

July 2024

Dear Friend of Israel,

As I write this letter to you, the People of Israel are celebrating the successful rescue of four of the hostages who had been in captivity under Hamas for eight months. Noa Argamani (26), Shlomi Ziv (41), Andrey Kozlov (27) and Almog Meir Jan (22) were all freed thanks to the outstanding display of efficacy and coordination between the IDF and Israel's intelligence agencies, all of whom deserve major commendations. We also dare not forget the sacrifice of Arnon Zmora, a member of Israel's counter-terrorism Yamam unit, who succumbed from wounds sustained in the rescue mission, leaving behind a wife and two children.

In the wake of this celebratory development, I would like us to stay mindful of several key points.

1. While it may not be feasible to recover every abductee through such rescue operations, Israel certainly has the capabilities to save more hostages and should not stop in that effort.
2. Hamas has encountered a significant setback. As demonstrated by this rescue mission, time is not necessarily on Hamas' side. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the fact that without a combination of sustained operational pressure and negotiations for a hostage deal, we should not expect this setback for Hamas to lead to any concessions.
3. It is crucial to maintain perspective and to accept the sobering reality that the journey ahead remains arduous. The People of Israel continue to face ongoing strategic challenges including international pressure, incessant attacks from Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the continued captivity by Hamas of approximately 120 other hostages.
4. We must refrain from hastily drawing conclusions about the conditions faced by the four former abductees in Gaza. None of us can truly understand what they experienced for eight months in captivity. They need time and space to heal, and when they are willing and ready, they will share their stories with the rest of us.
5. A number of miracles took place which collectively helped ensure the rescue of the four hostages. There were dozens of terrorists guarding the two different locations where the hostages were kept. Yet, they were all overcome without the loss of a single hostage. At one point during the operation, a terrorist was spotted holding an RPG and was shot and killed a second or two before firing. We are reminded once again that with His help and mercy, God is always there to help us achieve the purportedly unachievable.

We should not think that the situation on the ground has significantly improved. Yet, this past week, we saw a lot of light in the sea of darkness upon which we have been traveling since October 7th. May we see only much more light in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Shalom,

Shmuel Junger
Director
Christian Friends of Israeli Communities

P.S. I will be traveling to Los Angeles, Seattle, Canada, and Colorado in July and August. If you would like to host me at your church, home, or other event or gathering, please call Kim at 719-683-2041. I have some availability in my schedule to bring Israel to your home town!