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If you've been following the free press and honestly over the past 10 days, you'll have noticed something, and that's that we've been covering the war in Israel pretty much nonstop. We've published dozens of articles, we've posted three podcasts on it, we've produced dozens of social videos, and we've even sent a reporter on the ground in Israel.

We have never produced this much content in this short a time on any subject, let alone on a single subject. Some of you might be thinking, why? Why are you spending so much time on a war so far away?

And I want to explain to you why.

On October 7th, we saw the single biggest massacre of the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

But unlike the Holocaust, in which the Germans tried to hide their war crimes, remember it took the Allies years to uncover all that the Nazis did. Here we have the terrorists streaming it all in real time on every social media platform across the internet.

A young Israeli woman named Moore learned that her grandmother had been slaughtered because a terrorist took her grandmother's cell phone, filmed her murder, and then uploaded the video to the grandmother's own Facebook page to ensure that her family would see it. That is one of hundreds,

if not thousands, of videos like it, paraded with glee across the internet.

I gotta tell you, a good friend of mine, her son was missing at the party. Today, she got a video from the terrorist murdering her kid and his girlfriend. He took the video in her son's phone and sent it to her through her son's phone.

It's as if the Cossacks had TikTok. This morning, families waiting in agony, their loved ones under a new threat, that warning from Hamas that it may execute civilian hostages in response to Israeli strikes. Hamas has even warned that it is going to live stream the execution of hostages one by one. All of this is to say, this is not a situation of militants versus an army. This is a situation of terrorists targeting innocent women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. So no, there aren't two sides here.

They shot a baby three months old, I think, in front of their mother. These are babies.

Babies, women, families are off limits, show some dignity, some show some respect.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is in Israel now, taking in the breath of the horror there.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu showed him photographs today of just some of it.

A young infant riddled with bullets, a family hugging each other in a death embrace,

having been burned to death, beheaded soldiers. He's never seen anything like this. The sheer brutality of Hamas has stunned his entire team. But for us in the area, we're talking about a total of, I would say, about 280 bodies at 280 casualties. I would say 80% was tortured. And you're talking children, adults, children, when you're talking a pile, two piles, you found them in Be'eri. Two piles of 10 children each were tied to the back, burned to death. This is something behind this next level. I mean, it's actually indescribable, really. It's indescribable. It's indescribable, and I won't describe everything that I saw. I mean, the images that we're seeing of children kidnapped, of young women who have been abducted, who have blood in their pants, because they've presumably been repeatedly raped, it's horrifying. There's been a lot of death and destruction in that region, but I've never seen anything like this. I'm sorry. It's very difficult to look at these images and the human cost, and these are human beings. They're family members, they're friends, they're loved ones, cousins, brothers, sisters. That is what is going on here. A colleague of mine texted her friend, a reservist soldier who has been fighting on the ground at Kibbutz Be'eri, where one of the worst slaughters took place. And she asked him, are the stories of the decapitated babies true? And he wrote back, yes, much worse. A few minutes later, he added, much, much. I can't possibly imagine what could be worse than decapitated babies. When reports of this massacre started circulating on Saturday, I thought, surely this will be sufficient. Surely this amount of blood and horror, a nightmare turned reality, will be enough to shake the world awake. Surely no one can equivocate or justify this. Surely the response will be as it was after September 11th. As my friend Sarah Hader wrote, how simple is it to condemn targeted violence against civilians? Can there be a lower bar? And yet across the world, people, including some of the most educated people in American life, have sunk below that bar. Tens of thousands of people across the world are rejoicing in the slaughter of Jews. Rejoicing on the streets of Berlin, on the streets of Paris, on the streets of Toronto. On the streets of London, where more than 50,000 people gathered. On the streets of New York. They're screaming slogans like, resistance is justified. And glory to the martyrs. Let's make one thing clear. The people who took to the streets in the days after the massacre did so before the charred bodies of Israelis were even in the ground. These people are not cheering for the liberation of the Palestinian people in Gaza. They are simply and clearly cheering for barbarism and bloodshed. At least in a protest in Sydney, the people that gathered were honest about their intentions. They chanted, gas the Jews. Those were the rallies. Now listen to what's been happening on campus. More than 30 student groups at Harvard signed on to a letter that said that of the 1200 Israelis

