

The US-Israeli war on journalists

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On Sunday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) murdered two *Al Jazeera* reporters, Hamza al-Dahdouh and Mustafa Thuraya, in a targeted airstrike on their vehicle while they were returning from a reporting assignment.

Hamza was the eldest son of *Al Jazeera* Gaza bureau chief Wael al-Dahdouh, whose wife, two other children and infant grandson were murdered in an October IDF airstrike on their home. In December, another targeted drone strike injured Wael and killed his camera operator near the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.

The systematic and deliberate massacre of al-Dahdouh's family and the repeated efforts to kill him are part of a deliberate Israeli policy of murdering journalists. As of Sunday, the number of journalists killed by Israel over the past three months stood at 109, a figure that grew to 111 by Monday with the murder of two more journalists: Abdullah Breis and Mohammad Abu Dayer.

Israel's aim is to prevent the world from learning of the crimes it is inflicting every single day upon the Palestinian people by systematically murdering and intimidating the press. Journalists operating in Gaza have extensively documented Israel's campaign of genocide, which has killed over 30,000 people in just three months, has displaced 90 percent of Gaza's population, and has destroyed 70 percent of its civilian infrastructure.

Israel operates as a criminal regime, functioning outside of international law as a sort of Murder Incorporated. Its bloody crimes are made possible by the arms, funding and political backing provided by the United States and other imperialist powers.

The killing of journalists is accompanied by the deliberate murder of critics of the genocide, including prominently Refaat Alareer, a Palestinian writer, poet, professor and activist, who was killed in a targeted bombing by the Israeli military on December 7,

following weeks of death threats.

Such is the brazenness of Israel's policy of murdering journalists that, after the killing of al-Dahdouh and Thuraya, the IDF released a statement referring to them as "suspects" and saying that their car was targeted because photojournalist Hazem Rajab was a "terrorist operative."

On the day of Hamza's murder, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was asked whether the Biden administration condemns Israel's policy of deliberately targeting journalists.

Blinken refused to condemn the policy, and instead asserted he was "sorry" for the killing. Blinken declared, "I am deeply, deeply sorry for the almost unimaginable loss suffered by your colleague Wael al-Dahdouh. 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."

No, the murder of Hamza and the other members of Wael al-Dahdouh's family is not only an immense personal "tragedy," it is the outcome of a cold-blooded criminal slaughter for which Blinken and the Biden administration bear full responsibility. The Biden administration has publicly asserted that there are no "red lines" for the crimes that Israel will be allowed to commit. In fact, the United States, which has extensively coordinated airstrike targets with Israel, is likely to have directly collaborated with Israel in selecting which journalists would be murdered.

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."

Israel responded to these comments by systematically murdering *Al Jazeera* correspondents and their families in Gaza. Just three days after *Axios* reported Blinken's statement, on October 28, Israel carried out the strike on al-Dahdouh's home that killed his wife, two

children and infant grandson.

The question immediately arises: Where does Washington's collaboration in Israel's murder of journalists lead? If the United States declares that there are "no red lines" for Israel's crimes, will the US allow the Israeli regime to kill its political opponents and critical journalists on its own territory? And if the US endorses these actions by Israel, what is to prevent the US government and military from targeting their own political opponents?

Throughout the past 50 years, actions by the state of Israel have set a precedent for US policy. The most significant example is the doctrine of "targeted killings," or state-organized assassinations.

In November 2000, Israel became the first state in the world to openly acknowledge a policy of targeted killing. Within two years, the policy was adopted by the United States, which conducted its first known drone strike outside a war zone in Yemen in 2002. Within 10 years, the United States had used the doctrine of "targeted killing" to kill one of its own citizens.

In other words, what Israel is doing today, its imperialist backers will do in the near future.

The governments of the United States and Western Europe have already carried out sweeping attacks on democratic rights, banning anti-genocide protests and launching campaigns to purge opponents of the genocide from college campuses. In October, the US Senate passed a resolution accusing participants in mass demonstrations against the Gaza genocide of "expressing solidarity with terrorists."

By this logic, could not participants in the anti-genocide protests be subjected to the same treatment as journalists in Gaza?

The Gaza genocide marks a new stage in the criminality of the United States and other world imperialist governments, which are embracing genocide and mass murder as state policy. These crimes will then set a further precedent for even more sweeping attacks on the social and democratic rights of the working class.

A particularly despicable role is being played in this process by the corporate media, which has, with few exceptions, blacked out both the genocidal crimes being committed in the US-Israeli war on the people of Gaza and the unprecedented protests around the globe against them. In their bid to normalize these crimes, the

major news corporations have likewise covered up the slaughter of journalists, including in a number of cases correspondents who have provided them with reporting, photographs and video.

The endorsement of Israel's genocide and mass murder by the world's imperialist governments must serve as a warning. The line between "democratic" and "fascist" capitalist governments is being obliterated. Every crime, from genocide to mass murder and political repression, is being materially supported and legitimized by the criminal oligarchies that hold power.

For this reason, the struggle against Israel's genocide in Gaza must take the form of a political struggle by the working class against the governments that are enabling it, and which will seek to use the genocide to set a precedent for even greater crimes against working people all over the world.



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