Remains ID’d of Oded Lifshitz, Ariel and Kfir Bibas, but other body is not the boys’ mom Shiri

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Slain hostages Oded Lifshitz, and brothers Ariel and Kfir Bibas, were identified after their remains were returned to Israel by Hamas on Thursday but the military said another body sent by the terror group was not the young boys’ mother Shiri Silberman Bibas.

Specialists at Abu Kabir forensic institute were not able to identify the fourth body, the Israel Defense Forces announced early Friday morning.

The shocking statement came after the return of the remains in a [propaganda-filled ceremony](https://www.timesofisrael.com/bodies-of-four-slain-hostages-brought-to-israel-503-days-after-they-were-taken-alive/), that had already sparked anger and mourning across Israel. Hostages’ families demanded the freeing of all the captives, alive and dead, still held by terror groups in Gaza, and leaders vowed to destroy Hamas.

The revelation that Shiri Bibas’s body had not been returned, as promised by Hamas, and that the body was not that of any other hostage either, left the future of the ongoing hostage-ceasefire deal looking more uncertain than ever.

“This is a very serious violation by the Hamas terrorist organization, which is required by the agreement to return four dead hostages,” said the IDF. “We demand that Hamas return Shiri home, along with all of our hostages.”

“We share the deep sorrow of the Bibas family at this difficult time and will continue to make every effort to return Shiri and all the hostages home as soon as possible,” the army added.

At Hamas’s handover ceremony on Thursday morning, one of the four coffins handed over was marked as being that of Shiri Bibas, featuring her photograph and name in Hebrew and Arabic, and her “date of arrest”: October 7, 2023.

Forensic experts conducted numerous examinations on the body, comparing it to her DNA and that of other female hostages, but officials said there were no matches and the identity of the remains was still unclear.

Using forensic evidence and intelligence, authorities assessed that the two young boys were “brutally murdered” by terrorists in late November 2023, the IDF said. Ariel was 4-years-old and Kfir was 10-months-old when they were killed. They were not killed in an Israeli airstrike as Hamas claimed, according to the military.

The family’s father Yarden was abducted separately by Hamas terrorists after he left the safe room of their Nir Oz home in an attempt to distract the gunmen and save his family on October 7, 2023. He was freed from Gaza on February 1.

**Oded Lifshitz mourned**

Earlier, the head of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine confirmed that Oded Lifshitz was slain in captivity more than a year ago, after positively identifying his remains.

This is a “difficult moment” for all of Israel, Dr. Chen Kugel said, sending condolences to the Lifshitz family.

Like the Bibas family, Lifshitz, 83, was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7, 2023. His wife Yocheved was separately abducted that day and freed by Hamas over two weeks later.

“We received with sorrow the official and bitter news about the identification of the body of [our beloved Oded](https://www.timesofisrael.com/oded-lifshitz-hostage-slain-by-islamic-jihad-was-journalist-and-peace-activist/),” the Lifshitz family said in a statement, carried by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum.

“503 agonizing days of uncertainty have come to an end,” the family said, adding: “We hoped and prayed so much for the ending to be different. Now we can mourn the husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who we have been missing since October 7.”

But, they added: “Our family’s rehabilitation will start now and won’t end until the last hostage is returned.”

The Prime Minister’s Office said the IDF had told Lifshitz’s family that he was murdered in captivity by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

**Netanyahu: We will ‘settle the score’ with Hamas**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday offered a message of unity and victory over Hamas, in a short video published to social media after the terror group handed over four coffins but before the results of the identification processes.

“On this day we are all united,” says Netanyahu in a video message. “We are all united in unbearable grief. We all ache with pain that is mixed with rage.

“We are all furious at the monsters of Hamas,” he said, adding that Israel must “settle the score with the vile murderers — and we will settle the score.”

He then quoted Psalm 94: “O God of vengeance, O Lord; O God show vengeance.”

“We will bring back all our hostages, destroy the murderers, eliminate Hamas, and together — with God’s help — we will secure our future,” he pledged.

Defense Minister Israel Katz also issued a statement, saying: “The heart of the entire nation is mourning today. Hamas abducted, Hamas murdered, Hamas will be destroyed. We will take revenge against our enemies, and secure our future.”

**Demonstrators mourn hostages in Tel Aviv**

Some 1,500 people gathered at Tel Aviv’s Hostages Square on Thursday evening for a memorial to the slain hostages, following the release of the remains.

Israeli flags dotted the crowd, many featuring a Star of David interspersed with a yellow ribbon representing the hostages.

Pop star Omer Adam opened the ceremony with a rendition of Chava Alberstein’s 1988 song, “We Are All a Single Human Tissue.”

The ceremony’s title was a lyric from the song: “If one of us departs from us.”

