Reporters Without Borders

Middle East/North Africa - Palestine

Freed provisionally

After conditional release, photographer could be detained again

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An Israeli military court is due to rule tomorrow on the case of **Mohamed Al-Azza**, a Palestinian photographer who was arrested by Israeli soldiers in Aida refugee camp, near Bethlehem, on 30 June and was held arbitrarily in deplorable conditions until freed on bail of 1,500 shekels (317 euros) on 11 July.

Reporters Without Borders, which hailed Al-Azza's conditional release, now calls on the Israeli authorities to dismiss all the charges against him.

Al-Azza has described his ordeal to Reporters Without Borders:

"Israeli soldiers burst into my home at around 1 a.m., and hit members of my family who objected to this intrusion. When they hit me outside our home, I asked them to avoid my face because my eye injury was still giving me trouble, but they kept on beating me.

"They took me to a military camp near Aida where they questioned me for several hours. Then they transferred me to Assioun detention centre [near Bethlehem], where I spent two days. As I was seriously injured in several parts of my body, I had to be hospitalized for three days. I spent the rest of my detention in Oufar prison."

When he was brought before a military court, the Israeli Defence Forces accused him of participating in "violent and illegal" activities because, as a journalist, he has covered demonstrations in support of detainees on hunger strike and protests against the November 2012 offensive in Gaza.

As he was always at the demonstrations when they began, the Israelis are accusing of being a full participant rather then just covering them.

Reporters Without Borders insists that the Israeli authorities end their abusive treatment of Palestinian journalists who are just doing their duty to cover what takes place.

When Palestinian journalists demonstrated for the right of freedom of movement at the Kalandia military checkpoint on 17 July, Israeli soldiers blocked all movement through the checkpoint and fired teargas and rubber bullets, injuring six people.