



## Security Council

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### **Identical letters dated 19 January 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

Following the previous correspondence on this matter of crucial importance, I would like to draw your attention to new developments regarding the continuous violation of human rights surrounding two Israeli civilians, Avera Mengistu and Hisham Al-Sayed. Both Avera and Hisham continue to be held captive in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas terror organization, since 2014 and 2015 respectively.

Since their initial capture, Hamas has not disclosed their whereabouts, has not allowed any contact between the prisoners and their families or the Israeli authorities, nor provided any updates on their well-being. In addition, Hamas has forbidden any visits by international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, which should be allowed without preconditions or delay. Avera Mengistu and Hisham Al-Sayed are two persons with mental disabilities whose years-long imprisonments are both cruel and unfathomable. As persons with disabilities, these two individuals are also likely to have been deprived of the treatment that they need.

On 16 January 2023, Hamas released video footage purportedly of Avera Mengistu. The undated video shows a man who appears to be Avera sitting in front of a blank wall and speaking for around 10 seconds. The credibility of this video cannot be ascertained at this time. However, along with a previous video released in June 2022 of Hisham, the distribution of such videos on social media is a cynical, heinous and desperate act by a terrorist organization, which takes an unimaginable toll on the captives' families. I would like to emphasize that Israel regards Hamas as directly responsible for the well-being of the Israeli civilians that it is holding against international law.

Moreover, on another painful note, since 2014, Hamas has been holding the bodies of two Israel Defense Forces soldiers, Captain Hadar Goldin and First Sergeant Oron Shaul. Hamas, the terror organization responsible for the suffering of so many Israelis and Palestinians, fundamentally violates core obligations of international humanitarian law, and continues to display disregard for all the values that the international community holds dear: humanity, protection of civilians and respect for international law.

I would like to repeat my call to the international community, and to you, to condemn Hamas for its inhumane behaviour and to demand the immediate return of our civilians and the bodies of our fallen soldiers. The State of Israel will do all that it can to bring Avera, Hisham, Hadar and Oron home.



I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* Gilad **Erdan**  
Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations

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