



Israeli Forces Elicit Widespread Condemnation and Outrage Over the Heinous Killing of Palestinian Al Jazeera Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

This week, Israeli forces have drawn global condemnation and outrage following the heinous killing of Palestinian Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. The reputable journalist was fatally shot while reporting on an Israeli military raid in the Palestinian city of Jenin, despite wearing a clearly-marked press vest. The killing has understandably garnered calls for a thorough investigation and widespread criticism from an array of voices including rights groups, government officials, and international organizations. Israeli human rights group B'Tselem provided video verification refuting the army's reprehensible initial claims that the journalist was killed by stray bullets fired by Palestinian fighters, as opposed to an Israeli sniper. Social justice activists also highlighted how Israeli forces have a deplorable track record of using lethal force and systematically targeting journalists with a lack of accountability for their actions.

A second journalist at the scene of the crime, Ali al-Samoudi, was also shot during the incident. He is now in stable condition. In his description of what transpired, he stated that "We were going to film the Israeli army operation and suddenly they shot us without asking us to leave or stop filming. The first bullet hit me and the second hit Shireen...there was no Palestinian military resistance at all at the scene." Another journalist who was present, Shatha Hanaysha, confirmed the account. She believes that the group of journalists had been directly targeted for trying to report on the abusive raid. Shireen Abu Akleh was a highly-respected journalist, and has been described as a voice for Palestinians. She was one of the first field correspondents for Al Jazeera when she joined the network in 1997, and was one of the most recognizable figures covering stories in Palestine.

This is far from the first time that Israeli forces have targeted news organizations and journalists. Last year, when the Israeli military launched their assault on the besieged Gaza Strip, they bombed a building that was housing both Al Jazeera and Associated Press offices. Israel has drawn further outrage for continuously denying that the shooting was intentional. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) claim that Abu Akleh was standing near a group of armed Palestinians, which has been undeniably debunked by independent investigators and other journalists who were with her when she was shot and killed. Palestinian coroners are currently examining her body and the bullet to verify the findings of the impartial analysts.

A lack of accountability for the IDF has been evident, not just in this case, but in multiple other cases where they have killed clearly unarmed civilians. This atrocious behavior needs to be condemned in the highest manner internationally and across-the-board. The condemnation also needs to be followed by concrete actions to punish those accountable and to work to prevent the IDF from continuing to murder unarmed Palestinians. Currently, Israeli forces act with impunity, having the ability to do as they please with no repercussions, all under the guise of "maintaining order." This is not a justification for blatant murder. It is also extremely troubling that Shireen Abu Akleh and the group of journalists that she was with seem to be deliberately targeted while reporting on the abusive actions of the IDF. This behavior violates international human rights laws, and will likely continue if the IDF is not held accountable for its disgraceful actions.