



Dear colleagues and friends worldwide,

October 25, 2023

We, faculty members at the Department of Cognitive and Brain Sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, are reaching out for help on behalf of the Israeli families of more than two hundred hostages held captive in Gaza. The community of Ben-Gurion University, located only some forty kilometers from the Gaza Strip, suffered a horrible loss on October 7, 2023. The lives of many students, administrative and technical staff, and faculty members were taken in this brutal massacre, and faculty and students in our department lost friends and relatives. The lives of each member of our community have been deeply shaken by this horrifying tragedy.

We chose to focus this letter on the hostages, in the hope of making even the slightest contribution to the great effort of bringing them back. We thus describe one of the many devastating cases that we have witnessed firsthand—that of Mrs. Ofri Bivas, a former member of a laboratory affiliated with our department at ADI-Negev Rehabilitation Hospital.

On October 7, her life was turned upside down: her brother Yarden, his wife Shiri, and their two redhead sons—a nine-month-old baby and a four-year-old—were brutally taken hostage by inhumane Hamas terrorists. Her family lived in Nir Oz—a kibbutz bordering on Gaza. On Saturday morning, they were awakened to the sounds of sirens, thinking that *“it’s just another day with rockets being fired from Gaza”*. Ofri and Yarden had been texting since the early hours, soon realizing that terrorists had infiltrated the kibbutz and were shooting at innocent civilians. By approximately 9 AM, they had lost communication. Ever since, Ofri has had sleepless nights doing everything in her power to rally support for the release of her family.

More than 200 innocent civilians—babies, children, elderly women, and disabled people—were kidnapped and taken into Gaza as hostages. We are reaching out to you, fellow scholars worldwide, to seek your support with a critical issue: your assistance in advocating for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages that are held in Gaza. These days are crucial, and your assistance can make a significant impact in turning these concerns into a global priority. Your involvement would mean a lot to us and many other faculty members at Ben-Gurion University who were tragically affected by this crisis. We hope that with your support, and the support of your colleagues, we can deliver this message in our time of need by distributing our letter as widely as possible and by any other means you deem appropriate.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lior Shmuelof, Chair  
A/Prof. Carmel Sofer  
A/Prof. Oren Shriki  
Dr. Nir Fresco  
Dr. Talya Sadeh

Dr. Tal Golan  
Dr. Marius Cohen  
Dr. Moti Salti  
Prof. Galia Avidan  
Prof. Ilan Dinstein