Autopsy finds 6 hostages were shot multiple times at close range in last 48-72 hours

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By Emanuel Fabian

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/autopsy-finds-6-hostages-shot-multiple-times-at-close-range-in-last-48-72-hours/>

The six dead hostages recovered from the Gaza Strip over the weekend were killed 48 to 72 hours before their autopsy, meaning between Thursday and Friday morning, the Health Ministry said Sunday.

The ministry added that an examination carried out by Abu Kabir Forensic Institute found that all six hostages were shot multiple times from close range, indicating they were executed.

The IDF had said that Hamas terrorists murdered the hostages relatively shortly before troops located their bodies on Saturday afternoon in a tunnel in Rafah.

The hostages [brought back](https://www.timesofisrael.com/bodies-of-6-hostages-murdered-by-hamas-just-days-earlier-found-in-rafah-idf/) were [Hersh Goldberg-Polin](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-hersh-goldberg-polin-tied-own-tourniquet-after-arm-blown-off/), [Eden Yerushalmi](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-eden-yerushalmi-hid-in-car-with-two-dead-friends/), [Ori Danino](https://www.timesofisrael.com/presumed-captive-ori-danino-turned-his-car-around-to-save-others/), [Alex Lobanov](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-alex-lubnov-supported-pregnant-wife-toddler/), [Carmel Gat](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-carmel-gat-seen-doing-yoga-with-hostage-children/), and [Almog Sarusi](https://www.timesofisrael.com/presumed-captive-almog-sarusi-missing-since-supernova-rave/).

On Sunday morning, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen Herzi Halevi visited the site where the bodies were found and held an assessment at the scene.

Halevi was joined by the head of the IDF Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelman, and hostage point-man Maj. Gen. (res.) Nitzan Alon.

Channel 12 reported that security officials fear that Hamas executed the six hostages due to the terror group’s concerns that a hostage who was rescued alive from a nearby tunnel last week would divulge details about where the other captives were being held.

Hostage Farhan al-Qadi, 52, was safely rescued by IDF special forces from Hamas captivity in one of the terror group’s tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip. He was found alone after his captives fled.

IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said earlier that the six were “brutally murdered” by Hamas shortly before troops arrived.

“According to an initial assessment… they were brutally murdered by Hamas terrorists a short while before we reached them. They were abducted alive on the morning of October 7 by the Hamas terror group,” Hagari said in a press conference.

“Their bodies were found during the fighting in Rafah, in a tunnel, about a kilometer away from the tunnel from which we rescued Farhan al-Qadi a few days ago,” he said.

The IDF said that it did not have the exact location of the hostages but had indications of a general area where the six could be held, and was therefore operating carefully in the area.

“Since Farhan was found, troops were given an emphasis on operating carefully even more than usual, because of the understanding that additional hostages might be in the area. We did not have information on the exact location of the hostages,” Hagari said.

Troops began to search a tunnel complex, some 20 meters underground, on Saturday and found the hostages, dead, in the afternoon. Their bodies were extracted from Gaza overnight and brought to Israel for identification.

Mass demonstrations were held throughout Israel on Sunday after news came out that the bodies were found, with protesters demanding the government reach a deal for the release of hostages.

Arnon Bar-David, chairman of the Histadrut labor union, announced a general strike to be held Monday to pressure the government to reach a deal.

It is believed that 97 of the 251 hostages abducted by Hamas on October 7 remain in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 33 confirmed dead by the IDF.

Hamas released 105 civilians during a weeklong truce in late November, and four hostages were released before that. Eight hostages have been rescued by troops alive, and the bodies of 37 hostages have also been recovered, including three mistakenly killed by the military as they tried to escape their captors.

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.