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Medical Report: Urgent Health Concerns for All Hostages Abducted to Gaza Three Months Ago

Background

Over three months ago, during the October 7th Massacre, more than 240 people were brutally abducted from their homes and a music festival in the South of Israel to the Gaza Strip, while many of their friends and family members were murdered violently. After the release of some of the kidnapped persons, there are still, at the time of writing this report, over 100 Israeli and non-Israeli persons, including 15 women, a baby, and a toddler, being held as hostages in Gaza.

At least one-third of these hostages have chronic illnesses and need regular medication. Many others were wounded from the brutal abduction and need care. Others suffer from illnesses related to the harsh captivity conditions, which include mental and physical torture. These are groups that require special protection and care under the international laws of war, due to their increased vulnerability to severe physical and psychological harm. **If no medical care is provided urgently for all hostages, the result could be irreversible health problems at best and death at worst.**

The testimonies of the survivors who were released (November 24-30) reveal extreme cases of psychological and physical violence, including brutal sexual assault (including against men), mutilation, torture, starvation, and forced dehydration. Furthermore, lack of medical treatment and prevention of access to medical care of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were mentioned. **As each day passes, the health and lives of all hostages are seriously endangered.**

The present report focuses on the health implications for the remaining hostages, the risks to their physical and mental health, and the treatment they have received in captivity, as detailed in the testimonies of the survivors. **The potential implications of these violent acts are life-threatening**, as detailed in this report below. This report joins previous reports published on the health risks of the abductees¹, and provides new information received from the released survivors, and from family members.

¹ Medical Report to ICRC (15.10); Medical Report on the Needs of Women Abducted by the Hamas (11.11); Health Needs of Infants, Children and Adolescents Abducted to Gaza (20.11); Human Rights Violations of the Hostages - Human Rights Day (10.12). All reports can be found in the Forum's website - <https://media.bringthemhomenow.net/channel/Health/320857172>

Methodology

The medical team of "The Hostages and Missing - Families Forum", a voluntary civil organization, collected data on the hostages' medical background through interviews with family members and reviews of medical files that were provided by the families. Additional data on current medical status was gathered from testimonies of survivors. 38 case reports were approved by the families for publication (See Table 1).

Ethical Considerations

The nature of the data collected places it outside the realm of medical confidentiality, which typically binds healthcare providers. However, to safeguard the privacy of the hostages, explicit consent was secured from their family members—the custodians of the data—for its use. This consent pertains to the 38 hostages whose details are intended for disclosure. Within this framework, deliberations took place concerning the presumed consent of the hostages regarding the publication of specific information. This discussion considered the potential benefits of such disclosure in terms of raising awareness about their medical needs and gathering support from political and medical authorities. Additionally, the sensitivity the hostages themselves associated with this information was taken into account. The publication aligns with the conclusions drawn from this comprehensive discussion.

Findings

1. Health Risks for The Sick

1.1. Hostages with Pre-Existing Chronic Illness

At least one-third of the remaining hostages suffer from chronic diseases requiring regular medical treatment, including diabetes, osteoporosis, anemia, asthma, inflammatory bowel diseases such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's, inflammatory skin disease, Addison's disease, cancer, recurrent urinary tract infections, hypothyroidism, heart disease, epilepsy, hypertension, and more. Effective management of these conditions relies on medications and regular medical care, especially under unreasonable living conditions. Without access to medical treatment during their captivity, their health will deteriorate, leading to increased suffering, complications, reduced quality of life, potential hospitalization, disability, and even death. Testimonies of the survivors reveal that medications, even common ones, are rarely provided to the hostages. Some of the survivors suffered from severe complications such as new strokes or heart problems.

Examples:

Dolev Yehoud, 35 years old, faces life-threatening risks due to kidney and thyroid diseases.

Yosef AlZiadne, 53 years old, suffers from diabetes and hypertension. Without appropriate treatment, his life is in danger.

Omer Wenkert, 22 years old, suffers from Ulcerative Colitis and needs his medications.

1.2. Hostages with Vision, Hearing, and Mobility Impairment

According to a testimonial from one of the survivors, the absence of glasses, hearing, and mobility aids significantly impacted the hostages' ability to function during their captivity, leading to apathy. Numerous hostages were taken without these aids, thereby exacerbating their physical health problems and contributing to the deterioration of their mental well-being.

