

Israel : 100 Hostages, 435 Days in Captivity | 'We Are a Family of Zombies - a Little Alive, a Little Dead'

dimanche 15 décembre 2024, par [HASSON Nir](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 14 décembre 2024).

Noam Dan had multiple family members kidnapped on October 7, including two who returned in a hostage deal. 'If we let them remain there, it will fracture what's left of the life-loving nation I grew up in. From that, we will not recover'

Noam Dan, this week. « There is only one person who needs to be convinced, and we must use all the tools to reach him. Whether it's through Sarah or Yair, or through the book. »Credit : Naama Grynbaum

Three times in the course of our conversation, Noam Dan breaks into tears. The first is when she talks about a phrase her son used offhandedly.

« My son, who's 10 years old, said yesterday, 'Good God,' and I said to him, 'No, He's not.' And he said, 'Mom, it's [just an expression](#),' and I said, 'there's no - just - anything.' These are the kind of moments when I feel very, very alone. I am so, so tired. I keep feeling that soon we'll go back to our life, but it doesn't happen. »

Dan and other relatives of hostages, at the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, in April : « They say I want to go into politics, but I would be happy to return to my shell. »Credit : Olivier Fitoussi

The second time her voice breaks is when she talks about the [religious Zionist community](#) in Jerusalem. Dan is the wife of religious journalist Jackie Levy, and her family is part of this public.

« I am very, very hurt by the religious public, » she says. « This is my home, I don't understand it. I live in Jerusalem, I'm married to someone who belongs to this public, my best friends - I'm waiting for them to speak out. »

« I don't need a hug, I need them in the street. I need them in the Knesset, so their voice isn't [hijacked by Ben-Gvir and Smotrich](#), and if it is, then that's what they are. »

The third times she cries is when she talks about her inability to understand how the struggle to bring back the hostages has failed so far, and that a situation in which 100 hostages remain in Gaza has become normalized.

« How, in the evolution of fear and terror, did we reach the stage of normalizing ? » she asks. « The question is not what blessing we should add to the candle-lighting this Hanukkah, but if we should even light Hanukkah candles at all. I don't understand it - Why hasn't the world come to a

standstill ? I think about them all the time. »

« I feel like it's become an emotional disturbance for just a few people, and I can't understand why time after time I keep failing to create empathy [for the hostages]. »

Ofer Kalderon's son, Rotem, speaks to a crowd in Tel Aviv, in June. Credit : Tomer Appelbaum

Dan is the cousin of [Hadas Kalderon](#), whose children Sahar and Erez were kidnapped and later released. Their father, Ofer, is still held hostage. She has put herself at the forefront of the families' fight since mid-October 2023.

She is not afraid of [confrontations with police](#), or to move the police checkpoints in order to get closer to the prime minister's home, and has been arrested at protests three times.

« I felt a loss of fear, but fear is an amazing thing that safeguards us. I'm still searching for the fear. I keep going forward because I don't feel fear and I feel that I have nothing to lose. Polite women don't make history, » she says.

« People think I want to go into politics, but I'll be happy to be able to return to my shell. » But she does talk about fear in connection with the costs she and her husband are paying because of the struggle. « Jackie's shows are canceled, the army will no longer invite me to give talks. It's very unsettling. An economic boycott is scary. »

Dan feels that the Hostage Families Forum is mistaken in preferring displays of public solidarity and mourning over a resolute and [aggressive campaign against Netanyahu](#). « We don't need a PR campaign and memorial rallies. »

Relatives of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip and their supporters protest outside of the U.S. Embassy branch office during a visit by White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan to call for an immediate hostage release deal, in Tel Aviv, on Thursday. Credit : Ariel Schalit, AP

« Don't sell me mourning accessories, like a memorial candle to be added to the Hanukkah menorah this year. I don't need to grovel to the settler public that hates us and uses us for its messianic purposes, » she says.

« There is only one person who needs to be persuaded, and we need to use every possible tool to get to him, whether it's through Sara or Yair, or through [the book »Mr. Abandonment"](#) (a book attacking Netanyahu ; Dan was one of its creators).

« I'm tired of trying to explain that bringing them back is not so much about the hostages as it is about who we are as a nation. When [he gets mixed up between](#) 100 and 99, it shatters me. When someone tells me that most of them are dead, I say, 'But what about even one [hostage who is alive] ? I don't need more than one.' We've become our own Sodom, » she says.

After the conversation, she remembers to add a few more words : « Sahar and Erez returned from there after 53 days in a life-saving deal, and they are living proof of this tragedy. [Sahar spent her last days there with Ofer](#) in the same cage. »

She added that Sahar « gives us a glimpse into the horror of those days in captivity, but even that doesn't capture the catastrophe of day 432. Now, they are in a completely different state, both physically and mentally. »

A sign calling for Ofer Kalderon's release at Hostages' Square, in Tel Aviv. « Sahar left Ofer while he

was alive. The option that he might not come home does not allow Araz and Lee to recover, » says Dan. Credit : Itai Ron

Dan continued her plea : « For those who need the 'pornography' of horror and terror descriptions to feel compassion for any of us, I'm willing to share. But at its core, Sahar received one command from her father : to fight for him and never forget him. A 16-year-old girl holding on to the knowledge that she is here while he is still there - that's a survivor's guilt that cannot be erased until the man who raised her returns. »

« Sahar left Ofer alive. Frightened, humiliated, shocked to the core - but alive. The possibility that he might not come home prevents Erez and Sahar from healing. We are a family of zombies in this sense - a little alive, a little dead. Ofer is a small, private story, but in our national narrative, there is a much greater drama, » she added.

« If we let them remain there, it will fracture what's left of the life-loving nation I grew up in. From that, we will not recover. »

Nir Hasson

P.-S.

• Haaretz. Dec 14, 2024 7:04 pm IST :
<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-12-14/ty-article/.premium/we-are-a-family-of-zombies-a-little-alive-a-little-dead/00000193-bda6-d27e-ad97-bdff4cf10000>