us. We went down this massive incline, down a green and open field. I reached a fence and jumped into an avocado grove, climbing and running in. I couldn't breathe... I just lay there and tried to call people, but no one answered – either there was no reception or they were dead. I tried to call Ilan [Fiorentino], the security coordinator (*ravshatz*) of Nahal Oz, but he was dead already by then. I didn't know at the time... I'm lying there, hearing gunshots, rockets, sometimes close and sometimes far... I hear shouts coming closer, but it's not Hebrew. So, I call someone – doesn't matter who. I flip through my contacts and call a woman friend of mine from Petah Tikva, but they're too close by then, so I can't answer, I can't talk to her. She hears them on the phone, and they pass by... I whispered to her, 'I've only got 2% battery left. Bye!' I tried to open Google Maps to see where I am, but my phone just shut down. I lay there a long time, and the whole time there are shots... I understood that this was really dangerous, that I have to get some water. I sat up, but then I hear shooting again... I bury myself into the ground again, fall asleep and wake up. I got to get out of there. I start walking... Finally, I reached Netivot [a city 20km from the Nova festival site]."²⁸⁰

Videos verified by Amnesty International show that the killing of Nova festival attendees occurred at multiple points along Road 232. In two videos recorded by dashboard cameras in cars being driven by assailants on the road, large numbers of heavily armed fighters are seen in what appears to be the aftermath of the attack on the Nova festival; some of the fighters are travelling in white pickup trucks, others on foot. In the first video, at least two bodies are visible alongside the road next to an abandoned car and two vehicles are burning.²⁸¹ In the second, armed men are firing AK-pattern rifles in the direction of a field that civilians used to flee the Nova festival site.²⁸² In a third video, a group of armed fighters are seen leading a man in civilian clothing off the road and subsequently murdering him, shooting him at close range.²⁸³



These three stills from footage captured on dashboard cameras in cars being driven by assailants show Road 232 in the aftermath of the attack on the Nova festival on 7 October 2023. All three show fighters travelling in white pickup trucks and burning or burnt vehicles. The second (middle) shows fighters firing in the direction of people fleeing the Nova festival site.



²⁸⁰ Interview in person with Yair Yifrah, 16 May 2024, Mishmar HaEmek, Israel (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

²⁸¹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 19 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁸² Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 19 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁸³ Video posted by Twist on X on 1 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International



The assailants pursued and killed fleeing festival-goers for several kilometres from the Nova festival site. Among those killed while fleeing was 22-year-old German-Israeli tattoo artist Shani Louk, who was attacked on the Mefalsim bend, a section of Road 232 that bends around the kibbutz of Mefalsim, some 15km north of the Nova festival site, as she was driving in her car with her boyfriend, 30-year-old Orión Hernández Radoux, and their friend Keshet Casarotti-Kalfa, aged 21. Her mother told Amnesty International that Shani was fatally injured at this location, as confirmed three weeks later when a fragment of her skull was found nearby.²⁸⁴

On 17 May 2024, Shani's body was found in a tunnel in northern Gaza by the Israeli military and was returned to Israel, along with the bodies of three hostages, Amit Buskila, Itzhak Gelerenter, and Ron Binyamin.²⁸⁵ On 24 May 2024, the bodies of her boyfriend, Orión, and two other men, Hanan Yablonka, aged 42, and Michel Nisenbaum, aged 59, all reportedly killed on 7 October 2023 off Road 232, were found in Gaza by the Israeli military.²⁸⁶ The body of Keshet Casarotti-Kalfa was found on 11 October 2023.²⁸⁷

Further south along Road 232, a video recorded by a body-worn camera and verified by Amnesty International shows a group of fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades equipped with Type 56-1 rifles (some with accessories) running along the road and then onto an adjacent gravel track towards a stationary white car.²⁸⁸ As they approach the vehicle, they shoot at it repeatedly from different angles, apparently killing one person inside the car and another, whose body is seen lying on the ground, next to it. Another person, who seems to have fled from the car, is chased by fighters.

²⁸⁴ Interview by voice call with Ricarda Louk, 28 November 2024.

²⁸⁵ AP, "Israeli army finds bodies of 3 hostages in Gaza killed at Oct. 7 music festival", 18 May 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-gaza-hostages-shani-louk-a37e4fd656b46be36c4c659a9c2aac7d>; Reuters, "Shani Louk's parents thankful to have a grave after her body was returned from Gaza", 18 May 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/europe/parents-german-israeli-woman-whose-body-found-gaza-thankful-have-grave-2024-05-18>

²⁸⁶ Jewish Chronicle, "IDF recovers body of Shani Louk's boyfriend and two other hostages from Gaza Strip", 24 May 2024, <https://www.thejc.com/news/israel/idf-recovers-body-of-shani-louks-boyfriend-from-gaza-strip-cuovtlo4>

²⁸⁷ Times of Israel, "Keshet Casarotti-Kalfa, 21: Pirate-loving partygoer 'a ball of light'", 11 February 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/keshet-casarotti-kalfa-21-pirate-loving-partygoer-was-a-ball-of-light>

²⁸⁸ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 7 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.



↑ This still from a video recorded by a body-worn camera shows a group of fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades equipped with Type 56-1 rifles running along Road 232 and then onto an adjacent gravel track on 7 October 2023. The video subsequently shows them approaching a stationary white car and shooting at it repeatedly from different angles, apparently killing one person inside the car and another, whose body is seen lying on the ground, next to it.

Just a few kilometres south of this location, video footage from a dashboard camera captured the moment when the car, which appears to be a civilian vehicle, is shot at by numerous armed fighters along Road 232 at around 7.39am.²⁸⁹ The footage shows a group of armed fighters – some on foot, others in vehicles – who, upon spotting the approaching car, open fire directly at its windscreen. They fire at the car at least eight times. The video ends as the car crashes into another vehicle and three armed fighters in camouflage-coloured military-style clothing, one of whom wears an Al-Qassam Brigades headband, approach it from both sides.

In another verified video, recorded on a body-worn camera and verified by Amnesty International, armed fighters – most of them on motorcycles – approach a red car on a sandy track adjacent to Road 232, in which a lifeless body is seated in the front passenger seat.²⁹⁰ A male voice off camera can be heard shouting, “Let’s throw her out!” One of the fighters removes the body of the woman and throws her on the ground as the group erupt in cheers. Blood is visible on her car seat.

Fighters also attacked shelters along Road 232, where civilians had sought refuge after fleeing from the Nova festival site. Video footage recorded by a dashboard camera and verified by Amnesty International shows a group of armed men – at least five of them wearing green headbands, commonly associated with the Al-Qassam Brigades – firing weapons in close proximity to a roadside shelter at around 7.55am.²⁹¹ The fighters are speaking to each other. One is heard saying, “... inside... inside”, before an object – likely a grenade – is thrown into the shelter.²⁹² An unarmed man attempts to flee the shelter, but armed fighters shout and open fire on him as he runs. One crosses the road, apparently to shoot him at closer range. While the gunfire continues, an explosion occurs inside the shelter.²⁹³

In another video, recorded by a dashboard camera near the same shelter and verified by Amnesty International, a man who appears to have been abducted is seen jumping out from the back of a white

²⁸⁹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a moving car and, at the start, displays the date and time as “07-10-2023 07:39:23”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

²⁹⁰ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 18 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

²⁹¹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a stationary car and, at the start, displays the date and time as “2023-10-07 07:55:52”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it. In the same video, two fighters are beating an unarmed man in civilian clothing (see section 7.1.1 “Beatings and other abuse”).

²⁹² Translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International.

²⁹³ Injured hostages, including Hersh Goldberg-Polin, were abducted from this shelter. See section 6.1.2 “Nova festival site and surrounding areas”.

pickup truck around 8.32am.²⁹⁴ As he lands, the vehicle halts and armed fighters immediately open fire on him at point-blank range.

Civilians were also killed in and around another roadside shelter located on a small access route leading to Mefalsim from Road 232. In one incident, CCTV shows a man in civilian clothing running towards the main gate of Mefalsim around 7.52am.²⁹⁵ He appears to be shot in the upper torso and head and collapses to the ground, with large volumes of blood pooling around his head. A few seconds later, at least eight armed individuals, some wearing Al-Qassam Brigades headbands, can be seen approaching the area. Three of them, carrying rifles, walk up to the body and fire multiple shots at him at close range. Two fighters also appear to fire in the direction of nearby vehicles. In a separate segment recorded by the same camera, armed fighters can be seen launching what appears to be a grenade into a shelter by the roadside around 8.42am.²⁹⁶ After an explosion inside the shelter, one fighter enters the shelter and pulls a person out of it. At least one body, partially visible in the corner of the screen, is shot at several times. A fighter then repeatedly strikes the body with a rifle.

Other apparent murders took place near the main gate of Mefalsim. CCTV footage verified by Amnesty International shows a woman being dragged along Road 232, near the turn-off to Mefalsim, by one man and being followed by another, who appears to be armed, at around 8.04am.²⁹⁷ A white pickup truck carrying fighters approaches. As the vehicle nears, the woman appears to break free and attempts to run away. She is subsequently shot in the back and is seen collapsing on the road. Video footage recorded by a dashboard camera and verified by Amnesty International shows the same scene from the other side of Road 232.²⁹⁸

According to Israeli media reports, dozens of civilians attending the Nova festival were killed on or near the Mefalsim bend on Road 232, including individuals sheltering in the roadside bomb shelter outside the main gate of Mefalsim.²⁹⁹ When fighters attempted to enter the kibbutz, members of its emergency response squad reportedly engaged them in armed confrontation, preventing their entry and thereby avoiding casualties inside the kibbutz itself.³⁰⁰

Civilians who were trying to escape the attack on the Nova festival were also targeted and shot close to other kibbutzim.

A group of Nova festival attendees attempted to seek refuge in Alumim. Five videos extracted from CCTV footage and verified by Amnesty International captured the sequence of events. The first shows the festival-goers arriving at the entrance of the kibbutz around 7.09am.³⁰¹ In the second, three armed fighters, the first wearing an Al-Qassam Brigades headband and the other wearing Al-Qassam Brigades armbands, run towards the entrance, apparently from the other side of the main gate, inside Alumim.³⁰² In the third, the same fighters run out of the opening main gate, two of them with their weapons ready to shoot.³⁰³ In the fourth, festival-goers are fleeing from the entrance and heading in the direction of Road 232, pursued by at

²⁹⁴ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 28 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a stationary car and, at the start, displays the date and time as “2023-10-07 08:32:29”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

²⁹⁵ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 14 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “07/10/2023 07:52”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

²⁹⁶ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 14 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “07/10/2023 08:42”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

²⁹⁷ Two videos posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 22 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The two videos are from timestamped CCTV footage taken by two different security cameras. The first, at the start, displays the date and time as “07/10/2023 08:04:33”, while the second, at the start, displays the date and time as “07-10-2023 08:04:07”. The times are consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

²⁹⁸ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 22 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a stationary car and, at the start, displays the date and time as “07-10-2023 07:01:24”. However, Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it, along with cross-referencing with other video evidence, indicated that the camera used to record the footage was set approximately one hour behind the actual time of the event.

²⁹⁹ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited).

³⁰⁰ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Mefalsim, A Local Story, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/mefalsim/mefalsim> (accessed 12 May 2025).

³⁰¹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 20 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “10-07-2023 Sat 07:09:31”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

³⁰² Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 20 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “10-07-2023 Sat 07:09:45”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

³⁰³ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 20 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “10-07-2023 Sat 07:08:34”, which is broadly consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it, although the setting of the camera used to record the footage appears to be set slightly behind the actual time of the event.

least one of the fighters.³⁰⁴ In the fifth, a fighter appears to catch one of them, apparently a woman, by her hair.³⁰⁵ As she struggles, he shoots her point-blank. A second woman, wearing a white T-shirt, drops to the ground as she witnesses the execution, apparently pleading for her life. As the woman is crouching, the fighter then fires over her head towards other civilians who are fleeing. He then stands back, waits for several seconds and shoots her at close range, sending her rolling backwards onto the ground and thus appearing to have murdered her.

In another video, which was recorded by survivors and aired as part of a media interview with her parents, the body of Rachel Silbermann is visible in the back seat of a car, hit by a bullet. According to the parents, the video was filmed close to Kissufim. Rachel messaged her parents at 6.51am, saying there were explosions at the Nova festival and that she was trying to leave. According to her father, Mikhail Silbermann, at around 10am he saw a photograph of his daughter on a Telegram channel, in which she appeared slumped in the seat of a car with a bullet wound in her torso. The photograph was shown in the same media interview. Her parents said they tried to reach and rescue her but were unable to do so and recovered her body three days later.³⁰⁶

Amnesty International verified several videos showing killings or their aftermath near the entrance to Sderot, where at least seven vehicles can be seen scattered along the road with their doors open and engines off. In one video, fighters, some with Al-Qassam Brigades headbands, fire at a black car.³⁰⁷ The car attempts to drive away but encounters another group of fighters and crashes into another vehicle. The fighters continue to fire at close range towards the driver and then break the window, open the door and violently pull out the driver, who appears dead. In another video, an armed fighter is seen by a car with an open door, attempting to pull the driver out of the car.³⁰⁸ He pulls out only the upper part of the driver's body before the car starts moving, dragging the body along the road.

Two videos taken from footage recorded from a vehicle, apparently an ambulance, driving along Road 232 from the direction of Sderot towards Be'eri between 12pm and 2pm, show a total of at least 26 cars destroyed and abandoned along the road, many with signs of burning, and a total of at least 10 lifeless bodies.³⁰⁹

5.1.8 OFAKIM

Ofakim, a city of about 35,000 residents,³¹⁰ is the furthest from Gaza – some 30km away – among all the locations subjected to a ground attack on 7 October 2023. As elsewhere, the attack started with a barrage of rockets around 6.30am, followed by a ground incursion shortly after. The attack focused on a relatively small area in the north-west of the city and killed 31 civilians, including five local police officers and two soldiers, according to Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.³¹¹

According to an Israeli military investigation into the attack, at 6.45am, “22 terrorists from Hamas’ elite Nukhba unit arrived in Ofakim and began a killing spree”.³¹² Amnesty International’s analysis of video evidence shows fighters storming what appears to be a residential house as early as 6.41am.³¹³

³⁰⁴ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 20 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “10-07-2023 Sat 07:09:50”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

³⁰⁵ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 20 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as “10-07-2023 Sat 07:09:52”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

³⁰⁶ TV Rain Newsroom, “‘Identified only by her fingerprints’ – parents of an Israeli girl killed at the music festival”, 20 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ekqfi713UQk>

³⁰⁷ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁰⁸ Video posted by Jay in Kyiv on X on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁰⁹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 10 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 20 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The two videos are from timestamped footage taken by a rear vehicle camera. The first, at the start, displays the date and time as “2023-10-10 12:15:24”, while the second, at the start, displays the date and time as “2023-10-10 13:08:34”. The times are consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in the videos. Both videos are stamped with the reference “7390402”.

³¹⁰ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Census Data 2022, Ofakim, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=861deaf> (accessed 14 May 2025).

³¹¹ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited). See also Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Ofakim, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/ofakim> (accessed 9 May 2025); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

³¹² VINnews, “On Oct. 7, 600 soldiers deployed In Sderot, 600 In Ofakim, none in kibbutzim overrun by terrorists”, WinNews, 9 March 2025, <https://vinnews.com/2025/03/09/on-oct-7-600-soldiers-deployed-in-sderot-600-in-ofakimnone-in-kibbutzim-overrun-by-terrorists>

³¹³ Video posted by Visioner on X on 10 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

Several residents, including police officers, confronted the attackers, likely preventing more extensive civilian bloodshed. The fighting had ended by the following morning, when forces from Yamam (National Counter-Terrorism Unit of the Israel Border Police) stormed the home of the Edri family, where fighters were holding hostage Rachel Edri and David Edri, a couple in their 60s, and using it as a sniping position to kill residents in the street outside. Rachel and David were rescued unharmed, while the fighters were killed by Yamam forces.³¹⁴

Photographs and video footage taken by a witness, who provided them to Amnesty International and requested to remain anonymous, show the body of what appears to be a fighter with military equipment – a tactical vest and rifle magazines – and other objects found on a fighter's body, including aerial photographs of Ofakim with marked locations and a legend in Arabic noting the location of several places, including the police station and synagogues, which seems to indicate plans to attack civilians.³¹⁵

Amnesty International interviewed two survivors: Itamar Ilos, a member of the Ofakim police who participated in the battle on 7 October 2023, and Shahar Butzhak, a rabbi who was shot and wounded in his thigh. The two survivors met that day when Itamar treated Shahar after he was injured and their testimonies are consistent with each other.

Itamar, a father of three, told Amnesty International he was in an administrative role with the Ofakim police and was not on duty on 7 October 2023. He was also trained as a paramedic. When he woke up, he intended to go to synagogue with his children. After hearing warning sirens and shooting outside his house, he took his personal handgun and went outside in civilian clothing, leaving his family in the safe room. On HaGoren Street, he saw two white pickup trucks loaded with military equipment such as RPGs, body armour and ammunition. He estimated that about 15 fighters had entered the city in these two trucks. The attack on the city was planned, he said, as evident from an aerial photograph of the city found on one of the fighters. The photograph had the name "Ofakim" on it and various places in the city were marked, such as the police station and synagogues. He described the fighters as wearing similar green or dark uniform-style clothes (which made some residents mistakenly identify them as Israeli soldiers, not imagining the presence of Palestinian fighters in military-style clothing in the city), heavy boots, body armour vests loaded with grenades, explosive blocks and medical equipment. Itamar described four battles that took place on HaGoren, HaTamar, HaKhita and HaKramim streets. The fighting started around 6.30am and was over by around 11.45am, but for hours, they were not certain whether they had repelled the attack and kept scanning the area for more fighters. At this stage, only the police and other civilian residents of the city were defending the city; Israeli military units did not arrive before 2pm. On HaGoren Street, in the first neighbourhood under attack, residents did not have safe rooms in their houses and apartments and therefore, at the sound of warning sirens, they tried to reach public shelters or shelters in the staircases of their apartment buildings. The fighters were waiting for them outside and in the staircases of apartment buildings and some entered homes, shooting and killing civilians. Itamar said he saw Shahar Butzhak wounded in the street when they were both under fire from fighters and tried to protect him with his own body. He managed to drag him into a house, where they confronted a fighter who threw a grenade at them. After shooting the fighter, Itamar said he tied towels around Shahar's wounded thigh. Later, he found another Ofakim resident, Denis Kanyazoyk, who had been shot with several bullets, and placed tourniquets on him. He later drove Denis to a hospital in the city of Beersheba, some 20km away, ultimately saving his life, and drove back to continue defending the city. During the day, he saw the bodies of several people he knew lying, shot, in the streets.³¹⁶

Shahar Butzhak told Amnesty International that he went out of his house with his handgun shortly after he heard the warning sirens and massive shooting. Once on the street, he said he saw three fighters with clothes looking like uniforms, including a brown vest, and armed with a Kalashnikov. On his first encounter with them, he was shot in the thigh and then hopped and dragged himself to hide behind a bomb shelter. According to messages on his phone that he showed Amnesty International, at 7.23am, he alerted others that he was wounded. Shortly after, he said he was dragged to a house by Itamar Ilos, who tied a towel around his thigh and instructed another civilian in the house to apply pressure to the wound. A paramedic arrived and placed a tourniquet on him at 8.44am, writing the time on the tourniquet. Another civilian,

³¹⁴ A video verified by Amnesty International shows police forces fighting in Ofakim. Video posted by Yorrick de Vries on X on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. See also New York Times, "Alone and outgunned, Israeli police fought Hamas from house to house", 26 October 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/26/world/europe/israel-ofakim-police-hamas.html>; Jerusalem Post, "Bravery in Ofakim: The civilians, police who thwarted Hamas massacre plan", 4 November 2023, <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/gaza-news/article-771532>; VINnews, "On Oct. 7, 600 soldiers deployed in Sderot, 600 in Ofakim, none in kibbutzim overrun by terrorists" (previously cited).

³¹⁵ Five photographs and one video provided by the source and held on file by Amnesty International.

³¹⁶ Interview in person with Itamar Ilos, 13 April 2024, Ofakim, Israel. See also Israel Hayom, יכולתי לקחת קלצ'ניקוב אבל הייתי בלי מדים, פחדתי שאני אזורה כמחבל ["I could have taken a Kalashnikov, but I was out of uniform, I was afraid I would be identified as a terrorist"], 11 February 2024, <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/local/article/15247397> (in Hebrew).

Amitay Ohayon, evacuated him in a car to the Gilat Junction on Road 25, some 6km away, from where he was taken by ambulance to Soroka hospital in Beersheba. He said he went through surgery, a long period of hospitalization and further treatment, as his thigh bone was shattered and the nerves and muscles were badly damaged.³¹⁷

Amnesty International documented the aftermath of the killings of Sergey Gradeskul and Victoria Gradeskul, two civilians aged 81.³¹⁸ The video footage provided by a witness (who requested anonymity) shows the aftermath of the attack on a house where the two civilians are seen dead, with blood around them, and an RPG at the scene.³¹⁹ Another video verified by Amnesty International and recorded on the camera of an assailant shows an armed man passing next to what appears to be the body of Sergey Gradeskul, which is lying on the floor and surrounded by blood.³²⁰

Amnesty International also documented the killing of Ariel Biliya, another civilian. He and members of his extended family were hiding in the Biliya family house on the morning of 7 October 2023. Amnesty International verified CCTV footage, corroborated by witness testimonies, confirming the location.³²¹ The footage shows family members escaping through a window onto the roof of the house. Ariel can be seen helping others out, but then being shot and collapsing while attempting to climb out himself. A separate drone video verified by Amnesty International shows Ariel's body lying on the roof, while an Israeli police officer fires towards the house.³²²

Itamar Ilos told Amnesty International that he arrived at the house approximately five hours after the killing and helped the family – including a young child and a baby – descend from the roof of an adjacent house where they had taken shelter. He heard their account of events. He also saw Ariel's body, which was still lying on the roof. Itamar said he himself was in life-threatening danger several times during the day. He described the severe trauma he was experiencing due to the number of people known to him who were killed, some of whose bodies he saw with his own eyes.³²³

Video evidence Amnesty International analysed shows fighters walking along streets in Ofakim carrying weapons, speaking Arabic and entering residential homes. Some are dressed in civilian clothing, while others are wearing military-style clothing, but without insignia or other indications of affiliation to a specific Palestinian armed group. Verified videos show them primarily searching houses and moving along HaKhita and HaGoren Streets.³²⁴ Gunshots are audible in the background of several recordings.

In one of the videos, filmed in a passage behind HaKhita Street, the assailant filming says: "... time to film... This is the first one, and this is the second, thrown in the street [referring to the body of a man in civilian clothes seen lying in the street surrounded by blood and possibly another body not in the shot]. They are all hiding in their homes. No one came out." He then continues to follow an armed fighter equipped with a Type 56-1 rifle, while multiple loud gunshots can be heard in the background.³²⁵

In another video, verified by Amnesty International and recorded from a window of a nearby residential house, four armed attackers can be seen firing towards the roundabout of HaGoren Street.³²⁶

Two further videos show the bodies of two different people in civilian clothing lying lifeless, with blood around their upper bodies, in the streets around HaKhita and HaGoren Streets.³²⁷

³¹⁷ Interview in person with Shahar Butzhak, 3 June 2024, Ofakim, Israel.

³¹⁸ Times of Israel, "Dr. Victoria & Prof. Sergey Gredeskul, 81: Acclaimed BGU scientists", 5 March 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/dr-victoria-prof-sergey-gredeskul-81-acclaimed-bgu-scientists>

³¹⁹ Video held on file by Amnesty International.

³²⁰ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 16 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³²¹ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 24 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³²² Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 2 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. See also New York Times, "Alone and outgunned, Israeli police fought Hamas from house to house" (previously cited).

³²³ Interview in person with Itamar Ilos, 13 April 2024, Ofakim, Israel.

³²⁴ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 16 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³²⁵ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 16 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

³²⁶ Hamas Massacre October 7th 2023, "Hamas terrorists shooting in the streets of Israel", <https://www.hamas-massacre.net/content/hamas-terrorists-shooting-in-the-streets-of-israel> (accessed 12 May 2025).

³²⁷ Two videos posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 16 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

5.1.9 RE'IM

Re'im, a kibbutz located approximately 3km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and home to some 480 residents,³²⁸ came under sustained attack on 7 October 2023, apparently due to its proximity to both the Nova music festival site and the nearby Re'im military base. According to an Israeli military investigation, seven civilian residents, including two migrant workers from Thailand, and 15 members of military and security forces that came to fight the assailants were killed in and just outside the kibbutz.³²⁹ The figures broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.³³⁰ A number of festival-goers attempted to hide in roadside bomb shelters near Re'im, where some were subsequently killed. Several civilians were also shot at and killed on nearby Roads 232 and 234, as they were fleeing the attack on the Nova festival.³³¹

Two Thai men were among those killed in the kibbutz. Another Thai man (name withheld at his request), an agricultural worker, told Amnesty International that he and six other Thai men were captured in Re'im by a group of about 10 armed men wearing military-style clothing showing affiliation to the Al-Qassam Brigades. He said they had been playing football together in the early morning and sought refuge in a bunker in the kibbutz, where they were captured. Along with an 18-year-old Israeli man from the kibbutz, they were ordered out of the bunker, had their hands tied behind their back and were forced at gunpoint towards a vehicle. As they approached the vehicle, they were shot at from the bushes by fighters who were speaking Arabic and showing signs of affiliation to the Al-Qassam Brigades. The agricultural worker told Amnesty International that two of the Thai men were killed, one right in front of him. He and the remaining three Thai men and the Israeli man were then forced into the vehicle and taken to Gaza.³³²

The Thai men killed were 25-year-old Pongsathorn Khunsri and 35-year-old Kiattisak Patee, who had both been living and working in agriculture in Re'im.³³³ Pongsathorn's mother told media that he had been working on an Israeli farm for a year, hoping to earn more money and build her a new house.³³⁴ The family of Kiattisak Patee said he had been in Israel for six months, also to send money back to the family.³³⁵

Amnesty International verified three videos recorded by a CCTV camera at the entrance to Re'im, which document the arrival of Palestinian fighters. In the first video, a black car is seen stopped in front of the gate at around 7.54am.³³⁶ Seconds later, armed fighters in three white pickup trucks approach and fire in the direction of the vehicle. The driver opens the front door, prompting the fighters to shoot again in his direction. In the second video, at around 8.02am, fighters are seen taking control of the security checkpoint, opening the gate, taking control of the black car, which they start using to move fighters and weapons, and continuing further into the kibbutz.³³⁷ At least five white pickup trucks are visible in front of the gate and numerous fighters enter through the gate in vehicles and on foot. Most are wearing military-style clothing and some appear to be wearing Al-Qassam Brigades headbands. Most of the fighters are armed, mostly with AK-pattern rifles, machine guns and RPGs. One of them is handling a PG7-VR RPG, designed for armoured targets. In the third video, approximately 12 minutes later, along the same road used to enter Re'im and near the Iralaser laser factory, two white pickup trucks are stationary and six armed fighters can be seen abducting up to five individuals in civilian clothing.³³⁸

³²⁸ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Census Data 2022, Re'im, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=2fb3a8d> (accessed 12 May 2025).

³²⁹ See Times of Israel, "Civil defense squad, cops battled 100 terrorists in Re'im; some were headed to Nevatim Airbase", 10 April 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/civil-defense-squad-cops-battled-100-terrorists-in-reim-before-idf-arrived-probe-finds>

³³⁰ See Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Beeri (previously cited); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

³³¹ See section 5.1.7 "Nova festival".

³³² Interviews by video call with Thai agricultural worker (name withheld), 6 March and 1 May 2025. See section 6.1 "Abduction of civilian hostages" for details of their abduction.

³³³ Times of Israel, "Civil defense squad, cops battled 100 terrorists in Re'im; some were headed to Nevatim Airbase", 10 April 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/civil-defense-squad-cops-battled-100-terrorists-in-reim-before-idf-arrived-probe-finds>

³³⁴ Times of Israel, "Pongsathorn Khunsri, 25: Thai worker sought to build mom a new home", 28 February 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/pongsathorn-khunsri-25-thai-worker-sought-to-build-mom-a-new-home>

³³⁵ Times of Israel, "Kiattisak Patee, 35: Thai worker whose TikTok showcased farm life", 6 December 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/kiattisak-patee-35-thai-worker-whose-tiktok-showcased-farm-life>

³³⁶ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 28 December 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "07-10-2023 07:54:53", which is consistent with Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

³³⁷ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 28 December 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "07-10-2023 08:02:07", which is consistent with Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

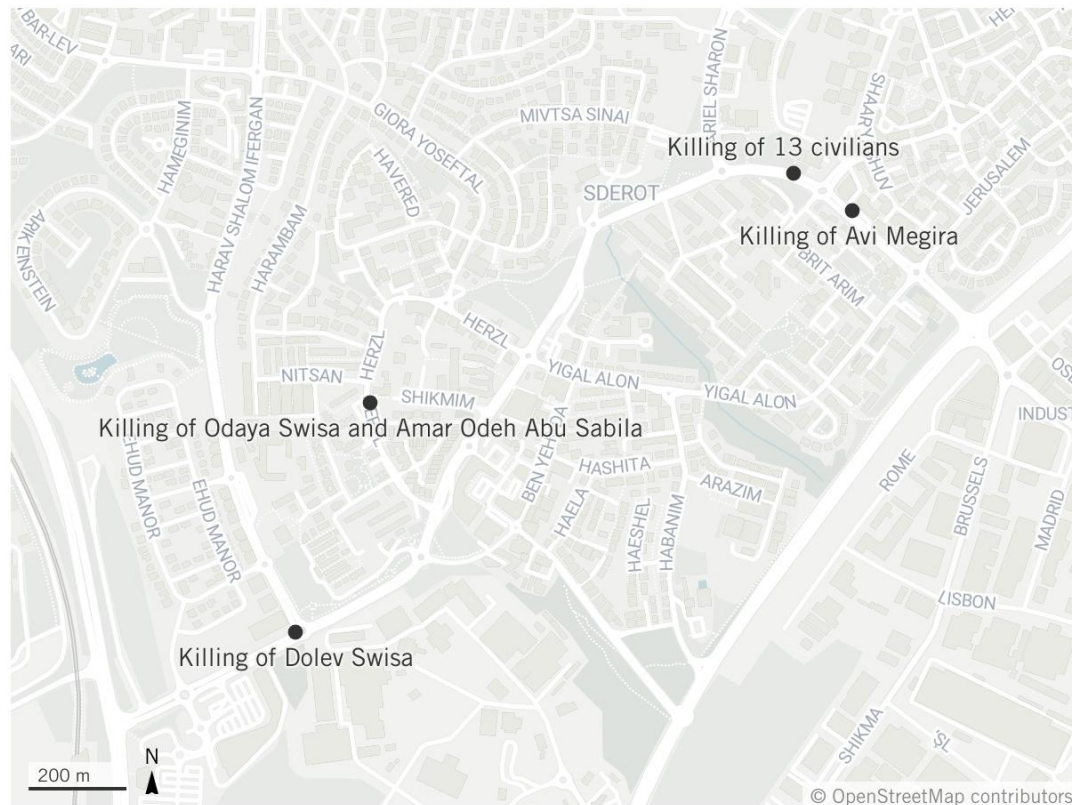
³³⁸ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 28 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "07-10-2023 08:14:42", which is consistent with Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

In one case, fighters appeared to spare two young children when killing adults in their vicinity. Daria Karp, aged 10, and her brother, Lavie, aged eight, survived when their father, Dvir Karp, and his partner, Stav Kimchi, were shot dead in front of their eyes. Assaultants reportedly saw them hiding under a blanket but did not kill them.³⁴⁰ For three hours, they were left alone until a family friend came to rescue them. Attackers reportedly wrote on the wall of the room where the children were left: “Al-Qassam does not kill children.”³⁴¹ As already seen in this chapter, however, fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades did kill children.

Sderot, a city of about 31,000 residents,³⁴² located less than 1km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza at the closest point, was attacked by dozens of assailants, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, on 7 October 2023. According to an Israeli military investigation, 53 people were killed in the city, including two firefighters and 37 other civilians, as well as three soldiers. Two of the soldiers were killed in rocket attacks on Sderot in the days following the ground attack. Also among the 53 killed were 11 police officers; some were members of the local police, who were killed in an attack on a police station, while others were from units from outside the city who arrived later in the day in an attempt to rescue them.³⁴³ The figures broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.³⁴⁴ The killings included shootings at passing vehicles and the murder of a group of civilians, many of them older people, at a bus stop. Additional incidents occurred on major roads surrounding Sderot, where fighters opened fire on vehicles attempting to enter or leave the area.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁵ See section 5.1.7 “Nova festival”.

Sites of four lethal attacks on civilians in Sderot



Locations of four lethal attacks on civilians in Sderot that were investigated by Amnesty International. The attacks were perpetrated by fighters between 6.30am and 7.30am on 7 October 2023.

In the early hours of 7 October 2023, shortly after 6.30am, dozens of fighters, some wearing Al-Qassam Brigades headbands, entered Sderot, primarily in white pickup trucks. Video analysis shows that as the fighters moved through the city, they fired at civilian vehicles. One video verified by Amnesty International shows armed fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades firing assault rifles at a black civilian vehicle at approximately 6.50am.³⁴⁶ The black car stops suddenly as it exits a roundabout, likely after seeing a white pickup truck and armed men approaching it on the other side of the road. Two adults, who were later identified by family members as Dolev Swisa and Odaya Swisa, open the front doors of the car and step out of it. They then take their two children, identified as Romi Swisa, aged six, and Lia Swisa, aged three, from the back seats before fleeing in different directions. The fighters fire in their direction. Dolev Swisa runs with Lia away from the car, towards the roundabout, unaware that another pickup truck full of fighters is coming from that direction. He is shot and collapses to the ground. According to family members, he died from his injuries.

A second video, recorded on a security camera outside the Sderot police station shortly afterwards, shows fighters opening fire on the same black car.³⁴⁷ The footage first shows fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades firing at the car from a distance. One of the fighters then approaches the car on foot and appears to shoot the driver and front-seat passenger at close range multiple times. According to family members who spoke to Kan, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, Odaya Swisa and her two children, Romi and Lia, who managed to escape the roundabout attack described above, and Amar Odeh Abu Sabila, a Bedouin citizen of Israel and construction worker who had come to assist the family after Dolev Swisa was shot, were inside

³⁴⁶ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 18 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "2023-09-20 03:58:48". However, Amnesty International's analysis of sunrise data and cross-referencing with witness testimony and other available reporting indicated that the actual time was different.

A video posted by Kan News on YouTube on 12 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International contains an interview with Ofir Swisa, Dolev's brother, who, on film, shares video footage he took of some of the same scene from another angle inside his nearby home.

³⁴⁷ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 5 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

the car.³⁴⁸ Both Odaya and Amar were reportedly killed.³⁴⁹ Footage from the same security camera and additional footage from an Israeli police officer's body-worn camera show the two children later being rescued from the car by the police officer.³⁵⁰

The video that recorded the shooting of Odaya and Amar also shows fighters shooting directly at a red car passing the scene, causing it to veer off and crash into a waste container on the side of the road.³⁵¹

Shooting at civilians and passing vehicles on various roads in central Sderot was documented in at least four additional videos verified by Amnesty International.³⁵² In CCTV footage recorded on Menachem Begin Road, at least seven armed fighters – most wearing Al-Qassam Brigades headbands – are seen walking down the street around 7.07am, attempting to forcibly enter buildings along the way.³⁵³ The group appears to target an approaching vehicle and fires an RPG in its direction. At 7.10am, the driver, who appears to have survived the initial explosion, restarts the vehicle, which moves briefly along the road. Armed fighters then return and open fire on the car. The driver is subsequently killed. Some 30 seconds later, a motorcyclist is seen approaching the area. He is shot and killed by the same group of armed fighters. He was later identified by family members as Avi Megira. According to their account, Avi and a friend had planned to travel to the Dead Sea that morning and left home at approximately 6.20am. Around 10 minutes later, as they encountered other drivers, a siren warning of incoming fire reportedly sounded, prompting the group to take shelter. Avi is said to have left the shelter at around 7.07am to return home.³⁵⁴



These three stills from CCTV footage taken on three different cameras show the scenes of three lethal attacks on civilians in Sderot on 7 October 2023. The first still (top) shows the scene of the killing of Dolev Swisa. Armed fighters in the white pickup truck in the foreground fired at the black civilian vehicle in which he was travelling with his family at approximately 6.50am. Other fighters in the white pickup truck in the background opened fire on him as he attempted to flee with one of his children. The second still (middle) shows fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades outside the Sderot police station firing on the same black car. One of them then approached the car on foot and shot Odaya Swisa, the wife of Dolev Swisa, and Amar

³⁴⁸ Video posted by Kan News on YouTube on 12 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁴⁹ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre, Amer Abu Sabila Odeh, <https://oct7map.com/AmerAbuSabilaOdeh> (accessed 12 May 2025); Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Sderot, The Swissa Family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/sderot/swissa> (accessed 12 May 2025). Times of Israel, "Odaya and Dolev Swissa, 33 & 34: Murdered in front of their daughters", 30 October 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/odaya-and-dolev-swissa-33-34-murdered-in-front-of-their-daughters>

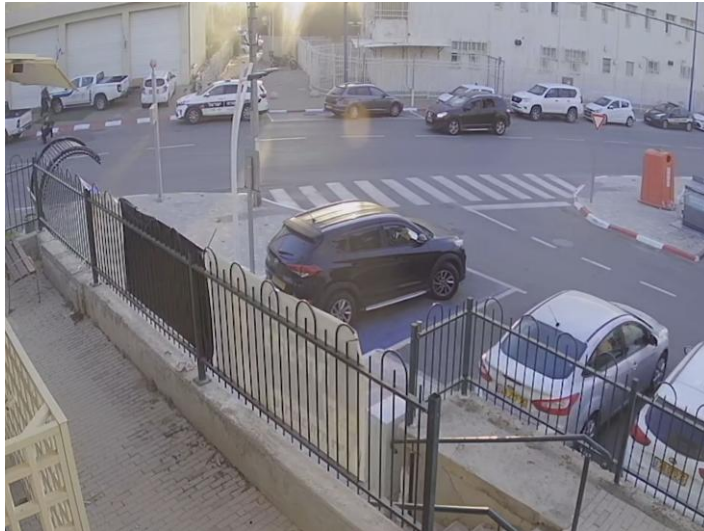
³⁵⁰ Two videos posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 5 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁵¹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 5 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁵² Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 5 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; two videos posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 30 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 18 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁵³ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 30 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "2023-10-08 07.07.40".

³⁵⁴ Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Sderot, Avi Megira, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/sderot/avimagira> (accessed 14 May 2025). See also BFM TV news report of 9 October 2023, available at BFM TV, "Des scènes de guerre sous les yeux des civils" ["War scenes before the eyes of civilians"], 9 October 2023, <https://www.tiktok.com/@morandiniblog/video/7287991704525851936> (in French).



Odeh Abu Sabila, a Bedouin citizen of Israel and construction worker who had come to assist the family. The third still (bottom) shows fighters, most wearing Al-Qassam Brigades headbands, firing at a motorcycle on Menachem Begin Road, killing its driver, Avi Megira.



Older people who were caught along Menachem Begin Road that morning were not spared. Among those killed were a group of 13 civilians, most of them retirees from nearby areas, who were gunned down at and around a bus stop in the early morning, while they were starting a day trip to the Dead Sea. Upon reaching Sderot at about 6.15am, the driver of the minibus in which they were travelling stopped the minibus and discovered punctures in two wheels next to a bus stop in the east of the town, just north of the industrial zone. When the air raid alert warning of incoming rockets sounded, the 15 passengers tried to take cover in a bomb shelter attached to the bus stop, but the doors of the bomb shelter, which were supposed to be automatically unlocked by the air raid alert system, failed to open and the travellers were unable to enter. Shortly after, assailants arrived at the scene and shot at the travellers, who were standing by the shelter, murdering 13 of them.³⁵⁵

Videos and images shared by media outlets and verified by Amnesty International show the aftermath of the killings, with at least six bodies visible on the ground, covered in blood.³⁵⁶ The minibus driver, Sharif Abu Taha, told media: "They shot them all and dead-checked them. I hid with someone else [a passenger] behind the shelter, they shot her. I pretended to be dead, I didn't move."³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Kan, Kan 7.10 360 Digital Memorial Project, Sderot, The Travelers' Minibus, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/sderot/minibus> (accessed 12 May 2025); New York Times, "Hamas leaves trail of terror in Israel", 10 October 2023 (updated 18 October 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-war-hamas-deaths-killings.html>; Ynetnews, "No weapons, locked shelters, and the pensioners' massacre: The security gaps of October 7 in Sderot", 29 January 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/hjglzmduyx>; Times of Israel, "Yaakov Mortov, 66: Russian immigrant who worked as an engineer murdered by Hamas terrorists at a bus stop in Sderot on October 7", 20 August 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/yaakov-mortov-66-russian-immigrant-who-worked-as-an-engineer>

³⁵⁶ Ynetnews, "Hamas war crimes: An elderly group gunned down at a bus stop", 17 October 2023, <https://www.ynetnews.com/magazine/article/b1f2eqo11p>; Kan, Kan 7.10 360 Digital Memorial Project, Sderot, The Travelers' Minibus (previously cited); three photographs posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁵⁷ Kan, Kan 7.10 360 Digital Memorial Project, Sderot, The Travelers' Minibus (previously cited).



↑ This photograph shows the bodies of some of the 13 civilians who were killed in an attack on a bus stop in Sderot on 7 October 2023. The bodies lie covered with blankets. © Baz Ratner / AFP via Getty Images.

5.1.11 SUFA

Sufa, a kibbutz located around 3km from the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and home to some 210 residents,³⁵⁸ was attacked by assailants, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, on 7 October 2023. They killed three civilians, including two emergency squad members in the kibbutz, according to Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.³⁵⁹

Amnesty International verified 10 videos reportedly recovered from the body of a killed fighter that provide a visual timeline of the attack on Sufa. Fighters are seen leaving Gaza at dawn, breaching and crossing the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, entering the kibbutz and, once inside, opening fire at passing cars, homes and even an ambulance. In the first verified video, recorded around sunrise, at approximately 6.38am, a fighter is mounting a camera on his body while seated on the back of a motorcycle driven by a fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades.³⁶⁰ The driver is wearing a green headband bearing the insignia of the Al-Qassam Brigades and they are both visibly carrying weapons, including an RPG. They are filmed driving through Gaza in the direction of southern Israel. As they approach a section of the fence already breached north of Sufa, they join a larger group of fighters – some on foot, others also on motorcycles – several of whom are also wearing Al-Qassam Brigades headbands. Background audio includes the sound of transmission radios, indicating coordination among the fighters as they move toward Israeli territory.

In the second video, the same two fighters approach the outskirts of Sufa alongside a larger group of armed fighters, many visibly from the Al-Qassam Brigades.³⁶¹ One fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades riding ahead on a motorcycle fires toward residential homes as they advance. The group later encounters other armed fighters, many with Al-Qassam Brigades' insignia, who appear to have arrived on two pickup trucks.

³⁵⁸ Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Census Data 2022, Sufa, <https://census.cbs.gov.il/en/geographic-area?id=35baa73> (accessed 14 May 2025).

³⁵⁹ October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited). See also Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Kfar Aza, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/kfar-aza> (accessed 30 April 2025); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

³⁶⁰ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. Amnesty International deduced the approximate time based on its analysis of the position of the sun, sunrise data and the positioning and size of the shadows visible in the video.

³⁶¹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

The third and fourth videos show fighters, some wearing Al-Qassam Brigades headbands, capturing the guardroom adjacent to the main gate of Sufa and later opening the gate.³⁶² They fire multiple shots in the direction of a car approaching the gate. The fifth, sixth and seventh videos show the same two fighters moving through the kibbutz, firing multiple times at residential homes.³⁶³ The eighth captures them shooting the tyre of a parked ambulance stationed within the kibbutz, rendering it immobile.³⁶⁴ In the ninth, the fighters are seen entering a home in what appears to be a search for civilians and firing inside, including towards upper floors and roofs.³⁶⁵ The 10th video ends abruptly as one of the fighters is shot while moving through a residential yard.³⁶⁶

5.1.12 ZIKIM BEACH

Zikim beach, a popular destination for fishing and other recreational activities located around 3km north of Gaza, was attacked by fighters who arrived by sea on 7 October 2023. Some 32 civilians who were on the beach – some who had spent the night there and others who had arrived earlier that morning – took refuge in a public toilet and a bomb shelter, along with other places on and near the beach. When these places were attacked by fighters, a total of 17 civilians were killed, including seven out of the eight sheltering in the public toilet and seven out of the 12 sheltering in the bomb shelter, according to an Israeli military investigation; one soldier was also killed.³⁶⁷ The figures broadly correspond to those of Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.³⁶⁸

A total of 18 fighters reached Zikim beach from Gaza on five small rubber boats, while the Israeli navy reportedly intercepted two other boats at sea and prevented them from reaching the shore, killing 20 of the 38 Palestinian assailants who had set off from Gaza by boat. According to an Israeli military investigation into the attack, 10 of the 18 Palestinian assailants who managed to reach the Israeli shore headed to Zikim beach, while three headed to the shooting ranges of the nearby Zikim military training base, three towards a power station in the city of Ashkelon to the north and two towards the Israeli navy's Erez radar base near Zikim. Some of the assailants also attempted to attack the nearby kibbutz of Zikim, but were prevented from entering by its emergency response squad, who, having been informed of the attack on Zikim beach, deployed along the kibbutz's fence and managed to fight off the incoming assailants.³⁶⁹

Amnesty International verified 10 videos showing different stages of the attacks on Zikim beach and nearby localities. The earliest of these, which bears the logo of the Al-Qassam Brigades, shows the destruction of an Israeli surveillance tower adjacent to the Zikim military base.³⁷⁰

A video, recorded by assailants, shows eight men, some armed, boarding a boat, presumably in Gaza.³⁷¹ A subsequent segment of the same video shows two boats in the open waters. Footage from a security camera verified by Amnesty International shows five assailants arriving by boat at 6.45am in the central area of Zikim beach, close to the bath facilities, public toilets, gazebos and parking lot.³⁷²

Among those killed was Or Taasa, a 17-year-old boy whose father was killed the same morning in an attack on the family home in Netiv HaAsara that also gravely injured two of his brothers.³⁷³ His mother, Sabine Taasa, told Amnesty International that Or was killed while sheltering in the public toilet at Zikim beach, some 9km away from the moshav.³⁷⁴

³⁶² Two videos posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁶³ Three videos posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁶⁴ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁶⁵ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁶⁶ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁶⁷ See Times of Israel, "In 'massive failure,' troops abandoned civilians at Zikim Beach on Oct. 7, IDF probe finds", 4 May 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-massive-failure-troops-abandoned-civilians-at-zikim-beach-on-oct-7-idf-probe-finds>

³⁶⁸ See Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Beerli (previously cited); October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited); Sagi Or and others, Death Locations of 1216 Murdered and Fallen During the Hamas Attack on Israel Between 7-9.10.2023 (previously cited).

³⁶⁹ Haaretz, "Zikim probe: IDF troops didn't confront terrorists, failed to protect civilians" (previously cited);

Times of Israel, "In 'massive failure,' troops abandoned civilians at Zikim Beach on Oct. 7, IDF probe finds" (previously cited); Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Zikim, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/zikim/zikim> (accessed 9 May 2025); KibbutzVisit, Kibbutz Zikim, Overview, <https://www.kibbutzvisit.com/listing/kibbutz-zikim> (accessed 9 May 2025).

