

Operation Swords of Iron: Keeping Israeli Hostages Front and Center
Lesson for 6th-9th Grades

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IMPORTANT NOTE TO FACILITATOR:

The events in Israel, that began on October 7, 2023, are tragically still in motion. Therefore, the content of this lesson is limited to the information available on the date on which it was released. It is important for the facilitator to familiarize themselves with the situation in real-time so that any information presented in this lesson can be updated prior to presenting it to students. The lesson and slide deck are accurate as of December 1, 2023.

Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is to help Jewish tweens and teens connect to the plight and hoped-for return of the remaining Israeli hostages taken by Hamas (and other groups) on October 7, 2023 and held in Gaza.

Overview:

- 1) Overview of the events that began the Israel-Hamas war, giving context to the capture of hostages from Israel.
- 2) Discuss ways in which some communities have created symbolic installations dedicated to the hostages, ultimately signaling the overwhelming desire for them to be returned safely.
- 3) Highlight the list of known hostages, including the first four who were released and the one rescued in October 2023, and the dozens who were released as part of a temporary ceasefire deal in late November 2023.
- 4) Learn about PLUR culture and how it can help students create a visual and wearable "memorial" to the hostages.
- 5) Create their own kandi to honor the hostages.
- 6) Join together in a classroom prayer for the release of the hostages.

Supplies needed:

- Computer and screen to show lesson via PowerPoint. (If technology isn't available, the PowerPoint can be printed.)
- [Link to Canva slide deck](#)
 - https://www.canva.com/design/DAFymgpyEKE/BnbsS4-dfdRoDBgmomtdZQ/edit?utm_content=DAFymgpyEKE&utm_campaign=designshere&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton
- Art supplies to make kandi bracelets (i.e. variety of colorful beads, elastic wire, Hebrew letter beads, English letter beads, etc.). Depending upon the size of the beads and bracelet, each bracelet will require approximately 15-20 beads.

Timing (60 minutes total):

- 1) Framing and overview of the events (7 min)
- 2) Symbolic installations (8 min)

- 3) Known hostages (4 min)
- 4) PLUR culture, kandi making, and clean-up (30 min)
- 5) Classroom prayer and Kotel (5 min)
- 6) Wrap-up (6 min)

Lesson:

- 1) Overview of the events (5 min; slide 2)
 - a. Let students know that the purpose of this lesson is to help them connect to the plight of the hostages and give them a way to do something that will help keep their flame alive.
 - b. Facts as we know them⁽¹⁾: *(the list below is more detailed than the notes on the slide; use them together)*
 1. On the morning of Saturday, October 7, 2023, Hamas, a terror organization that governs the Gaza strip, openly and violently attacked Israeli communities in the areas just outside the northern part of Gaza.
 2. Hamas terrorists attacked with rockets and munitions by land, air, and sea, facilitated by a complex network of tunnels underground.
 3. During the terrorist attack, Hamas targeted Jewish Israeli communities. Those who were killed, injured, and kidnapped include civilians and soldiers, Israelis and internationals, Jews and Arabs.
 4. To date, more than 1,200 Israelis have been killed in Israel, including at least 310 soldiers, according to the Israeli government. At least 240 hostages were taken into Gaza, of whom dozens have now been released, and one rescued as of 12/1/2023.
 5. Of the hostages taken, about 30 of them were children, including several toddlers. Many, but not all, of these children were released (in some cases along with their mothers) during the temporary ceasefire in late November 2023.
 6. The Israeli government says 138 of those taken hostage have foreign passports (meaning that several countries other than Israel are also impacted), including 15 Argentinians, 12 Germans, 12 Americans, 6 French, and 6 Russians.
 7. Israel, which has the right to self-defense, has a responsibility to minimize the loss of life of innocent Palestinians living in Gaza, while comprehensively defeating Hamas.
 - c. A map, from Israel's Ministry of Tourism, has been provided on the slide deck to give students some orientation as to the location of Gaza and the surrounding areas/borders.⁽²⁾
- 2) Symbolic installations (6 min; slides 3, 4, & 5)
 - a. Providing context for the lesson and activity:

- i. On October 7, Hamas (and other terrorist groups) kidnapped soldiers from their bases and innocent civilians from their homes, neighborhoods, and a music festival. More than one hundred of those who were kidnapped are still being held as hostages in Gaza.
 - 1. A hostage is someone who is taken as a prisoner by an enemy in order to force the other people involved to do what the enemy wants.⁽³⁾
 - 2. In this case, Hamas did not initially make public what it wanted from Israel in return for releasing the hostages. Eventually, a temporary ceasefire deal was struck in late November 2023, in which dozens of women and children held by Hamas have been released, and three Palestinian prisoners (also women and minors) have been released from Israeli prisons for each captive returned.
- ii. There are some political actions that can be taken (and which adults in the community are taking) as well as spiritual, mitzvah-oriented, and representational actions that we can ALL take to make sure that the hostages are kept in the forefront of our minds. (symbolic installations)
- b. Some communities in Israel and other places around the country have created symbolic installations that represent the hostages taken into Gaza by Hamas. There are three slides, six examples of symbolic installations, to show the students.
 - i. Questions to ask while looking at symbolic representation photos:
 - 1. What is something (or more than one) that these installations have in common?
 - 2. What is your emotional response to seeing these installations?
 - 3. Public displays can evoke powerful emotions. What might be the purpose and/or intended outcome of attaching emotions to the hostage situation?
 - 4. The flag symbolic installation is at a person's home. What might be the reason that someone would want this in their front yard? Why might they NOT want this in their front yard?
 - 5. Have you seen anything like this around another tragedy or incident? If yes, share. How does this one feel different?
 - ii. Symbolic representation examples:
 - 1. United Nations; A field of "KIDNAPPED" posters and shoes; 10/25/2023⁽⁴⁾
 - 2. Dizengoff Square, Israel; Large teddy bears painted with red paint and carrying photographs of the children held hostages by Hamas terrorists in Gaza; 10/25/2023⁽⁵⁾
 - 3. Tel Aviv, Israel; Memorial for the more than 220 people captured by Hamas militants; 10/28/2023⁽⁶⁾

4. New York City, NY; Kidnapped posters adorned a Shabbat (Sabbath) table set for children amid a larger Shabbat table to symbolize the plight of the hostages held captive; 10/27/2023⁽⁷⁾
5. Concord, Massachusetts; 1,500 Israeli flags; 10/27/2023⁽⁸⁾
6. Tel Aviv, Israel; Photos of hostages kidnapped; 10/17/2023⁽⁹⁾

3) Known released hostages (5 min; slides 6, 7, 8, 9)

- a. As of December 1, 2023, there have been 110 hostages released by Hamas, and one rescued by the IDF (Israeli Defense Force). The significant return of hostages was due to a 7-day ceasefire between Israel and Hamas which began on November 24, 2023.⁽¹⁰⁾
 1. This article provides some information about the released hostages.
 - a. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67477240>
- b. Corresponding to the slides
 - i. (slide 6) American hostages, Judith Tai Raanan and her 17-year-old daughter Natalie Raanan were released on October 20.⁽¹¹⁾
 - ii. (slide 6) Israeli hostages, Nurit Cooper, 79, and Yocheved Lifshitz, 85, were released on October 23.⁽¹²⁾
 - iii. (slide 7) Private Ori Megidish was rescued by the IDF on October 30. Megidish as one of several soldiers who were taken hostage on October 7 after Hamas attacked her base in Nahal Oz.⁽¹³⁾
 - iv. (slide 8) Image collage of hostages released as part of the ceasefire.
- c. Ask students what their thoughts are about the following statements:
 - i. The safe return of these hostages can give us HOPE that other hostages are alive and may be returned to their families safely too.
 - ii. Our actions may give strength, courage, and hope to their families as they await the return of their loved ones.

4) PLUR Culture and Kandi⁽¹³⁾ (30 min; slide 10, 11, 12)

- a. Let's now transition into doing something meaningful and representational, as the symbolic installations that we just discussed have done, so that we can help keep the spirit of the hostages alive.
- b. Something that might be meaningful to students is to create their own symbolic representation for the hostages, especially young hostages. In this activity, students will create kandi, a significant part of PLUR culture, as the tool to symbolically represent the hostages.
 - i. PLUR culture refers to the "vibe" around rave or EDM (electronic dance music) festivals/events.⁽¹⁴⁾
 1. The acronym PLUR stands for: Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect.
 2. Part of PLUR culture is to handmake and exchange colorful bracelets or other accessories made of beads. It is called kandi.

3. Watch the explainer video describing PLUR culture, PLUR acronym, kandi, and the handshake.⁽¹⁵⁻
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUGGWUK6Bng>)
- c. Using the framing of kandi as a symbol of PLUR culture and a strong connection made between two people at a rave or festival, we are going to make our own kandi to symbolize the connection between students and hostages. *Note that making bracelets to keep the flame lit for Prisoners of War (POW) and those Missing in Action (MIA) originated from college students following the Vietnam War. It was their way of remembering American prisoners of war suffering in captivity in Southeast Asia.⁽¹⁹⁾
- i. **IMPORTANT NOTE:**
 1. In an age-appropriate manner, please preface this part of the conversation by helping students understand that this is not a historical event that we are looking back on years later, but rather an event taking place in real time.
 2. It is likely that some of the hostages, no matter how much we hope and pray for their safe return, might not come back safely, potentially dying in captivity or never being returned to their families at all.
 3. Even if they don't come back or come back alive, keeping their name and memory alive is equally significant.
 - ii. Project:
 1. Creating a bracelet dedicated to a hostage allows students a visual and tangible way to connect to a hostage, passing along their hope that the hostage will be returned to their family safely.
 2. Students can make one bracelet for one hostage or to represent their feelings about the war, or they can make multiple bracelets to wear together, give away, exchange, etc.
 3. This allows students to learn about a hostage, share with others what they learned about the hostage, and have a symbolic representation of their hope and prayers for the safe return of the hostage.
- d. Some ideas for decorating the bracelets include:
- i. Personalized information such as name, age, and/or city of residence
 - ii. Hebrew or English sayings such as (English and Hebrew transliteration below)
 1. B'Yachad – Together
 2. Tikvah – Hope
 3. Am Yisrael Chai - The Jewish People Lives
 4. Chozek - Strength
 5. B'nei Yisrael - Children of Israel
 6. L'olam Lo Od - Never Again

- iii. Colors, patterns, or symbols such as, blue & white, color meaning chart⁽¹⁶⁾, symbolic beads, etc.
 - e. List of names, photos, kidnapping location and release date (if applicable)⁽¹⁷⁻
<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-22/ty-article-magazine/hostages-held-by-hamas-the-names-of-those-abducted-from-israel/0000018b-55f8-d5d2-afef-d5fdd04e0000>
 - i. While you are looking at the photos, names, ages, and locations of the hostages and making your kandi, talk to a classmate about:
 1. How do you think the experience of being a hostage differs based upon the age of the person?
 2. How might the experience be for a civilian versus a soldier in the IDF?
 3. What else would you like to know about the hostages at this time?
 4. How might the hostages hope that Israeli society and its allies are responding to their captivity?
- 5) Classroom prayer (5 min; slides 13)
- a. In Judaism, we are able to connect with God, people, situations, and so on through prayer. Let's join together in a prayer, as a classroom community, for the safe return of those who were taken captive from Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023.⁽¹⁸⁾
 - b. You may choose go around the room and invite students to share aloud their personal prayer for the hostages. (For example: "I pray that the children that are being held hostage will be returned safely to their families.") These are personal prayers that can be added to the shared prayer read together as a community.
 - i. Alternatively, you can have students write their own personal prayers for the return of those captured at home, which they can say privately/at home.
- 6) Wrap-up (6 min)
- a. Ask students to respond to the following debrief questions
 - i. What part of today's lesson stands out most to you?
 - ii. What did you learn about yourself during the program today?
 - iii. What is one action you want to take as a result of today's program?

Images Provided in Slide Deck

Official Map of Israel (Current Political Map), Israel Ministry of Tourism



United Nations; Posters and Shoes



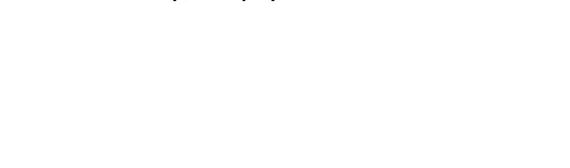
Dizengoff Square; Teddy Bears



Tel Aviv; Memorial Wall



New York City; Empty Shabbat Table Seats





Concord, Massachusetts; Flags



Tel Aviv, Israel; Kidnapped Posters



Judith Tai Raanan and Natalie Raanan Hostages Released



Nurit Cooper and Yocheved Lifshitz Hostages Released



Private Ori Megidish



Image collage of some hostages released



PLUR/Kandi Explainer Video



Kandi



PLUR Handshake



Color meaning chart

Red prompts action passion excitement strength love energy	Orange warmth energy youthful confidence success bravery sociability	Yellow caution youthful creativity happiness warmth cheer	Green natural health wellbeing innovative renewal freshness quality	Blue intelligence refreshing luxury classic trust peace loyalty
Pink feminine youthful compassion sincerity sophistication sweet	Purple elegant royalty luxury spirituality ambition	Brown dependable rugged trustworthy simple	Black classic conventional formal dramatic sophistication security	White pure calm clean simplicity innocence honest