Some reported that their glasses were intentionally broken to humiliate and thus harm them. At least in one case, a survivor had Deep Vein Thrombosis due to captivity conditions and lack of movement.

Example:

Avraham Munder, 79 years old, suffers from mobility impairment and regularly wears glasses. He was abducted from his home in Kibbutz Nir Oz. During the abduction, he fell from a motorcycle, resulting in severe injuries to his hands and leg. This incident was captured on video footage and confirmed by a survivor.

1.3. Vulnerable Elderly Who Need Nursing Assistance

Ten percent of the hostages are elderly (above 65 years old) and 75% of them suffer from chronic non-communicable diseases, including hypertension, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hematologic disease, respiratory disease, renal disease, dermatological disease, osteoporosis and orthopedic conditions and disability, depression and anxiety, neurological disease, chronic pain disorder and more. The lack of medical care has dire consequences for them, as witnessed in the case of 84-year-old Elma Avraham, a woman who was released from captivity after 50 days in critical condition and the case of Aryeh Zalmanovich ('Zalmen') who died in the hands of his kidnappers.

Examples:

Gadi Mozes, 79 years old, with comorbidities in the digestive and cardiovascular systems, faces life-threatening conditions without treatment.

Oded Lifshitz, 83 years old, with respiratory and vascular comorbidities, is in immediate danger to life without proper treatment.

2. Mental Health of the Hostages

Among the hostages are individuals already coping with pre-existing mental health illnesses, including depression and anxiety, conditions that can worsen significantly during captivity. Even for hostages without pre-existing mental illness, the conditions of captivity, such as isolation and separation from family members, confinement in tunnels and small spaces, and the violence perpetrated against them, can severely impact both their physical and mental well-being. The unbearable conditions raise concerns regarding their mental stability and sanity and the possibility of self-harm, apathy, or suicidal ideation. In some cases, there is evidence that the kidnappers are subjecting the hostages to continuous psychological abuse, which includes informing them that their families have been entirely murdered. Testimonies from survivors highlight instances where hostages faced acute stress as a direct result of the October 7th Massacre and the adverse conditions of their captivity.

Survivor testimonies indicate their proximity to missile launch sites and to war zones. The constant threat of being killed in bombings instills immense fear among the hostages, further exacerbating their mental health vulnerabilities.

Example:

***Itay Svirsky**, 39 years old, suffers from depression and anxiety and needs medication. The conditions of captivity endanger his life.*

3. Health Risks for the Injured Hostages

During the brutal abduction, many hostages suffered extreme forms of violence, leaving them with severe injuries such as gunshot wounds, limb amputations, and visible open wounds. The latter put them at risk of infections, which, when left untreated, may become life-threatening. Testimonies from survivors highlight an alarming lack of treatment for injuries in the many who remain captive; in some cases, this neglect has already resulted in death. Even the few hostages who did receive medical attention while in captivity reported substandard treatment, which further compromised their recovery and rehabilitation processes, leading to permanent disability and suffering.

Example:

***Romi Gonen**, 23 years old, was shot during the abduction, and recent testimonies indicate that her gunshot wound is criminally neglected, leading to suffering and disability.*

4. Health Risks Due to Lack of Meeting Dietary Needs and Gastrointestinal Diseases

The hostages are held under low-quality nutrition and poor hygiene, affecting everyone but especially those with complex medical backgrounds and special dietary needs. Several hostages are suffering

from inflammatory bowel diseases which require a specific diet to reduce clinical symptoms and maintain remission. Without this diet they may experience disease exacerbation entailing many symptoms, some of them life-threatening. Others suffer from Coeliac disease or have other special dietary needs. There is one baby, **Kfir Bibas**, and one toddler, **Ariel Bibas**, who could die or suffer from severe complications if their special dietary requirements are not met.

Examples:

***Michel Nisenbaum**, 59 years old, suffers from Crohn's disease. He desperately needs regular treatment for his illness, including transfusion therapy. Without treatment, he will suffer serious complications and imminent danger of death.*

5. Unique Health Risks for Abducted Women

In addition to the aforementioned health risks, there are unique health risks for abducted women (further detailed here). Women are in danger of sexual violence, which has serious implications on their long lasting mental and physical health. Following rape, women are at risk for dangerous physical injuries, life threatening bleeding, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, or loss of reproduction. The severe psychological trauma could have immediate and long-lasting adverse implications. Furthermore, rape could lead to unwanted pregnancy, that could be life threatening without proper medical care, in cases such as ectopic pregnancy or abortion.