³⁷⁰ Video bearing the logo of the Al-Qassam Brigades and the date of 7 October 2023, available at: War Monitor, X post: "Hamas publishes footage of their troops firing rockets and entering the settlements north of the Gaza strip yesterday", 8 October 2023, <https://x.com/WarMonitors/status/1711038340005298653>

³⁷¹ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by Warfare Analysis on X on 11 June 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁷² Video posted by South First Responders to its Telegram channel on 4 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁷³ See section 5.1.6 "Netiv HaAsara".

³⁷⁴ Interview by video call with Sabine Taasa, 28 October 2024.

Or had left home earlier in the day, before the attack started, to spend the day at the beach with his friends. When Sabine managed to reach him by phone, he told her that he and his friends were sheltering in the public toilet, under attack by Palestinian fighters, and that two soldiers were trying to keep the fighters out. In a media interview, Sabine described her family ordeal in detail, including the conversation she had with Or only minutes before he was killed:

“I can hear in his voice how much he was afraid and terrified and alone. And he said to me, ‘Mama, I’m here in Zikim. Don’t worry!’... He didn’t finish his words and suddenly I heard ta-ta-ta... [a long burst of gunfire] And I said, ‘Or, please lie on the floor!’ [He replied] ‘Mama, I must go. Don’t worry! Don’t worry! I promise you I’ll take care of myself’... Unfortunately, five minutes after the call he was murdered, with six bullets straight to his head... No one survived – only one person – and this person is the person who told me what happened after... Or filmed everything until he was murdered.”³⁷⁵

Amnesty International verified five videos related to the killings in the public toilet of Zikim beach that corroborate Sabine’s account. One of the videos, recorded by a victim prior to the entry of fighters, shows five people hiding inside the public toilet while multiple gunshots can be heard outside.³⁷⁶ An armed Israeli soldier is visible at the door, apparently attempting to protect them from the approaching fighters. In the video, one of the individuals hiding in the toilet can be heard saying: “Oh my! Hamas boat arrived here.”

Three additional videos show the aftermath of the killing. One, recorded using a camera apparently worn on the body of an assailant, shows the bodies of three people inside the public toilet.³⁷⁷ Another video, in which Israeli soldiers are partially visible, indicating they had taken control of the area by that time, shows the lifeless bodies of five people, with blood near their heads and upper and lower limbs.³⁷⁸ The body of a fighter is also visible in front of the public toilet, next to a 30-round 7.62x39mm magazine, likely from an AK-pattern rifle.

Another video, recorded after the removal of the victim’s bodies, shows dozens of marks on the toilet’s doors and walls, likely from the impact of bullets.³⁷⁹



↑ These three stills from a video show dozens of marks on the doors and walls of a public toilet on Zikim beach, likely from the impact of bullets. The video was recorded after the removal of the bodies of seven civilians killed by fighters on 7 October 2023 as they were sheltering in the toilet.

As mentioned, seven of the civilians were killed inside a bomb shelter on the beach where 12 civilians had taken refuge when the rocket red alert sounded.

According to a recorded call published by Kan, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, those hiding in the shelter called the fire department, asking for help. Gunshots are audible in the background. “Hurry,

³⁷⁵ Jewish News, “I lost everything: Israeli mother tells her October 7th story – Sabine Taasa full interview” (previously cited).

³⁷⁶ Video posted by Gal Shalev on X on 7 October 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁷⁷ Video posted by Warfare Analysis on X on 11 June 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁷⁸ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 4 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

³⁷⁹ Video posted by Zvi Gluck on X on 28 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

come rescue us. Fast. Quickly we are in the shelter, terrorists shoot at us, there are many killed, quickly,” said one of the callers.³⁸⁰

Amnesty International verified a video, captured by the first responders who recovered the bodies a week later, which shows the impact of multiple weapons on the bomb shelter’s structure.³⁸¹

A survivor, 27-year-old Oshri Tuito, told media that he had travelled from his home in Sderot to Zikim beach to fish, as he often did, but that he had barely managed to get his equipment out of the car when the attack started. He said he ran to the bomb shelter, which was then attacked by the assailants with grenades and machine gun fire. Oshri raised his hands to shield himself and was hit by a bullet that went through his arm, into his eye socket, down his oesophagus and into his stomach. Against all odds, he survived.³⁸²

As well as targeting the civilians who were sheltering on and near the beach, the assailants also pursued and tried to kill those fleeing. Two other survivors recounted on social media how they and 19 of their co-workers had slept on the beach after partying there the previous night and were woken up by the attack. They said they fled, but as they drove away, they were ambushed by assailants who shot at their cars.³⁸³ Two of them sustained non-fatal bullet wounds and managed to escape with 18 of their friends, whereas one – 30-year-old singer Mor Gabay, who had left the beach earlier – was killed on her way home.³⁸⁴

5.2 INDISCRIMINATE ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE

On and following 7 October 2023, the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups based in Gaza fired thousands of unguided rockets and mortars, which are inherently inaccurate, towards populated areas in Israel, as well as Israeli forces inside Gaza. The attacks had killed 15 civilians in Israel by the end of 2023. Amnesty International has concluded that these attacks were unlawful, amounting either to direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects or indiscriminate attacks.

The rocket attacks also damaged homes and other civilian buildings in both Israel and the OPT and contributed to the displacement of Israelis from their homes in southern Israel.

On 7 October 2023, the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups launched some 3,000-5,000 unguided rockets and mortars towards populated areas in Israel.³⁸⁵ This was a barrage of unprecedented intensity in the context of repeated such attacks since 2001.³⁸⁶ Some 2,200 rockets and mortars were fired in the first four hours, according to the Israeli military.³⁸⁷ As documented above, thousands of fighters used the cover of the barrage, which started just before 6.30am, to break through the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza and cross into Israel.

³⁸⁰ Audio recording, available at: Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Zikim Beach, The Shelter (previously cited).

³⁸¹ Video, available at: Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Zikim Beach, The Shelter (previously cited).

³⁸² The Jewish Agency for Israel, “Surviving Against all Odds”, 17 November 2023, <https://www.jewishagency.org/surviving-against-all-odds>

³⁸³ Israel in the USA, Facebook post: “This is Ahia’s story”, 24 October 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1070888264409529>; Los Angeles Daily News, “ Hamas attack survivor shares his story at memorial for Jewish man who died after protest”, 12 November 2024, <https://www.dailynews.com/2023/11/12/hamas-attack-survivor-shares-his-story-at-memorial-for-slain-jewish-protester>

³⁸⁴ Times of Israel, “Mor Gabay, 30: Singer-songwriter whose lyrics have lived on”, 18 February 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/mor-gabay-30-singer-songwriter-whose-lyrics-have-lived-on>

³⁸⁵ Different numbers are quoted by different sources, mostly varying from 3,000 to 5,000. The Israeli military gave a figure of over 3,000 rockets. IDF, 7.10 The Inquiries, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/7-10-the-inquiries> (accessed on 9 May 2025). Mohammed Deif, the then leader of the Al-Qassam Brigades, said they had launched more than 5,000 rockets. France 24, “ Hamas military leader announces the beginning of a new operation against Israel”, 7 October 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/video/20231007-hamas-military-leader-announces-the-beginning-of-a-new-operation-against-israel>

³⁸⁶ See section 3.1 “Situation before 7 October 2023”.

³⁸⁷ Israeli Air Force, X Post: “This morning, approximately 2,200 rockets were launched from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory”, 7 October 2023, <https://x.com/iafsite/status/1710596920631050655>



↑ This still from a video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades shows rocket fire and a paraglider in the sky over Gaza at the start of the Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel on 7 October 2023.

The rocket attacks killed at least 10 civilians on 7 October 2023. The death toll would have been much higher were it not for Israel's air raid warning systems and public and private shelters. Seven of those killed were Bedouin citizens of Israel living in the Negev/Naqab region of southern Israel in communities which lack air raid warning systems and bomb shelters and have poor access to emergency medical services.³⁸⁸ Six of them were children aged between five and 15. Mai Abu Sabah, aged 13, as well as her grandmother Fayza Abu Sabah, aged 57,³⁸⁹ and four children from the Al-Kra'an family – brothers Malik Ibrahim Al-Kra'an and Jawad Ibrahim Al-Kra'an, aged 14 and 15, and their cousins Amin Akal Al-Kra'an, aged 11, and Mahmoud Diab Al-Kra'an, aged 12 – were killed when rockets landed on or near their homes in Al-Ba'at, an unrecognized Bedouin village. Yazan Zakaria Abu Juma'a, aged five, was killed by a rocket which struck the ground next to his home in Ar'ara, a Bedouin town located further south.³⁹⁰

Another rocket killed three members of the same Jewish Israeli family, including one child, in the city of Netivot: Refael Meir Maskalchi, aged 12, his father, Netanel Maskalchi, aged 36, and his grandfather, Refael Fahimi, aged 63.³⁹¹

Palestinian armed groups continued to launch rockets into Israel at regular intervals, though at a gradually diminishing pace, apparently as a result of Israel's offensive on Gaza, which grew in scale and scope. According to the Israeli military, between 7 October 2023 and May 2024, some 12,500 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel from Gaza.³⁹² Media reports indicated that rockets had killed another five civilians in Israel by the end of 2023, bringing the total to 15 civilians since 7 October 2023.³⁹³ There were no reports of deaths in Israel by rocket fire in 2024 or 2025.

³⁸⁸ See NPR, "One community in Israel didn't have access to rocket shelters. They say it's been deadly", 4 May 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/04/1249166899/one-community-in-israel-didnt-have-access-to-rocket-shelters-they-say-its-been-d>; NBC News, "No bomb shelters, no sirens, no Iron Dome: Israel's long-neglected Arab Bedouins", 14 October 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/arabs-living-israels-negev-desert-are-sitting-ducks-hamas-rcna120168>; +972 Magazine, "Reeling from October 7, Bedouin citizens struggle to make their losses known", 6 December 2023, <https://www.972mag.com/bedouin-citizens-negev-october-7/>

³⁸⁹ The rocket strike also injured Fayza's 30-year-old son, Adel Abu Sabah. Forward, "'You feel invisible': Israeli Bedouins fear rockets and apathy", 19 October 2025, <https://forward.com/news/565822/bedouin-villages-israel-iron-dome>

³⁹⁰ Times of Israel, "Yazan Abu Jamaa, 5: Bedouin family's only son slain by rocket", 20 February 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/yazan-abu-jamaa-5-bedouin-family-only-son-slain-by-rocket/>

AFP, "How many children were killed in Hamas's October 7 attack" (previously cited); AP, "Middle East latest: Palestinian militants in Gaza fire rockets into Israel as it marks Oct. 7", 8 October 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hezbollah-hamas-latest-mideast-7-october-2024-d3d272d83e70d420ba547dbd7e09ef52>

³⁹¹ Times of Israel, "Refael Fahimi, 63, Netanel Maskalchi, 36, and Refael Maskalchi, 12", 9 November 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/refael-fahimi-63-netanel-maskalchi-36-and-refael-maskalchi-12/>

³⁹² Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Swords of Iron: War in the South – Hamas' Attack on Israel", 26 May 2024, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-war-in-the-south-7-oct-2023>

³⁹³ New York Times, "Hamas and other militant groups are firing rockets into Israel every day", 27 December 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/27/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-gaza-rockets.html>

On 7 October 2024, as mourners throughout Israel commemorated the one-year anniversary of the attacks of 7 October 2023, the Palestinian armed groups responsible for them fired a barrage of indiscriminate rockets into Israel.³⁹⁴ Reports of sporadic rocket fire continued into 2025.³⁹⁵

The groups which have most frequently claimed responsibility for launching rockets are the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, and the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.³⁹⁶

Most of the rockets fired from Gaza into Israel, both before and after 7 October 2023, were either intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system or landed in empty areas or in the sea, without causing human casualties or material damage. In some rare cases, rockets struck military facilities, including a rocket launched on 7 October 2023, which reportedly landed inside the Sdot Micha military base, believed to host many of the country's nuclear-capable missiles.³⁹⁷

Hamas has claimed that the rockets fired into Israel are aimed at military targets and that civilian casualties are unintended collateral damage.³⁹⁸ However, the fact is that the rockets cannot be pinpointed at specific targets and the casualties from these rocket attacks have overwhelmingly been civilians.

5.3 KILLING OF HOSTAGES IN GAZA

The Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, and the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, have repeatedly threatened to kill the Israeli hostages they have been holding since 7 October 2023 in retaliation for Israeli actions and to prevent rescue operations by the Israeli military. Amnesty International has concluded that at least six hostages were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

On 9 October 2023, Abu Obaida, the spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades, announced:

"As of this hour, we declare that any targeting of members of our people who are safe in their homes without prior warning will be met with the execution of one of the enemy's civilian hostages. We will be forced to broadcast this in audio and video."³⁹⁹

On the same day, Abu Hamza, the spokesperson of the Al-Quds Brigades, said that, if Israel continued to target and kill civilians in Gaza, "the fate of your soldiers and prisoners [referring to hostages held by the Al-Quds Brigades] will be as unknown as the fate of Ron Arad more than 40 years ago", referring to an Israeli air force officer who was captured in Lebanon in 1986 and is believed to have died in captivity there, although his remains have never been returned.⁴⁰⁰

Arbel Yehoud, who was taken hostage from her home in Nir Oz on 7 October 2023 and held hostage in Gaza for 482 days until her release in January 2025 in a hostages-prisoners exchange, told media that "her Palestinian Islamic Jihad captors made it clear to her that they would kill her if the IDF discovered their location and came to rescue her".⁴⁰¹ She said that her worst night in Gaza was on 12 February 2024, when Israeli troops carried out an operation to rescue hostages Louis Har and Fernando Marman in the city of

³⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, "Video: Hamas fires of rockets at Tel Aviv on October 7 anniversary", 7 October 2024,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2024/10/7/video-hamas-fires-barrage-of-rockets-at-tel-aviv-on-october-7-anniversary>

³⁹⁵ See, for example, Reuters, "Hamas fires rockets at Israeli cities, Israel issues evacuation orders in Gaza", 6 April 2025,

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hamas-fires-rockets-israeli-cities-2025-04-06>; Oneindia News, "Hamas fires massive rocket on Israel from Gaza: Abu Obaida all out war after Trump speech", 26 July 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90ZkFLGG0mQ>; Jewish News Syndicate, "Palestinian terrorists in Gaza fire rocket at Israel", 3 August 2025, <https://www.jns.org/palestinian-terrorists-in-gaza-fire-rocket-at-israel>

³⁹⁶ See, for example, BBC, "Hamas fires rockets at Tel Aviv as Israel renews Gaza ground campaign", 20 March 2025,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2dr7jd7mno>; Times of Israel, "Palestinian Islamic Jihad takes responsibility for rocket fire from Gaza", 3 April 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/palestinian-islamic-jihad-takes-responsibility-for-rocket-fire-from-gaza

³⁹⁷ New York Times, "Militant rocket hit base linked to Israeli nuclear missile program", 4 December 2023,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/04/world/middleeast/militant-rocket-israel-oct-7.html>

³⁹⁸ Basem Naim, head of Hamas's Political and International Relations Department, letter to Human Rights Watch, 14 April 2024, available at: Human Rights Watch, "*I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind*": *Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel* (previously cited), p. 244 (translation from the original Arabic into English by Human Rights Watch).

³⁹⁹ Statement by Abu Obaida, available at: Arab-Military, X post: ... أبو عبيدة يقول... ["Abu Obaida says..."], 9 October 2023,

<https://x.com/ashrafnsier/status/1711428290995478857> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁴⁰⁰ Video, available at: Al-Mayadeen News, X post: "الناطق باسم #سرايا القدس أبو حمزة حول مستجدات معركة #طوفان الأقصى", 9 October 2023, <https://x.com/AlMayadeenNews/status/1711448419623952778> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁴⁰¹ Times of Israel, "Former hostage Arbel Yehoud says captors threatened to kill her if IDF approached", 29 April 2025,

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/former-hostage-arbel-yehoud-says-captors-threatened-to-kill-her-if-idf-approached>

Rafah, and that, during it, one of her captors “was with a loaded gun, aimed at the tent” where she was being held nearby.⁴⁰²

Andrey Kozlov, who was taken hostage on 7 October 2023 and rescued with three other hostages in June 2024 by Israeli forces, who stormed the buildings where he and the three other hostages were being held in two separate apartments in Nuseirat refugee camp, told media that “his Hamas captors constantly told him and the other hostages that the Israeli government wanted them to die and that they would be killed if the IDF tried to rescue them”.⁴⁰³

On 1 September 2024, the Israeli military announced that the previous day, it had recovered the bodies of six Israeli hostages who had been held in Gaza since 7 October 2023.⁴⁰⁴ Five of the six hostages had been abducted after attending the Nova festival. They included Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a 23-year-old dual US-Israeli national who was involved in Israeli-Palestinian coexistence initiatives.⁴⁰⁵ He was seriously injured and lost part of his left arm on the morning of 7 October 2023 when a fighter threw a grenade into the bomb shelter where he had taken refuge after fleeing the attack on the Nova festival; he was then abducted and taken to Gaza with other hostages.⁴⁰⁶ It was feared that he might not have survived such a serious injury, but 201 days after his abduction, on 24 April 2024, Hamas released a video showing him alive for the first time since his abduction.⁴⁰⁷ In the video, the stump below his left elbow appears to have healed reasonably well.

Two of the six hostages had been working at the Nova festival: 24-year-old Eden Yerushalmi as a bartender and 33-year-old Alexander Lobanov as a bar manager. The other two who attended the Nova festival were 27-year-old Almog Sarusi, who went with his girlfriend, who was killed in the attack, and 25-year-old Ori Danino, an off-duty soldier who reportedly tried to fight the assailants attacking the festival even though he was unarmed.⁴⁰⁸ The sixth hostage, 40-year-old Carmel Gat, had been abducted in Be’eri, from the home of her mother, Kinneret Gat, who she was visiting at the time and who was killed in the attack.⁴⁰⁹ Carmel’s brother, Alon Gat, her sister-in-law, Yarden Romat-Gat, and her niece, Geffen Gat, who were also visiting, were all taken hostage. Alon and Geffen managed to escape the same day and Yarden was released in a hostage-prisoner exchange in late November 2023.

The Israeli military said it recovered the bodies of the six hostages from an underground tunnel in Rafah near to the location where their forces had found another hostage, 52-year-old Qaid Farhan Alkadi, alone, but alive, in a tunnel on 27 August 2024.⁴¹⁰ It said the six hostages had been killed, seemingly to prevent a possible rescue operation such as those in which six other hostages were freed, four of them from two nearby buildings in Nuseirat refugee camp on 8 June 2024,⁴¹¹ and two from a house in the Shaboura refugee camp in Rafah on 12 February 2024.⁴¹²

A subsequent Israeli medical forensic examination concluded that the six hostages had been shot dead shortly before their bodies were retrieved.⁴¹³ The mother of Hersh Goldberg-Polin told the news network CNN that, according to the forensic report, her son was shot at close range from the left side, with a bullet going through his left shoulder and his right hand, which he had apparently put up in a protective posture, and

⁴⁰² Guardian, “Thin, pale, but happy: Freed Israeli hostages reunited with family”, 12 February 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/12/thin-pale-but-happy-freed-israeli-hostages-reunited-with-family>; Times of Israel, “RESCUED: Argentine-born Louis Har, grandfather to ten”, 19 December 2023 (updated 12 February 2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-argentine-born-louis-har-and-fernando-marman>; Times of Israel, “RESCUED: Argentine-born Fernando Marman, beloved handyman”, 20 January 2024 (updated 12 February 2024), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-argentine-born-fernando-marman-beloved-handyman>

⁴⁰³ Times of Israel, “Hostage freed in rescue op says Hamas guards threatened to murder him in captivity”, 9 July 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hostage-freed-in-rescue-op-says-hamas-guards-threatened-to-murder-him-in-captivity>

⁴⁰⁴ IDF, Facebook post: “The bodies of Carmel Gat, Eden Yerushalmi, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Alexander Lobanov, Almog Sarusi, and Master Sergeant Ori Danino were found and recovered yesterday”, 1 September 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/idfonline/posts/905687784926571>

⁴⁰⁵ Forward, “He’s a Muslim Israeli who was close with Hersh Goldberg-Polin. Now he’s mourning his friend – and seeking change”, 26 September 2024, <https://forward.com/opinion/658230/arab-israeli-hostages-hersh-goldberg-polin>

⁴⁰⁶ See section 6.1.2 “Nova festival site and surrounding areas”.

⁴⁰⁷ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, available at: NBC News, “Hamas releases video of hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin”, 24 April 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJeOoeCDgKw>

⁴⁰⁸ ABC News, “Who were the 6 hostages killed in Gaza?”, 2 September 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/who-were-6-hostages-killed-gaza-funerals-israel-hersh-goldberg-polin/story?id=113322975>; Ynetnews, “Heroism of murdered hostage Ori Danino revealed by fellow captive: He fought Hamas terrorists and saved lives”, 27 February 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/sk2tfx05kl>

⁴⁰⁹ Times of Israel, “Hostage Carmel Gat declared dead, body recovered from Hamas tunnel”, 3 December 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-carmel-gat-seen-doing-yoga-with-hostage-children>

⁴¹⁰ NPR, “Israel says it rescued a hostage found alone in an underground tunnel in Gaza”, 28 August 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/08/27/nx-s1-5090950/israel-gaza-hamas-war-rescued-hostage-qaid-farhan-alkadi>

⁴¹¹ AP, “How an Israeli raid freed 4 hostages and killed at least 274 Palestinians in Gaza”, 10 June 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-war-hostages-casualties-1458f5a1dfe7bd4d908231bb7090a559>

⁴¹² CNN, “Israeli forces rescue 2 hostages as airstrikes kill around 100 Palestinians in Rafah”, 12 February 2024 (updated 13 February 2024), <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/02/12/middleeast/israel-hostages-rescued-gaza-rafah-intl-hnk/index.html>

⁴¹³ Times of Israel, “Autopsy finds 6 hostages were shot multiple times at close range in last 48-72 hours”, 1 September 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/autopsy-finds-6-hostages-shot-multiple-times-at-close-range-in-last-48-72-hours>

into the left side of his neck and exiting from the top of the right side of his head. He then seemingly fell on his knees and was shot in the back of his head at very close range.⁴¹⁴ She added that Eden Yerushalmi's body was lying next to Hersh's and that she had also been shot multiple times, as had the other four hostages.

Three statements posted by Abu Obaida, the Al-Qassam Brigades' spokesperson, on social media on 2 September 2024, seemingly in response to the Israeli military's announcement, suggested that the six were killed to prevent them from being rescued. In the first, he blamed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli army for the death of the prisoners "after they deliberately obstructed any deal to exchange prisoners".⁴¹⁵ In the second, he said that, following what he referred to as the "Nuseirat incident", "new instructions" had been issued to those guarding hostages on how to "deal with them" in the event of the Israeli army "approaching their place of detention".⁴¹⁶ The "Nuseirat incident" was the rescue by Israeli special forces on 8 June 2024 of four Israeli hostages from two apartments in the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza, an operation in which scores of Palestinian civilians were killed.⁴¹⁷ He did not explicitly clarify what the "new instructions" were. However, in the third post, he said: "Netanyahu's insistence on freeing prisoners through military pressure instead of making a deal will mean they return to their families in coffins. Their families must choose: either dead or alive".⁴¹⁸

Amnesty International has concluded, based on all available evidence, that the six hostages were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

In 2025, the Al-Qassam Brigades stepped up threats to kill the remaining Israeli hostages. On 15 February 2025, they forced one of three Israeli hostages who were being released in a negotiated hostage-prisoner exchange to hold an hourglass above a photograph of Matan Zangauker, one of the hostages still being held in Gaza, in a threatening message that time was running out for the remaining hostages.⁴¹⁹ On 24 March 2025, the Al-Qassam Brigades issued yet another video with the same message, featuring two of the remaining hostages pleading for a hostage-prisoner exchange deal as their only chance of survival.⁴²⁰

The bodies of three of the most well-known hostages abducted on 7 October 2023, Argentinian-Israeli Shiri Bibas and her two sons – nine-month-old Kfir Bibas and four-year-old Ariel Bibas – were finally returned to their family on 21 February 2025 as part of a negotiated hostage-prisoner exchange.⁴²¹ Three weeks earlier, the Al-Qassam Brigades released Yarden Bibas, Shiri's husband and the children's father, who had been held separately from his wife and children since they were all abducted on 7 October 2023 from Nir Oz, where they lived.⁴²²

Shiri and her two sons were alive and unharmed when they were seen being abducted from Nir Oz on 7 October 2023,⁴²³ but, in a video date-stamped 20 December 2024, a spokesperson of the Mujahideen Brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement, stated in a media interview that Shiri and her two sons, whom they were holding hostage, were killed in an Israeli air strike along with their

⁴¹⁴ CNN, "Parents whose son was killed by Hamas describe the conditions of his captivity", 15 October 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfIH4pZz9BM>

⁴¹⁵ Abu Obaida, Telegram post: "نتنياهو وجيش الاحتلال وحدهم من يتحملون المسؤولية الكاملة عن مقتل الأسرى بعد تعمدتهم تعطيل أي صفقة لتبادل الأسرى لمصالح ضيقة، [Only Netanyahu and the occupation army bear full responsibility for the killing of the prisoners after they deliberately obstructed any deal to exchange prisoners for narrow interests, in addition to their deliberate killing of dozens of them through direct aerial bombardment.]", 2 September 2024, https://t.me/spokesman_2020/126 (translation from the original Arabic by Amnesty International).

⁴¹⁶ Abu Obaida, Telegram post: "نقول للجميع وبشكل واضح أنه وبعد حادثة النصيرات، صدرت تعليمات جديدة للمجاهدين المكلفين بحراسة الأسرى بخصوص التعامل معهم حال اقترب جيش الاحتلال من مكان احتجازهم [We say to everyone clearly that after the Nuseirat incident, new instructions were issued to the fighters in charge of guarding the prisoners on how to deal with them in the event of the occupation army approaching their place of detention]", 2 September 2024, https://t.me/spokesman_2020/127 (translation from the original Arabic by Amnesty International).

⁴¹⁷ See BBC, "Four hostages rescued in Gaza as hospitals say scores killed in Israeli strikes", 8 June 2024, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd11z2j34k4o>

The four hostages – Noa Argamani, Almog Meir Jan, Andrei Kozlov and Shlomi Ziv – were abducted after attending the Nova festival.

⁴¹⁸ Abu Obaida, Telegram post: "إصرار نتنياهو على تحرير الأسرى من خلال الضغط العسكري بدلاً من إبرام صفقة سيعني عودتهم إلى أهلهم داخل توابيت وعلى عوائلهم [Netanyahu's insistence on freeing prisoners through military pressure instead of making a deal will mean they return to their families in coffins. Their families must choose: either dead or alive]", 2 September 2024, https://t.me/spokesman_2020/128 (translation from the original Arabic by Amnesty International).

⁴¹⁹ OneIndia News, "Hamas forces hostage lair Horn to hold hourglass in shocking 'Time is running out' threat to Israel", 15 February 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWafxEo_ygY

⁴²⁰ OneIndia News, "Hamas-released hostage sends shocking message to Netanyahu: 'Time is running out'" (previously cited).

⁴²¹ CNN, "Human remains returned by Hamas to Israel confirmed as those of former hostage Shiri Bibas", 22 February 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/02/21/middleeast/shiri-bibas-body-gaza-israel-intl-latam/index.html>

⁴²² Hindustan Times, "Hamas releases Yarden Bibas, but this chilling 2024 video leaves more questions than answers", 1 February 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2p_2R07pNDw

⁴²³ NBC News, "Video shows the kidnapping of Shiri Silberman-Bibas and her children by Hamas gunmen", 9 October 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/video/video-shows-hamas-gunmen-kidnap-shiri-silberman-bibas-and-her-children-194724933949>

captors.⁴²⁴ The Al-Qassam Brigades made a statement to the same effect and the Israeli army said it would investigate the allegation.⁴²⁵ Neither the Mujahideen Brigades nor the Al-Qassam Brigades provided any evidence to substantiate their claims.

After the bodies were returned to their family, the Israeli authorities said that forensic evidence showed that the boys were killed by their captors in November 2023, but provided no evidence to substantiate their claim.⁴²⁶ The director of Israel's National Center of Forensic Medicine, Chen Kugel, said there was no evidence that Shiri Bibas had died in an explosion, disputing claims that she and her sons were killed in an Israeli air strike.⁴²⁷ However, to date, neither he nor the Israeli military has provided any details about the injuries they sustained. Amnesty International has not been able to obtain sufficient information to come to a conclusion on this case.

Some hostages were accidentally killed by the Israeli military. The most well-known case is that of Yotam Haim, aged 28, Samer Talalka, aged 22, and Alon Shamriz, aged 26, all of whom were shot dead on 15 December 2023 in the Shuja'iya neighbourhood of Gaza City, where Israeli forces were facing significant resistance from local Palestinian armed groups.⁴²⁸ The Israeli military took responsibility for these killings promptly, whereas in the case of three other hostages – Nik Beizer, Ron Sherman and Elia Toledano – it took the army 10 months to announce that they had been killed in an air strike in November 2023.⁴²⁹ Another hostage, 25-year-old Sahar Baruch, was reportedly killed in a failed rescue attempt in December 2024, but neither the exact circumstances of his death nor the party responsible for it could be verified.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁴ Video, available at: Middle East Eye, "Mujahideen Brigades: Israeli airstrike killed Shiri Bibas and her children", 25 February 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2kyo4x-TRE>

⁴²⁵ CNN, "Israel assessing Hamas claim youngest hostage and family members are dead", 29 November 2023,

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/29/middleeast/kfir-bibas-israel-hamas-gaza-intl/index.html>; CNN,

"Mystery and anguish over the fate of missing Israeli hostage Shiri Bibas", 21 February 2025,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2025/02/21/middleeast/shiri-bibas-israel-hostage-hamas-gaza-war-what-we-know-intl/index.html>

⁴²⁶ The Israeli military reported on 21 February 2025 that "forensic examinations have revealed that Palestinian terrorists murdered children Ariel and Kfir Bibas 'with their bare hands' weeks after their kidnapping on October 7, 2023". Times of Israel, "IDF: Captors murdered children Ariel and Kfir Bibas 'in cold blood' with 'their bare hands'", 21 February 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-says-captors-murdered-children-ariel-and-kfir-bibas-with-their-bare-hands>

⁴²⁷ Times of Israel, "Forensics chief confirms ID of body of Shiri Bibas, no evidence she died in explosion", 22 February 2025,

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/forensics-chief-confirms-id-of-body-of-shiri-bibas-no-evidence-she-died-in-explosion>

⁴²⁸ BBC, "Israel Gaza: Hostages shot by IDF put out 'SOS' sign written with leftover food", 18 December 2023,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67745092>

⁴²⁹ PBS, "Israel says 'high probability' its own airstrike killed 3 hostages in Gaza last November", 15 September 2024,

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/israel-says-high-probability-its-own-airstrike-killed-3-hostages-in-gaza-last-november>

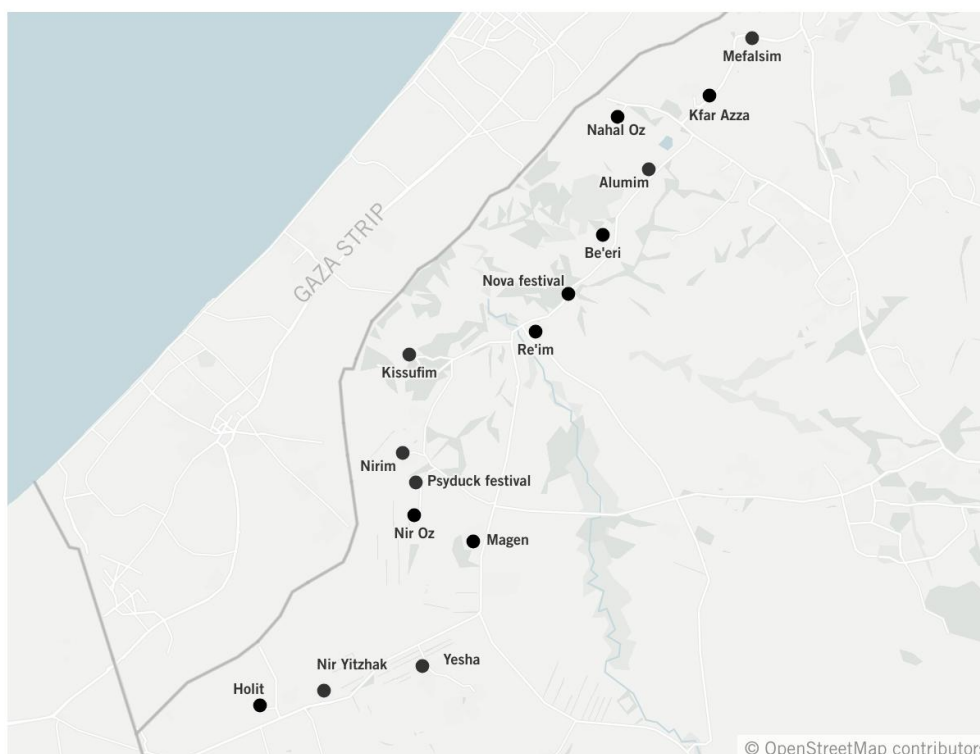
⁴³⁰ Times of Israel, "Report: Failed IDF raid that resulted in death of hostage Sahar Baruch was meant to rescue Noa Argamani", 22 December 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/report-failed-idf-raid-that-resulted-in-death-of-hostage-sahar-baruch-was-meant-to-rescue-noa-argamani

6. HOSTAGE-TAKING AND SEIZURE OF BODIES

Palestinian assailants, consisting of fighters in military-style clothing and armed or unarmed men in civilian clothing, seized 251 people during the Hamas-led attacks on 7 October 2023 and forcibly brought them to Gaza. The majority of these 251 people were seized alive and held hostage, but, in 36 cases, reportedly, Palestinian assailants seized the bodies of people killed during the attacks.

Of the 251 people seized, 27 were soldiers on active duty at their assigned positions (that is, not on leave). The vast majority of the remaining 224 people were civilians. They comprised 124 men, 64 women and 36 children. Most of the 251 people seized were Jewish Israelis, including some with dual nationality. Seven were Bedouin citizens of Israel. At least 35 were foreign nationals.

Sites of reported abductions of civilians in Israel



- Sites of reported abductions, based on Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project (<https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en>) and October 7th Geo-Visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (<https://oct7map.com>).

Hamas announced that its forces seized soldiers during the 7 October 2023 attacks, but denied they were responsible for abducting civilians, blaming this on other Palestinian assailants. However, Amnesty International concluded, on the basis of ample evidence, that fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, abducted civilians from multiple locations. It also concluded that assailants in civilian clothing, whose affiliation, if any, Amnesty International could not determine, abducted civilians, sometimes operating alongside fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. It was not able to determine whether other armed groups captured soldiers or abducted civilians. It documented evidence that fighters, likely including fighters from both the Al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, seized bodies in Israel and took them to Gaza.

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad held people and bodies seized during the attacks for days, weeks, months or, in some cases, over two years in Gaza. Their leaders made it clear – in statements they made and videos of hostages they issued – that they were holding people seized during the attacks under threat of harming or continuing to hold them to compel action from the Israeli authorities, including the release of Palestinians in Israeli detention, recognizing that such videos would lead to public pressure on the Israeli government. The Palestinian Mujahideen Movement also likely held hostages from Israel in Gaza.

The seizure and holding of civilians by Palestinian armed groups to compel the Israeli authorities to take or refrain from taking specific actions as a condition for releasing or not killing or injuring them constitutes hostage-taking, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law. As Hamas made it clear that soldiers were being held not to remove them from the battlefield, but to compel action from the Israeli authorities, the holding of soldiers also constitutes hostage-taking. The seizure and holding of the bodies of people killed amounts to a violation of the prohibition on mistreatment of bodies under international humanitarian law.

HOSTAGE-TAKING AND SEIZURE OF BODIES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Taking hostages is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and constitutes a war crime.⁴³¹ Hostage-taking is defined as involving the seizing, detention or otherwise holding one or more persons, who are civilians or persons *hors de combat*, where the perpetrator threatens to kill, injure or continue to detain such persons, with the intention to compel specified entities including a state to act or refrain from acting as an explicit condition for the safety or release of such person or persons.⁴³² Soldiers captured by armed groups are *hors de combat* as they are in the power of the adverse party.⁴³³

International law requires those holding civilian hostages to release them immediately and unconditionally. Those holding soldiers must immediately stop holding them as hostages.⁴³⁴ International humanitarian law also requires those holding soldiers as captives to treat them humanely at all times, and grant them access to the ICRC and communication with their families.⁴³⁵

International humanitarian law prohibits abuse and ill-treatment of dead bodies.⁴³⁶ Parties to a conflict must endeavour to facilitate the return of the remains of the deceased upon request of the party to which they belong or upon the request of their next of kin.⁴³⁷

⁴³¹ See, for example, Geneva Conventions, Common Article 3; Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Article 8(2)(a)(viii) and (c)(iii); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 96 and 156.

⁴³² The ICC Elements of Crimes sets out the following elements to constitute the war crimes of hostage taking in a non-international armed conflict: "The perpetrator threatened to kill, injure or continue to detain such person or persons; The perpetrator intended to compel a State, an international organization, a natural or legal person or a group of persons to act or refrain from acting as an explicit or implicit condition for the safety or the release of such person or persons. Such person or persons were either *hors de combat*, or were civilians, medical personnel or religious personnel taking no active part in the hostilities. The perpetrator was aware of the factual circumstances that established this status. The conduct took place in the context of and was associated with an armed conflict not of an international character. The perpetrator was aware of factual circumstances that established the existence of an armed conflict." ICC Elements of Crimes, Article 8(2)(c)(iii).

⁴³³ See, for example, ICRC, ICRC Casebook, *Hors de Combat*, https://casebook.icrc.org/a_to_z/glossary/hors-de-combat

⁴³⁴ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(a)(viii) and (c)(iii); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 96.

⁴³⁵ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 99.

⁴³⁶ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 90, 113 and 156; ICC Statute, Article 8(2)(b)(xxi) and (c)(ii). According to the ICC Elements of Crimes, the war crime of outrages upon personal dignity also applies to dead persons: "For this crime, 'persons' can include dead persons. It is understood that the victim need not personally be aware of the existence of the humiliation or degradation or other violation." ICC Elements of Crimes, Article 8(2)(b)(xxi), fn. 49.

⁴³⁷ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 114.

NUMBERS

Amnesty International primarily based its figures for those seized on 7 October 2023 on a database produced by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.⁴³⁸ However, it also cross-checked other datasets, including information published by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (regarding hostages or bodies that were released or rescued),⁴³⁹ the Israeli military (particularly for details about soldiers and the specific locations from which individuals were seized),⁴⁴⁰ Israel's national social security (regarding those killed in captivity),⁴⁴¹ and other governments (for information about their nationals) and other Israeli civil society documentation initiatives.⁴⁴²

While the sources are broadly consistent with each other, they do not list the nationality or nationalities of all the individuals seized on 7 October 2023, nor do they specify in all cases whether individuals were soldiers or civilians. In some, but not all, cases Amnesty International was able to supplement the information in these datasets with details from other sources.

6.1 ABDUCTION OF CIVILIAN HOSTAGES

A total of 224 people – 124 men (or their bodies), 64 women (or their bodies) and 36 children (all then alive) – were seized on 7 October 2023 from civilian communities such as kibbutzim where they lived or worked, as well as the Nova festival site and surrounding areas. The vast majority of them were civilians.⁴⁴³ The youngest was less than a year old. Nine were aged over 80.

Hamas has claimed that it did not plan to take civilians hostage and that Hamas forces were not involved in abducting civilians from southern Israel, while appearing to blame the abduction of civilians on unaffiliated civilians who crossed over from Gaza during the attacks. Saleh Al-Arouri, then Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, made a statement on 12 October 2023:

“The young fighters from the Al-Qassam [Brigades] captured army [soldiers] and brought them back to Gaza. Are there civilians who were captured? There are ordinary people who went in and seized people and brought them back to Gaza. It was not Hamas’s intention to harm either prisoners or civilians nor can it. This is the official position.”⁴⁴⁴

In “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”, issued on 21 January 2024, Hamas said: “Maybe some faults happened during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood’s implementation due to the rapid collapse of the Israeli security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas with Gaza.”⁴⁴⁵

However, Amnesty International documented a wealth of evidence that refutes Hamas’s claims. While some unaffiliated civilians from Gaza may have been involved in abducting civilians, visual and other evidence collected by Amnesty International identifies a clear pattern in which the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, targeted civilians, including children and older people, for abduction in multiple civilian locations. These abductions involved fighters seizing civilians outside the vicinity of any military target, forcing families out of safe rooms in their homes or hunting unarmed young people across the Nova festival

⁴³⁸ Haaretz, *רשימה מתעדכנת של החטופים בעזה: מי כבר שוחרר ומי עדיין בשבי* [“Updated list of those kidnapped in Gaza: Who has been released and who is still in captivity”], 25 January 2025, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/2025-01-25/ty-article-magazine/00000194-83dd-dbbb-abf4-dbf032d0000> (in Hebrew, accessed on 31 July 2025) (Haaretz hostages database). An English version including fewer details is available at: Haaretz, “Hostages held by Hamas: The names of those abducted from Israel”, <https://www.haaretz.com/haaretz-explains/2023-10-22/ty-article-magazine/hostages-held-by-hamas-the-names-of-those-abducted-from-israel/0000018b-55f8-d5d2-afef-d5fdd04e0000> (accessed on 31 July 2025).

⁴³⁹ Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report”, 10 October 2023, updated on 23 June 2025, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/hostages-and-missing-persons-report> (accessed on 31 August 2025).

⁴⁴⁰ IDF, *חללי המלחמה ששמותיהם הותרו לפרסום, 848* [“848 war dead whose names were allowed to be published”], undated, <https://www.idf.il/נופלים-חללי-המלחמה> (in Hebrew, accessed on 20 April 2025).

⁴⁴¹ Israel, National Insurance Institute, *חללי פעולות האיבה* [Casualties of Hostilities], <https://laad.btl.gov.il/Web/He/TerrorVictims/Page/Default.aspx> (in Hebrew).

⁴⁴² See, for example, Kan, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, *רשימת שמות החטופים לעזה: ישראל במלחמה* [“Israel at war: List of names of those kidnapped in Gaza”], <https://www.kan.org.il/lobby/kidnapped> (in Hebrew).

⁴⁴³ Amnesty International is aware of two cases in which individuals seized in civilian locations were soldiers on leave. See section 6.2 “Seizure of military captives”.

⁴⁴⁴ Al Jazeera, *נائب رئيس المكتب السياسي لحركة حماس للجذيرة: هذه معركة متقدمة على طريق حرية شعبنا* [“Deputy head of Hamas’s political bureau to Al Jazeera: This is an advanced battle on the path to our people’s freedom”], 12 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAqZAQGD1M> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁴⁴⁵ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), pp. 7-8.

site and surrounding areas as they tried to hide or flee. Amnesty International also documented evidence that assailants in civilian clothing, whose affiliation, if any, the organization could not determine, abducted civilians while operating alongside fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.

Hamas also defended its actions on 7 October 2023 by noting that all Israeli adults are subject to mandatory military service, implicitly questioning the civilian status of Israeli adults in general.⁴⁴⁶ While a small number of people seized in civilian locations may have been soldiers on leave, the overwhelming majority were civilians.

6.1.1 CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES

Palestinian assailants took civilian hostages from multiple kibbutzim and other civilian communities near the Gaza perimeter fence. In some places, they took two or three generations of people from the same family hostage. They also took young children hostage immediately after their parents were killed. Many of those captured from civilian homes were hiding in their safe rooms and forced out. Amnesty International verified visual evidence and received testimonies about the abduction of at least 37 civilians from kibbutzim.

JEWISH ISRAELIS

Most of the civilians abducted from civilian communities were Jewish Israelis.

Shoshan Haran, the founder and president of Fair Planet, an Israeli development NGO, and a member of Women Wage Peace, a grassroots peace movement, was taken hostage with six other members of her family and held hostage by Hamas.⁴⁴⁷ Shoshan, who lived in Be’eri and was aged 67 at the time, told Amnesty International that, after receiving a WhatsApp message at 6.29am warning of “an infiltration of terrorists” into the kibbutz, she sheltered in her safe room with members of her family who were visiting for the Jewish holidays. They included her daughter Adi Shoham, a 38-year-old psychologist, and Adi’s husband, 38-year-old Tal Shoham, who worked for a solar energy company. They also included Adi’s and Tal’s children, Naveh Shoham and Yahel Shoham, aged eight and three respectively, as well as Shoshan’s 52-year-old sister-in-law, Sharon Avigdori, and Sharon’s 12-year-old daughter, Noam Avigdori. Her husband, Avshalom Haran, the 66-year-old chair of the kibbutz’s business operations, remained outside the safe room with a knife, prepared to defend his family.

Shoshan said:

“Around 8am, we started hearing shouts in Arabic, and guns shooting and grenades being thrown around us and getting closer. Tal messaged my husband and said, ‘Come to the safe room as a knife won’t protect us!’ Avshalom came to the safe room, and he and Tal were reinforcing the handle of the safe room door while the rest of us hid under the beds. The terrorists entered our house and shot through the safe room door. We saw the bullets come through the door, but they weren’t able to break in. Then the terrorists went out, and we thought for a moment that maybe we were saved. But instead, they brought a bulldozer to the house to force open the safe room window. They managed to force apart two sections of the metal window. Tal and my husband realized the terrorists could easily throw a grenade through the gap between the window’s metal panels; the space was wide enough and the terrorists had grenades. At that point, we gave ourselves up and surrendered.”⁴⁴⁸

Shoshan told Amnesty International that the armed men took her husband, Avshalom, and her son-in-law, Tal, first. It was the last time she saw her husband. Shortly after this, they pulled Shoshan, Adi, Sharon and the three children – Naveh, Yahel and Noam – through the window. Outside, armed men surrounded them, shouting “jihad, jihad”. One shouted at them in English, “Women, children, take. Men, boom-boom.” She said the armed men abducted them from the kibbutz at approximately 10.30am and then took them to Gaza.

Shoshan, Adi, Naveh, Yahel, Sharon and Noam were held in Gaza until 25 November 2023. Shoshan said that, during the “horrific 50 days of captivity”, they were moved between four apartments by their Hamas captors.⁴⁴⁹ Shoshan said she knew they were from Hamas, as when she and her family arrived in Gaza after their abduction from Be’eri, they were forced to make a video in which they were told to say they were

⁴⁴⁶ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), p. 9.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview by video call with Shoshan Haran, 9 July 2025.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview by video call with Shoshan Haran, 9 July 2025. See also Shoshan Haran, Presentation to the UN Security Council, 16 May 2024, shared by Shoshan Haran with Amnesty International on 17 September 2024 and available at: DaJobnik, “Kidnapped by Hamas: Dr. Shoshan Haran’s harrowing testimony at the UN”, 18 May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD02WGqQOYU>

⁴⁴⁹ MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

hostages of Hamas.⁴⁵⁰ She was also able to speak at length in English to one of her captors, who told her he was with Hamas. He warned her that, if she and her relatives were released, they should leave Israel, as there would be further and more powerful attacks like the one on 7 October 2023. Shoshan told Amnesty International that the men holding her would routinely make calls to an unknown individual whom she presumed to be a commander to report on her family's status. She also said, after 49 days of captivity, a man who said he was holding Tal came to the apartment in which she and her family were being detained, informed them Tal was still alive and passed news of their status back to Tal.⁴⁵¹

Tal was held hostage separately until he was released on 22 February 2025, after 505 days in captivity. He spent eight and a half months of that time held in a tunnel.⁴⁵² It was only after Shoshan's release that she learnt the fate of her husband, Avshalom Haran, and other family members. She said: "My husband was murdered after we were forced out of the safe room, as were my sister [60-year-old Lilach Kipnis], my brother-in-law [Eviatar Kipni] and his carer [42-year-old Paul Vincent Castelv, a Filipino national], who also lived in my kibbutz."⁴⁵³ When Amnesty International spoke to Shoshan in July 2025, around 18 months after she had been released, she described the difficulty of putting her life back together after the attack, and said she had not yet returned to Be'eri.