Hostage name list

 <p>Ronen Engel, 54 Nir Oz Kidnapped from his home with his family</p>	 <p>Yuval Engel, 11 Nir Oz Kidnapped from her home with her family</p>	 <p>Mika Engel, 18 Nir Oz Kidnapped from her home with her family</p>
 <p>Carina Engel-Bert, 51 Nir Oz Kidnapped from her home with her family</p>	 <p>Avigail Idan, 3 Kfar Azza Kidnapped from her home, both her parents were killed</p>	 <p>Tamar Gutman, 27 Beit Hashmonai Was at the outdoor rave near Re'im</p>
 <p>Channa Peri, 79 Nirim Kidnapped from her home</p>	 <p>Nadav Popplewell, 51 Nirim Kidnapped from his home</p>	 <p>Emilia Aloni, 5 Yavneh Kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz with her mother</p>

Prayer for the captives

<p>אלהינו מתיר האסורים, משגב לך, משגב לעתות בקרה (תהלים טו) שלה, העלה שלמה ופדיון גמור לנתינים בשבי אויב: [...]</p>	<p>Our God, the One who raised Joseph up from the pit, be "a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." (Psalms 9:10) Send complete rescue and full redemption to those held captive by the enemy: [when possible, add names here].</p>
<p>חזקי רוחם, הביאי להם את תפלתנו לשמרם מרע.</p>	<p>Strengthen their spirit and bring them our prayers that they be protected from all harm.</p>
<p>תני בינה בלב אויב להשיבם בשלמות גוף ונפש.</p>	<p>Implant understanding in the heart of the enemy that they may return the captives in wholeness of body and spirit.</p>
<p>תני תבונה בלוחמי עה"ל לחלצם בלא אבוד נפשות.</p>	<p>Grant wisdom to the Israel Defense Forces that they may secure freedom for the captives without loss of life.</p>
<p>תן לכל בני ובנות אברהם, שרה והגר את עו הרוח ואמץ הלב להתיר בכלי שבי ולחיות חיי חרות.</p>	<p>Grant strength of spirit and courage of heart to all the sons and daughters of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to release bonds of captivity and allow us all to live in freedom.</p>
<p>יקראני ואענהו עמו אנכי בקרה אחלצוהו ואבדוהו (תהלים צא)טו ונאמר, אמן.</p>	<p>"They shall call upon Me, and I will answer them; I will be with them in distress; I will rescue them, and honor them." (after Psalms 91:15) And we say <i>Amen</i>.</p>

References

- (1) (Article highlighting facts) <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-25/ty-article/more-than-half-of-amas-hostages-have-foreign-citizenship-israel-says/0000018b-67be-d78a-a5eb-7fbf08360000>
- (2) (Israel tourism map) https://theicenter.org/icenter_resources/maps-as-narratives/
- (3) (Hostage definition) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/hostage>
- (4) ("KIDNAPPED" posters and shoes) <https://thevillagesun.com/bring-them-home-alive-rallying-for-gaza-hostages-outside-the-united-nations>
- (5) (Teddy bears) <https://www.jewishpress.com/multimedia/photos/hostage-in-dizengoff/2023/10/27/>
- (6) (Hostage posters) <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/nation-world/story/2023-10-28/israel-says-its-war-can-both-destroy-amas-and-rescue-hostages-their-families-are-less-certain>
- (7) (Empty Shabbat table) <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-770498>
- (8) (Israeli flags in yard) <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/2023/10/27/memorials-emerge-for-hostages-and-those-murdered-by-amas/>
- (9) (Photos on wall in Tel Aviv) <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/amas-expresses-willingness-release-captive-women-children-rcna120776>
- (10) (released hostages) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67477240>
- (11) (Hostages released-Judith Tai Raanan and Natalie Raanan) <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/20/middleeast/amas-us-hostages-released-intl/index.html>
- (12) (Hostages released-Nurit Cooper and Yocheved Lifshitz) <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/23/amas-israel-hostages-release-elderly-women>
- (13) (Ori Megidish) <https://nypost.com/2023/10/30/news/israel-celebrates-rescue-of-idf-soldier-held-captive-in-gaza/>
- (14) (Rave or EDM kandi) <https://www.iheartraves.com/blogs/post/how-to-trade-kandi-at-a-rave>
- (15) (PLUR, kandi, & handshake video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUGGWUK6Bng>
- (16) (Color meaning chart) <https://blog.aweber.com/learn/how-to-use-the-psychology-of-color-in-marketing.htm>
- (17) (Hostage name list) <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-22/ty-article-magazine/hostages-held-by-amas-the-names-of-those-abducted-from-israel/0000018b-55f8-d5d2-afef-d5fdd04e0000>
- (18) (Prayer for the captives) <https://opensiddur.org/prayers/collective-welfare/trouble/conflicts-over-sovereignty-and-dispossession/prayer-for-the-redemption-of-captive-israelis-shemini-atseret-war-of-erab-sabath-beit-halachmi-2023/>
- (19) (POW bracelet history) <https://www.pow-miafamilies.org/history-of-powmia-bracelets.html>