



# **American Hostage: A Memoir of a Journalist Kidnapped in Iraq and the Remarkable Battle to Win His Release**

*Micah Garen, Marie-Helene Carleton*

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**A rare and powerful story of hope, love, survival, and the struggle to bring back alive a hostage in Iraq**

Micah Garen and Marie-Hélène Carleton were journalists and filmmakers working in Iraq on a documentary about the looting of the country's legendary archaeological sites, with their Iraqi translator Amir Doshi. In the late summer of 2004, they began to wrap up their work, and Marie-Hélène returned home while Micah remained for a final two weeks of filming. As Micah and Amir were filming in a Nasiriyah market, something went horribly wrong: Micah, who wore a bushy mustache and was dressed in Iraqi clothing, was unmasked as a foreigner and kidnapped by militants in southern Iraq.

Home in New York, Marie-Hélène awoke to a gut-wrenching phone call from Micah's mother with word of his abduction. She promised Micah's mother the impossible--that together they would bring Micah back alive.

*American Hostage* is the remarkable memoir of Micah Garen's harrowing abduction and survival in captivity, as well as the heroic and successful struggle of Marie-Hélène; Micah's sister, Eva; along with family and friends to win Micah's and Amir's release from their captors. The world watched and waited as Micah's drama unfolded, but the authors, now safely home and engaged to be married, detail the dramatic untold story.

After learning of Micah's abduction, Marie-Hélène took a risky and unusual step: instead of relying on the authorities to rescue Micah, she used her recent experience in Iraq to construct a massive grassroots effort to reach out to Micah's captors and plead for his release. As fighting between Coalition forces and the Mahdi Army raged in Najaf, Micah and Amir became pawns in a terrible political game. The kidnappers released a video threatening to kill Micah unless the United States withdrew from Najaf within forty-eight hours. In response, Marie-Hélène's and Micah's families redoubled their efforts, eventually sending a representative to Nasiriyah to lobby for Micah.

While Marie-Hélène worked on his release, Micah, imprisoned alongside Amir under armed guard deep in the marshes of southern Iraq, lived the nightmare of a hostage haunted by the alternating impulses of hope and despair, his desire for survival and plans of escape. His experience reveals a great deal about the lives and minds of militants in southern Iraq.

*American Hostage* is an engrossing and rare story of how hope, love, and communal effort can overcome war, distance, and cultural differences in Iraq.

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