Thirty people were taken hostage from Be'eri.⁴⁵⁴ A video verified by Amnesty International from Be'eri shows a woman, 56-year-old Raz Ben Ami, being forced to walk out of the kibbutz through the breached fence surrounding it.⁴⁵⁵ She is wearing pyjamas, is barefoot and is surrounded by a group of men, some of whom are dressed in civilian clothing and some of whom are armed fighters of unclear affiliation. Raz was released on 29 November 2023.⁴⁵⁶ She later said that she and her husband were abducted from their safe room.⁴⁵⁷ In an image reviewed by Amnesty International that she identified in a media report as being of her husband, 55-year-old Ohad Ben Ami, he is seen in a T-shirt and boxer shorts, flanked by two armed fighters of unknown affiliation.⁴⁵⁸ One of Raz and Ohad's daughters, Ella Ben Ami, communicated with Amnesty International a month after her parents' abduction, confirming their abduction from their home in Be'eri and raising concerns in particular about her mother's health.⁴⁵⁹ Ohad, described as the kibbutz's accountant,⁴⁶⁰ was released on 8 February 2025 as part of the January-February 2025 hostage-prisoner exchange.⁴⁶¹

Four members of the Bibas family were taken hostage from Nir Oz: Shiri Bibas, her husband, Yarden Bibas, and their two young sons, Kfir and Ariel Bibas. In a video verified by Amnesty International, a group of men, including at least one fighter whose affiliation cannot be ascertained, other armed men and unarmed individuals in civilian clothing, are seen drilling into the front door of a house, likely in Nir Oz, seemingly to break in. Shiri is outside in the early morning,⁴⁶² clutching her two children to her chest and draping what looks like a blanket around them while they are surrounded by armed men, some in civilian clothing and at least one possibly in military-style clothing.⁴⁶³ Amnesty International could not identify any affiliation these armed men had to specific Palestinian armed groups, if any. According to online reports, Shiri was a former

⁴⁵⁰ This video has not been publicly released.

⁴⁵¹ They learnt after Tal was released that he had received this information.

⁴⁵² Interview by video call with Shoshan Haran, 9 July 2025.

⁴⁵³ Interview by video call with Shoshan Haran, 9 July 2025. Avshalom's death was also widely reported in the Israeli media. See, for example, Haaretz, "Israel's dead: The names of those killed in Hamas attacks, massacres and the Israel-Hamas war", 19 October 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/haaretz-explains/2023-10-19/ty-article-magazine/israels-dead-the-names-of-those-killed-in-hamas-massacres-and-the-israel-hamas-war/0000018b-325c-d450-a3af-7b5cf0210000>

⁴⁵⁴ This is according to the Israeli army's operational investigation into the attack on Be'eri. IDF, [תחקיר הקרב בקיבוץ בארי](https://www.idf.il/אתרי-יחידות/7-10-התחקירים-המבצעיים/תחקיר-הקרבות/תחקיר-הקרבות-בקיבוץ-בארי), <https://www.idf.il/אתרי-יחידות/7-10-התחקירים-המבצעיים/תחקיר-הקרבות/תחקיר-הקרבות-בקיבוץ-בארי> (in Hebrew, accessed on 7 March 2025). Some other sources mention 31 hostages.

⁴⁵⁵ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 23 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. Raz Ben Ami identified herself in a recorded public event as the woman in this image. See Yisroel Roll, "I am Raz Ben Ami. I was kidnapped from Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7th. I was released after 54 days.", 6 December 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq8RTRrXPMQ>

⁴⁵⁶ MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁴⁵⁷ Recorded public event. See Yisroel Roll, "I am Raz Ben Ami. I was kidnapped from Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7th. I was released after 54 days." (previously cited).

⁴⁵⁸ Recorded public event. See Yisroel Roll, "I am Raz Ben Ami" (previously cited).

⁴⁵⁹ See Amnesty International, "Israel/OPT: Hamas and other armed groups must release civilian hostages and treat all captives humanely", 7 November 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/11/israel-opt-hamas-and-other-armed-groups-must-release-civilian-hostages-and-treat-all-captives-humanely>

Another of Raz and Ohad's daughters, Yuli Ben Ami, spoke to the media about the abduction. See, for example, i24News report, 22 October 2023, available at: i24News, X post: "Témoignage : ses deux parents, otages à Gaza" ["Testimony: Both parents held hostage in Gaza"], 22 October 2023, https://x.com/i24NEWS_FR/status/1716155340956336460 (in French).

⁴⁶⁰ See, for example, a statement by the UK branch of the Hostages and Missing Families Forum. bringhomenow_uk, Instagram post "Ohad Ben Ami (55)", 8 June 2024, https://www.instagram.com/bringhomenow_uk/p/C7-JlrSNdLR/?img_index=1

⁴⁶¹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited); MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁴⁶² Amnesty International deduced the approximate time based on its analysis of the position of the sun and the positioning and size of the shadows visible in the image.

⁴⁶³ Video posted on the website <https://www.hamas-massacre.net> on an unknown date and held on file by Amnesty International.

education worker and bookkeeper, and was aged 32 at the time of her abduction.⁴⁶⁴ The two children were reported as aged four and 10 months.⁴⁶⁵ One of the men surrounding them can be heard in the video telling fighters in Palestinian Arabic to protect her because she is a woman and “to take her alive”. Shiri and the two children are later seen in two videos under the control of a group of men, one of whom is armed, forcing them into a car.⁴⁶⁶ The videos, which were verified by Amnesty International, were released by the Israeli military, which stated that it obtained them, during military operations, from footage recorded on surveillance cameras on an outpost in the city of Khan Younis, in Gaza, belonging to the Mujahideen Brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement.⁴⁶⁷ A man reported to be a field commander in the Mujahideen Brigades was filmed by Middle East Eye saying that the Mujahideen Brigades had held Shiri and her two children together in Gaza.⁴⁶⁸

In another video verified by Amnesty International, Shiri’s husband, Yarden Bibas, is seen on the back of a motorcycle with three armed men, including one driving it, in civilian clothing in Gaza.⁴⁶⁹ Yarden has blood on his face and hands. He is reported in the media to have been a welder.⁴⁷⁰ In November 2023, a recording of Yarden was released by Hamas, showing him in their custody.⁴⁷¹ In the video, which was reviewed by Amnesty International, he is visibly distraught.⁴⁷² Captions in Arabic at the start of the video say that Shiri Bibas and her two children were killed by Israeli air strikes. Yarden then addresses Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, using his nickname: “Bibi, you bombed my family, you killed my wife and my children, all that I had in life.”⁴⁷³ He then pleads for their bodies to be returned home. Yarden was released on 1 February 2025. The bodies of Shiri and their two children were returned to Israel on 20 and 21 February 2025.⁴⁷⁴ Yarden has, since his release, stated publicly that he, his wife and two children had been sheltering in their safe room when their home was attacked and they were abducted.⁴⁷⁵

Dozens of other people were abducted from Nir Oz.⁴⁷⁶ A 49-year-old teacher, Liat Atzili, described to Amnesty International being taken hostage from this kibbutz. She said she hid in her safe room while the kibbutz was attacked and that at first some people in civilian clothing came and opened the safe room door, asked her for money and left when she said she did not have any. They were soon, however, followed by armed men. She said: “Two people arrived, armed, in uniform, and they opened the door. They kidnapped me. I walked around the house a little bit, they let me take things.” She said that she was taken in a vehicle with another person from the kibbutz,⁴⁷⁷ but was separated from this person on arrival in Gaza. She told Amnesty International that guards holding her told her that they were members of Hamas, and recounted being visited by other Hamas members during her time in captivity, whom she understood to be more senior and “doing the rounds between apartments” where hostages were being held. She described being moved between apartments several times, seeing two Thai hostages being handcuffed and taken out of one apartment, and being held with another Israeli hostage for a time. She also described being questioned by a man she was told by other guards was a more senior Hamas member and asked about any military affiliation she might have. Liat was released on 29 November 2023.⁴⁷⁸

Four members of the Angel family were also abducted from Nir Oz.⁴⁷⁹ According to accounts from their family members recorded by the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, Kan, 54-year-old Ronen Angel and 51-year-old Karina Angel were taken from their home in the morning of 7 October 2023 and their two

⁴⁶⁴ See, for example, Blue Ribbons for Life, Shiri Bibas, updated on 22 February 2025, <https://www.blueribbons.life/families/shiri-bibas>

⁴⁶⁵ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁴⁶⁶ Two videos and a montage of screenshots posted by the IDF on X on 19 February 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁴⁶⁷ See, for example, Times of Israel, “Bibas family hopes new video of kidnapped mom and kids ‘shocks world’ into action”, 20 February 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/bibas-family-hopes-new-video-of-kidnapped-mom-and-kids-shocks-world-into-action>

⁴⁶⁸ Middle East Eye, Facebook post: “Mujahideen Brigades: Israeli airstrike killed Shiri Bibas and her children”, 20 February 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2070060606776118>

⁴⁶⁹ Video posted by Kan news on X on 17 April 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁴⁷⁰ See, for example, Haaretz, “Ofer Kalderon, Yarden Bibas and Keith Siegel released from Hamas captivity after 484 days”, 31 January 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-01-31/ty-article/.premium/these-are-the-israeli-hostages-set-to-be-released-by-hamas-on-saturday/00000194-bb5f-d69b-a3b7-bb7f12d80000>

⁴⁷¹ See, for example, Times of Israel, “Hamas releases propaganda video regarding the Bibas family”, 30 November 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/hamas-releases-propaganda-video-regarding-the-bibas-family

⁴⁷² Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by ABNA24 on its website on 7 January 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁴⁷³ Translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International.

⁴⁷⁴ See section 5.3 “Killing of hostages in Gaza”.

⁴⁷⁵ See, for example, Sky News, “Thousands line streets in Israel for Bibas family funeral procession”, 26 February 2025, <https://news.sky.com/story/thousands-line-streets-in-israel-for-bibas-family-funeral-procession-13317329>

⁴⁷⁶ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁴⁷⁷ Name withheld but held on file by Amnesty International.

⁴⁷⁸ Interview in person with Liat Atzili, 8 September 2024 (translations from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International). See also MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

⁴⁷⁹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

daughters, Yuval Angel and Mika Angel, aged 11 and 18 respectively, were taken shortly afterwards.⁴⁸⁰ Four videos were posted on Ronen's Facebook account, seemingly taken on his phone, showing the scenes of the destruction of the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, close to Nir Oz, at around 12pm on 7 October 2023.⁴⁸¹ Karina, Yuval and Mika were released on 27 November 2023 after spending 52 days captive in Gaza.⁴⁸² Ronen was killed while in captivity; his body was returned as part of a hostage-prisoner exchange deal in October 2025.⁴⁸³

Gabriela Leimberg, aged 60, and four of her family members were taken hostage from the kibbutz of Nir Yitzhak.⁴⁸⁴ Video verified by Amnesty International shows the moment Gabriela and her 17-year-old daughter, Mia Leimberg, were abducted and driven out of the kibbutz in a pickup truck, with two armed men sitting behind and one motorcycle in front of them.⁴⁸⁵ Gabriela, Mia and Gabriela's sister, Clara Marman, were released on 28 November 2023 in a hostage-prisoner exchange,⁴⁸⁶ but Gabriela's and Clara's brother, Fernando Marman, and 70-year-old Luis Har, Clara's partner, remained in captivity in Gaza.⁴⁸⁷ They were rescued by the Israeli military on 12 February 2024 in an operation that killed around 100 Palestinians.⁴⁸⁸

PALESTINIAN OR BEDOUIN CITIZENS OF ISRAEL

While most of the people taken hostage from civilian communities were Jewish Israelis, Palestinian assailants also abducted seven Palestinian or Bedouin citizens of Israel (or their bodies).⁴⁸⁹ They included four members of the same family of Bedouin citizens of Israel, who lived in an unrecognized Bedouin village in the Negev/Naqab region of southern Israel: 53-year-old Youssef Zayadna and his four children, 21-year-old Hamza Zayadna, 17-year-old Aisha Zayadna and 18-year-old Bilal Zayadna.⁴⁹⁰ They were abducted from Holit, where Youssef was working in farming.⁴⁹¹ Aisha and Bilal were released on 30 November 2023.⁴⁹² The bodies of Youssef and Hamza were retrieved by the Israeli military from Gaza on 7 January 2025.⁴⁹³ Amnesty International was not able to determine the circumstances of their deaths. A family member of theirs, Salem Naif, who was also working that day in another part of the same kibbutz and had brought his two children with him, described to Amnesty International how fighters captured him and his children when they attacked the kibbutz and tried to take him and his children hostage. He said he and his children managed to escape.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁰ Kan, Nir Oz: Angel Family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/nir-oz/angel> (accessed on 10 April 2025). See also Mapping the Massacre, Yuval Engel, <https://oct7map.com/YuvalEngel> (accessed on 10 April 2025).

⁴⁸¹ Kan, Nir Oz: Angel Family (previously cited). The second "story" posted around 12pm contains all four videos. Amnesty International deduced the approximate time based on its analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in the videos.

⁴⁸² Ynet, "Karina Engel kept mostly apart from daughters during captivity", 29 November 2023,

<https://www.ynetnews.com/magazine/article/sj6e2cvb6>

⁴⁸³ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). Conflicting accounts indicate that Ronen Angel was killed by either an Israeli air strike or his captors. Amnesty International has not been able to corroborate either account. See, for example, Anadolu Agency, "Al Qassam Brigades reveals identities of four Israeli hostages killed in a strike", 9 March 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/al-qassam-brigades-reveal-identities-of-4-israeli-hostages-killed-in-gaza-airstrikes/3160375>; Times of Israel, "Ronen Engel, 54: Photographer, dad who was 'always smiling'", 12 December 2023 (updated 22 October 2025), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ronen-engel-54-photographer-dad-who-was-always-smiling>

⁴⁸⁴ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited); MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁴⁸⁵ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 6 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. Gabriela identifies herself and Mia as the people in the video in a media interview. i24News, "Gabriela Leimberg, her daughter Mia, and their dog Bella: Released hostages talk about captivity", 11 February 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YuuKvSn8TQ>

⁴⁸⁶ MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁴⁸⁷ Times of Israel, "Former hostage reflects on life post-captivity, one year after her release", 25 November 2024,

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/former-hostage-reflects-on-life-post-captivity-one-year-after-her-release>

⁴⁸⁸ See Amnesty International, "Israel/OPT: Hamas and other armed groups must immediately release civilians held hostage in Gaza", 12 July 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/israel-opt-hamas-and-other-armed-groups-must-immediately-release-civilians-held-hostage-in-gaza>

⁴⁸⁹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). Amnesty International has received testimony or spoken to people confirming the abduction of five of these individuals.

⁴⁹⁰ See Kan, Kan 7.10.360 Digital Memorial Project, Holit, Alziadana family, <https://www.710360.kan.org.il/en/holit/alziadana> (accessed 13 May 2025).

⁴⁹¹ Interview in person with Salem Naif, 5 August 2024; Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁴⁹² Interview in person with worker at Holit (name withheld), 5 August 2024; MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁴⁹³ BBC, "Israeli military says body of Bedouin hostage found in Gaza", 8 January 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clgyv18r2jqoh>; Times of Israel, "IDF confirms death of hostage Hamza Ziyadne, day after father Youssef laid to rest", 10 January 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-confirms-death-of-hostage-hamza-ziyadne-day-after-father-youssef-laid-to-rest>; Times of Israel, "Body of murdered Hamas hostage Hamza Ziyadne returned to Israel and identified", 19 January 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-hamza-ziyadne-rahah-resident-working-in-kibbutz-holit>


See also New York Times, "Who Is Farhan al-Qadi, the Rescued Hostage?", 27 August 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/27/world/middleeast/who-is-qaed-farhan-al-qadi-israel-hostage.html>

⁴⁹⁴ Interview in person with Salem Naif, 5 August 2024.

FOREIGN NATIONALS

Palestinian assailants abducted at least 35 people (or their bodies) who were not Israeli citizens.⁴⁹⁵ Most of these individuals were workers on short-term labour visas or agricultural students. Thirty-two were from Thailand, at least one was from Nepal, one was from the Philippines and one was from Tanzania.⁴⁹⁶ Those abducted were primarily men, but also included a Thai woman.⁴⁹⁷



 ↑ This still from CCTV footage taken by a camera at the entrance to Re'im at around 8.15am on 7 October 2023 shows armed fighters, some of whom are from the Al-Qassam Brigades, forcing men down a road in Re'im. Some of the men were identified as Thai nationals.

A Thai agricultural worker (name withheld at his request) told Amnesty International that he and five other Thai men were attacked by about 10 fighters in Re'im while sheltering in a bunker in the early morning of 7 October 2023. He said: "Armed men entered the bunker, pointed guns at us and forced us all to leave. We were instructed at gunpoint to form a line and walk towards a vehicle." He explained that an Israeli man (name withheld) was also taken hostage with them from Re'im, so seven people in all were taken. A video verified by Amnesty International, filmed around 8.15am, shows six armed fighters, some of whom are from the Al-Qassam Brigades, forcing up to five men in civilian clothing down a road in Re'im.⁴⁹⁸ The Thai agricultural worker interviewed by Amnesty International said that, while he and other abductees were "complying without resistance" and about to get into the vehicle, two of the Thai men were shot and killed.⁴⁹⁹ He learnt that the bodies of the two victims were later repatriated to Thailand.⁵⁰⁰

He said that the group of surviving Thai men and the Israeli man were taken to a tunnel in Gaza, where he said he was held in different locations within the tunnel until he was released on 25 November 2023. A photograph released with the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades shows five men

⁴⁹⁵ According to Haaretz, at least 35 foreign nationals were abducted. A small number of them, however, may have been killed already. Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). Amnesty International has verified images and received testimony confirming the abduction of five people who were not Israeli citizens.

⁴⁹⁶ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). See also Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs's statement on the release of the hostages, taken as a result of the violence in Israel and Gaza", 21 October 2023, <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/statement-first-hostage-releases-2>; Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Congratulatory Statement on the Fourth and Fifth Release of Thai hostages", 30 November 2023, <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/pr301123-2>; Nepal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press Release on release of hostages", 27 October 2023, <https://mofa.gov.np/press-release-on-release-of-hostages>; Philippine News Agency, "DFA Israel believes 1 of 2 missing Filipinos 'likely' held hostage", 25 October 2023, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1212533>; and East African, "Student abducted by Hamas is dead, Tanzania says", 18 November 2023, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/tanzania-says-student-abducted-by-hamas-is-dead--4437852>

⁴⁹⁷ Sky News, "Thai mother describes 'indescribable sadness' as Hamas holds her daughter captive", 23 November 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/thai-mother-describes-indescribable-sadness-as-hamas-holds-her-daughter-captive-13013824>

⁴⁹⁸ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 28 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "07-10-2023 08:14:42", which is consistent with Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

⁴⁹⁹ See section 5.1.9 "Re'im".

⁵⁰⁰ Interview by voice call with Thai agricultural worker (name withheld), 6 March 2025 (translation from the original Thai into English by Amnesty International).

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

handcuffed and held at gunpoint by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁵⁰¹ He said it was taken of his group on one of the first few days after they were taken into the tunnel.⁵⁰²

On 16 October 2023, Abu Obaida, the military spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades, confirmed that Palestinian armed groups were holding individuals of foreign nationalities who “were brought in during the battle”, adding, “We consider them to be our guests and endeavour to protect them... The moment field conditions permit their release, we will do this because we do not have any problem with them.”⁵⁰³

On 2 December 2023, Saleh Al-Arouri, then Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, stated, “The foreign prisoners arrived in Gaza on 7 October were not a target and we are ready to release them without exchange.”⁵⁰⁴

On 20 October 2023, Hamas unconditionally released two US citizens, Judith Raanan and her daughter Natalie Raanan, stating that it was a gesture to their government.⁵⁰⁵ However, no other foreign or dual nationals were released before late November 2023. That month, as part of the first hostage-prisoner exchange, three dual nationals of Israel and Russia and 24 other foreign nationals were released.⁵⁰⁶ Five Thai nationals were held until January or February 2025, when they were released as part of a second deal. The body of one Thai hostage, Nattapong Pinta, was retrieved by Israeli security forces in June 2025,⁵⁰⁷ and that of another, Sonthaya Oakkharasri, was returned as part of a third deal in October 2025.⁵⁰⁸ The body of Bipin Joshi, a Nepalese hostage, was returned as part of the October 2025 deal. While there had reportedly been no sign of life from him since November 2023, his family and many others had been holding out hope he was alive.⁵⁰⁹

According to media reports, the release of at least some of the foreign nationals during the deals was outside the terms of the agreements reached.⁵¹⁰ As the foreign nationals abducted on 7 October 2023 were seized and then not released at the first available opportunity, Amnesty International assumes that Palestinian armed groups sought to exchange them for political concessions, even if they were unsuccessful at this.

CHILDREN AND OLDER PEOPLE

Palestinian assailants took hostage 36 children, including 15 boys and 21 girls, on 7 October 2023.⁵¹¹ All of them were seized alive. Children were abducted from the kibbutzim of Be’eri, Holit, Kfar Azza, Nahal Oz, Nir Oz and Nir Yitzhak.⁵¹² Most of the children were Jewish Israelis, but at least one was a Bedouin citizen of Israel.⁵¹³ Of these children, 16 were under the age of 10.⁵¹⁴ All of the 36 children were released alive except for the Bibas children, mentioned above.

⁵⁰¹ Photograph bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 19 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁰² Interview by voice call with Thai agricultural worker (name withheld), 6 March 2025. See also Washington Post, “Released Thai hostage recalls his time in Hamas captivity”, 7 December 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/world/released-thai-hostage-recalls-his-time-in-hamas-captivity/2023/12/07/cb76c954-ee94-40c4-9315-fbec1ab8868c_video.html

⁵⁰³ Al Jazeera, “كلمة أبو عبيدة الناطق العسكري باسم كتائب القسام” [“Speech by Abu Obaida, the military spokesman for the Qassam Brigades”], 16 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCDEihEszCg> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁵⁰⁴ Al Jazeera, “صالح العاروري للجريدة: لا تبادل حتى انتهاء العدوان ووقف شامل لإطلاق النار” [“Saleh al-Arouri to Al Jazeera: No exchange until the end of the aggression and a comprehensive ceasefire.”], 2 December 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5njcWNWejw> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁵⁰⁵ Washington Post, “Hamas took 251 hostages from Israel into Gaza. Where are they?”, updated 25 March 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/hamas-hostages-israel-war-gaza/>; Haaretz, “Two American hostages released from Hamas captivity, with Qatari mediation”, 20 October 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-20/ty-article/.premium/two-american-hostages-released-from-hamas-captivity-with-qatari-mediation/0000018b-4e84-dbe0-a38b-cff444700000?v=1744623000791>; NBC News, “An artist and a recent HS grad: These are the two American Israeli hostages released by Hamas”, 20 October 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/judith-raanan-natalie-us-hamas-hostages-released-what-know-rcna121472>

⁵⁰⁶ Washington Post, “Where are they?” (previously cited); Haaretz, “Two American hostages released from Hamas captivity, with Qatari mediation” (previously cited); Washington Post, “Hamas release of Russian hostages highlights Putin’s new Mideast stance”, 2 December 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/02/russia-hamas-putin-hostages-israel/>

⁵⁰⁷ NPR, “Israel says it has retrieved the body of a Thai hostage in Gaza”, 7 June 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/06/07/nx-s1-5426563/gaza-thai-hostage-body-recovered>

⁵⁰⁸ Straits Times, “Body of Thai migrant held in Gaza returns home”, 23 October 2025, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/body-of-thai-migrant-held-in-gaza-returns-home>

⁵⁰⁹ MSN News, “Family deeply concerned for hostage Bipin Joshi after recovery of slain Thai national”, 10 June 2025, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/family-deeply-concerned-for-hostage-bipin-joshi-after-recovery-of-slain-thai-national/ar-AA1GrwXm>

⁵¹⁰ See, for example, Jewish News Syndicate, “Thais freed from Gaza captivity arrive home in Bangkok”, 9 February 2025, <https://www.jns.org/thais-freed-from-gaza-captivity-arrive-home-in-bangkok>

⁵¹¹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). See also MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited). Amnesty International has verified video or testimonial evidence about the abduction of nine of these children.

⁵¹² Haaretz hostage database (previously cited); MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

⁵¹³ Aisha Zayadna was 17 when she was seized with her father and two brothers in Holit. Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁵¹⁴ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Civilian communities from which children were abducted



Civilian communities - all of them kibbutzim - from which children were abducted, all of them alive, on 7 October 2023. Palestinian assailants took hostage 36 children - 15 boys and 21 girls - in total.

Ella and Dafna Elyakim, aged eight and 15 respectively, were taken to Gaza as hostages from the Nahal Oz without an accompanying adult after their father, Noam Elyakim, and his partner, Dikla Arava, were shot.⁵¹⁵ They were with their father, Dikla and Dikla's son, 17-year-old Tomer Arava, when their home was broken into by fighters, as shown in a video live-streamed by the attackers on Dikla's phone and verified by Amnesty International.⁵¹⁶ One fighter, who alternates between Arabic and English, says in the video, "Hamas' Kata'ib al-Qassam [Al-Qassam Brigades] here". Noam, Dikla and Tomer were killed that day.⁵¹⁷ Ella and Dafna were held hostage until 26 November 2023, when they were released and reunited with their mother.⁵¹⁸ After the two girls were released, the Israeli military made public a video it reported finding in Gaza in which Ella and Dafna are seen standing by a Hamas flag, saying they are hostages of Hamas.⁵¹⁹

Erez Calderon, aged 11, was taken hostage from Nir Oz.⁵²⁰ A video verified by Amnesty International shows armed men in civilian clothing pushing him around the kibbutz on the morning of 7 October 2023.⁵²¹ He appears to be alone, without any family members or an adult nearby. The person taking the video says in Palestinian Arabic, "Those are young settlers. Take them!... Don't hurt them! Treat them wisely!"⁵²² Erez said that attackers broke into his family's home and took him, his 17-year-old sister Sahar Calderon and their 53-

⁵¹⁵ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁵¹⁶ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 12 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵¹⁷ See section 5.1.5 "Nahal Oz" for details.

⁵¹⁸ MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited); Mayaan_zin_free, Instagram post: "Finally reunited. It is real.", 26 November 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/COHxLAoNB9z/#>

⁵¹⁹ Video posted by Ynet on its website on 19 May 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵²⁰ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was aged 12 on release. MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁵²¹ Video posted on the website <https://www.hamas-massacre.net> on an unknown date and held on file by Amnesty International. Amnesty International deduced the approximate time to be between 9.30am and 11am based on its analysis of the position of the sun and the positioning and size of the shadows visible in the video.

⁵²² Translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International.

year-old father, Ofer Calderon, from the safe room and that he was abducted separately from his father and sister.⁵²³ Many other assailants can be seen passing Erez as he is being marched down the street by armed men, including a fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades on a motorcycle. Erez and Sahar were released on 27 November 2023. Ofer, who is reported on social media to be a carpenter,⁵²⁴ remained in Gaza until his release on 1 February 2025.⁵²⁵

There were nine people aged over 80 abducted.⁵²⁶ Amnesty International has verified images of 84-year-old Alma Avraham being ordered onto the back of a motorcycle at the gate of Nahal Oz by armed fighters on 7 October 2023. She has bandages on one arm.⁵²⁷ It is not possible to identify the affiliation of the fighters in the images.

A video verified by Amnesty International shows 85-year-old Yaffa Adar being put in a golf cart in Nir Oz (those forcing her into the golf cart are not fully visible in the video).⁵²⁸ A second video reviewed by Amnesty International shows her in the golf cart in Gaza, driven by a man in civilian clothing and guarded by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades behind her in the cart.⁵²⁹ Yaffa said that she was abducted from her safe room by armed men and held hostage by Hamas.⁵³⁰

Yocheved Lifshitz, aged 83 when abducted, was released on 23 October 2023, along with 79-year-old Nurit Kuper.⁵³¹ Alma Avraham, Yaffa Adar and Ditz Heiman, aged 83 when abducted, were released on 24 November, 26 November and 28 November 2023, respectively.⁵³² Alma Avraham was reportedly taken to a hospital in Israel, where she received life-saving treatment and was only discharged in May 2024.⁵³³

The five men who were aged 80 or more when they were abducted all reportedly died in captivity, in different circumstances, of which much remains unknown.⁵³⁴ Yoram Metzger and Amiram Kuper, Nurit Kuper's husband, aged 80 and 85 respectively when abducted, were seen, along with 79-year-old Haim Perry, in a video made public by the Al-Qassam Brigades on 18 December 2023, pleading to be released.⁵³⁵ Shortly before his death was announced, Yoram Metzger's daughter-in-law, Ayala Metzger, identified him in the video and told Amnesty International he looked frailer than before his abduction.⁵³⁶

An additional 18 of the people abducted were reportedly in their 70s.⁵³⁷ Hannah Katzir, aged 77, along with Yagil Jacob, aged 13, were both taken hostage from Nir Oz. They were seen in a video apparently released by the Al-Quds Brigades on 9 November 2023.⁵³⁸ Abu Hamza, the spokesperson of the Al-Quds Brigades, announced the same day the group's "willingness to release" the two hostages "once the appropriate field

⁵²³ Erez Identified himself as the boy in the video. Yeshiva World News, "12-year-old former hostage makes emotional plea for the return of his father from Hamas captivity [video]", 4 September 2024, <https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/israel-news/2311296/12-year-old-former-hostage-makes-emotional-plea-for-the-return-of-his-father-from-hamas-captivity-video.html>

See also MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁵²⁴ See, for example, HostageAid, X post: "Ofer Calderon is an Israeli French citizen who was kidnapped on Oct. 7 along with his 2 children from kibbutz Nir Oz...", 2 December 2024, <https://x.com/HostageAid/status/1863655018773217288>

⁵²⁵ MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁵²⁶ According to media sources, they and their ages at the time of abduction are: Yoram Metzger, 80; Ditz Heiman, 83; Oded Lifshitz, 83; Yocheved Lifshitz, 83; Alma Avraham, 84; Yaffa Adar, 85; Amiram Kuper, 85; Shlomo Mansur, 85; and Arye Zalmanovich, 86. Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). Two other men turned 80 while being held hostage in Gaza.

⁵²⁷ Video posted by Zvi Adler on X on 2 September 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by Ynet on its website on 2 September 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵²⁸ Video posted on the website <https://www.hamas-massacre.net> on an unknown date and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵²⁹ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on X on 12 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; Telegraph, "Israeli hostage taken in golf buggy is released by Hamas", 24 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEFe7qmDCVl>

In an op-ed, Yaffa Adar says: "My captors held my arms as they sat me on a golf cart, and we drove off toward the border with Gaza... When they pointed a camera at my face, I smiled. That image was broadcast around the world. I was not going to give them the satisfaction of terrorizing me". Yaffa Adar, "I'm a great grandmother, and a former hostage of Hamas. Bring the rest home.", New York Times, 7 October 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/07/opinion/my-heart-remains-captive-in-gaza.html>

⁵³⁰ Yaffa Adar, "I'm a great grandmother, and a former hostage of Hamas" (previously cited).

⁵³¹ MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁵³² MFA, "Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report" (previously cited).

⁵³³ Jerusalem Post, "Former hostage, 85-year-old Alma Avraham leaves hospital for first time since Hamas captivity", 8 May 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-800395>

⁵³⁴ See, for example, Jerusalem Post, "IDF announce deaths of four hostages in Hamas captivity", 4 June 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-804839>

⁵³⁵ Al Jazeera, "Hamas video shows elderly Israeli captives pleading for release", 18 December 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/18/hamas-releases-video-showing-elderly-israeli-captives-pleading-for-release>
The video bears the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades.

⁵³⁶ Interview by voice call with Ayala Metzger, 26 May 2024.

⁵³⁷ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁵³⁸ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Quds Brigades, available at: Annahar Al Arabi, X post: [بالفيديو](https://x.com/AnnaharAr/status/1722651562810417419) ["#Video: Al-Quds Brigades releases recording of two Israeli detainees holding Netanyahu responsible for their safety"], 9 November 2023, <https://x.com/AnnaharAr/status/1722651562810417419>

and security conditions are met”.⁵³⁹ Both reportedly had medical conditions and were held until they were released on 24 November and 27 November 2023, respectively.⁵⁴⁰

6.1.2 NOVA FESTIVAL SITE AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Around 40 people were taken hostage from the Nova festival site or surrounding areas, including rocket shelters where people tried to shelter from the attacks or roads along which they tried to flee.⁵⁴¹ Amnesty International verified the abduction of 13 unarmed people in civilian clothing being taken hostage from the Nova festival site or surrounding areas.

Hersh Goldberg-Polin, aged 22, was taken hostage from Road 232 near the Nova festival site after fleeing the attack on the festival.⁵⁴² Video footage recorded by a dashboard camera and verified by Amnesty International shows a group of armed men – at least five of them fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades – firing weapons in close proximity to a roadside shelter at around 7.55am.⁵⁴³ The fighters are speaking to each other. One is heard saying, “Guys, inside, inside here”, before an object – likely a grenade – is thrown into the shelter. While the gunfire continues, an explosion occurs inside the shelter. Footage recorded by a Nova festival attendee before the attack shows at least nine individuals sheltering inside or standing outside the shelter.⁵⁴⁴ A video verified by Amnesty International shows Hersh being loaded onto a white pickup truck by armed men, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, while his left arm is freshly severed below the elbow and bleeding profusely, likely following an explosion.⁵⁴⁵ Four other hostages, all in civilian clothing, are seen in the same video, some being taken from a shelter, and one being dragged by the hair and beaten as he is loaded onto the truck. One of the fighters (whose affiliation cannot be determined) is threatening him at gunpoint with a Type 56 rifle. Another video, taken afterwards by those holding them, shows at least three hostages on the moving pickup truck, with a fighter of unknown affiliation armed with a Hungarian AMD-65 assault rifle putting a makeshift tourniquet on Hersh.⁵⁴⁶ A Palestinian flag is clearly visible on the clothing of one of the fighters on the truck, which appears to be heading towards Gaza via a road near the Nahal Asaf forest. Hersh appeared in a video issued by Hamas.⁵⁴⁷ He was killed in August 2024 while in captivity.⁵⁴⁸

⁵³⁹ Video date-stamped 9 November 2023, available at: Yasser ElMahmoud1000, 2023-11-10 كلمة أبو حمزة الناطق باسم سرايا القدس [“Speech by Abu Hamza, spokesman of Al-Quds Brigades_ 10-11-2023”], 10 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QSkN7zFZYg>

⁵⁴⁰ MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

⁵⁴¹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited); October 7th Geo-visualization Project, Mapping the Massacre (previously cited). An Israeli military investigation into the attack at the Nova festival reported that 44 people were taken hostage from the Nova festival site and surrounding areas. See Times of Israel, “IDF okayed Nova music festival, but didn’t inform troops deployed at border, probe finds” (previously cited).

⁵⁴² Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁵⁴³ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a stationary car and, at the start, displays the date and time as “2023-10-07 07:55:52”, which is consistent with Amnesty International’s analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it. In the same video, two fighters are beating an unarmed man in civilian clothing (see section 7.1.1 “Beatings and other abuse”) and others open fire on an unarmed man attempting to flee the shelter (see section 5.1.7 “Nova festival”).

⁵⁴⁴ Video posted by Twist on X on 8 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁴⁵ Video posted by Joe Truzman on X on 12 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁴⁶ Video posted by Noa Magid on X on 24 June 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁴⁷ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, available at: NBC News, “Hamas releases video of hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin” (previously cited).

⁵⁴⁸ See section 5.3 “Killing of hostages in Gaza” for details.



↑ These three stills show the abduction of Hersh Goldberg-Polin from Road 232 near the Nova festival site on 7 October 2023. The first still (top), from footage taken by a dashboard camera, shows a group of armed men, some of them from the Al-Qassam Brigades, firing weapons in close proximity to a roadside shelter. At least nine individuals were hiding at the shelter, including Hersh Goldberg-Polin. The second still (bottom left), from a video, shows the same group of armed men loading Hersh and three other individuals onto a white pickup truck. The third still (bottom right), from a video taken by those who transported the hostages to Gaza, shows a rifle being held next to one of the hostages inside the same pickup truck once it is on the move. The hostages were taken to Gaza, and Hersh was killed there while in captivity.

Moran Stella Yanai, aged 40, was also abducted from the Nova festival site. In her interviews with Israeli media, she said she was captured from the Nova festival site and filmed by her assailants.⁵⁴⁹ In a video of the event reviewed by Amnesty International, the man behind the camera says in Palestinian Arabic, “The Jewish [inaudible]. We just caught a woman who we’ll take. If we find any man, just wait to see what we’re going to do with him. Here we are in the [occupied] lands!” A second man says, “Film this!”⁵⁵⁰ Neither of the two assailants can be seen. She said in the media following her release on 29 November 2023 that she is a jewellery designer and was at the Nova festival selling her jewellery.⁵⁵¹

Amnesty International also verified two videos of 25-year-old Noa Argamani and 30-year-old Avinatan Or being taken hostage. In the first video, filmed between the Nova festival site and the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza, Noa is put on a motorcycle and separated from Avinatan, with those responsible appearing to be unarmed, in civilian clothing.⁵⁵² However, in a second video, the men holding Noa on the motorcycle are joined by at least four men with military equipment.⁵⁵³ Noa Argamani was rescued from Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza alongside three other hostages in an Israeli military operation on 8 June 2024.⁵⁵⁴ The operation resulted in the deaths of at least 274 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza.⁵⁵⁵ Avinatan remained hostage in Gaza for over two years until he was released as part of the October 2025 deal. According to media reports, Avinatan worked as an electrical engineer and Noa was a student.⁵⁵⁶

Omer Wenkert, aged 22, was abducted near the Nova festival site.⁵⁵⁷ In a video verified by Amnesty International, he is seen being taken through the streets of Gaza in the back of a pickup truck on 7 October 2023, accompanied by armed men, including at least two fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁵⁵⁸ Omer is wearing no clothes except for boxer shorts. His arms are tied behind his back and people run up to the truck to beat him. Two apparently unresponsive bodies of people dressed in military-style clothing can be seen on the truck next to him. In a photograph that appears to have been released by the Al-Qassam Brigades, likely taken after the aforementioned video, Omer is lying on sacks. He is still naked except for his boxer shorts, his arms are still restrained behind his back and he has visible bruising on his arms and face.⁵⁵⁹ A former hostage confirmed to Amnesty International that he was held for a time with Omer in a tunnel. According to media reports, Omer was a restaurant manager.⁵⁶⁰ He was released on 22 February 2025.⁵⁶¹

Evyatar David, aged 23, was also taken hostage from the area surrounding the Nova festival site.⁵⁶² Amnesty International verified a video of him in the back of a pickup truck in Gaza, with two other hostages in civilian clothing, surrounded by armed men, including at least some from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁵⁶³ Amnesty

⁵⁴⁹ Jewish News of Northern California, “Berkeley-born Hersh Goldberg-Polin among North Americans missing in Hamas invasion”, 8 October 2023, <https://jweekly.com/2023/10/08/berkeley-born-hersh-goldberg-polin-among-missing-americans-missing-or-dead-in-hamas-invasion>; Face the Nation, “Former Israeli hostage describes being held captive by Hamas in Gaza”, 7 October 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLNIS2TtHc>

⁵⁵⁰ Video posted by The Persian Jewess on X on 29 March 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International (translations from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁵⁵¹ Maccabiah – MWU, “A testimony by Moran Stella Yanai from her time as a hostage in Gaza”, 24 March 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9QIDOlGpDU>

⁵⁵² Video posted by Mario Nawfal on X on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁵³ Three carry weapons and one wears a tactical vest. Video posted by The Slaughter 710 on its Telegram channel on 12 April 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁵⁴ Israel Police, X post: “Body cam footage of the heroic hostage rescue of Noa Argamani by Israel Police’s Yamam forces, IDF, and ISA”, 15 June 2024, <https://x.com/israelpolice/status/1802061244108824836>

⁵⁵⁵ Amnesty International does not know how many of the Palestinians killed were fighters and how many were civilians.

⁵⁵⁶ The Media Line, “A Brother’s Plea: The Fight To Bring Avinatan Home”, 17 February 2025, <https://themedialine.org/top-stories/a-brothers-plea-the-fight-to-bring-avinatan-home>; Jewish Federations of North America, Facebook post: “Noa Argamani is a student at Ben Gurion University who loves music.”, 4 April 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/federations/videos/1841728969672766/>

⁵⁵⁷ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). See also Haaretz, “Freed Israeli hostage: collapse of cease-fire meant ‘humiliation, less food, abuse’ in Hamas captivity”, 12 March 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-03-12/ty-article/freed-israeli-hostage-collapse-of-cease-fire-meant-humiliation-less-food-abuse/00000195-893d-dd1f-a3fd-a9bda79b0000?gift=1db9c90eea2042b4b4517c5f88d38c64>; Bring Omer Back, <https://omerwenkert.com> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

⁵⁵⁸ Twist, X post: “[October 7] A Hamas truck takes an Israeli hostage back to Gaza whilst he is hit.”, 16 March 2024, <https://x.com/TwistyCB/status/1769027987033219327>

The hostage is identified as Omer Wenkert in the media and on a site established in the campaign to bring him home: CNN, “Video shows Hamas militants striking captured festivalgoer”, 11 October 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2023/10/11/hamas-militants-capture-israeli-music-festival-goer-omer-wenkert-ebob-vpx.cnn>; see also Bring Omer Back, <https://omerwenkert.com> (accessed on 14 April 2025).

⁵⁵⁹ Photograph bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades and held on file by Amnesty International. After his release, Omer said that the photograph was taken soon after his abduction. He was reported as telling Israel’s Channel 12, “They put me inside a warehouse, laid me on my stomach – that’s where the famous picture of me comes from. I saw a tunnel shaft, and then I realized – we’re going down”. See Haaretz, “Freed Israeli hostage: collapse of cease-fire meant ‘humiliation, less food, abuse’ in Hamas captivity” (previously cited).

⁵⁶⁰ Times of Israel, “Omer Wenkert released from Hamas captivity after 505 days”, 21 November 2023 (Updated 22 February 2025), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-omer-wenkert-suffers-from-congenital-disease>

⁵⁶¹ MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

⁵⁶² Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁵⁶³ Video posted by Noa Magid on X on 11 May 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

International also reviewed a second image of him in a video that appears to have been issued by the Al-Qassam Brigades on 7 October 2023, in which he is lying on the floor with his hands tied behind him,⁵⁶⁴ and verified images of him from the same day being pulled down a street in the town of Al-Mughraqa in Gaza by armed fighters with his top ripped and pulled down to expose his chest.⁵⁶⁵ His family said they last heard from him as he was fleeing the attack on the Nova festival. He was released as part of the October 2025 deal.



↑ These two stills from videos show Evyatar David being taken into captivity in Gaza on 7 October 2023. The first still (left) shows armed men, including members of the Al-Qassam Brigades, on the back of a pickup truck in Gaza. The truck holds three hostages, including Evyatar, who was abducted from the area surrounding the Nova festival site. The second still (right), from a video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, shows an armed man pulling Evyatar down a street in the town of Al-Mughraqa in Gaza. As of 31 July 2025, he remained in Gaza.

Amnesty International also verified a video of the abduction of Guy Gilboa-Dalal, showing he was taken by fighters at the Nova festival site.⁵⁶⁶

A video that appears to have been filmed at the “release ceremony” staged by Hamas for Omer Wenkert and two other hostages, Omer Shem Tov and Eliya Cohenon, on 22 February 2025 and released to the media by Hamas shows Evyatar David and Guy Gilboa-Dalal inside a car or van nearby watching.⁵⁶⁷ A fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades is with them in the vehicle. In the recording, the two plead with Israeli authorities to secure their release.⁵⁶⁸ According to media reports, this was the first sign of life of Evyatar following his capture. His parents are reported in the media as saying that Evyatar was a shift worker in a café before his abduction.⁵⁶⁹

Amnesty International has also verified a video of another unarmed man who was captured by fighters at the Nova festival, whom it has not yet been able to identify, and considers may have been taken hostage. Some of the fighters in this video are from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁵⁷⁰

6.2 SEIZURE OF MILITARY CAPTIVES

The 27 soldiers seized while on active duty at their assigned positions (that is, not on leave) in southern Israel were made up of 20 men and seven women.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁴ Video posted by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Facebook on 24 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁶⁵ Video posted on the website <https://www.hammas-massacre.net> on an unknown date and held on file by Amnesty International. Evyatar's family confirmed to the media that the image in the video was of him. Folkus Jerusalem, “Die Gesichter & Geschichten hinter den Geiseln – Evyatar David” [“The faces and stories behind the hostages – Evyatar David”], 9 January 2024, <https://www.fokus-jerusalem.tv/2024/01/09/die-gesichter-geschichten-hinter-den-geiseln-evyatar-david> (in German).

⁵⁶⁶ FOZ_Museum, X post: “Dr. Mike Evans, Founder of the FOZ Museum met with Tal Shoham, a released hostage, and Ilan and Gal Gilboa Dalal, who talked about Guy Gilboa-Dalal and Evyatar David who are still being held hostage in Gaza.”, 9 April 2025, https://x.com/foz_museum/status/1909978368826626282

⁵⁶⁷ Video posted by Michael Rapaport on X on 22 February 2025 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁶⁸ Times of Israel, “Hamas brought 2 hostages, Evyatar David and Guy Gilboa-Dalal who remain in captivity, to watch today's release ceremony”, 22 February 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/hamas-brought-2-hostages-who-remain-in-captivity-to-watch-todays-release-ceremony

⁵⁶⁹ Haaretz, “Two Israeli hostages brought to watch release ceremony in Gaza, Hamas video shows”, 23 February 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-02-23/ty-article/premium/two-israeli-hostages-brought-to-watch-release-ceremony-in-gaza-hamas-video-shows/00000195-2fee-d871-a5bf-bfeff3c40000>

⁵⁷⁰ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁷¹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).



↑ These three stills from videos show the capture of women soldiers from the Nahal Oz military base on 7 October 2023. The first (top) shows armed men, including members of the Al-Qassam Brigades, holding hostage a group of women soldiers. The second and third (bottom left and bottom right) show armed men taking several of the women soldiers to a truck. The third still (bottom right) is from a video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

The seven women soldiers were taken from the Nahal Oz military base. In several videos verified by Amnesty International, five of them are seen being held in the base and forced into vehicles by a large number of armed fighters, all of whom are men. One video shows a group of young women soldiers – Naama Levy, Liri Albag, Agam Berger, Daniela Gilboa and Karina Arie – surrounded by a group of fighters, at least some of them from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁵⁷² Several of the women are then taken to a truck by a group of fighters, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades. The other two videos show some of the same scenes, as well as images of the attack on the military.⁵⁷³ Amnesty International also verified a later video of Naama Levy being transported by fighters in a jeep in the east of Gaza.⁵⁷⁴ The video was recorded in the Shuja'iya neighbourhood, in the east of Gaza City, around 10am.⁵⁷⁵ Photographs apparently taken during the early days of their captivity in Gaza show the same five women soldiers being held in Gaza.⁵⁷⁶ The photographs were released by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum in July 2024. According to Israeli media, they had been “taken from a Hamas video retrieved by the IDF during operations in Gaza and first shown to the families by the IDF spokesman a few months” earlier.⁵⁷⁷

Amnesty International also verified a video that shows Matan Angrest, a male soldier, being seized by fighters; it was published by Israeli media and is said to have been released by the Angrest family on 4 March 2025.⁵⁷⁸ In the video, Matan is being pulled from a tank near the Nahal Oz military base. The video appears to have been taken by an assailant approaching the area. A second video released by the Angrest family on 4 March 2025 appears to show Matan being asked questions by someone outside the camera frame; behind Matan can be seen a printed logo of the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁵⁷⁹ Amnesty International was not able to verify this video.

