

February 2025

Dear Friend of Israel,

We stand at a pivotal moment in the war against Hamas, grappling with two fundamental questions: What lies ahead and how do we move forward? **A hostage deal has been agreed to, igniting fierce debate in Israel.** Some demand an exchange for the hostages at any cost while others warn of irreversible consequences. These heated discussions often dismiss the complexity of the situation, stifling meaningful dialogue and neglecting hope.

Over the past year, **we achieved a historic military victory by crushing Hamas in Gaza**, breaking its grip as a military entity. However, the October 7th attack remains an ongoing, deep wound—one that exposed profound failures of leadership across government, military and judiciary institutions. While the courage and resilience of our people shine, the failures at the top are undeniable.

Ultimately, **the current hostage deal reflects our inability to stand firm against negotiating with evil.** Rationally, we know that surrendering to Hamas' demands is dangerous. But emotionally, as a collective, we cannot turn away from the faces of the hostages and their families. This conflict between reason and compassion in which the heart overpowers logic echoes past decisions such as the deal in 2011 to release over 1,000 terrorists in exchange for IDF soldier Gilad Shalit.

Without addressing systemic weaknesses, another war—and even more heartbreak—is inevitable. For many, this war was meant to completely eradicate Hamas. Yet, **this hostage deal ensures the continuation of terror. Instead of “never again,” the agreement ensures “again and again.”** Supporters of the deal however, note that hostages are caught in a state between life and death and that their family members, reliving the horror of their capture daily, are stuck in a never-ending state of grief and fear. Opponents of the deal counter that those harmed by this deal are living in the shadow of future attacks. For them, agreeing to such an exchange seals the fate of future victims and perpetuates a cycle of terror, abductions and even more loss.

Ultimately, however, this war was launched against us when our enemies saw a fractured nation. **When we stood united, we started winning. Healing our divisions is essential**—not only to survive but to thrive as a people. With the finalization and implementation of this deal, we now face a choice. We can remain divided and throw accusations at each other, or we can approach this moment with humility. Let us admit, without celebrations but rather in truth and shared humanity, that we did our best under impossible circumstances. Imagine a gathering at the Western Wall when a hostage returns, and instead of waving flags or expressing political slogans, people are embracing one another in shared grief and relief, telling each other “Let my joy for your reunion meet my sorrow for those still missing.” In such a shared moment, mutual hope and trust can begin to rebuild.

While this deal will give Hamas terrorists time to regroup, the critical question we must answer is not what others will do but how we respond. Can we rise above division, using this period to find strength and unity? If we can learn to grieve together, we can learn to hope together. Unity is our greatest strength, radiating power even into the darkest places where many of our hostages are still being held. Leaving behind the tunnels of division we have dug for ourselves will allow us to rebuild—not just for now, but for the future. Finally, **as we reflect on this moment, we must turn our eyes upward in prayer and faith: “Our help is in the name of the Lord, Maker of Heaven and Earth.”** (Psalms 124:8) May God continue to bless you!



Shmuel Junger
Executive Director

P.S. Enclosed with this letter is our most recent newsletter, Nahala. I hope you enjoy reading it.