'They are inside the house. They shot at us in the room. Help me!'

Merav Tal and her partner, Yaya Yaakovi, were kidnapped from Yaakovi's residence in Kibbutz Nir Oz.

By BINI ASHKENAZI/WALLA, OCTOBER 17, 2023

On Saturday, October 7th, Merav Tal and her partner, Yaya Yaakovi, were kidnapped from Yaakovi's residence in Kibbutz Nir Oz. "We are plagued by uncertainty," Keren Blank, Tal's sister, said a week after the abduction. She continued, "Merav had been visiting Kibbutz Nir Oz at Yaya's place that Saturday, during the Simchat Torah holiday and celebration. She had kept in touch with us as the missiles began launching. We, having resided in central Israel, had been cognizant of the unfolding situation. We had observed the drones and the terrorist infiltrations on television. I had urgently advised her and Yaya to seek shelter in a bomb-proof shelter, urging them to remain silent, as if no one was home. However, the last thing we had heard from her, around 9:20 a.m. were terrifying WhatsApp messages."

'They are inside the house'

Tal's last WhatsApp messages, before her abduction, had been shared with Walla! "They are inside the house," she said in the recording. "They shot at us in the room. They are inside... Help me! Yair (Ya Ya) is wounded. Call the police." Blank had disclosed that the military and associated Israeli authorities had informed the family that the couple was in the Gaza Strip. However, this formal notification had been redundant for Keren; she had already viewed a harrowing Hamas video that captured the moment of the couple's kidnapping.

Blank further added, "It was certain that Yaya's children, aged 12 and 16, had been kidnapped a mere two minutes before the abduction of Yaya and Merav. This was because they had managed to call and notify of their own kidnapping. The Hamas operatives had even instructed them to make that call. We earnestly appeal to the state authorities to spring into action and utilize every means to ensure their safe return. We cannot be left in this dire situation."