who have been slaughtered, quote, the apartheid regime is the only one to blame. A joint statement from Columbia University's Palestine solidarity groups wrote this. We remind Columbia students that the Palestinian struggle for freedom is rooted in international law under which occupied peoples have the right to resist the occupation of their land. Northwestern University's Middle Eastern and North African Student Association, quote, grieves for the martyrs. A student group at California State University in Long Beach advertised a day of resistance protest for Palestine event. On the poster, there was a crowd waving the Palestinian flag. And on the top of the poster was a Hamas paraglider, a symbol of mass murder. At the University of Virginia, students for justice in Palestine declared on Sunday that the events that took place yesterday are a step toward a free Palestine. At University of Michigan, a medical student spoke at a rally and denied the atrocities that Hamas committed against unarmed men, women, and children. At Stanford, in a mandatory undergraduate class, a professor separated the Jewish students from the non-Jews, labeling them colonizers versus the colonized. He then told the class that the colonizers, as in the Jews, have killed more people than the Nazis did in the Holocaust. Yale professor Zarina Gruel said this on social media, settlers are not civilians, this is not hard, excusing the murder of women and children. She also explained that you shouldn't feel too bad for the kidnapping of an Israeli woman taken back to Gaza on a motorbike by Hamas because the 25-year-old named Noah had once served in the IDF. Joseph Massad, a tenured professor at Columbia, said the attack on Israel was, quote, awesome. A professor at Cornell at a rally called the terrorist attacks exhilarating and energizing. Hamas has punctured the illusion of invincibility. That's what they've done. And in those first few hours, even as horrific acts were being carried out, many of which we would not learn about until later, there are many Gazans of goodwill, many Palestinians, conscious, who were able to breathe. They were able to breathe for the first time in years. It was exhilarating. It was exhilarating. It was energizing. And if they weren't exhilarated by this challenge to the monopoly of violence, by this shifting of the balance of power, then they would not be human. I was exhilarated. So those are the students and the professors organizing essentially Hamas pep rallies. In the meantime, many of the school's presidents and administrations are staying out of it. The president of Cornell University described her statement as, quote, a response to world events, lamenting that it is impossible to respond to all of the world's tragedies. The president of Northwestern University said, quote, Northwestern does not intend to make an institutional statement. Stanford's interim president wrote along with the provost of the school that, while they condemn terrorism as, quote, a moral matter, that, quote, they believe it is important that the university, as an institution, generally refrain from taking institutional positions on complex political or global matters. Dartmouth's president has yet to explicitly condemn Hamas, same with Columbia's president, Minou Shafiq. These are the same presidents and campus administrators, you'll recall, that offer morally authoritative statements on everything from climate change to the war in Ukraine to Roe v. Wade to January 6th. But on Israel, on the largest slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust, they have suddenly discovered the virtue of the institutional neutrality. So if you're asking why this matters, why we have put the full force of our company behind this story, this is why, because this isn't just some far away war. It's because it is a battle for civilization.

As my friend Sam Harris recently said, there are people and cultures who revel in war crimes, who do not hide these crimes or their celebration of them, but rather proudly broadcast their savagery for all the world to see. Conversely, there are people and cultures who have given us the concept of a war crime as a sacred prohibition, and as a safeguard in the ongoing project of maintaining the moral progress of civilization. He continued, there are not many bright lines that divide good and evil in our world. This is one of them.

And yet so many educated people, not just universities, not just professors, not just institutions, but prominent people, including, for example, the producer of Barack and Michelle Obama's podcast, are still not clear on this bright line. They are still having a hard time condemning mass murder, or even acknowledging that mass murder was carried out. Just look at the letter in the New York Review of Books this week. In that letter, Ta-Nehisi Coates, a New York Times bestselling author, a recipient of the MacArthur Genius Award, was the primary signatory. Here is how this letter described the atrocities, quote, on Saturday, after 16 years of siege, Hamas militants broke out of Gaza. More than 1300 Israelis were subsequently killed. Subsequently killed. Imagine saying of the September 11th attacks in the New York Review of Books, Al Qaeda fighters liberated themselves from the American-occupied Middle East, and more than 3000 Americans were subsequently killed. So now we know. If there is one thing we can say about this past week, it's that the masks have fallen off. Now we know who would have looked at Jews shoved onto cattle cars and said, well, they did undermine the German economy. Those are the people today saying this is a justified response to the provocation of Israel existing. After this week, we know whose politics are rooted not in conservatism or liberalism or anything else other than simply hating Jews more than they love civilization. I want to say a word about Gaza, which has the eyes of the world now on it, and which has been the target of Israeli airstrikes since October 7th, and is set to be the site of intense fighting with an Israeli ground invasion believed to be imminent. Scores of innocent Palestinians have already died. To be a Palestinian living under Hamas in Gaza is its own daily nightmare, and the tragedies that Gazans will now suffer, the compounding tragedies of war and of being ruled by an authoritarian regime are impossible to capture. I said earlier that there aren't two sides in this war. I think the right way to think about this war is that there are three sides. One side are the two million Palestinians in Gaza who languish under Hamas rule, which has controlled the strip for almost two decades. The second side is Hamas, a Latter-day ISIS backed by Iran that controls Gaza and uses not just human shields, but human sacrifice as a weapon in their propaganda war. They are interested not just in the slaughter of Israelis, but in the slaughter of Palestinian civilians. And thirdly, there is Israel, which despite priding itself on its military sophistication, found itself caught totally unaware as the barbarians crashed through its gates on October 7th, instigating a war that Israel did not ask for, but must fight because of this existential threat. This is all critical to remember as this bloody war progresses, as it becomes tempting to both sides this story. To return to Sam Harris, who said it this week better than I could have, as this war proceeds, he said, many people will consider the deaths of non-combatants on the Palestinian side to be morally equivalent to the kids who were tortured and murdered at the peace concert by Hamas, or to the hostages who may yet be murdered and their murders broadcast

