



SILENCED NO MORE

SEXUAL TERROR UNVEILED: THE UNTOLD ATROCITIES
OF OCTOBER 7 AND AGAINST HOSTAGES IN CAPTIVITY



THE CIVIL COMMISSION ON
OCTOBER 7TH CRIMES BY HAMAS
AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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The Civil Commission on October 7th Crimes by Hamas Against Women and Children, a nonprofit, independent organization, was founded to document, research, and raise international awareness of the war crimes and gender-based violence committed by Hamas and their collaborators against women, children, and families during their brutal attack on Israel on October 7th and in captivity. Led by Dr. Cochav Elkayam-Levy, a 2024 Israel Prize laureate and expert in human rights and international law, the Civil Commission documents, researches, and advocates for victims, giving them a voice and challenging the denial of these atrocities. Its archive serves as both a memorial and a vital historical and legal record.

With a team of experts, including researchers, lawyers, documenters, and trauma experts, and supported by leaders like Sheryl Sandberg and Prof. Irwin Cotler, and other prominent figures on our advisory board, the Civil Commission is raising international awareness and forging global partnerships to highlight these atrocities and pursue justice for the victims.



THE CIVIL COMMISSION
ON OCTOBER 7TH CRIMES
BY HAMAS AGAINST
WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“You hear it. It’s right next to you. You hear the screams . . . and then you hear silence.”

The Civil Commission’s interview with Darin Komarov, Nova Survivor

Following a two-year independent investigation, the Civil Commission concludes that **sexual and gender-based violence was systematic, widespread, and integral to the October 7th attacks and their aftermath**. Across multiple locations and phases of the assault, including during abduction, transfer, and captivity, Hamas and its collaborators deployed recurring tactics of sexual abuse and torture against victims. These crimes were marked by extreme cruelty and profound human suffering, often inflicted in ways designed to amplify terror and humiliation.

This report presents a comprehensive independent evidentiary record, the most extensive assembled to date of the sexual and gender-based crimes committed on October 7th and during captivity. **The report draws on extensive factual documentation, including original filmed survivor and witness testimonies, interviews, photographs, videos, official records, and other primary materials from the attack sites.** The investigation examined materials from multiple locations, including residential communities, the Nova music festival and surrounding areas, roads and shelters, military bases, and sites associated with the identification of victims’ bodies. It further analyzed testimonies and evidence relating to the abduction, transfer, and prolonged captivity of hostages in Gaza.

Based on this large body of materials, the Commission constructed a dedicated archive preserving these materials within the Civil Commission’s **October 7th War Crimes Archive**, a secure and carefully curated repository. This evidentiary record is the product of a sustained and methodologically rigorous investigation conducted over a two-year period. The Commission systematically **reviewed more than 10,000 photographs and video segments of the attack, amounting to well over 1,800 cumulative hours of analysis of visuals**, alongside extensive testimonial work, including the collection, transcription, translation, and cross-referencing of survivor and witness accounts, as well as site visits, expert consultations, and meetings with families and affected communities. **Overall, the Commission conducted over 430 formal and informal interviews, testimonies, and meetings with survivors, witnesses, returned hostages, experts and family members.** All materials were logged, coded, and mapped across time and

geographic locations, and integrated into a dedicated database on sexual and gender-based crimes, forming a structured subsystem within the Civil Commission's secure archive. **Data analysis conducted by the Commission reveals that the victims represented 52 different nationalities, underscoring the international scope of the crimes and their impact.** The Commission further conducted an extensive open-source investigation, corroborated materials through geolocation-supported datasets and interdisciplinary expert input, and carried out its work in accordance with internationally recognized standards, including trauma-informed and survivor-centered practices and ethical principles, guided by the principle of "do no harm." This methodological framework enabled the Commission not only to document individual incidents, but to identify recurring patterns, present a full and comprehensive account of the events, and delineate operational features across sites and phases of the attack.

