



October 16, 2023

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General, World Health Organization
Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Sir,

Since 2017, I have served as an advisor to WHO in infection prevention and control (IPC), at the Headquarters and European Regional levels. During the COVID years, I participated in several IPC groups, chaired a number of these, and volunteered hundreds of hours of service to WHO. I did this out of a sense of duty to world health, and with a feeling of pride that I was contributing to a humane organization that placed human rights, dignity and basic decency among its highest values.

No longer.

In its statement of 14 October, WHO noted that it "strongly condemns Israel's repeated orders for the evacuation of 22 hospitals treating more than 2000 inpatients in northern Gaza." The statement follows by one day the call for "immediate reversal of (the) Gaza evacuation order to protect health and reduce suffering." But no mention is made in either statement about the reasons for Israel's military operation. For that one would have to go back to the statement of 10 October, where the plea of WHO on the heels of the 7 October Hamas rampage of murder, torture, rape, mutilation and kidnapping is first and foremost for "an end to the hostilities."

Dr. Ghebreyesus, with all due respect, I must ask: what world do you inhabit? I ask this because it seems to me that it is far different from the world in which I live. The world in which Israelis have lived since the early morning hours of 7 October is one in which a band of terrorists, committed in word and deed to the annihilation of every Jew, breached our sovereign border, brutally and gleefully massacred over 1300 people, ranging in age from under 1 to over 80, maimed well over 3000 more, and, unconscionably, kidnapped at least 199 people, including toddlers and the injured and the frail elderly, with no word on their whereabouts or fate since. Some of those murdered were shot while their hands were tied behind them. Others, including babies, were burned alive. Young women were brutally raped and tortured before being stabbed to death. Entire families were wiped out by machine gun fire. Surgeons treating the wounded and forensic pathologists tending to the corpses are on record saying that the abject brutality reflected in the wounds they are witnessing is unlike anything they have seen before.

And yet WHO believes that the proper response to this apocalyptic horror, the humane response, is to *end* the hostilities? To sue for peace and the safe return of the hostages (in your remarks yesterday opening the World Health Summit you qualified even that, calling only for the return of "civilian" hostages, implying that in WHO's eyes abducting Israeli soldiers is in some way acceptable), in the hope and belief that the Hamas terrorists holding them will suddenly embrace humanity and agree to their safe release, as you have asked? Or is it simply WHO's position that violence can never be justified, even in self-defense?



I understand and share the concern about the safety of having to evacuate hospitalized patients. But isn't that first and foremost the responsibility of Hamas, which as a matter of strategy embeds armaments and terrorist cells within, next to and underneath hospitals, as well as schools and other concentrations of innocent non-combatants? Where is WHO's condemnation of this age-old diabolical practice, which constitutes a war crime? And where in WHO's statements is there any mention of the over 6000 rockets fired into Israeli population centers over the past week, putting hospitalized patients throughout the country into harm's way, and in one case actually striking Barzilai Hospital in the southern city of Ashkelon? Israel, by contrast, is allowing time for hospitals to evacuate and thereby avoid harm. And should it then send ground troops in rather than pursue an all-aerial offensive, it will be putting its own troops at risk in order to minimize civilian casualties to the largest extent possible.

But I would like to return to the hostages, whom Hamas has threatened to publicly execute. Do not confuse them with prisoners of war. These are innocent people plucked by Hamas from the killing fields that they created last Saturday, ripped from the arms of their loved ones, and herded away to the terrifying unknown dungeons of Gaza. Their Hamas captors have historically, and presently, shown zero regard for the Geneva Convention. Do you have any idea what it feels like for a society to know that at least 199 of its innocent members – including sisters as young as 2 and 4 years old – are held in that state of captivity? No information about their welfare has been provided. Some have medical needs, including diabetes. Others are injured. According to an eyewitness account, 23-year-old Hersh Goldberg-Polin had his arm blown off at the elbow before being driven away into captivity. His parents know nothing about whether his wound has been tended to in any way.

Below are pictures of some of the children missing and either known or presumed to have been kidnapped:



https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/yokra13631588?utm_source=ynet.app.ios&utm_term=yokra13631588&utm_campaign=general&utm_medium=social

Look at these faces, Dr. Ghebreyesus. Is it possible to imagine them in the hands of the monsters who attacked us last Saturday and not go insane? As a parent, I cannot. Thomas Hand, the father of 8-year-old Emily, described to CNN the sense of **relief** (!) he felt when he learned his daughter had been murdered, rather than abducted to Gaza as had been feared. Compared to Hamas captivity, he said, "death was a blessing, an absolute blessing."

If WHO wishes "for the immediate and safe delivery of medical supplies, fuel, clean water, food, and other humanitarian aid into Gaza," as well it should, it should begin by demanding that Hamas first release, unharmed, every last prisoner it kidnapped on 7 October. That, rather than condemning Israel for doing what it must to free its citizens, would be the humane statement to issue.

I would like to hope that you will find at least some of what I have written persuasive enough to change the tone and content of WHO's statements. I do believe that WHO has a potentially important role to play as a promoter of world health in regions of conflict. But it can do so only if it makes a clear distinction between good and evil, and follows that distinction to the logical conclusion that evil must be decisively defeated if good is to thrive. Like the Nazis, like ISIS, Hamas has shown the world that it is pure evil. It must be eliminated, and it has fallen to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to do the job.

No one here is eager to fight in Gaza, but as a society we overwhelmingly understand we must. Contrary to your remarks yesterday, Israel is not attacking Palestinian civilians, but carefully waging war against a brutal enemy that uses civilians as human shields. As British Colonel Richard Kemp, a veteran of armed conflicts in the Middle East and Europe, has declared, the IDF does more to safeguard civilian rights in combat zones "than any other army in the history of warfare." As a humanitarian, you would not want any other army on the face of the globe doing the essential job we are now doing. The decent, humane, moral stance for WHO to take, then, is to have our back.

Respectfully yours,



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