In video, Hamas forces hostage Evyatar David to dig what he fears will be his own grave

August 2, 2025

The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-living-skeleton-buried-alive-hostage-evyatar-davids-family-publishes-clip-of-hamas-video/>

Hostage [Evyatar David](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-eviatar-david-ided-in-a-hamas-photo-on-telegram/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter) appeared pale and emaciated in a video that his family approved for publication on Saturday, a day after the Hamas terror group released the shocking footage of him. His family said it showed he was being deliberately starved.

The Hamas footage, more of which was approved by the family for publication in the course of Saturday, includes David speaking in a weak voice, in remarks likely dictated to him by his captors, and shows him digging what he says he fears will be his own grave.

The video was approved for publication as US special envoy Steve Witkoff told hostages’ families that Washington supports a comprehensive Gaza ceasefire-hostage agreement and would no longer seek “piecemeal deals,” and is opposed to expanding the fighting in Gaza. The effort was complicated, he said, but he believed it would ultimately succeed.

Witkoff made the comments during a visit to Hostages Square in Tel Aviv, where hostages’ relatives and hundreds of supporters rallied after Hamas put out the [video](https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-issues-propaganda-video-of-hostage-evyatar-david/) of David and Palestinian Islamic Jihad published similarly [harrowing footage](https://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-jihad-airs-video-of-hostage-rom-braslavski-they-broke-him-family-says/) of hostage [Rom Braslavski](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-rom-braslavski-rave-guard-who-saved-others/).

Initially on Saturday, David’s family approved for publication a still image from the new footage, which was shared alongside a screenshot from a Hamas propaganda video released in February and a photograph of him before he was kidnapped from the Reim-area Nova music festival during the terror onslaught of October 7, 2023.

It then approved the publication of part of the footage, in which David is seen in a tunnel with a ceiling roughly as high as he is tall, crossing off dates on a calendar on the tunnel’s wall. He is unkempt and unshaven, and appears skeletal even in comparison with the February video, which was filmed during the last ceasefire-hostage deal with Hamas, as Israel increased the flow of aid into Gaza. That deal collapsed in March.

The family later permitted Israeli media to publish the full video.

“Today is July 27, at 12:00 p.m., I don’t know what I’m going to eat,” he says. “I haven’t eaten for a few days in a row.”

“I am in a very, very difficult situation, for a long time, for a few months,” he says, describing the lack of food and water, and stating that his captors are giving him what they can.

“This isn’t fiction, this is real,” David adds.

He says his diet consists mainly of some lentils and beans, pointing to the calendar and noting days he has eaten, and several days in a row when he hasn’t received food.

He says he has been in “very, very, very difficult conditions for a very long time, a few months already… You can see how thin I am…”

In the middle of the video, the person behind the camera hands him a can: “This can is for two days. This whole can is for two days so that I don’t die,” David says.

Addressing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, David says he feels, “I have been completely abandoned by you, my prime minister, who is supposed to worry about me and all the prisoners held by the enemy.”

Hamas labels the hostages it took as “prisoners.”

At the end of the video, David describes himself digging what he fears will be his own grave inside the tunnel, as he is filmed doing so. He states that he is feeling “weaker and weaker” by the day and heading toward death.

“This is the grave I think I’m going to be buried in,” he says. “Time is running out. You are the only ones who can end this.”

The new Hamas videos were sent as the United Nations and other aid agencies have warned of mounting hunger in Gaza as a result of Israel’s aid policies. Israel has rejected the accusations of starvation as Hamas propaganda. During the Hostages Square rally on Saturday, the mother of a hostage said a senior government official dismissed as Hamas propaganda her concern that her son was “skin and bones.”

In a statement on the new footage, David’s family said: “We are forced to witness our dear son and brother Evyatar being deliberately and cynically starved in Hamas’s tunnels in Gaza — a living skeleton buried alive. Our son has only a few days left to live in his current condition.”

“Hamas is using our son, Evyatar, as a living experiment in a disgusting hunger campaign,” the family said, demanding that humanitarian aid entering Gaza also reach David and urging “Israeli media to stop pumping Hamas propaganda.”