on social media. But they're not. There is a difference between collateral damage, which is euphemism for innocent people killed in war, and the intentional massacre of civilians for the purpose of maximizing horror. Simply counting the number of dead bodies is not a way of judging the moral balance here, because intentions matter. It matters what kind of world people are attempting to build. If Israel wanted to perpetrate a genocide of the Palestinians, it could do that easily, tomorrow. But that isn't what Israel wants. And the truth is that the Jews of Israel would live in peace with their neighbors, if only their neighbors weren't enthralled to genocidal fanatics. And yet, some 10 days into this war, some of the most prominent media outlets in the world seem to have already forgotten that moral distinction. Just take what happened on Tuesday night, October 17th, when a bomb blast at a hospital in Gaza killed scores of Palestinians. A horrific, unspeakable tragedy. Very soon after the incident, the New York Times published a story with this headline, Israeli strike kills hundreds in hospital, Palestinians say. And the paper of records sent it out as a breaking news push notification. They did so relying on Hamas' word, and Hamas' word alone. Israeli authorities soon after denied responsibility. An IDF spokesperson said that no Israeli aircraft had been operating in the area of the hospital at the time of the explosion. Israel has released footage that they say shows that the hospital was struck by a missile that had been fired toward Israel from Gaza and that inadvertently fell on its own citizens. Realizing their mistake, editors at the Times changed that headline on their home page to say this, at least 500 dead in strike on Gaza Hospital, Palestinians say. Then, an hour later, they changed it again, at least 500 dead in blast at Gaza Hospital, Palestinians say. So in the space of several hours, the news event went from an Israeli strike, which of course is what the push notification said, to an ambiguous blast. Early Wednesday morning, more information came out. The Israeli military released a recording of an intercepted conversation between two Hamas operatives discussing the failed rocket that landed on the hospital. The shrapnel is ours, one of the Hamas members says. It doesn't resemble Israeli shrapnel. Then, President Joe Biden said Wednesday morning that he was confident Israel was not behind the explosion based on the data he was shown by the American Defense Department. Later on Wednesday, the US announced it has an independent assessment that it was a Palestinian Islamic Jihad group rocket that misfired and hit that hospital in Gaza. But to back up to the damage that that New York Times headline has already done, when that push alert was sent Tuesday evening, no one knew what happened in Gaza. But the point of doing good journalism is that you pause to get the fact straight, that you hesitate before trusting a government or trusting the word of a known terrorist group, in this case the Hamas-Ran Gaza Ministry of Health. That is especially so in a war in which the number of casualties is weaponized to instigate and shape global rage and opinion. But for some reason, when it comes to Hamas and Israel, all the old rules are out the window. And whatever the facts are, that breaking news alert, Israel targets a hospital hundreds dead, is already echoing throughout the world with big and immediate geopolitical consequences. Protests erupted across the Arab world, fires were set at the US embassy in Beirut, there were clashes at the Israeli embassy in Amman, and large protests at the Israeli consulate in Istanbul. This is what's at stake, this is why all of it matters, and it should matter to everyone who cares about the future of civilization. Because if there is one lesson from history,

it's that what starts with the Jews never ends with the Jews. And societies and worlds in which the Jewish people are persecuted, in which truth is replaced by conspiracy thinking, or societies in which no one is safe. As the world seems to lose its grip on reality, today we want to bring you stories. Stories of some of the three dozen people my colleagues and I have been speaking to about the living hell that began on October 7th. We'll be right back.

We'll be right back, we'll be right back, we'll be right back.

I'm sorry, I'm coughing from, still from smoking elation.

Oh my gosh, Deborah, where are you right now?

Right now, I'm in my house in Elac, the south of Israel.

This is Deborah Mintz, who my colleague Susie spoke to this week.

But I was visiting my daughter, who lives in Kibbutz Nireem on the Gaza border. That's why I was caught up in it. That's why I was there. And that was because she just had a baby 10 days before the 7th of October. And I was there for the birth of the baby and the brick.

Deborah lives in Elat, which is in the southernmost part of Israel.

But she was with her daughter and son-in-law and their 10-day-old baby at Kibbutz Nireem when the terror began.

6, 6.30 in the morning, I'm not 100% sure on any timing.

