

SYSTEMATIC TARGETING OF PALESTINIAN JOURNALISTS BY ISRAELI FORCES 2000-2023

Overview

- Journalists operating in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) are **systematically and deliberately subjected to targeted attacks** by Israeli forces, a practice which may amount to a **war crime** under international law.
- On behalf of targeted journalists and their families, the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP), alongside the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) **submitted two communications to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2022** in relation to attacks against Palestinian journalists and media infrastructure, which demonstrate the systematic targeting of Palestinian journalists by Israeli forces.
- MPs should call on the UK Government to **uphold Britain's commitment to freedom of expression** and adherence to **international law** with regards to protections for journalists by, among other means, calling on the ICC Prosecutor to **exercise his jurisdiction and authority to pursue investigations** relating to the systematic targeting of journalists and media infrastructure in the OPT.

Special legal protections for journalists under international law

International law contains a number of specific obligations that ensure the protection and promote the safety of journalists.

The right to freedom of expression is protected under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

According to international humanitarian law (IHL), the intentional targeting of civilians constitutes a war crime. The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1738 in 2006 and Resolution 2222 in 2015,¹ which stipulate that journalists are protected as civilians within armed conflicts.

Consequently, **any targeted attack against a journalist** by a party to an armed conflict **constitutes a war crime**, as has been repeatedly upheld and reaffirmed by the Security Council in resolutions regarding the protection of journalists in armed conflicts.

Statistics on attacks

According to the PJS and the IFJ at least 46 journalists have been killed by Israeli Forces from 2000 to mid-2022.² In the first half of 2022 alone, the PJS documented **479 violations** against Palestinian journalists.³ The detention of journalists and prevention of coverage accounted for 175 of these cases. The PJS also documented 80 cases of physical assault by the Israeli occupation forces and 65 cases of attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers.

Systematic targeting

Israeli forces' attacks against journalists in the OPT are characterised by their widespread and systematic nature. Despite the protection of journalists as civilians under international humanitarian law, repeated and ongoing concern has been raised about states targeting journalists in conflict zones.

Journalists play an essential role in armed conflict situations documenting the conflict and the crimes committed by all sides and playing a fundamental role in holding government officials accountable for violations

¹ UNSC. (2006) UNSC 5613th meeting. [Resolution 1738. S/RES/1738.](#); UNSC (2015) UNSC 7450th meeting. [Resolution 2222. S/RES/1738.](#)

² International Federation of Journalists. (26th April 2022) [Palestine: ICC case filed over systematic targeting of Palestinian journalists.](#)

³ Palestinian Journalist Syndicate. (2022) [479 violations and crimes by Israeli occupation against Palestinian journalists in the first half of 2022 "and the coverage continues!"](#)

of the laws of war. For this reason, the deliberate and systematic targeting of journalists and media organisations, to prevent and/or undermine their reporting on events and deter others from reporting, should be seen as part of efforts to censor journalists, and enable armed forces to act with impunity.

Israel has consistently **failed to investigate the targeting and use of lethal force** against journalists documenting demonstrations and protest in the OPT.

The ICC's jurisdiction

On 5 February 2021, the ICC ruled that its criminal jurisdiction extended to 'the Situation in Palestine,' and that its territorial scope covered allegations that occurred in 'Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem'.⁴ This presents **an unprecedented opportunity for the accountability** of Israel's alleged policy of targeting journalists and could lead to a formal investigation by the ICC Prosecutor and potential prosecutions.

April 2022 ICC Submission

In April 2022, a communication detailing the systematic targeting of Palestinian journalists was submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on behalf of four named victims – Ahmed Abu Hussein, Yaser Murtaja, Muath Amareh and Nedal Eshtayeh – **who were killed or maimed by Israeli snipers** all whilst wearing clearly marked **PRESS vests**. Ahmed and Yaser were killed aged 24 and 30 respectively and Muath and Nedal were both shot in the eye.

The communication also details the **targeting of media infrastructure** including the Al-Sousi, Al-Shorouk, and Al-Jalaa Towers in Gaza City in May 2021. The legal challenge was submitted alongside the IFJ and the PJS and is being carried forward by leading human rights lawyers from Bindmans LLP and Doughty Street Chambers.

September 2022 ICC Submission

In September 2022, a further communication was submitted to the International Criminal Court on behalf of journalists Ali Sadiq Saleem Samoudi, Shatha Hanaysha, and the family of Palestinian-American journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh. A long-time TV correspondent for Al Jazeera Arabic, Shireen was **killed while covering Israeli army raids in the city of Jenin**. Ali, who was present when Shireen was killed was also shot in the shoulder. Ali has provided crucial witness testimony.

The submission also addresses the aftermath of the killing of Shireen, including **a misinformation campaign** by the Israeli authorities and an attack on Shireen's funeral procession by members of the **Israeli security services, who sought to intimidate and disrupt the funeral procession**.

September 2023 Human Rights Council Session

In September 2023, ICJP sent a delegation to Geneva to speak at the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council at the Palais des Nations. The parallel event session was held to mark one year since the September 2022 ICC submission. It was entitled "Justice for Shireen Abu Akleh: Protection of Journalists' rights."

The event was chaired by Jim Boumelha, Treasurer of IFJ. He was joined by Ilora Choudhury and Jonathan Purcell from ICJP, as well as Nasser Abu, Vice President of IFJ. The hybrid panel also featured remote speakers, including Tatyana Eatwell, a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers who worked on the ICC case, and Ali Samoudi, a fellow journalist who was shot at the same time as Shireen Abu Akleh.

Attendees included representatives from over thirty countries, including the USA, UK, China, Palestine, Qatar, Norway, Malaysia, Australia, Ireland and the European Union.

⁴ International Criminal Court. (2023) [Situation in the State of Palestine](#). ICC-01/18.