

Thursday, September 5, 2024

To:

Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger
President of the International Committee of the Red Cross
International Committee of the Red Cross
Avenue de la Paix 19
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

Samantha Shann, President
World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)
17 Clark House,
Clark Avenue,
Bognor Regis, West Sussex,
PO21 2RX, United Kingdom

Subject: Urgent Call to Acknowledge the Murder of Carmel Gat, Healthcare Professional Taken Hostage, and Advocate for Release of All Hostages Held in Gaza

Dear Ms. Spoljaric Egger and Dr. Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Ms. Shann,

We are writing with deep sorrow and urgency following the brutal murder of Carmel Gat, a 40-year-old occupational therapist, who was executed while held captive by Hamas in Gaza. Carmel was taken hostage on October 7, 2023, during a visit to her parents' home in Kibbutz Be'eri. On September 1, 2024, her body was recovered from a Hamas tunnel in Rafah, alongside five other hostages who were also executed by their captors.

Carmel was a dedicated healthcare professional specializing in mental health and was pursuing a master's degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Known for her empathy, peacefulness, and professionalism, she was a caregiver who helped two children endure their ordeal by practicing yoga and meditation daily while in captivity.

The release of a psychological terror video by Hamas showing the final statements of Carmel Gat and Alexander Lobanov stands as another testament to Hamas's cruelty and disregard for human life. In the video, both hostages described the harsh conditions of their captivity and pleaded with the Israeli public to pressure their government to negotiate for their release. Notably, Noam, a 17-year-old

released hostage whom Carmel cared for during captivity, expressed his gratitude with the words: "Thank you for taking care of me; because of you, I am here."

This loss not only represents a profound tragedy for her family and colleagues but also highlights crimes against healthcare teams and hostages. These actions flagrantly disregard the fundamental tenets of International Humanitarian Law, which mandates the protection of civilians, non-combatants, the wounded, the sick, healthcare workers, volunteers, and the general civilian population.

We urge the World Health Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and all health organizations to publicly acknowledge and condemn the cruel murder of Carmel Gat and the other hostages. Immediate action is needed to protect all hostages and healthcare workers still held captive, including Keith Segal, an American-Israeli occupational therapist. Additionally, Lior Rudaeff, an emergency medical technician and dedicated MDA volunteer ambulance driver for 40 years, was murdered on October 7, 2023, and his body was kidnapped to Gaza. Bar Kuperstein, a volunteer medic, remained on site to assist the wounded after the attack until he was kidnapped by Hamas.

We call on your organizations to advocate for the release of all hostages and to treat this atrocity with the same gravity applied to all violations against healthcare workers in conflict zones.

Sincerely,

Prof. Hagai Levine, Head
Health Team, Hostages Families Forum

Prof. Tamir Sheafer, Rector
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Eli Pikarsky, Dean
Faculty of Medicine,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Yafit Gilboa, Head
School of Occupational Therapy,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Prof. Karen B. Avraham, Dean
Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences
Tel Aviv University

Prof. Shai Ashkenazi, Dean
School of Medicine
Ariel University

Prof. Reli Hershkovitz, Dean
Faculty of Health Sciences
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Prof. Ami Aronheim, Dean
Faculty of Medicine
Technion Israel Institute of Technology

Prof. Orly Avni, Dean
Faculty of Medicine
Bar-Ilan University

Prof. Sigal Portnoy, Chair
Occupational Therapy Department,
Tel Aviv University

Revital Gal, Chairwoman
The Israeli society of Occupational Therapy

Eshel Iuliana
Head of OT national organization at the Health
Professions National Workers Union, Israel