

Two Al Jazeera journalists wounded in Israeli attack in southern Gaza

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Rafah, December 15 (RHC)-- Two Al Jazeera Arabic journalists have been wounded while covering an Israeli attack on a school in Khan Younis, southern Gaza.

Wael Dahdouh, Gaza bureau chief for Al Jazeera Arabic, and cameraperson Samer Abudaqa were covering an earlier air strike at Farhana school in Khan Younis when they were wounded on Friday by shrapnel from an Israeli missile attack.

Dahdouh was hit by shrapnel on his upper arm, and was transferred to Nasser Hospital with minor injuries.

Abudaqa sustained shrapnel injuries and remained near the scene of the incident for about two hours, as paramedics were unable to reach the site due to Israeli fire, according to Al Jazeera correspondent Tareq Abu Azzoum.

Witnesses said there was heavy shelling in the area around the school.

The ambulance had to receive prior “approval” from Israeli forces before it could reach Abudaqa, Abu Azzoum reported from Rafah.

His medical condition remains unclear at this time. But according to Al Jazeera’s Wael Dahdouh, who was also injured in the attack, Abudaqa was “critically injured”, Abu Azzoum added.

Palestinians from the central and northern parts of Gaza have sought shelter in Khan Younis since the war began in October. Many have now been pushed further south towards the strip’s southernmost city of Rafah after Israel intensified its military operations in Khan Younis.

The attack comes amid violent clashes between Palestinian fighters and the Israeli army in locations across Gaza. Residents reported fighting in Shejaya, Sheikh Radwan, Zeitoun, Tuffah, and Beit Hanoun in north Gaza, east of Maghazi in central Gaza and in the centre and northern fringes of Khan Younis, according to the Reuters news service.

In late October, Wael Dahdouh lost four of his family members in an Israeli air raid. His family had been seeking refuge in Nuseirat camp in the centre of Gaza when their home was bombed by Israeli forces, killing his wife, Um Hamza, his 15-year-old son, Mahmoud, his seven-year-old daughter, Sham, and his grandson, Adam, who died in hospital hours later.

“Despite all the difficulties, despite the death of his family, he rebounded within minutes to do his job again. And now, Wael is the victim,” said Al Jazeera’s senior political analyst Marwan Bishara.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said it was “shocked” at the attack. “We condemn the attack and reiterate our demand that journalists’ lives must be safeguarded,” it said in a post on X.

An IFJ report published last week found that 72 percent of journalists who died on the job this year were killed in the Gaza war.

The two journalists have worked together with Al Jazeera Arabic since before the war. “[Samer] and Wael make up a very professional, strong team on the ground, documenting everything and bringing all the facts and live pictures of what the Palestinian people have been going through,” Hani Mahmoud said.

“But particularly with this war, given its intensity in scale and magnitude and the sheer amount of destruction, they have been at the forefront of covering every little detail that one might have forgotten about,” he added.

Jodie Ginsberg, the president of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said Palestinian journalists in Gaza felt abandoned by the international community. “The role of journalists in such a situation is absolutely vital – particularly in Gaza where we’ve seen the kinds of institutions that traditionally also help with the kinds of documentation about the impact, like the UN officials, have left – so we’re really only left with the Gazan journalists doing this very important documentation work,” she told Al Jazeera.

“The international governments’ failure to push for an end to this conflict is increasingly creating a real sense of abandonment amongst the community and particularly amongst the journalist community in Palestine and the region,” Ginsberg said.

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