Reporters Without Borders

Middle East/North Africa - Palestine

Media closed

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

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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."