

Al Jazeera renews pledge to seek justice for Shireen Abu Akleh

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Banners depicting former Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh hang on a building overlooking the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

Doha, May 11 (RHC)-- Al Jazeera Media Network has renewed its demand for accountability in the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh by Israeli forces on the first anniversary of her death. Abu Akleh, a television correspondent with Al Jazeera for 25 years, was shot by Israeli forces on May 11, 2022, while reporting on an Israeli military raid in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin.

Israel initially denied its forces were behind her shooting but later admitted its soldiers “accidentally” hit her but refused to launch a criminal investigation. “The Network renews its appeal to international human rights and press freedom organisations to continue to support Shireen’s case and help end impunity for crimes against journalists,” Doha-based Al Jazeera said in a statement.

“Al Jazeera Media Network remains committed to its pledge to Shireen’s family and colleagues to seek justice for Shireen by pursuing all possible avenues to ensure her killers are held accountable, including through the International Criminal Court in the Hague,” it said.

In December, the network submitted a request for the court to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the killing of the Palestinian-American journalist, who was known as the “Voice of Palestine. The network has insisted that only an independent and impartial investigation will reveal the truth behind her killing.

“The crimes perpetrated against us will not dent our resolve,” Mostefa Souag, the network’s director general, said on Thursday at a remembrance event at its headquarters in Doha. “We will continue to work in pursuit of the truth. We will also do the maximum to end the violation of freedom of the press.” “Al Jazeera will continue to seek other venues to ensure that the killers of journalists will not go unpunished,” he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken backed the demand for an independent inquiry, but the White House has insisted that Israel should be the party leading the investigation. Multiple media outlets, including an investigation by Al Jazeera, and the UN human rights body have said Israeli forces were responsible for Abu Akleh’s killing.

In a damning new report released on Tuesday, the Committee to Protect Journalists said Israeli forces have killed at least 20 journalists, including 18 Palestinians, over the past 20 years. The media watchdog said it had found “a pattern of the killings of journalists by [Israeli military]”. “No one has ever been charged or held accountable for these deaths, ... severely undermin[ing] the freedom of the press,” it said.

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