Considered collectively, these materials illuminate a coherent and structured account that could not previously have been discerned in this manner. Through systematic cross-referencing of this material and detailed analysis of the *modus operandi* of the perpetrators, the Commission identified **thirteen recurring patterns of sexual and gender-based violence** committed across multiple locations. The repetition of these patterns demonstrates that the crimes were not isolated acts of brutality but formed part of a broader operational method used during the attack and its aftermath.

The investigation also documents how perpetrators **weaponized visibility and digital dissemination** as part of the violence itself, including sexualized content. Armed groups recorded acts of abuse, humiliation, and killing, and circulated the footage through social media platforms and victims' own digital accounts. In numerous cases, family members first learned of the fate of their loved ones through images or videos distributed by perpetrators. This deliberate use of digital media transformed acts of violence into instruments of psychological warfare directed not only at victims but also at families and society at large.

The sexual violence continued beyond the attacks themselves. The report extensively documents testimonies from released hostages and other sources demonstrating how sexual assaults, sexual humiliation, and **sexualized torture persisted during captivity in Gaza for prolonged periods**. In some cases, the sexual and gender-based abuse of hostages continued for months.

In addition to documenting individual crimes, **the report identifies a distinct pattern of violence targeting family members and exploiting familial relationships as instruments of terror**. In several documented incidents, victims were sexually assaulted or humiliated in the presence of relatives, and in one of the documented cases family members were coerced into participating in acts of abuse against one another. These acts reflect what the Commission characterizes as **kinocidal sexual violence**—violence deliberately designed to destroy the family as a social and emotional unit by weaponizing the bonds between family members.

Taken together, the Commission’s investigation reveals a coordinated assault in which sexual violence was used to terrorize victims, families, communities, and society at large. Our conclusion is unequivocal: sexual and gender-based violence formed a central component of the October 7th attack and of hostages’ captivity.

Based on its investigation, the Civil Commission’s findings conclude that **these crimes constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocidal acts under international law**. Therefore, the report establishes **a clear roadmap for the prosecution of the crimes committed on October 7th and during captivity**. The report presents a clear evidentiary and legal foundation for the investigation and prosecution of those responsible. It also highlights the need for specialized prosecutorial structures and gender-competent frameworks to effectively address these crimes.

This work carries a broader historical purpose. At its core, this report is an act of documentation, accountability, and remembrance. Many victims of these crimes did not survive to testify. Others continue to endure profound trauma. By preserving testimonies, documenting evidence, and analyzing the patterns and legal implications of the crimes, the Commission has sought to ensure that the suffering endured by the victims will not be denied, erased, or forgotten.

It records the voices of survivors and witnesses. It preserves the evidentiary foundations necessary for future prosecutions. Furthermore it affirms a fundamental principle of international justice: that even in the aftermath of the most extreme violence, truth must be documented and the suffering of victims must be acknowledged.

Their voices, and the record preserved here, ensure that they are silenced no more.

THE REPORT'S CONTRIBUTION

The report advances the factual and legal understanding of these crimes in the following ways:

It constructs a dedicated evidentiary record of the crimes, with both historical and legal significance, preserving and systematically archiving survivor and witness testimonies, photographs, videos, and contemporaneous materials documenting sexual and gender-based crimes committed during the attacks and in captivity.

It provides the first systematic, case-based record of these crimes. Over more than 160 pages of testimony-driven analysis, archived materials, and other primary evidentiary sources, the report's factual chapter details individual cases and evidentiary records across multiple geographic locations, tracing sexual and gender-based violence during the assault itself and throughout the phases of abduction, transfer, and captivity.

It identifies recurring patterns of sexual violence across sites and phases of the attacks. By examining recurring themes and modes of operation, the report demonstrates that these crimes followed identifiable patterns and methods, rather than constituting isolated acts of brutality.

