

URGENT ACTION

ISRAELI CIVILIANS ABDUCTED FOR MORE THAN 2 YEARS

Avera Mangistu and Hisham al-Sayed have been missing respectively since 7 September 2014 and 20 April 2015 in the Gaza Strip. The two Israeli civilians suffer from serious mental health conditions. Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip have refused to disclose any information about them. Their fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

Israeli civilians **Avera Mangistu**, 31, and **Hisham al-Sayed**, 29, have been missing for more than two years after crossing separately into the Gaza Strip. On 7 September 2014, Avera Mangistu, who is of Ethiopian descent, left his home in Ashkelon in southern Israel, and entered the Gaza Strip without authorization by crossing a barbed wire fence near the beach. Hisham al-Sayed appears to have crossed into the Gaza Strip on foot on 20 April 2015, after leaving his family home in al-Sayed Bedouin village in the Negev/Naqab desert in southern Israel.

Both men suffer from mental health conditions. Avera Mangistu's family told Amnesty International that he has been suffering from a serious mental health condition since his brother's death on 11 November 2012. Amnesty International reviewed hospital documents issued by the Israeli Ministry of Health's mental health services stating that Avera Mangistu was admitted to psychiatric hospitals on two separate occasions in January 2013. According to Hisham al-Sayed's medical records, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and personality disorder, was hospitalized for these, and needs regular medication.

Amnesty International fears that the two men are being held as hostages by Hamas' military wing, the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades for a potential prisoner exchange. In April 2016, the armed group published a video statement online showing pictures of the two men dressed in Israeli military uniforms. In the statement, the al-Qassam Brigades' spokesperson said that they will not release any information about the men "without a price and entitlements being paid before and after the negotiations". Suggesting that they are being held as hostages for a potential prisoner exchange. However, Amnesty International reviewed documentation which proves that Avera Mangistu was found unfit for military service. A document made public by Human Rights Watch confirmed that Hisham al-Sayed was also found unfit and was discharged from military duty in November 2008.

Hamas authorities in the Gaza Strip have refused to disclose any information on the fate and whereabouts of the two men.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language urging Hamas authorities to:

- Ascertain and disclose the fate and whereabouts of Avera Mangistu and Hisham al-Sayed immediately;
- Secure their safe release without delay;
- Ensure their humane treatment and access to adequate medical care pending their release.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO:

Head of Hamas
Isma'il Abd al Salam Ahmad Haniyeh
Gaza
Fax: +972 8 288 4815
Salutation: Dear Mr Haniyeh

Senior Hamas Leader
Dr Mahmoud Zahar
Email: h104@hotmail.com and
mail@hamasinfo.net
Fax: + 972 (or 970) 8 286 8971
Salutation: Dear Mr Zahar

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The abduction of Hisham al-Sayed and Avera Mangistu and the lack of information about their fate and whereabouts have had a huge emotional and psychological impact on their families. They are concerned that their mental and physical health has deteriorated further as a result of their abduction and lack of adequate medical treatment. Hisham al-Sayed left his house in al-Sayyed in the Negev/Naqab desert, on 20 April 2015 without telling his mother where he was going. At the time, she thought that he went out to the store. She told Amnesty international that she fears for her son's life and well-being: "I am afraid that he is being beaten or ridiculed. Hisham is a good boy; he wouldn't hurt anyone, they should let him come home". He had previously crossed into the Gaza Strip without authorization on 2 February 2010 and 16 January 2013. According to his father, the Hamas authorities were aware of Hisham's al-Sayed's mental health condition. He explained that his son was detained and interrogated by Hamas authorities each time, and then handed to Israel at Erez crossing between Israel and occupied Gaza: "He went into Gaza twice," and each time "Hamas interrogated him. They knew that he had mental [health] issues, [and] released him at the [Erez] crossing. Hisham had also crossed the border into Jordan and Egypt without authorization." He added: "We have nothing to do with politics, we don't understand how Hamas can hold him until now without at least reassuring us that he is alive and well". He has been desperately trying to find information about his son to no avail.

Avera Mangistu and his family moved to Israel from Ethiopia when he was five years old. The family is struggling to make a living. His father has been unemployed for 10 years and his mother earns a modest salary. On 13 March 2003, Avera Mangistu was deemed unfit for military duty and was relieved from mandatory conscription. He then worked as a driver for a recycling company and in the tourism industry to support his family. On 11 November 2012, Avera Mangistu's brother died after suffering from anorexia. Avera Mangistu's older brother Eilan explained that, amongst the family, Avera was the most affected by their brother's death. His mental health deteriorated to the point that he had to be hospitalized multiple times. Eilan said that his brother was feeling unwell when he crossed the border, and added: "We don't know how he is being treated, we haven't received any information about his health. Avera is an innocent civilian who has mental issues. He has nothing to do with politics".

In tears, Avera Mangistu's mother described to Amnesty International the emotional toll that her son's abduction has had on her and the entire family: "I cannot live like this, no one is doing anything to release my son. We have no information about him, and I don't know if he is dead or alive". The entire family expressed disappointment at the lack of support and involvement from the Israeli government and cabinet members. They told Amnesty International: "We feel sorrow and helplessness at the disregard of the country's leaders for the life of Avera Mangistu. We feel that it is only because Avera belongs to a marginalized community".

In 2012, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern at discriminatory policies affecting Ethiopian and Bedouin communities in Israel.

Name: Avera Mangistu and Hisham al-Sayed

Gender m/f: m

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