

Human Rights Watch affirms Israel deliberately killed three Lebanon journalists



New York, November 25 (RHC)-- An Israeli air attack that killed three journalists and wounded others in Lebanon in October was most likely a deliberate attack on civilians and an apparent war crime, Human Rights Watch has said.

An Israeli attack on October 25 killed cameraman Ghassan Najjar and engineer Mohammad Reda, who worked for Al Mayadeen, and Al-Manar TV's camera operator Wissam Qassim as they slept in guesthouses in Hasbaiyya in southeast Lebanon.

In a report published on Monday, Human Rights Watch found "no evidence of fighting, military forces, or military activity in the immediate area at the time of the attack" and noted "the Israeli military knew or should have known that journalists were staying in the area and in the targeted building."

The report also determined that Israeli forces carried out the attack using an air-dropped bomb equipped with a United States-produced Joint Direct Attack Munition, or JDAM, guidance kit.

The rights group said that it found remnants at the site and reviewed photographs of pieces collected by the resort owner and determined that they were consistent with a JDAM guidance kit assembled and sold by the U.S. company Boeing.

The JDAM is affixed to air-dropped bombs and allows them to be guided to a target by using satellite coordinates, making the weapon accurate to within several metres, the group said.

"Israel's use of U.S. arms to unlawfully attack and kill journalists away from any military target is a terrible mark on the United States as well as Israel," Richard Weir, senior crisis, conflict and arms researcher at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

The rights group also called on the U.S. government to suspend weapons transfers to Israel because of the military's repeated "unlawful attacks on civilians, for which US officials may be complicit in war crimes".

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration said in May that Israel's use of US-provided weapons in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza has likely violated international humanitarian law but that wartime conditions prevented US officials from determining that for certain in specific attacks.

"The Israeli military's previous deadly attacks on journalists without any consequences give little hope for accountability in this or future violations against the media," Weir added.

Journalists have been regularly targeted by Israel and have faced unprecedented dangers while covering Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon.

In November 2023, two journalists for Al Mayadeen TV were killed in a drone attack at their reporting spot.

A month earlier, Israeli shelling in southern Lebanon killed Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah and seriously wounded other journalists from Al Jazeera and the AFP news agency on a hilltop not far from the Israeli border.

The killing of journalists has prompted an international outcry from media advocacy groups and the United Nations.

Israel has repeatedly said it does not deliberately target journalists. On multiple occasions, the army has also claimed the killed journalists were fighters or "terrorists." But according to independent investigations carried out by rights groups and experts, these claims have rarely held up.



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