It demonstrates how sexual and gender-based violence functioned as an organized component of the attacks and reveals the operational logic of the violence. The repetition and organization of these acts reveal how sexual and gender-based violence functioned as a deliberate component of the attacks, deployed to terrorize victims, families, and communities.

It expands the factual scope of inquiry beyond the attack itself. The report traces sexual violence across the full continuum of the crimes—from the attacks of October 7th, through abduction and prolonged captivity, to the deliberate filming and digital dissemination of abuse as a means of amplifying terror.

It translates the evidentiary record into a prosecution-oriented legal framework, analyzing how the documented conduct constitutes war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocidal acts, torture, and terrorism-linked sexual and gender-based violence, and outlines concrete pathways for investigation and prosecution.

By integrating a comprehensive factual foundation with rigorous legal analysis, the report establishes a structured historical evidentiary record and lays the groundwork for accountability.

KEY FINDINGS

In consultation with a panel of experts and leading international scholars, the following are the main factual and legal conclusions of the report:

— Hamas and its collaborators used sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) deliberately and systematically as an inherent part of a wider strategy of the attack, primarily targeting women and hostages, while minors were also subjected to grave forms of such violence and abuse. Evidence gathered and corroborated by the Civil Commission demonstrates the patterned, multisite, and organized use of SGBV, including sexual torture, committed during the October 7th attacks and against hostages thereafter. SGBV acts were repeatedly and similarly committed in private homes, in public spaces, at the Nova Music Festival grounds and adjacent areas, on roadsides, military bases, and in some cases in front of family members, amplifying the terror and suffering of the victims.

— Hamas and its collaborators used sexual torture to maximize pain and suffering. Victims endured brutal acts, including burning, mutilation, rape, restraining, forced insertion of objects into the genitalia, shootings to the faces and genital area, killings and abuses in front of family members, and executions. Many victims were found handcuffed, bound, or otherwise physically restrained. Extreme forms of SGBV continued against hostages in captivity for prolonged periods, inflicted on both women and men. Those who survived, and those who witnessed these crimes, suffer severe and enduring physical and psychological injuries. This kind of sexualized torture leaves a distinct and lasting imprint on society, producing a form of terror that extends far beyond the immediate victims and long after the killings themselves.

— Hamas and its collaborators inflicted SGBV in multiple locations, employing recurring patterns of abuse. The Civil Commission identified at least *thirteen patterns of abuse across multiple sites, including:* 1) Rape, gang rape, and other forms of sexual assaults; 2) Sexual torture*, including intentional burning and mutilation; 3) Deliberate shootings to the head, face and genital area; 4) Killings and executions following or committed in conjunction with SGBV; 5) Postmortem sexual abuse, humiliation, and desecration of bodies; 6) Forced nudity and exposure; 7) Handcuffing, binding, and restraint of victims; 8) Public displaying and parading of women and children; 9) Abduction of mothers and children; 10) SGBV inflicted in the presence or near vicinity of family members; 11) Filming and digital dissemination of SGBV, including use of social media to document, glorify, and amplify the atrocities; 12) Threats of forced marriage; 13) Rape and other forms of sexual violence against boys and men.**

* The Civil Commission uses the term sexual torture here to denote conduct characterized by extreme physical or mental pain for the victim and the intentional infliction of severe suffering through sexualized violence.

Hamas and its collaborators committed *kinocidal* sexual and gender-based acts: * SGBV was deliberately perpetrated against family members, including a case in which family members were coerced into performing sexual acts on one another.** Other documented cases include, *inter alia*, family members being sexually assaulted or humiliated in each other's presence. The weaponization of familial bonds maximized the pain and suffering of victims and terrorized their families. This pattern was particularly evident during Hamas captivity.

