

Associated Press condemns targetting media offices in Gaza

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AP staffers and other tenants safely evacuated the building after the Israeli military telephoned a warning that the strike was imminent

Gaza City, May 16 (RHC)-- An Israeli airstrike Saturday leveled a high-rise building after the military ordered occupants to evacuate. Inside were the offices of several media outlets -- including The Associated Press and Al-Jazeera -- as well as residential apartments.

An AP statement said all employees and freelancers safely evacuated the building. Associated Press President and CEO Gary Pruitt said the company is looking to the Israeli government for answers. "We are shocked and horrified that the Israeli military would target and destroy the building housing AP's bureau and other news organizations in Gaza," he said. "They have long known the location of our bureau and knew journalists were there."

"We narrowly avoided a terrible loss of life. A dozen AP journalists and freelancers were inside the building and thankfully we were able to evacuate them in time."

Following the attack, the Israel Defense Forces released a statement saying the building was attacked because it was used by Hamas intelligence offices. IDF provided advanced warning to the building's civilian occupants before fighter jets attacked, providing "sufficient time" to evacuate, it said.

One journalist said that he personally spoke with Israeli military officials and pleaded for an additional ten minutes to get his camera and other personal materials out of the building. But the Israeli military refused and warned that he had 30 seconds to get out or be killed.

Eyewitnesses said that drone strikes hit the building, followed by three more powerful strikes from U.S.-built F-16 fighter jets. The building completely collapsed, destroying valuable equipment and files from a number of news agencies.

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