
Israel and Hamas: Yshay Dan (relative of the hostages), “No spirit of revenge. We must live in peace”

Yshay Dan, an Israeli-French citizen, suffered the death of his 80-year-old sister-in-law Carmela and his niece Noya, a 12-year-old autistic child and Harry Potter fan, in the Hamas terror attack on Israel on 7 October. Their family members had hoped they had been taken hostage. They were found dead, hugging each other, in the kibbutz of Nir Oz. But his nephew, Ofer Kalderon, 53, was taken hostage to Gaza with his two sons, Sahar, 16, and Eretz, 12. The latter two were released by Hamas on Tuesday 28 November under the Qatar-Egypt-US brokered agreement with Israel. Ofer is still being held, along with other Israelis. “We don't know anything about their condition,” Yshay told SIR. His family name comes from one of the twelve tribes of Israel, the tribe of Dan, which according to the Book of Joshua inherited two parts of the Promised Land in the north. Yshay, who is one of the founders of kibbutz Nir Oz, among those attacked by Hamas, met Pope Francis yesterday on the sidelines of Wednesday's general audience, during which the Pope repeated his appeal "to pray for the grave situation in Israel and Palestine; peace, please, peace. I hope that the present ceasefire in Gaza will continue, that all the hostages will be released and that humanitarian aid will continue to be allowed in.”



[The Pope's remarks were warmly welcomed by Yshay, who proudly points out that he always enjoyed good relations with the people of Gaza. For years, his brother Uri, whose wife was killed, accompanied, on a voluntary basis, people from Gaza in need of medical treatment to Israeli hospitals. SIR interviewed him at the end of the audience. Could you describe your meeting with Pope Francis? I want to say that I am very thankful to the Pope. In fact I perceived something that I was not aware of before, which is that he can give a hope, the hope. I don't know if it's 'a' hope or 'the' hope, but I looked into his eyes and I spoke with him. I was surprised to see how attentively he listened to what I told him. I showed him the picture of my family - two of them were hostages until two days ago, another is still a hostage - and I told him about all the over one hundred hostages. He told me to pray for peace between Israel and the Palestinians, for the hostages and for those who are suffering and those who are ill. I showed him the picture of the hostages. He placed his hand on mine and said in French:](#)

[“I am with you, I will pray for this, do not forget it.”](#)

[All the time he looked straight at me. There are great rabbis in Israel, and when they talk they transmit a great strength. This is exactly what I felt. I would like to point out that I am not a believer, I am an agnostic. But if you want to know what I felt, the answer is that I felt something very powerful that I cannot define.](#)



I don't have an answer because I don't know the reason for this. I think no one in the world does. I think Qatar is giving money to release the hostages. We don't know what happened, I don't have a clear answer to that question. **Are you optimistic about the release of the other hostages?** Not at all. I have learned to live with the thought that they are no longer alive and I am only surprised when something positive happens. **Have you had the opportunity to talk to the families of the hostages who have already been released?** I had the opportunity to talk with my brother's daughter, whose two sons have been released. She told me that their children are very sad, they are not speaking. And she does not push them to talk. She heard from one of the children taken hostage who said that they were forced to watch Hamas footage documenting the atrocities in Israel, they could see what was done to the women, how they cut off the baby's head. It's horrible. Maybe my brother's children have also seen these images, but they don't speak. The few times they do, they speak very slowly and softly, as if they were in a state of shock. But I have no certainty of that. **Talks are underway to extend the truce. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken is due to visit Israel and the West Bank this week, while more hostages and prisoners are expected to be released. Do you think the war will end soon?** Most of the people who have been attacked by Hamas in southern Israel, including myself, have a big problem that goes by the name of Benjamin Netanyahu and the settlers. I think that it's convenient for them that the war continues, so I don't think they will ask us whether or not we want peace. They say we must continue to fight because they believe in the words of the prophets or I don't know what.



Yes. I am sure that we will do our best for this. We will make peace with the Arab citizens and they will make peace with us and I am sure they will accept it. I am convinced that most of them want peace with Israel. Most Israelis want peace, understood as equal dignity, not a peace that implies that we will be the king and the Palestinians the slaves. Nobody wants that. No spirit of revenge. I think we have to live together in peace, because it can be a paradise. We will rebuild Gaza, I am sure of it. And it will be for the Palestinians, not for the army and not for the government. I hope that there will be a change of government and that there will be peace with our neighbour.

Daniele Rocchi