Hamas and its collaborators made strategic use of videos, digital and social media to exert and intensify harm and to perpetuate, glorify, and amplify the atrocities they committed, including sexualized content made for public display. Perpetrators filmed themselves and circulated images and videos during the attacks, including assaulting, humiliating, abducting, killing women, children, and entire families, and desecrating bodies. They presented women and their bodies as trophies of war. Some videos show militants and Gazan civilians celebrating over abused bodies. Footage also depicts burned bodies and brutalized bodies. Hamas and its collaborators further circulated footage of injured women and girls, and elderly women being violently humiliated and abducted; many of these victims were taken in their sleepwear due to the early-morning timing of the attack, further heightening their vulnerability.

Hamas and its collaborators systematically staged, produced, and disseminated videos of hostages during captivity. The digital abuse of hostages continued for many months after October 7th. Videos and images filmed by Hamas during captivity, show hostages being tormented, abused, taunted, or humiliated on camera.

** While women and girls constituted the majority of victims of SGBV and were disproportionately affected by the SGBV committed on October 7th and subsequently in captivity, the Commission has found that there was a discernible pattern of boys and men who were subjected to extreme forms of sexual violence, sexual torture and sexual humiliation, including rape, forced nudity, mutilation, targeted burning in genitals and repeated sexual assaults. Although these violations overlap with the broader patterns of sexual violence documented in the preceding patterns, the Commission determined that the scale, severity, and distinct modes of abuse directed at male victims warrant dedicated analysis.

*** The Civil Commission defines sexual and gender-based violence in the presence of family members described herein as kinocidal sexual acts: crimes deliberately aimed at torturing and destroying the family as a cohesive social and emotional unit. See The Civil Commission on October 7th Crimes by Hamas Against Women and Children, *Kinocide: Uncovering the Weaponization of Families on October 7, 2023*, https://www.civilc.org/files/ugd/aab121_00115134734b4e8ea6d91de6ad08132c.pdf (documenting the systematic abuse and torture of families on October 7th).

The public display and dissemination of the crimes turned visibility itself into a weapon, prolonging and compounding harm inflicted on victims and their families beyond October 7th. This digital documentation and dissemination extended the impact of the attacks, has undermined survivors' rehabilitation, and has exacerbated emotional distress and trauma far beyond the initial acts of brutality. Documented patterns of conduct include:

- Recording, live streaming, and posting of the atrocities, including SGBV.
- Glorification and celebration of the crimes online, amplifying the suffering and spreading further terror.
- Recording and sending images and videos directly to families, social media, and community channels to intimidate, humiliate, and terrorize families and society as a whole.
- Recirculating and broadcasting materials depicting victims, causing ongoing trauma to survivors and family members and impeding recovery.

“The men pulled a woman from the vehicle... forcibly removed her clothing, and raped her... They repeatedly stabbed her, killing her... they continued to rape her after her death.”

Raz Cohen, Nova Survivor

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

The Civil Commission's legal analysis of the evidence leads to the following conclusions regarding the crimes committed during the October 7th attack and in captivity:

The Commission concludes that Hamas and affiliated actors have engaged in genocidal acts, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and SGBV amounting to torture. The documented conduct includes acts inflicting severe bodily and mental harm and destruction directed against civilians, families and entire communities, alongside rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence; torture; persecution; sexual slavery and enslavement; and other inhumane acts as crimes against humanity; as well as war crimes including rape, sexual mutilation, forced nudity, sexual slavery, outrages upon personal dignity, and acts amounting to torture.

The sexual and gender-based violence was widespread and systematic and formed an integral component of the attacks and the subsequent treatment of hostages. The evidence further demonstrates that the attacks formed part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against a civilian population. The scale of the violence, the coordinated assault across numerous civilian communities and locations, and the recurring patterns of killings, sexual violence, hostage-taking, and other abuses demonstrate an organized campaign carried out with advance planning and operational coordination.

Sexual and gender-based violence was systematically and deliberately deployed as a tactic of terror. The Commission finds that sexual violence was used to intimidate, punish, coerce, and subjugate victims, hostages, families, and communities. Such conduct constitutes sexual and gender-based violence linked to terrorism and must be addressed under applicable counterterrorism frameworks.

