



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mario R. Mattera

Senate Minority Conference Joins With Run For Their Lives In Calling For The Return Of Hostages In Gaza

MARIO R. MATTERA April 4, 2024

| ISSUE: **ISRAEL, ISRAEL; HAMAS; TERRORISM, ISRAEL HOSTAGES, FREE THE HOSTAGES, RUN FOR THEIR LIVES**



Senator Mario R. Mattera (2nd Senate District) joined New York State Senate Minority Leader Robert Ortt, Senator Steven Rhoads, Kurt Roth and Amanda Aussems, organizers of *Run for Their Lives New York*, for a rally in Albany with members of the Senate and Assembly Conferences to advocate for the release of the 134 hostages being held in Gaza, including six Americans, two from New York State.

Run for Their Lives is a leading humanitarian organization dedicated to advocating for victims of the hostage crisis, both alive and deceased, from all countries. Supporters and participants of *Run for Their Lives* meet weekly in locations across the globe dressed in matching red attire and either walk or run one kilometer to raise awareness for the hostage crisis in Gaza.

The rally included advocates from Long Island to the Capital Region who called for the safe release and return home of the 134 hostages remaining in Gaza held by Hamas. Among the Americans still being held captive are two New Yorkers: Omer Neutra of Plainview, who is still believed to be alive, and Itay Chen of Brooklyn, who lost his life on October 7th and whose body is still being held by Hamas.

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“The 134 innocent hostages of this cowardly terrorist attack deserve to be released from captivity immediately. The victims of this heinous attack must never be forgotten and by continuing to join together, the leaders of Run for Their Lives are making sure they are not. I had the honor of joining the Commack organizers of Run for their Lives recently and I thank the organizers of all the rallies across our state, our nation and the world in support of those who were abducted in the October 7th terrorist attacks,” said Senator Mattera.

“On October 7th, we witnessed Israel come under attack by the terrorist group Hamas. The atrocities of that day stay with us – innocent civilians gunned down, women and children brutally abused, murdered, kidnapped and held hostage. We are rallying here today to demand the release of all the innocent men and women who are prisoners of war. Elected officials who support freedom must take action and call for an end to their captivity and their peaceful release back to their loved ones,” **said Senator Minority Leader Rob Ortt.**

“After October 7th, my family was devastated to learn that my son's best friend, Omer Neutra, was taken hostage. Since that time, we have been leading a group in Commack, NY

every Sunday to keep the attention on the hostage crisis. We hold out hope that all of the hostages will be released immediately and that Omer will be able to hug his family and our son once again. We are here in Albany to influence the public and our representatives to continue advocating for the release of the hostages so that the families missing their loved ones can be complete,” **said Kurt Roth, Run for Their Lives in Commack.**

“Today marks 179 days that the hostages held by Hamas have been captive. It is incomprehensible, the anguish of being held hostage for almost 6 months. Run for Their Lives is here to speak up for those who currently have no voice, here to peacefully demonstrate and speak with elected officials about the hostage crisis, here to advocate for the immediate release of the hostages, here to bring them home,” **said Amanda Aussems, Run for Their Lives in Albany.**

“As students, we have the ability to not only get an education, but to educate others. You have the tools to empower those around you and change the narrative. Use your voice, go to your local weekly walk for the hostages, put up posters to spread awareness, stand up to anti-semitism and don't be afraid to speak out against what you know is wrong. I've learned from my leadership in the Run for Their Lives movement how much of a difference I can make. It's been 179 days too long. Bring them home now,” **said Shaina Roth, Run for Their Lives in Commack and President of the New York Jewish Student Union.**

“I cannot imagine the heartache each family has endured since the Oct. 7 attacks. For 179 days, 134 people have been held in captivity as their loved ones deal with unimaginable pain. The victims are people like you and me; they were enjoying outings with friends, going about their normal routines when their lives got turned upside down. Violence in the name of hatred has no place in a civilized world. I remain unwavering in my support for Israel and the Jewish population and demand the hostages be released immediately,” **said Assembly Minority Leader Will Barclay.**

“Regardless of anyone's views on the October 7th attack or the Israeli response, there should be universal condemnation of the capture and taking of hostages - a war crime that violates both international law and the terms of the Geneva Convention.. Today marks 179 days of captivity of 134 unarmed mothers, father, sons and daughters, of the elderly and infirm - whose only crime was quietly living their lives and are now being held and used, against their will, as pawns. For 179 days, family members of these hostages have been denied information concerning their condition or whereabouts - not even knowing whether their loved one is alive or dead. I am proud to stand with Run For Their Lives in calling for an end to this unconscionable practice and demand that the international community compel the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. International Law and the bounds of human decency demand it. Bring them home NOW!,” **said Senator Steven Rhoads, 5th Senate District.**

