Israel admits deliberately targeting journalists in strike that killed son of Al Jazeera bureau chief

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The number of journalists killed by Israel in Gaza grew to 109 on Sunday with a targeted drone strike on the car of *Al Jazeera* reporter Hamza al-Dahdouh, killing him alongside fellow journalist Mustafa Thuraya.

Hamza was the eldest son of the *Al Jazeera* Gaza bureau chief, Wael al-Dahdouh, and the fifth member of al-Dahdouh's family to be killed in a series of deliberate and targeted murders by the criminal US-backed Israeli regime.

"Hamza was everything to me, the eldest boy, he was the soul of my soul," Dahdouh told *Al Jazeera* on Sunday. "These are the tears of parting and loss, the tears of humanity."

In a statement published after hours of silence in the face of questions by reporters, the Israeli military confirmed that it deliberately targeted the journalists' vehicle, referring to the murdered men as "suspects."

The statement declared:

> An Israeli military aircraft identified and struck a terrorist operative who was operating an aircraft that posed a threat to troops. We are aware of reports that during the strike, two other suspects who were in the same vehicle as the terrorists were also hit.

The third man in the car was Hazem Rajab, a photojournalist whose responsibilities include operating photographic drones. The group of journalists was in reality targeted for performing their professional obligations in what Israel officially designated a "safe zone" for civilians.

Speaking in Qatar on Sunday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was asked whether the United States condemned the targeting of journalists by Israel.

Blinken refused to condemn either the murder of Hamza or Israel's practice of deliberately killing journalists, instead shedding crocodile tears about what a "tragedy" his death was.

"I am deeply, deeply sorry for the almost unimaginable loss suffered by your colleagues," Blinken said. "I am a parent myself. I can't begin to imagine the horror that he's experienced not once, but twice. This is an unimaginable tragedy."

Blinken is a key enabler and supporter of Israel's policy of massacring journalists. The United States has never condemned the practice and maintains its position that there are no "red lines" for what Israel is allowed to do. The United States has provided Israel with 10,000 tons of military equipment over the past three months, delivered by over 200 cargo planes.

During the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US military repeatedly targeted and killed *Al Jazeera* journalists. In a 2003 diary entry, UK Home Secretary David Blunkett urged UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to attack *Al Jazeera* journalists. Blunkett said that the UK should not "rule out" targeting journalists because "they are attempting to win a propaganda battle on behalf of your enemy."

On October 25, *Axios* reported that Blinken asked the prime minister of Qatar to "turn down the volume on *Al Jazeera*'s coverage because it is full of anti-Israel incitement," and then bragged about it in a meeting.

However the Qatari government responded to Blinken's demand, Israel has been working to "turn

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down the volume on *Al Jazeera*'s coverage" by systematically murdering *Al Jazeera* correspondents and their families in Gaza.

In October, Israel murdered the wife, two children and infant grandson of Wael al-Dahdouh in an airstrike on their home. In December, a drone strike injured Wael and killed his camera operator near Khan Younis.

In a gesture of heroism and resistance, al-Dahdouh continued to work the day after each attack.

In a statement, *Al Jazeera* condemned Sunday's strike:

> The assassination of Mustafa and Hamza, *Al Jazeera* correspondent Wael Al-Dahdoh's son, while they were on their way to carry out their duty in the Gaza Strip reaffirms the need to take immediate necessary legal measures against the occupation forces to ensure that there is no impunity.

The statement continued:

> The assassination of his son Hamza in January 2024 confirms without a doubt the Israeli forces' determination to continue these brutal attacks against journalists and their families, aiming to discourage them from performing their mission, violating the principles of freedom of the press and undermining the right to life.

It concluded:

> We urge the International Criminal Court, governments, human rights organizations, and the United Nations to hold Israel accountable for its heinous crimes and demand an end to the targeting and killing of journalists.

The Committee to Protect Journalists called for an investigation into the killing. Sherif Mansour, Middle East and North Africa program coordinator at the Committee said in a statement:

> The Al Dahdouh family and their journalist colleagues in Gaza are rewriting what it means to be a journalist today with immensely brave and never-before-seen sacrifices.

Agence-France Presse global news director Phil Chetwynd declared, "We vigorously condemn all attacks against journalists doing their jobs and it is essential we have a clear explanation as to what happened."

On Friday, the Euro-Med Monitor reported that 30,676 Palestinians have been killed in Israel Defense Forces attacks since October 7, taking into account both those whose bodies have been identified and those who have been missing for more than two weeks, most buried under the rubble of demolished buildings.

To date, 1.9 million Palestinians have been internally displaced, amounting to 90 percent of the population of Gaza. Many have been forced to flee multiple times, and Israel has destroyed or damaged approximately 70 percent of Gaza's civilian infrastructure.

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