

Facilitating Israel's Widespread Practice of Targeting Journalists

By [Ramona Wadi](#)

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Israel's targeting of Palestinian journalists has veered into selective collective punishment against the profession. According to the Ma'an news agency, Israel has now banned Arab and international organisations from importing bulletproof vests for journalists in Gaza, in an attempt to render Palestinian press even more vulnerable to attack.

Given Israel's penchant for "collateral damage", the latest oppressive tactic will allow the display of additional victims, despite the protection outlined in Article IV, Chapter III of the Geneva Convention that journalists are to be entitled to the same rights and protection granted to civilians. The disregard for international norms exhibited by Israel is once again evident, as the perpetual security concern rhetoric was woven into the purported explanation of the ban.

Quoted in *Ma'an*, the spokesperson for the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territory stated that "bulletproof vests are dual-use devices whose entry requires examinations of the security establishment." It was added that requests for vests are examined "with the security protocols."



File photo of Israeli soldier attacking Palestinian Press officer

Seen within the wider context of Israeli oppressive tactics against Palestinian journalists, the recent prohibition is additional evidence of covert violations that will not disturb the international community's slumber. The absence of critical thought regarding Israel's security propaganda has resulted in international differentiation and fragmentation between the West Bank and Gaza, despite the fact that Israeli oppression in both areas is an extension of the constant struggle embodied by Palestinians as well as Israel's necessity to widen its repertoire of human rights violations without attracting vociferous condemnations.

Whether Israel is targeting journalists through detention, including ensuing torture and medical neglect as occurs regularly in the West Bank, or directly as has been the case in Gaza particularly during Israel's demonstrations of military capabilities against a civilian population, the end result is the creation of undesired vulnerability by exacerbating a lack of protection.

According to the Committee to Support Palestinian Journalists, 43 journalists were detained by Israel since October 2015, three of whom are suffering from serious illnesses. The detention of journalists has been described as part of an Israeli conspiracy that equates media outlets affiliated with Palestinian political parties as conforming to Israel's distorted definition of terrorist organisations.

During "Operation Protective Edge" in 2014, the targeting of journalists by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) was based upon manipulation of international law without as much as a whisper of dissent by the international community. Earlier in 2012, a letter to the opinion pages of the *New York Times* penned by IDF spokeswoman Avital Leibovich insisted: "Such terrorists, who hold notebooks and cameras in their hands, are no different from their colleagues who fire rockets aimed at Israeli cities and cannot enjoy the rights and protection afforded to legitimate journalists."

Erroneous premises aside, the quote is proof of how the international community has continuously turned a blind eye to the targeted assassinations of Palestinian journalists. Normalising Israeli violence has become enshrined in international consciousness, which thrives upon the increase of rampant bloodshed and the resulting desensitised attitude that has transformed the macabre into mundane. Not only the exhibited scorn for international humanitarian law is lauded through complicit silence; clearly, the international community has no qualms about endorsing Israel's manipulative narrative to facilitate the slow extermination of Palestinians.

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