

# [***Hamas Hostage Families Say Politics Cloud Goal of Saving Loved Ones***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B47-P9R1-JBR6-9005-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** As heated ***politics*** surround the conflict in Gaza, families of the Israeli hostages are urging decision makers to focus on the goal of freeing their loved ones.

**Body**

It's been more than 100 days since [*Hamas*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hamas?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) launched its attack on Israel that killed an estimated 1,200 people and resulted in the capture of more than 200. While about half of these hostages have been released, over 100 of them remain captive.

Now, the family members of some of those still held in Gaza are worried that the hostage crisis is at risk of falling behind other political priorities as the war rages on with no clear end in sight.

"We are continuing the war until the end," Israeli President [*Benjamin Netanyahu*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/benjamin-netanyahu?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) said in a Saturday address on the eve marking the 100th day of the war, "until total victory, until we achieve all of our goals: Eliminating Hamas, returning all of our hostages and ensuring that Gaza will never again constitute a threat to Israel."

On the same date as this address, over in the United States, thousands gathered in Washington, D.C. in protest of the war and America's support for Israel, chanting calls for "Cease Fire Now" and "Free Palestine" outside the White House.

The ***politics*** surrounding Israel's offensive grow ever tense as members of the international community criticize the nation for not doing enough to limit civilian harm, all while Netanyahu faces a tenuous grasp on power and lingering corruption charges.

However, for those who have family held captive in Gaza, these political issues are far from being at the forefront of their minds. For them, the mission at hand is one focused on keeping government leaders' eyes on those held hostage and facilitating discussions on ways to best bring their loved ones home.

"The issue of the hostages needs to be above any political discourse," Moshe Emilio Lavi, a 35-year-old Israeli citizen who now resides in New York, told *Newsweek*. "Those who call for one thing or another need to include the hostages. If they don't include the hostages, I don't think they're advocating in good faith for this humanitarian plea."

Lavi's brother-in-law Omri Miran is one of the individuals who continues to be held captive by Hamas. According to testimony by Omri's wife and Lavi's sister, Lishay Lavi, the family, who live in the Nahal Oz kibbutz in southern Israel roughly 2.5 miles from the Hamas-led Gaza Strip, woke up on October 7 to the sound of red alert sirens, gun fire and explosives.

Omri, Lishay, and their two daughters rushed to the safe room of their residence but were soon confronted with an onerous decision. Hamas militants had captured their neighbor's son and threatened to kill the boy if they did not open the door. They chose to save the boy's life.

Hamas militants rounded up Omri, Lishay, and their daughters in an area with others from the kibbutz. Omri was taken away without explanation while Lishay and her girls were left to wait with the militants as houses burned around them. As the trio waited with anxiety over what may come next, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) arrived at the kibbutz, saving the family. However, the neighbor's son was ultimately killed and Omri was gone.

Lavi and another family representing an individual taken from the Nahal Oz kibbutz traveled to Washington last week along with three other families whose relatives were abducted on October 7. They met with lawmakers, diplomatic officials, and advocacy groups to tell their stories.

"Sharing our stories first is important because we need to make sure that the issue is not framed as just the number of hospitals but as human beings," Lavi said. "After sharing that, we try to see how we can help them to ensure this remains at the top of the table for decision makers."

Time is also of the essence. As the conflict continues, uncertainty grows over the fate of those still held hostage by Hamas. While Hamas has continued to release video testimonies of its prisoners and claims to be treating them well, the group has also increasingly accused the IDF of killing its own citizens amid the ongoing bombardment of densely populated Gaza.

"The fate of many of the enemy's prisoners and detainees has become unknown during the recent weeks, while the rest have all entered the tunnel of the unknown due to the Zionist aggression," Abu Obaida, spokesperson for Hamas' military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, said during video remarks published on Sunday.

"Most likely many of them were recently killed, while the rest are in imminent and great danger each hour," he added. "And the enemy's leadership and army bear full responsibility for this issue."

The issue has drawn in the U.S. directly, not only as Israel's ally but also as a nation whose citizens were among those seized during Hamas' unprecedented surprise attack. Washington has readily backed Israel's subsequent offensive in Gaza and has rejected calls for a full ceasefire, while at the same has called on Netanyahu's administration to do more to prevent growing civilian casualties as figured shared by officials in Gaza exceed 24,000 dead.

Outside of the White House, lawmakers too have taken up the matter. One of the leaders Lavi and the other four families met with last week in Washington was Democratic Senator [*Tammy Baldwin*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/tammy-baldwin?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) of Wisconsin.

Speaking with *Newsweek*, Baldwin said the most effective path forward to facilitate the speedy release of the hostages would be a temporary ceasefire. Such a ceasefire would be akin to that in November when Qatar mediated an agreement between Israel and Hamas that led to a week-long break in the fighting, a break that allowed for the release of the hostages and the flow of humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

Baldwin said this would not only provide time for the hostages to be freed but it would also allow the Red Cross to assess the situation and provide medical assistance. She added that more can be done to facilitate conversations with Qatar and Egypt to help spark negotiations around such a deal.

"We've got to keep those hostages top of mind and use whatever tools that we have to keep the pressure up for a ceasefire to allow the hostages to be released," Baldwin said. "It is urgent."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2336569/hostage-families-call-leaders-help.jpg)

**Graphic**

Hostage Families Call on Leaders for Help

Photo by GIL COHEN-MAGEN/AFP via Getty Images

An Israeli couple holding their national flag walk in front of graffiti calling for the release of Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip since the October 7 attack by Hamas militants in southern Israel, in Jerusalem on November 18, 2023. Families of the hostages worry that ***politics*** cloud the goal of bringing their loved ones home.

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