

U.S. calls on Israel to investigate Sireen Abu Akleh's killing

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Washington, May 30 (RHC)-- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid that “investigations” must be completed into the death of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, the State Department said.

In a statement describing talks with the Israeli foreign minister, the State Department said Blinken “underscored the importance of concluding the investigations into the death” of Abu Akleh, who held United States citizenship.

The veteran reporter was killed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank earlier this month. It was not clear what investigations Blinken was referring to, but previously the State Department has said that it would trust Israel to conduct a probe into the veteran reporter’s killing in the Palestinian city of Jenin.

In a series of tweets on Friday, Lapid said he had promised Blinken that Israel would “share the results of [its] investigation” into Abu Akleh’s killing “with the United States as is standard practice between our countries.”

The Israeli military said last week that it will not open a criminal inquiry into the fatal shooting of Abu Akleh. But later, Israeli media outlets cited the Israeli army’s top lawyer as saying that the military is “making every effort” to investigate the incident.

The Biden administration has been under pressure to launch a U.S.-led, independent probe into what happened, including from dozens of Democratic members of Congress who are demanding an FBI investigation.

But while Washington has condemned Abu Akleh’s killing, State Department spokesman Ned Price has said that Israel has the “wherewithal and the capabilities to conduct a thorough, comprehensive investigation.”

Blinken’s call with Lapid on Friday comes a day after the Palestinian Authority said the results of its own investigation into the veteran journalist’s killing showed Israeli forces deliberately shot and killed her.

Al Jazeera’s Alan Fisher, reporting from Washington on Friday, said “that is why, given that this report was released just more than 24 hours ago, that the Americans are now putting pressure on the Israelis to come up with a speedy inquiry.”

Meanwhile, Al Jazeera Media Network has assigned a legal team to refer the killing to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The network said that it had formed an international coalition that consists of its legal team along with international experts, and is preparing a dossier on the murder of Abu Akleh for submission to the ICC prosecutor.

Earlier this week, Al Jazeera’s Washington, DC bureau chief Abderrahim Foukara also urged the international community to help ensure a “transparent and independent investigation” into Abu Akleh’s killing and an attack by Israeli forces on her funeral.

Israeli police attacked Abu Akleh’s funeral procession in Jerusalem and beat pallbearers carrying her coffin with batons in scenes that spurred further anger and calls for accountability.

“Al Jazeera’s position is crystal clear: Shireen Abu Akleh’s life matters, and so does a transparent and independent investigation of her killing and of the serious violation of her funeral by the Israeli security forces,” Foukara told the UN Security Council during an informal session.

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