

March 7, 2024

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To Whom It May Concern

My name is Dr. Deborah Soffen. I am a pediatrician with over thirty years of clinical experience caring for young women and girls. I am currently serving as the Children's Advocate for the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a global Jewish human rights organization. I therefore write to you as a doctor, a mother and a human rights advocate.

As we approach International Women's Day, I am concerned that many organizations that speak on behalf of women and girls have said too little or nothing at all about the use of rape and hostage taking not as unintentional consequences of a larger conflict, but as intentional tools of terror practiced by the men of Hamas on and since October 7th.

Organizations and the people who speak for them can have reasonable disagreements and criticisms about how Israel is pursuing its war on Hamas. However, there should be no disagreement in condemning, and no attempt to minimize, the use of rape and kidnapping of Israeli women & girls which have been the explicit & intentional policies of only one side in this conflict.

It is now 151 days since October 7th and there are still 19 Israeli women who are being held hostage by Hamas. We know their names, we know their stories and we know that that many of them were sexually assaulted, as evidenced by their blood-stained clothing visible in the celebratory videos of their kidnapping taken by Palestinian men on October 7th.

As we approach National Women's Day, I ask you to support our call for the unconditional release of all 19 Israeli women that are still held hostage in Gaza. Additionally, as an organization that speaks out against rape & sexual violence, I ask you to declare through your social media and public statements in the strongest manner possible that the use of rape & kidnapping as tools of terror directed exclusively towards Israeli women are never forms of legitimate resistance. There are some issues on which reasonable people can disagree. There are other issues about which there should be no disagreement.

If you want to talk further on how we can work together, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Thank you,

Dr. Deborah Soffen MD



Children's Advocate,
Simon Wiesenthal Center