



## **Position Paper by the Israeli Psychological Association regarding the terror events of October 7th, 2023.**

On Saturday, October 7th, 2023, Palestinian Hamas in Gaza launched an unprecedented terror attack on Israeli civilians living in the south of the country and participating in a music festival. This attack resulted in 1,400 deaths, including babies, children, adults, and elderly civilians, and more than 330 soldiers. Over 240 Israelis and foreign civilians, including 30 children and babies, were kidnapped and as of the writing of this statement, more than 240 people, including babies and children below 18, are being held hostage in Gaza's tunnels by Hamas.

Many are still missing, mainly due to difficulties identifying bodies that were highly mutilated.

The Isis-style atrocities of the attack that was orchestrated by the Hamas leadership have been widely documented and shared via multiple media channels worldwide. These atrocities are clearly within the definition of severe crimes against humanity. The victims included people from three-month-old babies to senior people over 90 years of age. People with disabilities like CP and Autism were executed with their parents and caregivers. Hamas massacred and kidnapped people from more than 30 different nationalities, including Jews, Arab Muslims, Thai farm workers, and citizens of Russia, the USA, India, Kazakhstan, and many other nations.

The list of horrors of October 7th included burning babies and people alive, execution of young people in groups standing in lines, rape of young girls and sexual acts with their bodies, mutilation of bodies, killing children and parents in front of their families, decapitations, shooting of pets and cattle, and attempted systematic cleansing of rural communities to a level of extinction. These actions reflect a murderous ideology that prevailed in the world before by organizations such as Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, and ISIS, as well as the Nazi regime. Detailed Instructions as to the performance of these atrocities were found on the terrorists sent by their leaders.

Like any other nation, Israel has the inherent right to defend its sovereignty and the safety of its citizens. Israel's actions comply with international law, particularly the principles of self-defense outlined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes the right of nations to use force in self-defense against armed attacks.

During Israel's military operations and throughout its existence, Hamas has used the civilian Gazan population as human shields by placing them beside military rocket launching sites and by maintaining terrorist headquarters located under hospitals and humanitarian facilities. Hamas prevents many of its civilians from escaping to safe zones and is known to redirect humanitarian aid for their use. Meanwhile, Israel maintains continuing humanitarian support of food, water, and medicine to the Gazan population.



The IPA clearly states there is no excuse for the horrific massacre and kidnapping of civilians to Gaza, no matter what preceded the event in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nothing can provide legitimacy to the events described above. Israelis have a right to live in peace and security. Humanity should not tolerate murderous ideology nor the use of human shields, even when it claims it fights for freedom. While all people naturally strive for independence, hateful and murderous acts cannot be legitimized and can not be echoed in democratic societies.

As psychologists, we uphold the belief in the value of all lives. We cherish the goodness of living, not death, as our ultimate goal. Terror organizations like Hamas worship and preach for death by Jihad, openly call for Israel's destruction, and encourage young people (not the leaders) to sacrifice their lives for their cause: Annihilation of Israel. It poses a threat to Israel's existence, and Israel must defend itself against such threats with any needed force in compliance with international laws.

The psychological trauma that Israel is experiencing can be expected to be a challenge for decades, affecting thousands of individuals, their families, their close social circles, and the larger society. Helping with the recovery and rehabilitation of **all** parts of the Israeli population is our long-term mission.

As psychologists in Israel, we have always been committed and devoted to a wide range of endeavors to enhance the mental health of Jews and Arabs, Christians and Druze, and other minorities in Israel and the region. We are addressing extreme psychological pain experienced among civilians from both sides. However, the events of October 7th should not be perceived as just another part of the ongoing conflict. Justification of terror adds to the national trauma.

We urge our colleagues in the global psychological communities and organizations to speak out against terror and radical Islam and support Israel in the recovery of victims and their families during these highly trying times.

Sincerely,

Yoram Schleyer, Chairperson  
Israel Psychological Association