Among the hostages are a mother, **Shiri Bibas**, and her two young children. The captivity conditions, including poor hygiene and nutrition, are of great danger to their health.

6. Risk of Infectious Diseases and Poor Environmental Conditions

Based on survivor testimonies and observations of their conditions, it is evident that numerous hostages suffered from infectious diseases and were kept in poor environmental and hygiene conditions, thereby exposing them to significant health risks. Survivors reported limited access to toilet facilities, no access to running water, poor sanitation, and limited access to clean water, if any at all. Gastrointestinal illnesses, such as diarrhea, were prevalent among survivors, with several cases diagnosed with pathogens like Salmonella.

Acute gastroenteritis causes suffering and could lead to dehydration and electrolyte imbalance, especially with shortage of water and food and lack of proper treatment. Several hostages returned with lice or scabies, as well as zoonotic infections. Some survivors have severe persisting infections associated with inadequately treated traumatic injuries. Additionally, survivors reported difficulties breathing, taken the poor ventilation in tunnels, high humidity, and exposure to smoke, especially for

those with pre-existing respiratory problems. Furthermore, there is concern regarding the potential health impact of the winter season, aggravated by the lack of proper clothing, heaters, and other essential amenities.

Summary

The medical information presented above reveals the plight of some of the hostages. The health risks they are faced with are putting them in danger with every passing day. **All hostages are in great danger and have no time to waste.** Many of them suffer from complex medical conditions or injuries, including those that need specialized care, while also enduring the mental wounds of abuse, humiliation, and continuous trauma.

We urgently appeal for the immediate release of all hostages to safeguard their basic human rights and provide them with the essential medical and psychological care they need to heal from the severe physical and emotional impact of their ordeal.

Every day in captivity endangers their lives and health.

We should all demand their release now for humanitarian reasons.

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Table 1: Examples of 38 Hostages Who are Facing Serious Health Risks:

| Name | Age | Gender (F/M) | Known Medical Condition |
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| Kfir Bibas | 11 months | M | A baby who relies on a formula-based diet. To date, Kfir's nutritional status is unknown, and it is not clear if while being held hostage, he receives appropriate nutrition. He is at a high risk of experiencing malnutrition, and failure to thrive. |
| Ariel Bibas | 4 | M | A toddler with low weight and height (3 rd percentile for weight and height). He needs to follow a high-protein diet. He is at a high risk of experiencing life threatening malnutrition, and failure to thrive. |
| Naama Levy | 19 | F | Based on video footage and testimonies, suffered from injury caused by a grenade during the abduction. Without proper treatment for shrapnel injuries could have severe life-threatening complications, including infections, bleeding, embolism, disability and severe pain. Needs glasses. |
| Itay Chen | 19 | M | Suffers from potentially life-threatening intestinal blockages in captivity conditions and also copes with fibromyalgia. There is a high probability that he sustained injuries during the kidnapping and requires immediate medical attention. |
| Omer Shem Tov | 21 | M | Suffers from asthma and allergies. Without proper treatment he will have difficulty breathing. In addition, he suffers from celiac disease and needs an adapted diet. |
| Almog Meir Jan | 21 | M | Underwent eye surgery about two weeks before the abduction and needs treatment and follow-up. |
| Omer Neutra | 22 | M | Suffers from allergy and cold sensitivity, manifested by severe swelling and redness throughout the body, rendering him at significant risk in captivity conditions. Additionally, he experiences problems with his vocal cords. |

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| Omer Wenkert | 22 | M | Suffers from ulcerative colitis and needs medication. Takes Rafassal 3 g daily. |
| Romi Gonen | 23 | F | Suffers from dust allergies and eczema and is dependent on an inhaler for her respiratory tract ailments. Additionally, she has sustained a gunshot wound which isn't treated. The risk of complications is high and puts her life in great suffering and danger. |
| Evyatar David | 23 | M | Suffers from pulmonary and allergic problems that require ongoing treatment and put him at risk in captivity conditions. Had surgery several months ago that could be complicated in captivity. Needs glasses. |
| Eliya Cohen | 26 | M | Suffers from a neurological disease and shoulder dislocation. Two conditions that can worsen in the conditions he is in. |
| Idan Shtivi | 28 | M | Suffers from a permanent orthopedic problem in the shoulder that requires treatment. Suffers from anxiety and needs medication in moments of crisis. |
| Or Levy | 33 | M | Suffers from a serious sleep problem that increases in stressful situations and endangers his health. Suffers from a neurological problem that requires medication. |
| Yagev Buchstav | 34 | M | Depends on medication. Without treatment, his condition may deteriorate. |
| Elkana Bohbot | 34 | M | Has a background of asthma and has difficulty breathing, which could be life threatening in captivity conditions. Was seen injured in his face after the abduction. |
| Dolev Yehoud | 35 | M | Suffers from complex medical problems including kidney and thyroid problems. Without his regular medication his life is in danger. |
| Itai Svirsky | 39 | M | Suffers from depression and anxiety and needs medication. The conditions of captivity endanger his life. |

