



October 12, 2023

To
His Excellency, Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations, New York

Excellency,

**Urgent call for your rapid and decisive action for the immediate release of hostages
in the Gaza Strip**

On Saturday morning, October 7, the Jewish holiday of *Simchat Torah*, Palestinian terrorists led by Hamas invaded the sovereign territory of Israel and launched a heinous attack by land, air, and sea, targeting more than 20 towns and villages.

The terrorist attack intentionally targeted Israel's civilian population. Amidst a barrage of indiscriminate rocket attacks directed at cities throughout southern and central Israel, Hamas armed operatives and other terrorists conducted a brutal murderous rampage – moving from house to house - slaughtering men, women, elderly and children – entire families. Houses and those inside were burnt alive, babies were murdered or left beside the lifeless bodies of their parents. Over 260 young adults who gathered to celebrate peace were massacred *en masse*. These horrific acts are reminiscent of the barbarous events of the Holocaust.

Hamas led terrorists also abducted hundreds of hostages – including elderly people, children, and infants ranging in age from a few months to over 80 years – their fate remains unknown. Many families are still waiting for some sign of life from their loved ones, who have been out of contact since the horrendous morning of October 7.

The vile details of these barbaric acts – the same as the tactics used by ISIS – including rape, beheading, mutilation of bodies, inconceivable torturous and inhuman acts – are still unraveling. As time progresses, more and more accounts are surfacing of mothers silencing their babies' crying in hiding fearing for their lives; people hiding under the corpses of their family and friends in an attempt to be spared; parents shielding their children with their bodies, and children shielding their parents with theirs. The number of the dead and wounded continues to rise – now over 1200 confirmed dead, over 3000 wounded.



These heinous acts blatantly defy the most basic principles of morality and humanity. They constitute grave violations of international law amounting to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

These atrocities must be stopped at once. Such blatant, barbarous inhuman behavior cannot be allowed to take place, and its perpetrators cannot be allowed to walk freely among the family of mankind.

In this time of grave crisis, as the lives and wellbeing of the hostages are in acute danger, we - the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists (IJL), an international organization established over 50 years ago to protect human rights globally and to prevent the recurrence of the gross violations of the past, in collaboration with the Coordinating Committee for the Families of the Abducted - representing the families of the abducted men, women and children - **call for your immediate action, through any available means, for: (1) the immediate provision of information on the fate of all men, women and children kidnapped from Israel; (2) the receipt of guarantees for their safety and humane treatment; and (3) their immediate return.**

Sincerely,

Meir Linzen

President

CC:

Ms. Virginia Gamba, The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

Ms. Pamela Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict