

judge based on the actions we take and the results we deliver and whether or not we deliver for the American people.

To deliver for the American people, Republicans must force the Senate Democratic leadership, Majority Leader SCHUMER, and President Biden, to understand a handful of very key truths. Under no circumstances should we give another dollar to Ukraine. No bills should come to the House floor until H.R. 2 is signed by the President and the flow stops across our southern border.

That ought to be the very clear message that is sent to the President and Majority Leader SCHUMER. If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and the Senate want to choose to refuse to secure the border, then they can call up Mr. Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine and explain why.

They can explain that it is more important to keep open borders in America and undermine our sovereignty and our security and our well-being. They can call up Israel and explain to Israel that they refuse to actually fund support for Israel because they are more interested in funding Internal Revenue Service bureaucrats to go after the American people.

That is what our Democratic colleagues in the Senate have chosen to do, and they know it. They know it. We pass a bipartisan bill that chooses to move dollars that were allocated to expand the IRS to go after the American people, take those dollars and give it to our friends from Israel. Our Democratic colleagues in the Senate, on a party-line vote, voted no.

They refused to fund our friends in Israel because they were more committed to the leftist makeover of this country. They are more committed to open borders than they are to securing the communities of the American people and allowing us to have a full and open debate about Ukraine and how we can proceed to fund our government.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are sick of excuses. They want us to do our job. I understand the difficulty of dealing with a razor-thin majority with colleagues on the other side of the aisle who have no interest in doing the things that we want to do to secure the United States, secure our border, reduce spending, reduce inflation, focus the military on what it needs to be focused on, and to do our job under the Constitution in our limited powers. I understand the difficulty of that.

We have done a great job and we have been united as a Republican Party to send good bills over to the Senate. Now we should hold the Senate accountable to doing the work of the American people to follow up on what we have already done. To send a border security bill, H.R. 2, that would do the job of securing the border. Sending a National Defense Authorization bill that would restore our military to its mission rather than social engineering.

There are seven appropriations bills, and others that are ready to go if our

Democratic colleagues on the other side of the Capitol in the Senate will sit down with us to actually reduce spending year over year from 2023 to 2024. We can constrain spending. We can constrain inflation. We can constrain the bureaucrats that are interfering with the lives of the American people and undermining their freedom and their ability to produce and prosper according to their God-given talents.

Voters are watching what we are doing. They are watching whether we are going to stand up and actually do our job, and whether or not we are going to deliver for them rather than engaging in lip service. I think we need to do our job.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ISRAELI HOSTAGE CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lead my colleagues in a Special Order hour.

On October 7, Hamas launched a horrific attack against Israeli civilians, murdering over 1,400 people and taking hostage more than 244 women, children, families, and the elderly. Hamas spared no one.

The hostage crisis has left hundreds of families desperate and searching for answers on the health and safety of their loved ones. This past month has been gut-wrenching. I have never felt this magnitude of pain, shock, and anger burning in the hearts of the Jewish people.

The intentional, genocidal violence inflicted on Israeli civilians and the unconscionable apathy of many nations is a sobering reminder of the fact that Israel remains surrounded by hostility and danger.

For me, and for so many of us, this goes beyond our belief in the survival of the Jewish State. It rises far above politics as usual. It is a moment in history that begs for humanity, unity, and solidarity with Israel.

I am wrecked by how quickly people in this country have forgotten the hostages still being held in Gaza by Hamas. I find myself having to reiterate over and over again that Israel was attacked by a terrorist organization whose mission is the eradication of Israel and the Jewish people.

We must all remember not only the horrifying statistic of 240 captured, but who they are as people. These are real human beings. That is why we are here tonight.

We will continue to come to this floor to call attention to all of the human beings who are brutally being held captive by Hamas in Gaza, until every last one of them is released.

Each of my colleagues who are joining me will speak about a hostage or family of hostages, show their beautiful faces, and remind all of us not to forget these victims who are suffering under terrorist brutality.

Thankfully, Israel has welcomed home many children and some women this week. I am extremely grateful for President Biden's efforts to help make that possible. We cannot and we will not stop until all hostages are reunited with their families.

Tonight, I will be sharing the story of the Bibas family, parents Shiri and Yarden, 4-year-old Ariel, and 10-month-old Kfir from Kibbutz Nir Oz. Look at this beautiful family.

Kfir, the youngest hostage, was just 9 months old on October 7. He had just learned to crawl when he was abducted. His family is worried Kfir doesn't have access to formula. Look at Kfir's beautiful face. How could anyone justify kidnapping and taking hostage a 9-month-old.