“Our Evyatar is being starved for the Hamas terror group’s propaganda purposes,” continued the family. “There is no limit to the pain the Hamas terror group causes the hostages and the residents of Gaza.”

“We are begging the government of Israel, the people of Israel, every nation of the world, and especially President Trump,” the family said. “You must do everything in your power, by any means necessary, to save Evyatar and Guy [Gilboa-Dalal, with whom he has been held] and the rest of the hostages. They urgently need proper food and medical care so their lives can be saved.”

A senior Israeli source was quoted on Channel 12 on Saturday night saying that the Hamas captors are not short of food, and are deliberately starving the hostages. “We know from testimony of returned hostages and from our own information that the hostages’ captors don’t look like [the emaciated hostages],” the official says. “This is deliberate starvation, not only to abuse the hostages themselves but also to abuse their families and the public.”

Witkoff: Plan is to end war, not expand it

Witkoff, who was greeted with applause at Hostages Square, told relatives of captives there that “the plan is currently not to expand the war, but to finish it,” according to a statement from the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which quoted in Hebrew the envoy’s English-language comments.

“A majority of Israelis want the hostages at home, and a majority of Gaza’s public wants the return of hostages because they want the rehabilitation of the Strip,” he was quoted as saying in the Hebrew statement.

Neither comment appeared in the forum’s English-language statement on what it said was a three-hour meeting.

In English, Witkoff was quoted as telling the hostages’ families: “We will get your children home and hold Hamas responsible for any bad acts on their part. We will do what’s right for the Gaza people.”

“We now need to bring all of them home. We are very close to ending the war,” he said, according to the statement. “We have a plan to end the war and bring everyone home.”

“We know who is alive, and someone will be to blame if they don’t come out alive. The US stands behind this statement,” Witkoff added.

He was also quoted as saying that the hostages’ release is a “first priority” and “sacred mission” for the administration of US President Donald Trump.

“This is the most important thing Trump asked me to work on, and I will on it until my last breath,” said Witkoff, who has also overseen US negotiations with Russia on the Ukraine war and with Iran over its nuclear program.

In a recording from the meeting published by Channel 12 news, Witkoff could be heard telling the families that Washington was no longer interested in a ceasefire agreement that would release only some of the hostages, but was rather seeking a comprehensive deal. The Hostages and Missing Families Forum has long assailed such agreements as needlessly prolonging their loved ones’ suffering.

“No piecemeal deals,” Witkoff said. “That doesn’t work. And we’ve tried everything.”

“I hear your frustration, and I understand it. You want your children home, and who wouldn’t?” said Witkoff, adding that Trump “cares as much about your children as he would about any American hostage that was in there.”

Despite what he described as a “super complicated situation,” Witkoff said he believes “we are going to be successful here ultimately… for a lot of reasons and some of those I can’t discuss right now.”

In Hebrew, Channel 12 quoted him as saying that the “negotiations with Hamas were very frustrating,” and that “we think the negotiations need to turn into all-or-nothing.”

The comments came after Netanyahu had [reportedly](https://www.timesofisrael.com/smotrich-ben-gvir-said-to-urge-razing-gaza-city-with-pm-not-objecting-idf-chief-balking/) not ruled out the recommendation by his far-right coalition partners, who oppose a ceasefire-hostage deal, to raze Gaza City and take full control of the Strip.

Witkoff also [reportedly told the families](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/witkoff-said-to-tell-families-nothing-new-in-hostage-talks-situation-complicated/) of hostages that part of ending the ongoing war requires the demilitarization of Hamas, and that “Hamas said that it is ready to demilitarize.”

“Beyond this, some Arab countries are demanding that Hamas disarm,” he was quoted as saying.

Hamas later put out a [statement](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/hamas-says-witkoff-visit-to-ghf-site-aimed-at-polishing-the-image-of-the-occupation/) vowing not to disarm “as long as the occupation exists” and lashing out at Witkoff over the Trump administration’s efforts to boost the amount of humanitarian aid entering Gaza.

