Freed child hostage still speaks in code, has nightmares about Hamas captivity

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By Vered Weiss

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In an interview with *Kan* News, Thomas Hand, father of freed child hostage Emily Hand, says that although she shows signs of recovery, she still speaks in code and has nightmares about Hamas captivity.

Emily Hand, who spent her 9th birthday as a hostage in Gaza, was released on November 25th following 50 days in captivity after having been kidnapped from Kibbutz Be’eri.

Thomas Hand, a native of Ireland who is raising Emily alone after her mother Liat Korenberg died of breast cancer, said that Emily was recovering well after her release.

He said, “She’s very, very good, making progress, recovering. The rest of us are broken now.”

Hand described waking Emily up often when she seems to be having nightmares and that she once had a dream that she was escaping from Gaza and running back to Kibbutz Be’eri.

Hand added that Emily doesn’t talk much about her captivity and has code words for terrorists, foods she doesn’t like and certain objects and situations that remind her of her ordeal in Gaza.

During the interview, he turned to Emily and asked, “What’s zeitim (olives)?”

Emily promptly answered, “Terrorists.”

Thomas showed the interviewer a whiteboard of Emily’s code words, and said, “Any food or item that she doesn’t like, she transfers that word into code.”

When the interviewer asked Emily the reason for the codes, she answered, “Sometimes it is uncomfortable for me to say these words.”

Thomas explained, “I believed she was down in the tunnels because that’s the safest place … but no, from the time she was kidnapped, they ran from one house…next morning, they ran to another house… presumably taking one step ahead of the IDF.”

Most of the time, Emily was guarded by men, and when asked if any of them were kind, she quickly answered, “No.”

She referred to her time in captivity as “the box” and said that a terrorist said to her ““Uskut’ [Arabic for be quiet] or I’ll kill you with this knife.”

Thomas Hand said he noticed that Emily was suddenly more mature when she returned from captivity, although she often feels insecure and has to double-check that she is safe.

“She’s insecure,” he said. “She always wants to know that the door is locked, that the shutters are down; she wants to feel secure in the house.”