

Shireen Abu Akleh street inaugurated in the heart of Ramallah



A ceremony was held in Ramallah to honor the late Palestinian-American journalist [Nida Ibrahim/Al Jazeera]

Ramallah, August 11 (RHC)-- A street in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank has been renamed after slain Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. On the eve of the three-month anniversary of Shireen's

killing by Israeli forces, an official ceremony was held on Wednesday to honour the late Palestinian-American journalist.

Abu Akleh was shot dead by Israeli forces on May 11, while covering an Israeli raid in Jenin, in the north of the West Bank.

Ramallah's mayor was accompanied by Abu Akleh's family and Al Jazeera colleagues as he unveiled a stone memorial with a picture of Shireen and key events in her life. The street is located in the heart of Ramallah, a one-minute walk Al-Manara Square, a bustling hub.

At the ceremony, Shireen's brother, Anton Abu Akleh said that the family will continue its efforts to hold Israel accountable. "The square witnessed historical Palestinian events, and Shireen was always there to cover walking through this specific street for over a quarter of a decade," Ahmed Abu Laban, the director of Ramallah municipality told Al Jazeera. "We wanted to make sure that her memory remains eternal," he added.

Abu Akleh's colleagues said the street was one of her preferred locations when carrying out live television broadcasts. For more than 25 years, Shireen was welcomed in Palestinian and Arab homes as she travelled to report on key moments in Palestinian history. After her killing, many Palestinians have named her the daughter of Palestine.

Several funerals were held for Abu Akleh in different cities in the West Bank, including an official one held by the Palestinian president before she was laid to rest in Jerusalem. During her Jerusalem funeral, the Israeli police attacked the pallbearers almost causing the coffin to fall.

"She was a unifying figure. The way she was killed has intensified the feelings of collective grief and sadness, Safaa Dweik, director of the GIS department in Ramallah municipality, told Al Jazeera.

Three months after her killing, Abu Akleh's legacy is being engraved in the shared memory of Palestinians. The head of Al Jazeera's bureau in Palestine Walid al-Omari said it was hard to explain the love people had for Abu Akleh.

"Shireen left no choice for people but to love her," he told the crowd at the ceremony in Ramallah. Al-Omari promised to continue pursuing all efforts to secure justice for her killing.

A Palestinian Authority probe concluded that she was killed deliberately by Israeli forces and several international probes found that Israeli forces killed the journalist, but Israel has not opened a criminal investigation into her killing. Al Jazeera and Abu Akleh's family have referred her killing to the International Criminal Court.

Abu Akleh's family has recently returned from a visit to Washington, DC where they met Secretary of State Anthony Blinken urging him for an FBI investigation into her killing.

"She was killed because she was telling the Palestinians' stories and suffering to the world," he said, promising to keep Shireen's legacy alive. He added that renaming the street after Shireen was an honour to her and all those who sacrificed their lives for Palestine.

The street was previously called Sanaa street. It is rare for the names of streets to be changed in Ramallah, but many Palestinians told Al Jazeera that the act shows her significance in Palestinian society.

In the months since Abu Akleh's killing, signs and pictures featuring her likeness have been displayed in locations across the West Bank. Artist Taqi El Deen Sabatin has drawn Abu Akleh's face on the Israeli-built wall separating Bethlehem from Jerusalem.

Abbad Yahya, a Palestinian writer and novelist told Al Jazeera that memorials are an important global and civilisational concept that shows great appreciation. “It is a key element in the building of a nation’s national identity and Shireen was a landmark of Ramallah, especially during and after the second Intifada, and this has been now documented by naming a public place after her,” he said.

“No matter how many honors are bestowed on the memory of Shireen Abu Akleh, she is no longer alive and was assassinated,” Palestinian politician Hanan Ashrawi told Al Jazeera. “Shireen deserves all this recognition, but the most important recognition is that she is held dear in the hearts of Palestinians,” she added.

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