

LIONESS

THE AMAZING STORY OF EINAV ZANSAKER

YONA SHAKED

First Edition

“I dream of the moment the army calls me and tells me that Matan is expected to be released tonight.

“I dream of the first meal I will cook for Matan, slices of meat.

I dream that all the hugs I receive on the street, Matan will receive them too.

This dream is our pillar of fire, which illuminates the dark and difficult path we walk, shoulder to shoulder.”

EINAV ZANGAUKER

Introduction

On October 7, 2023, during the Hamas attack on Israel, Matan Zangauker, a 19-year-old Israeli soldier, was kidnapped by Hamas militants and taken to Gaza. He was among the many individuals who were abducted during the brutal assault. Matan was a soldier serving in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and his kidnapping was part of the larger wave of abductions during the conflict, where Hamas and other Jihadist organizations took hostages from Israel, including both civilians and military personnel. The kidnapping of Matan Zangauker was one of the widely reported cases, and his family and the Israeli government have been actively working on efforts to secure his release. Matan's mother, along with his two sisters, made enormous efforts to secure Matan's release from captivity, along with all the other hostages.

Matan's mother, Ainav, along with his two sisters, made enormous efforts to secure Matan's release from captivity, along with all the other hostages. This is their story.

Foreword

This documentary book follows one of the central figures in the struggle to free the Israeli hostages being held in Gaza by Hamas terrorists - the mother who fights like a lioness to free her son from captivity. Her name is Einav Zangauker, and she is Matan's mother. After her son Matan Zangauker was kidnapped by Hamas to Gaza with his girlfriend, Ilana Gritsevski, Einav began working for the kidnapped at the Families Headquarters for the Return of the Kidnapped and Missing. Ilana was released from captivity in the seventh round of the prisoner exchange on November 30th, 2023.

Until December 2023, Einav participated several times in the call to return the kidnapped in the "kidnapped Square" in Tel Aviv, without taking a political position. In January 2024, she met, along with other families of the kidnapped, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. At the end of the meeting, she said: "I left less pessimistic than I went in, but there were no high hopes. I want to believe that the Prime Minister means that Israel placed a blueprint in the hands of Qatar and not its own."

Preface

I began writing this documentary book on the 444th day of the Israeli hostages being held captive by Hamas in Gaza. This day holds symbolic significance for me and for anyone who grew up in the 1980s. Let me share the story:

On November 4, 1979, Iranian students in Tehran seized the U.S. Embassy and took 52 Americans hostage. The Iran Hostage Crisis lasted for 444 days and culminated just minutes after President Jimmy Carter left office in 1981. This crisis was a major international incident stemming from the takeover of the U.S. Embassy by revolutionary Iranian students, who had the backing of the Ayatollah Khomeini-led government. The students held the embassy employees as hostages for 444 days, with neutral Algerian diplomats acting as intermediaries. Negotiations for the hostages continued throughout late 1980 and early 1981.

Ultimately, Iran released the hostages on January 20, 1981, just moments after Ronald Reagan was inaugurated as the new U.S. President. No one could have imagined,

even in their most pessimistic thoughts, that so many hostages would still be held captive in the Hamas tunnels in Gaza after 444 days - but they are still there.

I have met Einav Zangaukar many times at various events and in various places - always at events for the release of the kidnapped - protests, demonstrations, marches, Knesset committees and even roadblocks. Einav is a true lioness, a mother anyone would want, a woman of great stature and above. I am sure that her son, Matan, will be very proud of her when he is released from his captivity and returns home.

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Chapter One

THE ATTACK

On Saturday morning, October 7th, 2023, at approximately 6:29 a.m., Hamas and other Islamic Jihad terrorists launched a surprise attack on the state of Israel. The surprise attack on Israel is also known as the “Black Sabbath”, “October 7 massacre” and “Simchat Torah massacre”; Hamas gave the attack the name “Operation al-Aqsa flood”.

A Hamas official asserted in an interview that the group planned for a severe Israeli retaliation. He cited recent events, such as Jewish settler attacks against Palestini-

ans in the West Bank and the storming of Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque by settlers, as fueling Palestinian rage. The dramatic action by Hamas and the other Palestinian terrorist organizations was described in the world's media as a move that stunned the Israeli government and the security establishment: "It was launched in the middle of Shabbat and Simchat Torah, caught Israel off guard, and brought back memories of the Yom Kippur War, which almost ended in a catastrophic defeat."

