

INDEPENDENT
COMMISSION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
I C H R

October 10, 2023

Ms. Irene Khan
UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Urgent Appeal: Protect Palestinian Journalists and Media Freedom in Gaza

Dear Ms. Khan,

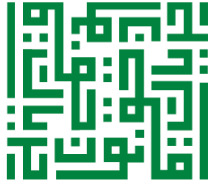
I am writing on behalf of Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) to urgently address a deeply troubling issue. We commend your unwavering commitment to upholding the fundamental right to freedom of opinion and expression worldwide.

We are deeply concerned about the deliberate targeting of journalists and the erosion of press freedoms by the Israeli occupation forces during their ongoing and escalating aggression in Gaza since October 7, 2023. These actions flagrantly violate international human rights and humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Israeli state has persistently launched retaliatory missile attacks on densely populated areas in Gaza, recklessly endangering innocent civilians and demolishing their homes without prior warning. Palestinian journalists and media personnel, playing a crucial role in reporting news and exposing Israeli violations, have become systematic targets during this aggression.

Tragically, this has resulted in the loss of lives of seven journalists and media personnel: Mohammed Al-Salhi, Ibrahim Lafi, Abdel-Nasser Shamlakh, Saeed Al-Taweel, Mohammed Suboh, Hisham Al-Nawajha, and Haitham Abdel-Wahed, most of whom were killed while covering the aggression. Additionally, at least ten journalists have suffered injuries, a blatant violation of international agreements protecting journalists as civilians.

Journalist Nidal Al-Wahidi went missing near the Beit Hanoun checkpoint in northern Gaza during his coverage of the initial days of the aggression. The homes of journalists, like Rami Al-Sharafi and Basel Khairuddin, have been directly targeted and demolished. Dozens of other journalists' homes suffered partial damage. Residential towers housing numerous media institutions, such as Palestine and Watan Towers, have been partially or completely destroyed, affecting over 40 media outlets, including Al-Ayyam newspaper, Shehab Agency, Gaza FM Radio, Maan Agency, Fadl Shanaa Foundation, and more.



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This relentless assault on journalists is part of Israel's deliberate policy to silence voices, suppress information, and target journalists actively reporting on the field—a stark contradiction to international conventions safeguarding journalistic freedom and journalists during armed conflicts.

As the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression, we urgently implore you to take prompt action within your mandate. Please exert substantial pressure on the Israeli government to cease its targeting of journalists immediately and put an end to ongoing crimes against them and media institutions in Gaza. This includes ensuring comprehensive protection for journalists, preventing future atrocities, launching investigations into these grave violations, holding perpetrators accountable through due legal processes, and pursuing efforts in the International Criminal Court to investigate cases such as journalist Shireen Abu Aqla and all those who lost their lives due to Israeli actions.

It is essential to halt the alarming and systematic pattern of targeting Palestinian journalists and media institutions by the Israeli occupation.

Sincerely,

Issam Aruri
Commissioner General