

Al Jazeera decries unfounded Israeli claims about its Gaza journalists

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The network warns Israel against using allegations as a justification for targeting Al Jazeera journalists.

Doha, October 24 (RHC)-- Al Jazeera has strongly rejected a claim by the Israeli military that six of its journalists based in Gaza are members of the Palestinian groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).

The media network on Wednesday vehemently condemned the “unfounded allegations” by the Israeli army, which in a post on X described some of the named Al Jazeera Arabic correspondents as “operatives” working for Hamas’s armed wing to promote the group’s “propaganda” in the besieged and

bombarded enclave.

The six named journalists are Anas al-Sharif, Talal Aruki, Alaa Salama, Hosam Shabat, Ismail Farid, and Ashraf Saraj.

The military published “documents” that it claims prove the “integration of Hamas terrorists within” Al Jazeera. It claimed the papers show lists of people who have completed training courses and salaries.

“Al Jazeera categorically rejects the Israeli occupation forces’ portrayal of our journalists as terrorists and denounces their use of fabricated evidence,” the network said in a statement.

“The Network views these fabricated accusations as a blatant attempt to silence the few remaining journalists in the region, thereby obscuring the harsh realities of the war from audiences worldwide,” the statement read.

It said the “baseless” accusations came following a recent report by its investigative unit that revealed potential war crimes committed by Israeli forces during the continuing assault on Gaza, where more than 42,000 Palestinians have been killed – many of them women and children.

Al Jazeera said its correspondents have been reporting from northern Gaza and documenting the dire humanitarian situation unfolding “as the sole international media” outlet there.

Israel has severely restricted access to Gaza for international media outlets since it launched its assault on the Palestinian territory on October 7, 2023, in response to a Hamas-led attack on southern Israel.

Northern Gaza has been under siege for 19 days as Israeli forces continue a renewed ground offensive in the area. Some 770 people have been killed in Jabalia since the renewed assault began, according to the Gaza Government Media Office, with Israel blocking the entry of aid and food from reaching some 400,000 people trapped in the area.

“The Network sees these accusations as part of a wider pattern of hostility towards Al Jazeera, stemming from its unwavering commitment to broadcasting the unvarnished truth about the situation in Gaza and elsewhere.”

Last month, Israeli forces raided Al Jazeera’s office in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank and ordered its immediate closure following the decision by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s cabinet in May 2024 to shut down Al Jazeera’s operations within Israel.

Israeli forces have killed at least three Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza since October last year.

In July, Al Jazeera Arabic journalist Ismail al-Ghoul and his cameraman Rami al-Rifi were killed in an Israeli air attack on the Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City. The pair were wearing media vests and there were identifying signs on their vehicle when they were attacked.

In December, Al Jazeera Arabic journalist Samer Abudaqa was killed in an Israeli strike in southern Gaza’s Khan Younis. Al Jazeera’s Gaza bureau chief, Wael Dahdouh, was also wounded in that attack.

Dahdouh’s wife, son, daughter and grandson had been killed in an Israeli air raid on the Nuseirat refugee camp in October last year.

In January, Dahdouh’s son, Hamza, who was also an Al Jazeera journalist, was killed in an Israeli missile strike in Khan Younis.

Prior to the war on Gaza, veteran Al Jazeera correspondent Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead by Israeli forces as she covered an Israeli raid in Jenin in the West Bank in May 2022.

While Israel has acknowledged one of its soldiers likely fatally shot Abu Akleh, it has not pursued any criminal investigation over the killing. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), at least 128 journalists and media workers have been killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza since the war began.

The press freedom watchdog said last year that Israel's war on Gaza is the deadliest in modern history for journalists. In its report, CPJ drew attention to what it called "an apparent pattern of targeting of journalists and their families by the Israeli military."

Palestinian reporters in Gaza continue to work under gruelling conditions, facing constant bombardment, displacement and possible targeting by Israeli forces.

In its statement, Al Jazeera called on the international community to act with the "utmost urgency" to protect the lives of the six journalists, adding that it stands firm in its belief that "journalism is not a crime".

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