The surprise attack by Hamas began by launching thousands of rockets at Israel, which were fired at Dimona, Yeruham and even Midrashat Ben-Gurion and the Negev Mountain region in the south, up to Wadi Aara and Baqqa al-Gharbiyya in the north and up to Arad and Jerusalem in the east, some of which caused damage to property and several casualties, most of them in the unprotected Bedouins diaspora. Under the auspices of the rocket fire, Hamas personnel began operations to cross the Smart fence along a 60-kilometer front. According to videos published by Hamas, observation and fire systems, including a sight-seeing system, were neutralized with the help of drones armed with RPG rockets that were converted to grenade launchers and by launching anti-tank missiles. Tractors blew up and destroyed the barrier fence at several points, and the terrorists of the Noch'ba penetrated through the other fences on their way to the crossings. After crossing the obstacles, Hamas terrorists, who were

equipped with many weapons, raided eight IDF posts, including the headquarters of the Gaza Division in Camp Re'im. There they destroyed means of communication and observation in order to disrupt the IDF's ability to command and control the sector.

In the afternoon, a speech by Muhammad Def, the commander of the military arm of Hamas, was played in the mosques in Gaza and informed the residents of Gaza that the Israeli army was not in the surrounding settlements and called on them to go out and conquer them. Following the speech, many citizens from Gaza crossed the fence and went to the kibbutzim. "I brought a bag with clothes because I was sure I was going to settle my family in Be'eri" said one Gaza resident to investigators.



Chapter Two

THE KIDNAPPING

On the October 7 massacre, which sparked the "Iron Swords" war, thousands of terrorists infiltrated Israeli territory and committed massacres and rapes, murdering and killing 1,163 people, of whom 779 were civilians. This was the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. In addition, the terrorists kidnapped 251 people, soldiers and civilians, to the Gaza Strip.

The abductees in the Gaza Strip during the Iron Swords War were Israeli civilians, soldiers, and foreign residents who were kid-

napped during a surprise attack carried out by Hamas. The terrorists kidnapped 251 people alive and dead from Israeli territory to the Gaza Strip. Most of the abductees were civilians, including women, men, the elderly, and children. Among the abductees were several dozen foreign workers. A minority of the abductees were IDF soldiers from the bases near the border.

According to estimates, most of the abductees were held in the southern Gaza Strip, and some may still be held there. By December 2024, 117 abductees had been returned to Israel alive, 8 abductees had been rescued alive in IDF operations, and 38 bodies of abductees had also been recovered. 96 hostages remained in Hamas's hands, of whom 34 were declared martyrs who were killed during the attack or at a later stage. Four more hostages are in Gaza before the 7th of October 2023. In total, there are currently 100 kidnapped men and women at the hands of Hamas in Gaza. Matan Zangauker is one of them.

In the interrogation videos of the terrorists released, one of them said: "I saw a kibbutznik hiding among the trees. He said his name was 'Matan.' I took him, and then 15 people arrived and took him from me by force to the Gaza Strip." During the interrogation, the terrorist, who had previously told how his father, he, and his cousin brutally raped and murdered a woman, said: "When I went out, I saw a kibbutznik hiding among the trees, so I caught him. It hap-

pened when Hassan and my father arrived. Hassan wanted to attack him because he had verbally attacked him. He hit him in the back, and I stopped Hassan and told him that this man was on me. I took the kibbutznik and told him that I had to go home, and he said 'Okay'. I went with him and Ahmed Abu Hajjaj, and we sat down, we talked a little."

The interrogator asked for the name of the 'kibbutznik', and the terrorist answered Matan. "I asked him where he was from, and he said he was from Ofakim, that he was a tourist here," he added. "He gave us a Coke, Nutella, and water - and we left," he said. "We left, Ahmed and Matan, and when we left, two people arrived in a Toyota jeep. There were about 15 people there, they wanted to take Matan from me by force. I asked, 'Where are they from?' and they answered, 'From the city.' The rest said they were not ready to say until they recognized me. They took him from me by force and put him in the jeep and took him from there to Gaza." New footage revealed later shows Matan Zangauker being transported on a motorcycle, apparently during the first days after October 7th, when he was transferred from one hiding place to another.



Chapter Three

IRON SWORDS

The "Iron Swords" War is regarded as one of Israel's largest conflicts based on several factors, including the duration of the fighting, the extent of damage to the home front, and the highest number of fighting fronts since the War of Independence.

