

Israel's stark dilemmas after hostage deaths

ANALYSIS

By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

The murder of six hostages in Gaza by Hamas represents a potential new turning point in the long war in Gaza. Hamas murdered Ori Danino, Alexander Lobanov, Almog Sarusi, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, and Carmel Gat, Eden Yerushalmi. It is believed the murders happened very recently, in the last days of August, just before the IDF discovered the bodies deep in a tunnel in Rafah. The murder of the hostages could lead to tough discussions about Israel's current tactics in Gaza and whether the endless ceasefire talks are having an effect. Hamas feels it can murder hostages and continue to control most of Gaza.

The murders of the hostages leave Israel with painful decisions to make. There are many who have called for a ceasefire in Israel and who want to see a deal with Hamas. Hamas claims that it supports a deal as well, based on terms agreed back in July. This deal has had many different countries play a role, including Qatar, Egypt, and the US. Qatar has played a dual role, as both host of Hamas and also the country that gains endless praise by the US and the West for its role in these talks. It's not clear if Doha has actually prolonged the talks in order to advance Hamas's demands, but it is clear that the talks have continued for seven months with little progress.

Those who follow the talks will claim that this is not the case. That they have frequently come close to some kind of agreement. However, the public has heard this for 10 months. "Almost" a done deal is what the public was told, often misleadingly. This is why the murder of these hostages has hit home so hard, because many believe that they could have been released as part of a deal. For instance, the two female hostages, Carmel Gat and Eden Yerushalmi should have been released last year during the initial deal. Hamas knows this yet it violated the deal last December, and didn't hand over the Bibas children either.

Hamas is hosted by Qatar. Hamas is backed by Iran, Russia, Turkey, and China. Hamas feels it can hold onto hostages and murder them without any consequences. Hamas knew that Hersh Goldberg-Polin's family spoke at the Democratic National Convention. Hamas feels impunity to murder hostages because it has not suffered any consequences for the October 7 attack. After Ismail Haniyeh was killed in Tehran, Yahya Sinwar was chosen to take his place because Hamas assumes Sinwar will survive this war, move to Doha, and lead them like Haniyeh did before. This illustrates the Hamas policy. Recently, Hamas official and former leader Khaled Mashaal gave a speech to attendees at an event in Istanbul calling for a resumption of suicide bombings. He did this openly in Istanbul, Turkey, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member. Hamas officials coordinate attacks on Israel from NATO member Turkey and major non-NATO ally Qatar. They fly back and forth from these countries to Moscow and Tehran. This is why Hamas feels it can murder hostages and face no consequences.

THE MURDER of the six hostages has led to condemnation from western leaders. However, this momentary support for Israel continues to come with calls for a ceasefire. Israel's dilemma now is that it must decide on its policy in Gaza. Currently, Israel's operations are at a low intensity. The IDF has units in the Netzarim corridor and in Rafah but these are there for limited operations. The IDF has left most of Gaza alone. Hamas controls most of Gaza. The war has gone on for almost 11 months and Hamas controls most of Gaza. Israel's tactics in Gaza have led to this situation. The IDF and Israel's security establishment, as well as its political leaders, apparently all believe Hamas will control Gaza when the war is

over. The current policy is to reduce Hamas's "governing" and "military" capabilities. This is a broad concept and it can be argued that Hamas has been reduced. It has lost some 20,000 fighters. But it continues to control most of Gaza. This is particularly true in central Gaza where Hamas rule has never been contested in 10 months of fighting. In Deir el-Balah, Nuseirat, Maghazi, and Bureij, Hamas is intact. It has also returned to Khan Yunis and northern Gaza. It may have returned in limited numbers, but it is there. No force has supplanted Hamas. There are no "bubbles" of local control, as was once floated as a way of replacing Hamas. There is no third force in Gaza.

This is where Israel faces a stark dilemma now. The IDF is concentrating on a new large-

scale operation in the West Bank and officials have also said they want to shift focus to northern Israel. Every month, officials say they want to help return Israelis to northern Israel. However, the Hezbollah attacks continue. Over 10,000 kids had to start school uprooted from their homes. Never in Israel's history did it evacuate a whole swath of the country like this for a year. This presents a stark challenge. Hezbollah rains rockets down on northern Israel. Three policemen, Roni Shakuri, Hadas Branch, and Arik Ben Eliyahu, were murdered in the West Bank on September 1. This is a major death toll.

Now the dilemma is not just what to do in the West Bank, Gaza and the North. There are questions not just about a ceasefire deal, but also about whether Israel will ever investigate

what went wrong on October 7 and learn from it. It's unclear what the strategy in Gaza has become and why a "day after" plan was never released. It appears the day after plan is to have Hamas in control, but in a more reduced capacity. It is not clear how reconstruction will begin in Gaza, if Hamas is in control. Will Qatari money again flow to Gaza and the tunnels be rebuilt?

