

## Gaza Journalists Target of Israeli Snipers

Two journalists killed, 360 others injured by Israeli army fire in Gaza since last year

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*Palestinian journalists covering the weekly protests against the decades-long Israeli occupation are complaining of being the target of Israeli snipers stationed along the border of the blockaded territory.*

Since the protests began in March of last year, two journalists have been shot dead and dozens injured by Israeli gunfire near Gaza-Israel buffer zone.

Last week, two journalists were shot injured as they were covering protests against the Israeli occupation, according to the Journalist Support Committee (JSC) in Palestine.

Osama Al-Kahlout, a photojournalist, was shot in the leg with a live bullet while Hatem Omar, working for China's Xinhua news agency, was injured by a rubber bullet.

"No one has immunity along Gaza border," Al-Kahlout, 33, who was shot east of al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, told Anadolu Agency.

"The [Israeli] occupation forces target journalists, paramedics, citizens and even the handicapped," he said. "Everyone is within the target of Israeli snipers."

Al-Kahlout said he had received a phone call from an unknown number before being shot in the leg.

The photojournalist believes that

"the call was from the Israeli army so that he could be accurately located and targeted directly".

He confirmed that he was wearing a shield bearing a press badge and was working in an area relatively far from the demonstrators.

Israeli crimes

According to al-Kahlout, four journalists had previously been injured while covering the weekly protests in the same area where he was shot east of al-Bureij refugee camp.

“Israeli forces target journalists in an attempt to prevent them from exposing their crimes and violations against peaceful protesters to the world,” he said.

Xinhua news agency’s Omar was also shot by a rubber bullet while covering demonstrations east of Khan Younis city in the southern Gaza Strip.

“I was shot by two rubber bullets in both legs, although I was wearing a press shield and working in an area far from the demonstrators,” Omar told Anadolu Agency.

Accusing the Israeli army of internationally targeting journalists in Gaza, Omar said:

“In many incidents, groups of journalists were targeted by teargas or bullets while working in areas away from the demonstrators.”

Ahmed Ghanem, a correspondent for Al-Mayadin television, said the Israeli army targets journalists “to prevent them from carrying out their duty”.

“Palestinian journalists have proven their strength and ability to expose the crimes of the occupation and to convey the message of the Palestinian people in Gaza to the world,” he said. “This disturbs Israel and embarrasses it before the international community.”

Hit himself by an Israeli gas shell while covering the demonstrations in January, Ghanem called on human rights organizations to “provide protection to Palestinian journalists from the ongoing Israeli attacks”.

#### Prosecution

Tahseen al-Astal, vice president of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, said his organization was preparing “legal files on Israeli violations against journalists, to be lodged with international courts to prosecute Israeli leaders”.

He said the Journalists Syndicate has sent letters to the International Federation of Journalists, the Union of Arab Journalists, and the UNESCO “to brief them on Israeli violations against journalists”.

According to Salama Maarouf, a government spokesman in Gaza, around 360 journalists have been injured by Israeli army fire since the Gaza rallies began in March 2018.

Demonstrators demand an end to Israel’s 12-year blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has shattered the coastal enclave’s economy and deprived its two million inhabitants of many basic amenities.

Since the Gaza rallies began last year, nearly 270 protesters have been martyred — and thousands more wounded — by Israeli troops deployed near the buffer zone.

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