There was a red alert siren and my daughter, her husband and this 10-day-old baby, my grandson called Kai, were sleeping in the Mamad, the secure room, the safe room, which was their bedroom anyway. I was sleeping in the spare room. So I got out of bed in my pajamas, no shoes, of course. I went to them. We closed the door of the safe room.

And we waited for it to pass. My son-in-law, Oriel, has lived on this Kibbutz since he was 10 years old. His parents still live there. They immigrated from Argentina. So he's pretty used to, you know, these rockets run to the safe room, come out, have your coffee, go back in. But then we started to hear shooting outside.

And it took us some time. We didn't know who was shooting. We didn't quite understand what was going on. And my daughter looked at her phone and she accessed the camera that was in the living room. And she said, they're coming in. Who's coming in? They're coming in. They're breaking into the house. So then we knew that this was a lot more serious than just a couple of rockets going over. The problem with the safe room is it's a concrete enforced room. It's built to withstand rocket attack. It is not for ground infiltration invaders. So in theory, you can't lock the door from the inside. But my daughter and her husband, they took it in turns to hold the handle in an upright position so that the terrorists couldn't get in so easily. When they shot at the door, we were lucky that the bullets didn't go through. Maybe we just fell upon a weaker terrorist. I don't know. They tried to get in. They shot some, I don't know what they call it, a bazooka rocket, I think it is, you know, one of those handheld ones, but it didn't penetrate the door. We were completely quiet. We, you know, I had my finger in the baby's mouth in order to, you know, get the baby, 10-day-old baby to suck on my finger because, you know, we didn't prepare bottles and things. And my daughter, you know, she's just given birth. She's with stitches. She's breastfeeding. But her main concern was keeping that door handle up so they couldn't get in. And when they saw they couldn't get in, they set fire to the house.

And the smoke started coming under the door because they had managed to wedge the door open a little bit. So it wasn't sealed. And the smoke started pouring into the safe room.

And we now, in hindsight, which is such a marvelous thing, realize they set the houses alight with petrol from our cars and tires. So it was black, you know, toxic smoke. And we, we were there in total almost nine hours. It was between eight and nine hours, but six hours at least in the fire. Every time my daughter thought that they weren't in the house or they weren't around the house, she opened the still window. She held the baby up to get some air. We all took some air, closed the window, threw the baby on the bed, had the baby on the floor with me. For me, one of the hardest, I mean, obviously it's all very, very raw, very difficult. But when I heard my dog screaming as he burnt to death, my daughter said, that's the point that I gave up. And I just wanted death to, to overcome me. I, you know, I mean, how long can you, you can, how long can you survive in that hellish hot, hot room with no air and smoke and and for what reason they're going to get you anyway? I mean, why are we fighting this? They're outside, they're shooting, they're screaming there. And my son-in-law was on the phone to his brother pretty much the whole time. And my daughter was on the phone to the fire brigade. And because we were, well, I certainly was unaware of what was happening in the region. My daughter was getting messages in. So I think she knew, but she didn't tell me she's kind of a protector. I didn't understand why it could, nobody was coming to save us. Why were we left to burn to death? Why? What was the government doing? What were the army doing? Where were they? Where could they leave us to die like that? And then finally we heard Hebrew, but you know, you can't be so sure that they're not terrorists. These are not stupid people. But when there's somebody called Uriel Uriel and he said, we're here, we're here and we knew they'd come to save us, but it's still, they had to secure the area. They had, they still killed a few terrorists after that. And I don't know how long it was. It was a while before they got us out the window. And through relative safety, if you can call a bomb shelter and keep put safety, and eventually the ambulances couldn't get through. And the army took us to hospital because of the baby and my daughter's husband and the baby were there for three days on oxygen. And I was released the same night. And now I went to my other daughter in Monty Yen and we came back down to Ila on Thursday. People donated clothing and baby stuff. And my eldest daughter, she just rallied around and she's nine months pregnant too. And she just rallied around setting up donation points and getting money and begging people. And you know, it's days after when you hear other stories of people that were exactly in the same, exactly the same situation as us that didn't make it. So why did we make it out? Did we get out the sheer determination of my daughter and her husband because they just became parents? Like I said, I'd given up. I didn't think, I didn't think you could, you could live much longer in that, that smoke. That, that, that, that hell, hellish, hellish place. And now I see it was so much worse for other people, so much worse. We asked Deborah, who is also a British citizen, if she plans to leave Israel. Either I and my family will survive or I and my family will die, but stay we are. And I'm hoping that after my daughter gives birth next Friday, please God, as soon as she's well enough after the Caesarean, my father will bring her down to Ila because her husband is in Nilewim.

And as a family, me and my two girls and my ex-husband and the children will stay in Ila and hopefully we'll be safe. And if not, like I said, we'll survive together or we'll die together, but we're not leaving.

