

# Gilad Shalit Freed During Feast of Tabernacles

After five years and four months as a Hamas hostage, Gilad Shalit is home with his family.

Although the price of his release was very high—Shalit was released in exchange for the release of 1,027 Palestinian prisoners—it shows the determination of his family and the people of Israel to bring back their kidnapped son, said ECI director Tomas Sandell.

Shalit was captured in July 2006 while patrolling the northern border of Israel. He was then held captive by terrorist organization Hamas. His detainment marked a breach of international humanitarian.

Shalit, who has dual Israeli and French citizenship, has been supported by the French president as well as by the whole European Parliament, which last year issued a declaration in support for his release.

“No other country in the world has had to pay such a high price for the release of one of their sons. There are those who may say that the price of the prisoner swap was too high, but on the other hand it underlines the value of human life in Israeli society,” Sandell says.

“This prisoner swap shows with all clarity the difference between the two sides. While the Israelis are celebrating the homecoming of one innocent young soldier, Hamas activists are celebrating by calling for new attacks on Israel and taking of new captives. It will be very difficult to create a Palestinian state while these are still the realities on the ground.”

Meanwhile, several thousand Christians from some 80 nations

are joining the popular Jerusalem March in an expression of solidarity with Israel on the occasion. The marchers are attending the annual Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

“We share the relief and joy of the Shalit family and all Israel that Gilad has come back alive. We also share the disgust of so many that the price for his return has meant having to set ruthless murderers free,” says ICEJ Executive Director Juergen Buehler. “These are the paradoxes which Israel constantly lives with, and our pilgrims will no doubt return to their own nations with a deeper appreciation of Israel’s unique struggles and an even stronger commitment to standing with the Jewish state and people.”