



## EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

Jon Polin and Rachel Goldberg-Polin  
Parents of Hersh Goldberg-Polin  
Democratic National Convention  
Wednesday, August 21, 2024  
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Rachel Goldberg-Polin: At this moment, 109 treasured human beings are being held hostage by Hamas in Gaza. They are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. They are from 23 different countries. The youngest is a one-year-old red-headed baby boy, and the oldest is an 86-year-old mustachioed grandpa. Among the hostages are eight American citizens. One of those Americans is our only son. His name is Hersh. He is 23 years old.

Like Vice President Kamala Harris, Hersh was born in Oakland, California. Hersh is a happy-go-lucky, laid back, good-humored, respectful, and curious person. He is a civilian. He loves soccer and is wild about music and music festivals. And he has been obsessed with geography and travel since he was a little boy. His bedroom overflows with atlases, globes, and National Geographic magazines.

On October 7, Hersh and his best friend, Aner, went to a music festival in the south of Israel. It was advertised as celebrating peace, love, and unity. They also went there to celebrate Hersh's 23rd birthday. As rockets started to fall, Hersh, Aner, and 27 other young festival goers took refuge in a 5-foot by 8-foot bomb shelter. Terrorists began to throw grenades into the shelter. Aner repelled seven grenades before the eighth one killed him. Altogether, at the Nova Festival, 367 music lovers were killed. This was just one of the many attacks on neighborhoods and communities in southern Israel on that terrible day. In total, 1,200 were killed, including 45 Americans. Hersh's left forearm was blown off before he was loaded onto a pickup truck and stolen into Gaza. That was 320 days ago. Since then, we live on another planet. Anyone who is a parent, or has a parent, can try to imagine the anguish and misery that Jon and I are enduring.

Jon Polin: Rachel and I are comforted to be back in our sweet home, Chicago. We were both born and raised here, and our families still live here. This is a political convention. But needing our only son, and all of the cherished hostages, home is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue.

The families of the American eight hostages meet every few weeks in Washington. We are heartened that both Democratic and Republican leaders demonstrate their bipartisan support for our hostages being released.

We have met with President Biden and Vice President Harris numerous times at the White House. They are both working tirelessly for a hostage and ceasefire deal that will bring our precious children, mothers, fathers, spouses, grandparents, and grandchildren home and will stop the despair in Gaza. We are all deeply grateful to them.

We are also profoundly thankful to the millions of people in the United States, and all over the world, who have been sending their love, support, and strength to the hostage families. You have kept us breathing in our world without air.

There is a surplus of agony on all sides of this tragic conflict in the Middle East. In a competition of pain, there are no winners. In our Jewish tradition we have a saying: *kol adam olam umlo'o*. "Every person is an entire universe." We must save these universes.

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In an inflamed Middle East, we know the one thing that can most immediately release pressure and calm the region: a deal that brings home this diverse group of 109 hostages, and ends the suffering of the innocent civilians in Gaza. The time is now.

Rachel Goldberg-Polin: And to our beloved Hersh, if you can hear us—we love you, stay strong, survive.

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