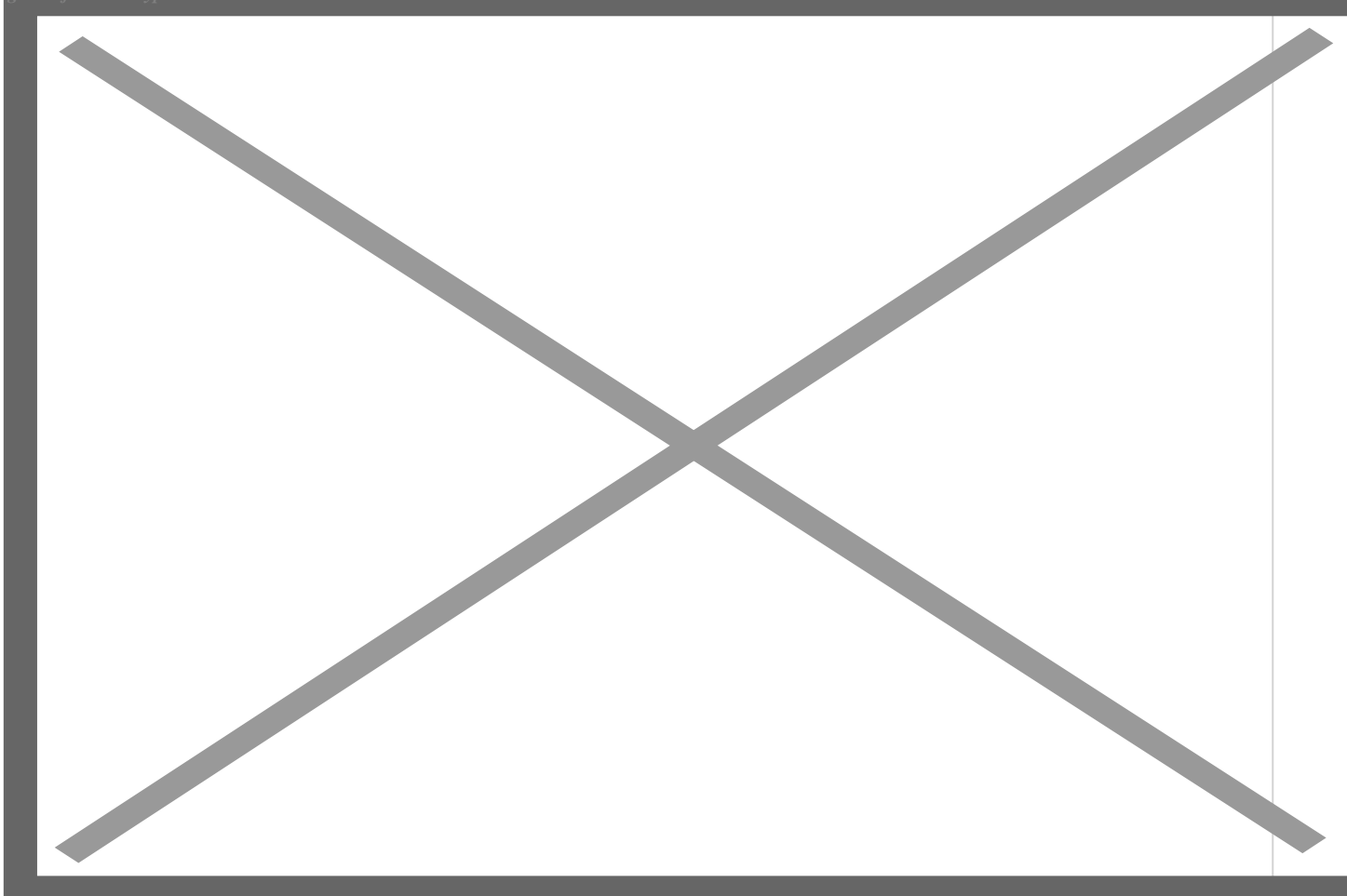


Palestinian Authority calls on Israel to hand over gun in Abu Akleh case

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Ramallah, June 20 (RHC)-- The Palestinian Authority (PA), which governs the occupied West Bank, has urged Israel to hand over the gun that fired the shot which killed veteran Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh more than a month ago.

Abu Akleh was shot in the head by Israeli forces on May 11th, while she was standing with a group of journalists near the entrance of the Jenin refugee camp, reporting on an Israeli raid on the camp.

Her tragic death sent shock waves across the region, drawing global condemnation. The United Nations and the European Union, among others, called for a full investigation into what has been described as a deliberate murder “in cold blood.”

On May 26, Palestinian Attorney General Akram al-Khatib said an Israeli soldier gunned down Abu Akleh, confirming the results of a preliminary investigation announced nearly two weeks earlier.

While the Tel Aviv regime claims the Al Jazeera journalist was killed as she was caught in the crossfire, the attorney general said the PA investigation showed there were no Palestinian fighters near the scene of the shooting.

Abu Akleh was hit with an armor-piercing bullet fired from a semi-automatic rifle Ruger Mini-14 while she was wearing a helmet and a vest that was clearly marked with the word “PRESS”, the probe said, refuting Israel’s claim that the bullet may have come from the Palestinians.

The Palestinian investigation echoed findings by Al Jazeera and several other major news organizations.

Following the incident, the Israeli military asked the PA to hand over the bullet that killed Abu Akleh to Israeli authorities for investigation. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas refused to do so. He said the regime cannot be trusted.

On Sunday, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said at a ceremony in the West Bank town of Ramallah to mark 40 days since Abu Akleh’s assassination that the PA had called on the Tel Aviv regime to hand over the gun.

“We have refused to hand over the bullet to them, and we even demand that they hand over the weapon that murdered Shireen Abu Akleh,” Shtayyeh said.

The Israeli military persistently claims it has not yet concluded whether the Palestinian journalist was killed by one of its soldiers or stray Palestinian gunfire. Israel says it has not either concluded yet whether one of its troopers will face criminal charges over the killing.

Furthermore, the top lawyer of the Israeli military has already said such charges will be unlikely given the circumstances surrounding Abu Akleh’s killing that occurred during an active combat, according to the refuted claims of the Israeli military.

Eyewitnesses and journalists who were with Abu Akleh on the day she was shot also described the shooting as a “deliberate attempt” to kill journalists.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has already opened an investigation into possible war crimes by Israel in both the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip. However, Israel does not recognize the court’s jurisdiction and has called the war crimes probe unfair and anti-Semitic.

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