As a Jewish mother, I remember when my babies were that age. I remember nursing them. I remember holding them in my arms and being joyful about their first crawling, their first steps, and looking forward to the beauty of their lives unfolding.

Looking at Kfir and Ariel's faces is heartbreaking and is deeply personal. Many of us have had the opportunity to meet with the families of these hostages. Yesterday, Hamas claimed that Shiri, Ariel, and Kfir were killed in Gaza. I pray with all my heart that that is false. The barbarism and cruelty of Hamas knows no bounds.

The Bibas family would never have been in harm's way in Gaza if Hamas did not launch its murderous attack on Israel and take children as leverage on October 7.

□ 1830

On that fateful day, Shiri, Yarden, and their boys were hiding in a safe room when militants fired semiautomatic weapons outside the family's window as Yarden texted relatives: "I love you all." One-half hour later, he texted, "They are coming in," just before communication ceased.

Since then, the world has seen a distressing video of Shiri holding her two young boys wrapped in a blanket close to her chest while surrounded by Hamas militants. Another video depicts Yarden with a head injury forcibly being taken away on a motorcycle.

On Monday, the IDF announced the Bibas family was transferred by Hamas to another Palestinian terror group in Gaza as if they were a commodity to

give leverage to another terrorist organization.

While we know the facts about October 7 and have seen the family's pictures and videos, it is important to remember the light and love of this family. Shiri is described by loved ones as a woman who touches everyone's heart, gentle and full of tenderness, which you can clearly see when she was trying to shield her children and the terror on her face. She was reborn with her two little sons. They were the light that filled her life. Under her loving wing, they were growing up happily.

Ariel loves anything with wheels and a motor. He dreams of superheroes and dresses up as Batman.

Yarden is a sensitive and loving father and husband. Ofri says that while her brother looks big and strong, inside he is the most sensitive and gentle person she knows.

Shiri's cousin Yifat said in an interview about her family: "I can only hope they are together. I hope they didn't separate her from her children. I try not to think about the worst. This is the only thing that keeps me going. But every day that goes by, we can't go the same path anymore. Things need to be changed. Israel is going to be changed after this. We are all traumatized, okay? This touched every family that is involved in Israel."

My heart goes out to Ofri, Yifat, and their whole family. Make no mistake, Hamas will be held responsible.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, this is a time of sadness, of wrenching pain, of anger, and of determination.

It is my solemn duty, Mr. Speaker, to speak on this floor today about a courageous, talented, and generous young man, Itay Chen. His family is in the gallery. I had the opportunity to speak to them just a few minutes ago. As any family would be, knowing that their child is at great risk and not knowing his present welfare, they are grieving but determined.

Itay is an American-Israeli dual citizen bravely serving his nation in the IDF.

That is probably incorrect. This is his nation. IDF is the land of his forebears and of his ancestors and a land that offers sanctuary and safety to the Jewish people who have been savaged, hated, killed, and maligned for millennia.

On October 7, Itay was taken hostage during Hamas' brutal criminal and savage attack on Israel and on innocent civilians in the land that is not contested by anybody.

Itay is only 19 years old. Mr. Speaker, I have not met Itay, though I hope to do so in person in the near future. However, I met with his father, Ruby, who is with us in the gallery today, as I said, and his mother, Hagit, is joining us, as well.

Mr. Speaker, everything I have heard about their son has only reinforced my resolve to help bring Itay home and the other hostages home, as well.

Itay was raised in New York City, the city in which I was born, Mr. Speaker. He was always a precocious kid and a kindhearted young man. Like his dad, he is an avid lover of basketball. Unlike his dad, however, he is a diehard Lakers fan. So, there is a little conflict in the family, but that has not affected the deep love and concern that his family has for Itay.

I want to assure them, Mr. Speaker, that is shared by the 435 Members of this body. It is not a partisan issue but a human issue.

Itay may not have inherited his father's basketball loyalties, Mr. Speaker, but he did inherit his New York grit. Itay also developed a calling for service at a very young age, participating in Boy Scouts and serving his community. That commitment to serving others drove Itay to join the IDF.

I know his experience in captivity, as awful as it is. Very frankly, Mr. Speaker, the Red Cross has seen the horror of how these hostages are being kept, and they ought to tell the world that truth. Nevertheless, we know that his experience will not break his generous spirit nor his dedication to the sacred Jewish principle of tikkun olam, repairing the world and doing good so that others may do better.

His parents, Ruby and Hagit; his brothers, Roy and Alon; and the rest of his family and friends continue to show tremendous resilience and courage. We can do no less in the Congress, no less in the White House, and no less in America than make sure we bring this American home alive and healthy.