So far, Israel appears to be treading water. The murder of the hostages could have been a wake-up call to shift tactics in Gaza. Rather than letting Hamas continue to hold hostages forever, of which there are more than 100 held in Gaza, it could signal a decision to come down hard on Hamas. The murderers of the six hostages apparently slipped away without being caught. Eventually questions will be raised about

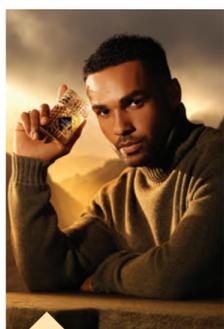


BYSTANDERS ON THE street pay their respects to Hersh Goldberg-Polin in Jerusalem yesterday. (Ronen Zvulun/Reuters)

politics, rather than a national strategy and national desire to make Hamas pay. Some believe the IDF can withdraw from Gaza and then return. Others don't want to withdraw. However, absent from the conversation is a discussion about sending the IDF forward, surging into the central camps, uprooting Hamas, eliminating Sinwar, and freeing the remaining hostages by force, despite the cost. The murder of the hostages might have engendered a decision to act decisively and seize the initiative. Perhaps 10 months of a slow tactical campaign in Gaza and endless ceasefire talks have not led anywhere, except for allowing Hamas to believe that it can murder hostages and get away with it? This is a stark dilemma for Israel, but it may be time to start asking these tough questions.



Golda is launching a new fruit shake collection to freshen up your summer. 100% fruit, no added sugar, preservatives, or artificial colors.



Luxury fragrance brand KILIAN PARIS, by designer Kilian Hennessy, is proud to announce that "Emily in Paris" star Lucien Laviscount is the brand's first-ever ambassador and will lead the campaign for their new fragrance.



Yellow Star is the ultimate day and night moisturizer designed to address various skin concerns. The cream enhances elasticity and maximizes absorption into the skin's multiple layers. It helps to smooth the skin, correct tone and texture, aid in moisture retention, and keep the skin looking plump, firm, radiant, and youthful.

What's new?



Miu Miu, the bold Italian fashion brand ranked among the top three brands by LYST magazine for 2024, is launching its fall-winter sunglasses and optical glasses collection.



Israel will launch its first automated safe deposit box facility operated by robots in the last quarter of 2024. In collaboration with Gunnebo, Brixton is opening "Brixton 3," an automated safe deposit box facility operated entirely by robots with no human contact. Dvir Indig, CEO of Brixton, stated: "The Brixton 3 safe deposit box facility, located on the ground floor of the Rubinstein Tower in Tel Aviv, will include 2,500 safe deposit boxes, with an investment of approximately 5 million NIS."



Braun is proud to introduce the Braun IPL Pro7 in Israel, the newest and most advanced version of its IPL device series for permanent hair reduction, designed for both women and men. This groundbreaking device is the world's first smart home IPL system, featuring a personalized app that helps users achieve optimal results.



150 yellow kites were flown from the roof of the "Palace Modiin" retirement home by the residents' grandchildren.



Evrideo, an innovative start-up specializing in cloud-based broadcasting platforms for TV channels, has recently secured a significant deal with the second-largest TV market player in Brazil. The agreement, valued at approximately \$1.5 million, marks the first phase of a digital TV project involving the launch of 10 TV channels. Evrideo's platform, which eliminates the need for expensive hardware, is already widely adopted by most Israeli television channels on platforms such as Yes, Hot, Partner, Cellcom, and FreeTV. The company's global client base includes prominent names like the NBA channel, France's national television, and M6, France's second-largest broadcaster. In total, Evrideo serves around 350 TV channels worldwide. Avi Zeno, CEO of Evrideo, announced, "Recently, our broadcasting platform transitioned to Oracle's cloud to enhance AI-driven performance." The largest investor in Evrideo is the venture capital fund SIBF. Or Ben Shushan, the managing partner of SIBF, added, "We foresee that our collaboration with industry giants like Oracle and Nvidia will propel Evrideo to a leading position in the digital broadcasting field, powered by advanced AI solutions."



Sloggi, the leading international lingerie brand, presents a collection of bralettes designed for maximum comfort. These bralettes allow you to feel confident in your body while adapting to your shape and are the best to accompany you throughout the day with comfort and support.

With a wide range of sizes and styles available, the brand's models can be purchased at Triumph stores, selected lingerie retailers (such as Mashbir, H&O, Et Livni Nashim, Intima, etc.), lingerie shops, and on our online website: <https://triumph.co.il>.



Newpan is offering an extensive selection of electrical products from top-quality brands, featuring attractive promotions and discounts in preparation for the High Holidays.



A collaboration between Pini Gurvitz, CEO of Yachin, and seven Gaza envelope farmers growing premium vegetables has led the company, for the first time in its 90-year-long operation, to produce a series of frozen vegetable products made from Israeli agriculture.



British fragrance brand Atkinsons 1799 introduces new scented candles featuring a regal aroma.



AVIA Storage provides advanced storage solutions for private customers and businesses and is now launching a new and highly successful service: Storage boxes, serving as an "extra room" or "back storage." Customers can rent durable plastic boxes to store equipment that is not in regular use, picking it up every few months (for example, during seasonal changes) or after several years when it becomes relevant again (for instance, when a new child joins the family). The cost is only 12 NIS per month!



The Shaldag Eyewear Group is proud to announce the launch of the Japanese sunglasses brand Eyevan in Israel. Eyevan offers designs that blend classic elements and modern aesthetics.



MDA, Israel's National Rescue Organization, and the Steimatzy Network Launch: Upgraded Emergency Kit for the Safe Room (Merkhav Mugan)