While Israeli Kibbutzim, like the one Deborah was at along the Gaza border, were being rated by hundreds

of Hamas terrorists, villages destroyed, entire families wiped out, hundreds more were flooding a music festival in the desert to carry out a massacre there. They came on paragliders with automatic rifles to slaughter and rape and mutilate as many people as possible.

Amit Tal, 28 years old, saw it with his own eyes.

It was about 5 a.m. and I look up and I start seeing like maybe like 20 rockets, music stops.

It's already daylight. We see officers and security guards running all over the spread of the whole festival area. Everybody started panicking. Everybody started getting in the car, started driving. And they got onto the road and there was a huge line of like maybe like 50-60 cars. We just got ambushed from all sides. We were pretty much surrounded and like the only way was to go that way, which is past like the dirt parking lot. And basically there you had like open fields that you can see in videos of people running in open fields. That's like nowhere to hide. It's an open field. They're in jeeps. They could literally ride and grab you and pick you up like a goldfish out of a tank. Like just grab you. We hear gun shooting. We start running from side to side. Start seeing people shot in the leg, in the arm. We ran past the dance floor into the camping site, slid into like holes in the ground and into dirt. All kinds of like ditches in the back. We were just hiding as low as we can. He hid in a grapefruit grove for hours and he dug a hole to shove his feet into the earth because he was scared that the terrorists would see his bright shoes. They were probably shooting at the cars, but you couldn't tell because everything was so close. And in open field it felt like it was coming from everywhere. I hear yelling. I hear girls yelling. I hear shots. I hear Arabic. I hear the police yelling. Everything is so loud. It's like it's right on top of me. We're all like everybody's like hiding behind the tank. And then they start shooting and I hear like they're hitting the tank. You can actually like feel like you can hear like the thing thing like the hitting metal like shooting metal. And then they shot left and they literally hit this car, which exploded on the street out of that that like jump or out of the like the wind that came out of the impact of the car and whatever they're shooting. I literally like flew and hit back on the ground and I hit my head right in the middle at the bottom of the tank, started bleeding like crazy, passed out for about 15-20 minutes under a tank, come to my cell, come back to myself. A police officer is like slapping me straight, waking up, pouring like dirt on my head to stop the bleeding. I picked my head up and I can literally see maybe like 500 meters, 600 meters from us. Four terrorists all wearing black. I literally could see their eyes from far. I could see their eyes and their guns and this is real. I could die today. They literally just missed me. That's like the thought that's going through your mind. You get the, you know, in the moment you

start understanding that there's a lot of people that you know they're not gonna get out of here alive.

It was a slaughterhouse out there. It's honestly, it was like, it's like sheep for slaughter.

I was with my friends. We were happy. Only when, when they shut down the music, we look up in the

sky and we saw the rockets and we heard the bombs and the explosion and everything.

We spoke to another woman, Chen, a 21-year-old who also survived the attack at the Nova Music

Festival. And then we started, the officers started yelling about to everyone to, to be safe and to go away from here from the party. And me and my friend, we, we, we think like, well, what, what, what, what are we gonna do right now? What, what is safer? What is, what is the best idea to go to the car, to, to find a place to hide, to stay? We didn't know what to do. What is the safer way to, you know, to act? And, and we decided to, to go to our car. Like many others, she had run to her car for safety. But the car, it turned out, was not safe at all. There was one girl, she screamed, the terrorists are here with their weapons. And we, we started to hear a shooting gun, you know, shoot. There was chaos. Chen ran from the car and hid in a bush in the fields alone for many hours. And then we start running to the fields. And when we, when we ran to the field, I, I found a bush and I, I hid there on my own. I was alone. I was, I was panicked. I was shocked. All this time I was quiet. Oh, fuck, I need to go. I need to go to a safe place. Sorry. I need to fuck. Sorry. Sorry. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

In the middle of speaking to us, she had to abruptly hang up because an alarm went off signaling another Hamas rocket was landing and she had to run to a bomb shelter.

We spoke to another young man, Ilya, who, like Amit and Chen, also just barely survived.

Bullets were flying past his ears. They were so close that he temporarily lost hearing.

Eventually, he escaped from his hiding place under his car with a friend to a village nearby called Saad, which due to sheer luck was the only village in that area that hadn't been heavily infiltrated by Hamas. Later that evening, when Ilya drove home, he described the carnage to us.

On the way home, it was the most horrific scene so ever seen in my life. It was apocalyptic.

All you could see is every 50 hundred meters, two, three crashed cars, bodies just lying

and next to the car. Like it's crazy. I took a video of it, actually, you know, I want,

I wanted to only took a video of the cars. I had, in the beginning, I had no clue that

there are actually dead bodies. So, you know, I started filming and then I, and then I saw,

and then I saw that I'm filming a dead body and I made it in like, turn the camera away.

And that's how it is. I mean, I was very lucky. The sequence of the, of events that happened this day, it was very lucky. But Ilya says many of his friends weren't as lucky as him.