I think, Mr. Speaker, how I would feel if one of my three daughters or one of my three grandchildren or one of my four great-grandchildren were in some tunnel or crevice illegally and criminally. I would do everything I could to get them back, and we must do everything to get back not only Itay but all those pictures that we will see of innocent people killed, maimed, and taken hostage by a criminal group we call Hamas.

I want Itay and his loved ones to know that we are going to make sure this Congress does everything it can to bring him and the other hostages home as quickly as possible. Mr. Speaker, as a symbol of that promise, I am wearing a dog tag that Ruby gave me just weeks ago.

Until they return safely to our shores, we will continue to stand strong with their families. Their grief is our grief. Their hope is our hope, and that hope grows with every hostage released. It will not end until they are all home, safe in the arms of their families and loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for taking this Special Order and for yielding to me.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for his poignant remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GOTTHEIMER).

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for this Special Order.

I rise tonight, Mr. Speaker, because, on October 7, Hamas terrorists attacked Israel and abducted more than 230 people, including many Americans. Hamas brutally murdered, raped, burned alive, and decapitated more than 1,000 innocent babies, children, women, men, and the elderly. It was the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Mr. Speaker, 40 American citizens were slaughtered by Hamas, and 9 have been living in horrifying fear at the hands of terrorists for more than 50 days. It blows my mind that this isn't talked about every single day in this country, that Americans were killed and Americans remain hostages.

Hamas killed Americans, and terrorists still hold American hostages inside Gaza. That should be the beginning and end of the argument of why we must crush and kill Hamas.

Thankfully, because of President Biden's resolve and strong leadership, groups of hostages have been rescued, including 4-year-old Avigail, an American citizen. Nevertheless, as of today, there are still 160 hostages.

One of the eight American hostages is Edan Alexander, a 19-year-old from Tenaflly in my district in northern New Jersey. You can see him in this photo that was shared with me by his family, his mom.

I have spent time with his family. They are phenomenal people and just such wonderful, warm people. His sister is at Tenaflly High School. After graduating from Tenaflly High School in 2022, Edan began serving in the Israel Defense Forces.

Edan is the type of person who would regularly call his mother to check in, and his sister considers him to be her best friend. He is devoted to his friends and is always there for his family. He swam in high school. I have seen pictures of him at the prom. He is just like any other American kid we know.

Since day one, I have been in constant contact with the Alexander family and the State Department. Their unimaginable strength in the face of unfathomable pain gives us all great hope.

It is time to get all of these hostages home.

There are some people who equivocate about Hamas. There should be no equivocation. They are designated by the United States of America as a foreign terrorist organization, and anybody who has spent time looking at images that many of us saw in the videos of barbaric, heinous, and unthinkable acts that took place on October 7 knows what Hamas is capable of.

Look what they are doing to innocent Palestinian civilians every single day. Are they welcoming them underground and giving them safe haven? No. They take no responsibility. They use innocent people as human shields. That is what Hamas does.

Hamas' charter advocates jihad against the Jewish people and the elimination of the Jewish state. Israel

is surrounded by terror groups that want to kill their people, including Arab Israelis.

Israel is and remains the only vibrant, progressive, and inclusive democracy in the region. They are our key ally because they are critical to our national security and stand up for values that we share, strong democratic values. They are key to our fight against terror in the region, against Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hamas.

In Israel, Arab parties serve in the Knesset; women serve at the highest levels of military; and the country remains an oasis for LGBTQ people in a region hostile toward the community.

It sickens me that some people are trying to romanticize Hamas. They should be reminded that in Gaza, under Hamas rule, same-sex relations are outlawed. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, your life would be at risk every day if you were openly gay in Gaza or the West Bank.

Additionally, Hamas' 1988 charter states that Muslim women are important because they "manufacture men." Hamas even enforces what women wear in public. There is also no law in Gaza that criminalizes violence against women within the family, including sexual violence.

□ 1845

Hamas allows honor killings, the murder of women and girls accused of what they call "immoral sexual conduct."

Yet, it took U.N. women a month and a half to recognize that women and girls were raped in Israel, and, even then, they still refused to mention Hamas.

Do they not believe the fact that Hamas terrorists committed horrifying and unspeakable acts against innocent girls and women, including many that we have seen images of? As you see all of these hostages being released, you can't imagine what they have been through; and I think, of course, of the images we are seeing this evening, those who are still hostages.