Witkoff was also quoted by Channel 12 telling the families that there is a shortage of food in Gaza, but no starvation. “After we debunk that claim, we can continue the negotiation.”

‘Jews becoming skin and bones because of political survival’

Hundreds of people gathered in Tel Aviv’s Hostages Square on Saturday afternoon, where family members of hostages held in Gaza set up a barbed wire protest camp in the middle of the square, following the release of the footage of David and Braslavski.

“Against the backdrop of horrifying footage and harsh reports about the hostages’ condition – hostage families will cry out this morning in the heart of Tel Aviv: A barbed wire fence compound will be erected in Hostages Square, family members will sit imprisoned within it – and cry out the desperate plea of their loved ones who are dying in captivity,” the forum said in a statement.

“We appeal to the Israeli government and the US administration: Look our loved ones – and us – in the eyes. The danger to their lives is tangible and immediate. The risk of losing those deceased is growing,” it continued.

“This is the time for a comprehensive deal and an end to the war. No more delays. No more leaving them behind. Stop this nightmare and bring them out of the tunnels and home,” the statement said.

The weekly anti-government protests and hostage rallies held on Saturday evenings are expected to be more subdued this week, as the Jewish holiday fast of Tisha B’Av begins at sundown on Saturday evening. Some rallies will still be held in cities and towns across Israel, including anti-war rallies in mixed and Arab cities organized by the Jewish-Arab coexistence group Standing Together.

“In recent days, we saw the difficult videos of Rom and Evyatar from captivity,” Einav Zangauker, mother of hostage[Matan Zangauker](https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-issues-new-photo-of-hostage-matan-zangauker-threatens-execution-if-troops-come-near/), said at the Tel Aviv protest camp. “Our children are undergoing a Holocaust.”

“Jews are becoming skin and bones because of political survival,” said Zangauker, who has long accused Netanyahu of prolonging the war to appease his far-right coalition partners. “If we don’t free everyone now, they will not survive for much longer.”

Anat Angrest, mother of captive soldier [Matan](https://www.timesofisrael.com/newly-released-abduction-video-shows-hostage-matan-angrest-manhandled-by-gazans/), said that the ongoing crisis is a “complete failure” for Netanyahu, playing on his promise to achieve a “complete victory” over Hamas in the ongoing war.

“I am standing here because my son is going through a second Holocaust. I am the image of failure for the prime minister. I avoided using the word Holocaust until now, because I am a daughter of a Holocaust survivor,” she said.

“My father is going through a second Holocaust through his grandson. We see videos of the Holocaust in color. The 2025 Holocaust is continuing and extending thanks to the Israeli government,” she added.

In the square, she recounted telling the government’s hostage point man, Gal Hirsch, that her son was “skin and bones,” and that he replied to her that such comments were “Hamas propaganda.”

In a response on X to the statement, Hirsch accused the media of misrepresenting his remarks. According to Hirsch, in a personal message to a hostage’s relative, he said the videos released by terror groups of hostages “are part of Hamas’s starvation campaign,” and not that the captives’ suffering itself was propaganda.

As images of hungry Gazans and reports of imminent famine have mounted in recent days and weeks, leading to widespread international condemnation, Netanyahu and the Israel Defense Forces have strenuously rejected allegations that Israel is carrying out an intentional starvation campaign in the Strip.

Israel has also rejected the claim of widespread, famine-level hunger and has instituted new measures, including 10-hour pauses in fighting throughout large swaths of the Strip, to boost aid distribution in the territory.

War broke out between Israel and Hamas on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led terrorists invaded Israel, killing some 1,200 people and kidnapping 251. Of the 50 hostages remaining in Gaza, the IDF has confirmed the deaths of 28.

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry says more than 60,000 people in the Strip have been killed or are presumed dead in the fighting so far, though the toll cannot be verified and does not differentiate between civilians and fighters.

Israel’s toll in the ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza and in military operations along the border with the Strip stands at 459.