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International Condemnation Mounts Over Gaza Hostage Videos as Red Cross Calls for Access

August 4, 2025
   Categories: Breaking News

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Western leaders have issued strong condemnations following the release of disturbing footage showing two emaciated Israeli hostages held in Gaza. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has renewed calls for immediate access to all hostages, urging the facilitation of medical care and humanitarian support.

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy described the videos as "sickening," stating that hostages must be released "unconditionally." His comments follow the publication of a video by Palestinian Islamic Jihad showing 21-year-old Rom Braslavski, visibly malnourished and in distress. Separately, Hamas released footage of 24-year-old Evyatar David, appearing severely emaciated.

Both men were abducted from the Nova music festival during the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led assault on southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of around 1,200 people and the abduction of 251 hostages. According to Israeli authorities, 49 hostages remain in Gaza, 27 of whom are believed to be deceased.

Following the release of the videos, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu contacted the hostages' families, expressing "profound shock" and reaffirming that efforts to secure their release would continue without pause. On Sunday, Netanyahu also spoke with Red Cross officials, requesting urgent intervention to deliver food and medical aid to those still in captivity.

The ICRC, which described the footage as "appalling," said the conditions shown constitute "stark evidence of the life-threatening environment in which the hostages are being held." The organisation again urged all parties to allow access to hostages, facilitate healthcare, and enable communication with their families.

Hamas's armed wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, stated they would "respond positively" to any ICRC request to deliver aid to captives, provided Israel permits regular humanitarian corridors and suspends airstrikes during aid operations. Israel, however, continues to blame Hamas for both obstructing aid and exploiting civilians as shields.

On the ground, reports from Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said at least 27

Palestinians were killed on Sunday amid clashes near aid distribution points. Hospitals in the region continue to report deaths from malnutrition, with the ministry stating 175 people, including 93 children, have died of starvation since the conflict began.

Criticism of the Red Cross has come from both sides. Israeli citizens accuse the organisation of failing to adequately assist hostages, while Palestinians note it has not been allowed access to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody since the conflict began.

Public outcry has grown in Israel, with protests held in Tel Aviv demanding stronger action from the government. Families of the hostages, including Braslavski and David, issued emotional appeals. In the videos, Braslavski is seen crying, claiming he has not eaten and is near death. David says he has gone days without food or water and is seen digging what he claims is his own grave.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the videos were "appalling," asserting that the release of hostages is essential for any ceasefire. French President Emmanuel Macron also condemned Hamas, calling for renewed efforts toward a ceasefire and a long-term political solution involving a two-state framework.

As the humanitarian situation in Gaza deteriorates, international pressure is mounting. UN-backed agencies report the "worst-case scenario of famine" is unfolding. While global sentiment shifts against Israel due to the scale of destruction and suffering, the Israeli government maintains that accusations of enforced starvation are unfounded and driven by misinformation from Hamas.

Nevertheless, the emergence of hostage videos showing extreme deprivation is intensifying scrutiny of the ongoing conflict and prompting urgent calls for humanitarian resolution.