

Mural of murdered journalist Shireen Abu Akleh inaugurated in Bethlehem

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Bethlehem, August 31 (RHC)-- A mural in memory of Al Jazeera's slain journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, has been inaugurated in the Palestinian city of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. The municipality of Bethlehem unveiled the mural on Wednesday, saying that it was a tribute to Abu Akleh and her reporting on the Palestinian cause.

The ceremony took place on al-Mahd Street in Bethlehem in the presence of Abu Akleh's relatives and colleagues, as well as local officials. Speakers at the event stressed the need for justice for Abu Akleh, who was killed by an Israeli soldier on May 11, 2022, while she was reporting from Jenin. No one has been held accountable for her killing.

Walid al-Omari, the head of Al Jazeera's bureau in Ramallah, said the mural conveyed a moral message. "We're thankful to the Bethlehem municipality for this work, and we'll continue to follow up on Shireen's case so that we can achieve justice," al-Omari said.

"This mural is in memory of Shireen, especially in the city of Bethlehem, from where her origins come," said Tony. He went on to explain the close relationship between Shireen Abu Akleh and the "City of Christ," as he described it. "This mural is not only for Shireen, but rather in memory of every martyr who was killed at the hands of the Israeli occupation," Tony said.

For his part, Hanna Hanania, Bethlehem's mayor, said that Abu Akleh represented the city, as well as Jerusalem, where she was born and eventually laid to rest, and the Palestinian people as a whole because she is "a martyr of the truth" who conveyed the Palestinian cause to the world. "It's our duty to immortalise her name in 'the City of peace' -- Bethlehem," Hanania said.

Nida Ibrahim, Al Jazeera's correspondent in the occupied West Bank, expressed her sadness when she first saw the mural. "For me, it was a bittersweet moment," she said. "It's a reminder of the loss we endured after she was killed, both as her colleagues and as Palestinian journalists," Ibrahim said. "A reminder that justice has not been served and that the killer is probably on the beach right now or enjoying coffee or living their life."

"It's really touching to see Shireen's pictures and memorials in different places in Palestine and abroad," Ibrahim added. "It shows the deep impact she has on people, as someone who was passionate and deeply interested in the human part of the story. It's been almost 500 days – but she's still with us and her memory lives on and on."

The killing of the late Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American dual nation, garnered international attention, and at first, Israel attempted to falsely accuse Palestinian fighters of fatally shooting the veteran reporter, who had been at Al Jazeera since 1997, and was renowned across the Arab world.

Months after the killing, Israel acknowledged that one of its soldiers likely killed Abu Akleh but dismissed the incident as unintentional. The Israeli government has not opened a criminal probe into the killing – but Al Jazeera has taken the case to the International Criminal Court.

Numerous media outlets, rights groups and witnesses have documented that there was no fighting in the immediate vicinity of where Abu Akleh was shot.

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