

**Human Rights Council 52<sup>nd</sup> Session (March 2023)**

**Agenda Item 3 – ID with SR on Persons with Disabilities**

**NGO:** IJL - The International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists

**Representative delivering the statement:** Brenda Nanyunja

Mr. President,

More than eight years ago, in September 2014, Mr. Avraham Mengistu, an Israeli citizen, crossed into the Gaza Strip and has been held ever since incommunicado by the Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip. The same happened with Mr. Hisham al-Sayed in April 2015.

Both Mr. Mengistu and Mr. Al-Sayed suffer from mental health conditions, which triggered them to cross into the Gaza Strip. They must receive proper medical treatment.

The first and only signs of life since they were captured were only recently provided. In June 2022, Hamas published a photo of Mr. Al-Sayed lying in a bed and breathing through an oxygen mask, and on January 16, 2023, a video of Mr. Mengistu begging for his release.

Enforced disappearance is one of the most serious violations of international human rights law. Holding persons with disabilities incommunicado is a cruel and inhumane act. It is a grave violation of the right to freedom of the weakest members of society.

We call upon the Human Rights Council, the international community, the Special Rapporteur on the right of persons with disabilities, the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, and Member States to take proactive measures to require the governing authority in Gaza to share the relevant information regarding their location and conditions, and to let Avera and Hisham return to their families immediately.

Thank you Mr. President.