The Hamas terrorist organization has secured the release of BBC journalist Alan Johnston, after 114 days in captivity. Clashes erupted between the Army of Islam group that had abducted him and Hamas yesterday, in what was described by Hamas as a battle for Johnston's release. A gun battle ensued, which resulted in the death of a Palestinian civilian, and the capture of members of the Dogmush family that run the Army of Islam. Both terrorist organizations then agreed to swap prisoners, and Johnston was released. Both former Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and Alan Johnston held a press conference after his release, which was promptly condemned by President Abbas' Fatah organization...

**Quote:** *"But Abbas aide Yasser Abed Rabbo said: "We're watching a movie, where the thieves in Gaza fall out and one of them claims to be honest and brave and the other is the bad guy. Photo "This Hamas game fools no one. For Mashaal to present himself as bringing security is a fraud. The Army of Islam were collaborators with Hamas in undermining security ... He's trying to gain sympathy for creating a Taliban principality in Gaza."*

The move by Hamas to secure the release of Alan Johnston by force was also criticized by British Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells as a " publicity stunt " aimed at winning favour with the West. And how could Hamas have gained better publicity for their cause, than to have Johnston and Haniyeh standing side by side with the world's press in attendance? Meanwhile, Corporal Gilad Shalit is still being held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, having been in captivity for over a year and with deteriorating health.
Operation Summer Rains
, an incursion into Gaza planned by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, could not secure his release. Hamas had been in negotiations with Olmert for the possible release of around a
thousand
Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Shalit, many of whom were responsible for the deaths of Israeli civilians, but the deal fell through. Now with the release of Johnston, Haniyeh has the upper hand on Israel and Shalit.

**Quote:** *"Haniyeh spoke at a joint press conference with Johnston, who had arrived at his home at the Shati refugee camp in Gaza several hours after his release. "If the Israelis think reasonably and rationally, and take into account the humanitarian issue and the suffering of the Palestinian prisoners, we will be able to reach a deal," the Hamas leader said.*

Johnston's post in Gaza was due to expire shortly before his captivity, so it is unlikely that he will be able to be used much more by the Hamas terrorist organization to propagate their message. I am glad that Alan Johnston has been freed, even if he has been an instrument for Palestinian terrorism. The Bible reminds us that we are also willingly held captive, by our own sins. The Bible says that whoever commits sin is the servant of sin (John 8:34). Around 2000 years ago a Man came to earth, in order to effect the biggest hostage release ever undertaken.

Our release demanded a high ransom, one that we were not able to pay. It demanded the blood of an innocent person, of one who could vindicate God's throne, as well as justify the sinner. That Person was the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us so much that He gave His own life on the cross, so that we could be set free.

Luke 4:18-21
The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord (year of Jubilee). And he closed the book, and he gave [it] again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Source Reuters , YNet News