Thankfully, President Biden has been phenomenal, as I said, with his unwavering support for the State of Israel and the Jewish people. The President understands that you have to actually hold terrorists who commit atrocities accountable or they will strike again and be stronger.

Hamas terrorists have made it clear that they will not back down and are committed to "a second, third, and fourth" October 7 against Israel.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying: We must stand by our key ally to get all hostages home, crush the terrorists, and provide humanitarian aid to innocent Palestinian civilians being used by Hamas as human shields.

Israel must eliminate every single terrorist responsible for the atrocities committed on October 7, and we must get these hostages home.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Debbie for her leadership. I thank all of my colleagues for being here this evening.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for his words.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. TRONE).

Mr. TRONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for the release of Abraham Munder, who was taken hostage by Hamas during their brutal attack on October 7.

Mr. Munder is a 78-year-old father and grandfather. Who does that? He has been in captivity for 54 days and counting.

Abraham and his wife, Ruti, lived and raised their family in Kibbutz Nir Oz for nearly 60 years. They built a home. They built a life. It is all gone. Nir Oz was one of the hardest hit by Hamas on October 7, almost a quarter of their population was murdered or kidnapped.

The Munder family has endured unspeakable hardship and tragedy in these weeks. That day, Abraham and Ruti's daughter, Keren, was visiting her parents with her son, Ohad. They were all taken hostage by Hamas. Ohad spent his ninth birthday as a hostage in Gaza.

A few weeks ago, I had the solemn honor of meeting with the hostages' family members in my Capitol office, including Keren's cousin Meirav and her son, Itay.

All they wanted was for the hostages to be brought home, for the world to not forget about their loved ones. Many of us here in Congress took these meetings, and we all pledged we would do all we could to bring them home.

For the last 54 days, Abraham has been held separately and was feared dead by his family. For the last 54 days, he hasn't known that his son was murdered in the attacks. For the last 54 days, he hasn't known that his wife and his daughter and grandson survived and were taken hostage.

As a grandfather and a parent myself, I can't begin to imagine the nightmare. By the grace of God, Ruti, Keren, and Ohad were returned to Israel on November 24 as part of the negotiated cease-fire and hostage exchange.

Today, we call for Abraham to be brought home. Let him grieve and heal with his family. We continue to call for Hamas to release all the hostages. We must bring them all home.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his participation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER).

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, on October 7, the State of Israel was treacherously attacked by the terrorist group Hamas. They murdered 1,200 peaceful people, many of them at a musical festival, some from Kibbutz Nir Oz near the border. They kidnapped 250 people illegally, of course, and took them into Gaza.

We know that some of them have been released in a deal that was made, one of them was an American Israeli

named Abigail, just 4 years old. She was kept together with three other hostages and was given one piece of pita, Middle East bread, for the four of them per day. When they came home, they had to be deloused. Their hair and their clothes were full of lice, and they said that if they had to go to the bathroom, they had to wait 2 hours.

Mr. Speaker, Hamas has said over and over again, they will attack over and over again, again and again until Israel is no more. When people demand a cease-fire, we should think what we would have thought about people demanding a cease-fire 7 or 8 weeks after Pearl Harbor. A cease-fire would simply permit Hamas to regroup and to attack Israel again and again and again, which they have told us they would do.

By the way, there had been cease-fires. There have been four cease-fires, every one of which Hamas broke, including breaking a cease-fire on October 7.

One of the hostages who was taken was a fellow named Danny Elgarat, brother of Yitzhak Elgarat. I want to read what Danny said about that.

He said, "My name is Danny, Danny Elgarat. Around 10:30 a.m., my brother calls me, my brother, Yitzhak Elgarat. He lives in Kibbutz Nir Oz. He tells me that his hand is crushed, flooded with blood. He was hysterical and stressed, and I didn't quite understand what was going on with him, and I tried to guide him how to apply a tourniquet to stop the blood.

"Suddenly, while I am still trying to guide him, I hear screams in the background and shouts. Then Itzik, my brother Itzik, shouts 'Danny, it's the end. It's the end,' and our call is cut off.

"Afterwards we checked the matter of Itzik's phone, the location of the phone. We found out that his phone is located in Gaza, the center of the city of Gaza.

"When he would come back to us, we would sit in the porch with a good glass of Whiskey and we would say it was just a bad dream."

Mr. Speaker, I pray for Yitzhak and all the remaining hostages who were so barbarically taken from their families. Bring them home and defeat Hamas so they can't do this again and again and again.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL).

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on October 7, the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, Hamas terrorists took over 200 hostages from Israel—men, women, children, the elderly, and the young, including dozens of IDF soldiers who Hamas has refused to release. I want to tell you about one of them.