He lost many friends that day. Basically, the situation here is,

you need to decide for which funeral you need to go. Today, I went to a funeral of a girl named Rachel.

She is a good friend and she also a girlfriend of one of my best friends. They were about to get married. Very sad. And yesterday also in the funeral of another friend who also got killed, was murdered. We now know that more than 250 bodies have been recovered from that music festival.

The size of the disaster is just, it's, you cannot digest it. It's, it's crazy. All the goal

was to kill as many Jews as possible. It's not attack in army base. It's not attack in military.

It's about killing, raping, massacring as many Jews as possible. There are stories about girls

who is, who were raped in the area of the festival next to the dead friends. Babies with their heads cut off. A woman who was pregnant and they basically butchered her stomach and put the baby out.

I

mean, the stories are unbelievable. I mean, the evil and the cruelty of Hamas is just unbelievable.

It's, it's, it's worse than ISIS. I mean, really.

Worse than ISIS, Ilya says.

90% of this massacre were citizens. Part of them were just sitting in their homes,

still sleeping, waking up with a gun to the head and shot them one by one so the others could see how their families are being murdered. And we spoke to a mother, Chani, whose daughter was at the music festival. The abolic creatures filmed it. And then they went to the party where people were dancing, you know, they dance all night and they were intense sleeping. And they went there and there were, I don't know, two to 3000 young people around the edge of my daughter and they start shooting them.

Chani's daughter, Orya, 26 years old, was dancing when the Hamas men attacked.

My daughter and her friend and the friend's boyfriend ran bare feet to the car and they started to drive away from there. But these diabolic monsters waited on the road and they shot the driver. And from the texting that my daughter had with her sister while this whole event was going on, she said that the driver died in her hands. And she doesn't know what to do and they can't get out of the car. It flipped over and they couldn't go out. But eventually they did because when they came to look, they found the car, there was only the driver dead. And the girls were not to be found. So they declared her missing.

I was in New York and I got the phone call in the middle of the night telling me that my daughter is missing. And I was still, you know, just waking up to these horrible news and then I opened my phone and I saw that she sent me a message, Mom, I love you so much.

And I sent her a message, Orya, what's going on? Call me back. Tell me what's wrong.

And, of course, she didn't answer. So I took the next day I flew back to Israel

from New York still hoping that I will find her. After waiting for days for any news,

the family heard the worst from Orya's boyfriend who went searching for her.

Her boyfriend just couldn't sit still any longer. I mean, it was horrible because she was texting. They wrote to each other that they will never separate again and they were going to get married and so on. And he went down to the South even if it was forbidden for citizens to go there. But he couldn't just sit any longer. He went to the car.

And I always said, from the moment I came to Israel, I said, I feel in my heart. I feel it.

She's there. She's by the car. And so he went to the car and he filmed the whole area and it was deserted. It was nothing there. There was the car empty and he was about to give up after two minutes. But then he drove a little bit further and he saw this tree, about 100 meters from the car. And he stopped and he went out. And this is where he found her. Dead.

And he called us and he told us that he found her.

Part of me want to see her for the last time. But I know that her pretty face are not exactly the same.

Oh my god. Yeah. So I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Yeah, me too. And I'm sorry for me, for my my heart that was broke to pieces. And for her friend's family and for the other 1200 dead people. This is a massacre. This is not a war zone. This is a massacre.

The death toll in Israel stands at 1400 people so far. There are 199 people confirmed, kidnapped, including what appears to be more than 25 children, some as young as five months old, according to Israeli media, which for some of the people I talked to is a fate worse than death.

I was trying to save them the trauma as much as I can. I was holding the door

trying to make it not open to make it shut. This is Moti. He was at Kibbutz near Oz and

managed to hide in his safe room with his wife and three daughters ages two, seven, and eight.

While Moti and his family miraculously survived, his 75-year-old father, who was born in Poland

