Freed hostage says she was abducted by armed Gaza civilians, sold to HAMAS

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The Times of Israel

[https://www.timesofisrael.com/freed-gaza-hostage-says-she-was-abducted-by-armed-civilians-sold-to-HAMAS/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/freed-gaza-hostage-says-she-was-abducted-by-armed-civilians-sold-to-hamas/)

An Israeli hostage who was abducted during the HAMAS-led terror onslaught on October 7 said Monday that she was captured by armed Palestinian civilians who later sold her to the Gaza-ruling terror group.

[Nili Margalit’s](https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-nili-margalit-nursing-other-hostages-in-gaza/) revelation in an [interview](https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/dans-l-enfer-des-tunnels-de-gaza-une-ex-otage-infirmiere-raconte-sa-captivite-08-04-2024-2557054_24.php#11) with the Le Point French magazine appeared to further highlight the extent to which participation in the shock attack in which some 1,200 Israelis were killed and 253 were taken hostage extended beyond fighters in the HAMAS terror group.

Margalit shared her story while on a Paris stop of a tour throughout Europe aimed at raising awareness of the 133 Israelis still in captivity.

Margalit was in her home in the Gaza-border town of Kibbutz Nir Oz when thousands of Palestinian terrorists burst across the border shortly after dawn. Like many others, she took refuge in her house’s bomb shelter before messages began flooding in from neighbors sharing that terrorists had infiltrated their town, she recalled in the interview.

At around 9 a.m. terrorists breached Margalit’s home, ransacking rooms and setting the building on fire. They soon found her hiding in her safe room.

It was not locked, allowing the attackers to open it easily. The unlocked door may have actually saved her life. “Those who barricaded themselves in the [safe rooms] died because the terrorists shot through the doors and set them on fire,” she explained. In Margalit’s case, the terrorists simply opened the safe room door before they found a need to shoot through the entrance.

The 42-year-old was pulled outside and covered with a white sheet while surrounded by what she described as “civilians armed with Kalashnikovs.” She was forced onto a golf cart and driven to the southern border before being transferred to a car and driven to the Gazan city of Khan Younis.

There, her civilian captors “negotiated with HAMAS to sell me. When they were paid, I was taken straight into a tunnel,” she said.

Initially, Margalit was taken to an area with about thirty other people — many of whom were friends and neighbors from Nir Oz.

“The men had swollen faces and injured legs after being dragged on a motorbike,” she said.

The hostages were divided into smaller groups, including one that was made up of people above the age of 70. “I mentioned that I was an emergency room nurse,” Margalit said.

She was eventually put in a small room with around a dozen other people, under the watch of four guards. Crammed together, they were given small daily rations of rice and bread that caused stomach issues for some of the hostages.

“Several hostages did not have their glasses, or hearing aids or lacked oxygen. I was their eyes and ears so they could find their way in the tunnels,” she said.

Margalit worked to maintain herself by doing yoga exercises. She took care of the other hostages, especially those who were elderly or needed medications.

One of the captors, speaking in Arabic translated by a hostage, asked for a list of medications they needed, but the medicine that arrived was inadequate.

“We quickly established a routine: patients had to eat at the same time, then take their pills at another time,” she told Le Point. “But we were short on stock. We learned afterward that HAMAS had received boxes of medicine and glasses from the Red Cross, sent according to the needs of each hostage.”

The days “were extremely long” and the captives inevitably got into arguments.

“There were shouting matches, crying [but also] laughter. It’s normal when you put ten people in the same room — we’re human! But we always supported each other.”

“At first, I told myself it would only last two days. Then I understood that Israel would never pay for so many hostages. This depressed some of us. We had to hold on psychologically. Helping was my way of surviving.”

Margalit said the hostages were largely unaware of what else had happened on October 7 beyond their individual abductions.

She was eventually released from Gaza on November 30, 2023, as part of a negotiated truce between Israel and HAMAS that freed over 100 hostages. She received no warning of her impending freedom.

“A guard came and picked me up, pointed at me, and said, ‘Go, go,’” giving her no time to say farewell to the other hostages with whom she had been held captive.

Once back in Israel, family and friends visited her in the hospital where she was recovering and they slowly informed her of what had happened on October 7. A day after her release, the IDF confirmed the death of her father, [Eliyahu Margalit](https://www.timesofisrael.com/eliyahu-margalit-75-cattle-breeder-horse-lover-known-as-churchill/), whose body remains in Gaza.

Margalit is now touring Europe to campaign on behalf of the remaining hostages’ plight.

“Freeing the hostages is the key to ending this war,” she said.

As for herself, she remarked, “My rehabilitation will begin the day the hostages are out.”