That beautiful young lady is Naama Levy. She is the second of four children. She is an athlete, loves soccer, the triathlon. During her summer in high school, she was a participant in the Hands of Peace project in the

United States working toward peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

After she graduated high school, like other Israeli youth, she completed her coursework to be an observation soldier, and she began her military service on October 5 at the Nahal Oz base. It was 2 days later, on October 7 at 6:32 a.m., she woke to red alerts and went into a safe room with her friends. She then texted her mom. There is the text:

Mom, we are in the safe room. I have never heard anything like this.

Her mother says:

What is happening, my darling?

What her mother then saw on a video loop over and over was her daughter being dragged off by her hair by Hamas into the back of a truck.

Her mom lives the same nightmare as the other families of the hostages. She thinks about her every day. Where is her daughter now? What kind of life is she living? Where does she sleep? Does she have water? Does she have air? Is she being treated well?

Mr. Speaker, look at this young lady, just starting her life with hopes and dreams. Let's bring her back.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. NORCROSS).

Mr. NORCROSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Debbie and all my colleagues for being here today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of Aviv Atzili. I was supposed to be here speaking about him being held hostage by Hamas and the need to bring him home safely and without delay.

Instead, I am sadly here to speak about the memory of Aviv. Aviv was a dedicated family man, who just hours ago it was confirmed that he was killed by Hamas.

According to his father-in-law, a New Jerseyan, Aviv bravely fought back against terrorists, but they had not heard anything since that day in October. The news of his death comes hours after his wife, Liat, an American, was released from captivity after 54 days.

While we are grateful for her release, we mourn the loss of Aviv as he leaves behind Liat and her three children.

We are keeping friends, family, and certainly his community in our prayers, but, unfortunately, Aviv's story is one of thousands, many that you will hear tonight about American citizens, many who have been killed or taken hostage by Hamas terrorists.

When I traveled with Debbie in a bipartisan group just 2 days after the attack when we were in Israel, we heard the stories from the families. We listened as two children talked about how their mother and father hid in that shelter until they broke through and took her father away while she hid, and we are still waiting to hear what happened there. It is impossible to try to fathom exactly the pain that they are going through, to watch and to hear what happened as they are hiding.

Many Israelis continue to live that dark day and they are waiting to hear

about those who have been taken away. It is time to bring them all home. The images, the videos of the reuniting children and families bring that joy to our heart in such time of pain. It is a reminder that we must bring all the remaining hostages home without delay.

I am proud to join with my colleagues here today to highlight our commitment to bring every single one of them home. We cannot and we will not be silent until all those held by that terrorist organization are reunited with their families.

As a father and grandfather, it breaks my heart to listen to the pain of those families and what they are going through, and I cannot fathom what the Atzili family across Israel had to live through since its brutal attack.

Mr. Speaker, Aviv and Liat's story is a reminder that every single hostage and Israeli loss is a son, daughter, mother, father, brother, or sister. May Aviv's memory be a blessing to his family and to all of us.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey so much for his words, and I can say it was so incredibly moving and meaningful to be able to join him and Mr. PANETTA from California and Senator ERNST just days after those horrific attacks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GOLDMAN).

Mr. GOLDMAN of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for organizing this very important Special Order hour, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving us the time to do this.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to shine a light on the Metzger family from Kibbutz Nir Oz, which suffered the unimaginable loss of 38 members of the kibbutz, and from where a shocking 75 innocent people were taken captive by Hamas. That is almost one-third of the innocent hostages who were abducted by Hamas on October 7.

Two of those abducted were Tamar Metzger, age 78, and her husband Yoram, age 80. They are grandparents.

Mrs. Metzger was released 2 days ago, after 52 days in captivity.

My family had an opportunity to spend some time with the Metzger's son, Nir, and his two children, Ran and Omer, this week in New York.

According to Nir, the Hamas terrorists, teenagers, dragged his mom out of her bathroom, bashed her face in with a rifle, and severely injured her knees and legs as they violently took a 78-year-old woman to the tunnels of Gaza.

□ 1900

In Gaza, both Metzgers were kept in a tiny, dark, and moist room in an underground tunnel, where there were 12 mattresses on the floor for the 2 of them and 10 other hostages from Kibbutz Nir Oz.

There was essentially nowhere for them to walk or move. They were not allowed to speak. If they did speak, the terrorists would beat them. This hap-

pened to a number of them, including 78-year-old Mrs. Metzger at least one time.

Yoram remains held captive in that dank darkness underground, unable to move, unable to speak, under constant fear of being beaten by Hamas terrorists.

