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TIMELINE / 1,940 days from Gilad Shalit's abduction to his release

The Israeli soldier has endured five years of Hamas captivity in Gaza, during which Israel and Hamas negotiated a deal for his release.

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June 25, 2006

A cross-border raid by Palestinian militants from Gaza on an IDF base in southern Israel leaves two soldiers dead. Gilad Shalit, who is wounded in the attack, is taken into Gaza, where he is to remain for more than five years.

September 2006

Reports emerge from Israel and the Palestinians of progress in negotiations for Shalit's release. IDF arrests dozens of Hamas leaders in the West Bank which Hamas says are to be used as "bargaining chips" in a future deal for the soldier's release.

October 2006

A Qatari proposal for a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation deal includes a Palestinian unity government that would free Shalit.

December 2006

Noam Shalit publishes a letter to his son in the Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds, which is printed in Jerusalem. The letter says: "Our son Gilad, stay strong, don't break."

January 2007

Senior Hamas officials say there has been significant progress in contacts on a prisoner swap, involving then Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman.

August 2007

After a six-week freeze, negotiations between Israel and Hamas are renewed, with Egyptian mediation. Four months later, in the wake of a new Hamas proposal, a row breaks out between Israeli negotiator Ofer Dekel and Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin over the release of prisoners "with blood on their hands."

June 2007

Shalit's captors release an audio tape in the which the soldier is heard begging the Israeli government to bring him home.

April 2008

Hamas political leader Khaled Meshal says Shalit is alive and being well looked after. In June of the same year, on the eve of a Hamas-Israeli agreement to calm tensions along the Gaza border, the Shalit family petitions the High Court against it, but the petition is rejected.

June 2008

The Shalit family receives the last of three letters from Gilad, who has not been permitted a visit by the Red Cross since his capture.

December 2008

Israel launches Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip. At the end of the fighting some three weeks later, the Shalit family receives word via a French mediator that Gilad is still alive.

February 2009

The Israeli cabinet rules to condition the opening of the crossings into Gaza on Gilad's release. Several days later, Israel hands Hamas a new list of prisoners it is willing to exchange for the soldier, which Hamas rejects.

March 2009

To mark Gilad's 1000th day in captivity, the Shalit family moves into a protest tent opposite the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem. The government, headed by Ehud Olmert, again fails to reach a deal, despite last ditch efforts. A statement released by Hamas following the breakdown in talks claims that Israel had "cold feet." Israel counters by claiming that Hamas "toughened its stance and went back on understandings reached during the last year, and made extreme demands."

June 16, 2009

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter gives Hamas a letter for Gilad from his family. Following his meeting with Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, Carter says he received the impression that Gilad was alive and well.

October 2009

A video recording is released in which Shalit appeals his family and the prime minister to free him from Hamas captivity. (Click here for the video with English transcript)

December 2009

The group of senior Israeli ministers known as the Forum of Seven convenes to discuss a draft Shalit deal. The Shalit family stages a demonstration in front of Prime Minister's Office, but the meeting ends without any results.

April 2010

Noam Shalit sends a personal message to Hamas political leader Khaled Meshal asking him to approve Israel's latest offer.

May 2010

Hamas deputy leader Mousa Abu Marzuk accuses the German mediator in the swap negotiations of bias and of hiding details from Hamas. He announces a freeze in the talks, blaming Israel for the halt.

Four years following Shalit's capture his family embarks on a massive march from their home in Mitzpe Hila to Jerusalem. Thousands of people accompany the family members.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, addressing widening protests, warns of repeating past errors in prisoner exchange deals, saying: "Israel is willing to pay a heavy price for Gilad Shalit's release. But it cannot say: 'At any price.' That is the truth and I'm saying it here."

April 2011

Israel's top negotiator in the Shalit swap Ofer Dekel is replaced by Haggai Hadas.

June 2011

Netanyahu says he intends to pressure Hamas prisoners and that "the party is over for terrorists in Israeli prisons."

July 2011

At a rally marking five years since Gilad was taken captive, Shalit family members criticize Netanyahu for the lack of progress in negotiations. "The damage which Netanyahu is doing to Israel by not saving the soldier Gilad Shalit is greater than an injury to national morale."

August 2011

Media reports claim Khaled Meshal has arrived in Cairo to discuss the Shalit deal, without any significant breakthrough. The sides are reportedly bridging the gap between their respective demands.

October 2011

After news breaks of an agreement on a prisoner swap, Netanyahu pledges that Shalit will be home in a matter of days.