The performance was followed by a moment of silence in memory of the four hostages.

Yael Adar, mother of Tamir Adar, whose body is held captive in Gaza, called for the public to demand all hostages, living and dead, return by Israel’s Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and terror victims, marked this year on April 29-30.

“This is Tamir’s last will and testament,” she said.

On Memorial Day, there should be “no family in Israel without a grave, no casualty abandoned in a foreign land, and the living will return to independence and freedom,” she said, adding that every family of a slain captive is still “troubled by the hope that there’s been an error” and their loved one is alive.

“The only way to get certainty is to bring them back for burial,” she said.

Tamir Adar, a member of Kibbutz Nir Oz’s emergency response squad, was killed defending the kibbutz on October 7, 2023, and his body was snatched to Gaza.

“Tamir is a hero,” said his mother. “When Assaf, his son, misses his dad, we remind him that his dad was a hero — he saved people. But then Assaf asks: ‘What’s a hero worth if he’s dead?’ And I ask: What’s a dead hero worth if he hasn’t been returned for burial?”

Oded Lifshitz, Shiri Silberman Bibas, and Bibas’s young sons Ariel and Kfir were all members of Kibbutz Nir Oz, where roughly every fourth resident was murdered or kidnapped.

“They are another testament to the failure of October 7, 2023,” said Adar.

She said she used to live next door to Lifshitz, “a man of words and peace.” She also recalled Ariel Bibas, “a child of life,” playing at the entrance to the kibbutz when she would visit.

Rabbi Elhanan Danino, father of slain captive soldier Ori Danino, also eulogized “the four wondrous ones.”

In a speech borrowing heavily from Jewish liturgy, Rabbi Danino, whose son’s body was retrieved last August, recited a prayer attributed to the Jewish High Priest on Yom Kippur: “Lead us upright to our land… prevent plague and pillage from befalling us and the entire House of Israel.”

Referring to the Bibas boys’ shock of red hair, he said, “Today our heart was painted orange.”

Addressing the nation’s leaders, he added: “If you fail to bring everyone home, you will bear the stain.”

Danino ended with Kaddish, the Jewish mourners’ prayer.

The ceremony also featured a speech by Tzvika and Ruti Greenglick, whose son, 26-year-old Shauli Greenglick, was killed in December 2023 while fighting in Gaza.

Before the war, the younger Greenglick had been accepted to compete in Israel’s pre-Eurovision singing tournament.

His parents said he “fulfilled two dreams: to be a singer and to defend his country.”

**Terror groups slip propaganda into slain hostages’ coffins**

In a public, propaganda-filled ceremony on Thursday morning — which drew[harsh condemnation](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-human-rights-chief-hamas-parading-of-hostages-bodies-is-abhorrent-and-cruel/) by Western diplomats, the United Nations, and the International Red Cross — the Hamas terror group turned over four coffins that it said contained the remains of Lifshitz and the three members of the Bibas family, as part of the hostage-ceasefire deal agreed to in January.

The terror group had inserted propaganda material into the coffins, according to Israeli officials, which prompted Jerusalem to immediately contact the mediators of the deal — Egypt, Qatar and the United States — and demand stern action, against what it said was a desecration of the sanctity of the dead.

In addition, a propaganda video issued on Thursday by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the terror group that held Oded Lifshitz, showed a terror operative supposedly digging up the elderly hostage’s remains.

The casket seen in the video, different from the one seen at the ceremony staged by Hamas, was plastered with propaganda messages blaming Israel for Lifshitz’s death, and was topped with a map of the claimed borders of Palestine with text reading: “We will not give up a centimeter of Palestine.”

Sixty-seven of the 251 hostages abducted by Hamas on October 7 remain in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 35 confirmed dead by the IDF. Hamas is also holding two Israeli civilians who entered the Strip in 2014 and 2015, as well as the body of an IDF soldier who was killed in 2014.

Six more living hostages are [set to be released](https://www.timesofisrael.com/these-are-the-six-living-hostages-set-to-be-released-saturday/?utm_campaign=most_popular&utm_source=website&utm_medium=article_end&utm_content=4) on Saturday. All of them are alive.

The releases come as the first, 42-day stage of the three-phase ceasefire deal nears its end. The second phase, which is to see the release of the rest of the hostages in exchange for a permanent end to the war, appears [up in the air](https://www.timesofisrael.com/dermer-in-us-to-meet-witkoff-on-difficult-phase-two-of-hostage-ceasefire-deal/), with conflicting messages from the government about whether Israel intends to carry on with the ceasefire, or return to fighting.

Netanyahu has vowed to return all the hostages, while also refusing to countenance any end to the war that would allow Hamas to remain intact in Gaza or allow the Palestinian Authority to take over as a civil government instead.