The fighting in the Gaza Strip, identified as the primary arena of conflict, began with the efforts to clear the area surrounding Gaza of terrorists. This involved air and naval strikes, targeted assassinations, and localized ground raids. After evacuat-

ing the population from the northern part of the Strip, a comprehensive ground maneuver was executed to take over terrorist hotspots. Following a brief lull in fighting, coinciding with a hostage deal, further ground operations were conducted in the southern and central regions of the Strip to eliminate remaining terrorist strongholds.

The conflict was marked by intelligence-driven raids, leading to the destruction of various terrorist infrastructures, including terror tunnels, underground routes, tunnel shafts, concealed rocket launchers, weapons depots, outposts, headquarters, training camps, and buildings utilized for combat. During the fighting, most of Hamas' leadership and top command were eliminated, specifically Yahya Sinwar, Muhammad Deif, Marwan Issa, and Ayman Nofal. Additionally, eight live hostages were rescued, along with the bodies of hostages who had been concealed in the Strip.



Chapter Four

MATAN

Matan was kidnapped with his partner Ilana from their home in Kibbutz Nir Oz, where they worked. Ilana has since returned from captivity, and Matan is still left with a picture on a white shirt that his mother wears every day as she waged a brave and uncompromising fight for his return. A restrained lioness mother who goes out every day to fight for her son, in a reality where mothers looking for their cubs is slowly becoming normalized.

"On October 7th, I called him with the first alarm," recalls Einav, "and as usual he tells me, 'Calm down, Mom.' After half an hour we

realize that it's something massive, Ilana receives a message from the emergency room that there is a risk of intrusion. He begs for help, says, 'Mom, there's no strength! Call for help!' Then they received instructions to lock themselves in the emergency room and hold the handle with force. The last thing he wrote to me was, 'Mom, I love you, they're here, don't cry, everything will be okay.' I managed to write to him that we love him and Ilana and that they will hold on. They jumped out the window because the terrorists entered the house, were immediately caught, and each one was taken in a different direction."

"In the first few days I was in a state of shock. There was no video or documentation from the security cameras, they started taking out bodies and putting them on the floor of the cemetery in Ofakim, and I called and asked to come and identify a body. I also wanted to go to the Shur camp to identify my son. I was ready for anything, because the uncertainty is very difficult. At some point they told me that 60 percent that Matan was kidnapped, 40 percent that he was not kidnapped. What does that mean? A leg in Gaza, a skull on a kibbutz? I don't understand, either he was kidnapped or not. Only after ten days did we receive an official notification from the Ministry of Defense that he was defined as a kidnapped person. I told both the prime minister and Galant - 'My son was kidnapped alive, as time goes by you are increasing the chance that he will not return alive. I don't want you to come to

console me at Matan's funeral, you will not force me to be part of the bereaved family."

"When I see Matan, I'm sure I'll fall off my feet. I think he'll have to bend over to hug me because I won't have the strength to hug him. What I can't allow myself to do now will happen when I see him walking towards me, and then there will be a systemic collapse. I'm waiting for the moment when I let go of my body, when I let my soul fall. Silence and tears will be the sound heard in that encounter."

"Believe me, I want to go back to wearing bleach-stained clothes, go back to doing laundry, go back to cooking hot pot for Matan, sit down to crack kernels on Shabbat, concentrate on a TV series. I want to be angry at Matan for taking off his shoes and not taking them to the place. Now, for my part, the shoes will be scattered all over the house with mud."



Chapter Five

EINAV

Einav Zangaukar is the mother of Matan Zangaukar that was kidnapped by Hamas and is being held in Gaza. She is a prominent activist in the Families Headquarters for the Return of the Abducted and Missing and in the **We Are All Abducted** movement.

Einav is a resident of Ofakim. She works as a higher education coordinator in the Ofakim Municipality Education Directorate. She is the mother of Matan and his two sisters.

After her son Matan was kidnapped by Hamas to Gaza with his partner, Ilana Gritsevski, she began working at the Families Headquarters for the Return of the Abducted and Missing for their return.

"I have a dream that my Matan and 99 other abductees will be returned to us. In this dream, I see the Prime Minister signing a comprehensive deal and an end to the war that guarantees the return of the last abductee. We will be freed from the chains of captivity, from the endless pain" she recently said, "I dream of the moment when the army calls me and informs me that Matan is expected to be released tonight. In this dream, I see Shani, Natalie, Ilana, and Gina running towards Matan in the hospital. Ilana's dog Nono and Matan jumping with excitement." she continues.

