Murdered hostages had trouble breathing in tunnel, struggled with their killers, IDF probe said to find

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Several of the six Israeli hostages who were executed by their Hamas captors in Gaza some 10 days ago attempted to fight off their killers, their families have reportedly been told by the IDF.

Channel 12 News reports that IDF Spokesman Daniel Hagari has briefed some of the families of the six — Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Ori Danino, Eden Yerushalmi, Almog Sarusi, Alexander Lobanov, and Carmel Gat — on the conditions in which they were held and the circumstances of their murders.

Hagari, who reportedly met with the families over the past day or so, shared what are reported to be the initial findings of the IDF’s investigation into the incident, detailing the harsh conditions in which the six were held, and showing the families evidence from inside the tunnel where they were killed.

The IDF believes they were murdered about 10 days ago — a day or so before the IDF got to the tunnel, the report says.

“Several of the six are assessed to have defended themselves and struggled with those who shot them,” it adds.

Channel 13 cites “forensic” findings that show “Hersh, Ori, Alex and Almog defended Eden and Carmel.”

The six were held in a small and very narrow tunnel, barely two-people wide and too low for them to stand fully upright, the Channel 12 report says.

There were no air vents, and the hostages had difficulty breathing, the families were reportedly told.

There were no toilets or showers in the tunnel. The hostages washed with water from the bottles they drank from.

Protein bars were found in the tunnel but the hostages had very little food — and lost weight to the point where Yerushalmi weighed just 36 kilos (80 pounds).

There was a generator and a small torch that didn’t always work, a chess set, writing implements and notepads. The IDF has given the notepads to the respective families, the Channel 12 report says.

Members of one family, who were not named, told Channel 12 that the hostages “did everything to survive in impossible circumstances… and in the end Hamas murdered them… Their only demand was that the government save them, and the government failed in its mission.”

The bodies of the six were recovered by the IDF overnight August 31-September 1. An initial autopsy on September 1 found they had been shot multiple times at close range two to three days earlier. Last week Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that their Hamas murderers shot them dead “in cold blood. They riddled them with bullets… They shot them in the back of the head.”