to parents who survived the Holocaust, was captured by Hamas. I tried to call him but it was already disconnected. I hope that he's alive and I hope that they don't torture him or something like that. To tell the truth, I don't know if it's better to be killed or be kidnapped by this terrorist. One father I saw on CNN went even further than Moti. He said that the death of his eight-year-old was in fact a blessing. I just said, we found Emily. She's dead. And I went, yes! I went, yes! I'm smiled because that is the best news of the possibilities that I knew. That was the best possibility that I was hoping for. She was either dead or in Gaza. And if you know anything about what they do to people in Gaza, that is worse than death. That is worse than death. The way they treat you. They'd have no food. They'd have no water. She'd be in a dark room filled with Christ knows how many people and terrified every minute, hour, day and possible years to come. So death was a blessing, an absolute blessing. But for all of the families of those who have been taken, this is the torture and anguish they are living through every day since October 7th. I spoke to some of them, like Shakhed Haran. Okay, so my name is Shakhed Haran. I was born and I grew up in Kibbutzmeri. I currently live in the Sheva, but most of my family members live there. I'm 34. I have two children and one on the way. I'm 30 experiments. Shakhed, tell us about the Kibbutz where you grew up. Tell us, for people that don't understand Israeli geography, tell us where it's located also in relationship to the Gaza Strip. Yeah, so my Kibbutz is called the western Negev of Israel. It's actually the closest to the northern part of the Gaza Strip. It's about less than four kilometers from Gaza. And it's never been a completely safe place, but also it was never as terrible as what's happening now. Let's go to the morning of Shabbat morning. It was also a holiday, Saturday, October 7th. Let's start at the very beginning of that day. What do you remember? So I wasn't in the Kibbutz on Shabbat. My parents were there, my sister, her husband, and two young children, one eight-year-old son and three-year-old daughter. And my aunt, my father's sister, and her daughter, which is 12-year-old, they all came to visit my parents for the holiday. They were there together. And around late morning, there were orders to go into the shelter and reports of hundreds of terrorists attacking the Kibbutz. We don't know exactly what happened, but we do know that they entered the shelter in Berry. We have a shelter in each house because from once you hear the alarm, there are seven seconds to reach the shelter before the missile hits. So there's a shelter in every house. And we know my parents received the order to go inside the shelter and take out the lights and stay completely quiet. And this is what they did. My brother, at that point, was contacting them by WhatsApp, trying to understand what's going on. And so in the beginning, they told them they're in the shelter and they're okay. And at some point, my father said that they are in trouble and that they... They're in trouble and they love us. And then it was when we lost the contact, when my brother lost contact with them. And from that point on, we didn't hear from them anymore. There was such a crazy chaotic situation that we could not get any information from anyone about what's going on inside the Kibbutz. But the inner network of the Kibbutz, we could connect it and see the messages that people are sending. And it was horrible. People were reporting gunshots everywhere. And like a massacre and houses burning down. I couldn't read them. I couldn't read them. I stopped at some point because it was just so terrible.

And then yesterday on Sunday, at some point, we tried to get as much information just to understand where they are, what's the situation. My sister, she's there with three-year-old daughter and the eight-year-old son. And we couldn't imagine what's going on and where they are and what they're going through. We just wanted some information. We couldn't find anything. And at some point, a friend of my father told us that he tried to call my father for like hundreds of times. And at some point, someone answered him in Arabic and shouted, hostage, hostage, Gaza, Gilad Shaleed, and hung up. Perhaps people will remember that Gilad Shaleed is the Israeli prisoner, the soldier that was held for more than four years in Gaza and released in exchange for a thousand prisoners. Some of them hardened terrorists, which gives you a sense of how Israel thinks of the importance of a single life. So then we thought, okay, maybe this is what happened. And at some point, we got another information that the house was empty, completely burned down and destroyed, and a lot of signs of things broken and everything, but no bodies and no signs of physical hurt, no blood or something like this. And when the student, most of the houses near my parents' house are in this situation. So we thought that probably most of the people that were taking hostage and the way they manipulated them to come out of the shelter was by burning the house. And I don't know this for sure, but this is the indications that we were told. And then so we started doing everything we can to try to see if this is valid information and if someone knows where they are inside Gaza and maybe we hope. We hope maybe they didn't take the children, but we don't know. We don't know anything. And we just know that 11 family members are probably there now. Shaged now believes that Hamas is holding captive 11 of her family members, including her father, her mother, her uncle, two aunts, her sister, her brother-in-law, a disabled relative, and two children ages three and eight. 10% of that kibbutz, 10% of kibbutz baeri were slaughtered. More than 100 bodies have been recovered there. Let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me what happened in the early hours of Shabbat? Yeah, on Friday night, our son, Hirsch Goldberg-Polen, was with us in Jerusalem where we live. He came with us to synagogue. This is Jonathan Pulleen, father of Hirsch Goldberg Pulleen. Then all had dinner together. Our family and two other families had about 11 p.m. He departed from us with a backpack on to go meet his good friend, Anir Shapira. And that's the last we saw. Jonathan and his wife found out about what had happened on Saturday morning when their son, Hirsch, sent them a text message. Saturday morning, the whole country woke up to chaos, booms, sirens, and my wife checked her phone. And at 8.11 a.m., back to back, we had both received the same two messages from Hirsch, or different messages, but they came to both of us. Message number one said, I love you. Message number two said, I'm sorry. That was at 8.11 a.m., and that was the last we heard from him. And it's been chaos ever since. They haven't heard from him since, but they started to put the pieces together by talking to the family of friends that he was with. A group of about 25 people ended up together running into an outdoor shelter, and they came under heavy attack shooting and grenades. There were a lot of injuries, and we have been told that what we now know to be Hirsch's friend, by the description, was the hero who saved anybody who survived it, because he was taking grenades that landed in the shelter immediately throwing them out. We've heard several stories of heroism about our son's friend. We know that at about, that was starting at 7 a.m.,

we know that at 9 a.m., gunmen came in calmly and pulled out a group of the people. Nobody could tell the pattern how they selected anybody, but they pulled out a group of the people, and we believe that six were abducted. We believe the group didn't all know each other, so confirming who's who and who's where is hard, but we've spoken to some people who we know to have been there and been evacuated late in the afternoon, and they believe that our son was among the small group of people who were taken hostage at about 9 o'clock in the morning by armed Hamas militants, but we don't know. Ironically right now, that would probably be the most optimistic scenario.