“I join with the “Run for Their Lives Advocates, my Senate Colleagues, and the families of the hostages taken during the terrorist attack of October 7th in support of their immediate release. After almost 6 months of captivity, the time to release them is now!” **said Senator Alexis Weik, 8th Senate District.**

“All lives are sacred. We need to focus on what binds us together. Everyone wants peace, but there are still 134 hostages illegally being held in Gaza. Releasing those hostages is the beginning of bringing peace,” **said Senator Jack Martins, Vice Chair of the Senate Minority Conference, and Chair of the Antisemitism Working Group, 7th Senate District.**

“We must prioritize diplomatic efforts to ensure the safe release of all hostages and reunite them with their families. ‘Run for Their Lives’ visit to Albany underscores the urgent need for action to address the ongoing hostage crisis in Gaza, where 134 individuals, including 6 Americans and 2 from New York State, are held captive. New York State stands in solidarity with those affected by this crisis and supports efforts for the release of those held captive. We must bring them home,” **said Senator Patricia Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick, member of the**

Antisemitism Working Group, 9th Senate District.

“For 179 days, hostages, including two New Yorkers, have been held by Hamas in Gaza. We cannot - and we will not - forget these individuals who are being held captive. It is imperative that we continue to advocate for the release of these hostages. They must all be brought home,” **said Senator Joseph Griffo, member of the Antisemitism Working Group, 53rd Senate District.**

“My heart goes out to the families who continue to wait and pray for the return of their loved ones. It is vital that we keep the spotlight on the hostage crisis and ensure that the innocent individuals taken by Hamas terrorists are not forgotten. I commend *Run for Their Lives New York* and the work being performed by the organization’s devoted volunteers. This is highly personal for so many, and I stand with you in your continued fight to bring the hostages home,” **said Senator Peter Oberacker, member of the Antisemitism Working Group, 51st Senate District.**

“The plight of the Israeli hostages, including 6 United States citizens and two New Yorkers, should be getting a lot more attention than it has. The Hamas terrorist organization must free all 134 hostages immediately and unconditionally,” **said Senator Bill Weber, member of the Antisemitism Working Group, 38th Senate District.**

“When I traveled to Israel last summer, I never could’ve imagined that the same people who welcomed me with open hearts and open arms would be targeted in one of the most vile and unspeakable terror attacks in history just several weeks later. For the families of the hostages, the horror remains unceasing. There can be no peace without the safe return of these innocent, courageous men and women. I want to thank *Run For Their Lives New York* for their unflinching commitment to justice and to humanitarian principles. Today and every day, I’m proud to stand with Israel,” **said Senator Jake Ashby, 43rd Senate District.**

“The news headlines change every day, which is why this rally calling for the release of the hostages being held in Gaza is so important. We must not let the public or our political leaders forget that innocent men, women and children are still being held captive by Hamas. Every day that passes without their release is torture for their families who see their loved ones being used as political bargaining chips. The courageous actions of the individuals participating in *Run for Their Lives* are a reminder to the world that these hostages are still captive, still suffering and must be released,” **said Senator George Borrello, 57th Senate District.**

“What the hostages are suffering, and what their families are enduring, is unimaginable. I proudly stand with *Run for Their Lives New York* in their fight to bring these innocent civilians home,” **said Senator Pam Helming, Chair of the Minority Conference, 54th Senate District.**

“I am proud to join *Run for Their Lives New York* and legislative colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to help keep critical awareness and attention focused on the hostage crisis in Gaza and to help keep up the fight for their safe return home to their loved ones. It remains a hostage crisis of the first order and demands strong and steadfast diplomatic intervention,” **said Senator Tom O’Mara, 58th Senate District.**

“America must continue to stand in support of Israel and do everything in our power to help facilitate the release of all the hostages being held by Hamas,” **said Senator Anthony Palumbo, 1st Senate District.**

“It has been almost six months since the terrorists of Hamas took as hostages innocent men, women, and children. Today I stand with my colleagues, friends and loved ones of those still in captivity, and concerned citizens across our state and nation to demand their safe return. We must punish the perpetrators responsible for this heinous act of barbarism and continue to mourn those Americans and Israelis we lost to the violence and mayhem of October 7. Bring the hostages home now,” **said Senator Rob Rolison, 39th Senate District.**

“It’s been almost 7 months since the Hamas terrorists attacked Israel, brutally murdering over 1100 people and taking hundreds hostage with 134 people still in captivity including six Americans and two New Yorkers. I join my colleagues in support of Israel and to call for the immediate release of these hostages. There can be no peace until these innocent people are freed,” **said Senator Jim Tedisco, 44th Senate District.**