

Police start building Oct. 7 rape cases, focusing on footage and testimonies

'Not a traditional rape investigation': Police say they have multiple witnesses, are focusing on gathering circumstantial evidence as physical proof gleaned from bodies is limited

By **CARRIE KELLER-LYNN** ✓

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A member of Zaka at the forensic center in the Shura military base near Ramle, on October 13, 2023, where hundreds of dead bodies have arrived since Hamas-led terrorists rampaged through southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people. (Nati Shohat/Flash90)

Israeli police investigators are currently building several sexual assault cases against Gazan terrorists who participated in the massacres in southern Israel on October 7, with the goal of eventually trying the perpetrators for rape and other crimes.

“We have multiple witnesses for several cases” of sexual abuse, said David Katz, who heads cyber crime at Lahav 433, the Israel Police’s criminal investigation division.

In addition to witness testimony, Katz and police spokespeople said Tuesday, the police have video evidence, testimony from terrorists, and photographs of victims’ bodies that all point toward sexual assault.

Speaking to journalists at the National Police Academy in Beit Shemesh, the officials confirmed Hebrew media reports that Lahav 433 is [collecting evidence](#) of Hamas atrocities in preparation for criminal prosecution.

The police would not disclose the number of witness testimonies or active sexual assault cases being investigated. Five weeks after Israel’s largest-ever mass casualty event, Katz said that the police still expect months more work before completing their investigation and shifting toward indictments.

The sexual violence investigation is part of a larger push by Lahav 433 to put together cases of murder, torture and other atrocities committed on October 7. Most details of the investigations are currently under a gag order.

The police confirmed a Times of Israel investigation that found [physical evidence of sexual assault was broadly not collected](#) from October 7 victims, amid the still ongoing need to identify bodies and complications posed by an active warzone.



Police chief Kobi Shabtai at the scene of a stabbing attack outside a police station near Jerusalem's Old City, November 6, 2023. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

Rape kits, which have a 48-hour window to be collected after an assault, were not prioritized. “In the first 48 hours, there was still an active combat zone” across much of southern Israel, Dean Elsdunne, a police spokesperson, said Tuesday.

“We did gather photographic evidence,” Elsdunne said, taken by forensic workers at the emergency morgue set up at the Shura military base, where the majority of the 1,200 killed on October 7 were taken for identification.

“We have detailed photos of the bodies of victims, and everything is being put together,” Elsdunne said.

Many bodies arriving at Shura were in such bad condition that collecting physical evidence of sexual assault, such as semen or DNA samples, was [not possible](#).

Mirit Ben Mayor, who leads communications for the Israel Police, said that investigating the October 7 crimes “is not a traditional rape investigation.”

Much of the state’s case will rest on “circumstantial evidence,” she said, adding that “it’s enough to indict someone by that.”

Based on “the conditions of the bodies that came in, bodies in the field, by the stories people are telling, by the situation of the bodies that arrived for forensic checking at Shura,” Ben Mayor said, “we say that there was rape, that there was sexual harassment. There is no room for doubt about these events.”

Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai similarly said that the police’s ongoing investigation has yielded “evidence indicating rape [and] amputation of organs,” including breasts.

“Many of the victims who survived the massacres are not ready to speak,” Shabtai said.