In addition to these 27 soldiers captured while on active duty at their assigned stations, at least some of the people seized in kibbutzim, the Nova festival, shelters or escape routes were military personnel on leave from the army on 7 October 2023. For example, Ori Danino was reported in the press to have been seized from the Nova festival site or surrounding areas while on leave from the military.⁵⁸⁰ Ori was killed in captivity.⁵⁸¹ Rom Braslavski, who was seized while working as a security guard at the festival, was reportedly an off-duty soldier.⁵⁸² Amnesty International recognizes there may be others. However, based on an assessment of the profiles, ages, media accounts and other available information on those who were taken hostage, Amnesty International considers this is likely to be a small number relative to the total number of 224 people abducted in civilian locations. Such abductions would likely have been accidental while assailants sought to abduct civilians or carried out abductions indiscriminately from civilian locations.

6.3 SEIZURE OF BODIES

In addition to taking live hostages, Palestinian fighters brought the bodies of civilians and soldiers they killed to Gaza. According to the database produced by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, they did so in 36 cases.⁵⁸³ Amnesty International documented evidence that Palestinian fighters, likely including fighters from both the

⁵⁷² Video posted by Ynet on its website on 22 May 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International. It appears to have been recorded by one of the assailants. The five soldiers were named to the media by the Hostage and Missing Families Forum. See, for example, New York Times, “New video shows Hamas fighters taking Israeli soldiers hostage”, 22 May 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/22/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-hostage-video.html>

⁵⁷³ Video posted by Tahir Malik on X on 10 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by Black Mask on X on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. Both videos appear to have been recorded by an assailant.

⁵⁷⁴ Video posted by Benjamin Strick on X on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video appears to have been recorded by someone on the street in Gaza. The woman in the video was identified as Naama Levy by her mother, Ayelet Levy Schachar. Free Press, “The woman in the Hamas video is my daughter”, 12 August 2023, <https://www.thefp.com/p/the-woman-in-the-hamas-video-is-my-daughter>

⁵⁷⁵ Amnesty International deduced the approximate time based on its analysis of the position of the sun and the positioning and size of the shadows visible.

⁵⁷⁶ Jewish Chronicle, “Terrifying new images of female hostages in first days of Gaza captivity released”, 16 July 2024, <https://www.thejc.com/news/israel/terrifying-new-images-of-female-hostages-in-first-days-of-gaza-captivity-released-ypdlfmhr>; Times of Israel, “Hostage families release photos of 5 female soldiers from early days of captivity”, 16 July 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hostage-families-to-release-photos-of-5-female-soldiers-from-early-days-of-captivity>

⁵⁷⁷ Times of Israel, “Hostage families release photos of 5 female soldiers” (previously cited).

⁵⁷⁸ Ynet, “Shocking video released of moment Matan Angrest was captured and lynched”, 4 March 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/byrxhmfayv>

⁵⁷⁹ Ynet, “Shocking video released of moment Matan Angrest was captured and lynched” (previously cited).

⁵⁸⁰ See Times of Israel, “A mourning rabbi looks to hostage son, slain in Gaza, for direction as he pushes for a deal”, 11 March 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-mourning-rabbi-looks-to-hostage-son-slain-in-gaza-for-direction-as-he-pushes-for-a-deal>

⁵⁸¹ See section 5.3 “Killing of hostages in Gaza”.

⁵⁸² CNN, “Palestinian Islamic Jihad releases first ever video of Israeli hostage Rom Braslavski”, 16 April 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/04/16/middleeast/rom-braslavski-hostage-video-palestinian-islamic-jihad-intl-latam>

⁵⁸³ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

Al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, took to Gaza the bodies of people who had been killed or mortally wounded during attacks in southern Israel.

Seizing bodies of people killed in the attacks – a violation of international humanitarian law that Israeli authorities have also perpetrated for decades – is not only an abuse of the person killed, but also denies the family a chance to bury the body promptly. This pattern of action, coupled with the failure of Palestinian armed groups to share comprehensive information about whom they had seized, also caused some families to suffer for weeks, months and, in some cases, more than a year and a half, not knowing if their abducted loved ones were alive or dead.⁵⁸⁴

Amnesty International verified a video in which the unresponsive body of Shani Louk was paraded in front of crowds in Gaza by armed men after she was killed fleeing the attack on the Nova festival.⁵⁸⁵ Shani's mother, Ricarda Louk, told Amnesty International she learnt that her daughter had been taken to Gaza from a video of this abuse circulating on social media.⁵⁸⁶ She said that, for several weeks, the family held out hope that she might still be alive in a hospital in Gaza, until they were informed that a skull fragment belonging to her had been found in Israel and a forensic analysis confirmed she could not possibly have survived without it.⁵⁸⁷ Amnesty International also consulted with two forensic experts, both of whom said it was not possible or very unlikely that Shani would have still been alive after the head injury.⁵⁸⁸

Amnesty International also verified a video of two assailants in civilian clothing, one armed with an M4 rifle, putting an unresponsive body in the back of an SUV immediately inside Be'eri's main gate at around 10.30am.⁵⁸⁹ Ayelet Samerano identified the body as that of her son, Yonatan Samerano, who was shot in a vehicle at the entrance of the kibbutz earlier that day.⁵⁹⁰ According to media reports, Yonatan's family held out hope he was alive in Gaza for several months.⁵⁹¹ His body was recovered from Gaza by the Israeli military in June 2025.⁵⁹² Shoshan Haran told Amnesty International that, while she was being abducted by fighters from her home in Be'eri, she saw the bodies of six or seven of her friends and neighbours who had been killed on the ground outside. She later realized that the bodies had been gathered so they could be taken to Gaza.⁵⁹³

Palestinian armed groups released the body of Joshua Mollel in Gaza on 5 November 2025 as part of the October 2025 deal.⁵⁹⁴ Amnesty International verified a video showing his dead body on the outskirts of Nahal Oz, meaning it was seized and taken to Gaza.⁵⁹⁵

Amnesty International reviewed videos of more than five unresponsive bodies being driven in pickup trucks through crowds in Gaza by Palestinian fighters, including fighters of the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁵⁹⁶ Amnesty International could not confirm if these individuals were alive or dead. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades also released a video on their Telegram channel of its forces sitting over what appears to be a badly injured or dead body in civilian clothing in the back of a moving vehicle as part of a montage from 7 October 2023,

⁵⁸⁴ See section 7.2.3 "Psychological abuse of hostages and family members".

⁵⁸⁵ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 19 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁵⁸⁶ Interview by voice call with Ricarda Louk, 16 October 2024.

⁵⁸⁷ Interview by voice call with Ricarda Louk, 16 October 2024; Shani Louk's body was held in Gaza until 17 May 2024, when it was recovered by Israeli forces, along with the bodies of two other hostages. See, for example, Guardian, "Israel recovers bodies of three hostages taken by Hamas, including Shani Louk", 17 May 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/17/israel-recovers-bodies-of-three-hostages-taken-by-hamas-including-shani-louk>

⁵⁸⁸ Written communication with Derrick Pounder, independent forensic pathologist, 12 May 2024; interview by video call with forensic expert B (name withheld), 6 June 2024.

⁵⁸⁹ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 10 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "10-07-2023 Sat 09:33:59", but Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows of this video and others from the same camera determined that the actual time was one hour later.

⁵⁹⁰ Jewish News, "Israel mother of hostage: 'UNRWA worker kidnapped my son'", 21 February 2024, <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/israel-mother-of-hostage-unrwa-worker-kidnapped-my-son>

See also section 5.1.1 "Be'eri" for details of the killing of three men outside the gate of Be'eri.

⁵⁹¹ Times of Israel, "Family of Yonatan Samarno, believed hostage in Gaza, informed that he was killed", 4 December 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/family-of-yonatan-samarno-believed-hostage-in-gaza-informed-that-he-was-killed

⁵⁹² Times of Israel, "IDF recovers bodies of three slain hostages from Gaza in military operation", 22 June 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-recovers-bodies-of-three-slain-hostages-from-gaza-in-military-operation>

⁵⁹³ Interview by video call with Shoshan Haran, 9 July 2025. See also "Chief Rabbi meets Dr Shoshan Haran, former Hamas hostage", 26 June 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaFCp6EmTnA&t=2872s>

See section 6.1.1 "Civilian communities" for details of her abduction.

⁵⁹⁴ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited); BBC, "Israel says Hamas returned body of dead Tanzanian hostage", 5 November 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgidwje0ywdg>

⁵⁹⁵ See section 5.1.5 "Nahal Oz" for details.

⁵⁹⁶ Video posted by Middle East Buka on X on 1 April 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by Al Mustashaar on their Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; and video bearing the logo of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, posted by Joe Truzman on X and held on file by Amnesty International.

which indicated their involvement in the seizure of bodies.⁵⁹⁷ Amnesty International could not verify this video.

6.4 HOLDING OF HOSTAGES AND BODIES

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad held in Gaza soldiers, civilians and dead bodies that they seized in Israel on 7 October 2023. They held these people and bodies for days, weeks, months and, in some cases, over two years.

Released hostages told Amnesty International or media outlets they were held by Hamas in Gaza.⁵⁹⁸ Liat Atzili, from Nir Oz, told Amnesty International that she spoke to her captors, who told her they were Hamas members, and had conversations with them about why they joined Hamas. Shoshan Haran gave a similar account.⁵⁹⁹ A smaller number of people reported that they were held by Palestinian Islamic Jihad.⁶⁰⁰ Both armed groups announced they were holding hostages and the military wing of each group also distributed videos showing people they were holding as hostages. As noted above, there is also some evidence that the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement held hostages in Gaza. Amnesty International could not determine whether other Palestinian armed groups held hostages.



↑ This photograph, taken in Jerusalem on 4 July 2025, shows a woman walking past a billboard bearing the portraits of Israeli hostages taken to Gaza on 7 October 2023. © Ahmad Gharabli / AFP via Getty Images.

6.4.1 TREATMENT AS HOSTAGES

While the seizure of soldiers to remove them from the battlefield is not prohibited in international humanitarian law, in the weeks and months that followed the attacks, statements and actions by Palestinian armed groups made it clear that they were holding soldiers, like civilians, under threat of harm or continued detention to compel the Israeli authorities to take specific actions as a condition for their release. Amnesty

⁵⁹⁷ Video bearing the logo of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, posted by Joe Truzman on X and held on file by Amnesty International. Due to the nature of the video, such as the narrow frame focused on the truck without capturing much of the surroundings, Amnesty International was not able to independently verify it. However, Amnesty International found that no version of this video had been shared publicly before 7 October 2023.

⁵⁹⁸ Interview in person with Liat Atzili, 8 September 2024.

⁵⁹⁹ Interview by video call with Shoshan Haran, 9 July 2025. See section 6.1.1 "Civilian communities" for details.

⁶⁰⁰ See, for example, Times of Israel, "Former hostage Arbel Yehoud says captors threatened to kill her if IDF approached" (previously cited).

International concluded that this rendered the soldiers, like the civilians, hostages and that the actions of Palestinian armed groups holding them violated the prohibition on hostage-taking under international humanitarian law.

Following the 7 October 2023 attacks, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad made statements referring to people seized from southern Israel whom they were holding and indicating the purpose of holding them.

On 7 October 2023, Saleh Al-Aroui, then Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, indicated that it held a larger number of Israeli prisoners and that the aims of the attacks were the liberation of the Palestinian people, breaking the siege on Gaza, stopping settlement expansion and freeing Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons.⁶⁰¹ On 16 October 2023, Abu Obeida, the spokesperson for the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, said publicly:

“We tentatively estimate that the number of prisoners is between 200 and 250 or more. We have about 200 prisoners in the hands of the Al-Qassam Brigades, and the rest are distributed among other elements of the resistance factions or in locations that we cannot enumerate in light of the current field conditions.”⁶⁰²

On 16 October 2023, Khaled Meshaal, head of the Hamas movement abroad, said that one of the aims of the 7 October 2023 attacks was to “take Israeli prisoners from among their soldiers and officers in order to cleanse the Zionist prisons of our people.”⁶⁰³ Hamas stated in “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”, issued on 21 January 2024:

“Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on Oct. 7 targeted the Israeli military sites, and sought to arrest the enemy’s soldiers to pressure on the Israeli authorities to release the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails through a prisoners exchange deal.”⁶⁰⁴

Likewise, Ziad Nakhleh, the Secretary General of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, said on 7 October 2024, in a statement to mark the first anniversary of the attacks, that “[Palestinian Islamic] Jihad, Hamas and the resistance movement have enough prisoners to carry out an exchange that guarantees the freedom of our prisoners.”⁶⁰⁵

Videos released by Hamas also made clear that it was using civilians and soldiers as hostages. Many of the videos show soldiers or civilians pleading with Israeli leaders, or leaders of other influential countries, such as the USA, to make a deal to bring them home. One video shows Edan Alexander saying he is a hostage of Hamas and calling on people in Israel to demonstrate to put pressure on the government for their release.⁶⁰⁶ Another video shows Matan Zangauker making similar statements and saying he does not understand why a deal is taking so long.⁶⁰⁷ Similar videos have been released, reportedly by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, showing hostages Sasha Trufanov and Rom Braslavski.⁶⁰⁸

The coercive circumstances imposed on the hostages make these videos non-consensual and a violation of their right to be free from torture or other ill-treatment.

Palestinian armed groups refused to release the majority of people seized on 7 October 2023 in southern Israel outside the context of a negotiated deal in which the Israeli authorities agreed to implement measures demanded of them by the armed groups, mainly the release of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. The armed groups thereby used the holding of both civilians and soldiers to compel the Israeli authorities to take specific actions as a condition for their release.

⁶⁰¹ Al Jazeera, “Deputy head of Hamas’ political bureau to Al Jazeera: We have a large number of Israeli prisoners, including senior officers.”, 7 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=650XS7ymafI>

⁶⁰² Al Jazeera, “كلمة أبو عبيدة الناطق العسكري باسم كتائب القسام” [“Speech by Abu Obaida, the military spokesman for the Qassam Brigades” (Video)] (previously cited).

⁶⁰³ Al-Araby, “Khaled Meshaal, head of the Hamas movement abroad: interview”, 16 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5FJ9cKkiYI> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁶⁰⁴ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), p. 7.

⁶⁰⁵ Al Jazeera, “الجهاد الإسلامي: نستحضر الذكرى الأولى لانطلاق معركة طوفان الأقصى التي أبلى فيها شعبنا بلاء عظيمًا” [“Islamic Jihad: We commemorate the first anniversary of the launch of the Battle of the Flood of Al-Aqsa, in which our people performed greatly.”], 6 October 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=770822785142172> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁶⁰⁶ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by BringThemHome23 on X on 30 November 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶⁰⁷ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by Iris Leal on X on 7 December 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶⁰⁸ See, for example, One India News, “Palestinian Islamic Jihad released third video of Russian-Israeli hostage Sasha Trufanov”, 13 November 2024 (held on file by Amnesty International); and Times of Israel, “Palestinian Islamic Jihad releases video showing Rom Braslavski”, 16 April 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/palestinian-islamic-jihad-releases-video-showing-hostage-rom-braslavski

6.4.2 FATE OF HOSTAGES AND BODIES

As of 4 December 2025, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups had released 158 living hostages and 34 bodies of people seized on 7 October 2023, mostly in the context of negotiated deals, the last of which was concluded in early October 2025. Eight living hostages and 50 bodies had been rescued or retrieved through Israeli military operations. This left one body held in Gaza. Of those recorded as taken into captivity alive, 48 died in Gaza;⁶⁰⁹ at least six were killed by their captors, while others died as a result of Israeli military operations.⁶¹⁰

As part of the first hostage-prisoner exchange starting on 24 November 2023, Palestinian armed groups released 105 hostages, all of whom were either women, children and/or foreign nationals. Hostages released at this time had been held for at least 48 days in Gaza. In exchange, the Israeli authorities released 240 Palestinians held in Israeli detention and agreed to a four-day pause in fighting, which extended to seven days.

A further 28 hostages who had been seized on 7 October 2023 were released from Gaza in the context of a second deal, in January and February 2025, which was also intended to be the first phase of a ceasefire negotiation between Israel and Hamas. These 28 people had been held hostage for over 15 months. Five were women soldiers, the rest were civilians (including four Israeli women and five Thai men).⁶¹¹ The bodies of eight hostages who had died in captivity – all civilians, including the two young Bibas children mentioned above – were also returned. In exchange, the Israeli authorities agreed to the release of around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from some positions in Gaza and more aid permitted into the territory.

The 20 remaining living hostages were released from Gaza on 13 October 2025, in the context of a third deal between Israel and Hamas, which led to a ceasefire. As part of the same deal, Hamas also agreed to release the 27 remaining bodies of people seized on 7 October 2023. They had released 26 of them, as well as the body of Israeli soldier Hadar Goldin, which had been held in Gaza since 2014, as of 4 December 2025; this left one body held in Gaza, that of Ran Gvili.⁶¹² Hamas claimed it faced challenges in reaching the remains of some people because they were buried under rubble.⁶¹³ In exchange for the release of hostages and bodies, Israel released over 1,900 Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

In addition to hostages released in the context of hostage-prisoner exchanges, four hostages were released by Palestinian armed groups in October 2023, seemingly unilaterally and unconditionally. The four released were two women – a mother and her daughter – with dual US-Israeli nationalities, and two older Israeli women.⁶¹⁴ Edan Alexander, a soldier holding dual US-Israeli nationality, was also released on 12 May 2025, reportedly without anything in exchange.⁶¹⁵

Eight hostages were freed by Israeli forces in military operations that killed hundreds of Palestinians.⁶¹⁶ Israeli forces also retrieved 50 bodies of people taken hostage on 7 October 2023.⁶¹⁷

At least 29 hostages not holding Israeli nationality were released in the context of the deals. Amnesty International could not determine if the armed groups holding them extracted anything from their respective governments as a result, but considered them hostages because it believed that they, like other civilian hostages, were abducted in order to compel the authorities to take actions as a condition for their release, were not released at the first opportunity and were denied access to communications with their family and visits by humanitarian agencies.

⁶⁰⁹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

⁶¹⁰ See section 5.3 “Killing of hostages in Gaza” for details.

⁶¹¹ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited); MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

⁶¹² Times of Israel, “The 3 slain hostages whose bodies are still held in Gaza”, 19 October 2025 (updated 17 November 2025), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/the-16-hostages-whose-bodies-are-still-held-in-gaza>; CBS News, “Israel confirms Thai hostage's remains returned, leaving just 1 deceased hostage still in Gaza”, 4 December 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-hamas-war-thailand-hostage-remains-returned-sudhisak-rinthalak>

⁶¹³ See, for example, Sky News, “Hamas says it is facing ‘enormous difficulties’ recovering Israeli hostages’ bodies”, 16 October 2025, <https://news.sky.com/story/hamas-says-it-is-facing-enormous-difficulties-recovering-israeli-hostages-bodies-13451293>

⁶¹⁴ Two US citizens were released before the first deal on 20 October 2023. Two older Israeli women were released on 23 October 2023 before the first deal on humanitarian grounds.

⁶¹⁵ Edan Alexander was also a US citizen, and his release reportedly followed US intervention. BBC, “Hamas to release US-Israeli hostage Edan Alexander as part of ceasefire efforts”, 12 May 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2q7749dxlo>

⁶¹⁶ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited); MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited).

⁶¹⁷ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited); MFA, “Swords of Iron: Hostages and missing persons report” (previously cited). Data on military casualties was cross-referenced with Israeli army data on deceased soldiers. IDF, חילי המלחמה ששמותיהם הותרו לפרסום, 848 [“848 war dead whose names were allowed to be published”] (previously cited).

7. PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Palestinian assailants, consisting of fighters in military-style clothing and armed or unarmed men in civilian clothing, subjected people they captured on 7 October 2023 – both soldiers and civilians – to physical, sexual and psychological abuse either in Israel or in Gaza. They also abused the bodies of people killed.

Amnesty International has concluded that, in both Israel and Gaza, members of Hamas and its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, and individuals in civilian clothing subjected some people – both soldiers and civilians – to beatings and other abuse. It documented the physical abuse of 16 people: seven individuals – six men and one woman – during the 7 October 2023 attacks in southern Israel and nine individuals – all men – while they were being transported to captivity in Gaza. However, it considers, based on other sources it has reviewed, that the pattern was likely to be more widespread.

It documented evidence that Palestinian assailants committed, in both Israel and in Gaza, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence against people in their power. However, except for one case, it was unable to interview people who reported surviving or witnessing sexual violence during the attacks in Israel or while held hostage. It therefore could not reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the violence. Amnesty International found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups gave orders to their fighters to commit acts of sexual violence during the attacks. However, it has concluded that members of Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, committed sexual violence against hostages in captivity, based on credible indications of their responsibility in several cases. However, in other cases where Amnesty International documented evidence of sexual violence against hostages in captivity and during the 7 October 2023 attacks, it could not determine the affiliation of the perpetrators. In most cases, it also could not determine whether the perpetrators were fighters or unaffiliated civilians.

It has concluded that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad subjected all hostages they held, as well as their family members, to psychological abuse. They held all hostages incommunicado, sought to humiliate them through non-consensual videos and public parading. They denied the hostages' families information about their loved ones.

Amnesty International documented evidence that Palestinian assailants mutilated, burnt, beat or otherwise mistreated the bodies of 19 victims who were either confirmed as dead or may have been dead at the time, in Israel or in Gaza. In some cases, the perpetrators were identifiably from the Al-Qassam Brigades, the Al-Quds Brigades or the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

In committing these acts of physical, sexual and psychological abuse during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages held since then, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, as well as, in some cases, people whose affiliation Amnesty International could not identify, breached one or more of the following international humanitarian law prohibitions: the prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment; the prohibition on mutilation of bodies; and the prohibition on rape or and other forms of sexual violence.

Hamas has denied responsibility for any mistreatment of civilians during the 7 October 2023 attacks. There is, however, a wealth of evidence that conclusively refutes these statements, including digital images circulated by the Al-Qassam Brigades, and other Palestinian armed groups, that show their own fighters perpetrating abuses. Some statements by Hamas spokespeople claimed that its forces treat hostages humanely, while other statements by spokespeople for the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups suggested otherwise and included threats of execution. The accounts of many released hostages provide further evidence of inhumane treatment.

Hamas specifically denied that Palestinian fighters perpetrated rape or other sexual violence during the 7 October 2023 attacks or against hostages.

UN bodies and NGOs, including Israeli civil society organizations, have expressed concern over the widespread scepticism surrounding reports of sexual violence in the context of the attacks, warning that such disbelief may contribute to the silencing of survivors. At the same time, they have cautioned against the instrumentalization of reports of sexual violence committed by Palestinian armed groups to dehumanize Palestinians and justify Israel's military attacks against Palestinians in Gaza.⁶¹⁸

7.1 ABUSE IN ISRAEL

7.1.1 BEATINGS AND OTHER ABUSE

Amnesty International has concluded that fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian assailants subjected some people – both soldiers and civilians – to beatings and other abuse, generally before the victims were killed or taken to Gaza. It documented, based on videos verified by the organization and one testimony, five incidents in which a total of seven people – six men and one woman – were beaten or subjected to other physical mistreatment while alive by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades or other Palestinian groups during the 7 October 2023 attacks in southern Israel. It documented, based on a video, another incident in which assailants in civilian clothing physically abused a male victim. A number of other images provide evidence of the abuse of five unarmed female soldiers by fighters.

In one video verified by Amnesty International, likely filmed around 7am, men in green military-style clothing, some carrying weapons, including AK-pattern rifles and RPG launchers, grab an unarmed man in civilian clothing from a rocket shelter on Road 242 outside the kibbutz of Kissufim and beat him, demanding to know how to reach Re'im, the name of both a military base and another kibbutz around 7km away.⁶¹⁹ The assailants can be seen beating the victim with a rifle butt, slapping him and screaming insults at him in Palestinian Arabic. The assailants then remove the victim's shirt, kick him and bind his hands with a cable tie before the clip ends. Amnesty International does not know the identity of the victim or what happened to him subsequently.

In another video verified by Amnesty International, eight assailants – at least four of whom are fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades – surround an unarmed man in civilian clothing whom they have captured outside a rocket shelter located on Road 232 at 7.55am on 7 October 2023.⁶²⁰ The victim holds his shirt in his hands

⁶¹⁸ The UN Commission of Inquiry stated: "The Commission considers that the inflammatory language, misinformation and disbelief surrounding the issue of sexual violence in the context of the attack of 7 October risk exacerbating these challenges [to survivors coming forward] and further silencing victims. The exploitation of sexual violence in conflict for political expediency risks removing attention from the experience and needs of the survivors, as well as fuelling long-standing animosity and dehumanization." UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 19. The SRSG-SVC also made a recommendation to "relevant actors" to respect and safeguard "the dignity and identity of survivors/victims and witnesses of sexual violence, as sensationalizing headlines, media pressure and scrutiny, exposure of identity, political instrumentalization and pressure, and/or fear of reprisal can result in the suppression, silencing and discrediting of survivors/victims and witnesses, further compound trauma and increase the risk of social stigmatization." SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), recommendation f. See also section 9.2.4 "Investigation and prosecution of sexual violence" for concerns raised by the Israel Women's Network and Women and War Collective related to the "appropriation of CRSV [conflict-related sexual violence] crimes in service of national advocacy aims". The human rights organization Physicians for Human Rights – Israel raised similar concerns: "Since October 7, the Israeli government and other entities have been exploiting reports of sexual violence in a manipulative and cynical manner. These reports have been utilized as part of a campaign to dehumanize Palestinians and as a propaganda tool to justify Israel's brutal military assault on the Gaza Strip." Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, "Physicians for Human Rights Israel's clarification on the organization's November 2023 position paper on sexual violence", May 2024, <https://www.phr.org.il/en/clarification>

⁶¹⁹ Video initially posted by The_Slaughter on its Telegram channel (which no longer existed at the time of writing), later posted by Twist on X on 5 November 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. Amnesty International deduced the approximate time based on its analysis of the position of the sun and the positioning and size of the shadows visible in the video.

⁶²⁰ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped footage taken by a dashboard camera in a stationary car and, at the start, displays the date and time as "2023-10-07 07:55:52", which is consistent with Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

as he crouches on the ground. Three of the fighters can be seen kicking him, while another points an AK-pattern rifle at him before lowering it. At the end of the clip, the man is still alive. The man's family later identified him as Osama Abu Eisa, a Bedouin citizen of Israel, and said he was subsequently killed.⁶²¹

Amnesty International documented two other similar cases of physical mistreatment seen in videos verified by the organization. In one, apparently filmed early in the morning, a barefoot man in civilian clothing can be seen at the Erez crossing surrounded by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, two of whom kick and beat him.⁶²² In the other, a man captured in the vicinity of the location where the Nova festival was taking place is seen being pushed and kicked by a large group of armed men in military-style clothing, including at least one fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁶²³

Amnesty International also verified an extract from CCTV footage taken from the northern side of Kfar Azza in which a woman, Amit Soussana, is seen being dragged through a field on the outskirts of the kibbutz by a group of men at around 11am on 7 October 2023.⁶²⁴ The video shows at least three men holding Amit and forcing her to walk in the direction of Gaza. Six other men are walking next to them. Some of the men carry weapons and at least two are dressed in green uniform and wear body armour vests. As they carry her through the field, she resists and is pushed or falls to the ground at least four times. When she falls for the fifth time, one of the fighters beats her with his rifle butt. In the last part of the footage, she can be seen covered by a white sheet and carried by at least four men. In a media article published after her release, Amit is reported to have said that she was left bleeding heavily and with a split lip as a result of the violence to which she was subjected during her abduction.⁶²⁵

Amnesty International also reviewed a video of the attempted beheading of a severely injured man.⁶²⁶ The victim, wearing a T-shirt with the Hebrew phrase for "Dimona Race" (a running event near the city of Dimona in the Negev/Naqab region of Israel), is seen lying on the floor with a large bloodstain covering his abdomen in a room with three assailants. Two of the assailants who are seen abusing the victim in the video are wearing civilian clothing. The legs of another person are briefly seen in the video. They can be heard speaking Palestinian Arabic. One of the assailants repeatedly beats the victim with a long object, possibly a stick or a knife, while filming his actions. The second assailant kicks the victim in the head while the victim is trying to protect himself. The two assailants then film themselves taking turns striking the victim in the neck with the blade of a garden hoe, apparently seeking, unsuccessfully, to behead him. One of the attackers declares in Arabic, "Let history register that this is the first person I've killed". He then yells, "Bring me a knife!"⁶²⁷ At the end of the clip, the victim is unresponsive. While Amnesty International has not been able to independently verify the precise date and location of these events, no version of the video appeared online before 7 October 2023. The UN Commission of Inquiry determined that the victim was a Thai national residing and working in Nir Oz and that the video was recorded in the kibbutz, but "could not conclude definitely which armed group committed the acts, or whether they were committed by civilians from Gaza directly participating in hostilities".⁶²⁸

Another man, a Bedouin citizen of Israel, described to Amnesty International being beaten by Palestinian assailants in front of his young children. He said fighters attacked the kibbutz where he had been working and abducted him and his children at around 11.30am. Some of the fighters brought them water and appeared concerned with their welfare, but did not release him. He told Amnesty International:

"Around 3pm, these guys open the door – no weapons – and they start beating me up. [They say,] 'Take out your wallet' and call for [one of their members]. They say, 'You're lying. You're a Jew.' I say, 'I'm a Muslim like you."

⁶²¹ New York Times, "They ran into a bomb shelter for safety. Instead, they were slaughtered", 11 November 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/11/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-oct-7-attack-shelter.html>

⁶²² Video posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. It was not possible to determine the exact time of this video as the high walls of the Erez crossing cover the entire area visible in shadow when the sun is low in the sky.

⁶²³ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 15 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶²⁴ Video posted by South First Responders on its Telegram channel on 5 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "07-10-2023 10:59:14".

⁶²⁵ New York Times, "Israeli hostage says she was sexually assaulted and tortured in Gaza", 26 March 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/26/world/middleeast/hamas-hostage-sexual-assault.html>

This report also identifies Amit Soussana as the woman in the video and refers to a hospital report prepared shortly after her release, which "said that she returned to Israel with fractures in her right eye socket, cheek, knee and nose and severe bruising on her knee and back. The report stated that several injuries were related to her abduction on 7 October, including punches to her right eye."

⁶²⁶ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 23 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶²⁷ Translations from the original Arabic by Amnesty International.

⁶²⁸ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 118. The Israeli authorities also referred to the victim as a Thai national while screening the clip publicly. See, for example, Times of Israel, "Erdan shows attempted beheading in uphill bid to block UNGA resolution ignoring Hamas", 27 October 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/erdan-shows-attempted-beheading-in-uphill-bid-to-block-unga-resolution-ignoring-hamas>

Who are you to come tell me what I am?’ He says, ‘I don’t care what you are; you strengthen this state. Why did you bring the kids here [to this kibbutz]?’ ... The kids are right by me now, and I see in their eyes that they’re afraid; they can see me getting beaten up... The guy who beat me up says, ‘I have to kill him.’ The other goes, ‘No, look, *haram* [Arabic word used to express pity], he has kids, *haram*.’ They start arguing, and the guy who wants to kill grabs a hammer, and I start thinking already, how can I protect myself?”⁶²⁹

He said that the assailants took his money, wallet and car keys, and then decided to take him and his children hostage to Gaza, but that they were able to escape.

A number of images provide evidence of the abuse of five unarmed women soldiers who were seized from the Nahal Oz military base on 7 October 2023 by fighters. Amnesty International verified four videos recorded on the morning of 7 October 2023 at the base. One of them shows a group of unarmed women soldiers huddled inside a building in the base as fighters arrive.⁶³⁰ Another shows a group of young women soldiers – Naama Levy, Liri Albag, Agam Berger, Daniela Gilboa and Karina Ariei – who appear to have been beaten or otherwise mistreated, surrounded by a group of fighters, at least some of them from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁶³¹ One of the women has bleeding facial injuries and traces of blood on her arms. Another has a bleeding mouth injury and heavy bloodstains on her T-shirt and trouser legs. A third appears to have facial injuries and a bleeding wound above her left ankle. Fighters shout threats at them in Palestinian Arabic: “You dogs, we will stamp on you!” and “Our brothers died because of you. We will shoot you all!”.⁶³² Several of the women are then seen struggling to walk, apparently due to injuries, while being taken to a truck by a group of fighters, some of them from the Al-Qassam Brigades. The other two videos show some of the same scenes, as well as images of the attack on the military base.⁶³³

Photographs apparently taken during the early days of their captivity in Gaza show the same female soldiers with signs of injuries. One shows Liri Albag, Karina Ariei, Agam Berger and Daniella Gilboa sitting on mattresses on the floor of a room; Karina Ariei and Daniella Gilboa wear bandages on their heads. Another shows Naama Levy with a black eye and a swollen face.⁶³⁴ The photographs were released by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum in July 2024. According to Israeli media, they had been “taken from a Hamas video retrieved by the IDF during operations in Gaza and first shown to the families by the IDF spokesman a few months” earlier.⁶³⁵

Hamas has denied that Palestinian fighters mistreated civilians. In “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”, a document it issued on 21 January 2024, it stated that “avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women, and ‘elderly people’”, is a religious and moral commitment by its forces, and referred to the “Palestinian resistance” as “fully disciplined” during the 7 October 2023 attacks.⁶³⁶ As documented above, there is, however, a wealth of evidence that conclusively refutes these statements, including digital images circulated by the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups that show their own fighters perpetrating abuses. In response to the publication of the video of five women soldiers at Nahal Oz military base in May 2024, described above, Hamas claimed that it was “edited and manipulated, and the authenticity of its content cannot be verified” and contained “intentional distortions and manipulations in the English translation, including fabricated phrases that were never spoken by any of the fighters shown in the footage, whether in Arabic or English”.⁶³⁷ Amnesty International carried out its own verification of the video and its own translation of statements heard in it.

⁶²⁹ Interview in person with Salem Naif, 5 August 2024 (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

Additional details, including the name of the kibbutz, have been withheld at the interviewee’s request.

⁶³⁰ Video posted by Aviva Klompas on X on 22 May 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International. It appears to have been recorded on the phone of one of the soldiers.

⁶³¹ Video posted by Israeli online news outlet Ynet on its website on 22 May 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International. It appears to have been recorded by the assailants. The five soldiers were named to the media by the Hostage and Missing Families Forum. See, for example, New York Times, “New video shows Hamas fighters taking Israeli soldiers hostage” (previously cited).

⁶³² Translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International.

⁶³³ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades posted by Tahir Malik on X on 10 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International; video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on its Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. Both videos appear to have been recorded by assailants.

⁶³⁴ Jewish Chronicle, “Terrifying new images of female hostages in first days of Gaza captivity released” (previously cited); Times of Israel, “Hostage families release photos of 5 female soldiers from early days of captivity” (previously cited).

⁶³⁵ Times of Israel, “Hostage families release photos of 5 female soldiers from early days of captivity” (previously cited).

⁶³⁶ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), p. 7.

⁶³⁷ Hamas, Telegram post: “تصريح صحفي” [“Press statement”], 22 May 2024, <https://t.me/HamasOnline/1783> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International). See also Al-Quds Al-Arabi, “الفيديو مختزاً وتم التلاعب فيه” (in Arabic); New York Times, “New video shows Hamas fighters taking Israeli soldiers hostage” (previously cited).

[“Hamas on video of female soldiers released by Israel: The video is edited and manipulated”], 22 May 2024, <https://www.alquds.co.uk/عن-أسر-مجنذات-فيديو-إسرائيل-تنشر-مقطع-فيديو> (in Arabic); New York Times, “New video shows Hamas fighters taking Israeli soldiers hostage” (previously cited).

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT AND MUTILATION UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

International humanitarian law requires that all persons taking no active part in hostilities, including civilians and members of armed forces who have laid down their arms or who have been placed *hors de combat* because of injury or capture, be treated humanely in all circumstances. “Violence to life and person”, including mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, is prohibited against such individuals “at any time and in any place whatsoever”.⁶³⁸ Torture involves the infliction of severe physical or mental pain or suffering for purposes such as obtaining information or a confession, punishment, intimidation or coercion or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind.⁶³⁹ Outrages on personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, are likewise prohibited.⁶⁴⁰ International humanitarian law also prohibits the mutilation of dead bodies.⁶⁴¹

7.1.2 MUTILATION AND OTHER ABUSE OF BODIES

Amnesty International documented evidence that, in Israel, during the 7 October 2023 attacks, Palestinian assailants mistreated 13 bodies of victims who were either confirmed as dead or may have been dead at the time. In six cases, the evidence indicated that the bodies were mutilated, burnt or beaten. In some of those cases, the perpetrators were likely to be fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades or Al-Quds Brigades. In others, Amnesty International could not determine the affiliation, if any, of the perpetrators. It also documented additional incidents in which fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, the Al-Quds Brigades or the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades appeared in videos posing with one foot placed on a victim’s body. A total of seven victims were shown in this manner. It concluded that this amounted to mistreatment of their bodies.

In two of the 13 cases of mistreatment of bodies, the organization could determine directly or indirectly from a forensic expert that the victim was dead at the time of the abuse. In nine of these cases, it reviewed images in which the victim was unresponsive and appeared dead, but could not rule out the possibility that they were still alive at the time. In two of these cases, it obtained information from forensic experts who had examined mutilated bodies but could not conclude if the victim was dead or alive at the time of the abuse because of the state of the body.

Amnesty International verified a video and a photograph, both made public by the Al-Qassam Brigades, that, together, point to the intentional decapitation of at least one Israeli soldier in the Nahal Oz military base on the morning of 7 October 2023. The video shows the bodies of two dead Israeli soldiers in full combat gear on the ground, near the base’s communication tower, at around 9.30am.⁶⁴² A number of men, some armed and in military-style clothing, including a fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades, are seen near the soldiers’ bodies. Another man in the video, wearing black clothes, is briefly seen standing over the body of one of the soldiers, wielding a knife. The photograph, which was taken shortly after, based on a comparative analysis of shadows in the video, on the one hand, and the photograph, on the other, shows the same two soldiers’ bodies; however, the body over which the knife-wielding man stood in the video appears to be missing its head and neck, while the area of the head of the second body is obscured by combat gear because of the angle of the photograph.⁶⁴³ While it is not possible to see how and where the neck and head were severed from the body of the first soldier, the lack of evidence of arterial blood spurting from the body indicates that any decapitation was likely after death.⁶⁴⁴

The UN Commission of Inquiry reported finding evidence of two additional bodies in Israeli army uniform that had been decapitated at an unidentified Israeli military base. It could not determine the affiliation, if any, of those responsible.⁶⁴⁵ It also referred to a video published on social media following the 7 October 2023 attacks of two masked men with Palestinian Islamic Jihad insignia holding the severed head of a man. It could not determine in any of these cases if the victims were beheaded before or after death.⁶⁴⁶

⁶³⁸ Geneva Conventions, Common Article 3.

⁶³⁹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 90. For the definition of torture as a war crime, see ICC Elements of Crimes, Article 8(2)(c)(i)-4.

⁶⁴⁰ Geneva Conventions, Common Article 3; ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 90.

⁶⁴¹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 113.

⁶⁴² Video posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶⁴³ Photograph posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 12 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶⁴⁴ Written communication with Derrick Pounder, independent forensic pathologist, 14 May and 17 May 2024.

⁶⁴⁵ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 121.

⁶⁴⁶ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 122.

In interviews in the media, David Tahar is recorded saying that his son Adir Tahar, who served in the Israeli military near the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza, was killed during the attacks and buried without his head. He said the army informed him that his son's head was severed after death and was taken into Gaza, where it was retrieved by Israeli forces two months later.⁶⁴⁷

Amnesty International collected information indicating the intentional almost complete decapitation of a girl, most likely after her death, and an amputation of a body part in the case of one other individual. Researchers from the organization interviewed two forensic experts who worked at the Israeli National Center of Forensic Medicine (NCFM) on or very soon after 7 October 2023, when human remains from the attacks were analysed.⁶⁴⁸ The researchers were shown a photograph taken at the NCFM of a head that had almost been separated from the body, but was still attached to it by a thin strip of tissue. One of the forensic experts concluded that the victim was a girl who had been shot in the head and was likely to have been intentionally subjected to a near decapitation after death.⁶⁴⁹ The expert based this conclusion partly on the fact that there were no signs of another event that would have separated the head from the body, such as an explosion. One of the experts also told Amnesty International that, in the case of one body, they concluded that a hand had most likely been cut off intentionally, as the lines of incision on the separated hand were straight. They were not able to determine if the hand amputation had been carried out while the victim was dead or alive. Amnesty International was not able to obtain a copy of these photographs or otherwise verify the account.

Parents of a man who was killed near the Nova festival site told Amnesty International that his body was found showing signs of abuse. They showed Amnesty International researchers a communication in which he told a family member at 9am that he could hear gunshots; they said it was his last contact with the family. They said that they were asked to identify his body at the Shura military base three days later, where they spoke to police and a forensic pathologist, who told them that their son died from a direct shot to the head and that after his death, his throat was cut. They were also told that his body was found near a rocket shelter. Amnesty International viewed two images of him looking tense at the shelter, and a poor-quality photograph of his dead body, where researchers could identify what appeared to be a gunshot wound to the head and blood on his neck.⁶⁵⁰

Amnesty International verified images or received information regarding instances of beatings of unresponsive bodies during the 7 October 2023 attacks. Amnesty International could not, however, determine if the individuals were dead or alive at the time. In one video that Amnesty International verified, armed men in military-style clothing, whose affiliation is not visible, drag what appears to be the dead body of a civilian through Mefalsim at 8.43am, shooting once at the body and then jabbing it with the muzzle of their rifle at least five times in the region of the stomach and crotch before leaving the area.⁶⁵¹

Some bodies were burnt after death. For example, a video verified by Amnesty International shows two bodies lying by a metal door in the Nahal Oz military base following an operation by fighters from Palestinian armed groups, including the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.⁶⁵² Both bodies are blurred in the video, but, based on a few frames where parts of the bodies are visible, it appears they are both female, one with long dark hair. The lower half of one of the bodies, which is wearing a camouflage T-shirt, is burning, with flames visible through the blurring. A wooden pillar close to the body appears charred, but the fire does not otherwise seem to have spread to surrounding areas. There is also a distinct darker patch around the body, likely caused by fuel used to start the fire, which would explain why it remained confined to a specific location.

Assailants, often clearly members of Palestinian armed groups, posed with one of their feet on top of the bodies of both military and civilian victims in several photographs or videos analysed by Amnesty International. In one video verified by the organization, fighters, including some from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs'

⁶⁴⁷ Israel National News, "עדויות מצמררות של האב שבנו החייל נפל בקרבות: 'אחד המחבלים ניסה למכור את הראש'" ["A chilling testimony from a father whose soldier son fell in battle: 'One of the terrorists tried to sell the head.'"], 17 January 2024, <https://www.inn.co.il/news/626513> (in Hebrew); i24 News, "Father tells i24NEWS: ' Hamas decapitated my son and tried selling his head for \$10,000'", 24 January 2024, <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel-at-war/1705613587-father-tells-i24news-hamas-decapitated-my-son-and-tried-selling-his-head-for-10-000>

⁶⁴⁸ Interview by voice call with forensic expert A (name withheld), 7 March 2024; interviews by video call with forensic expert B, 6 June and 19 June 2024.

⁶⁴⁹ Amnesty International was not given a copy of the photograph and therefore could not independently confirm the conclusion. However, the UN Commission of Inquiry reported that it "reviewed photos of a 12-year-old girl who was shot in the head and then decapitated." UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 124.

⁶⁵⁰ Interview in person with two parents (names withheld), 27 April 2025.

⁶⁵¹ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 24 October 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International. The video is from timestamped CCTV footage and, at the start, displays the date and time as "07/10/2023 08:43", which is consistent with Amnesty International's analysis of the positioning and size of the shadows visible in it.

⁶⁵² Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Quds Brigades, posted by Quds News Network on its Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

Brigades, filmed themselves at around 12pm standing around the body of a young man identified in the media as 21-year-old Joshua Mollel, a Tanzanian student. One of them steps on Joshua's head with his left foot. Joshua's top is raised and his trousers are in a lowered position on his right leg and removed from his left leg, exposing his boxer shorts, which appear to have been ripped, in turn exposing his right buttock.⁶⁵³ In another video showing Joshua's dead body, he is wearing his trousers, suggesting they were partially removed after his death.⁶⁵⁴ In three other videos verified by Amnesty International, similar images of assailants posing with their feet on the bodies of their victims can be seen.⁶⁵⁵

Amnesty International is not aware of any specific instances where Palestinian armed groups have responded to reports of the mutilation or mistreatment of bodies.

7.1.3 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Amnesty International documented evidence that armed or unarmed Palestinian assailants committed sexual assault in Israel during the 7 October 2023 attacks. However, for the most part, it could not ascertain the affiliation, if any, of its perpetrators.

Amnesty International spoke to one man who had reported in the media being subjected to rape during the attack. It also reviewed testimony shared by two returned hostages, one before the UN Security Council and the other in a media recording, who both described perpetrators touching them in intimate areas while capturing and abducting them from southern Israel. Amnesty International also spoke to one professional with long-standing experience treating sexual violence survivors who reported treating three survivors of rape during the attacks. It reviewed media reports in which a second person reported being subjected to rape during the attack, five named people said they saw rape and five named people said they heard what they understood to be sexual assault. It also spoke to another three mental health professionals who reported that at least 13 of the clients treated by their organizations said they witnessed sexual assault during the attacks.

Amnesty International found no evidence that those perpetrating sexual violence did so in line with orders handed down by Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups.

Amnesty International faced particular limitations in its investigation into sexual violence. Except for one case, referred to above, it was not able to interview people reporting they had survived or witnessed sexual violence, despite efforts to do so. In seeking instead to collect information from a broad range of sources, Amnesty International worked in line with international guidance on documenting conflict-related sexual violence, which recognizes the value of testimony by medical professionals, therapists and first responders, among others, in sexual violence investigations and on relying on pre-existing statements made by survivors where possible as an alternative to re-interviewing them.⁶⁵⁶ As a result of these limitations, however, the organization was unable to reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the sexual violence.

In June 2024, the UN Commission of Inquiry concluded that it had "identified a pattern of sexual violence that has been corroborated by the digital evidence it collected and preserved",⁶⁵⁷ and that "these were not isolated incidents but perpetrated in similar ways in several locations primarily against Israeli women."⁶⁵⁸ It documented cases of bodies of women and men found with indicators of sexual violence in and around the Nova festival site, in several kibbutzim – including Kfar Azza, Re'im and Nir Oz – and on the Nahal Oz

⁶⁵³ Video bearing the logo of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, posted by Joe Truzman on X on 12 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶⁵⁴ Video posted by Twist on X on 17 December 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. See section 5.1.5 "Nahal Oz" for details of his killing.

