

Reporters Without Borders

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Middle East/North Africa - Palestine

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Palestinian news agency allowed to reopen Gaza City bureau

18 November 2013

Reporters Without Borders welcomes the Hamas government's decision to let the Bethlehem-based *Ma'an News Agency* reopen its Gaza City bureau. The government closed it in July after it quoted Israeli sources as saying Hamas was providing refuge to Muslim Brotherhood officials who had fled Egypt.

"This decision is important for freedom of information in the Gaza Strip even if it just constitutes a return to normal," Reporters Without Borders said. "It is positive, but it only rescinds a closure order that was arbitrary and unacceptable."

Reporters Without Borders regrets that no decision has so far been taken on the reopening of the Saudi-owned *Al-Arabiya TV's* Gaza City bureau, which was closed at the same time.

"Palestinian journalists must be able to cover sensitive subjects without being threatened or pressured by the authorities, political parties or armed groups," Reporters Without Borders added.

The *Ma'an News Agency* bureau's reopening was announced on 16 November after a meeting between the Gaza Strip's prime minister, Ismael Haniyeh, and the representatives of various Palestinian factions, which did not, however, include Fatah. *Ma'an News Agency* general director Raed Othman [welcomed the decision](#) and said the bureau would resume operating as soon as its staff were allowed back into their offices.

When Gaza Strip prosecutor-general Ismail Jaber [closed](#) the *Ma'an News Agency* and *Al-Arabiya TV* bureaux on 25 July, he accused them of "fabricating news and disseminating false rumours and baseless reports that threaten civil peace and undermine the Palestinian people's resistance."

30/07/2013

Hamas closes Ma'an News and Al-Arabiya TV bureaux in Gaza Strip

Reporters Without Borders calls for the immediate reopening of the *Ma'an News* and *Al-Arabiya TV* bureaux in Gaza City, which the Hamas government closed on 25 July after they reported that Hamas was [sheltering Muslim Brotherhood](#) officials who had fled Egypt.

"Closing news bureaux for covering matters of public interest, even when they are sensitive, constitutes a gross violation of freedom of information, which is already endangered in the Gaza Strip by [the Hamas government's ban](#) on any cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli media," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Palestinian media personnel must be allowed to express themselves freely, without being subjected to pressure from government officials or political parties," the media freedom organization added.

Emad Eid, the *Ma'an News* bureau chief in Gaza City, was questioned by Hamas officials for several hours on 30 July. At the end of the session, the authorities [seized the keys to the bureau's offices](#).

Ma'an News director-general **Raed Othman** told Reporters Without Borders that this was [not](#)

[the first time](#) that pressure had been put on the agency in the Gaza Strip.

He said the Hamas authorities had refrained from publishing the official closure order because they were unable to demonstrate that the agency had published false information. He added that the main reason for the bureau's closure was the agency's use of the sources of an Israeli new media, *Mena News Agency*.

Gaza Strip prosecutor-general Ismail Jaber told journalists on 25 July that *Ma'an News* and *Al-Arabiya TV* were being closed down for the sake of public order. He accused them of "fabricating news and disseminating false rumours and baseless reports that threaten civil peace and undermine the Palestinian people's resistance."
