Family of hostages at rally: Why does the world accept that 240 people are buried alive?

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Three relatives of Jewish and Israeli people who were kidnapped by Hamas and held as hostages in Gaza spoke at the March for Israel rally at the National Mall in Washington DC today.

Orna Neutra, the mother of Omer Neutra, described her son, who enlisted in the IDF as a lone soldier following his gap year and is descended from Holocaust survivors on both sides of his family. "Omer is a warm, optimistic, and people-loving person. Everywhere he goes, he immediately makes new friends."

“From a place of deep pain, we hold strong for you, Omer. We speak in your name, tirelessly. We hope and pray and we act. And I must believe that our actions have power. Omer you’re not just my beloved son, you touch so many in deep and profound ways," Neurta said.

"There is power in speaking Omer's name, posting his picture, and keeping his story in the public eye, calling your representatives every single day," she said. "We must all use the power that we have to bring Omer and all the hostages home now."

Rachel Goldberg, the mother of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a civilian American citizen who was kidnapped from the music rave for peace on October 7, demanded to know why so much of the world is ignoring the plight of the hostages.

"We hostage families have lived the last 39 days in slow-motion torment," she said. "But the real souls suffering are those of the hostages. And they want to ask everyone in the world; all the screamers, the indifferent, the experts, the academics, the knowledgable, the passives, the perfectly outraged, the righteous, the indignant, the haters, the leaders, the lovers. the every single one of us: Why is the world accepting that 240 human beings from almost 30 countries have been stolen and buried alive?”

She added, referencing the story of a Christian person who saved Jews during the Holocaust: “What the world needs to start thinking about today is, what will your excuse be?"

Alana Zeitchik, who has six cousins who are being held by Hamas as hostages in Gaza, addressed the March for Israel rally in Washington DC today.

"For too many in the West, the suffering of hostages’ families like mine has become a footnote, collateral damage in service of some perceived higher universal truth, Zeitchik said. “For too many, it feels like to care about one family, to love one child, is to diminish the suffering of another. But the simple human truth is that you don’t have to choose. You can abhor the suffering of Palestinian families and the suffering of Israeli families like mine."

“You can call for peace and the immediate return of the innocent men, women, and children who were violently taken from us. It doesn’t need to be political to share in my grief or in the anguish that the Israeli people are feeling. To demand the release of the hostages is not an act of politics. Nor is it a cry for war. It is an act of love and a cry for humanity. And love is the only thing that can repair our shattered hearts and bring us back together in the name of peace,” she said.

The mothers' and cousin's remarks were accompanied by chants of "bring them home" from the crowds gathered at the National Mall.