We cannot allow another day to go by before these innocent civilians are released back to their homes in Israel. We cannot stop pushing and pressing Hamas to release them and putting pressure on allies and other countries in the Middle East—in Qatar, in Egypt—to put pressure on Hamas to release the illegally abducted civilians who are kept captive in the tunnels of Gaza without any light, without food, and without any ability to move around.

It is time to bring them home. It is time to bring them all home.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS), who is the co-chair of the Congressional Task Force on American Hostages and Americans Wrongfully Detained Abroad.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Florida for her leadership in the House of Representatives during this incredibly sobering and trying moment.

When the Congressional Task Force on American Hostages and Americans Wrongfully Detained Abroad was created, we never envisioned a moment like the one that we found ourselves in on October 7.

As Americans, as Members of the House of Representatives, we don't just call for the release of the American hostages in Gaza, but we call for the release of all the hostages, for what took place on October 7 was an attack on innocent people. It was an attack on all of humanity, an attack on those living freely and peacefully, going about their daily business in free society.

They were attacked by terrorists. They were attacked by those who seek to do evil. They were attacked because of what Israel means to the world. That cannot stand.

Behind me is a picture of a woman, Karina Arieve, age 19, a surveillance soldier who was taken captive on October 7 when Hamas terrorists attacked the base at Nahal Oz, where she was stationed. Her family is still eagerly waiting for her release, including her parents and her 24-year-old sister, Sasha.

Sasha's plea for the return of her sister has been heard around the world. As I join my colleagues this evening in bringing attention to the individuals like Karina and the remaining hostages, it is incredibly sobering.

Sasha's words, which I would like to read, about her beloved sister are as follows:

"She called us in the morning [of October 7], and she said that the base had been raided and attacked. She basically called to tell us good-bye. And so, if she won't live, she asked us to continue our life. The last message was: 'The terrorists, they are here.'

"A few hours later, we identified her in a video. This was a video that the terrorists took and then published on their Telegram channels. This is our last confirmation that she is alive. She is alive on the video, but we don't know what is going on now.

"We know that they probably took her. She was in their jeep, with other girls. We went to the police to show them the video and to say that we identify my sister so they can do something.

"The same evening, military officers came to our door, and they said to us that my sister, Karina, is held in the hands of a terror organization. From this moment, we do not know any other information.

"We sit, watch TV, and hope for the best."

She continues: "She is all I have, you know. I love my parents and all, but she is the one my heart belongs to. She is the only one I love in this world and the only one I want to be with me. She always comforts me.

"Even [though] she is my little sister, I can always come to her, and she will be logical with me and make me come together. She is very lovely. She is very innocent. She is very childish, although she is now a teenager. She likes to decorate her room. She likes stickers and the fluffy dolls of the animals. She loves to paint. She loves cosmetics; she is always doing my make-up. I do not understand anything about it.

"I remember the day she was born because the gap between us is 5 years. I was in the hospital, and I saw her. All this life, since the moment she was born till now, is just rolling in my head like a film."

Hamas, release the hostages now. Bring Karina home to her family.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her poignant remarks and her dedication to this cause.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES).

Mrs. TORRES of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Florida for bringing us together to bring awareness and to never forget the folks who still need to be returned home.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to demand the immediate release and safe return of the remaining hostages in Gaza held by Hamas terrorists.

I am grateful for President Biden's leadership that has led to the release of hostages. However, many remain captive, including 22-year-old Omer Neutra.

Omer was born in the United States and is the son of Ronen and Orna and now has spent over 50 days in captivity. He grew up in Long Island, where he was the regional president of the United Synagogue Youth and captain of many sports teams.

His friends and family describe Omer as a natural-born leader known for his compassion, seeing the best in people,

and bringing communities together, a peaceful soul. His kindness and sense of duty led him to defer his future at Binghamton University to defend his grandparents' land with the hope of bringing communities together. Putting his future on hold to serve others, that is Omer.

His drive to lead and to serve now puts him last in line to be released from captivity. His family, who are with us here this evening, have been in agony for the past 7 weeks with no word if Omer is even alive. We will continue to pray for him.

As the mother of an Air Force veteran, I can only imagine their agony. This is something that no parent, no mother, no father, no grandparent could ever imagine would happen to their loved one.

I join my colleagues in calling for the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas, and I urge the administration to continue to do everything in their power to help free hostages like Omer and ensure their safe return home.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING), the co-chair of the Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism.

Ms. MANNING. Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear friend, Congresswoman WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for putting this evening together and for meeting with me and so many other of our Members with hostage families for week after week.

