

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/palestine-journalists-lives-on-the-line-in-22-07-2014,46677.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Israel

Media under fire

## Journalists' lives on the line in Gaza conflict

22 July 2014

Reporters Without Borders is shocked and saddened by the death of the 26-year-old Palestinian news cameraman **Khaled Hamad**, fatally wounded two days ago as he was preparing a report on attacks by Israeli troops on Palestinian paramedics. Other media workers were wounded in earlier Israeli raids on the offices of news organizations.

*"Reporters Without Borders deplores the Israeli army's bombardment of Palestinian civilians, including journalists,"* said Virginie Dangles, Reporters Without Borders assistant research director. *"We note that, under UN Security Council resolution 1738 of 2006 and the Geneva Conventions, all parties to the conflict have a duty to guarantee the safety of journalists."*

Since the start of Israel's Operation Protective Edge in the the Gaza Strip, 583 Palestinians have been killed, most of them civilians. On the Israeli side, 27 soldiers have died. Israeli [bombardment two days ago of the Shuja'iyah neighbourhood](#) just outside Gaza City alone caused 140 Palestinian deaths.

The offices of the Qatar-based TV station *Al-Jazeera*, on the 11th floor of the Al-Jala' Tower, were subjected to warning shots from Israeli forces today, a day after Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman expressed the desire to stop *Al-Jazeera* operating from Israel, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Lieberman openly criticized the funding of the station by Qatar, which he described as the "[economic backbone](#)" of terrorist organizations in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Two days ago, **Khaled Hamad**, a cameraman for the *Continue TV* production company, was in Shijaiyah reporting on [violence carried out on 10 July by Israeli troops](#) against Palestinian paramedics assisting the injured.

Wearing a helmet and a bullet-proof vest with the word "press", he was standing near an ambulance when it was hit by a tank shell and set on fire. Hamad was badly injured but could not be evacuated and died of his wounds several hours later.

On 9 July, **Hamdi Shehab**, a driver for the *Media 24 news agency*, was [killed in an Israeli air raid](#) while he was on his way back to his firm's office after the Ramadan iftar, the evening fast-breaking meal. He was driving a car marked "TV".

The day before yesterday, the cameraman **Kareem al-Tartouri**, who worked for *Medi 1 TV* was [injured in an Israeli air raid](#) as he was trying to leave the building containing the offices of the TV station, which had been targeted in an attack. A second missile hit the floor where the station was located, injuring al-Tartouri who was taken to hospital.

Four days ago, **Muhammad Shabat**, a cameraman for the *Watania Media Agency*, was [injured in the arm](#) in a air strike on the Al-Jawhara tower, in which the *Watania* office is located. The offices of other news organizations in the building were also damaged.

On July 16, Israeli forces targeted the Daoud building in the al-Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City, which also houses several news organizations. Two journalists from the *Sawt Al-Wattan* radio station, **Ahmad al-Ajala** and **Tariq Hamdieh**, were [injured](#) and taken to hospital. The station was [unable to continue broadcasting](#) as a result of the damage.

## A media war

The Israeli military offensive in Gaza has set off a new information (and disinformation) war, especially on social media. Some news organizations and journalists have openly taken sides on Israel's use of force. Others have been accused of bias because of their actual or presumed point of view.

On 17 July, the US network *NBC* decided to recall its Egyptian-American correspondent **Ayman Mohyeldin** from Gaza, replacing him with his colleague Richard Engel. Officially, the network

said this was because of "security concerns" but gave no further details.

Mohyeldin, an experienced journalist who had previously worked for *CNN* and *Al-Jazeera*, had witnessed at first-hand [Israeli strikes that killed four Palestinian boys](#) on a Gaza beach on 16 July.

His account of the deaths of the children, considered by some to be pro-Palestinian, was widely criticized. He was also accused of [being too emotive](#) about the incident by publishing photos of the victims' families on Twitter and Instagram. On 2 July, he posted a Tweet accusing the Israeli army of deliberately firing on journalists.

After a barrage of [criticism on social media](#) accusing it of censorship, the network's management finally decided to [send Mohyeldin back](#) to Gaza on 18 July.

The US network *CNN* decided to [withdraw its correspondent Diana Magnay after she posted a Tweet](#) on 17 July after she reported live from the hill above the Israeli town of Sderot, where Israelis were cheering a rocket strike on Gaza. In her Tweet, she wrote: "*Israelis on hill above Sderot cheer as bombs land on Gaza; threaten to 'destroy our car if I say a word wrong'. Scum.*" After she posted the Tweet, Magnay was transferred to Moscow.

In an [interview](#) with the *Huffington Post*, a *CNN* spokeswoman said the journalist was threatened by the Israelis before and during the live shot and reacted angrily on Twitter.

Finally, the Israeli government has told foreign journalists covering the offensive that it is not responsible for their safety.

Some foreign journalists say they have received a message from the authorities warning them that they could be used as human shields by Hamas, as [reported](#) by *Huffington Post* Middle East correspondent **Sophia Jones**.

In breach of international law, journalists, who must register with the Government Press Office, are also [made to sign a waiver](#) declaring that they are fully aware of the dangers to which they are exposed. The document goes on: "*I am aware that neither the MOD nor the IDF shall be bear any liability whatsoever for damage resulting from military operations..... Furthermore I hereby undertake that no suit, claim or demand of any kind shall be filed for damage or injury...*"

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