

Israeli president addresses dire health of Hamas-held hostages



By Katja Hamilton

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Israeli President Isaac Herzog said at The World Economic Forum's 54th Annual Meeting in Davos last week that Israel is committed to distributing medicines to hostages who have been taken captive by Hamas-led gunmen.



Source: Twitter/@Isaac_Herzog. Israeli President Isaac Herzog addressed The World Economic Forum's 54th Annual Meeting in Davos last week, calling on world leaders to not forget the hostages taken captive by Hamas gunmen on 7 October 2023. The hostages include both Israelis and Muslims, among them Kfir Bibas who turned one last week. President Herzog is seen here seated at #WEF2024 next to a photo of Kfir Bibas, taken shortly before Bibas was abducted.

This follows a recent meeting President Herzog held in Israel with representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, family members of hostages held by Hamas as well as returned hostages, wherein they discussed the desperate medical situation of the hostages abducted on 7 October 2023.

"The medical situation of the hostages is dire," he said at @WEF24. "They are in very real danger. We have a very cruel sadistic enemy who has taken a decision to try to torture the Israeli national psyche as well as the hostages themselves."

He said "the meeting was very emotional".

"We discussed how the Red Cross operates and how it can help - under the limitations of this war zone - and its ability to

have a dialogue with all parties concerned.”

President Herzog did not provide further details regarding the meeting or the health status of the hostages.

“We are praying that the medication that is being supplied with France and Qatar, and the international agencies and others in Gaza will reach them. I hope it will further enhance the ability to help the hostages.”

Hostage details and location uncertainty

President Herzog said there are 136 hostages “four from the 2014 Gaza War; including Muslims, including women, foreign nationals, young girls, older women, Holocaust survivors, [and those] connected to the Holocaust.”

The eldest hostage, he said, is 85 years old, the youngest is Kfir Bibas, who last week turned one.

But, whether the medication can reach the hostages is disputed.

President Herzog vacillated on whether the whereabouts of the Hamas-held hostages are known, and it’s not clear whether the hostages are in one location or at several satellite venues.

Speaking of Kfir Bibas, President Herzog at first said “his whereabouts are unknown” and then he followed this sentence with: “We know he was kidnapped by Hamas. We know that these barbaric terrorists have taken him and his mother and his brother, and his father was in a different place. We know that they are going through hell. And we now know their whereabouts.”

Border access challenges

Secondly, he spoke of border access for convoys of trucks carrying aid for Palestinians in Gaza. He said he had recently visited the Nitzana crossing with the media to see how Israel is screening humanitarian trucks. He noted the government has the ability to screen up to 400 trucks a day, which translates into the delivery of 20,000 tonnes of goods daily.

He nevertheless did not go into detail about which of these trucks would be carrying the medication meant to reach the hostages, what conditions the medications would be treating and what quantity of medications would be transported.



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He also failed to distinguish between the total number of humanitarian trucks reaching the Nitsana crossing each day and those that are either denied clear passage by regulatory authorities or unable to cross the border due to security screenings.

“Unfortunately, so far the international community did not manage to meet the ability to get to 400 trucks a day; usually there are around 200 trucks a day,” he said. “Unfortunately, [the trucks have] to go to Rafah and Kerem Shalom, which is another passage we’ve opened up despite the risk of terror there.”

The call for peace

Hertzog reiterated the importance of the hostages being returned home.

“Israel needs to get its hostages back, and we need to prevent this [kind of conflict] from ever recurring again. Meanwhile,

“we are doing our best to deliver huge quantities of humanitarian [aid] to Gaza. There are also about six field hospitals, two marine floating hospitals [and] we’ve enabled water supply [via] a desalination project [courtesy] of the United Arab Emirates.

He included in his #WEF24 address “a message to all our neighbours first of all, and especially to the Palestinians”.

“I’ve been advocating and calling for peace with our neighbours for years. I said it in [my speech](#) in a joint session of Congress [to US lawmakers] on the 19th of July, just before the war: terror is the main impediment to moving towards peace.

“You cannot accept terror directly or indirectly, you cannot justify it.”

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

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