IDF recovers bodies of 6 hostages from Gaza, including one previously presumed alive

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-recovers-bodies-of-6-hostages-from-gaza-including-one-previously-presumed-alive/>

The bodies of six Israeli hostages abducted by terrorists on October 7, including one hitherto presumed alive, were recovered in an overnight operation in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, the military announced Tuesday morning.

The deceased hostages brought back were Alex Dancyg, 75, Yagev Buchshtav, 35, Chaim Peri, 79, Yoram Metzger, 80, Nadav Popplewell, 51, and Avraham Munder, 78.

All six are known to have been taken to Gaza alive during the Hamas-led invasion and slaughter in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, and were killed over the course of the 10-month-long war.

Dancyg and Buchshtav had been confirmed dead by the IDF in [late July](https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-announces-deaths-of-hostages-alex-dancyg-and-yagev-buchshtav-in-hamas-captivity/), while Peri, Metzger, and Popplewell were declared dead by the army in [early June.](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-announces-the-deaths-of-four-hostages-in-hamas-captivity/) The five were believed to have been killed in Khan Younis in early 2024, although the causes of death are not known.

Munder had not been previously declared dead by the IDF, although the army had some information that had raised concern for his wellbeing. As such, until Tuesday morning he had been listed among the hostages presumed alive.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent his condolences to the families of the six and thanked soldiers and commanders from the military and the Shin Bet for the “determined” operation that led to the recovery.

“The State of Israel will continue to make every effort to return all our hostages — both the living and the fallen,” Netanyahu said, amid relentless accusations that he was not doing enough to secure a hostage deal.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant hailed the “daring and dangerous” operation and said he too shares the families’ grief. He said the action was a testament to the “freedom of operation” Israel has achieved in the Strip and vowed to continue until Hamas is toppled and all hostages are returned.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir also sent his condolences and thanked the IDF troops for the “courageous” operation. He added that the remaining hostages “must only be returned via intense military pressure, halting the entry of fuel and humanitarian [aid] to terrorism and its supporters, and not via irresponsible deals that will bring upon us, God forbid, more hostages and fatalities in the future.”

With the bodies recovered, the IDF said it would continue to investigate the causes of the men’s deaths, including the possibility that some or all of the six were killed by Israeli fire amid military operations in Khan Younis.

The IDF said it had obtained accurate intelligence that allowed troops, including special forces, with the 98th Division and members of the Shin Bet security agency to reach a specific tunnel in Khan Younis and recover the bodies, amid a new offensive in the city in the southern Gaza Strip.

Troops did not face any resistance inside the tunnel or in the immediate vicinity, and fighting only took place in surrounding areas of Khan Younis.

Munder, Dancyg, Peri, and Metzger were all abducted alive by Hamas from Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7, while Buchshtav and Popplewell were taken hostage from Kibbutz Nirim.

In December, Hamas had published a video showing Peri, Metzger, and a third hostage alive, and in March the terror group claimed that the three were killed by Israeli strikes. In May, Hamas shared a coerced propaganda clip featuring Popplewell. It was apparently published weeks after he was killed.

Hamas in March claimed that Buchshtav had died due to lack of food and medication, and that Dancyg had been killed by Israeli fire. The claims have not been confirmed by the IDF.

It is now believed that 105 of the 251 hostages abducted by Hamas on October 7 remain in Gaza, including the bodies of 34 confirmed dead by the IDF. Hamas is also holding two Israeli civilians who entered the Strip in 2014 and 2015, as well as the bodies of two IDF soldiers who were killed in 2014.

**The stories of the six**

[Peri](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-chaim-peri-film-lecturer-and-activist/), who retired from a military career at age 50, was in later life an art curator, film lecturer, and peace activist who would volunteer to drive sick Palestinian children from the Gaza border to Israeli hospitals.

He is survived by his wife, Osnat, five children, and 13 grandchildren. Peri’s kibbutz mourned him as an “entrepreneur, humanist and peace activist” who saved his wife on October 7 before being abducted by terrorists.

[Metzger](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-yoram-metzger-broken-hip-has-limited-mobility/) had worked in the Nirlat paint factory for decades and more recently in the kibbutz garage. He was described by his family as an excellent cook and a lover of history with a great sense of humor, and a dedicated connoisseur of the Nir Oz winery cellar.

Metzger had been kidnapped with his wife Tami, who was released in a hostage deal in November. He is survived by her, three children and seven grandchildren.

[Popplewell](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-nadav-popplewell-held-in-tunnel-under-gaza/), a dual Israeli-UK citizen, was described by relatives as a family-oriented guy, devoted to his nieces and nephews, who loved to read science fiction and play bridge with his friends in the kibbutz.

He is survived by his sister Ayelet and mother Channah.

[Munder](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-avraham-munder-forced-to-kneel-in-front-of-terrorists/), who had worked at a paint factory, was remembered as “a very warm person who loved singing,” his kibbutz said.

His son Roee was murdered on October 7, and he was kidnapped along with his wife Ruti, his daughter Keren, and his only grandson Ohad, all three of whom were released in a hostage deal in November.

[Dancyg](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-alex-dancyg-warsaw-murals-painted-for-holocaust-educator/), a Polish-Israeli, was born in Warsaw in 1948 to Holocaust survivors, and his family came to Israel in 1957. He had lived at Nir Oz since he completed his military service, and grew peanuts and potatoes there.

He spent his life educating about the Holocaust and teaching other educators, including Yad Vashem guides as well as Polish educators and public figures, how to teach the Nazi genocide of the Jews.

[Buchshtav](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-yagev-buchshtav-could-hear-terrorists-outside-his-window/) was a musician and soundman who built his own instruments, including electric guitars.

His wife, Rimon Kirsht Buchshtav, was abducted with him and then released on November 28 in a hostage deal with Hamas. The couple was together throughout Rimon’s captivity and she didn’t want to leave Yagev behind, but was told to go willingly or be dragged on the floor.

The couple, known for creating a home full of music and rescuing abused animals, had met in high school and then reconnected years later, marrying in 2021.