On October 7, we woke in horror to Hamas' brutal and despicable terrorist attacks, invading Israel, firing rockets at innocent civilians, going house to house, murdering babies, executing parents in front of their children, and massacring 250 young people at a music festival.

As if killing 1,200 people was not enough, Hamas took an estimated 240 innocent civilians hostage in Gaza, including elderly women, babies, young children, and Holocaust survivors.

Like many of my colleagues, I have spent the past 7 weeks meeting with the families of hostages, hostages including Keith Siegel from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and his wife Aviva, who were kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza.

I met with Keith's sister, Lucy, and his niece, Emily, who spoke so lovingly of their family members.

Keith and Aviva are the parents of four children and the proud grandparents of five grandchildren. Keith grew up in my home State of North Carolina. He moved to Israel as a young man, where he met Aviva, who was born in South Africa and had moved to Israel at the age of 8. Keith and Aviva have lived happily in Kibbutz Kfar Aza for 40 years.

On the morning of October 7, Keith and Aviva were having a quiet day at home when they were brutally attacked and abducted by Hamas terrorists, who drove them into Gaza in their own car.

After 51 days of grueling captivity, Aviva was finally released earlier this week as part of a temporary cease-fire. Keith is still being held hostage. I can't even imagine what Aviva has gone through or the agony the entire family is going through waiting for their beloved Keith to be freed from captivity.

I have met with other hostage families and learned about their loved ones. I realized that just like the stories of Holocaust survivors, each story about a hostage is unique. Each story is heartbreaking because each of these hostages has loving family members whose lives have been torn apart, who are living the agony of not knowing what has become of their loved ones: Are they okay? Are they healthy? Are they injured? Are they alive? Will they ever see them again?

I have heard stories that have brought me to tears, that haunt my dreams, and that should make all of us redouble our efforts to bring those hostages home. I have met with several of these families so often that I feel like they are my own extended family members.

Over the past few days, we have seen some of the hostages released and brought home to their families, and I thank President Biden and this administration, along with Israelis and our regional partners who have worked to ensure that the agreed-upon hostage exchanges took place, but there is still much more work to do.

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There are still more than 130 people being held hostage, and we have only begun to learn about the terrible circumstances of their captivity. This has told us we have absolutely no time to waste.

Earlier this week, I was proud to help lead the debate on the House floor on a bipartisan resolution that we passed unanimously demanding the release of the hostages, but passing a resolution is not enough. We must do more.

Hamas has still not allowed the International Red Cross to visit the hostages. This is unacceptable. Our country and countries around the world must join together and demand the immediate release of all the remaining hostages: the children, the women, the men, the civilians, and the soldiers. We have no time to waste.

I look forward to rejoicing with the Siegel family when Keith is finally released, and I look forward to bringing all the hostages home.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina for her remarks, and I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. AUCHINCLOSS).

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Florida for her leadership on this issue.

I rise today to tell the story of Ofer Kalderon. On October 7, the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, Ofer, along with his children Sahar, 16, and Erez, 12, was taken

hostage by Hamas from the Nir Oz Kibbutz close to the Gaza Strip.

During that brutal attack, 29 of Kibbutz Nir Oz's 400 residents were murdered, and 80 were taken captive. These are not just numbers. Those residents who were murdered were individuals with hopes now extinguished, with lives now cut short.

Those taken hostage are living in unimaginable terror, and their families are waiting, hoping for good news and fearing the worst.

Ofer is a father of four, a carpenter. He loves to build and to rebuild engines, to travel, to take family camping trips, to race and ride dirt bikes, to help cook Shabbat dinner for his family.

When asked about Ofer, his family describes his easygoing energy and a huge smile.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that there is a family and a story like this one behind each one of these names of those murdered and of those taken hostage. Ofer is one of them.

Ofer's children have thankfully been returned, but their family will not be made whole again until Ofer is released, as well. His relatives are my constituents, and my office is providing any support that we can, but the ultimate responsibility is on Hamas to release Ofer and all hostages immediately and unconditionally.

I urge those terrorists to salvage a shred of humanity by releasing him and by releasing all the others held hostage, but I understand also that the hopes of finding a shred of humanity within Hamas are close to nil, which is why I remind my colleagues here today that we cannot handcuff Israel with calls for a unilateral cease-fire as they work to achieve their primary shared goal we all have: bringing all of the hostages home.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for his remarks, and I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. RYAN).

Mr. RYAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Florida for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of my Hudson Valley community to honor the memories of the community members we lost on October 7 and to plead and to demand the safe return of all of the Hudson Valley families and friends still held hostage by Hamas.

