# Skies Over Israel

October 29, 2023 by [Karen Alkalay-Gut](https://www.firstofthemonth.org/author/karen-gut/)

Maybe if they stopped bombing us, we’d stop bombing them… If they have a million displaced persons, we have 150,000 families looking for places to stay because of the rockets. If we have fewer casualties, it’s because we have a warning system that they could have built as well. And sometimes pieces of shattered rockets fall on us, so we stay sheltered for 10 minutes. We scurry out and scurry back in.

The 239 hostages have still to be identified and listed — none of them are guilty of a single crime — almost quarter are still in diapers, or back in diapers. They all have families — some still alive — who know nothing about their physical state much less their mental state. These are to be exchanged for 1000 or so prisoners who were arrested because they tried to kill us. This seems like a strange imbalance, but, okay, we would do it. Unfortunately they have shown no sign of interest – except for their release of two Americans and two old ladies, no word has come from them even of identification. So we do the math, trying to find DNA in what is left of the 1400 bodies and

I don’t think sufficient accurate information has reached the West to allow a reasonable judgement on what should be done. Sure, we don’t get all the information either. For example, we haven’t seen footage of the massacre in the areas down south — no rapes, no beheadings, no fetuses ripped from their terrified mothers. We just hear a few of the stories that survivors tell.  
We have 4 tv channels: One is so rightist that I can’t bear to watch it, the others have Arab commentators, moderators, photographers, and guests — almost in proportion to the population of people living here. I’m watching Lucy Aharash (who begins her broadcast with ‘masa el nur’ (good evening in Arabic) right now as I write because I have to know whatever I can at any given moment.

Sometimes I watch CNN or news in France to get a bigger picture. I still can’t absorb anything because I’m not able to concentrate, and I worry about the all the people who are suffering because of the brutality of Hamas, and the unpredictability of Hizballah. Orit calls to ask Ezi if a half a ton bomb from Hizballah would flatten her house. He says yes,but assures her it won’t come to that because we’d flatten Lebanon. Just before that Joe calls from the States to ask if it’s true that we’re rounding up local Arabs. I hope not — because I have an appointment tomorrow with an Arab doctor, and I have to pick up the prescription from an Arab pharmacist, and some of my neighbors are Arab, and — oh, I forgot to write one of my aged Arab colleagues to see how he is faring…

Just to illustrate, a poem by Ronny Sommek [who came to Israel as a young child after being born in Baghdad in 1951], and one of mine.

**I Am the Severed Head You Do Not Know**

My hair is more blond than the sand it rolls over  
On my lips crowd words  
sharp as the knife  
that met my throat.  
You who are mesmerized by my eyes,  
put a chip on the wheel of fortune  
that spins under the eyebrows.  
Don’t ask my name and imagine my hands  
hugging the body that was so beautiful  
beneath my neck  
and now cast upon the disgrace of the earth  
as if it was no more than a banana peel.

The sun shone, the poet wrote,  
and I am barely a model of darkness.  
No more.

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And two of mine…

**Regenerating**

No sex in wartime,  
I always say.  
Even a touch of foreplay  
brings on the rockets  
that give it to us all at once.

Afterward,  
everyone who can  
makes babies  
and give them names  
in memory of

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