Kibbutz says Gadi Haggai, abducted Oct. 7, died in Hamas captivity; body held in Gaza

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Kibbutz Nir Oz, one of the hardest hit communities during Hamas’s October 7 rampage in which 1,200 people were slaughtered in southern Israel, announced Friday that one of its residents who was taken hostage in Gaza has died while in captivity.

In a statement, the kibbutz said Gadi Haggai, 73, was murdered and that his wife, 70-year-old Judi Weinstein, remains hostage in Gaza.

Weinstein is believed to have been wounded during the onslaught.

The kibbutz does not say how it received the information of Haggai’s death, but said his body remains in the hands of Gaza terrorists.

Haggai, a retired chef and jazz musician, was a father of four and grandfather of seven.

“Gadi was a man full of humor who knew how to make those around him laugh. A musician at heart, a gifted flautist, he played in the IDF Orchestra and was involved with music his whole life,” the Hostages and Missing Persons Families Forum said in a statement, adding that Haggai’s family had asked for privacy.

Haggai and Weinstein, a US national, were on their morning walk when gunfire erupted and missiles streaked across the sky on October 7.

Taking cover in a field, they could hear a recorded voice from an alert system for their kibbutz in southern Israel.

“What did she say?” Weinstein asked in Hebrew as she captured the scene on video.

“Red alert,” her 72-year-old husband said, referring to the warning for incoming rocket fire.

Weinstein shared the 40-second video clip in a group chat on October 7, when Hamas invaded Kibbutz Nir Oz during its terror onslaught, in the couple’s last contact with their family.

A paramedic later told the pair’s children that Weinstein had called for medical help but that they had lost contact with her.

“She said they were shot by terrorists on a motorcycle and that my dad was wounded really bad,” said Iris Weinstein Haggai.

“Paramedics tried to send her an ambulance. The ambulance got hit by a rocket,” said Weinstein Haggai.

Weinstein, a New York native, is a retired teacher.

Some 80 of Kibbutz Nir Oz’s roughly 400 residents were taken hostage by terrorists on October 7.

It is believed that 129 of the 240 hostages abducted by Hamas on October 7 remain in Gaza — not all of them alive — after 105 civilians were released from Hamas captivity during a weeklong truce in late November. Four hostages were released prior to that, and one was rescued by troops.

The bodies of eight hostages have also been recovered and three hostages were mistakenly killed by the military.

The Israel Defense Forces has confirmed the deaths of 22 of those still held by Hamas, citing new intelligence and findings obtained by troops operating in Gaza.

Hamas is also holding the bodies of fallen IDF soldiers Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin since 2014, as well as two Israeli civilians, Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who are both thought to be alive after entering the Strip of their own accord in 2014 and 2015, respectively.