⁶⁵⁵ In one video, fighters can be seen kicking or stepping on the necks of two people wearing Israeli army uniforms who appear to have been killed, at the Paga military outpost. Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 9 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

In a second, fighters can be seen stepping on the bodies of at least three people wearing Israeli army uniforms who appear to have been killed, at the Nahal Oz military base, and raising a Palestinian Islamic Jihad flag. Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Quds Brigades, posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 10 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International. In a third, fighters can be seen stepping on the neck of one man who appears to be in Israeli army uniform and to have been killed, at the Re'im military base. Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 8 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶⁵⁶ See section 2.2.5 "Investigating sexual violence" for details.

⁶⁵⁷ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 134.

⁶⁵⁸ OHCHR, "Israeli authorities, Palestinian armed groups are responsible for war crimes, other grave violations of international law, UN Inquiry finds", 12 June 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/israeli-authorities-palestinian-armed-groups-are-responsible-war-crimes>

military base.⁶⁵⁹ It said it could not determine the identity of the perpetrators.⁶⁶⁰ However, it did report it had found indications that members of the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups had committed acts of gender-based violence in several locations.⁶⁶¹ It said it was not able to reach any conclusions about rape, noting limitations to its investigation, including a lack of access to victims and witnesses and obstruction by the Israeli authorities.⁶⁶²

RAPE AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Rape and other forms of sexual violence during conflict are violations of international law.⁶⁶³ Rape is defined under international criminal law as the invasion of “the body of a person by conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body... when committed by force, or by threat of force or coercion... or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or the invasion was committed against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.”⁶⁶⁴

Sexual violence is a broader term that includes a range of physical and non-physical acts. It occurs where the “perpetrator committed an act of a sexual nature against one or more persons or caused such person or persons to engage in an act of a sexual nature by force, or by threat of force or coercion... or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or such person’s or persons’ incapacity to give genuine consent.”⁶⁶⁵ An act may be sexual where it “involved exposing a ‘sexual body part’”,⁶⁶⁶ or where it was “intended to be sexual by the perpetrator or was perceived as such by the affected person or their community as being sexual in nature”.⁶⁶⁷ An act can be sexual in nature even if sexual gratification is not the intention or result.⁶⁶⁸ Rape and sexual violence may also constitute torture and other ill-treatment under international law.⁶⁶⁹

Examples of acts of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, rape, other forms of sexual assault or non-consensual touching, targeted violence against sexual organs, non-consensual sharing of sexualized images, and forced nudity in whole or part.⁶⁷⁰ Forced nudity may include situations where victims were forcibly undressed, forced to undress, or forced to remain undressed. Determinations as to whether an act amounts to sexual violence may be informed by the survivor’s point of view.⁶⁷¹ Sexual violence is normally committed against people who are alive, but may be committed against dead bodies. Acts of sexual violence can include “acts that one person causes another person to commit

⁶⁵⁹ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, paras 144-167.

⁶⁶⁰ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 291.

⁶⁶¹ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 24.

⁶⁶² UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 138.

⁶⁶³ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 93.

⁶⁶⁴ ICC, Elements of Crimes, 2 November 2000, UN Doc. PCNICC/2000/1/Add.2, Article 7(1)(g)-1 (crime against humanity of rape) and Article 8(2)(e)(vi)-1 (war crime of rape in non-international armed conflict). The Elements of Crimes were adopted by the Assembly of States Parties to “assist the Court in the interpretation and application” of the definitions of crimes set out in Articles 6 to 8 in the Rome Statute. The Elements of Crime, therefore, form part of the “applicable law” to be applied by the ICC.

⁶⁶⁵ ICC, Elements of Crimes, Article 7(1)(g)-6 (crime against humanity of sexual violence) and Article 8(2)(b)(xxii)-6 (war crime of sexual violence).

⁶⁶⁶ Women’s Initiative for Gender Justice, Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, <https://4genderjustice.org/ftp-files/publications/The-Hague-Principles-on-Sexual-Violence.pdf>, p. 14. The Hague Principles on Sexual Violence were developed in 2019 through extensive legal research and consultations with survivors, practitioners and experts and have been endorsed by civil society organizations, including Amnesty International.

⁶⁶⁷ Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, p. 14. See also ICC Office of the Prosecutor, *Policy on Gender-Based Crimes*, December 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-policy-gender-en-web.pdf>, para. 33, which notes: “Ultimately, as with other crimes, understanding acts of a sexual nature requires an intersectional approach. Such an analysis can help discern whether an act was committed with sexual intent, had sexual impact or was perceived as sexual by affected persons.”

⁶⁶⁸ Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, p. 14. See also ICC Office of the Prosecutor, *Policy on Gender-Based Crimes*, para. 32.

⁶⁶⁹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 93 and 94. ICC, *Prosecutor v. Kunarac, Kovač and Vuković*, Case IT-96-23 & IT-96-23/1, Appeals Chamber Judgment, 12 June 2002, paras 142-157. UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, General Recommendation 30: Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations, 18 October 2013, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/CG/30, para. 23. See also Amnesty International, *Rape and Sexual Violence: Human Rights Law and Standards in the International Criminal Court* (Index: IOR 53/001/2011), July 2011, <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ior530012011en.pdf>, Chapter 5.

⁶⁷⁰ See, for example, Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, pp. 70-77; ICC Office of the Prosecutor, *Policy on Gender-Based Crimes*, para. 62.

⁶⁷¹ ICC Office of the Prosecutor, *Policy on Gender-Based Crimes*, para. 62.

against themselves, against a third party... or on a dead body” or “mutilating, otherwise injuring a sexual body part, or any other body part with a sexual intention, including after a person’s death”.⁶⁷²

Amnesty International spoke to one man who testified to an Israeli news channel in July 2024 that he was subjected to rape at the Nova festival site after it was infiltrated in the early morning; he confirmed that testimony to Amnesty International.⁶⁷³ He said the armed assailants had pinned him to the ground, stripped him, touched his private parts and raped him. In the news report, the man, who chose to remain anonymous, was referred to only by an initial, the Hebrew letter *Dalet*. Amnesty International also spoke to his lawyer, Gilad Ginzburg, who had twice accompanied *Dalet* to speak to the police, first in June 2024 to report his case and again in July 2024 for a follow-up visit, and reviewed his medical records in December 2024.⁶⁷⁴ The reports show that he visited the doctor twice, in March and May 2024, that he reported during both visits anxiety and fears from having been at the Nova festival when it was attacked and that he reported, during the second visit, having been subjected to sexual assault at the Nova festival site. At this second visit, the doctor referred *Dalet* to mental health support services for treatment.

Ilana Gritzewsky told the UN Security Council in August 2025 that she was subjected to sexual assault while being captured from outside her home in Nir Oz and taken hostage to Gaza. She said that, when they captured her, the “terrorists beat me, humiliated me, touched me all over, and threw me on a motorcycle and took me to Gaza... On the way to Gaza, when they started to touch me and sexually abuse me, I passed out; physically and mentally, I couldn’t take it anymore.”⁶⁷⁵ Ilana was reported in The New York Times saying that she was trapped between two gunmen on a motorcycle, her head and face covered with a large piece of nylon or tarpaulin, and that the men pressed her leg onto the exhaust pipe, burning it; she added that one of them sitting behind her groped her, touching her breast under her shirt and her legs.⁶⁷⁶ She said she passed out before they crossed the breached perimeter fence surrounding Gaza. A therapist confirmed in the same report that Ilana had previously shared the main details of her time in captivity with her, including the details of this assault.⁶⁷⁷ Amnesty International verified a video of Ilana being abducted from Nir Oz, on a motorcycle between two assailants, her face and at times her upper body covered in a white sheet.⁶⁷⁸ Another returned hostage, Mia Schem, recounted in a recorded account that an assailant touched her upper body, prompting her to scream, after she escaped a burning car while fleeing the attack on the Nova festival.⁶⁷⁹

Amnesty International interviewed a therapist (name withheld at her request) who has long-standing experience treating survivors of sexual violence and said she had overseen and provided intensive treatment and support since late 2023 to three women who were raped during the 7 October 2023 attacks.⁶⁸⁰ The therapist said that these rapes were carried out at the Nova festival site and in kibbutzim, by multiple perpetrators, and that the survivors were referred to her from hospitals where they were receiving treatment for injuries sustained during the attack.⁶⁸¹ She did not have information that would enable the identification of the affiliation, if any, of the perpetrators. The therapist also described providing treatment advice to

⁶⁷² Hague Principles on Sexual Violence, pp. 15 and 17.

⁶⁷³ Channel 12 news report, available at: StandWithUs, “Survivor of the ‘Nova’ festival speaks for the first time: ‘Nukhba terrorists raped me’”, 24 July 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y31PYw8H1RQ>

⁶⁷⁴ Interview in person with *Dalet* (name withheld), 5 August 2024, and follow-up conversation by phone on 28 November 2024. Interviews with *Dalet*’s lawyer, Gilad Ginzburg, in person on 5 August 2024 and by voice call on 8 August 2024, as well as follow-up communications with him on 11 December 2024, 9 March 2025 and 19 August 2025.

⁶⁷⁵ DRM News International, “Full Speech: Ex-Hostage Ilana Gritzewsky Shares Emotional Story at UN Security Council”, 27 August 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCEekimN09I>

She also described the pain she continued to face because her partner, Matan Zangauker, was still being held hostage in Gaza.

⁶⁷⁶ New York Times, “She was released, now she is campaigning for her partner in Gaza,” 25 March 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/25/world/middleeast/israeli-hostage-gaza-campaign.html>

⁶⁷⁷ New York Times, “She was released, now she is campaigning for her partner in Gaza” (previously cited).

⁶⁷⁸ Video on file with Amnesty International.

⁶⁷⁹ Channel 13 News, “Freed Israeli hostage Mia Schem in first interview since her release from Hamas captivity in Gaza”, 31 December 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=y02xPRX6vCE&t=1s>, minute 4:48-5:02.

⁶⁸⁰ Interview by video call with therapist (name withheld), 14 August 2024. The therapist withheld further details on locations to protect the identity of her patients. The UN Commission of Inquiry noted: “The Commission has documented information that some survivors [of sexual violence] are receiving treatment but are not ready to speak about their experience with external parties.” UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 19.

⁶⁸¹ Amnesty International sought to speak to representatives or employees of the Israeli Ministry of Health on several occasions but was unable to do so, as set out in Chapter 2 “Scope and methodology”. On 20 August 2024, Amnesty International requested by email to speak to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health to ask specifically about any referrals of survivors of sexual violence from the 7 October 2023 attacks from Ministry of Health hospitals, and sent a follow-up message over instant messaging on 3 September 2024. In a reply the same day, the spokesperson directed Amnesty International to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to which Amnesty International wrote on 7 October 2024 without response.

therapists treating five other individuals who reported surviving sexual assault during the 7 October 2023 attacks, at least three of whom said they were raped.⁶⁸²

Two therapists (names withheld at their request) from an NGO called SafeHeart, which has provided psychological support to around 2,500 survivors of the attack on the Nova festival, told Amnesty International that one survivor who approached their organization said that they were raped during the attack. Amnesty International could not confirm whether or not this was one of the survivors mentioned by the therapist mentioned above.

There were further accounts of sexual assault reported in the media. On 26 November 2023, the French newspaper Le Parisien quoted an anonymous woman who said she was raped and beaten in front of her boyfriend before she was left for dead at the Nova festival site.⁶⁸³ At least five named people were also reported in the media saying they saw rape during the attacks, mostly at the Nova festival site, surrounding areas and escape routes from it, while five other named people said they heard what they understood to be women being sexually assaulted.⁶⁸⁴ One woman appears in a recording of an Israeli news channel describing hearing what she understood to be the rape of a woman in a car at the Mefalsim Junction on Road 232.⁶⁸⁵ She described hearing the victim screaming for help and shouting at the start of the assault that the assailants were taking her clothes off. She said that afterwards the victim was killed.⁶⁸⁶ None of the people who spoke to the media provided information that would identify the victims or the affiliation, if any, of those responsible for perpetrating sexual violence.

The two SafeHeart therapists mentioned above said that 10 of the NGO's clients said they witnessed rape or gang rape at the Nova festival site or surrounding areas.⁶⁸⁷ The lead therapist from an organization named Secret Forest, which has treated over 1,000 survivors of the attack on the Nova festival at a retreat centre in Cyprus, said that 13 of their clients said they witnessed sexual assault.⁶⁸⁸ Where they knew details, therapists said their clients described seeing the victim being raped and then shot afterwards. None of these professionals had information that would identify the affiliation, if any, of those responsible for perpetrating

⁶⁸² For the other two cases, the therapist did not have details about the nature of the sexual assault committed. She said that most of these attacks were at the Nova festival site or escape routes from it. She did not have any information that could identify the perpetrators or any affiliation they may have had.

⁶⁸³ Le Parisien, "Ils ont arrêté lorsqu'ils m'ont crue morte: le calvaire d'Esther, violée et mutilée par les terroristes du Hamas" ["They stopped when they thought I was dead": The ordeal of Esther, raped and mutilated by Hamas terrorists"], 26 November 2023, <https://www.leparisien.fr/international/israel/israel-le-calvaire-desther-violee-et-mutilee-par-les-terroristes-du-hamas-26-11-2023-MK5HBAQRRZHENBBFEOI6NDVWL.php>

In the article, the anonymous survivor also appears to report that another woman with whom she attended the Nova festival was raped after her death.

⁶⁸⁴ In one report, the location was not provided. In the others, the location of the events was reported as being the Nova festival site, surrounding areas or escape routes from it, including Road 232.

⁶⁸⁵ Channel 13 news report, available at: Israel Human Faces Chana Shuvaly, "The testimony of 26 years old Yovel Sharvit Trabelsy Nova Festival survivor", 23 June 2024, <https://vimeo.com/966198847>

She said that she and her husband were shot at while they were approaching Mefalsim Junction in their car, that her husband was killed and that the car overturned into a ditch, where she remained until she was rescued several hours later. She said she heard what she understood to be the rape of a woman during that time. Yovel Sharvit Trabelsy was also earlier reported in the UK Daily Mail newspaper as having witnessed assailants raping and kidnapping people at the Nova festival. Daily Mail, "Beauty and bravery in the face of Hamas terror: Survivors of October 7 massacre put on extraordinary fashion show with outfits including wedding dress worn by model whose fiancée died saving lives and bride with 'bullet wound' like her executed husband", 11 December 2023, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12851169/Beauty-bravery-face-Hamas-terror-Survivors-October-7-massacre-extraordinary-fashion-outfits-including-wedding-dress-bullet-hole-worn-model-fiance-died-trying-save-lives.html>

⁶⁸⁶ She said that the perpetrators fired an RPG killing the victim, but it was not clear from the recording if this is something she saw directly or inferred from the sound of an explosion, which may have other causes.

⁶⁸⁷ Interview by video call with two SafeHeart therapists (names withheld), 2 April 2024. One of the therapists said that two people told her directly, in screening interviews she carried out, that they witnessed rape. She said that both cases were gang rape in which the victim was shot dead: in one case, the victim was raped then shot; in the other, the victim was shot then raped. The other eight cases were collected from across their network of 400 psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and art therapists in preparation for the visit of the SRSG-SVC in January-February 2024.

Two other SafeHeart members are reported in Haaretz referring to 10 of their patients as being witnesses to rape at the Nova festival. One of them is Demian Halperin, the organization's head of psychiatric support, who is reported to have personally treated six people who witnessed sexual violence during the attack. Haaretz, "15 witnesses, three confessions, a pattern of naked bodies. All the evidence of Hamas rape on October 7", 18 April 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-04-18/ty-article-magazine/witnesses-confessions-naked-dead-bodies-all-the-evidence-of-hamas-rape-on-oct-7/0000018e-f114-d92e-abfe-f77f7e3f0000>

⁶⁸⁸ The director of therapists at Secret Forest said that eight people reported that they saw sexual assault and five that they heard sexual assault during the attacks. Haaretz, "15 witnesses, three confessions, a pattern of naked bodies. All the evidence of Hamas rape on October 7", 18 April 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-04-18/ty-article-magazine/witnesses-confessions-naked-dead-bodies-all-the-evidence-of-hamas-rape-on-oct-7/0000018e-f114-d92e-abfe-f77f7e3f0000>

The director of therapists, who described himself as a licensed psychotherapist and group therapist, told Amnesty International that prospective applicants completed a virtual link to register for the Cyprus retreat, followed up by an interview by a clinical psychologist to assess their mental health status and suitability for the retreat programme. Applicants were asked directly during this screening process if they were subjected to or witnessed sexual assault during the attacks. He described using the information received about sexual violence during the screening calls to work with his team of therapists in advance to prepare a respectful way to "make space", "normalize" but also "contain" cases where reports of sexual assault were raised in the context of group therapy, to protect any individual witnesses from further trauma, and also the wider group. Interview by voice call with director of therapists, Secret Forest, 19 June 2024.

sexual violence. Amnesty International could not determine the extent of any possible overlap between the clients of different practitioners or between those clients and individuals who spoke to the media; they thus could have been speaking about anywhere between 13 and 23 different individual witnesses, and an unknown number of victims.

The apparent partial undressing of the body of Joshua Mollel, a Tanzanian man who was killed outside Nahal Oz, may also constitute sexual violence.⁶⁸⁹

TESTIMONIES, VIDEOS AND REPORTS THAT REQUIRE FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Amnesty International received information about bodies of people abducted or killed showing signs that raise concerns about the possibility of sexual violence, such as missing clothes and blood in the area of the genitals. It heard such accounts in three testimonies and saw images of such bodies in videos. Other individuals reported to the media that they saw bodies of women bearing such signs, primarily at the Nova festival site, surrounding areas and escape routes from it.⁶⁹⁰ In the absence of further information, Amnesty International has not been able to draw any conclusions on the basis of these testimonies, images and reports, but considers that they warrant further investigation.

Sabine Taasa from the moshav of Netiv HaAsara described to Amnesty International seeing the dead body of a woman killed during the attack with her trousers and underpants partially lowered, exposing her buttocks on one side.⁶⁹¹ She said the victim's underpants were stained with blood, the victim's legs were positioned in a "V shape", and one of her hands appeared to be broken. She said the body was lying face down on the road between the kibbutzim of Zikim and Karmia, near a car that was burning. She added that, right after passing it, she saw a Toyota pickup truck carrying fighters with military-style clothing and green headbands, and saw other bodies lying on the ground, some in civilian clothing, others in Israeli military uniforms. She saw the scene while being evacuated from her community in an armoured vehicle around 10am on 7 October 2023.

Noam Mark, who joined Re'im's emergency response squad during the night of the 7 October 2023 attacks, told Amnesty International he saw the bodies of three killed women who were partially naked near the body of a killed fighter in a house in Re'im.⁶⁹² Based on his role in the kibbutz emergency response squad and his understanding of who was in the kibbutz on 7 October 2023, and where fleeing Nova festival participants who arrived in Re'im were being sheltered, he believed at the time (and said he confirmed later) that the women were not kibbutz residents, but were brought there by assailants. He said he was focused at the time on finding a friend and did not photograph or remember further details of the bodies. Amnesty International sought to speak to the individual or individuals responsible for collecting the women's bodies, but was unable to do so.

An army reservist (name withheld at his request) involved primarily in identification of civilians, who stressed that he did not have the expertise to reach any specific conclusions, said that approximately 10 to 12 women's bodies and a smaller number of men's bodies that he saw at a makeshift morgue at the Shura military base in the days after the attack arrived totally naked or with the bottom half of their bodies unclothed.⁶⁹³ He also said that he saw some bodies that had been shot in the face or groin area. He said this included at least three bodies with shots in the groin area: "I don't mean just one or two shots. I mean the whole area was disfigured by multiple shots there; it was just opened up." He said that these bodies were also shot in other places on their body, but not all over. One, for example, was shot in the head and groin, but not elsewhere. He said at least one of the bodies with gunshot wounds to the groin was female, but it was not always possible to determine sex. He said one was from among those killed at the Nova festival, but he did not recall where the others were killed. Most bodies arriving at the Shura military base were not subjected to a forensic examination and may not all have been photographed.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁸⁹ See section 7.1.2 "Mutilation and other abuse of bodies" for details.

⁶⁹⁰ For example, Rami Shmuel told the media that he went to the Nova festival site on the morning of 8 October 2023 to search for the bodies of his friends. Among the bodies he came across, he saw those of three women who had been stripped from the waist down, with their legs spread. He inferred that they had been subjected to sexual violence. SkyNews, "I can still smell the bodies': What happened after Hamas left the Nova festival site in Israel", 8 December 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/i-can-still-smell-the-bodies-what-happened-after-hamas-left-the-nova-festival-site-in-israel-13024850>

Rami Shmuel also posted publicly on his Facebook page on 8 October 2023 that he had been at the Nova festival site looking for the bodies of his friends that day. Amnesty International is not sharing the URL for privacy reasons.

⁶⁹¹ Interview by video call with Sabine Taasa, 28 October 2024.

⁶⁹² Interview in person with Noam Mark, 26 March 2024.

⁶⁹³ Interview by phone call with army reservist (name withheld), 16 September 2024.

⁶⁹⁴ See Chapter 9 "Investigations".

Other images of the bodies of three women captured or killed that were verified by Amnesty International similarly raise concerns, but are inconclusive, about sexual violence. A set of videos raises concerns about what may have happened to one woman. The videos show a large bloodstain in the area of her crotch, multiple other signs of assault, and scenes of her being restrained by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁶⁹⁵ Separately, a video verified by Amnesty International released by the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, shows the body of a woman lying on her back with legs spread apart at the Nahal Oz military base.⁶⁹⁶ The image is blurred, but the victim appears fully or partially naked on her lower half, except for black socks. Because of the blurring, it is not possible to see if underpants are present. The body is close to that of a second woman, whose lower half is on fire.⁶⁹⁷ Finally, a montage of other videos from the Nahal Oz military base, released by the Al-Qassam Brigades, shows the bodies of two people who appear to have been killed: one appears to be that of a woman wearing a uniform; the other, likely to be that of a woman as well but whose image is blurred,⁶⁹⁸ is fully or partially naked from the waist down, possibly wearing underpants. The top half of the body is covered with white cloth, which does not seem to be clothing.⁶⁹⁹

Since rape and other forms of sexual violence often do not leave visible injuries, and forensic evidence was not comprehensively collected by Israeli authorities following the 7 October 2023 attacks, Amnesty International considers that factors such as the state of clothing or the position of a body of someone killed should be considered in the documentation of sexual violence.⁷⁰⁰ However, inferring sexual violence from an absence of clothing, from the position in which the body was found, or other signs is fraught with challenges.⁷⁰¹ Amnesty International did not rely on any of the information described above to draw conclusions on sexual violence.

Following a visit to Israel in January-February 2024, the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict found reasonable grounds to believe that rape, including gang rape, was perpetrated in at least three locations during the 7 October 2023 attacks: the Nova festival site and surrounding areas, Road 232 and Re'im kibbutz, but was not able to identify perpetrators.⁷⁰² It also reported that several bodies that were fully naked or naked from the waist down, mostly of women, were recovered across the various locations of the 7 October 2023 attacks, with hands tied and shot multiple times, often in the head, and determined that "[a]lthough circumstantial, such a pattern of undressing and restraining of victims may be indicative of some forms of sexual violence."⁷⁰³ The Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict visited Israel at the invitation of the Israeli government.⁷⁰⁴ It did not meet with any survivors of sexual violence on 7 October 2023,⁷⁰⁵ and did not identify any digital imagery of rape,⁷⁰⁶ but reported basing its findings on other sources, including "a small number of survivors and/or witnesses of the 7 October attacks who provided information on instances of sexual violence."⁷⁰⁷ The report of the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on

⁶⁹⁵ Further information withheld to respect the privacy of the individual in the images.

⁶⁹⁶ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Quds Brigades, posted by Quds News Network on its Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁶⁹⁷ See section 7.1.2 "Mutilation and other abuses of bodies" for more details on this case.

⁶⁹⁸ According to Amnesty International's analysis, there were inconclusive indications that the body was female in a few frames in which the lower sections of the legs and the feet are visible. The UN Commission of Inquiry, which reported seeing two videos of this body, including a second video to which Amnesty International did not have access, identified it as that of a woman. UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, para. 166.

⁶⁹⁹ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file with Amnesty International.

⁷⁰⁰ The SRSG-SVC reached a similar conclusion following its visit to Israel: "Therefore, the mission team concluded that circumstantial indicators, like the position of the corpse and the state of clothing, should also be considered when determining the occurrence of sexual violations, in addition to witness and survivor testimony." SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 74.

⁷⁰¹ See section 2.2.6 "Challenges and limitations" for details.

⁷⁰² SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited). With respect to the Nova festival site and surrounding areas, the SRSG-SVC reported finding "reasonable grounds to believe that multiple incidents of sexual violence took place with victims being subjected to rape and/or gang rape and then killed or killed while being raped." Regarding Road 232, the SRSG-SVC said it received corroborating witness accounts that described the rape of two women and received other accounts, including about gang rape. Regarding Re'im, the SRSG-SVC reported receiving witness testimonies and digital material related to the rape of a woman outside a rocket shelter at the entrance to the kibbutz. The SRSG-SVC also reported receiving information about rape from Kfar Azza and about sexual violence, including a case of rape and genital mutilation in the Nahal Oz military base, none of which could be verified.

⁷⁰³ SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 12.

⁷⁰⁴ The report noted that while the mission team "took every step, in line with UN methodology, to mitigate issues of source reliability before drawing conclusions", much of the information they received was sourced from Israeli national institutions. SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 55.

⁷⁰⁵ SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 8.

⁷⁰⁶ SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 77.

⁷⁰⁷ SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 49. The text of the report refers to testimonies received from witnesses of rape.

Sexual Violence in Conflict also states: “Given the mission was not investigative, it did not gather information and/or draw conclusions on attribution of alleged violations to specific armed groups. Such attribution would require a fully-fledged investigative process.”⁷⁰⁸

As already noted, Hamas has acknowledged that mistakes occurred during the 7 October 2023 attacks, although in very general terms and without reference to sexual violence. In “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood”, it said: “Maybe some faults happened during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood’s implementation due to the rapid collapse of the Israeli security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas with Gaza.”⁷⁰⁹ However, it has denied that Palestinian fighters perpetrated rape or other sexual violence during the 7 October 2023 attacks. In the same document, it said: “The suggestion that the Palestinian fighters committed rape against Israeli women was fully denied, including by the Hamas Movement.”⁷¹⁰

7.2 ABUSE OF HOSTAGES IN GAZA AND FAMILY MEMBERS

7.2.1 VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST HOSTAGES EN ROUTE TO CAPTIVITY

Amnesty International has concluded that fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades and individuals in civilian clothing committed acts of violence and abuse against people seized on 7 October 2023 while they were being taken into captivity in Gaza. Such violence amounts to torture or other ill-treatment under international law.

Amnesty International documented, through interviews and video evidence, five incidents in which a total of nine people – all men – were subjected to beatings and other abuse by those transporting them or by individuals in civilian clothing surrounding the vehicles in which they were travelling; the abuse amounted to cruel treatment. In two cases, the abuse included elements that may amount to sexual or other gender-based violence.

The organization reviewed evidence in a media report of a woman hostage being subjected to sexual violence in Gaza en route to captivity. It documented through video evidence two incidents in which members of a crowd in civilian clothing in Gaza beat the unresponsive, presumably dead, bodies of a total of five people who had been seized in Israel. It also documented through video evidence another incident in which the dead body of a woman hostage was subjected to abuse that may amount to sexual or other gender-based violence.

The Thai agricultural worker mentioned earlier as being interviewed by Amnesty International told the organization that, after being abducted from Re'im by a group of armed men whom he described as wearing clothing consistent with them being from the Al-Qassam Brigades, he and the four other hostages were first taken to an abandoned warehouse where they were handed over to a different group of men, who beat them with their hands and weapons “and fired warning shots to intimidate” them. He said the abuse lasted for about 20 minutes before the same group of armed men put them back into a vehicle and took them to a tunnel.⁷¹¹

In one video verified by Amnesty International, a man who appears to be Evyatar David, whom Amnesty International identified as someone abducted from the area surrounding the Nova festival site,⁷¹² is beaten by individuals in civilian clothing who gather around the pickup truck in which he is being transported in Gaza by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁷¹³ In another video verified by Amnesty International, Evyatar is seen being dragged around the streets of the town of Al-Mughraqa in Gaza by an armed fighter; his top is ripped and lowered, exposing his chest.⁷¹⁴ The armed fighter pushes his head down on several occasions to look at the ground.

⁷⁰⁸ SRS-G-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 78.

⁷⁰⁹ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), pp. 7-8.

⁷¹⁰ Hamas Media Office, “Our Narrative... Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (previously cited), p. 8.

⁷¹¹ Interview by voice call with Thai agricultural worker (name withheld), 6 March 2025.

⁷¹² See Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies”.

⁷¹³ Video posted by Noa Magid on X on 11 May 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷¹⁴ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted on the website <https://www.hamas-massacre.net> on an unknown date and held on file by Amnesty International.

Omer Wenkert, a 22-year-old man abducted from near the Nova festival site,⁷¹⁵ is also visible in a video verified by Amnesty International being beaten by individuals in civilian clothing; he is being transported into Gaza by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades on the back of a pickup truck while naked except for boxer shorts.⁷¹⁶

Two other videos verified by Amnesty International each show a similar scene of a hostage being beaten by individuals in civilian clothing while being transported into Gaza on motorcycles.⁷¹⁷

Ilana Gritzewsky, who reported that she was subjected to sexual assault by gunmen while abducted in Nir Oz and passed out in Israel on the motorcycle on which she was being transported,⁷¹⁸ told The New York Times that she was subjected to further sexual violence in Gaza en route to captivity. The newspaper wrote:

“When she came to, she said, she found herself on the floor in a dilapidated building, clearly in Gaza, her shirt up baring her breasts and pants pulled down, with seven gunmen standing over her. She does not know what exactly happened to her while she was passed out, but she said she gestured to them and told them in English that she had her period, believing that probably saved her from worse. ‘They hit me and lifted me up,’ she said.”⁷¹⁹

According to the same article, the therapist who supported Ilana following her release said that Ilana had shared with her these details of waking up partially naked on the ground in Gaza. According to media reports, Ilana was held in Gaza by Hamas.⁷²⁰ Ilana gave a similar account to the UN Security Council in August 2025.⁷²¹

The unresponsive, presumably dead, bodies of people who had been seized in Israel were also subjected to abuse. In a video verified by Amnesty International, the body of a man in military uniform, presumably an Israeli soldier, is seen lying on the street in central Gaza, his upper body covered in blood.⁷²² People in civilian clothing are kicking and stepping on his unresponsive body while a masked armed man, whose affiliation is not clear, stands over the body and watches. In another video verified by Amnesty International, four unresponsive bodies in the back of pickup trucks carrying armed men, including fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, are beaten by members of a crowd in civilian clothing in the city of Bani Suheila in Gaza.⁷²³

While some women hostages were covered with a sheet as they were abducted, others were exposed to crowds in minimal clothing, seemingly as trophies. One video verified by Amnesty International shows the unresponsive, likely dead body of Shani Louk.⁷²⁴ She is lying face down in a pickup truck, wearing only boots, black underpants or shorts and a bra that appears raised above her breasts and is surrounded by four men, one armed with a rifle and one carrying an RPG. One man is sitting with his leg over her underpants or shorts, another is grabbing her hair and two others appear to be standing triumphant over her body while she is paraded through cheering crowds. The armed fighters allow one man from the crowd close enough to spit on her body. Shani Louk’s mother, Ricarda Louk, told Amnesty International how she and her family found out that Shani had been abducted by seeing the video between 10am and 11am on 7 October 2023. “We recognized her immediately. We were in shock. How could it be that she was on the back of a pickup truck in this humiliating way?” she said.⁷²⁵

Civilians perpetrating abuses against individuals (or their bodies) who had been seized in Israel and were en route to captivity in Gaza and fighters who exposed them to such abuse, violated the prohibition of cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity under international humanitarian law.

Palestinian fighters who paraded women, or their dead bodies, in humiliating ways as they transported them through Gaza or subjected men to abuse while they were partially naked (wearing just underpants or just underpants and trousers) treated them in a way that may amount to sexual or other gender-based violence.

⁷¹⁵ See Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies”.

⁷¹⁶ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 19 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷¹⁷ Video posted by Kann News on X on 17 April 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International; video posted by Noa Magid on X on 1 August 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷¹⁸ See section 7.1.3 “Sexual violence”.

⁷¹⁹ New York Times, “She was released, now she is campaigning for her partner in Gaza”, 25 March 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/25/world/middleeast/israeli-hostage-gaza-campaign.html>

⁷²⁰ New York Times, “She was released, now she is campaigning for her partner in Gaza” (previously cited).

⁷²¹ DRM News International, “Full Speech: Ex-Hostage Ilana Gritzewsky Shares Emotional Story at UN Security Council” (previously cited).

⁷²² Video posted by Al Mustashaar on their Telegram channel on 7 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷²³ Video posted by Middle East Buka on X on 1 April 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷²⁴ Video posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 19 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷²⁵ Interview by voice call with Ricarda Louk, 16 October 2024.

7.2.2 PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST HOSTAGES IN CAPTIVITY

Amnesty International has concluded that members of Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, mistreated hostages in captivity and, in some cases, committed physical and sexual violence amounting to torture or other ill-treatment. It also documented evidence that Palestinian Islamic Jihad committed physical and sexual violence amounting to torture or other ill-treatment in the case of one hostage.

It documented through interviews with one released hostage the cases of five hostages who experienced abuse in captivity that likely amounted to torture. The abuse included beatings and other physical abuse, being kept chained in underground tunnels and being denied adequate food, water and healthcare.

At least 18 other named hostages – 12 men, four women and two girls – reported publicly, after their release, that they were subjected to abuse in captivity that amounted to torture or other ill-treatment. Amnesty International was not able to interview any of them. Eleven of the men and one of the women described being subjected to beatings. The four women and two girls also described being subjected to sexual violence, including sexual assault, such as non-consensual touching, and threats of forced marriage or threats of joining them in the shower. Five of the 12 men also described being subjected to abuse that constituted sexual violence. Some of the hostages described being starved or otherwise denied adequate food.

Several other released hostages said they saw or heard the accounts of other hostages subjected to such abuse. Health professionals who treated released hostages assessed that many were subjected to physical abuse and some to sexual violence.

Hostages were held in different arrangements, and some reported being transferred several times from one place to another. Some said they were held in or taken to apartments or underground tunnels, or hospitals.⁷²⁶ The day-to-day treatment of hostages appears to have varied greatly in captivity. Some were held in dire conditions and some appear to have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in captivity.

The Thai agricultural worker mentioned earlier told Amnesty International that he and three other Thai hostages and one Israeli hostage (names withheld) with whom he was held were beaten and denied adequate provisions in captivity.⁷²⁷ He described how, after being taken to a tunnel in Gaza, he and the four other hostages were handed over by the armed men who transported them there to a new group of people, who were armed and wearing military-style clothing but not headbands; they tied them up and beat them on multiple occasions over three days. He said that he and the other Thai men shouted out that they were from Thailand and that this caused them to be beaten less severely than the Israeli hostage with whom they were held. He said some of the guards were dressed in civilian clothing, but the “men carrying out the beatings were people dressed like soldiers”.⁷²⁸

He identified himself in a photograph showing five men held, with their arms restrained, at gunpoint by a fighter from the Al-Qassam Brigades; he said the photograph was taken in the first few days of their arrival in the tunnel.⁷²⁹ He also described to Amnesty International how he and the others with whom he was held were given regular but minimal food, and slept on the floor with one blanket between two of them. He said they were given toothbrushes but did not use them in order to conserve their limited water supplies. He described the hardest part as “not knowing what would happen, not knowing when I could leave, not knowing how many days I would have to live, or whether I would be killed.”⁷³⁰ He was released on 25 November 2023. The abuse of these hostages violated the prohibition of cruel treatment and torture under international law.

⁷²⁶ The Thai national described being held, with other hostages, in different locations in tunnels. Interview by voice call with Thai national (name withheld), 6 March 2025.

Liat Atzili told Amnesty International she was held in Nasser hospital with several other hostages for the last day and a half before she was released. Interview in person with Liat Atzili, 8 September 2024.

See also, for example, UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 76; Noa Ziv and others, “Medical perspectives on Israeli children after their release from captivity: A retrospective study”, 7 August 2024, *Acta Paediatrica*, Volume 113, Issue 10, available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.17355>, p. 2261.

⁷²⁷ See section 7.2.1 “Physical and sexual violence against hostages en route to captivity” for details of abuse against them en route to captivity.

⁷²⁸ Interview by voice call with Thai national (name withheld), 6 March 2025.

⁷²⁹ Photograph bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by Sprinter Observer on X on 7 October 2023 and held on file with Amnesty International. The Thai national identified himself in that image through a statement to the media. Reuters, “Exclusive: 50 days in Hamas captivity – Thai man recalls beatings and bleakness”, 7 December 2023,

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/50-days-hamas-captivity-thai-man-recalls-beatings-bleakness-2023-12-07>

⁷³⁰ Interview by voice call with Thai national (name withheld), 6 March 2025.

Wichian Temthong, a Thai hostage released in November 2023, was reported in the media saying he was treated leniently by his captors, but that, in the first weeks held underground in a tunnel, two of the Israelis with whom he was held were sometimes beaten with electric cables.

At least five other named hostages, all of whom were released in January and February 2025, described in the media being subjected to physical abuse, denial of food leading to severe hunger and significant weight loss, and other mistreatment in captivity. Eli Sharabi, abducted from Be'eri and released on 8 February 2025, told Israeli media that he was chained for the duration of his 16 months of captivity and subjected to multiple beatings, but that none of these beatings compared to the pain of the hunger to which he was also subjected.⁷³¹ He also recounted that captors beat him and other hostages with whom he was held, denied them food and justified such ill-treatment by saying, in relation to Palestinian detainees in Israeli detention facilities: "Our prisoners don't get any food. You don't get any food. Our prisoners are being beaten, you will be beaten."⁷³² Eli's brother-in-law, Stephen Brisley, gave Amnesty International a similar account of his treatment in captivity. He confirmed that Eli was taken hostage from his home by armed men he could identify as fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades by their green headbands and that Eli was held by Hamas supporters or fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades for the duration of his 491 days in captivity, first in an apartment, then, for the vast majority of those days, in tunnels.⁷³³

Omer Wenkert, who was abducted from near the Nova festival site, described beatings and humiliation, including a beating with a crowbar, and said he was held alone for almost 200 days.⁷³⁴ Three other hostages gave similar accounts.⁷³⁵ The severity and duration of the abuse described in these accounts mean it likely amounts to torture in each case.

As of 4 December 2025, less than half of the 20 hostages released as part of the October 2025 deal had spoken publicly about their treatment in captivity. At least seven, however, described in the media ordeals of being held in tunnels for months without daylight, being subjected to psychological and physical abuse, including mock executions and denial of adequate food or starvation, treatment which violates the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. In a detailed interview for Israeli media, Sergev Kalfon, who was seized while attending the Nova festival, described being subjected to prolonged beatings on numerous occasions, including with a donkey whip, and starved of food while his captors ate. He said he was threatened with execution on several occasions, including one in which one of his captors put a gun in his mouth to threaten him. He also described an occasion when he and five other Israeli hostages with whom he was held were told by one of their captors that, as revenge for killings committed by Israeli forces, the captor would shoot three of the six hostages dead and shoot three others "only" to injure them; the hostages were initially told to choose who would be killed before the captor started switching them between groups for execution or injury. He said this abuse went on for several hours before the captor left without shooting any of them.⁷³⁶ Bar Kuperstein, who Sergev said was another member of this group of six, likewise gave a public account that he and other hostages with whom he was held were ordered by a captor holding a gun to choose among themselves who would be killed, as a form of psychological abuse.⁷³⁷ Bar also described being beaten in captivity, including on the soles of his feet with his legs tied, with captors telling him it was revenge for the treatment of Palestinians in Israeli detention.⁷³⁸ Matan Zangauker, abducted from Nir Oz, also described being beaten, threatened with death and denied food while his captors ate.⁷³⁹ Guy Gilboa-

⁷³¹ Channel 12, אלי שרעבי מדבר ["Eli Sharabi speaks"], 27 February 2025, <https://www.mako.co.il/mako-vod-keshet/uvda-2024/VOD-c37976379664591027.htm> (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

⁷³² Channel 12, אלי שרעבי מדבר ["Eli Sharabi speaks"] (previously cited). See also Haaretz, "They broke my ribs and I didn't care": Freed hostage Eli Sharabi recounts starvation and torture in Hamas captivity", 1 March 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-03-01/ty-article/premium/freed-hostage-says-israels-treatment-of-palestinian-prisoners-influenced-hamas-torture/00000195-526b-d965-a395-526bc7ba0000>.

⁷³³ Interview by voice call with Stephen Brisley, 7 July 2025.

⁷³⁴ Haaretz, "Freed Israeli hostage: Collapse of cease-fire meant 'humiliation, less food, abuse' in Hamas captivity", 12 March 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-03-12/ty-article/freed-israeli-hostage-collapse-of-cease-fire-meant-humiliation-less-food-abuse/00000195-893d-dd1f-a3fd-a9bda79b0000>

⁷³⁵ Andrey Kozlov reported being held in chains for two months and told on one occasion that he would be executed. Meaningful People, "I was held hostage in Gaza for 8 months, until the IDF rescued me: Andrey Kozlov", 22 February 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r4jNA_fjxw

Keith Siegel said he was beaten and denied food for extended periods of time while captors ate in front of him, while Tal Shoham described beatings, denial of adequate food and exchanging back rubs of one of his captors for food. CBS, "60 minutes: Freed Israeli hostages call for end to war, to bring remaining Gaza hostages home", 31 March 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9panbhkqrmw>

⁷³⁶ Ynet News, "We ate rice with worms. I planned to escape, but my friends stopped me": the captivity of Segev Kalfon", 1 November 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/magazine/article/bk5x85gy1lg>

⁷³⁷ Stand With Us, Instagram post: "Survivor of more than two years in Hamas captivity, Bar Kupershtein recounts his harrowing experience of abuse and torture in Gaza, yet holds a powerful hope for the future.", 12 November 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQ-BaCGjNat>

⁷³⁸ See also Jerusalem Post, "Hamas tortured Gaza hostages over Ben-Gvir's actions, freed captive Bar Kupershtein reveals", 27 October 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-871803>

⁷³⁹ MSN, "I thought I would die here": Freed hostage Matan Zangauker recounts beatings, mind games", 11 November 2025, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/war-and-conflicts/war-events/i-thought-i-would-die-here-freed-hostage-matan-zangauker-recounts-beatings-mind-games/ar-AA1Qc7lr>

Dalal described being beaten, subjected to attempts to humiliate him and another hostage, and starved.⁷⁴⁰ Alon Ohel recounted being held chained in a tunnel and starved while knowing his captors had food.⁷⁴¹ Avinatan Or said he was beaten “for days” after attempting to escape.⁷⁴²

Rom Braslavski, who was held by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, likewise described in media interviews after his release abuse in captivity, including being tied up and repeatedly beaten on several consecutive days, being lashed and deprived of food. He also said his captors ate while he was starved.⁷⁴³

The mother of Matan Angrest also publicly stated, following his release, that he was “very severely tortured” in the first few months after his capture, including by being beaten so badly he lost consciousness.⁷⁴⁴

Amnesty International analysed reports from released hostages saying they were subjected to sexual violence while being held captive in Gaza or saw or heard accounts from other hostages subjected to such abuse. It was not able to interview any of them, despite efforts to do so, but presents the testimonies of survivors shared publicly in line with international guidance on documenting conflict-related sexual violence.

Amit Soussana, an Israeli lawyer abducted from Kfar Azza and released on 30 November 2023,⁷⁴⁵ described to the UN Security Council, in interviews with The New York Times and in a documentary film that she was chained up for three of the weeks she was held in Gaza; she said the man guarding her forced her to perform a sexual act on him at gunpoint.⁷⁴⁶ Two named Israeli doctors and a social worker confirmed to the New York Times that Amit reported the sexual violence to them within 24 hours after she was returned to Israel. Amit also described being subjected to a severe beating while held captive in Gaza, where guards tied her up and hung her “like a chicken” from a gap between two couches, where they beat and kicked her, called other hostages to watch, and then threatened to kill her, apparently to extract information from her.⁷⁴⁷ Amit also said on public platforms that she was held for the duration of her captivity by “armed Hamas guards”.⁷⁴⁸ The abuse she described amounts to torture.

Dafna Elyakim, who was aged 15 when fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades broke into her home and subsequently held hostage by Hamas in Gaza,⁷⁴⁹ has said publicly that she was subjected to sexual violence. She is recorded saying at a conference on 6 May 2025:

“We had one guard with us, one of the terrorists, who would touch me all the time, or tell me that I was going to stay there, that they would return [my sister] Ella and everyone else, and only I would stay behind with him, and that we were going to have children together, and a house and all that. He would always tell me that he was coming with me to shower... He didn’t actually come with me.”⁷⁵⁰

Agam Goldstein-Almog, abducted at age 17 from her home in Kfar Azza with her mother and brothers and released in November 2023, reported that she was threatened with forced marriage while held hostage in Gaza.⁷⁵¹ Two other hostages reported similar threats.⁷⁵²

⁷⁴⁰ Times of Israel, “‘I had nowhere to run’: Guy Gilboa-Dalal recounts sexual abuse by captor in Gaza”, 23 November 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/i-had-nowhere-to-run-guy-gilboa-dalal-recounts-sexual-abuse-by-captor-in-gaza>

⁷⁴¹ Jerusalem Post, “‘I choose life’: Ex-hostage Alon Ohel recounts Hamas kidnapping, torture, sexual harassment - N12”, 2 December 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-876904>

⁷⁴² Ynetnews, “‘I got out and saw the stars’: Ex-hostage Avinatan Or details Gaza escape attempt and brutal captivity”, 17 November 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/r1mk94oxwl>

⁷⁴³ Jerusalem Post, “Starved, blindfolded, beaten: Ex-hostage Rom Braslavski recalls torture in captivity” 7 November 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-873098>

⁷⁴⁴ Guardian, “Released Israeli hostages give accounts of torture, torment and extraordinary danger”, 14 October 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/oct/14/released-israeli-hostages-speak-of-torture-torment-and-co-existence>

⁷⁴⁵ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited). See Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies”, for details on her abduction.

⁷⁴⁶ i24News English, “Freed hostage Amit Soussana recounts sexual assault by Hamas captor”, 24 October 2024; New York Times, “Israeli hostage says she was sexually assaulted and tortured in Gaza” (previously cited); *Screams Before Silence* (previously cited).

⁷⁴⁷ New York Times, “Israeli hostage says she was sexually assaulted and tortured in Gaza” (previously cited); *Screams Before Silence* (previously cited).

⁷⁴⁸ Speech given by Amit Soussana (undated), available at: Israeli MFA, X post: “All the guards were heavily armed and abused me and the other hostages.”, 2 April 2025, <https://x.com/Israel/status/1907421851048874398>

⁷⁴⁹ See Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies” for details on her and her younger sister’s abduction.

