

Archdiocese Extends Compassionate Welcome To The Hostage And Missing Families Forum



The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America hosted a group of families from the Hostage and Missing Families Forum at its Headquarters in New York City on the afternoon of Sunday, January 14, 2024. His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America was represented by His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos, who was accompanied by his mother, Mrs. Fotini Ziliaskopoulos, and Rev. Fr. Nicholas Kazarian, Director, Inter-Orthodox Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.

100 days have passed since the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas in which more than 1300 innocent civilians were murdered and hundreds taken hostage.

During the gathering, hostage survivor 13-year-old Hila Rotem Shoshani shared her heartbreaking experience in captivity. Several families whose loved ones are still being held hostage also shared their painful stories.

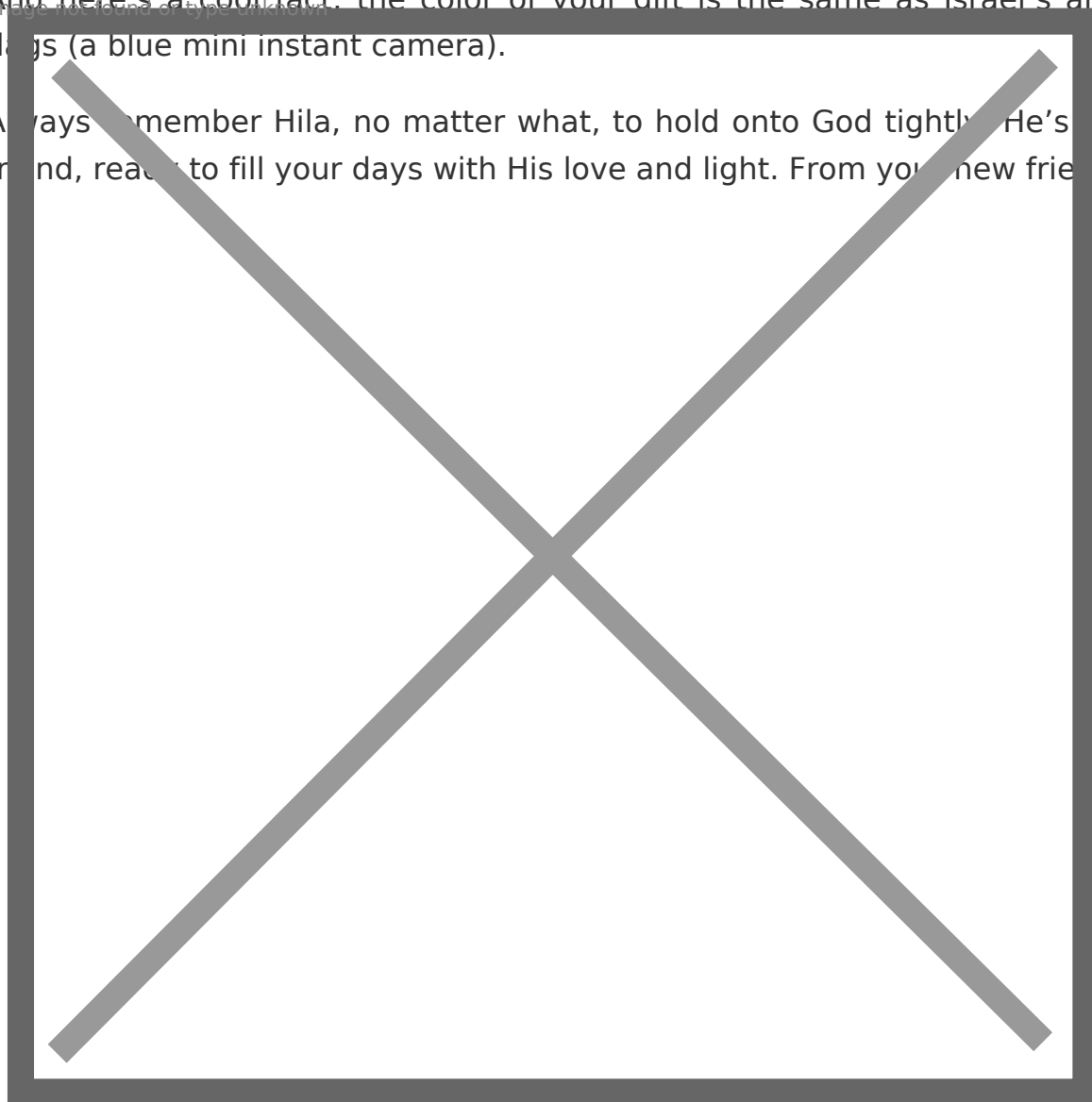
Bishop Athenagoras of Nazianzos, Auxiliary Bishop to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, offered pastoral care to the families and delivered a humble and heartfelt message of hope, faith, and love.

He and his mother surprised 13-year-old Hila with a gift, and he read the accompanying card, which said the following:

“Dearest Hila, we are so grateful to meet you! We have been praying for you, your family, and your friends for 100 days.

We hope this little gift brings a smile to your face. We picked it just for you, hoping it adds a moment of joy to your days while you’re trying to create new memories. And here’s a cool fact: the color of your gift is the same as Israel’s and Greece’s flags (a blue mini instant camera).

Always remember Hila, no matter what, to hold onto God tightly. He’s your forever friend, ready to fill your days with His love and light. From your new friends”





When Hila unwrapped her gift, she uncovered a surprising revelation—she used to own the exact same blue mini instant camera, but it was destroyed during the October 7 attack. In a moment of divine providence, what Hila had lost on that fateful day, she now regained at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

The gathering was organized at the request of the American Jewish Committee and the Hostage and Missing Families Forum. The Forum was formed by the families of the abductees and is volunteer-based and focused on bringing every hostage back home to their families.

Photos: Omer Kaplan

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