

Israel targeting, censoring journalists for covering assault on Gaza

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On Wednesday an Israeli airstrike in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the south of Gaza targeted and killed the family of Al Jazeera's Gaza bureau chief, Wael al-Dahdouh. The victims of Dahdouh's family include his wife, his high-school-aged son, seven-year-old daughter, and a grandson. According to reports from Al Jazeera, 12 members of the Dahdouh family are dead, nine of whom were children, and others are still missing.

The family was staying in the camp, having fled to the south of the Gaza strip after the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) dropped leaflets in the north urging civilians to evacuate. Dahdouh remained behind to continue covering the bombardment. Al Jazeera's Walid al-Omary told the press that the murders were part of Israel's "relentless targeting of Palestinians," and stated that in spite of the fact that the family had evacuated, the "Israeli army targeted them. This is proof that there isn't a single safe zone in Gaza."

Al Jazeera released a statement condemning the targeting of journalists and their families, and encouraging "the international community to intervene and put an end to these attacks on civilians, thereby safeguarding innocent lives."

The murder of Dahdouh's family followed reports on Monday that just two weeks ago, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on Qatar to "tone down" the state-owned news network's coverage of the slaughter in Palestine.

Axios reported that three sources who attended a meeting with Blinken "said he asked the Qataris to 'turn down the volume on Al Jazeera's coverage because it is full of anti-Israel incitement.'"

Shlomo Karhi, Israel's communications minister, has been pushing for harsh censorship measures through emergency regulations to tamp down on opposition to

Israel's massively unpopular assault on Palestine. "Al Jazeera's broadcasts and reports constitute incitement against Israel, help Hamas-ISIS and the terror organizations with their propaganda, and encourage violence against Israel," he said.

According to the draft emergency regulations, titled "Limiting Aid to the Enemy through Communication," any media outlet deemed a threat to "national security" will be shut down. On October 20, the Israeli government signed off on the regulations. Karhi then announced he would bring forth a formal proposal to shut down Al Jazeera's operations in Israel altogether at the next security cabinet meeting.

According to *Haaretz*, the emergency regulations "will apply to both the general public and the media, as well as both local and foreign media (in contrast to the stated objective to limit Al Jazeera). It will also apply to the publication of factually correct statements, at the minister's discretion... The draft defines 'aiding the enemy through communication' as the dissemination of information that 'undermines the morale of Israel's soldiers and residents in the face of the enemy,' or information that 'serves as a basis for enemy propaganda, including the spreading of the enemy's propaganda messages,' or information that 'aids the enemy in its war against Israel, its residents, or Jews.'"

The publication later notes in the same article that it is "unlikely" to be approved by the government's legal counsel as it conflicts with Israel's "democratic values."

The targeting and censorship of journalists is a longstanding policy of the Israeli regime in its effort to cover up and whitewash the crimes committed by the IDF against Palestinians.

In May 2022, Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu

Akleh was targeted and gunned down by the IDF while covering a raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. Her murder was an open attempt to prevent objective reporting on the brutal suppression of Palestinians, which has now escalated to open genocide.

The International Federation of Journalists reports that at least 23 journalists have been killed since October 7 as of this writing. Dozens more have been injured and more are missing. The Egyptian Journalists Syndicate reports that in addition to the deaths, injuries and missing journalists, over 50 media institutions have been destroyed in the airstrikes which have targeted the homes of journalists, and a further 30 journalists have been arrested in the West Bank.

Late Wednesday night, two more journalists, Saed al-Halabi and Mohammed Labad, were killed in a targeted attack. “[T]he Israeli occupation army continued to target the houses of journalists, where the bombing of the house of journalist Said Al-Halabi led to his martyrdom,” according to a press release from the Forum of Palestinian Journalists (PJS).

Al-Halabi worked for Al-Aqsa TV and was killed at his home in Jabalia, north of the Gaza Strip. Labad was killed in a blast near his home in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City.

Motaz Azaiza, a photojournalist on the ground in Palestine with over 8.7 million followers on Instagram, has had his X/Twitter account shut down this week for “violating rules.” Following a devastating video posted to the journalist’s Instagram account on October 13, showing the ruins and rubble after an IDF bomb destroyed residential buildings, his Instagram account was suspended and not reinstated until days later. His X/Twitter account currently remains suspended.

Meta, parent company of Facebook and Instagram, released a statement last updated on October 18 blatantly denying censorship, insinuating that posts showing the devastation of Palestine and the murder of civilians equates support for terrorism and are therefore not allowed. “[C]ontent containing praise for Hamas, which is designated by Meta as a Dangerous Organization, or violent and graphic content, for example, is not allowed on our platforms,” it says.

Language from the original statement published October 13 places blame for the Israeli attack on Gaza on the October 7 Hamas “terrorist attack.”

“Like many, we were shocked and horrified by the brutal terrorist attacks by Hamas, and our thoughts go out to civilians who are suffering in Israel and Gaza as the violence continues to unfold,” it reads. “Since the terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel on Saturday, and Israel’s response in Gaza, expert teams from across our company have been working around the clock to monitor our platforms, while protecting people’s ability to use our apps to shed light on important developments happening on the ground.”

The massive international outrage over the brutal assault by Israel on Palestine has gone beyond the control of the ruling class and its mainstream media outlets. Photos and videos of the bombings and deaths, and of the protests against it, have been shared widely on social media platforms in spite of the lack of mainstream media reports.

The hashtag “Genocide Joe” has been trending on X/Twitter, following US President Joe Biden’s open embrace of Netanyahu and call for \$105 billion to escalate war efforts in Ukraine and the Middle East, as workers and young people view with horror and disgust content from accounts like Azaiza’s, which show the reality of the situation in Palestine.



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