⁷⁵⁰ Intervention by Dafna Elyakim, Civil Advocacy Center’s Teen Spirit conference, 6 May 2025, available at: Zionist Federation of Australia, Instagram post: “Dafna Elyakim was just 15 years old when she was kidnapped...”, 6 May 2025, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJU_eiMzbxA

See also Times of Israel, “Teen ex-hostage says Hamas captor would touch her and tell her he wanted to marry her”, 6 May 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/teen-ex-hostage-says-hamas-captor-would-touch-her-tell-her-he-wanted-to-marry-her>

⁷⁵¹ Agam Golstein-Almog, “I was a captive of Hamas. After I was freed, I was imprisoned by online trolls.”, 21 August 2024, Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/08/21/hamas-israel-hostages-antisemitism>

⁷⁵² Noga Weiss, abducted from Be’eri, told Israel’s Channel 12 on 25 April 2024 that on her 14th day of captivity, her guards reunited her with her mother, saying they did this to obtain her mother’s approval for her marriage to one of them. She said for the remainder of her 50 days in captivity, she was subjected to threats that she would never be allowed home but would instead live with her captor and raise his children. Channel 12 report, available at: StandWithUs, “The chilling testimony of 18-year-old Noga Weiss, who was held hostage by Hamas”, 2 May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57pThtj89Z0>

Ori Magidish, a soldier captured from Nahal Oz military base, described being subjected to sexual assault and sexual harassment while being held hostage. She reported being asked questions about sex by a man who seemed to be the “boss” of her captors. She said:

“He would walk past me and give me a pat on the bum or places he shouldn’t touch. Or for instance, I was wounded in my chest, so he would ask, ‘How’s the wound?’, and try to take advantage of the wound to look and see... He was the one guarding me in that place and I couldn’t resist him as much as I needed to.”

She spoke of feelings of disgust and struggling to come to terms with this mistreatment after she was rescued on 30 October 2023.⁷⁵³

Amnesty International considers it likely that this captor was from Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades. Firstly, Ori said herself that she was held by Hamas.⁷⁵⁴ Secondly, Amnesty International verified videos of fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades capturing and guarding women soldiers, including Ori, at the Nahal Oz military base before taking them to Gaza.⁷⁵⁵

Keith Siegel, who was abducted from Kfar Azza with his wife, Aviva Siegel, said in a media report that he was forced to watch one woman hostage being tortured and saw other women hostages being sexually assaulted.⁷⁵⁶ He described being forcibly shaved on his head and pubic area, which he found humiliating and believed was done solely for his captors’ entertainment or to degrade him. This treatment constitutes a form of sexual violence.⁷⁵⁷ Aviva, who was initially held with Keith, also described someone they were held with in Gaza telling her she was subjected to sexual assault, and has referred publicly to Keith being subjected to the forcible shaving of his whole body.⁷⁵⁸ Keith and Aviva Siegel were held by Hamas.⁷⁵⁹ Eli Sharabi, referred to above, also reported being forced to stand naked in front of his Hamas captors and to shave off the hair from his whole body while they watched, which he likewise described as humiliating.⁷⁶⁰

In addition, as of 4 December 2025, three men released as part of the October 2025 deal had given accounts recorded by Israeli media of being subjected to sexual violence in captivity. Guy Gilboa-Dalal is reported describing being sexually assaulted on two occasions by the same captor and being threatened with execution if he told anyone.⁷⁶¹ He said that, during one of these assaults, his captor rubbed his own genitals against Guy’s anus for several minutes and that he froze and did not know what to do.⁷⁶² Guy was held hostage by the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁷⁶³ Alon Ohel described being sexually assaulted in captivity, recounting that one of his captors followed him into the shower, lathered him with shampoo and touched him. He said

Ilana Gritzewsky, abducted from Nir Oz, is reported by The New York Times saying that one of her captors hugged her and told her, while pointing his pistol at her, that, even if there was a deal, she would not be released because he wanted to marry her and have her children. New York Times, “She was released, now she is campaigning for her partner in Gaza” (previously cited). She gave a similar account to the UN Security Council, DRM News International, “Full Speech: Ex-Hostage Ilana Gritzewsky Shares Emotional Story at UN Security Council” (previously cited)

⁷⁵³ Channel 12, עכשיו אורי [“Now Ori”], 28 May 2025, <https://www.mako.co.il/mako-vod-keshet/uvda-2024/VOD-65bb8938c611791027.html> (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

⁷⁵⁴ IDF, Facebook post: “Special message from a rescued Israeli hostage”, 30 December 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=252634747700612>

⁷⁵⁵ See section 6.2 “Seizure of military captives”. See also Channel 12, עכשיו אורי [“Now Ori”], 28 May 2025, <https://www.mako.co.il/mako-vod-keshet/uvda-2024/VOD-65bb8938c611791027.htm>

⁷⁵⁶ CBS, “60 Minutes: Freed Israeli hostages call for end to war, to bring remaining Gaza hostages home” (previously cited).

See also Times of Israel, “Keith Siegel says he was forced to watch sexual assault of female hostages while in captivity”, 31 March 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/keith-siegel-says-he-was-forced-to-watch-sexual-assault-of-female-hostages-while-in-captivity The woman he said he witnessed being tortured may be Amit Soussana, mentioned above, based on interviews in the media in which he said they were held together for a period of time and the similarities in his and Amit Soussana’s descriptions of this attack.

⁷⁵⁷ CBS, “60 minutes: Freed Israeli hostages call for end to war, to bring remaining Gaza hostages home” (previously cited).

⁷⁵⁸ Trauma and Justice Conference, organized by the Association of Rape Crisis Centers, 26 November 2024.

⁷⁵⁹ The Al-Qassam Brigades apparently released a video of Keith Siegel showing him in captivity. Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, available at: Al Jazeera Arabic, X post: [#نتניהו بالإفراج عنهم وبحذرون من تداعيات](https://twitter.com/Netanyahu/status/1784244245840228848) [“القصف على حياتهم”], 27 April 2024, <https://x.com/AJArabic/status/1784244245840228848>

Keith Siegel is reported in the media as being held by Hamas. New York Times, “‘Now you’re dead’: Freed hostage recounts captivity in Gaza”, 16 April 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/16/world/middleeast/keith-siegel-israel-hostage-hamas-gaza-interview.html>

Aviva Siegel has likewise said that she and Keith were held by Hamas.

⁷⁶⁰ Channel 12 news report, available at n12news, Instagram post: “The chilling testimony of hostage survivor Eli Sharabi”, 6 June 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DKkeyidN2ks>

⁷⁶¹ Times of Israel, “‘I had nowhere to run’: Guy Gilboa-Dalal recounts sexual abuse by captor in Gaza”, 23 November 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/i-had-nowhere-to-run-guy-gilboa-dalal-recounts-sexual-abuse-by-captor-in-gaza>

⁷⁶² Times of Israel, “‘I had nowhere to run’: Guy Gilboa-Dalal recounts sexual abuse by captor in Gaza”, 23 November 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/i-had-nowhere-to-run-guy-gilboa-dalal-recounts-sexual-abuse-by-captor-in-gaza>

See also N12 News, “Released Israeli hostage Guy Gilboa Dalal told Channel 12 he was sexually assaulted by a member of Hamas terrorists”, 22 November, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRXvBIXDRLQ>

⁷⁶³ Guy Gilboa-Dalal was filmed in captivity on at least two occasions by the Al-Qassam Brigades (for more information on one of these videos, see section 6.1.2 “Nova festival site and surrounding areas”). He also reportedly described the sexual violence as occurring while he was held in tunnels with other hostages, several of whom Amnesty International has also confirmed were held by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

the sexual abuse did not go any further.⁷⁶⁴ Alon appears to have also been held hostage at this time by the Al-Qassam Brigades.⁷⁶⁵

Rom Braslavski, who was held hostage by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, described being stripped of all of his clothes and tied up naked, saying he believed this was to humiliate him and crush his dignity.⁷⁶⁶

Several other returned hostages said publicly that other hostages they met in Gaza had been sexually assaulted. Agam wrote in an opinion piece: “Six female hostages I met in a tunnel told me about men with guns who came into their shower rooms and touched their bodies.”⁷⁶⁷ Her mother, Chen Goldstein-Almog, was reported in the media saying that two women she met in captivity in Gaza told her they had been sexually assaulted.⁷⁶⁸

Some women reported being watched all day and night by male guards or being subjected to invasive body searches.⁷⁶⁹

Renana Eitan, a psychiatrist involved in treating hostages released in November 2023 in her then position as chair of psychiatry at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center (also known as Ichilov Hospital), told Amnesty International that some of them had faced physical and psychological abuse in Gaza. She said some hostages reported being beaten, forced to witness or participate in violent acts, confined in isolation or total darkness and deprived of basic needs, including food and sleep, leading to serious and long-term mental and physical health implications.⁷⁷⁰ The psychiatrist also said that some returned hostages were subjected to sexual violence, including forced nudity and sexual assault. She said most of the women and adolescent girls treated at her hospital, if not subjected to sexual violence themselves, met other hostages while in captivity who had been subjected to sexual violence, exacerbating their fear that they would be subjected to sexual violence.

A separate study published by Israeli medical teams that treated 29 hostages who were released in November 2023 found that 21 reported physical abuse. It reported finding signs of starvation and lack of adequate feeding, deficient hygiene (leading to lice and scabies), severe medical neglect and medical negligence of pre-existing medical conditions, as well as morbidities that developed during captivity. The study reported that signs of physical and sexual abuse were evident in some returnees, but did not specify how many.⁷⁷¹

The UN Commission of Inquiry stated in September 2024 that the majority of hostages were subjected to mistreatment and that some were subjected to physical violence.⁷⁷² It also stated that it “received credible information about some hostages being subjected to sexual and gender-based violence while in captivity, including sexualized torture and abuse against men and women when they were held in tunnels.”⁷⁷³ It reported that “one released female hostage reported that she had been raped in an apartment”.⁷⁷⁴ The Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC also reported finding evidence of sexual violence, including rape, against

⁷⁶⁴ Jerusalem Post, “‘I choose life:’ Ex-hostage Alon Ohel recounts Hamas kidnapping, torture, sexual harassment - N12”, 2 December 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-876904>

Part of the recorded interview is available at N12 News, “Alon Ohel reveals horrifying testimony from Hamas captivity: ‘They tore me out of my reality and put me in hell.’”, 2 December 2025, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRvxBL7En_q

⁷⁶⁵ Alon Ohel was filmed in a video reportedly issued by the Al-Qassam Brigades. See Ynetnews, “Hamas releases first proof-of-life video of hostage Alon Ohel – alongside fellow captive Guy Gilboa Dalal”, 5 September 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/sksp5v00qgg>

⁷⁶⁶ CNN, “Rom Braslavski: Newly freed Israeli hostage says he was sexually assaulted in captivity”, 5 November 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/11/05/middleeast/israel-hostage-braslavski-abuse-intl>

⁷⁶⁷ Agam Golstein-Almog, “I was a captive of Hamas. After I was freed, I was imprisoned by online trolls.” (previously cited).

⁷⁶⁸ New York Times, “Apology, tears and terror: A former hostage recounts a 7-week ordeal”, 15 December 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/15/world/middleeast/hamas-israel-hostage.html>

⁷⁶⁹ Yarden Roman-Gat described in an interview with CBS’s “60 minutes” programme having male guards with her from the moment she arrived in Gaza until the moment she left. 60minutes, Instagram post: “I was helpless ... They did not want to protect me. They wanted to guard their trophy.”, 18 December 2023, https://www.instagram.com/60minutes/reel/C1AAUCureOC_

Amit Soussana said she needed to ask permission to go to the bathroom and was not permitted to close the door. Speech given by Amit Soussana (undated), available at: Israeli MFA, X post: “All the guards were heavily armed and abused me and the other hostages.”, 2 April 2025, <https://x.com/Israel/status/1907421851048874398>

Moran Stella Yanai told CBS News that she was subjected to invasive body searches more than once. CBS, “Former Israeli hostage shares her story of 7 October capture”, 7 October 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/former-israeli-hostage-shares-her-story-of-oct-7-capture-being-held-in-gaza-by-hamas>

⁷⁷⁰ Interview by video call with Renana Eitan, 17 June 2024. She said that she treated some of the hostages directly and was informed about the situation of other hostages by other medical providers as they worked collectively to determine the best treatment for those in their care.

⁷⁷¹ Naama de la Fontaine and others, “Acute response to the October 7th hostage release: Rapid development and evaluation of the novel ReSPOND protocol implementation within a children’s hospital”, 20 June 2024, *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, Volume 18, Issue 76, available at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-024-00767-3>

⁷⁷² UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 83.

⁷⁷³ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 82.

⁷⁷⁴ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 82.

hostages.⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, when approving its arrest warrant for Mohammed Deif, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber “found reasonable grounds to believe that... while they were held captive in Gaza, some hostages, predominantly women, were subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including forced penetration, forced nudity, and humiliating and degrading treatment”.⁷⁷⁶

Hamas has claimed that it treated military and civilian hostages humanely. On 16 October 2023, for example, Abu Obaida, the spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, stated: “We deal with prisoners as dictated by the teachings of religion and care for them as required by moral and humanitarian duty”. He also said that non-Israeli detainees would be treated as guests until conditions permitted their release.⁷⁷⁷ On 16 October 2023, Khaled Meshaal, head of the Hamas movement abroad, while making a distinction between the soldiers and civilians whom Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups were holding, said, with respect to these hostages: “The Hamas leadership acts in accordance with international humanitarian law and our values and morals.”⁷⁷⁸ However, other statements by spokespeople for the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups suggested otherwise and included threats of execution.⁷⁷⁹

Abu Hamza, the spokesperson of the Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, announced on 3 July 2024:

“A number of enemy prisoners have actually and persistently attempted suicide as a result of the extreme frustration they feel at their government’s neglect of their cause, the difference in treatment by the guard units of the Al-Quds Brigades by depriving them of some of the privileges that were provided to them prior to the heinous crime of Al-Nuseirat, in which the criminal Nazi enemy [Israeli] army killed hundreds of innocent Palestinians, and the continued torture of our prisoners in [Israeli] prisons and other arbitrary and unjust measures.”⁷⁸⁰

He added:

“Our decision in the Al-Quds Brigades to treat enemy prisoners in the same way as our prisoners are treated inside [Israeli] prisons will remain in force as long as the terrorist [“Israeli”] government continues its unjust measures against our people and our prisoners.”⁷⁸¹

Basem Naim, head of Hamas’s Political and International Relations Department, publicly contested reports of sexual violence against hostages in Gaza.⁷⁸² While Amnesty International has faced challenges to its investigation that limit its ability to draw full conclusions about sexual violence, it has concluded that sexual violence was perpetrated against hostages, including by Hamas.

7.2.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE OF HOSTAGES AND FAMILY MEMBERS

Amnesty International has concluded that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad subjected all hostages they held, as well as their family members, to psychological abuse. They held all hostages incommunicado, without contact with the outside world. They denied all hostages communication with their families and access to the ICRC until their release.⁷⁸³ They recorded and released photographs and videos of hostages in

⁷⁷⁵ SRSg-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 71; ICC, “Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC: Applications for arrest warrants in the situation in the State of Palestine”, 20 May 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-state>

⁷⁷⁶ ICC, “Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I issues warrant of arrest for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (Deif)” (previously cited).

⁷⁷⁷ Al Jazeera Arabic, *كلمة أبو عبيدة الناطق العسكري باسم كتائب القسام* [“Statement by Abu Obaida, military spokesperson for the Al-Qassam Brigades”], 16 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCDEihEszCg> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁷⁷⁸ Statement by Khaled Meshaal, available at: Al-Araby, *حديث خاص: خالد مشعل - رئيس حركة حماس في الخارج* [“Khaled Meshaal, head of the Hamas movement abroad: interview”], 16 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5FJ9cKkiYI> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁷⁷⁹ See section 5.3 “Killing of hostages in Gaza”.

⁷⁸⁰ Abu Hamza, Telegram post, <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/103>, 3 July 2024, (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁷⁸¹ Abu Hamza, Telegram post, <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/104>, 3 July 2024, (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁷⁸² Basem Naim, Telegram post, 31 December 2023, <https://t.me/kUoQCMfm8b11NWE0/198> (also available at Workers World, “Hamas assails rape allegations made by The New York Times”, 2 January 2024, <https://www.workers.org/2024/01/75957>). See also Basem Naim’s response to the testimony of Amit Soussana, an Israeli hostage who described sexual abuse in captivity, as reported by The New York Times, who had interviewed her. New York Times, “Israeli hostage says she was sexually assaulted and tortured in Gaza” (previously cited).

⁷⁸³ ICRC, “For the hostages in Gaza, the Red Cross is neutral – but we are not bystanders”, 11 March 2025, <https://www.icrc.org/en/article/hostages-gaza-red-cross-neutral-but-not-bystanders>

violation of their rights. These non-consensual videos show the subjects at their most vulnerable, often injured, in great pain and fear, sometimes pleading for their lives or release. They did not provide a list of hostages they held, nor did they share details and updates on the hostages' whereabouts or condition, thereby denying families information about loved ones held hostage.⁷⁸⁴ They paraded hostages in front of crowds during their initial abduction and during non-consensual and humiliating mediated "release ceremonies". The brother-in-law of Eli Sharabi told Amnesty International that Eli's Hamas captors told him what to say in his "release ceremony" and made him practise it in advance; it included saying he was looking forward to seeing his wife and daughters even though it was known that they had been killed.⁷⁸⁵

Palestinian armed groups separated family members held hostage from each other and kept some children completely alone, according to Renana Eitan, a psychiatrist involved in treating hostages released in November 2023.⁷⁸⁶ A medical paper focusing on child hostages noted in August 2024 that one of the returned hostages was "a toddler who had been separated from her family for 10 days and held alone, [who] demonstrated events of unprovoked crying during the stay in our unit."⁷⁸⁷ Erez Calderon, aged 11 at the time of his abduction from Nir Oz, and whose capture was recorded on a video verified by Amnesty International, told Israeli media that he was held separately from his father and sister in captivity, and had come to believe his situation in captivity was his new reality.⁷⁸⁸ This was confirmed by Erez's family in separate media reports.⁷⁸⁹ Some hostages were threatened with death or were warned that they would be killed if the Israeli security forces attempted to rescue them.⁷⁹⁰

Palestinian armed groups recorded and released videos of tens of Israeli hostages, including at least three children.⁷⁹¹ In these videos, hostages refer to the treatment they are receiving at the hands of their captors, plead for their release, and/or criticize the policies of their government. The videos and statements exploited hostages' suffering, tormented families and were apparently used to spread fear or influence Israeli decision-makers. The videos and statements were forced; any consent given would be negated by the coercive circumstances.

In a video issued on 30 November 2024, a man identifying himself as US-Israeli national Edan Alexander is shown weeping.⁷⁹² Edan was reportedly seized while serving with the Israeli military on 7 October 2023.⁷⁹³ In the video, his speech is interspersed with images of him rocking back and forth with his head in his hands, sobbing. He says that he has been told about a new policy in which hostages will be killed if Israeli forces try to rescue them,⁷⁹⁴ and that, because of this, "the fear is at its peak and we are dying a thousand times every day". He pleads to be able to "return home with a full mind".⁷⁹⁵ As noted above, Edan was released on 12 May 2025.

A video of a hostage identifying himself as Matan Zangauker, who makes similar statements, was released on 7 December 2024.⁷⁹⁶ Matan was kidnapped from his home in Nir Oz.⁷⁹⁷ In both videos, the men say that they are captives of Hamas. Both videos end with an image of an hourglass and a caption saying "time is running out". In June 2025, Hamas reportedly released a new photograph of Matan Zangauker, threatening

See also UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 74.

⁷⁸⁴ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 74.

⁷⁸⁵ Interview by voice call with Stephen Brisley, 7 July 2025. See section 7.2.2 "Physical and sexual violence against hostages in captivity" for more details of his abuse in captivity.

⁷⁸⁶ Interview by video call with Renana Eitan, 17 June 2024.

⁷⁸⁷ Noa Ziv and others, "Medical perspectives on Israeli children after their release from captivity: A retrospective study" (previously cited), p. 2263.

⁷⁸⁸ Channel 12 news report, available at: Stop the Lies, Facebook post, 21 July 2024,

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1147305669880333>

See also Chapter 6 "Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies", in which Amnesty International documents his capture by assailants in Nir Oz.

⁷⁸⁹ See, for example, New York Times, "'I left him behind': Freed hostage fear for father, left in Gaza", 21 December 2023,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/21/world/middleeast/hamas-israel-father-hostage.html>; Times of Israel, "Freed hostage Ofer Calderon recounts trauma of learning 2 children also captive in Gaza", 5 July 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/freed-hostage-ofer-calderon-recounts-trauma-of-learning-2-children-also-captive-in-gaza>

⁷⁹⁰ See section 5.3 "Killing of hostages in Gaza" and section 7.2.2 "Physical and sexual violence against hostages in captivity" for examples.

⁷⁹¹ The UN Commission of Inquiry found at least 18 videos of 32 hostages. UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 75. Additional videos were released subsequently.

⁷⁹² Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by BringThemHome23 on X on 30 November 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷⁹³ Fox News, "Meet Edan Alexander, the last living American hostage in Hamas captivity", 22 February 2025,

<https://www.foxnews.com/world/meet-edan-alexander-last-living-american-hostage-hamas-captivity>

⁷⁹⁴ See section 5.3 "Killing of hostages in Gaza" for details.

⁷⁹⁵ He pleads to the US government in English, saying he does not want to end up like fellow US-Israeli national Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who was killed in captivity. See section 5.3 "Killing of hostages in Gaza" for details.

⁷⁹⁶ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by Iris Leal on X on 7 December 2024 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁷⁹⁷ Haaretz hostages database (previously cited).

to execute him if troops came near.⁷⁹⁸ Similar videos were released during 2025, including ones showing Matan Angrest, Bar Kupershtein, Omri Miran and Maxim Herkin in captivity.⁷⁹⁹

A video of Rom Braslavski was posted online on 31 July 2025.⁸⁰⁰ Rom is seen on the floor in a tunnel, emaciated and weeping, and says he has been starved, is too weak to stand and is on the verge of death. His family described the video as showing Rom “broken”. Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed the video was made before they lost contact with Rom’s captors, wrongly implying that Rom might have been killed in captivity and adding to his family’s suffering.⁸⁰¹

A video of Evyatar David was published on 2 August 2025.⁸⁰² It shows him emaciated in a tunnel and being forced to dig what he says he believes is his own grave. He describes in detail and with reference to an annotated calendar going consecutive days without food. Being forced to dig one’s own grave in these circumstances amounts to torture, as does intentional denial of food over extended periods of time in captivity. A second video posted a day earlier on the same account shows pictures of Evyatar looking emaciated and frail, interspersed with what appear to be images of malnourished children in Gaza; one of the captions states about the hostages: “They eat what we eat”.⁸⁰³

Hamas also subjected hostages released in the January-February 2025 hostage-prisoner exchange to non-consensual and humiliating “release ceremonies”, performed in front of large crowds. Hamas officially presented such “release ceremonies” as an indication that they had been treating the hostages humanely, but, in fact, they used these events as a propaganda tool to demonstrate their power. In one incident, the coffins of deceased Israeli hostages, including two children, were displayed publicly in front of a poster depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a vampire.⁸⁰⁴ At the time, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights commented:

“The images we have seen of Israeli hostages released over the weekend show signs of ill-treatment and severe malnourishment, reflecting very dire conditions they were subjected to in Gaza. We are also deeply concerned by the public parading of hostages released by Hamas in Gaza, including statements apparently made under duress during release.”⁸⁰⁵

The ICRC similarly expressed concern:

“We have repeatedly urged both publicly and privately to those with the responsibility and the authority over these releases, and those with influence on them, to ensure that they are conducted with privacy, respect, and care. This must happen in future release operations.”⁸⁰⁶

Family members of hostages with whom Amnesty International has spoken have described not receiving signs of life for months or longer, as well as the unbearable pain and anguish of not knowing where or how their loved ones are, or if and when they will return. The broadcasting of the hostages’ suffering causes more pain to the family members. The holding of hostages and broadcasting of videos of their suffering is not only a crime against the immediate victims, but the uncertainty and anguish caused to hostages’ loved ones also constitutes torture or other ill-treatment.⁸⁰⁷

Some families did not know if their loved ones were dead or alive. Ricarda Louk, the mother of Shani Louk, told Amnesty International she saw her daughter’s body on the back of a pickup truck in Gaza on 7 October

⁷⁹⁸ Times of Israel, “Hamas issues new photo of hostage Matan Zangauker, threatens execution if troops come near”, 7 June 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-issues-new-photo-of-hostage-matan-zangauker-threatens-execution-if-troops-come-near>

⁷⁹⁹ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “These are the remaining 20 Israeli hostages presumed to be alive in Gaza”, 7 July 2025, <https://www.jta.org/2025/07/07/israel/these-are-the-remaining-20-israeli-hostages-presumed-to-be-alive-in-gaza>

⁸⁰⁰ Video featuring the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Quds Brigades, posted by Warfare Analysis on X on 31 July 2025 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁸⁰¹ Jerusalem Post, “Palestinian Islamic Jihad release video of Rom Braslavski”, 31 July 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-862923>

⁸⁰² Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 2 August 2025 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁸⁰³ Video bearing the logo of the Military Media of the Al-Qassam Brigades, posted by the Al-Qassam Brigades on their Telegram channel on 1 August 2025 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁸⁰⁴ France 24, “Hamas hands over dead Israeli hostages in black coffins”, 20 February 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250220-hamas-hands-over-dead-israeli-hostages-in-black-coffins>

⁸⁰⁵ OHCHR, “Distressing conditions of Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees”, 10 February 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/02/distressing-conditions-israeli-hostages-and-palestinian-detainees>

⁸⁰⁶ ICRC, “Israel and the occupied territories: ICRC urges dignity and privacy ahead of next release operation”, 19 February 2025, <https://www.icrc.org/en/news-release/israel-and-occupied-territories-icrc-urges-dignity-privacy-ahead-next-release-operation>

⁸⁰⁷ The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment noted: “Secondary victimization affects immediate family members. They become involuntary participants in a high-stakes negotiation process... It is the Special Rapporteur’s position that, as with enforced disappearances, the families of hostages can be victims of torture or inhuman and degrading treatment. UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Report: *Hostage-Taking as Torture*, 6 February 2025, UN Doc. A/HRC/58/55, paras 61-63.

2023. She said: “That day, we didn’t know if Shani was dead or alive. We could see blood on her head but we thought she was alive, in hospital in Gaza.”⁸⁰⁸ Three weeks later, the Israeli authorities informed Shani’s parents that their daughter was dead.⁸⁰⁹ This ended a desperate search the family had undertaken to find information over the preceding weeks, ending the hope they had maintained that she was alive.

On 2 December 2024, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said that Omer Neutra, a US-Israeli soldier who was thought to have been captured alive during the 7 October 2023 attacks, was actually killed that day and his body taken to Gaza.⁸¹⁰ A family member was reported in the press the same day, saying: “It was an unimaginable nightmare to be acting based on the hope that he was alive, despite having little information or signs of life since he was seen on video being taken on October 7th.”⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁸ Interview by voice call with Ricarda Louk, 16 October 2024.

⁸⁰⁹ See section 6.3 “Seizure of bodies” for details.

⁸¹⁰ Israel Katz, X post: “אני מבקש לשלוח את תנחומי העמוקים להוריו של סרן עומר נאטורה ז”ל” [“I would like to send my deepest condolences to the parents of the late Captain Omar Neutra”], 2 December 2024, https://x.com/Israel_katz/status/1863502844118159662

⁸¹¹ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “‘Words alone have no power to comfort’: Family of hostage Omer Neutra, killed by Hamas, calls for deal to save living captives”, 2 December 2024, <https://www.jta.org/2024/12/02/israel/words-alone-have-no-power-to-comfort-family-of-slain-hostage-omer-neutra-calls-on-biden-and-trump-to-save-captives-who-are-still-alive>

8. CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

International criminal law provides that individuals who are responsible for certain serious violations of international law are individually criminally liable and should be brought to justice. Serious human rights violations which constitute crimes under international law include torture, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial executions. Some serious human rights violations (inhumane acts) which are committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population constitute crimes against humanity. Serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the prohibitions under Common Article 3, constitute war crimes.⁸¹²

Such crimes are so serious that they amount to an offence against the whole of humanity and, therefore, all states have a responsibility to bring those responsible to justice, including through universal jurisdiction.⁸¹³

The preceding chapters explain the relevant rules of international humanitarian law that apply in situations of non-international armed conflict and document acts committed by fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades and the military wings of other armed groups that flagrantly violate these rules, some of which constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity as envisaged under the Rome Statute of the ICC.⁸¹⁴

8.1 WAR CRIMES

Serious violations of international humanitarian law committed with criminal intent – that is intentionally or recklessly – are war crimes.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹² ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸¹³ This is reflected in the Preamble of the Rome Statute of the ICC: “Affirming that the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole must not go unpunished and that their effective prosecution must be ensured by taking measures at the national level and by enhancing international cooperation, Determined to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes and thus to contribute to the prevention of such crimes, Recalling that it is the duty of every State to exercise its criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes...”

The UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment requires states to exercise jurisdiction over persons found in their territory suspected of torture abroad, to extradite them to other states able and willing to do so or to surrender them to an international criminal court (Article 7). The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance has a similar obligation (Article 9).

States parties to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocol I have an obligation to provide for universal jurisdiction over grave breaches of the Conventions and the Protocol. Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (First Geneva Convention), Article 49; Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (Second Geneva Convention), Article 50; Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Third Geneva Convention), Article 129; Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), Article 146; Protocol I, Article 85(1).

See also Ljubljana-The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes and Other International Crimes, Article 14.

⁸¹⁴ See Chapter 4 “Overview”, Chapter 5 “Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians”, Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies” and Chapter 7 “Physical, sexual and psychological abuse”.

⁸¹⁵ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156. Article 30 of the Rome Statute limits criminal liability to crimes committed “with intent and knowledge.” It explains that “a person has intent where... that person means to cause that consequence or is aware that it will occur in the ordinary course of events.” Arguably, this could mean that some type of reckless conduct could be within the jurisdiction of the ICC.

8.1.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

War crimes applicable to non-international armed conflicts are listed in the Rome Statute of the ICC, in the ICRC's study on customary international humanitarian law and other sources.⁸¹⁶ They include a wide array of offences for which individuals may be held criminally liable.⁸¹⁷ War crimes may be committed by anyone taking part in hostilities, including members of armed forces, members of organized armed groups and civilians, against members of the armed forces, protected objects or civilians of the adverse party.⁸¹⁸

Individuals may be held criminally liable for the war crimes they order or commit, for attempting to commit a war crime, as well as for assisting in, facilitating, aiding or abetting, planning or instigating a war crime.⁸¹⁹ In addition, commanders and civilian leaders may be prosecuted for war crimes under the doctrine of superior responsibility when they knew or should have known about the commission of war crimes and failed to take necessary measures in their power to prevent them or, if the war crimes already occurred, to punish those responsible.⁸²⁰

Fighters have a duty to disobey manifestly unlawful orders.⁸²¹ Obeying a superior order does not relieve a subordinate of criminal responsibility if they knew that the act ordered was unlawful or should have known because of manifestly unlawful nature of the order.⁸²²

The Elements of Crimes of the Rome Statute of the ICC enumerates the elements required for conduct to constitute a war crime. Elements common to all war crimes include the requirements that the conduct took place in the context of and was associated with an armed conflict, and that the perpetrator was aware of the factual circumstances that established the existence of an armed conflict.⁸²³

States must investigate war crimes allegedly committed by their nationals or members of their armed forces, wherever committed, as well as on their territory or in any areas under their jurisdiction and, if sufficient evidence exists, prosecute the suspects. They also may, and in some cases must, provide for universal jurisdiction for war crimes, and thus investigate and, if appropriate, prosecute the suspects.⁸²⁴ No statutes of limitations may apply to war crimes.⁸²⁵

⁸¹⁶ Rome Statute, Article 8; ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸¹⁷ Under customary international humanitarian law, "violations are in practice treated as serious, and therefore as war crimes, if they endanger protected persons or objects or if they breach important values." ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸¹⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156. See also Knut Dörmann, *Elements of War Crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: Sources and Commentary*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 391–393.

⁸¹⁹ Rome Statute, Article 25; ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 151

⁸²⁰ Under customary international humanitarian law, "[c]ommanders and other superiors are criminally responsible for war crimes committed by their subordinates if they knew, or had reason to know, that the subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and did not take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible". ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 153.

The Rome Statute distinguishes between military commanders and other superiors. It states: "A military commander or person effectively acting as a military commander shall be criminally responsible... where: (a) That military commander or person either knew or, owing to the circumstances at the time, should have known that the forces were committing or about to commit such crimes; and (b) That military commander or person failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution." For civilian superiors, the equivalent situation is where: "(a) That superior either knew, or consciously disregarded information which clearly indicated, that the subordinates were committing or about to commit such crimes; (b) The crimes concerned activities that were within the effective responsibility and control of the superior; and (c) The superior failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution." Rome Statute, Article 28.

⁸²¹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 154.

⁸²² Rome Statute, Article 33; ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 155.

⁸²³ ICC, Elements of Crimes, 2 November 2000, UN Doc. PCNICC/2000/1/Add.2, Article 8 (Introduction). With regard to these two elements, the text clarifies that: "(a) There is no requirement for a legal evaluation by the perpetrator as to the existence of an armed conflict or its character as international or non-international; (b) In that context there is no requirement for awareness by the perpetrator of the facts that established the character of the conflict as international or non-international; (c) There is only a requirement for the awareness of the factual circumstances that established the existence of an armed conflict that is implicit in the terms 'took place in the context of and was associated with'."

The Elements of Crimes were adopted by the Assembly of States Parties to "assist the Court in the interpretation and application" of the definitions of crimes set out in Articles 6 to 8 in the Rome Statute. The Elements of Crimes, therefore, form part of the "applicable law" to be applied by the ICC. However, in case of a conflict with the Rome Statute itself, the Statute takes precedence over the Elements of Crimes. See Rome Statute, Articles 9(1), 9(3) and 21(1)(a).

⁸²⁴ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 157 and 158; First Geneva Convention, Article 49; Second Geneva Convention, Article 50; Third Geneva Convention, Article 129; Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 146; Additional Protocol I, Article 85(1). The Ljubljana – The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and other International Crimes, Article 14; UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 7; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 9.

⁸²⁵ Rome Statute, Article 29; ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 160.

8.1.2 APPLICATION

The fighting between Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, including their military wings, and Israeli forces is governed by international humanitarian law, specifically the rules applicable in non-international armed conflicts.⁸²⁶

This report has documented serious violations of international humanitarian law which incur individual criminal liability, including: deliberate killings of civilians and persons *hors de combat*; the taking of hostages; direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects; indiscriminate attacks; destruction of civilian property; forced displacement; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; torture and other physical, sexual and psychological abuse; and mutilation of bodies.⁸²⁷

According to Amnesty International's research, fighters from at least the following armed groups were involved in the 7 October 2023 attacks and the holding of hostages and were responsible for violations that took place: Hamas, including its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades; Palestinian Islamic Jihad, including its military wing, the Al-Quds Brigades; and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement. Unaffiliated civilians were also involved in some instances.

These acts took place in the context of and were associated with a non-international armed conflict. Amnesty International's research indicates that those responsible for these acts would have been aware of the factual circumstances that established the existence of an armed conflict.

Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of the violations of international humanitarian law documented in this report amount to war crimes. They include the war crimes of: "murder";⁸²⁸ "cruel treatment and torture";⁸²⁹ "committing outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment";⁸³⁰ "taking of hostages";⁸³¹ "making the civilian population or individual civilians, not taking a direct part in hostilities, the object of attack";⁸³² "pillage";⁸³³ "committing rape... or any other form of sexual violence";⁸³⁴ "making civilian objects the object of attack";⁸³⁵ destroying or seizing "property of the adverse party not required by military necessity";⁸³⁶ "launching an indiscriminate attack resulting in death or injury to civilians";⁸³⁷ "using human shields";⁸³⁸ and "enforced disappearance".⁸³⁹

8.2 CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Crimes against humanity constitute crimes under international law, and as such are crimes wherever they are committed, regardless of whether they are criminal under domestic law, and whether the state concerned is party to the Rome Statute of the ICC. Crimes against humanity may be committed either in peacetime or during armed conflict.⁸⁴⁰ They may be committed by state officials, members of armed forces or security services, fighters belonging to organized armed groups, or civilians.

⁸²⁶ See Chapter 4 "Overview" for details.

For an explanation of the criteria for classification of armed conflicts, see ICRC, *How is the Term "Armed conflict" Defined in International Humanitarian Law?* (previously cited). For the discussion of non-international armed conflict, see pp. 13-20.

For an explanation of Amnesty International's classification of the situation in the OPT, including how the occupation of Gaza and of the West Bank by Israel is recognized as an international armed conflict, see: Amnesty International, 'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': *Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza* (previously cited), pp. 70-71.

⁸²⁷ See Chapter 4 "Overview", Chapter 5 "Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians", Chapter 6 "Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies" and Chapter 7 "Physical, sexual and psychological abuse".

⁸²⁸ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(c)(i); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸²⁹ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(c)(i); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³⁰ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(c)(ii); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156. According to the ICC Elements of Crimes, this war crime also applies to dead persons. See also ICRC, Customary IHL, Rules 90 and 113.

⁸³¹ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(c)(iii); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³² Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(e)(i); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³³ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(e)(v); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³⁴ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(e)(vi); ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³⁵ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³⁶ Rome Statute, Article 8(2)(e)(xii).

⁸³⁷ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸³⁹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 156.

⁸⁴⁰ ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*, Case IT-94-1, Appeals Chamber, Decision on the Defence Motion for Interlocutory Appeal on Jurisdiction, 2 October 1995, paras 140-141.

8.2.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The *chapeau* of Article 7 of the Rome Statute sets out the contextual elements that need to be established for a prohibited, inhumane act listed in Article 7(1)(a–k)⁸⁴¹ to constitute a crime against humanity. Accordingly, a prohibited act must be “committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.”⁸⁴² Article 7(2)(a) further specifies that “[a]ttack directed against any civilian population” means a course of conduct involving the multiple commission of acts referred to in [Article 7(1)(a–k)] against any civilian population, pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy to commit such attack.”

Therefore, what needs to be established is the existence of:

- an attack directed against any civilian population;
- a state or organizational policy;
- the widespread or systematic nature of the attack;
- a nexus between an individual prohibited act and the attack; and
- the perpetrator’s knowledge of the attack.⁸⁴³

Importantly, the requirements of “an attack directed against any civilian population”, the existence of a “policy”, and the “widespread or systematic nature of the attack” concern the overall context within which individual perpetrators commit prohibited acts, and because of which such acts may qualify as crimes against humanity. These three elements must first be established before inquiring into whether an individual can be held criminally liable for committing crimes against humanity. The other two elements of “nexus” with and “knowledge” of the attack instead pertain to the link between the conduct of individuals and the broader widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population.

ATTACK DIRECTED AGAINST ANY CIVILIAN POPULATION

An “attack” must be comprised of the prohibited acts listed in Article 7(1)(a–k) of the Rome Statute, such as murder, torture or imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law. In turn, the multiple commission of prohibited acts must be part of a “course of conduct”, that is “a series or overall flow of events, as opposed to a mere aggregate of random or isolated acts. As such, the ‘multiple commission of acts’ sets a quantitative threshold involving a certain number of acts falling within the course of conduct.”⁸⁴⁴ An attack may arise in connection with the multiple commission of either the same prohibited act (for example, torture) or a combination of different prohibited acts (for example, torture and murder). The acts need not constitute a military attack.⁸⁴⁵

An attack is “directed” against a civilian population when this is “the primary object of the attack, and not just an incidental victim.”⁸⁴⁶ The term “civilian population” refers to “a collective, as opposed to individual civilians”; in turn, “any” civilian population means that this is “not limited to populations defined by a common nationality, ethnicity, or other similar distinguishing features.”⁸⁴⁷ Importantly, what needs to be ascertained is that “the civilians were targeted during the attack in sufficient number or in such a manner that the attack was effectively directed against the civilian population, without it being necessary... to prove that the *entire* population of a geographic area was targeted at the time of the attack.”⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴¹ The acts listed in Article 7 are: “(a) Murder; (b) Extermination; (c) Enslavement; (d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population; (e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; (f) Torture; (g) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; (h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender ..., or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court; (i) Enforced disappearance of persons; (j) The crime of apartheid; (k) Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.”

⁸⁴² Rome Statute, Article 7.

⁸⁴³ ICC, *Situation in Kenya*, Case ICC-01/09, Pre-Trial Chamber II, Decision Pursuant to Article 15 of the Rome Statute on the Authorization of an Investigation into the Situation in the Republic of Kenya, 31 March 2010, para. 79.

⁸⁴⁴ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1105.

⁸⁴⁵ ICC, *Elements of Crimes*, Article 7 (Introduction).

⁸⁴⁶ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga*, Case ICC-01/04-01/07, Trial Chamber II, Judgment, 7 March 2014, para. 1104.

⁸⁴⁷ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1106; ICC, *Prosecutor v. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo*, Case ICC-01/05-01/08-3343, Judgment pursuant to Article 74 of the Statute, 21 March 2016, para. 155.

⁸⁴⁸ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga*, Case ICC-01/04-01/07, Trial Chamber II, Judgment, 7 March 2014, para. 1105.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY

According to Article 7(2)(a) of the Rome Statute, an attack needs to be committed “pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organisational policy”. The ICC has found that the determination of whether a particular group is “an ‘organisation’ within the meaning of Article 7 of the Statute requires an assessment of its structures and mechanisms and the sufficiency of the same to carry out the attack against the population.”⁸⁴⁹ In the *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud* case, ICC Trial Chamber X found that “Ansar Dine/AQIM” (Ansar al-Din and Al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb) met this requirement, citing its findings that the group was “structured and hierarchically organised, possessed a high number of fighters and weapons, had a command structure, employed systems for allegiance and obedience, and disseminated internal instructions to their members.”⁸⁵⁰

The purpose of such a “policy” requirement is to ensure that “the multiple acts forming the course of conduct are linked. It ensures that acts which are unrelated or perpetrated by individuals acting randomly on their own are excluded.”⁸⁵¹ While the policy may be implemented according to “a design adopted by a State or organization... with regard to a certain population in a given geopolitical situation”, it is not required that “a formal design exist, since explicitly advanced motivations are ultimately of little importance. In any event, the policy must always target a particular civilian population or a part thereof”.⁸⁵²

Moreover, the ICC has clarified that it is not required that a policy be formed before an attack against a civilian population begins: “policy may consist of a pre-established design or plan, but it may also crystallise and develop only as actions are undertaken by the perpetrators”. In this regard, “[t]he existence of a policy may be inferred from a number of factors, including: (i) the fact that the attack was planned or directed; (ii) the existence of a recurrent pattern of violence, for example, repeated actions occurring according to a same sequence; (iii) the use of public or private resources to further the policy; (iv) the involvement of the State or organisational forces in the commission of crimes; (v) statements, instructions, or documentation attributable to the State or the organisation condoning or encouraging the commission of crimes; (vi) an underlying motivation; and (vii) the existence of preparations or collective mobilisation orchestrated and coordinated by that State or organisation.”⁸⁵³

There is no requirement that the inhumane acts all be committed by members of the same organization, as long as they are part of the same “attack”.⁸⁵⁴

WIDESPREAD OR SYSTEMATIC NATURE OF THE ATTACK

An attack needs to be either “widespread” or “systematic” – these requirements are alternative, not cumulative. Importantly, these elements apply to the “attack” against the civilian population, not the prohibited act(s) committed by an individual perpetrator. “Widespread” refers to “the large-scale nature of the attack and the number of targeted persons. The assessment of whether the attack is widespread is neither exclusively quantitative nor geographical, but must be carried out on the basis of all the relevant facts and circumstances of the case.”⁸⁵⁵

“Systematic”, in turn, “reflects the organised nature of the violent acts, referring often to the existence of ‘patterns of crimes’ and the improbability of their random or accidental occurrence.” Examining these requirements means to “assess if a series of repeated actions seeking to always produce the same effects on a civilian population were undertaken, and consequently, it may consider whether: (i) identical or similar criminal practices can be identified; (ii) the same *modus operandi* was used; or (iii) victims were treated in a similar manner across a wide geographic area.”⁸⁵⁶

NEXUS BETWEEN A PROHIBITED ACT AND THE ATTACK

To amount to a crime against humanity, a prohibited act must be committed “as part of” a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population. Due regard is to be given to “the nature of the act at

⁸⁴⁹ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1286.

⁸⁵⁰ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1286.

⁸⁵¹ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Case ICC-02/04-01/15, Trial Chamber IX, Judgment, 4 February 2021, para. 2678.

⁸⁵² ICC, *Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga*, Case ICC-01/04-01/07, Trial Chamber II, Judgment, 7 March 2014, para. 1108.

⁸⁵³ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda*, Case ICC-01/04-02/06, Trial Chamber VI, Judgment, 8 July 2019, para. 674.

⁸⁵⁴ ICC, Elements of Crimes, Article 7 (Introduction): “It is understood that ‘policy to commit such attack’ requires that the State or organization actively promote or encourage such an attack against a civilian population”. This suggests that individuals carrying the inhumane acts may be members of other organizations or individuals unaffiliated to a particular organization as long as they are acting “pursuant to or in furtherance of” an organizational policy.

⁸⁵⁵ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1113.

⁸⁵⁶ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1114.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

issue, the aims it pursues and the consequences it occasions” in order to examine “whether this act is part of the widespread or systematic attack, considered as a whole, and in respect of the various components of the attack (including the policy, the patterns of crimes, or the type of victims)”.⁸⁵⁷

It is important to note that “[t]he temporal and geographical proximity of the acts are relevant, but acts that are committed before or after the core of the attack against the civilian population may also, if sufficiently connected, be considered as part of that attack.”⁸⁵⁸

The fact that a prohibited act must be committed “as part of” a widespread or systematic attack means that its perpetration must occur within the context of the attack and be sufficiently connected to it. For example, a single act of torture may amount to a crime against humanity when committed “as part of” a widespread or systematic attack composed of a multiplicity of other prohibited acts, such as murder or enforced disappearance.

THE PERPETRATOR’S KNOWLEDGE OF THE ATTACK

To be liable for crimes against humanity, an individual perpetrator must have “knowledge of the attack”. Accordingly, “the perpetrator must know that the conduct was part of or intended to be part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population. However, it is not necessary that the perpetrator be aware of the precise details of the plan or policy of the State or organisation.”⁸⁵⁹

A perpetrator’s knowledge of the attack, as well as their awareness that their conduct is part of such an attack, “may be inferred from circumstantial evidence, such as: the accused’s position in the military hierarchy; [their] assuming an important role in the broader criminal campaign; [their] presence at the scene of crimes; [their] references to the superiority of his group over the enemy group; and the general historical and political environment in which the acts occurred”.⁸⁶⁰

The ICC Elements of Crimes clarify what is meant by a perpetrator’s knowledge that their conduct was part of the attack: “In the case of an emerging widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population... [the] mental element is satisfied if the perpetrator intended to further such an attack.”⁸⁶¹

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Individuals are criminally liable for crimes against humanity when they commit any of the prohibited acts under Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute, as long as they have a degree of knowledge about the contextual elements of the crime. Notably, the ICC Elements of Crimes requires that “[t]he perpetrator knew that the conduct was part of or intended the conduct to be part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.”⁸⁶² However, an individual does not need to be personally responsible for the actual widespread or systematic attack to be found guilty; a single act can be sufficient if – and only if – it is carried out in the context of a broader attack of which the perpetrator was aware.⁸⁶³ Individuals, whether civilian or military, can be held criminally liable for crimes against humanity for committing, co-perpetrating, indirectly perpetrating, planning, ordering, or aiding and abetting these crimes, as well as for command responsibility.⁸⁶⁴

Under international law, states may, and in some cases must, exercise universal jurisdiction over crimes against humanity.⁸⁶⁵ Any state may, under customary international law, undertake one of the following actions against suspected perpetrators of crimes against humanity, even if the suspects or victims are neither nationals nor residents of the state concerned, and even if the crime(s) did not take place under that state’s jurisdiction or in its territory: (1) bring such suspects before its own courts, (2) extradite them to any state willing to do so, or (3) surrender such persons to an international criminal court with jurisdiction to try

⁸⁵⁷ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1116.