I spoke to a man, his name is Amit, whose brother was also at the music festival and taken hostage. On Saturday morning, 6.30 a.m., was the time that the rocket alarms started.

My dad called my brother and told him, Omer, come back home right now. He was in the festival, in the south, and from what I realized is that him and two of his friends were trying to evacuate, but at the time they got to the car, they couldn't really get out of the area because the whole parking lot was making a bottleneck, so they could not escape. Meanwhile, my sister told my brother Omer's central location, so he made like a live location, and they couldn't get out, and by that time he probably has been taken by Hamas. We looked at the location from our home. This is about

like 8 to 9. The last time we ever spoke with Omer was around 9.15, and when we saw his live location,

it was inside of Gaza, and we could not believe that we tried to deny it, and anyway, the day goes by. Meanwhile, my dad and his brother go search him all over the south, they will from hospital to hospital, lists, gathering areas, all over the south, looking for a bottle, and towards the evening, around like 8, we receive a video of my brother, will we see him, hands tied in the back of a pickup truck. That was the most horrific thing we've ever seen. When we saw it, me, I was around my mom, and she could not hold it at all. She lost it completely. She could not believe it, like no one could. And this is how it's been for five days ever since, and on Monday, government officials have come over to confirm that Omer is indeed alive and kept by Hamas, I think that's in the same video that we did. We had a friend with him, we managed to recognize them both, Omer's face was blurred, but I managed to recognize him by the clothes, and the tattoo he had on his arm, and ever since this, we know nothing other than the fact that he's alive. He is hopeful that the government of Israel will find a way to bring him back. At least we know he's alive, for sure, and he's going to come back. And that's all that any of these families can do at this moment, hold out hope.

One woman we spoke to, Shani, whose cousin was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nireem, said she wanted the world to know what happened. If I could ask the world for anything, I would say just help us get them home. Help us get the individuals that they took, either again, elderly kids, women, men, teenagers, people that went to dance and celebrate life and peace and love,

and just bring them home. Distinguishing civilians from soldiers, and I'm not doing this because I don't think that the soldiers should come home. Everyone should come home, but there's a difference. There's a difference. Civilians have done nothing. They were either dancing or in their homes, and they were taken. We don't know where they are. We don't know what their situation. We don't know if they're getting their medicines. If we asked the Red Cross to

help us, just have a lineup. Show us they're okay. Show what they're getting, the support they show us that they're getting the medicines that they need. It's a 36-year-old woman that takes care of animals and plants should not be in terrorist hands. We need her back.

We do. It's like you're saying to herself, she did what she was supposed to do. She went into a safe room in her house. She wasn't walking around. She wasn't cheating death or doing anything like

that. Then she was gone. We were asked to bring artifacts of DNA, so in case there needed to be to make sure it doesn't match, they would have a DNA. Then we have no way of getting there.

We have no way of taking artifacts from her house,

because it's still locked down and there's still rockets, and it's still very dangerous to get there. You're saying to yourself, I don't think that any of us can imagine it. I don't think that any of us can think of the situation. I really hope if you ask about what would I say to the Americans, I really hope that you would never know what this feeling is. Never. I'm just keeping my finger crossed that she'll be back soon. Yeah.

So

Late on Monday night, Hamas released the first hostage video. In it, you see a 21-year-old woman named Mia Shem. Her arm is wrapped in a cast. It looks like it's been broken or severely injured. Her eyes are terrified as she speaks to the camera. I just ask that I'm returned as fast as possible to my family, to my parents, and to my siblings, she says. Please get us out of here as quickly as possible.

Oh

By

This is from a prayer that is sung on Friday night, wishing for peace, peace onto you.

By the words of peace onto you.

Shalom

Thank you for listening. The song you just heard is Regina Spector singing Shalom Alechem.

She recorded it originally for our friends at Tablet Magazine, and we're incredibly grateful to Regina and to Tablet for letting us share it with you. Thank you to everyone who has been reading and following our coverage over the past 10 days. We know it's been heavier than what we usually do,

but I hope you understand why we think it's so important. The kind of work we have been doing, especially over the past 10 days, takes resources. It's expensive to send people to Israel and make sure they have the right security. If you want to support our work, there is one way to do that.

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