

Hundreds of journalists sign letter condemning Israel for targeting and killing Palestinian reporters

Kevin Reed
1 November 2024

Hundreds of journalists from all over the world have signed an online petition condemning the Israeli government for deliberately killing Palestinian journalists in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon over the past year.

As of this writing 790 individuals—writers, reporters, editors, producers, photographers and photojournalists, artists, videographers, educators and students—have signed the online petition with the headline, “Israel Must Stop Killing Journalists.”

The petition states, in part:

Despite repeated condemnation by internationally-recognized human rights and media organizations, Israel has continued to kill and maim Palestinian journalists in Gaza. It has also escalated attacks against journalists in Lebanon.

The targeting of journalists is an attack on press freedom and a violation of international law.

This must stop.

Among the journalists endorsing the letter are Sakhr Al-Makhadhi, executive producer at AJ+, Al Jazeera; Anne Barnard, freelancer and former *New York Times* Beirut Bureau Chief; Samaa Khullar, investigative journalist at the *Nation*; and Khalil AlHajal, deputy opinion editor at the *Detroit Free Press*.

Palestinian journalists in Gaza have served as the world’s eyes and ears, documenting Israeli attacks such as the deliberate killing of civilians carrying white flags

and torture of Palestinians in detention. These journalists have received death threats, been maimed or killed by Israeli forces—even while not on assignment. Their families have also been killed by Israeli forces.

The petition circulators point out that the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has reported that “Israeli attacks have killed at least 123 Palestinian journalists and media workers,” which makes it the deadliest period for journalists since the organization began collecting data in 1992. The Government Media Office in Gaza puts the death toll of Palestinian journalists at 182 since October 2023.

Most recently, an airstrike in Lebanon on October 25 killed three journalists as they slept in a guest house in an area that has been used by media as a base for covering the war. A report by the Associated Press said:

The 3 a.m. airstrike turned the site—a series of chalets nestled among trees that had been rented by various media outlets covering the war—into rubble. Cars marked “PRESS” were overturned and covered in dust and debris, and at least one satellite dish for live broadcasting was totally destroyed.

The Israeli army did not issue a warning prior to the strike, which it said targeted Hezbollah militant infrastructure. The military later said the strike was being reviewed.

Mohammad Farhat, a reporter for Lebanon’s Al Jadeed TV in the south, said everyone rushed out in their sleeping clothes. “The first question we asked each other: ‘Are you alive?’”

The three journalists killed in the air strike were camera operator Ghassan Najjar and broadcast technician Mohammed Rida of the Beirut-based pan-Arab Al-Mayadeen TV, and camera operator Wissam Qassim, who worked for Al-Manar TV of Lebanon's Hezbollah group.

While the Israeli military maintained that the buildings were targeted because they were a base of Hezbollah operations, human rights groups reported that the journalists were deliberately targeted.

The CPJ's organizational director, Carlos Martinez de la Serna, said the organization was "deeply outraged by yet another deadly Israeli airstrike on journalists, this time hitting a compound hosting 18 members of the press in south Lebanon."

In another case, 19-year-old journalist Hassan Hamad was killed by an Israeli artillery shell at his home in Jabaliya on October 6 after he received death threats. Hamad received threatening phone calls and text messages via WhatsApp from an Israeli officer ordering him to stop filming evidence of the genocide. Hamad, 19, had been sharing video reports on the Israeli incursion into the Jabalia refugee camp when he was killed.

One threatening text message received by Hassan, shared on X by human rights activist and journalist Maha Hussaini, said, "Listen, if you continue spreading lies about Israel, we'll come for you next and turn your family into [...] This is your last warning."

One of the demands on the petition is that Israel allow injured journalists in Gaza to be immediately evacuated so they can receive urgently needed medical attention.

The petition states:

As the Israeli military escalated its attacks on central and northern Gaza in October 2024, they killed two Palestinian journalists and seriously injured three others. On Oct. 7, Al Jazeera cameraman Ali Al-Attar was severely injured due to shrapnel from an airstrike while he was covering the conditions of displaced Palestinians. Al-Attar is now in critical condition, with medical scans showing severe bleeding and shrapnel lodged in his brain. Two days later, Israeli forces shot Al Jazeera cameraman Fadi Al-Wahidi in the neck while

he was reporting. Doctors say his injury has left him paralyzed for life and he is now in a coma.

A report in *Al Jazeera* said al-Wahidi was shot by an Israeli sniper in the Gaza Strip and has not been allowed by Israel to leave the enclave for urgent medical treatment. The Palestinian journalist was shot as he reported on the Israeli ground invasion of the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, and he was wearing gear that clearly identified him as a member of the press.

Despite appeals from three media freedom organizations as well as medical officials, the Israeli government has not allowed al-Wahidi and Ali al-Attar to leave Gaza for "lifesaving medical treatment."

Al Jazeera issued a statement calling on the international community "to take immediate action to ensure the safety of journalists and civilians in Gaza and hold the Israeli Occupation Forces accountable for their repeated crimes against journalists."

The CPJ issued an appeal to the governments of the US, France and Germany as well as the United Nations seeking assistance to have al-Wahidi and al-Attar transferred out of Gaza. However, a CPJ statement says, "Despite these endeavors, the possibility of evacuating these journalists is currently blocked due to a lack of Israeli authorization for their safe passage."

The petition campaign states that the targeting of journalists "is an attack on press freedom and a violation of international law." A United Nations Security Council resolution adopted in May 2015 states that the Council "[c]ondemns all violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict and calls upon all parties to armed conflict to bring an end to such practices."



To contact the WWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wws.org/contact