

Desert horror: Music festival goers heard rockets, then Gaza militants fired on them and took hostages

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Video shows militants take festival goers hostage

01:03 - Source: [CNN](#)

(CNN) — The rockets began around 6:30 a.m., Tal Gibly told CNN. Thirty minutes later, she and hundreds of others attending an Israeli music festival were running as Gaza militants fired at them.

The Nova Festival in a rural farmland area near the Gaza-Israel border was just one of multiple locations hit on Saturday morning by the most sustained and coordinated assault inside Israel ever carried out by Hamas militants.

At least 260 bodies would later be found at the festival site, according to Israeli rescue service Zaka. Some attendees were taken hostage, seen in social media videos being seized by their armed captors.



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CNN reporter went to scene of music festival slaughter. Here's what she found

02:01 - Source: [CNN](#)

The outdoor festival was supposed to be an all-night dance party, celebrating the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. But as dawn broke, Gibly said they began hearing sirens and rockets.

“We didn’t even have any place to hide because we were at [an] open space,” she told CNN. “Everyone got so panicked and started to take their stuff.”

Explosions can be heard in video taken by Gibly of her and friends walking through the quickly emptying concert grounds, roughly two miles from the border.

“Ima’le,” someone is heard saying, a common Israeli expression of fear or feeling startled.

Gibly and the others didn’t know it, but less than two miles away, Gaza militants had also begun attacking Israeli tanks and soldiers.



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When attendees fled in their cars, Gibly said the roadways became clogged and no one could move. That’s when the gunshots began, she says.

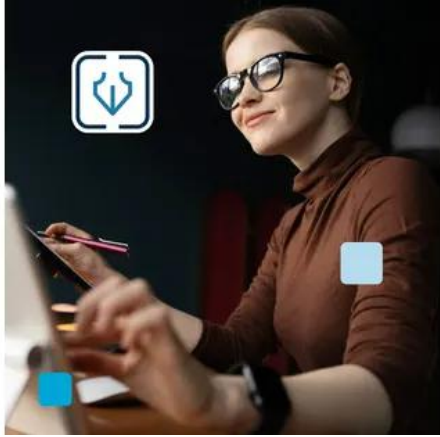
In ~~CNN~~ ~~video~~ ~~as~~ ~~Gibly~~ ~~took~~, an Israeli military vehicle is seen driving against the flow of traffic as people try to make way ~~for~~ it. Someone outside the car be heard screaming: "Go! Go forward! Go forward!"

That's when Gibly said she and her friends panicked, abandoned the car, and began running.



'Like a shooting range'

A video circulating on social media showed hundreds of attendees fleeing their cars, running across an empty field with gunshots echoing in the background.



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CNN is not airing the video in its entirety because as the gunfire draws near, a number of people are seen falling to the ground. It's not clear from the video whether the people falling are taking cover, or if they are being hit by gunfire.



From Instagram

People run across an empty field away from gunshots at a music festival near the Gaza-Israel border on October 7, 2023.

Gibly told CNN she ran to the forest, and eventually got into another car driving past. She saw a number of dead and injured people on the sides of the road, but one scene in particular stuck with her: one concertgoer shot dead.

injured people on the sides of the road, but one scene in particular stuck with her. One concertgoer shot dead outside a van, and another dead in the vehicle's passenger seat.

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Gibly confirmed video obtained by CNN of the scene showed the two victims that she saw.

"It was so terrifying and we didn't know where to drive to not meet those evil ... people," she said. "I have a lot of friends that got lost at the forest for a lot of hours and got shot like it was a range."

Gibly is still trying to get in touch with her friends who were also at the concert. She says she doesn't know if others survived, were taken prisoner, or worse.

The festival's organizers are helping Israeli security forces locate missing attendees.

Hostage taken to Gaza

Details of hostages from the attack are beginning to emerge as family members recognize relatives in videos circulating from Gaza.

In one video that went viral, an Israeli woman and her boyfriend – identified as Noa Argamani and Avinatan Or, who had attended the festival – were shown being kidnapped.

In it, Argamani was seen on the back of a motorcycle being driven away as she pleaded for help. Or was seen nearby as the motorcycle carrying Argamani rode past, and was eventually apprehended by several men – and made to walk with his hands held behind his back.

A dark plume of smoke was also seen in the background. CNN cannot independently verify the video.

Family members and friends of the couple have expressed that they want the video to be widely shared in hopes of locating them and securing their safe release.

"It's very difficult when you see someone that is so close to you and you know so much being treated like this," Amir Moadi, a roommate of Noa Argamani, told CNN, adding that he knew about five or six people who had been at the festival that have since gone missing.

"But still, we have people missing. We have friends and families, young and old, everyone that got to Gaza Strip, and we need to do everything and now to get them back," he said.

Moshe Or, the brother of Argamani's boyfriend Avinatan Or, told CNN affiliate Channel 12 that it did not take him long to find the video.

"I saw his girlfriend Noa in the video, scared and frightened, I can't imagine what's going through her at all - screaming in panic on a motorcycle, when some scumbags are holding her and they don't let her go," he said.

"My brother, who is a big guy, two meters tall, trains four times a week, a really strong guy. They held him maybe four or five people and just led them towards the strip, I guess."

In another video authenticated by CNN, an unconscious woman who was at the festival could be seen being displayed by armed militants in Gaza.

CNN has confirmed the identity of the woman as Shani Louk, a German-Israeli dual national. CNN has reached out to her family for comment but has not yet received a response.

Her cousin confirmed to the Washington Post that Louk attended the music festival.

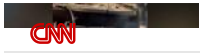
In the video, Louk is seen motionless. One gunman, carrying a rocket propelled grenade, has his leg draped over her waist; the other holds a clump of her dreadlocks. "Allahu Akbar," they cheer – meaning "God is great" in Arabic.

Some of the crowd gathered around the truck join in the cheers. One man spits on Louk's head as the car drives off.



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CNN does not know Louk's whereabouts or condition at this time. CNN is not airing the video because it is graphic and disturbing.

"We recognized her by the tattoos, and she has long dreadlocks," Louk's cousin told the Washington Post. "We have some kind of hope ... Hamas is responsible for her and the others."

A German foreign ministry source told CNN: "The Federal Foreign Office and the German embassy in Tel Aviv are in close contact with the Israeli authorities in order to clarify whether and to what extent German citizens are affected."

In a video obtained by German news outlet Bild, Louk's mother Ricarda said: "This morning my daughter, Shani Nicole Louk, a German citizen, was kidnapped with a group of tourists in southern Israel by Palestinian Hamas."

"We were sent a video in which I could clearly see our daughter unconscious in the car with the Palestinians and them driving around the Gaza Strip," she said. "I ask you to send us any help or any news. Thank you very much."

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