Judith and Gadi Haggai, who you can see behind me, are both dual American and Israeli citizens, Judith was born in the Hudson Valley in Goshen, New York, in Orange County.

On October 7, Judith and Gadi were on their usual morning walk around Kibbutz Nir Oz when they were ambushed by Hamas, shot, and the last location of their phone was traced to Gaza.

Judith and Gadi are not combatants or soldiers. They are a schoolteacher and a musician. They are peace-loving people whose only crime was being Jewish.

Their niece, Ofri, took a one-way flight to the United States, came to my office, and made two powerful requests: Never allow our country to forget her aunt and her uncle and to fight with everything that we have to bring them back. I promised her I would do that, and I stand here today to honor that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I served 27 months in combat. Our rule was that we never leave a fallen sister or brother behind.

I ask all to not forget Judith and Gadi, and I refuse, and I know my fellow Americans refuse to leave behind our Hudson Valley brothers and sisters.

Tragically, the Haggais are not the only Hudson Valley family grieving. Maurice Shnaider of Kingston, New York, my hometown, lost his sister, Margit, and his brother-in-law, Yosi, in these barbaric attacks.

While we honor their loss, it is impossible to mourn properly while the fate of their daughter, Shiri, and their grandsons, Ariel and Kfir, hang in the balance—Ariel, 4, Kfir, 10 months old.

My children, my two boys, Theo and Cameron, are 4 and 1. I cannot think every night as I put my boys to bed of anything other than the faces of the Bibas family.

These are not prisoners of war. These are children, babies ripped away from their home and taken hostage by Hamas terrorists. This is pure, unadulterated evil.

To the Haggai family, the Bibas family, to their friends, to my whole community, to every Jewish person worried about their safety amidst the historic rise in anti-Semitism, know this: We are here for you, we see you, and we will not give up until every single hostage comes home safely.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his remarks, and I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. PANETTA), who I also had the privilege of traveling with to Israel in the days after the attacks.

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, Representative WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and I were in the Middle East on October 7 of this year. We were part of a congressional delegation trip led by Senator JONI ERNST, and we went there to talk about peace. Unfortunately, due to the bloodthirsty attack by Hamas, we left the region talking about war.

Despite the change in the tone of our trip, we became the first congressional delegation to visit Israel in the aftermath of the October 7 attack.

While we were in country, though, we met with family members of victims of that attack, including David and Noam Peri, a brother and sister whose 79-year-old father, Haim Peri, was kidnapped by Hamas from his home in the Kibbutz Nir Oz, a peaceful agricultural town whose name means meadow of strength in Hebrew, a town whose 400 citizens probably could be seen prior to the attack taking to the streets to peacefully protest the prime minister's rightwing government.

On the morning of October 7, that town was anything but peaceful as the

Hamas attack left it smashed up and smoldering with one in four of its residents either murdered or kidnapped.

That day, Hamas lived up to its definition as a genocidal terrorist organization as it attacked Israel to kill Jews, to kill the Jewish society, and to kill peace.

As part of that goal, Hamas attacked Nir Oz and murdered 27 of its inhabitants and took 73 hostages to Gaza.

At the time of the attack, Haim was not only the leader in that community, he was also a long-time peace activist for the Israeli-Palestinian issues.

He is the type that would drive sick Palestinians from Gaza into Israel to be cared for at Israeli hospitals.

A father of five and grandfather of 13, Haim is now most likely isolated in the dungeons of the Gazan tunnels.

Although Noam Peri describes her father as strong and brave, she also admits that he is not young. A metalworker by trade, Haim has had two heart surgeries and now has been without his heart medication for 7 weeks.

I will never forget when we met them. All that Noam was concerned about was that he didn't have his medication to survive.

Mr. Speaker, it is going to be tough going forward. We hope that the hostages are released and that there are more pauses in the conflict.

We hope to pass and provide meaningful support and humanitarian assistance so that Israel can continue to defend itself from the existential and constant threat of Hamas.

Mr. Speaker, although things may never be the same for Nir Oz, for Haim, and for the family, we do know that because of its determination to survive and succeed, the same determination it has shown for over 75 years in its existence, Israel will continue to be that meadow of strength in the Middle East for peace, for prosperity, and for democracy.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his poignant words.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN) for 30 minutes.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER).

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for organizing this hour. I thank the Speaker for his indulgence and attention as we have gone through a long list typical of conversations talking about the hostages. I thank my friend from Michigan, General BERGMAN, for the time.

We should not have to be here tonight. We should not be forced to talk