

Next Monday will mark 100 days since October 7. That's 100 days since over 240 innocent people were taken hostage by a genocidal terrorist organization. More than half of these people, including the bodies of some who have been murdered, remain in captivity under the streets of Gaza, deep in the Hamas-built cement terror tunnels constructed using siphoned international aid meant for the people of Gaza.

We must never forget the plight of these hostages. We must work to bring them home now.

For those hostages who have been released, used by Hamas as mere tools to exchange for Palestinian prisoners with blood on their hands, they are still suffering from the trauma that was inflicted upon them as they watched their family and friends get tortured and murdered in front of them before being dragged into Gaza, where many of them were physically attacked by Gazan civilians. Many also suffered from unspeakable and repeated sexual violence.

One of the hostages who was released was Ofir Engel, who turned 18 years old as a hostage in Gaza. Engel, a dual Dutch-Israeli citizen from Jerusalem's Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, was visiting his girlfriend Yuval in Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7 when Hamas launched its attack. When the rockets started flying, the family moved into their safe room. Then, Hamas gunmen broke into the safe room and took everyone out. They told the women to sit on the grass and then shot their family dog. While the women survived the attack, the men, Yuval's father, Yossi, and Ofir, were taken with another Kibbutz Be'eri teen, Amit Shani, into a small black car and driven into Gaza.

On Saturday evening, Ofir spoke in Tel Aviv about the horrors of captivity. He said the most difficult part about being held hostage was the emotional manipulation, being told by their captors that their families didn't care about them. He recalled, "Every day, you break down a little more." In Gaza, Engel believed his girlfriend and family had also been taken captive. It was only when he was released that he found out they had survived and were safe, and began crying in the minibus transporting him back to Israel. Unfortunately, his girlfriend's father and brother, Yossi and Eli Sharabi, are still held hostage. On Saturday evening, Ofir said, "I want them to come back alive, and not in coffins." We must do everything we can to ensure that this can happen.

Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo ordered 100 engraved stainless steel bracelets, each one with the name of a different Israeli hostage, many of whom are still in captivity and some of whom have been freed and still need our support. These bracelets are being sold for \$20 and all proceeds will go to Jewish Federation of North America's Israel Relief Fund. Please call, message, or email the Jewish Federation to request a bracelet. They are available for pickup in the Sekach building.

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