Individuals responsible for these crimes must be investigated and prosecuted. International criminal law provides a clear legal basis for individual criminal responsibility. Perpetrators and those responsible for planning, ordering, facilitating, or otherwise contributing to the crimes may incur liability under established modes of liability, including co-perpetration, indirect perpetration, ordering, aiding and abetting, and contribution to crimes committed pursuant to a common criminal purpose.

The prosecution of the sexual and gender-based crimes committed on October 7th and during captivity is an urgent priority. The Commission recommends the establishment of a dedicated prosecutorial mechanism incorporating gender-competent standards, survivor-centered approaches, and trauma-informed procedures.

Accountability must be pursued through domestic and international mechanisms. The Commission supports the urgent pursuit of accountability through domestic Israeli proceedings. Additionally, prosecutions should be carried out, as appropriate, in other jurisdictions, including prosecutions against identified perpetrators, entities, and facilitators operating from different countries and across jurisdictions, within counterterrorism frameworks, and through coordinated sanctions designations.

Effective accountability for the sexual and gender-based crimes committed on October 7th and in captivity will require robust international cooperation. Drawing on mechanisms and standards that have been successfully employed in the prosecution of SGBC in other contexts, the report highlights several frameworks, including cooperation with the United Nations Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict; specialized training programs on sexual and gender based-crimes for judges, prosecutors and investigators; and collaboration with civil society organizations.

The Commission further recommends that Israel adopt a comprehensive gender strategy within its prosecutorial framework and establish a specialized chamber or panel of judges dedicated to the prosecution of sexual and gender-based crimes committed on October 7th and during captivity. This mechanism should apply survivor-centered and trauma-informed approaches consistent with international norms and jurisprudence, drawing on knowledge and experience developed over decades of case law addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Investigate and prosecute the sexual and gender-based crimes (SGBC) committed on October 7th and in captivity, including within domestic counterterrorism frameworks.

Ensure that investigations and prosecutions are conducted by specialized professionals with expertise in SGBC, guaranteeing survivor participation, where appropriate, throughout investigative and prosecutorial processes.

Impose targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for carrying out, or materially supporting, the October 7th attack and its aftermath. Sanctions should include asset freezes, travel bans, and financial restrictions, and should not only restrict the capacity of perpetrators to continue their activities but also prioritize the repurposing of assets to directly benefit victims and survivors, as well as their families and communities.

Initiate international cooperation processes to ensure accountability through, *inter alia*, evidence sharing, mutual legal assistance, and survivors' support.

Ensure formal institutional recognition of the findings of this report as part of the historical record, to honor victims, advance justice and accountability, and strengthen collective efforts against denial and erasure.

Provide reparations and support to survivors and their families, including psychosocial care, legal aid, and community recovery programs.

Take active measures to counter denial, minimization, or politicization of the SGBC committed during the October 7th attack and in captivity.

Ensure accountability for the deliberate abuse of digital platforms and social media to record, disseminate, and amplify the atrocities committed during the October 7th attack and against hostages and their families, alongside strengthened oversight and regulation of harmful content.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL

—
Establish a judicial mechanism with a specialized chamber or panel of judges on SGBC, to ensure the expertise required for the effective prosecution of these crimes.

—
Building on the prosecution’s existing efforts and expertise, establish a specialized prosecutorial unit exclusively dedicated to SGBC, with staff and resources allocated solely for investigating and prosecuting these crimes, guided by a comprehensive gender strategy.

—
Provide specialized training and capacity-building exchanges on SGBC to all judicial, investigative, and prosecutorial units.

—
Develop and enforce guidelines and ethical principles for judges, investigators and prosecutors to prevent re-traumatization of survivors and witnesses, and to ensure implementation of trauma-informed protective measures.

“It’s these little things that break you. When you have no control over your body and no control over how to take care of your body.”

Agam Goldstein (17), Former Hostage