Reporters Without Borders

Middle East/North Africa - Israel

Violence escalating against journalists
Israeli army deliberately targeting news professionals
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Continuing confrontations in the Palestinian Territories and many cities in Israel are marked by Israeli authorities' flouting of basic rights, including freedom of information

Since three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped on 12 June, and their bodies discovered 18 days later, the situation has deteriorated to dangerous levels. Hate messages demanding vengeance are flooding the web.

Then, the body of a young Palestinian who had been burned alive was found in East Jerusalem.

Israeli security forces have been combing the West Bank, arresting more than 600 Palestinians on grounds of suspected of links to Hamas. Human rights violations are taking place daily and information freedom is being disregarded.

Reporters Without Borders condemns these attacks on information freedom. Many journalists have been targeted by the Israeli army. Others have been arrested arbitrarily. And security forces have been conducting raids on media offices. RWB urges the Israeli military to allow news professionals, whether Palestinian or foreign, to carry out their work freely and safely.

In a report, "Palestinian Journalists Caught Between Three Sides", RWB highlighted the double vice gripping information freedom in the Territories. The strongest pressure comes from Israel and its army, which doesn't hesitate to arrest, even to kill, news professionals.

Recent events

On 5 July, a team from the *Palestine Today TV* station came under Israeli army fire while broadcasting live from the scene of confrontations in Al-Tur neighborhood in East Jerusalem. Journalist **Ahmed Al-Budeiri** was wounded in the shoulder and stomach. His cameraman, **Ahmed Jaber** was hit in the eye. Technician **Walid Matar**, suffered a head wound. Meanwhile, **Ahmed Al-Khatib**, a correspondent for the Hamas station, *Al-Aqsa TV* was arrested in Tulkarem.

A few days earlier, on 2 July, a large number of journalists covering demonstrations at Shuafat, following the murder of a young Palestinian were wounded by fire from Israeli security forces.

Tali Mayer, a photographer for the *Activestills site* and *Walla News!* was seriously wounded by a sponge-tipped bullet to the face. Her colleague, **Oren Ziv**, was hit in the arm.

Operation "Brother's Keeper" and its consequences for Palestinian media [1]

On 22 June, Israeli security forces raided the offices of two printing companies in the city of Ramallah, Turbo Computers and Software Co. Ltd and Jeel Publishing Co. Ltd., which publish, respectively, the Palestinian cultural magazine *This Week in Palestine* and the monthly *Filistin Ashabab*. Seven computers were seized, dealing a serious blow to the printing of the two magazines.

"*During our 28-year history, we have had no affiliation with any political faction,*" Turbo Computers CEO Sani Paul Meo said in a press release. "*This Week in Palestine is a 15-year-old nonpolitical cultural publication.*" He added, "*We reserve the right to claim reparation for damages incurred and to consider legal action, both locally and internationally.*"

An Israeli military spokesman said that "*propaganda and incitement materials linked to Hamas were being printed at this place.*"

At dawn on 22 June, the Israeli army searched the Bethlehem home of **Sahib Al-Assa** and his brother, **Fadi**. Both are correspondents for radio *Bethlehem 2000*. Sahib Al-Assa was taken to a military outpost at Beit Sahour and interrogated about his journalistic activities. He was released several hours later. His ID card and mobile phone, however, were confiscated.

On the same day, Israeli troops descended on the offices of *Palmedia* in Ramallah. Digital files going back to the company's founding in 2006 were confiscated, and professional equipment was destroyed. Offices rented by *Russia Today* were also affected. According to *Russia Today*, quoting an Israeli military spokesman, *Palmedia* was targeted "*because it provides services to* Al-Aqsa TV, *which has propagandist and inflammatory content*."

Palmedia management said that members of its staff, including photographer **Amar Abideen**, were subjected to a series of pressures in covering Operation "Brother's Keeper" in Hebron. The company's offices in East Jerusalem had been previously searched, in early June.

On 18 June, the Israeli army searched the offices of the Transmedia company in Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron, confiscating all equipment – worth about $1 million dollars. The Israeli authorities then ordered the company shut down, on the grounds that Transmedia did TV production work for *Al-Aqsa TV*.

On the 16 June, Israeli forces in Ramallah arrested **Aziz Kayed**, the chief executive of *Al-Aqsa TV*. According to the Union of Palestinian Radio and Television, Kayed was placed in "administrative detention" to last for six months.

The same day, **Yahia Habayeb**, correspondent for Palestinian radio station *Ajiyal*, was violently arrested by Israeli troops in Hebron, in the southern West Bank. His mobile phones and recording equipment were deliberately destroyed. The journalist was freed five hours later.

On 17 June, **Abderrahman Younes**, a photographer for the *Al-Quds.com site* was prevented from covering a traffic jam caused by the Israeli army at what is known as the "container checkpoint" in north Bethlehem. Israeli troops confiscated his camera and threatened him with imprisonment in case of a repeat offence.

[1] Sources: Union of Palestinian Radio and Television; Palestinian Center for Development & Media Freedom (MADA), an NGO specializing in defending the rights of Palestinian media.

You can download those documents on our website :
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