Einav is regularly demonstrating in front of the Begin Gate in the Kirya in Tel Aviv, along with her daughter Natalie and Matan's partner, Ilana Gritsevski.

"I've been a right-wing woman my whole life," says Einav. "I've always voted for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, including in the last elections. But the only people who identify with me, who offer me real help, are the people from the organizations that came out to demonstrate against the legal reform. They're the ones who are now supporting me, who are embracing me."

Since her eldest son was kidnapped, Einav has waged a stubborn, uncompromising

and unapologetic struggle for the return of her son and the other abductees. She does not shy away from expressing harsh criticism of the decision-makers, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, even when she pays a price for it from those around her, the community in which she lives, and other influential people who support Netanyahu. While most of the families gathered in the Kidnapped Square, Einav entrenched herself in front of the Begin Gate of the Kirya, along with a few families, and over time many thousands followed them.



The strength Einav demonstrates is inspiring, especially when you consider that she lacks any connection to centers of power and financial resources. All that is in her sights is the return of her son, and thus she has become one of the most central and important figures in the fight to return the

abductees. It is not for nothing that she is often called the 'Lioness Mother'.

Einav is standing every night exactly where she had stood the night before. The place that had become her permanent spot on Saturday night as well: on the road, before the turn to the Begin Gate of the Kirya in Tel Aviv. There, dazed and yet so present, her burning eyes searched for the ministry vehicles. Waiting to look straight into the eyes of those who would decide under neon lights the future of the kidnapped, including her only son, Matan.

What will she tell them? "I will tell the cabinet members, 'Come on, come on, make sure we get our children back,'" she says. "It's shameful and disgraceful that members of Knesset allow themselves to disrespect the families of the kidnapped and our struggle. It's unforgivable."

In recent months, some have felt that the struggle to return the abductees has become a private struggle. A sectoral disaster that struck a certain public, which is now preventing the government from reaching a complete victory. But Einav Tsengauker proves that for her, the only politics are conducted in the high windows; around one man for whom she voted all her life and whom she admired until the morning of October 7, when Matan, 24, was kidnapped with his partner Ilana from their home on Kibbutz Nir Oz, where they worked.

Ilana has since returned from captivity, and Matan still has a picture on a white shirt that his mother wears every day while waging a courageous and uncompromising fight for his return. A restrained lioness who goes out every day to fight for her son, in a reality where mothers looking for their cubs are slowly becoming normal. She hardly ate for six months. Her fuel is different: Einav Tsen-gaukar demands justice, and she demands it from the man who gave her the mandate to lead the country. "The prime minister always makes sure that his discourse with the families of the kidnapped is inclusive, that they embrace him and support him," she reveals, "and that they are right-wing."

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the book "liones".**

The book is available now on amazon. com.

https://amazon.com/author/yona_shaked

Afterword

The afterword is an opportunity for the author to offer any final explanations about the book, and is most common in non-fiction. Some books include this as part of the body content whereas others will place it in the back matter.

Acknowledgements

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About the author



Hello, my name is Yona (Yoni) Shaked, and I live in beautiful Israel with my wife and three children. I write nonfiction books that focus on politics, politicians, and various social issues relevant to the Israeli agenda.

I primarily author nonfiction documentary books about people and events that intrigue me and hold significance for others. I refer to my works as documentaries because this term accurately describes the genre, drawing from the familiarity of documentary films while stemming from the word “document,” which originally pertained specifically to writing.

My first book, "Almost: The Day Israel Was Almost Destroyed," provides an in-depth examination of the events of October 7, 2023, offering valuable insights into that tragic day.

My second book, "Attack on Democracy," chronicles the events that unfolded following the announcement of the legal "reform" in Israel and the protests that arose in response.

My third book tells the story of Benjamin Netanyahu, a figure who deceived, lied, and manipulated those who crossed his path. It is titled "The Big Bibi Bluff."

My fourth book is a documentary focused on the kidnapped Bibas family.

My fifth book is "Lioness" – the amazing story of Einav Zangauker.

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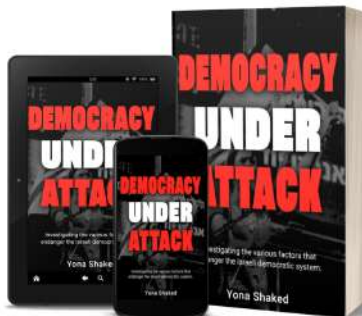
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