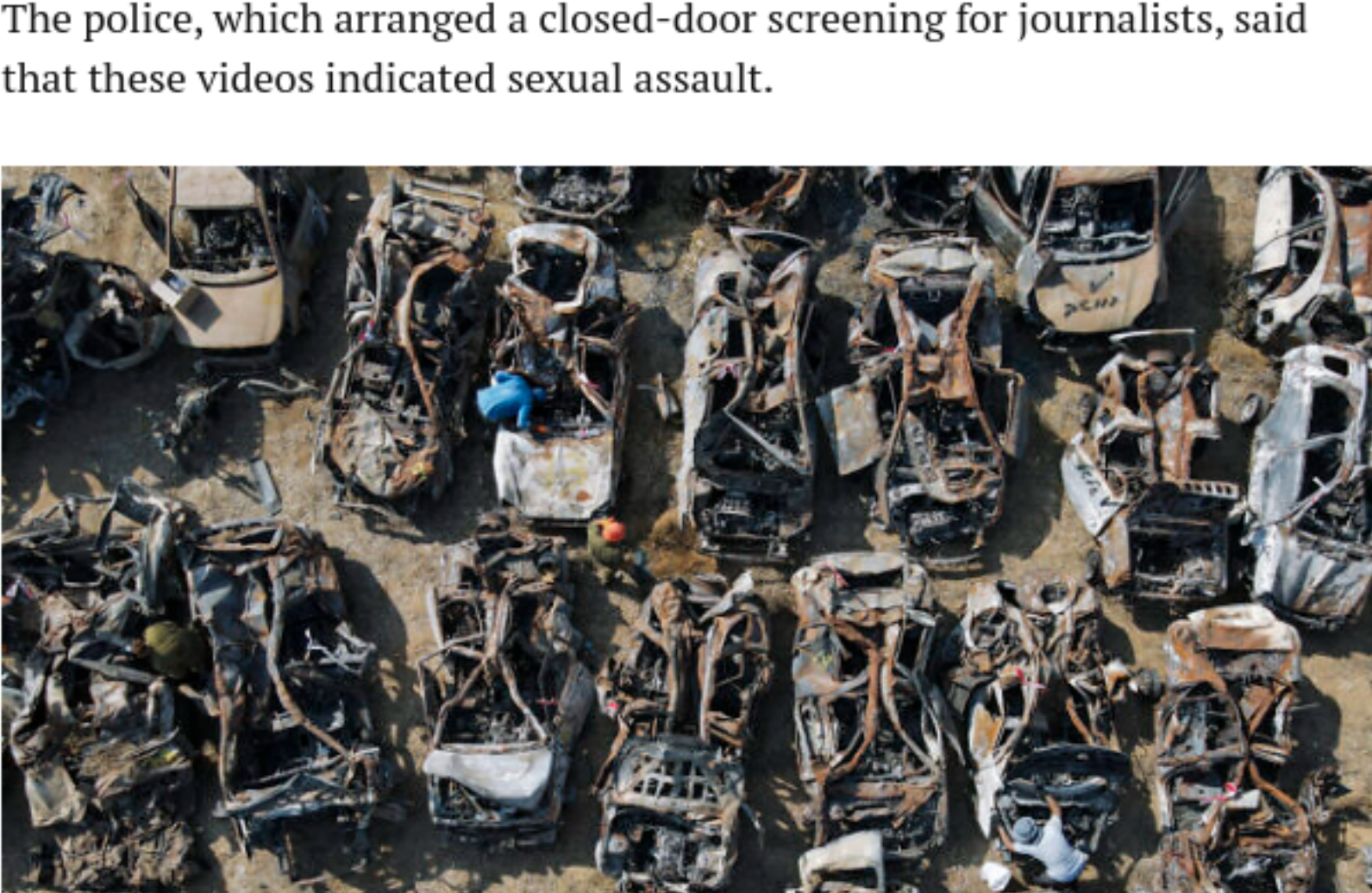
A woman's body, found on October 7, 2023 with a partially burned head and unclothed from the waist down; video was uploaded to social media and screened by the IDF as part of a raw footage compilation of Hamas atrocities. (Screenshot)

Ben Mayor said that she was not aware of October 7 rape survivors having made formal complaints to the police.

The Israel Police screened short clips Tuesday of footage gathered from Hamas bodycams, victim dashboard cameras, social media, and cell phones, showing partially clothed, dead women and charred remains of victims who had been bound before they were burned alive.

In one video, a woman is unclothed from the waist down, with her underpants hanging off one thigh. She is lying face down and is dead. In another, a mutilated dead woman has her dress hitched up to her waist, with no underpants.

The police, which arranged a closed-door screening for journalists, said that these videos indicated sexual assault.



Israeli security forces inspect charred vehicles burned in the bloody Oct. 7 cross-border attack by Hamas militants outside the town of Netivot, southern Israel. (AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)

“Many of the victims were in conditions too severe to identify, naked, and with clear signs of sexual assault,” read a caption accompanying a gruesome clip of several corpses, in various states of disrobement, stacked in outdoor piles.

The police also screened a segment of what they said was testimony from a survivor of Hamas’s attack on a large outdoor festival, where over 260 — mostly young adults — were killed.

Identified only as “Witness S.,” the survivor said she had seen terrorists gang-raping, mutilating and then murdering a young partygoer.

“He is here raping her,” S. was videotaped saying, “and then they pass her on to another person.” The terrorists were dressed in olive green uniforms, she added. The police showed video evidence that several Hamas terrorists had posed as Israel Defense Forces soldiers in order to get close to victims.

Confirming that the victim had still been alive during the rape, S. said that “she stood on her feet, she was bleeding from her back.”

Next, said S., one of the terrorists “slices her breast and throws it on the road, and they’re playing with it.”

“Afterwards,” S. continued, “someone really penetrates her and shoots her in the head before he finishes. It’s not like he ejaculates and picks up his pants... He shoots her in the head while he’s still inside of her,” she said.

Ben Mayor confirmed that police have identified the rape victim in this incident, now deceased.

The police declined to say how many rape cases are being looked into.

Police are working on developing “a case against every terrorist, every Hamas member” in custody, Katz said, for the broader set of atrocities committed on October 7.

Katz said that there are “a few hundred” October 7 terrorists in Israeli custody.