⁸⁵⁸ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Bosco Ntaganda*, Case ICC-01/04-02/06, Trial Chamber VI, Judgment, 8 July 2019, para. 696.

⁸⁵⁹ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, Case ICC-01/12-01/18, Trial Chamber X, Judgment, 26 June 2024, para. 1117.

⁸⁶⁰ ICC, *Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga*, Case ICC-01/04-01/07, Pre-Trial Chamber I, Decision on the Confirmation of Charge, 30 September 2008, para. 402.

⁸⁶¹ ICC, Elements of Crimes, Article 7 (Introduction).

⁸⁶² ICC, Elements of Crimes, Article 7 (1) (a-k).

The ICTY has stated that “the requisite *mens rea* for crimes against humanity appears to be comprised by (1) the *intent* to commit the underlying offence, combined with (2) *knowledge* of the broader context in which that offence occurs.” ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Zoran Kupreškić and others*, Case IT-95-16, Trial Chamber II, Judgment, 14 January 2000, para. 556.

See also ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*, Appeals Chamber, para. 271; International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), *Prosecutor v. Clément Kayishema and others*, Trial Chamber II, Judgment, 21 May 1999, paras 133-34.

⁸⁶³ See Antonio Cassese and Paola Gaeta, *Cassese’s International Criminal Law*, 3rd edition, Chapter 5.

⁸⁶⁴ Rome Statute, Articles 25 and 28.

⁸⁶⁵ Amnesty International, *Universal Jurisdiction: The Duty of States to Enact and Enforce Legislation* (Index: IOR 53/008/2001), 1 September 2001, Chapter 5.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

persons for these crimes. At least with respect to torture and enforced disappearances, exercising universal jurisdiction over suspected perpetrators is a legal obligation, not a choice.⁸⁶⁶ Crimes against humanity must not be subject to statutes of limitations.⁸⁶⁷

8.2.2 APPLICATION

Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that many of the violations documented in this report that were carried out by members of Palestinian armed groups and unaffiliated civilians who joined the attack meet the contextual, material and mental elements required by Article 7 of the Rome Statute and therefore constitute crimes against humanity. Unaffiliated civilians, as well as members of armed groups, may be individually liable for crimes against humanity when a nexus exists between individual conduct and the attack on the civilian population in the terms set out in Article 7. The definition of crimes against humanity there does not focus on the status of the perpetrator as a member of an organization but rather on their unlawful conduct and their state of mind (*mens rea*) when carrying it out.

ATTACK DIRECTED AGAINST A CIVILIAN POPULATION

Beginning on the morning of 7 October 2023, forces led and coordinated by Hamas's armed wing carried out multiple attacks in southern Israel. Following calls from Hamas, including its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, and other Palestinian armed groups urging Palestinians across Israel and the OPT to join, and the destruction of the perimeter fence surrounding Gaza in multiple locations, people in civilian clothing, who may have been additional fighters or Palestinian civilians not affiliated to organized armed groups, crossed into southern Israel from Gaza and joined the attacks.

This overall attack directed against the civilian population was carried out in several waves and was characterized by the multiple commission of inhumane acts prohibited under the Rome Statute of the ICC. The pattern of repeated prohibited acts – particularly murder and imprisonment – suggests that they were committed as part of a course of conduct.

The civilian nature of the overwhelming majority of locations attacked, the statements of leaders of Hamas and other organized armed groups, the pattern of repeated attacks deliberately targeting civilians, and the fact that the vast majority of those killed, injured or abducted in the attack were civilians, point to the conclusion that the attack was indeed directed against a civilian population.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY

Palestinian armed groups who participated in the attack, the Al-Qassam Brigades (the military wing of Hamas), the Al-Quds Brigades (the military wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad) and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (formerly the military wing of Fatah), as well as, based on some evidence, the National Resistance Brigades or Omar Al-Qasem Forces (the military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), the Mujahideen Brigades (the military wing of the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement) and the Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades (the military wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), meet the criteria identified in relevant jurisprudence for "organization" required in the definition of crimes against humanity. These groups were structured and hierarchical, comprised of a large number of fighters and a substantial arsenal, possessed a command structure, employed systems for allegiance and obedience, and disseminated internal instructions to their members.

Evidence collected and analysed by Amnesty International shows that Hamas leaders intended to carry out an attack on civilians, as well as on military targets, in Israel, and that fighters from its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, and the military wings of other Palestinian armed groups were acting in line with this intention when they attacked civilian locations on 7 October 2023. Hamas also said that it planned to take and hold hostages.

In statements made on and after 7 October 2023, Hamas leaders said that civilian communities in Israel, including civilian communities such as kibbutzim, were among the intended targets of the attack.⁸⁶⁸ They

⁸⁶⁶ UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 7; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 9. See also Ljubljana – The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and other International Crimes, Article 14.

⁸⁶⁷ Rome Statute, Article 29.

⁸⁶⁸ For example, on 7 October 2023, Saleh Al-Aroui, then Deputy Head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, while denying that civilians were targeted, said: "The plan was implemented as it was drawn up, which meant controlling these settlements [in Israel] and these [military] camps with their inhabitants was part of the plan..." Al Jazeera Arabic, *لدينا عدد كبير من الأسرى الإسرائيليين بينهم* [The deputy head of Hamas's political bureau to Al Jazeera: We have a large number of Israeli prisoners, including senior officers"] (previously cited).

referred on multiple occasions to instructions given by the leadership of the Al-Qassam Brigades to their fighters.⁸⁶⁹ Statements delivered or posted on social media by senior members of the Al-Qassam Brigades during the attack claimed that forces were in civilian communities, also implying that these leaders were in touch with their forces.⁸⁷⁰ They called on supporters to join these forces, and to kill people except children or older people.⁸⁷¹

Some fighters also appeared to have maps or instructions with them directing their role in the attack. Amnesty International was given aerial photographs of Ofakim with marked locations by a witness from the city, who told researchers he found it on the dead body of a fighter killed in the attack.⁸⁷² The photographs had a legend in Arabic noting the location of several places, including the police station and synagogues, which appear to be evidence of an intention to target civilian locations. Amnesty International saw photographs of several other maps and documents in the media or on social media channels that appeared similar to this one, but could not independently verify them. Some of these maps and documents related to Israeli military bases and military hardware, while others were maps of or instructions to target civilian communities. In several videos verified by Amnesty International, fighters can be heard discussing their target destinations, at least some of which were civilian locations.

Video and testimonial evidence show that scores of fighters arrived heavily armed with machine guns, rifles, grenades and RPGs in the civilian locations they attacked, often accompanied or followed by additional fighters and back-up supplies. In others, fighters can be seen using walkie-talkies or two-way radios and heard communicating with people outside their immediate vicinity for the purpose of transporting hostages back to Gaza.⁸⁷³

Amnesty International interviewed individuals from targeted civilian communities who described fighters from Palestinian armed groups acting in formation, or in coordination with each other, as they carried out their attacks.⁸⁷⁴

On 12 October 2023, Saleh Al-Arouri said: "Part of the [Palestinian] forces went to control kibbutzim and settlements [in Israel] to prevent interference against the forces advancing towards the Gaza Division [of the Israeli army]." Al Jazeera, *نائب رئيس المكتب السياسي لحركة حماس* ["Deputy head of Hamas's political bureau to Al Jazeera: This is an advanced battle on the path to our people's freedom"], 12 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAqZA0GDe1M> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

In January 2024, Hamas acknowledged that Palestinian fighters were in Israeli civilian communities on 7 October 2023: "The Israeli occupation army bombed the houses in the Israeli settlements where Palestinian fighters and Israelis were inside..." Hamas Media Office, "Our narrative... Operation Al Aqsa Flood" (previously cited).

⁸⁶⁹ For example, on 12 October 2023, Saleh Al-Arouri mentioned "instructions... given by the leadership of the Al-Qassam [Brigades] to the brothers who participated in the operation to attack the Gaza Division [of the Israeli army]": Al Jazeera, *نائب رئيس المكتب السياسي لحركة حماس* ["Deputy head of Hamas's political bureau to Al Jazeera: This is an advanced battle on the path to our people's freedom"], 12 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAqZA0GDe1M> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁸⁷⁰ For example, on 7 October 2023, Abu Obaida, the spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades, referred publicly to attacks on or confrontations in locations including Be'eri, Ofakim and Sderot, which are civilian communities. Abu Obaida, Telegram post, 7 October 2023, <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28366>

Human Rights Watch also reported that the Al-Qassam Brigades issued statements on their Telegram channel connecting their forces to attacks on Holit and Ofakim, that the Al-Quds Brigades posted messages on their Telegram channel about their forces' involvement in attacks on Kfar Azza, Kissufim and Sderot, and that the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed on their Telegram channel that their fighters stormed and confiscated weapons from Kissufim. These are all civilian communities. Human Rights Watch, *"I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind": Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel* (previously cited), p. 207.

⁸⁷¹ On 7 October 2023, Mohammed Deif, then head of the Al-Qassam Brigades, said: "Righteous fighters, this is your day to make this criminal enemy understand that its time is over. Kill them wherever you find them and drive them out from where they drove you out. Do not kill the elders and children and remove this filth from your land and your holy places. Fight, and the angels will fight with you... Today, whoever has a rifle, let them bring it out, for this is the time, and whoever does not have a rifle, let them come out with their cleaver, their hatchet, their axe or their Molotov cocktail, in their truck, their bulldozer or their car..." Al Jazeera, *محمد الضيف: أطلقنا خلال نصف ساعة ٥ آلاف صاروخ تجاه مستوطنات ومدن العدو* ["Mohammed Deif: We launched within half an hour 5,000 rockets towards settlements and cities of the enemy"], 7 October 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxL5_Nw1lQ (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

On 8 October 2023, Abu Obaida, the spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades, said that Palestinian fighters were in Sderot and called on others to join them: "We supplied our fighters with more equipment as they fight in Sderot... We invite our nation and our people to join the fight." Abu Obaida, Telegram post, 8 October 2023, <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28389> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁸⁷² See section 5.1.8 "Ofakim".

⁸⁷³ Two videos posted by Hamas Atrocities Documentation Center Report Oct 7 on its Telegram channel on 15 October and 23 October 2023 and held on file by Amnesty International.

⁸⁷⁴ Interview in person with Noam Mark, who fought with the Re'im emergency response squad and described fighters attacking in an organized manner, apparently coordinated by a group leader and assigned to different functions, 26 March 2024; interview in person with Amos Alon from Be'eri, who described fighters taking up strategic positions on rooftops of homes in two neighbourhoods, 26 March 2024; interview in person with Itamar Ilos, who fought with the police in Ofakim and described fighters consulting maps together, 13 April 2024; interview in person with Bari Meirovich, who fought with the emergency response squad in Nahal Oz and described apparently well trained fighters walking around in groups of two or three, 8 May 2024; interview in person with Salem Naif, who described fighters in Holit who captured him appearing to have a clear command structure and knowing about the presence of other fighters on the roads outside the kibbutz, 5 August 2024.

The broader pattern of killing and abduction of civilians also suggests that fighters acted in a coordinated fashion. According to evidence collected by Amnesty International and other international organizations, fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades, the Al-Quds Brigades, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and likely the National Resistance Brigades were involved in attacks on civilian locations, while fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades and likely other groups were responsible for killing civilians and/or taking civilians hostage in them, as well as setting up ambushes along key escape routes and killing or abducting civilians who approached them. Attacks against civilian communities, including the killing and abduction of civilians, happened from the very start of the attacks, just after fighters crossed into southern Israel, in multiple locations near simultaneously. While the fighters may not have had an advance plan to target the Nova festival specifically, the fact that scores, possibly hundreds, of armed assailants killed and abducted hundreds of civilians and attempted to kill many more at the festival site and surrounding areas indicates that they were acting in pursuance of a general intention to target the greatest number of civilians.

Hamas has said that “the first main attack” – that is, the first wave consisting largely of fighters – “took place largely according to plan”.⁸⁷⁵ Such statements have affirmed the existence of a plan. In the context in which fighters deliberately attacked civilians in multiple locations, killed hundreds and took scores hostage, they also imply the plan included deliberate attacks against civilians. Hamas has also claimed they would investigate any reports of misconduct.⁸⁷⁶ While there is no evidence to suggest they have investigated such abuses by their forces,⁸⁷⁷ such claims show that Hamas does consider itself in control of the actions of its forces.

Hamas claimed that “the subsequent stage [of the attack], in which Gaza residents and armed forces rushed in without coordination with Hamas, led to many mistakes.”⁸⁷⁸ Ample evidence shows that, while this statement may be true, fighters from the Al-Qassam Brigades led the attack on the civilian population and they and fighters from the military wings of other Palestinian armed groups carried out many of the inhumane acts. However, in some instances, Amnesty International could not verify whether perpetrators were affiliated to an armed group and cannot rule out that some of these inhumane acts were perpetrated by unaffiliated civilians or fighters joining the attack without prior coordination. Where these assailants were acting in line with statements from leaders of Palestinian armed groups to join the attack, or following instructions or collaborating with fighters implementing the attack, these assailants may also have been acting in line with the organizational policy to attack the civilian population. It is worth recalling that leaders of Palestinian armed groups invited Palestinians across the OPT to join the attack and commit acts of violence, including at civilian locations, with limited, if any, instructions to refrain from killing or harming civilians (and with no apparent instruction to limit their violence to military targets).

In relation to hostages, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have made it clear from their statements and actions that they imprisoned people and continue to hold Israelis and foreign nationals seized from Israel – mostly civilians – to demand an exchange with Israel for Palestinians in Israeli detention or other demands. Hamas has negotiated for the release of the hostages and bodies that they and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza are holding, and ensured the release of hostages and bodies in line with the agreements. The fact that Hamas and other armed groups have managed the captivity of many hostages for a prolonged period likewise signals planning and the existence of a structure to hold hostages. Two returned hostages who described being held by Hamas told Amnesty International that people they understood to be senior members of the armed group would come to meet their captors, seemingly providing some oversight of their treatment. A third returned hostage, who described being held by Hamas, said that her captors would regularly make phone calls to report on their status and condition and that she was visited by someone holding one of their other family members hostage, indicating communication among those holding hostages. This is all further evidence of the existence of an organizational policy.⁸⁷⁹

Finally, Hamas had a long-standing history, before 7 October 2023, of carrying out direct attacks on civilians, indiscriminate attacks and holding civilians and soldiers hostage. Other Palestinian armed groups likewise have a history of carrying out indiscriminate attacks or direct attacks on civilians.⁸⁸⁰

⁸⁷⁵ Basem Naim, head of Hamas's Political and International Relations Department, letter to Human Rights Watch, 14 April 2024, available at: Human Rights Watch, “*I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind*”: *Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel* (previously cited), p. 242 (translation from the original Arabic into English by Human Rights Watch).

⁸⁷⁶ See Chapter 9 “Investigations”.

⁸⁷⁷ See Chapter 9 “Investigations”.

⁸⁷⁸ Basem Naim, letter to Human Rights Watch, 14 April 2024, available at: Human Rights Watch, “*I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind*”: *Palestinian Armed Groups' October 7 Assault on Israel* (previously cited), p. 242 (translation from the original Arabic into English by Human Rights Watch).

⁸⁷⁹ See Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies”.

⁸⁸⁰ See Chapter 3 “Background”.

WIDESPREAD OR SYSTEMATIC NATURE OF THE ATTACK

The attack directed against the civilian population was widespread. Prohibited acts were committed during it in civilian communities throughout the areas in Israel surrounding Gaza, as well as the city of Ofakim. These communities are home to tens of thousands of people. Fighters also attacked civilians gathered in other locations, including the Nova festival site and surrounding areas and Zikim beach, and set up ambushes on main roads, killing people who fled.

In addition to being widespread, the attack was also systematic. Amnesty International's research documented patterns of identical or comparable prohibited acts committed in a similar manner. Perpetrators repeatedly treated victims in a similar way across many locations. In tens of videos verified by Amnesty International or testimonies received by the organization, fighters are seen targeting civilians in deliberate attacks in and around their homes and trying to force residents out of individual homes' safe rooms and common bomb shelters, where they were hiding, by shooting or throwing grenades into these shelters or setting fire to the houses. Victims are then killed in their homes, or while fleeing, or taken hostage. These same patterns are repeated across the civilian communities targeted by fighters.

NEXUS BETWEEN A PROHIBITED ACT AND THE ATTACK

Prohibited acts documented in this report were committed "as part of" an attack directed against the civilian population, which was both widespread and systematic. Many inhumane acts, including murder, were committed as part of the attack on the civilian population on 7 and 8 October 2023. Their temporal and geographical proximity is a clear indication of their nexus with such an attack.

The jurisprudence of the ICC has also made clear that acts which were committed after the core of the attack against the civilian population (such as subsequent unlawful imprisonment, enforced disappearance, sexual violence, torture and other inhumane acts committed against captives held in Gaza) may also, if sufficiently connected, be considered as part of the attack. Amnesty International's documentation of the treatment of hostages in Gaza indicates a clear nexus between the prohibited acts committed against them (including murder, imprisonment, torture, sexual violence and other inhumane acts) and the attack on the civilian population. In some cases, prohibited acts (such as enforced disappearance) that were initiated in Israel on 7 October 2023 subsequently continued for months in Gaza.

THE PERPETRATORS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE ATTACK

Amnesty International's findings indicate that, in many cases, perpetrators of inhumane acts knew that their conduct was part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population. In some instances, there is information that members of armed groups were aware of the organizational policy underlying the attack. As noted above, fighters were reportedly given instructions to attack civilian communities and groups of up to scores of fighters arriving at civilian locations appeared well coordinated with each other. In some cases, fighters could be seen and heard talking on walkie-talkies or two-way radios to coordinate the taking of hostages, indicating that they were aware that their actions were part of the wider attack against the civilian population.

In any event, the jurisprudence of the ICC has clarified that knowledge of the precise details of the plan or policy is not necessary, as long as perpetrators have knowledge of the attack directed against the civilian population and are aware that they are part of it.

Many assailants in the attack would have been able to see others targeting civilians around them, as, for example, numerous homes were attacked in many of the civilian communities. Statements by leaders of Palestinian armed groups, if assailants heard them directly or through others, would also have given an indication of the scale of the attack, and that supporters were being asked to join an attack against civilians or told to kill civilians (except children and older persons).

Even if assailants had not known in advance that the communities they were attacking were civilian, it would have soon become obvious as they – and the homes within them – were visibly residential and the other civilian sites targeted. Among those attacked within civilian communities were families where two or three generations were present, including children and older people, who were often clearly identifiable as civilians when killed or abducted. The attacks in these locations went on for many hours, with some assailants spending significant periods of time trying to force families from safe rooms, and/or going from house to house targeting numerous families. At Zikim beach and the Nova festival site and surrounding areas, the targets were visibly in civilian clothing and most were unarmed and trying desperately to flee or hide. Other attacks were indiscriminate, with no effort to distinguish civilians and civilian objects from military objectives.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY COMMITTED IN ISRAEL AND IN GAZA

According to the evidence Amnesty International gathered, corroborated by other reliable sources, members of Palestinian armed groups and, to a lesser extent, unaffiliated civilians committed the following inhumane acts as part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against a civilian population: “murder”; “extermination”; “imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law”; “enforced disappearance”; “torture”; “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity”; and “other inhumane acts”.⁸⁸¹ The organization considers, furthermore, that these acts met all the contextual elements of crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute. It has therefore found sufficient basis to conclude that these acts amounted to crimes against humanity.

Murder

Hundreds of civilians were deliberately and unlawfully killed during the 7 October 2023 attacks. Fighters from Palestinian armed groups killed civilians in their homes, at other locations, including the Nova festival site and surrounding areas, and as they tried to escape. Scores of the civilians killed had been trying to shelter in safe rooms, shelters and other locations when they were targeted and killed. Based on the evidence Amnesty International has analysed, most of the fighters who deliberately killed civilians during the 7 October 2023 attacks were members of the Al-Qassam Brigades. Amnesty International found evidence of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades and the National Resistance Brigades being present at the scene of one killing and evidence of the Al-Quds Brigades being involved in another.

The Al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Quds Brigades also repeatedly threatened to execute civilians and soldiers held hostage, either in retribution for Israeli attacks or in order to prevent a rescue attempt. Amnesty International has concluded that at least six hostages were killed by the Al-Qassam Brigades.

Extermination

The acts of murder perpetrated as part of the 7 October 2023 attacks “were constituted, or took place as part of, a mass killing of members of a civilian population” and therefore amount to the crime against humanity of extermination.⁸⁸²

Imprisonment

Scores of civilians were systematically taken and/or held hostage in southern Israel and imprisoned in Gaza in violation of fundamental rules of international law. The holding of hostages was done as part of an explicitly stated plan explained by the leadership of Hamas and of other Palestinian armed groups. Based on the evidence Amnesty International has analysed, the Palestinian armed groups responsible for abducting civilians or holding civilians or soldiers hostage are Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and likely also the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement.

Torture

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad inflicted severe physical or mental pain or suffering on scores of people who were held under their power – both civilians and soldiers. This included psychological abuse against all hostages and physical abuse against some of them. There also appear to be some cases of abuse or forms of killing by Palestinian fighters or people in civilian clothing during the 7 October 2023 attacks that may amount to torture. Amnesty International was not able to identify the affiliation, if any, of perpetrators of these acts.

Enforced disappearance

Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and likely also the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement failed to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those they abducted or captured from southern Israel and imprisoned in Gaza as hostages. Those imprisoning hostages would have known that no information was being provided about the fate and whereabouts of their victims, as this was widely known and reported. While in some cases, hostages were shown alive in videos that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad released to exert pressure on the Israeli authorities, in many instances, families of hostages reported having no information, even through such videos, as to whether their loved ones were alive or dead.

Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity

Amnesty International documented evidence that Palestinian assailants committed, in both Israel and in Gaza, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence against people in their power. However, except for one case, it was unable to interview people who reported surviving or witnessing sexual violence during the

⁸⁸¹ See Rome Statute, Article 7.

⁸⁸² See ICC, Elements of Crimes, Article 7(1)(b).

attacks in Israel or while held hostage. It therefore could not reach conclusions on the scope or scale of the violence. It has concluded that members of Hamas or its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, committed sexual violence against hostages in captivity, based on credible indications of their responsibility in several cases. It also documented evidence that Palestinian Islamic Jihad committed sexual violence in the case of one hostage. However, in other cases where Amnesty International documented evidence of sexual violence against hostages in captivity and during the 7 October 2023 attacks, it could not determine the affiliation of the perpetrators. In most cases, it also could not determine whether the perpetrators were fighters or unaffiliated civilians.

Amnesty International collected evidence that indicated that rape was likely committed as part of the 7 October 2023 attacks. This included the testimonies of one person who told the organization he was raped and of a therapist who told the organization she provided intensive treatment to three other survivors of rape. UN entities also reported finding evidence of rape during the attacks and against at least one hostage. Nonetheless, Amnesty International did not consider that it had collected enough evidence to definitively conclude that rape, as opposed to sexual assault more broadly, was committed.

Other inhumane acts⁸⁸³

Through subjecting civilian hostages, as well as captured soldiers held as hostages, to inhuman conditions, including denial of adequate food and medical care, during their unlawful imprisonment, Hamas and possibly other Palestinian armed groups inflicted on them great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health. Other ill-treatment, committed by both Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, included threatening to kill hostages and forcing them to appear in videos to beg for their freedom and participation in degrading “release ceremonies”. More broadly, the practice of taking and holding hostages in itself inflicted great suffering on the mental and physical health of hostages and on their families.

⁸⁸³ The ICC has stated: “International case-law suggests that serious beatings, subjection to deplorable conditions of detention and requiring persons to witness the beatings or killings of others can constitute other inhumane acts.” ICC, *Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Case ICC-02/04-01/15, Trial Chamber IX, Judgment, 4 February 2021, para. 2744.

9. INVESTIGATIONS

Fighters from Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, as well as some individuals who appear to have been unaffiliated civilians, committed numerous crimes under international law during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages in captivity.⁸⁸⁴ However, as of 4 December 2025, no one had been tried or brought to justice for these crimes.

Palestinian armed groups do not appear to have carried out investigations into reports of serious violations and crimes under international law, with one possible exception related to the killing of a hostage in Gaza. Hamas's political as well as military leadership have failed to publicly recognize or condemn crimes committed and blamed wrongful acts on unaffiliated Palestinians from Gaza. They have even boasted about some acts that amount to crimes, such as the firing of unguided rockets into Israel.⁸⁸⁵ The authorities of the State of Palestine have also failed to take steps to investigate or bring perpetrators to justice.

Israeli authorities made significant efforts to investigate crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks. However, gaps in the collection of forensic evidence meant that vital evidence was lost and the Israeli authorities may have fallen short of their obligations to investigate under international law. Israeli feminist networks highlighted particular concerns related to the documentation and collection of evidence related to sexual violence.

As of August 2025, Israeli authorities were reportedly detaining at least 200 Palestinians accused of crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks or holding hostages. On 20 April 2025, the Southern District Prosecutor's Office was reported to have announced that 22 people would be charged in relation to the attack in Nir Oz and indicated that charges would also be forthcoming against others involved in the 7 October 2023 attacks.

In May 2025, Israel's cabinet decided not to establish, at that time, a state commission of inquiry to look into failures by the Israeli authorities that preceded the 7 October 2023 attacks and to provide a timely response to protect the population of southern Israel. While international bodies have documented and investigated crimes committed, the Israeli authorities have obstructed international mechanisms with an investigation mandate.

Despite the obstructions, the Pre-Trial Chamber of the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Mohammed Al-Masri (known as Mohammed Deif), then head of the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, in November 2024. Israel reported that they killed him in August 2024 and Hamas confirmed his death a few months after the arrest warrant was issued. Two other senior leaders of Hamas were killed while applications for arrest warrants were pending at the ICC.

DUTY TO INVESTIGATE

The authorities of the State of Palestine have an obligation to investigate allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law and crimes under international law committed by Palestinian armed groups or unaffiliated civilians from the OPT and, where there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecute those suspected of responsibility in fair trials.⁸⁸⁶ They also have a duty to arrest suspects whose arrest and handover have been requested by the ICC.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁴ See Chapter 8 "Crimes under international law".

⁸⁸⁵ See section 4.1 "Attacks and aftermath".

⁸⁸⁶ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 158.

⁸⁸⁷ Rome Statute, Article 59.

Palestinian armed groups also have an obligation to repress violations of international humanitarian law, including by putting an end to violations and removing suspected perpetrators from their ranks.⁸⁸⁸ Failure by the leadership of armed groups to prevent, repress or report war crimes can trigger their individual criminal liability under the doctrine of command responsibility.⁸⁸⁹

Israeli authorities also have a duty to investigate violations of international humanitarian law and crimes under international law committed on their territory and bring the perpetrators to justice.⁸⁹⁰

The UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (UN Principles on Extra-Legal Executions) states:

“There shall be thorough, prompt and impartial investigation of all suspected cases of extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions... It shall include an adequate autopsy, collection and analysis of all physical and documentary evidence and statements from witnesses.”⁸⁹¹

The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (Minnesota Protocol) supplements these principles and establishes a global standard for the conduct of investigations into suspicious and unlawful deaths.⁸⁹²

Under international law, states have the right to vest universal jurisdiction in their national courts over war crimes.⁸⁹³ States have a responsibility to extend their criminal jurisdiction for all crimes under international law, including when they have not been committed on their territory or by or against their nationals.⁸⁹⁴

9.1 PALESTINIAN INVESTIGATIONS

Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have generally failed to carry out investigations into crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages. While there are obvious challenges to conducting investigations in a context of armed conflict, international law requires investigations to be carried out promptly.

Amnesty International is aware of only one instance in which the Al-Qassam Brigades announced they had carried out an investigation into the actions of their forces during the 7 October 2023 attacks or with respect to the holding and treatment of hostages. In August 2024, Abu Obaida, the spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades, announced the opening of an investigation into the killing of one hostage and the wounding of two others and, three days later, its conclusion.

On 12 August 2024, he stated:

“In two separate incidents, two recruits assigned to guard enemy prisoners shot a Zionist prisoner and killed him instantly, in addition to seriously wounding two female prisoners, and attempts are being made to save their lives. The enemy government bears full responsibility for these massacres and the resulting reactions that affect the lives of the Zionist prisoners. A committee was formed to find out the details and these will be announced subsequently.”⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁸⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 139.

⁸⁸⁹ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 153.

⁸⁹⁰ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 158.

⁸⁹¹ UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, adopted on 24 May 1989, para. 9.

⁸⁹² Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (Minnesota Protocol), 2016, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol.pdf>

⁸⁹³ ICRC, Customary IHL, Rule 157. In the case of those war crimes known as “grave breaches” of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I, states parties must provide for universal jurisdiction in their national legislation.

⁸⁹⁴ Rome Statute of the ICC, preamble; UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 7; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 9. See also Ljubljana-The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and other International Crimes, Article 14.

⁸⁹⁵ Abu Obaida, Telegram post, 12 August 2024, https://t.me/spokesman_2020/119 (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

On 15 August 2024, he stated:

“Following an investigation into the killing of an enemy prisoner by his guard, it became clear that the recruit assigned to guard [the hostage] acted in a vengeful manner after receiving news of the martyrdom of his two children in an enemy massacre.

“We emphasize that the incident does not represent our ethics or the teachings of our religion in dealing with prisoners. We will tighten our instructions after the incident was repeated in two cases so far.”⁸⁹⁶

However, neither the Al-Qassam Brigades nor the political leadership of Hamas has issued any further details about the investigation, the committee that conducted it, the identity and fate of the victims (or their bodies) or dates of the incidents. They have similarly not provided any information on whether any action was taken to remove the guard from its ranks, whether it made any findings in relation to the reported shooting and injuring of two female hostages or whether it gave any instructions to ensure non-repetition of such violence against hostages. Amnesty International did not receive any other information about this reported attack, despite having requested it in its correspondence to Basem Naim, head of Hamas’s Political and International Relations Department, on 20 June 2025.

Separately, Basem Naim, head of Hamas’s Political and International Relations Department, was reported by The New York Times in March 2024 to have said that it was essential for Hamas to investigate an account given to the paper by released hostage Amit Soussana of being subjected to sexual assault while held hostage in Gaza, but that such an inquiry was impossible in the current circumstances.⁸⁹⁷ In the same article, he is reported to have cast doubt on her account, suggesting it was made up by Israeli security forces.

Amnesty International is not aware of investigations into the unlawful killings or mistreatment of any other hostages.⁸⁹⁸ Hamas officials stated in previous offensives on Gaza that investigations into alleged violations of international law were not possible due to the context of armed conflict, but Amnesty International is not aware of any case where the authorities in Gaza carried out any type of investigation once the armed conflict had ended.

Regarding the 7 October 2023 attacks, Hamas leaders recognized in a few instances that they needed to investigate what they referred to as “mistakes”, but indicated that they could not do so in the context of an armed conflict. For example, Basem Naim, head of Hamas’s Political and International Relations Department, wrote in April 2024:

“The first main attack took place largely according to plan, though we do not deny some possible operational errors, which we cannot at this time determine because the exceptional circumstances of the war make it difficult to conduct investigations into operational behavior.

“However, the subsequent stage, in which Gaza residents and armed forces rushed in without coordination with Hamas, led to many mistakes. This operation and everything arising from it require a thorough examination from our side, but it cannot be done at the moment.”⁸⁹⁹

More broadly, in public statements by its leaders and in “Our narrative... Operation Al Aqsa Flood”, Hamas have failed to recognize the scope and severity of the violations of international humanitarian law or crimes under international law that its forces or others committed.⁹⁰⁰

Amnesty International is not aware of the existence of any independent body in Gaza tasked with investigating such violations and holding alleged perpetrators to account. Responding to a letter asking a question in this regard, the head of Hamas’s Political and International Relations Department wrote, in a letter dated 13 November 2024, that, following the end of the conflict, they would look into allegations of any “transgressions” that might have been perpetrated during it and would establish “accountability

⁸⁹⁶ Abu Obaida, Telegram post, 15 August 2024, https://t.me/spokesman_2020/120 (translated from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁸⁹⁷ New York Times, “Israeli hostage says she was sexually assaulted and tortured in Gaza” (previously cited).

⁸⁹⁸ See Chapter 5 “Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians” and Chapter 7 “Physical, sexual and psychological abuse”.

⁸⁹⁹ Basem Naim, letter to Human Rights Watch, 14 April 2024, available at: Human Rights Watch, “*I Can’t Erase All the Blood from My Mind*”: *Palestinian Armed Groups’ October 7 Assault on Israel* (previously cited), p. 242 (translated from the original Arabic into English by Human Rights Watch).

⁹⁰⁰ See Chapter 5 “Unlawful killings and attacks on civilians”, Chapter 6 “Hostage-taking and seizure of bodies” and Chapter 7 “Physical, sexual and psychological violence”.

mechanisms” to address them.⁹⁰¹ However, the Hamas authorities failed to take such measures in the aftermath of previous Israeli offensives.⁹⁰²

In any case, Amnesty International does not accept Hamas’s claims that it could not investigate alleged violations during the armed conflict. Its announcement in August 2024 of an investigation into the killing of a hostage in captivity indicates that it considers itself capable of conducting investigations. It is under an obligation to investigate promptly and delays in investigations lead to evidence being lost and facilitate further violations.

On 12 October 2023, in a meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas expressed his “rejection of practices that involve killing or abusing civilians on both sides” and called for “the release of civilians, prisoners and detainees”.⁹⁰³ On 16 May 2024, Palestinian Abbas criticized Hamas for the 7 October 2023 attacks, saying it gave Israel a pretext to wage war on Gaza.⁹⁰⁴ On 23 April 2025, he called on Hamas to release the remaining hostages, saying that it gave Israel an excuse to destroy Gaza.⁹⁰⁵ While Mahmoud Abbas’s rejection of the killing of civilians, and call on Hamas to release the hostages is important, Amnesty International is not aware of any recognition or condemnation by him or any other senior leader of the State of Palestine of the scope and scale of violations of international humanitarian law or crimes under international law committed by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October 2023 attacks, in the holding and mistreatment of hostages and in the launching of unguided rockets into Israel.

9.2 ISRAELI INVESTIGATIONS

The Israeli authorities have taken steps to investigate the crimes committed by Palestinian assailants during the 7 October 2023 attacks, amid significant challenges. However, gaps in the collection of evidence in the days immediately after 7 October 2023 meant that crucial evidence was lost. As of August 2025, the Israeli authorities were reportedly detaining at least 200 Palestinians accused of crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks or holding hostages, but not charged any of them.

9.2.1 INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTIONS

Three main Israeli bodies have investigated crimes and/or gathered intelligence related to the 7 October 2023 attacks: the Israeli police, specifically Lahav 433, an umbrella crime investigation organization within the Israel Police; the Israel Security Agency (also known as Shin Bet or the General Security Service); and the Israeli military, specifically Unit 504, one of its intelligence units. The police have gathered evidence exclusively for criminal proceedings and have coordinated their interrogations of suspects with the Israel Security Agency. The Israel Security Agency and the Israeli military are mainly focused on collecting intelligence, but evidence gathered by them can also be presented in legal proceedings.⁹⁰⁶

A journalist with access to investigating bodies, interviewed by Amnesty International, said in February 2024 that around 1,000 police personnel were allocated for this investigation.⁹⁰⁷ According to media reports, evidence collected includes a vast collection of video footage and other digital evidence called “Pandora”,

⁹⁰¹ Basem Naim, letter to Amnesty International, 13 November 2024 (on file with Amnesty International).

⁹⁰² See Chapter 3 “Background”.

⁹⁰³ Palestine Liberation Organization, *الرئيس يبحث مع العاهل الأردني سبل وقف العدوان على شعبنا وإيصال المساعدات الإغاثية لأهلنا في قطاع غزة* [“President discusses with Jordanian king ways to stop aggression against our people and deliver relief aid to our people in Gaza Strip”], 12 October 2023, <https://www.plo.ps/ar/Article/60854> (translation from the original Arabic into English by Amnesty International).

⁹⁰⁴ Palestinian Information Center, *حماس تعلق على كلمة عباس أمام قمة البحرين* [“Hamas comments on Abbas’ speech at the Bahrain summit”], 16 May 2024, <https://palinfo.com/news/2024/05/16/889915> (in Arabic). See also Palestine Chronicle, “Israel does not need pretexts’ – Hamas slams PA Abbas’ criticism of October 7”, 17 May 2024, <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/israel-does-not-need-pretexts-hamas-slams-pa-abbas-criticism-of-october-7>.

⁹⁰⁵ AlQahera News, *كلمة الرئيس الفلسطيني خلال الدورة 32 للمجلس المركزي لمنظمة التحرير* [“Speech by the Palestinian President during the 32nd session of the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization”], 23 April 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APo4pFnEVk> (in Arabic). See also France 24, “Abbas urges Hamas to free hostages as Israeli strikes kill at least 36 in Gaza”, 23 April 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20250423-abbas-urges-hamas-to-free-hostages-amid-escalating-strikes-on-gaza>.

⁹⁰⁶ See, for example, Haaretz, “Israel collecting digital evidence for war crimes case against Hamas”, 26 October 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/security-aviation/2023-10-26/ty-article/.premium/israel-collecting-digital-evidence-for-war-crimes-case-against-hamas/0000018b-6ab1-d326-a39b-6eb99b2f0000>; Ynetnews, “Israel Police struggle gathering forensic evidence against Hamas terrorists”, 12 October 2023, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/bygkchqup>; Haaretz, “Israel Police presents new evidence of sexual assault by Hamas terrorists on October 7”, 28 November 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-11-28/ty-article/.premium/israel-police-presents-further-evidence-of-sexual-assault-by-hamas-members-on-october-7/0000018c-169e-dd03-a7ff-bebe1bdb0000>; and SRSg-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 3.

⁹⁰⁷ Interview by voice call with journalist (name withheld), 22 February 2024.

testimonies of survivors, released hostages and first responders, medical data from released hostages, examinations of bodies by the National Center of Forensic Medicine (NCFM) and interrogation reports of Palestinian detainees captured during and after the attacks. More recently, the Israeli media also reported that digital evidence was found on computers in Gaza by Israeli forces during their military offensive.⁹⁰⁸

Police officials who testified in a Knesset committee hearing on 27 November 2023 stated that 1,500 testimonies had already been gathered by that date.⁹⁰⁹ The Israeli government has published selected digital evidence and provided closed viewings of an edited collection of digital evidence to journalists and some researchers, though not to Amnesty International.⁹¹⁰ Some of the videos included in this collection, as reported by individuals who watched it, have been independently collected and analysed by Amnesty International researchers.⁹¹¹ Israeli authorities have also released to the media videos from the interrogations of Palestinian detainees and a few Israeli witness testimonies to the police that focused on sexual violence. These videos of Palestinian detainees are likely to have been filmed under highly coercive conditions, given the record of the Israeli army and security forces of using torture and other ill-treatment against Palestinian detainees.⁹¹²

Some of the survivors and witnesses of the 7 October 2023 attacks, including former hostages, told Amnesty International they had been interviewed by police or the Israel Security Agency.⁹¹³ Therapists and medical staff Amnesty International interviewed also said they were aware of police or security forces seeking to take the accounts from victims and witnesses of crimes during the attacks.⁹¹⁴

However, the Israeli authorities faced numerous challenges in their investigations. Extensive fire damage caused by the attacks and, in some cases, the burning of bodies of people killed, destroyed physical evidence and even DNA material.⁹¹⁵ Fighting continued in some areas for one or two days after 7 October 2023. The area needed to be cleared of explosive devices which were left behind, some of which were tied to victims' bodies, and first responders worked under risk of ambush, ongoing rocket fire alerts and fear of bodies being snatched and taken to Gaza.⁹¹⁶ There were also capacity challenges as the Israeli military and investigating authorities were unprepared and overwhelmed by the scale of the attacks. These challenges led to many gaps in the information and evidence collected and are likely, in many cases, to adversely impact the rights to truth, justice and accountability of victims and their families.

The Israeli military has been conducting internal investigations into its own operations, and has briefed the families and media on a number of its findings since late 2024.⁹¹⁷ A few have concluded that a small number of Israeli civilians were or may have been killed during the 7 October 2023 attacks by Israeli military fire.⁹¹⁸ On 10 November 2025, an independent panel appointed by Eyal Zamir, chief of the general staff of the Israeli military, presented their evaluations of the Israeli military's investigations into the events of 7

⁹⁰⁸ Ynetnews, "Israel to indict 22 Hamas terrorists who participated in October 7 massacre in Nir Oz", 20 April 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/b1lrmwz1xe>

⁹⁰⁹ Israel Hayom, "עדות מ-1,500: יותר מ-1,500 עדויות מעזעזעות שהמום והנפש מתקשים להכיל": דיון מטלטל בוועדה לקידום מעמד האישה, 28 November 2023, <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/news/local/article/14879357> (in Hebrew).

⁹¹⁰ Amnesty International requested to view this footage as part of a broader request sent to the IDF spokesperson by email on 17 July 2024. See Chapter 2 "Scope and methodology" for details.

⁹¹¹ Interview by video call with feminist activist (name withheld), 22 July 2024.

⁹¹² See Amnesty International, "Israel/OPT: Horrifying cases of torture and degrading treatment of Palestinian detainees amid spike in arbitrary arrests", 8 November 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/11/israel-opt-horrifying-cases-of-torture-and-degrading-treatment-of-palestinian-detainees-amid-spike-in-arbitrary-arrests/>; Amnesty International, "Israel must end mass incommunicado detention and torture of Palestinians from Gaza" (previously cited); B'Tselem, *Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps*, August 2024, https://www.btselem.org/publications/202408_welcome_to_hell

⁹¹³ Interview in person with Noam Mark, 26 March 2024, Re'im, Israel; interview in person with Rami Davidian, 7 July 2024, Patish, Israel; interview in person with Liat Atzili, 8 September 2024, southern Israel; interview in person with Amos Alon, 26 May 2024, Be'eri, Israel; interview by video call with Sabine Taasa, 28 October 2024.

⁹¹⁴ Interview by video call with psychiatrist (name withheld), 17 June 2024; interview by video call with therapist (name withheld), 14 August 2024.

⁹¹⁵ The SRSG-SVC found that a "significant proportion" of recovered bodies had suffered destructive burn damage, noting that this made the identification of potential crimes of sexual violence impossible. SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report*, para. 7.

⁹¹⁶ Written communication with Chaim Otmazgin, commander of special units in ZAKA, 8 September 2024; interview by voice call with army reservist (name withheld), 16 September 2024. See also Haaretz, "15 witnesses, three confessions, a pattern of naked dead bodies. All the evidence of Hamas rape on October 7", 18 April 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-04-18/ty-article-magazine/witnesses-confessions-naked-dead-bodies-all-the-evidence-of-hamas-rape-on-oct-7/0000018e-f114-d92e-abfe-f77f7e3f0000> (which notes that the forensic police at the Nova festival site "worked in the dark of night, in an area where hostilities were still underway, with air force helicopters above them firing volleys" and that "the mission was halted in the middle of the night, when the police and the ZAKA teams had to leave in the wake of a security alert); and Yifat Bitton and others, *Challenges in Identifying and Documenting Sexual Crimes Committed During a Terrorist Attack*, October 2024, (which highlights how the chaos caused by Palestinian armed groups undermined the collection of evidence, noting among other factors the fear of body snatching).

⁹¹⁷ For the investigation into the attack on Be'eri, see IDF, 7.10 The Inquiries, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/7-10-the-inquiries> (accessed on 23 April 2025). The inquiries into the attacks on other locations have not been publicly issued, but have been reported on in the media.

⁹¹⁸ See section 5.1 "Ground attacks on civilians".

October 2023, announcing that most were “inadequate”. Eyal Zamir called for a wider “external” commission of inquiry to be established into the failings leading up to and on 7 October 2023.⁹¹⁹

A broad swathe of civil society, survivors of the attacks, families of the victims and hostages, and the broader Israeli public called on the Knesset to establish a state commission of inquiry into the failures by the Israeli authorities that preceded the attacks and to provide a timely response to protect the population of southern Israel.⁹²⁰ They also filed petitions on this matter to the Israeli Supreme Court. On 5 May 2025, Israel's cabinet decided to indefinitely delay establishing a commission of inquiry.⁹²¹ On 10 November 2025, in a debate on this issue in the Knesset, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected demands for a state commission of inquiry.⁹²² On 16 November 2025, he announced the formation of a government committee to look into decision-making surrounding the 7 October 2023 attacks, a move that drew criticism in Israel for departing from the established practice of creating an independent state commission of inquiry in the wake of major governmental failures.⁹²³

The State Comptroller has also investigated a series of related but distinct issues, including the licensing of the Nova festival, the treatment of civilian bodies and the treatment and evacuation of the wounded. It released several reports in February 2025.⁹²⁴

9.2.2 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

LACK OF CRIME SCENE DOCUMENTATION

According to information collected by Amnesty International, very little crime scene documentation was carried out at the locations of the 7 October 2023 attacks. The Minnesota Protocol states that a crime scene should be secured and searched for evidence.⁹²⁵ It also sets out in detail how photographs of human remains should be taken and carefully labelled to reflect a number of factors, including location.⁹²⁶

In at least some locations where people were killed, abducted or subjected to other crimes, there was no crime scene established, even a few days after the start of the attacks, when it was clear the fighting was over.⁹²⁷ One person from a kibbutz with whom Amnesty International spoke said that journalists and others had been able to wander around the damaged homes in the kibbutz in the days after the attacks, potentially contaminating crime scenes and evidence.⁹²⁸

The Israeli military is normally the body responsible for the recovery of bodies after major security incidents. However, it did not exclusively perform this role for the first few days after 7 October 2023 and instead, for

⁹¹⁹ Times of Israel, “External panel appointed by IDF chief finds most of army's Oct. 7 probes inadequate”, 10 November 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/external-panel-appointed-by-idf-chief-finds-most-of-armys-oct-7-probes-inadequate>

⁹²⁰ A vast majority of the Israeli public (90% according to a poll from July 2024) called for some kind of commission of inquiry into the events of 7 October 2023 and a significant majority (67% according to the same poll) called specifically for a state commission of inquiry. Israel Democracy Institute, *רוב הציבור תומך בהקמת ועדת חקירה ממלכתית לחקירת אירועי שבעה באוקטובר* [“The majority of the public supports the establishment of a state commission of inquiry to investigate the events of 7 October”], 26 August 2024, <https://www.idi.org.il/articles/55752>

See also, for example, a petition by the Movement for Quality Government, signed by 115,000 people as of 1 March 2025. Movement for Quality Government, *ועדת חקירה ממלכתית למחדלי השבעה באוקטובר* [“Demand the establishment of a state commission inquiry into the failures of 7 October!”], <https://petition.mqg.org.il/chakira>

⁹²¹ Haaretz, “Israel's cabinet decides not to form Oct. 7 state commission of inquiry amid new Gaza war plan”, 5 May 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-05-05/ty-article/premium/cabinet-decides-not-to-form-oct-7-state-commission-of-inquiry-amid-new-gaza-war-plan/00000196-9feb-df59-abde-ffeb9c40000?ts=1746795187710>

⁹²² Jerusalem Post, “Netanyahu rejects Oct. 7 inquiry process as bereaved families turn their backs”, 10 November 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-873408>

⁹²³ PBS News, “Netanyahu announces government inquiry into Oct. 7 attack, prompting outrage and calls for independent probe”, 17 November 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/netanyahu-announces-government-inquiry-into-oct-7-attack-prompting-outrage-and-calls-for-independent-probe>

⁹²⁴ Israel, State Comptroller, *דוח ביניים מיוחד - שבעה באוקטובר - קהילותיהם ותושביהם שנפגעו באירועי שבעה באוקטובר - דוח ביניים מיוחד* [The Rehabilitation Processes of the Western Negev Settlements, Their Communities and Residents Affected by the October 7 Events: A Special Interim Report], 24 February 2025, <https://library.mevaker.gov.il/sites/DigitalLibrary/Pages/Reports/8352-1.aspx> (in Hebrew); *הטיפול בבריאות הנפש בעקבות אירועי שבעה באוקטובר 2023 ומלחמת חרבות ברזל* [Mental Health Care following the events of 7 October 2023 and the Swords of Iron War], 11 February 2025, <https://library.mevaker.gov.il/sites/DigitalLibrary/Pages/Reports/8242-1.aspx> (in Hebrew); *האסדרה של צוותי החירום היישוביים לפני מלחמת חרבות ברזל והפעלתם בתחילת המלחמה* [The Organization of Local Emergency Teams Before the Swords of Iron War and Their Operation at the Beginning of the War], 11 February 2025, <https://library.mevaker.gov.il/sites/DigitalLibrary/Pages/Reports/8242-4.aspx> (in Hebrew). English abstracts of these reports are available.