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| Chanan Yablonka | 42 | M | Suffers from Addison's disease and hypothyroidism. Without proper medical treatment his life is in great danger. |
| Elad Katzir | 47 | M | Needs a special hearing aid, otherwise deaf. Deals with prior mental health problems and needs his medications. |
| Ohad Yahalomi | 49 | M | Suffers from multiple gunshot wounds in both his hands and legs. The risk of complications, such as amputation and infections, is high and puts his life in danger. |
| Eli Sharabi | 51 | M | Suffers from a complex orthopedic problem in his back and shoulder. Captivity conditions risk his life and can cause disability and paralysis. |
| Nadav Popplewell | 51 | M | Suffers from diabetes, asthma, and other diseases. Without his medications and medical treatment, his life is in immediate danger. |
| Ron Benjamin | 53 | M | Exposure to a certain substance endangers his life. He suffers an injury that endangers him. |
| Yosef AlZiadne | 53 | M | Suffers from diabetes, hypertension, and other diseases. Without proper treatment, his life is in danger. |
| Yossi Sharabi | 53 | M | Suffers from urinary-renal problem that poses severe risks for infections and complications. |
| Ohad Ben Ami | 54 | M | Suffers from vertigo which can worsen in the conditions he is held. |
| Michel Nisenbaum | 59 | M | Suffers from Crohn's disease. Desperately needs regular treatment for his illness including transfusion therapy. Without treatment, he will suffer serious complications and imminent danger of death. |
| Lior Rudaeff | 61 | M | Suffered a serious heart attack two years ago and since then has been taking life-saving medications, including anticoagulants. It is known that he was injured on the day of the abduction, the severity of his injury is unknown and whether he was treated. In addition, he is without his glasses. |

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| Keith Samuel Siegel | 64 | M | Suffers from several medical conditions, including hypertension, Anxiety, migraine, fibromyalgia, and polyneuropathy. Without treatment, his life is fraught with great suffering, and may be in danger. |
| Luis Norberto Har | 70 | M | Needs life saving medications for the treatment of diabetes and hypertension. Needs Oxygen. Needs a hearing aid. |
| Alexander Dancyg | 75 | M | Had severe myocardial infarction several years ago, suffers from renal problems and could die without his life-saving medications. Needs a medical device for sleep. |
| Avraham Munder | 79 | M | Suffers from diabetes and hypertension, vision difficulties and copes with the effects of Parkinson's disease. Needs regular medication. |
| Chaim Peri | 79 | M | Suffers from cardiovascular disease and cancer. He was treated regularly with critical medications including blood thinners. In the video published a few days ago by his captors, it is evident that he has lost a significant percentage of his body weight and muscle tissue. His life is in great danger if he is not released soon. |
| Gadi Mozes | 79 | M | Suffers from several comorbidities, particularly in the digestive system and cardiovascular system. Needs essential medication. Without treatment, his life is in danger, and he is in great suffering. |
| Yoram Metzger | 80 | M | Suffers from diabetes and other medical problems and requires life-saving medication. After a fractured hip several months ago the conditions of captivity pose a grave danger and great suffering for him, based on testimonies of survivors. |
| Oded Lifshitz | 83 | M | Suffers from comorbidities in the respiratory and vascular systems. Without proper treatment, his life is in immediate danger. |
| Amiram Cooper | 85 | M | Urgently needs medication and medical care. Suffers from an untreated medical problem. |



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| Shlomo Mantzur | 86 | M | suffers from several complex comorbidities, including respiratory system problems as well as an eye problem that requires treatment. He underwent several surgeries including one a few months ago that may get complicated in these conditions and risk his life. |
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