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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Institute for NGO Research, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[5 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Palestinian Terrorists Must Immediately and Unconditionally Release All Hostages Stolen from Israel on October 7

On October 7, 2023, thousands of Palestinian terrorists poured across the border from Gaza into Israel, slaughtering 1200 people, torturing and maiming thousands, including 36 children who were slaughtered in their homes. Several of them were horrifically burned alive, while others were brutally murdered in the presence of their parents, or forced to witness their parents being killed before they were murdered as well. Hamas, and other terrorist groups, also kidnapped more than 200 individuals, of which 30 were children.

As of this writing, at least 135, including a one year-old baby, the elderly, young women, and the severely disabled and sick, are still being held hostage and subject to unimaginable torture, cruel treatment, and sexual violence.

Around the world, posters featuring the faces of the kidnapped have been torn down, by antisemitic individuals seeking to erase Palestinian crimes against Israelis and create a fabricated narrative of the conflict. Family members of the hostages have also faced mental torture and unrelenting, unbearable pain of not knowing the status of their loved ones.

The international community has done very little to lobby on behalf of the hostages. UN officials have been largely silent and the ICRC issued its first statement calling for their release on social media nearly three months after their capture. The Islamic Republic of Iran and Qatar know the condition and most likely whereabouts of the hostages, but instead arm and harbor their Hamas kidnapers.

The international community, including UN officials, have barely spoken out and must do more to secure the release of the hostages.

Excerpts from an October speech at the United Nations by Rachel Goldberg-Polin, whose son Hersh was kidnapped by Hamas reflects this situation:

“We have begged the Red Cross and all other international humanitarian aid organizations to find out if the hostages who are from 33 different countries around the world who were severely wounded like Hersh, were they treated? The grandmothers, the babies, or 17-year old R. P., who has myotonic dystrophy and was stolen from her wheelchair from the music festival without her feeding tube. But our pleas came to no avail. The Red Cross said they were at the border but they were denied access into Gaza. So here I live in a different universe than all of you. You are right there. We seem like we live in the same place. But I, like all of the mothers and all of the fathers, and wives, and husbands, and children, and brothers, and sisters and loved ones of the stolen.

We all actually live on a different planet. And the very cruelest of questions each of us is asked every single day without intended malice is “how are you”? Well, picture your own mother and then picture her being told there are only two options. You are either dead or you had your arm blown off and were kidnaped by gunpoint into Gaza. And no one knows where you are or if you bled to death in that pickup truck 18 days ago. Or if you died yesterday or if you died 5 minutes ago. Picture your own mother and that those are her only two options. And that is my answer to you when you ask how are you. That is how all of us here on our planet feel. This planet of beyond pain. Our planet of no sleep. Our planet of despair. Our planet of tears. There are over 200 hostages being held in Gaza right now. Over 100 of them are from 33 countries. Where is the world? We, the families of the 200 hostages are far away on our own planet of agony. But where are you? Why is no one crying out for these people to be allowed access to the Red Cross? Why is no one demanding just proof of life? This is a global humanitarian catastrophe and the hatred being showered on Israel. Now, I keep being asked by that in all of the press, and I will say two things. First, in an article I read, it was so eloquently stated that when you only get outraged when one side's babies are killed, then your moral compass is broken and your humanity is broken. And therefore, in your quiet moments alone, all of us everywhere on planet Earth need to really ask ourselves, Do I aspire to be human? Or am I swept up in the enticing and delicious world of hatred? This is not a phenomenon unique to Israel or Gaza. This is everywhere on our planet.

I understand that hatred of the other, whoever we decide that other is, is seductive, sensuous, and most importantly, it's easy...When everything in the universe had been turned upside down. We human beings have been blessed with the gifts of intellect, creativity, insight and perception. Why are we not using it to solve global conflicts all over the world?"