Israel, State Comptroller, *The October 7th Terror Attack and the Iron Swords War: Addressing Population Needs*, 11 February 2025, <https://library.mevaker.gov.il/sites/DigitalLibrary/Pages/Reports/8242-5.aspx>

⁹²⁵ Minnesota Protocol, paras 59-66, 172 and 173.

⁹²⁶ Minnesota Protocol, paras 92 and 94-97.

⁹²⁷ Interview in person with Noam Mark, 26 March 2024, Re'im, Israel. A former prosecutor involved in the 7 October 2023 cases was reported stating there were no organized chains of evidence. Ynetnews, “If you were detained on October 7, as far as I'm concerned, you have no right to live”, 10 January 2025, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/s1hdxem81g>

⁹²⁸ Interview in person with Amos Alon, 26 March 2024, Be'eri, Israel.

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

Amnesty International

the first time, allowed ZAKA, a civilian volunteer organization, to collect bodies.⁹²⁹ People involved described to Amnesty International the collection of bodies on and in the few days after 7 October 2023 as a chaotic process, involving heartbreaking work by soldiers who had just finished fighting, assisted by ZAKA and other civilians who mobilized to help.⁹³⁰ These individuals worked under considerable pressure in a dangerous situation, but often not following any particular protocol. ZAKA lacked any professional capacity to collect evidence and was left alone in some areas without any assistance from investigative bodies. In many cases, bodies were moved before crime scene evidence could be collected or bodies could be photographed where they were found. Chaim Otmazgin, commander of special units in ZAKA, told Amnesty International that they were instructed not to wait for military or police investigators before moving bodies because of the length of time it would take to document each body, given the large number of bodies and the limited availability of forensic laboratory teams.⁹³¹

There appears to have been no process to record the exact location of victims who were killed before their bodies were moved or to connect documentation related to bodies to any physical evidence that might have been collected in the same location. Most bodies that were collected were taken first to a location described as just outside Be’eri and then to the Shura military base. A smaller number of bodies were taken to the NCFM.⁹³² A reservist working in the Shura base, involved in recording and identifying bodies, said his team did not know with any precision from where the bodies had been collected. A forensic expert working at the NCFM likewise confirmed that information they received as to where bodies had come from was limited: “at best it was place name and numbers – numbers were randomly assigned to places but did not correspond to maps”.⁹³³ Chaim Otmazgin noted that recording a precise location where each body was found was not possible due to internet and GPS disruption, so each body bag was marked instead with only the general area from which it was collected.⁹³⁴

According to media reports, there was some crime scene investigation work at the Nova festival site and in at least some kibbutzim, even if it was not comprehensive or systematic. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported:

“According to a source who is knowledgeable about the investigation, on the night between October 7 and October 8, six police forensic investigation teams – 12 police officers, all told – worked at the site of the [Nova] party, alongside volunteers of ZAKA Search and Rescue... In the course of their work, which included photographing faces only and covering the victims ahead of their evacuation, more than 200 bodies were documented.”

Haaretz further reported that police forensic teams did not operate in the kibbutzim and the army bases, but parallel work was done by the Israeli military.⁹³⁵ Another Israeli media outlet, Ynetnews, referred in December 2023 to efforts, which at that stage were mostly unsuccessful, by the police to gather fingerprint samples at locations including the Nova festival site.⁹³⁶

Amnesty International recognizes the challenging circumstances in which a large number of bodies had to be collected over a wide area quickly. A reservist working at the Shura military base told the organization:

“The people dealing with it [collecting bodies] didn’t have forensic capabilities. But they were also scared for their lives – 23 villages conquered for those 12 hours. When the security forces regained control, compromises had to be made. Just to be able to get the bodies out sometimes was hard.”⁹³⁷

⁹²⁹ Interview by video call with forensic expert B (name withheld), 6 June and 19 June 2024.

⁹³⁰ Interview by voice call with army reservist who worked at the Shura military base (name withheld), 16 September 2024; written communication with Chaim Otmazgin, commander of special units in ZAKA, 8 September 2024.

⁹³¹ Written communication with Chaim Otmazgin, commander of special units in ZAKA, 8 September 2024 (translation from the original Hebrew into English by Amnesty International).

⁹³² Interview by voice call with army reservist who worked at the Shura military base, 16 September 2024. The Shura military base is normally used for bodies of soldiers who are killed on duty and is under the command of the military rabbinate, while the National Center for Forensic Medicine (NCFM) is responsible for the same function for civilians, operating as part of the Israeli Ministry of Health. However, due to the volume of bodies from the attacks compared to the number that the NCFM could handle, starting a few days after 7 October 2023, the NCFM did not have the capacity to store and examine the bodies of civilians. Subsequently, bodies of both civilians and soldiers were stored in the Shura base, which in turn was divided into separate military and civilian compounds; only bodies that could not be identified there were transferred to the NCFM. Interview by video call with forensic expert A (name withheld), 7 March 2024; interviews by video call with forensic expert B (name withheld), 6 June and 19 June 2024.

⁹³³ Interview by voice call with forensic expert A (name withheld), 7 March 2024.

⁹³⁴ Written communication with Chaim Otmazgin, commander of special units in ZAKA, 8 September 2024.

⁹³⁵ Haaretz, “15 witnesses, three confessions, a pattern of naked dead bodies. All the evidence of Hamas rape on October 7” (previously cited).

⁹³⁶ Ynetnews, “Israel Police struggle gathering forensic evidence against Hamas terrorists” (previously cited).

⁹³⁷ Interview by voice call with army reservist who worked at the Shura base (name withheld), 16 September 2024.

LACK OF FORENSIC EXAMINATION OF BODIES OR COLLECTION OF BALLISTIC EVIDENCE

The UN Principles on Extra-Legal Executions provide that the body of the deceased person “shall not be disposed of until an adequate autopsy is conducted by a physician...”⁹³⁸ However, in many cases, the Israeli authorities did not subject the bodies of those killed during the 7 October 2023 attacks to autopsies or only carried out limited forensic examinations. They focused rather on the identification of the dead and timely burial.

Amnesty International was informed that some stages of the regular protocol at the Shura military base were dropped to respond to the large number of bodies being received.⁹³⁹ Thus, while there were forensic experts and X-ray and CT machines at the Shura base, due to the high number of bodies and limited capacity, not all bodies were given a forensic examination where they would have been required as per normal protocol.⁹⁴⁰ Haaretz reported that forensic pathologists managed to oversee the examination of a quarter of the bodies received at the Shura base at most, while others were buried without having undergone a professional examination.⁹⁴¹

Amnesty International received mixed reports about whether bodies were systematically photographed for their injuries at the Shura base before they were buried, suggesting some were while others were not. One reservist working at the base told the organization that in each case of the body of a civilian he was involved in receiving and identifying, the body bag was opened, photographs and fingerprints were taken, identifying features and a rough description of the injuries, along with any personal items, were noted and all of this information was recorded digitally. He said that a forensic report was always recorded, even if it lacked specific details or a conclusion of the cause of death:

“It would be like, ‘gunshot on right side’. It was done very fast. And if the family wanted to know were they inside the house or outside, in their bed or where else when killed, we couldn’t tell them; we didn’t know that. It’s not in the report. We don’t know who took them from the house or brought them to the staging centre. We would only know what truck they were brought in to Shura.”

The reservist said that the scale of the attacks and the chaos they caused had not only killed people but had “stolen” closure from families. He said that hundreds of people had no idea what happened in their loved ones’ last moments, if they were alone or with someone, or how they died.⁹⁴²

A volunteer doctor, who also worked at the Shura base, told Amnesty International that bodies were given an X-ray or CT scan. However, she said that she and fellow workers were under pressure to identify large numbers of bodies quickly, with the result that, in many instances, they only opened the body bag enough to photograph the face and/or upper body. She described one case where she felt, through the body bag, something that she thought warranted further exploration and opened the body bag to find what she described as injuries to the victim’s pelvic area. Believing this to be an indication of sexual violence, she said she was able to call “a regular photographer who was walking around, taking pictures for identification”, who “photographed the body”. There appeared to be no specific protocol for handling such cases and she said that the body was not swabbed for biological evidence, such as semen, nor subjected to any other professional examination.⁹⁴³

Stephen Brisley, the brother of Lianne Brisley-Sharabi, who was killed with her daughters, Noiya Sharabi, aged 16, and Yahel Sharabi, aged 13, in Be’eri, told Amnesty International that almost no information was documented about how his sister and nieces had been killed.⁹⁴⁴ He said:

“There was no forensic post-mortem examination or even a basic description of the bodies and injuries or anything at all. We [only] saw two photos and a 10-second video of the bodies in situ taken by a kibbutz member, apparently the following day.”⁹⁴⁵

Stephen said that, despite some erroneous media reports from near the time, the bodies were found huddled together, and that there was no information to suggest his sister and nieces were separated from each other during the attack or their bodies desecrated.

⁹³⁸ UN Principles on Extra-Legal Executions, Principle 12. On the importance of autopsies in investigation of unlawful killings, see: Minnesota Protocol, paras 148-157.

⁹³⁹ Interviews by video call with forensic expert B (name withheld), 6 June and 19 June 2024.

⁹⁴⁰ Interview by voice call with army reservist who worked at the Shura military base (name withheld), 16 September 2024.

⁹⁴¹ Haaretz, “15 witnesses, three confessions, a pattern of naked dead bodies” (previously cited).

⁹⁴² Interview by voice call with army reservist who worked at the Shura base (name withheld), 16 September 2024.

⁹⁴³ Interview by voice call with doctor who worked at the Shura military base (name withheld), 7 October 2024.

⁹⁴⁴ See section 5.1.1 “Be’eri” for details of case

⁹⁴⁵ Interview by phone with Stephen Brisley, 7 July 2025.

The NCFM received bodies that could not be identified at the Shura base, mostly burnt and dismembered bodies, and collected evidence by conducting CT scans of all the bodies and body parts, taking photographs and notes.⁹⁴⁶

Amnesty International was consistently told that the focus at both the Shura base and the NCFM in the days following the 7 October 2023 attacks was the identification and burial of bodies. One reservist working at the Shura base described the situation three days after 7 October 2023:

“There were still several thousand people the authorities didn’t have contact with and couldn’t account for. Thus, the goal at that moment was not prosecution, it was to identify people – not just to give their families the closure they desperately needed, but because there was an urgent need to know who was abducted and was in Gaza.”⁹⁴⁷

People working at the Shura base and the NCFM spoke about the desperation of families waiting to know if their loved ones had been killed or taken to Gaza (and may therefore have still been alive), with some families sleeping outside the Shura base for days on end in anticipation of being able to identify their loved ones.⁹⁴⁸

9.2.3 PROSECUTIONS

According to media reports, the Israeli authorities were detaining at least 200 men accused of crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks or holding hostages, as of August 2025.⁹⁴⁹ Most, or all, of them were Gaza residents detained either within the first 48 hours following the 7 October 2023 attacks or during subsequent Israeli military operations in Gaza; according to the Israeli authorities, they are members of Palestinian armed groups.⁹⁵⁰ None had been charged with crimes related to the 7 October 2023 attacks. They were held in dedicated sections of Israel Prison Service facilities, separate from the hundreds of other Palestinians from Gaza detained since 7 October 2023. These others were being held under the Unlawful Combatants Law in military facilities with no apparent plan to charge or prosecute them.⁹⁵¹

A former Israeli prosecutor tasked with the 7 October 2023 cases told media in January 2025 that prosecutors had lacked sufficient human and other resources and expertise to verify visual evidence that had been collected and that she was not aware of any plans to indict Palestinians detained in relation to 7 October 2023 crimes.⁹⁵² Another key challenge was gathering sufficient evidence to connect individuals to specific crimes, an issue exacerbated by the gaps in the crime scene evidence collected in the days and weeks after the 7 October 2023 attacks.⁹⁵³

On 20 April 2025, media reports indicated that the Southern District Prosecutor’s Office had announced that 22 people would be charged for crimes committed during the attack on Nir Oz on 7 October 2023. It said that much of the available evidence came from documents and images seized by Israeli forces during their military operations in Gaza.⁹⁵⁴

On 28 May 2025, the Knesset approved in a preliminary reading the Incarceration and Prosecution of October 7 Participants Bill, 2024.⁹⁵⁵ If passed into law, it would establish a special court to try those accused of offences listed in Israel’s genocide law, allow for indefinite detention of those accused with limited judicial oversight and allow anyone convicted to be sentenced to death. The Israeli media has cited opposition to the

⁹⁴⁶ Interviews by video call with forensic expert B (name withheld), 6 June and 19 June 2024.

⁹⁴⁷ Interview by voice call with army reservist who worked at the Shura military base (name withheld), 16 September 2024.

⁹⁴⁸ Interview by voice call with forensic expert A (name withheld), 7 March 2024; interviews by video call with forensic expert B (name withheld), 6 June and 19 June 2024; interview by voice call with army reservist who worked at the Shura military base (name withheld), 16 September 2024.

⁹⁴⁹ New York Times, “Israel hasn’t prosecuted a single suspect for the Oct. 7 attack”, 13 August 2025,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/13/world/middleeast/israel-oct-7-palestinians-trial.html>; Ynetnews, “Israel to indict 22 Hamas terrorists who participated in October 7 massacre in Nir Oz” (previously cited); Times of Israel, “Report: Israel asks US not to indict Oct. 7 terrorists before it files own charges”, 20 April 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-israel-asked-us-not-to-indict-oct-7-terrorists-before-it-files-own-charges>

⁹⁵⁰ Interviews in person with two individuals with knowledge of the detention and investigation efforts (names withheld), 13 February 2025. Ynetnews, “Israel to indict 22 Hamas terrorists who participated in October 7 massacre in Nir Oz” (previously cited).

⁹⁵¹ Interviews in person with two individuals with knowledge of the detention and investigation efforts (names withheld), 13 February 2025.

⁹⁵² Ynetnews, “If you were detained on October 7, as far as I’m concerned, you have no right to live” (previously cited).

⁹⁵³ Interviews in person with two individuals with knowledge of the detention and investigation efforts (names withheld), 13 February 2025. See also Ynetnews, “If you were detained on October 7, as far as I’m concerned, you have no right to live” (previously cited).

⁹⁵⁴ Ynetnews, “Israel to indict 22 Hamas terrorists who participated in October 7 massacre in Nir Oz” (previously cited); Times of Israel, “Report: Israel asks US not to indict Oct. 7 terrorists before it files own charges” (previously cited).

⁹⁵⁵ Knesset, “Approved in preliminary reading: Regulation of incarceration and prosecution procedures for participants of October 7 massacre; special tribunal to be established for adjudicating genocide offenses”, 3 June 2025, <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press3625q.aspx>

bill from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior government officials, noting it may never become law.⁹⁵⁶

On 11 November 2025, the Knesset approved in a preliminary reading the Penal Bill (Amendment No. 159) (Death Penalty for Terrorists), 2025.⁹⁵⁷ The amendment would make it mandatory for Israeli courts to impose the death penalty against individuals convicted of killing an Israeli “either intentionally or recklessly” if the act is motivated by “racism or hostility towards the public” and “committed with the objective of harming the state of Israel or the rebirth of the Jewish people”, effectively mandating the courts to impose the death penalty exclusively against Palestinians.⁹⁵⁸

Amnesty International is also concerned about reports that Palestinians detained in Israel in connection with crimes committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment,⁹⁵⁹ and that, like other Palestinian detainees in Israel, they have been unable to receive visits from the ICRC.⁹⁶⁰ This would be a serious violation of the rights of those detained and undermine the possibility of a fair trial and ensuring truth, justice and reparation for the victims, survivors and their families. Amnesty International and others have documented elsewhere how hundreds of other Palestinian detainees from Gaza, who are not accused of any specific crime related to the 7 October 2023 attacks or against hostages, are being held without charge or trial under the Unlawful Combatants Law, have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, and are being held incommunicado and subjected to enforced disappearance.⁹⁶¹

9.2.4 INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Feminist groups have raised particular concerns regarding the shortcomings in the investigation and prosecution of gender-based violence crimes at all stages of the process.

The Israel Women’s Network and Women and War Collective noted:

“The government’s appropriation of CRSV [conflict-related sexual violence] crimes in service of national advocacy aims diverted resources from efforts to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators and secure the return of the hostages”.⁹⁶²

Some of the concerns the Israel Women’s Network and the Women and War Collective raised related to the lack of evidence collected on sexual violence in the days and weeks after the 7 October 2023 attacks.⁹⁶³ They noted:

“An absence of government directives on addressing CRSV [conflict-related sexual violence] led to limited awareness and capacity of law enforcement agencies and search and rescue forces to handle sites of CRSV, resulting in improper treatment of bodies, management of survivors’ hospital care, and evidence collection. Security and first-responder teams were unprepared for handling sites of CRSV, leading to the loss of forensic

⁹⁵⁶ Haaretz, “How Israel is planning to bring Hamas terrorists to justice, and why it’s so alarming”, 29 May 2025, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-05-29/ty-article/.premium/how-israel-is-planning-to-bring-hamas-terrorists-to-justice-and-why-its-so-alarming/00000197-1ca7-d57f-a7d7-3ee723b10000>

⁹⁵⁷ Knesset, “Approved in first reading: Death penalty for terrorists”, 11 November 2025, <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/Pages/press111125q.aspx>

⁹⁵⁸ Amnesty International, “Israel must immediately halt legislation of discriminatory death penalty bill”, 11 November 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/11/israel-must-immediately-halt-legislation-of-discriminatory-death-penalty-bill>

⁹⁵⁹ Lawyers from the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), an Israeli NGO, obtained information during visits by its lawyers to some of the Palestinians detained in connection with crimes committed on 7 October 2023 that they had been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment in Israeli detention. Written communication with Tal Steiner, director of PCATI, 24 April 2025.

⁹⁶⁰ Association for Civil Rights in Israel, “Repeal the ban on Red Cross visits to Palestinian prisoners”, 25 August 2024, <https://www.english.acri.org.il/post/repeal-the-ban-on-red-cross-visits-to-palestinian-prisoners>

The ban had not been lifted as of 4 December 2025.

⁹⁶¹ For an overview of Israeli treatment of Palestinians held in administration detention since 7 October 2023, see Amnesty International, ‘You Feel Like You Are Subhuman’: Israel’s Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza (previously cited); Amnesty International, “Israel must end mass incommunicado detention and torture of Palestinians from Gaza” (previously cited); and B’Tselem, *Welcome to Hell: The Israeli Prison System as a Network of Torture Camps* (previously cited).

⁹⁶² Israel Women’s Network and Women and War Collective, *Analysis of the Israeli Government’s Preparedness and Response to Acts of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in the Hamas Attack of October 7, 2023 and Policy Recommendations*, December 2024, https://iwn.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/04_ENG_report_CRSV_B.pdf, p. 7.

⁹⁶³ Israel Women’s Network and Women and War Collective, *Analysis of the Israeli Government’s Preparedness and Response to Acts of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in the Hamas Attack of October 7, 2023 and Policy Recommendations* (previously cited).

and digital evidence that might have facilitated fact-finding and other efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice.”⁹⁶⁴

Another group of prominent feminist researchers, led by legal academic and activist Yifat Bitton, in a report issued in October 2024, likewise noted the lack of training or guidance given to first responders in identifying and responding to signs of sexual violence in bodies.⁹⁶⁵ They found that this led to inadequate documentation, making it difficult for investigative teams to analyse field materials later. They also found that strict adherence to standard protocols sometimes impeded proper documentation, noting:

“For instance, a high-ranking Scan Unit commander [from one of the Israeli military’s search, scan and rescue units] reported following standard procedure by immediately covering a naked female victim rather than photographing potential evidence.”⁹⁶⁶

They also raised concerns about an apparent decision within the police, a month after the attack, to centralize the investigation of sex crimes in the hands of Unit 105, instead of assigning the investigation to a team skilled in sexual violence or assembling a team to respond to the unprecedented situation.⁹⁶⁷ Unit 105 is a unit within Lahav 433 dedicated to combating crimes against minors in the online sphere.⁹⁶⁸ They said that Unit 105 did not issue a formal call within first responder organizations to come forward and testify, and that many of the first responders they had interviewed with potentially relevant information “told us that they did not testify, or that they testified to other police units, or that they testified only after a long time had passed since the terrorist attack.”⁹⁶⁹

In conclusion, while acknowledging the challenges faced by the Israeli authorities in collecting forensic evidence following the 7 October 2023 attacks, Amnesty International considers that, if such evidence had been systematically collected, it might have significantly advanced an understanding of what sexual violence was committed on 7 October 2023.

9.3 INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS

International mechanisms have documented and investigated crimes committed by Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages. They have made extensive findings and, in the case of the ICC, issued an arrest warrant, but have experienced numerous challenges. International mechanisms with an investigation mandate have faced obstacles imposed by the Israeli authorities. The ICC Prosecutor announced in May 2024 that he was seeking arrest warrants against three Hamas leaders, each of whom subsequently was killed by Israel.

9.3.1 UN MECHANISMS

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel (UN Commission of Inquiry) was established by the UN Human Rights Council on 28 May 2021. It has a mandate to investigate violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed in the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, to identify, where possible, those responsible and to make recommendations to promote accountability.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁴ Israel Women’s Network and Women and War Collective, *Analysis of the Israeli Government’s Preparedness and Response to Acts of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in the Hamas Attack of October 7, 2023 and Policy Recommendations* (previously cited), p. 5. See also p. 11 of the same report: “the state authorities in Israel failed to respond with the necessary speed and professional expertise in this complex and sensitive field in order to investigate, collect evidence, and effectively document the acts of CRSV.”

⁹⁶⁵ Yifat Bitton and others, *Challenges in Identifying and Documenting Sexual Crimes Committed During a Terrorist Attack* (previously cited), pp. 13 and 48.

⁹⁶⁶ Yifat Bitton and others, *Challenges in Identifying and Documenting Sexual Crimes Committed During a Terrorist Attack* (previously cited), p. 48.

⁹⁶⁷ Yifat Bitton and others, *Challenges in Identifying and Documenting Sexual Crimes Committed During a Terrorist Attack* (previously cited), p. 40.

⁹⁶⁸ Israel, Child Online Protection Bureau, Police Unit 105, https://www.gov.il/en/departments/units/operational_unit (accessed 23 April 2025).

⁹⁶⁹ Yifat Bitton and others, *Challenges in Identifying and Documenting Sexual Crimes Committed During a Terrorist Attack* (previously cited), p. 40.

⁹⁷⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Resolution S-30/1: *Ensuring Respect for International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and in Israel*, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/S-30/1, paras 1 and 2.

Israeli authorities have obstructed the work of the UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate not only Israel's actions but also those of Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October 2023 attacks and against hostages. It described these obstacles in a June 2024 report:

“Israeli officials not only refused to cooperate with the Commission’s investigation but also reportedly barred medical professionals and others from being in contact with the Commission after it approached medical professionals in Israel in December 2023. The Commission was not able to visit the sites of the violations as the Israeli Government has prevented it accessing Israel.”⁹⁷¹

Despite this, the UN Commission of Inquiry has made public its findings on violations and crimes under international law by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. In a report issued in June 2024 on the 7 October 2023 attacks, it found that “members of the Hamas military wing and the military wings of other Palestinian armed groups and Palestinian civilians had committed war crimes, as well as violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.”⁹⁷² These included “intentionally directing attacks against civilians and murder or wilful killing... the war crimes of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and of destroying or seizing the property of an adversary”,⁹⁷³ the “desecration of corpses by burning, mutilation and decapitation [which] constituted the war crime of outrages upon personal dignity”,⁹⁷⁴ and “the war crime of taking hostages... in most cases, together with outrages of personal dignity and inhuman treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence, such as assault, harassment and intimidation against women abducted in Israel and taken to Gaza.”⁹⁷⁵ It “also found that acts of sexual violence had been committed on 7 October in Israel, including at the Nova festival, on route 232, at the Nahal Oz military base and at the kibbutzim of Kfar Azza, Nir Oz and Re’im”⁹⁷⁶ and “that members of the military wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad had violated the principle of distinction when they attacked, killed and injured the civilian population and intentionally launched rockets and mortars from Gaza into Israel.”⁹⁷⁷ Finally, it found that “Israeli security forces had violated the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution when they fired shells at a house where Israeli civilian hostages were being held in Be’eri and directed helicopter fire at a civilian hostage from Nir Oz.”⁹⁷⁸ It noted how the lack of access or cooperation by Israeli authorities challenged or limited its ability to make findings on acts committed by Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October 2023 attacks, including sexual violence.⁹⁷⁹

In a September 2024 report on the treatment of hostages in captivity, the UN Commission of Inquiry found:

“Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups committed the war crimes of torture, inhuman or cruel treatment, rape and sexual violence and have violated the customary international humanitarian law prohibition on enforced disappearance. Inflicting mental suffering on the families of victims constitutes torture... Crimes against humanity, including torture, enforced disappearance and other inhumane acts, were committed against hostages by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.”⁹⁸⁰

The Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict issued a report in March 2024 following a visit to Israel and the occupied West Bank from 29 January to 14 February.⁹⁸¹ The report clarified that the visit did not have an investigation mandate:

“The mandate of the SRSVC [Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict] encompasses the gathering, analysis, and verification of existing, as well as independently received information on incidents and patterns of conflict-related sexual violence. The mission was not intended

⁹⁷¹ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, paras 8-9. See also Ambassador Gilad Erdan, X post, “The antisemitic Commission of Inquiry, established by the morally distorted Human Rights Council which recently appointed Iran as Chair of the Council’s Social Forum, is 100% biased against Israel.”, 30 November 2023, <https://x.com/giladerdan1/status/1730284375105819003?s=46&t=-c10mps22o0Q4HkH3ayKDg>; and Times of Israel, “Israel forbids doctors from speaking to UN group investigating Oct. 7 atrocities”, 16 January 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/government-forbids-doctors-from-speaking-to-un-group-investigating-oct-7-atrocities>

⁹⁷² UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 73.

⁹⁷³ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 74.

⁹⁷⁴ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 75.

⁹⁷⁵ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 76.

⁹⁷⁶ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 77.

⁹⁷⁷ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 78.

⁹⁷⁸ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 14 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/26, para. 79.

⁹⁷⁹ UN Commission of Inquiry, *Detailed Findings on Attacks Carried Out on and After 7 October 2023 in Israel*, 10 June 2024, UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.3, paras 8 and 138.

⁹⁸⁰ UN Commission of Inquiry, Report, 11 September 2024, UN Doc. A/79/232, para. 112.

⁹⁸¹ SRSVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited).

to be, and is not a substitute for, an investigation by relevant United Nations entities mandated for that purpose, nor is it a replacement for criminal investigations and proceedings subject to due process of law.”⁹⁸²

The Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict found that “conflict-related sexual violence occurred during the 7 October attacks in multiple locations across Gaza periphery, including rape and gang rape, in at least three locations”.⁹⁸³ It noted that the “mission was neither intended to, and nor could the mission team, in such a short period of time, establish the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence during and after the 7 October attacks. The overall magnitude, scope, and specific attribution of these violations would require a comprehensive investigation by competent bodies.”⁹⁸⁴ It raised concerns about the lack of access and cooperation granted by the Israeli authorities to the UN Commission of Inquiry and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and urged them to grant these bodies access.⁹⁸⁵

9.3.2 INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MECHANISMS

The crimes committed in this report are also covered by the ongoing Investigation into the Situation in the State of Palestine led by the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC.

The ICC has jurisdiction over crimes committed by Palestinian nationals in Israel during the 7 October 2023 attacks and crimes committed against hostages in Gaza. In January 2015, the State of Palestine became a party to the Rome Statute and accepted the jurisdiction of the ICC over alleged crimes committed “in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since 13 June 2014”.⁹⁸⁶ In May 2018, the State of Palestine referred to the ICC Prosecutor the situation since 13 June 2014, with no end date.⁹⁸⁷ In February 2021, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber ruled that the ICC’s territorial jurisdiction extends to the “Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.”⁹⁸⁸ This includes crimes that Palestinian nationals from Gaza committed in Israel during the 7 October 2023 attacks.⁹⁸⁹

The following month, the Prosecutor of the OPT announced the opening of an investigation into the situation in the State of Palestine.⁹⁹⁰ After October 2023, other states, including Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chile, the Comoros, Djibouti, Mexico and South Africa, also referred the situation in the State of Palestine to the Office of the Prosecutor, who confirmed that an investigation was ongoing and included the escalation of violence and hostilities since 7 October 2023.⁹⁹¹

Israel, which has otherwise consistently limited cooperation with the ICC, allowed ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan to visit Israel and certain locations in the occupied West Bank in December 2023, the first time an ICC prosecutor had done so.⁹⁹² He visited the kibbutzim of Be’eri and Kfar Azza, as well as the Nova festival site, and met families of the victims of the attacks on these locations. In February 2025, a bill was approved on preliminary reading in the Knesset, which would prohibit public authorities and bodies, as well as Israeli citizens and residents, from cooperating with the ICC and oblige them to report any request from the ICC.⁹⁹³ The bill would impose restrictions on persons operating on behalf of the court or assisting it in any way, such as on entering, staying or possessing properties in Israel, and establish a criminal offence bearing a five-year prison sentence for delivering information to the court.

⁹⁸² SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 25.

⁹⁸³ SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 12. See Chapter 7 “Physical, sexual and psychological abuse” for details.

⁹⁸⁴ SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), para. 19.

⁹⁸⁵ SRSG-SVC, *Mission Report* (previously cited), paras 21 and 88.

⁹⁸⁶ UN Secretary-General, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: State of Palestine – Accession, 6 January 2015, UN Doc. C.N.13.2015.TREATIES-XVIII.10 (Depositary Notification).

⁹⁸⁷ ICC, Situation in the State of Palestine, Case ICC-01/18, Background, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine>

⁹⁸⁸ ICC, Situation in the State of Palestine, Case ICC-01/18, Pre-Trial Chamber, Decision on the Prosecution Request Pursuant to Article 19(3) for a Ruling on the Court’s Territorial Jurisdiction in Palestine, 5 February 2021, para. 118.

⁹⁸⁹ Rome Statute, Article 12(2)(b). See also Smadar Ben-Natan and Itamar Mann, “Justice for trans-border torture requires rethinking the International Criminal Court’s jurisdiction in the Israel-Palestine conflict”, 7 August 2024, <https://www.justsecurity.org/98501/israel-trans-border-torture>

⁹⁹⁰ ICC, Situation in the State of Palestine, Case ICC-01/18, Investigation, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine>

⁹⁹¹ ICC, “Situation in the State of Palestine: Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim A.A. Khan KC, on the Situation in the State of Palestine: receipt of a referral from five States Parties”, 17 November 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-prosecutor-international-criminal-court-karim-aa-khan-kc-situation-state-palestine>

⁹⁹² ICC, “ICC Prosecutor, Karim A. A. Khan KC, concludes first visit to Israel and State of Palestine by an ICC Prosecutor: ‘We must show that the law is there, on the front lines, and that it is capable of protecting all.’”, 3 December 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/icc-prosecutor-karim-khan-kc-concludes-first-visit-israel-and-state-palestine-icc-prosecutor>

⁹⁹³ Knesset news, “Approved in preliminary reading: Prohibition on public authorities and bodies, Israeli citizens and residents, to cooperate with the International Criminal Court in The Hague”, 19 February 2025, <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/news/pressreleases/pages/press19225c.aspx>

In May 2024, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC applied to the Pre-Trial Chamber for arrest warrants for Ismail Haniyeh, then head of Hamas's Political Bureau, Mohammed Deif, then head of the Al-Qassam Brigades, and Yahya Sinwar, then head of Hamas in Gaza, over their alleged responsibility for the following war crimes and crimes against humanity committed from 7 October 2023 onwards: extermination, murder, hostage-taking, rape and other sexual violence, torture, other inhumane acts, cruel treatment and outrages upon personal dignity.⁹⁹⁴

Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar were reportedly killed by Israel in July and October 2024, respectively. Following confirmation of their deaths, the Chamber granted the withdrawal of the applications for arrest warrants against them. On 21 November 2024, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber issued an arrest warrant for Mohammed Deif.⁹⁹⁵ At that point, it was unknown if he was alive or dead. The Israeli authorities had announced at the start of August 2024 that they had killed him the previous month, but Hamas denied this claim; in January 2025, Hamas confirmed his death.⁹⁹⁶ In February 2025, in light of confirmation that Mohammed Deif had also been killed, the Chamber terminated proceedings against him.⁹⁹⁷

The same Chamber also issued warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, for charges including the war crimes of starvation as a method of warfare and intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution and other inhumane acts.⁹⁹⁸

⁹⁹⁴ ICC, "Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC: Applications for Arrest Warrants in the Situation in the State of Palestine" (previously cited).

⁹⁹⁵ ICC, "Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I issues warrant of arrest for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (Deif)" (previously cited). The ICC Pre-Trial Chamber also issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023.

⁹⁹⁶ See, for example, BBC, "Hamas confirms death of military chief Deif", 30 January 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g9p33xd2go>

⁹⁹⁷ ICC, Situation in the State of Palestine: Decision terminating proceedings against Mr Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (Deif), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/court-record/icc-01/18-417>

⁹⁹⁸ ICC, "Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I rejects the State of Israel's challenges to jurisdiction and issues warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant" (previously cited).

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 CONCLUSION

Through its research findings and legal analysis, Amnesty International has concluded that Palestinian armed groups committed violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity during their attacks in southern Israel that started on 7 October 2023 and continued to commit violations and crimes under international law in their holding and mistreatment of hostages and the withholding of bodies seized. It considers that Hamas, including its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, was chiefly responsible for these violations and crimes. Other Palestinian armed groups, notably Palestinian Islamic Jihad, including its military wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, formerly the military wing of the Fatah political movement, were responsible to a lesser extent, as were unaffiliated Palestinian civilians from Gaza in some instances.

10.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these conclusions, Amnesty International makes a number of recommendations aimed at securing justice and reparation for victims and survivors of crimes committed. Most of them are directed to Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups, to the authorities of the State of Palestine and to those with influence over them. Some are directed to Israel.

Amnesty International has presented its recommendations in relation to the genocide and other crimes under international law committed by Israel in Gaza, specifically, and in Israel and the OPT, more generally, in other publications.⁹⁹⁹

Amnesty International hopes that the findings of this report, along with those of its other publications, will contribute to ending a long cycle of impunity for crimes under international law in Israel and the OPT.

10.2.1 HAMAS AND OTHER PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS

Amnesty International calls on Hamas, including its military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, and all other Palestinian armed groups involved in the attacks of 7 October 2023 and the holding of hostages to do the following:

- Unconditionally return the body of Ran Gvili, seized from Israel on 7 October 2023, as soon as it is located. Seek international assistance if needed to locate it.
- End the use of unguided rockets and ensure that imprecise weapons such as mortars are never used to attack objectives in the vicinity of civilians and civilian objects.

⁹⁹⁹ See, for example, Amnesty International, *'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza* (previously cited).

- Investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law, committed by their forces during the 7 October 2023 attacks and since, including with respect to hostages. Identify and remove from their ranks anyone suspected of involvement in such violations and crimes. Identify and take steps to ensure non-repetition of these violations and crimes.
- Provide regular public updates about steps taken to investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law, committed on and since 7 October 2023.
- Publicly acknowledge and denounce the serious violations of international humanitarian law, including crimes under international law, committed and commit to non-repetition of such violations.
- Engage with and cooperate fully with all international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms investigating or monitoring violations of international law in Israel and the OPT, including the ICC, the UN Commission of Inquiry, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory Occupied Since 1967.
- Engage with and cooperate fully with human rights NGOs and monitors.

In addition, Amnesty International calls on Hamas, as the de facto authority in Gaza, to:

- Ensure that all those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and crimes under international law committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks and since then, including with respect to hostages, are brought to justice in fair proceedings conducted by an independent and impartial judicial mechanism.
- Share all evidence it has collected that is relevant to the investigation of such violations with all international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms investigating or monitoring violations of international law in Israel and the OPT, for the purpose of pursuing accountability and redress.

10.2.2 AUTHORITIES OF STATE OF PALESTINE

Amnesty International calls on the authorities of the State of Palestine to do the following:

- Publicly acknowledge and denounce the serious violations of international law, including crimes under international law, by Palestinian armed groups and the urgent need to redress these violations and crimes and bring suspected perpetrators to justice.
- Conduct independent, impartial and effective criminal investigations into alleged crimes under international law committed by persons under the jurisdiction of the State of Palestine, including crimes documented by international entities with an investigation or monitoring mandate or expertise, including the crimes documented by Amnesty International and set out in this report. The investigations should cover members of Palestinian armed groups at all levels and any civilians where there is credible information that they committed a crime under international law. Ensure investigations are credible and human rights compliant. Where there is sufficient admissible evidence, ensure those suspected of responsibility are prosecuted in fair proceedings that preclude the death penalty.
- Make the results of any investigation public, with any identifying details of victims redacted. Share any redacted information with international monitors, to enable them to share information, where appropriate, with the victims or family members of victims of these crimes, so they can find out the truth about how their loved ones died.
- Engage with and cooperate fully with all international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms investigating or monitoring violations of international law in Israel and the OPT, including the ICC, the UN Commission of Inquiry, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory Occupied Since 1967. Share with these international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms all evidence they have collected that is relevant to the investigation of such violations, including those committed by Palestinian armed groups, for the purpose of pursuing accountability and redress.
- Ensure the implementation of any further arrest warrants from the ICC, should they be forthcoming, in relation to anyone under the jurisdiction of the State of Palestine.

- Engage with and cooperate fully with human rights NGOs and monitors.

10.2.3 INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

While recognizing that the main focus of the Independent Commission for Human Rights, the Palestinian national human rights institution, is ensuring that the laws and institutions of the State of Palestine safeguard human rights, Amnesty International calls on it to do the following:

- Publicly acknowledge and investigate the violations of international humanitarian law and the crimes under international law committed by Palestinian armed groups on and since 7 October 2023. Call publicly for an end to violations and crimes by Palestinian armed groups and for justice and accountability for them.
- Encourage and monitor any efforts to bring suspected perpetrators of crimes under international law to justice, in human rights-compliant investigations and trials.

10.2.4 ISRAELI AUTHORITIES

Amnesty International calls on the Israeli authorities to do the following:

- End violations of international law against Palestinians in the OPT and Palestinian citizens of Israel and take concrete steps towards ensuring justice and accountability for violations and crimes committed by Israeli forces, including genocide and apartheid.
- Establish a state commission of inquiry into the 7 October 2023 attacks and the response to them. The state commission of inquiry should be fully independent and impartial, headed by an Israeli Supreme Court judge and have the necessary resources, expertise and powers to conduct a comprehensive investigation and to compel testimony, including from members of the government and security and military officials. It should have a mandate to report publicly, redacting information only when strictly necessary to protect the privacy, security and wishes of victims, survivors and victims' families, and to make recommendations. It should document what happened in the attacks, including violations of international law, as well as scrutinize Israel's offensive on Gaza.
- Ensure all investigations by the Israeli military into its role during the 7 October 2023 attacks are completed, shared with those affected and, unless there is a legitimate reason otherwise, such as respecting the privacy or wishes of survivors or victims' families, made public in full. Where evidence gathered is sufficient, or demonstrates that further investigation or prosecution may be required to determine individual responsibility, this should be effectively, independently and impartially carried out by civilian authorities.
- Ensure that all investigations into abuses committed during the 7 October 2023 attacks, particularly sexual and gender-based violence, are conducted in a manner that is survivor-centred, fully informed by best practices, respects victims' and their families' autonomy and privacy, and connects survivors with comprehensive support services and assistance.
- Engage with, cooperate fully with and provide access to all international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms investigating or monitoring violations of international law in Israel and the OPT, including the ICC, the UN Commission of Inquiry, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory Occupied Since 1967. Share with these international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms all evidence they have collected that is relevant to the investigation of such violations, including those committed by Palestinian armed groups, for the purpose of pursuing accountability and redress.
- Engage with, cooperate fully with and provide access to human rights NGOs and monitors.
- Proactively ensure survivors and families of victims from marginalized communities in Israel are given appropriate support. This should include cancelling any demolition orders affecting Bedouin citizens of Israel who were affected by attacks by Palestinian armed groups on and since 7 October 2023 and equipping these communities with adequate security infrastructure.
- Continue criminal investigations into the 7 October 2023 attacks, hostage-taking and seizure and holding of bodies, but only after ensuring they are compliant with international human rights law

standards. Where there is sufficient admissible evidence, bring those reasonably suspected of responsibility for crimes under international law to justice. The accused should be tried in civilian courts, in open proceedings that respect international human rights law and do not apply the death penalty.

- Consult with survivors and victims' families to identify other priorities for justice and accountability.
- Treat all Palestinians detained on suspicion of participating in the 7 October 2023 attacks in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law, including by ending enforced disappearances and incommunicado detention, and refraining from any form of ill-treatment during interrogation, such as the filming of coerced statements; providing families with up-to-date information on their loved ones' locations while in custody; granting access to the ICRC; allowing the detainees to communicate directly with their families and lawyers; and granting them all fair trial and due process guarantees.
- Immediately return in a dignified manner the bodies of Palestinian fighters and civilians killed during the 7 October 2023 attacks, as well as the hundreds of bodies of Palestinians, including some who died of torture and other ill-treatment in Israeli prisons, who have been held by Israel as bargaining chips. Pending their release, ensure the bodies are identified if possible.
- To ensure better preparedness and accountability for any future mass casualty event, ensure comprehensive steps are put in place to ensure that first responders and other stakeholders are better placed to document crimes under international law. Work with Israeli feminist organizations to ensure better preparedness, coordination and training of first responders to ensure documentation of sexual violence. Ensure that all security and investigative agencies currently have established protocols for identifying and documenting sexual violence crimes.

10.2.5 UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Amnesty International calls on the UN Security Council to do the following:

- Ensure all relevant Security Council resolutions and statements include a call for full and unhindered access to Israel and the OPT for all international justice institutions and UN human rights mechanisms investigating or monitoring violations of international law in Israel and the OPT, including the ICC, the UN Commission of Inquiry and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as human rights NGOs.
- Impose a comprehensive arms embargo on Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups operating in Gaza. The embargo should cover the direct and indirect supply, sale or transfer, including transit and trans-shipment, of all weapons, munitions and other military and security equipment, including the provision of training and other military and security assistance. (Amnesty International has also called for such an embargo on Israel.)
- Impose targeted sanctions, such as asset freezes, against officials from Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups who are most implicated in crimes under international law during or after 7 October 2023. (Amnesty International has also called for such targeted sanctions on Israeli officials.)

10.2.6 OFFICE OF PROSECUTOR OF ICC

While recognizing that the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC must conduct credible, professional and independent criminal investigations, Amnesty International calls on it to do the following:

- Continue to investigate crimes committed by Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October 2023 attacks and since, with a view to ensuring that individuals, including – where they are still alive – those most responsible, are brought to justice.
- Pursuant to the Rome Statute's provisions, urgently ensure that protection for victims and witnesses is given. Notwithstanding such obligations in the Rome Statute, in keeping with the importance the Office of the Prosecutor attaches to local civil society to effectively carry out its mandate, ensure as much as possible that those pursuing justice in Israel and the OPT are not harmed or targeted for doing so. This should include condemnation of attacks on NGOs and clear assurances that those who target human rights defenders and organizations integral to the ICC's work will be held accountable by the Office of the Prosecutor.

- Undertake urgent and effective outreach to affected communities and conduct public information activities concerning the Office of the Prosecutor's ongoing investigation into the situation in the State of Palestine.

10.2.7 THIRD STATES

Amnesty International calls on all states to do the following:

- Pursue fair and effective justice and individual criminal accountability for any alleged crimes under international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, perpetrated in Israel and OPT on and since 7 October 2023 by exercising domestic, universal or other forms of extraterritorial criminal jurisdiction.
- Undertake a national-level structural investigation – a broad investigation focused on structures related to potential international crimes and all potential perpetrators – into all crimes under international law committed in Israel and the OPT. A structural investigation should include gathering and collecting evidence, including witness testimony, from persons who may be on a state's territory. Victims of crimes under international law within a state's jurisdiction must be able to provide their evidence to domestic authorities.
- Firmly oppose any efforts to undermine the ICC and other institutions that are investigating crimes under international law in Israel and the OPT, including firmly and unequivocally opposing threats and attacks on the ICC, its staff, and those engaging with and supporting the ICC's operations. In light of the US administration's sanctions on the ICC, enacted on 6 February 2025, firmly oppose the imposition of such sanctions, which severely hinder the ICC's work in investigating and prosecuting all those suspected of committing crimes under international law in the State of Palestine situation, including Palestinian armed groups.
- Proactively and promptly cooperate with other states and international justice mechanisms undertaking investigations and prosecutions into alleged crimes under international law committed in Israel and the OPT, including the ICC. ICC member states should also, in particular, consider requesting cooperation and assistance from the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC pursuant to Article 93(10) of the Rome Statute to meet their international obligations to investigate and prosecute crimes under the Rome Statute.
- Ensure that domestic legal and institutional frameworks enable the effective investigation and prosecution of suspected perpetrators of all crimes under international law.

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.
WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS
TO ONE PERSON, IT
MATTERS TO US ALL.**

CONTACT US



contactus@amnesty.org



+44 (0)20 7413 5500

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



www.facebook.com/amnesty



@Amnesty

TARGETING CIVILIANS

MURDER, HOSTAGE-TAKING AND OTHER VIOLATIONS BY PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

On 7 October 2023, southern Israel was the scene of devastating attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups that has left lasting scars. Based on extensive video, testimonial and other evidence, Amnesty International has documented abuses by Palestinian assailants during the attacks and the treatment of those seized and held captive in the occupied Gaza Strip.

Hamas has claimed that its forces were not involved in the targeted killing, abduction or mistreatment of civilians during the attacks and that many civilians were killed by Israeli fire. However, Amnesty International has concluded that the vast majority of civilians who died were killed by Palestinian fighters and that all held in Gaza were unlawfully detained as hostages. It presents evidence that some of those captured were subjected to physical and sexual violence and others were killed by their captors.

The organization has determined that many of these violations constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder and torture. It highlights obstacles to accountability for these crimes and the need for redress for survivors and families of victims. It also provides the context of Israel's crimes against Palestinians, including genocide in Gaza and apartheid, and Hamas's violations against Palestinians.