

# Reporters Without Shame: Top ‘Media Rights’ Organization Ignores Rampant Killings of Gaza Journalists

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Global Research, March 03, 2024  
[In Gaza](#) 9 January 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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*At the end of 2023, Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans Frontieres, RSF), the international organization ostensibly advocating for freedom of information, released its annual report. The paper massively downplays the widespread and deliberate targeting of Palestinian journalists in the Israel-Gaza war.*

The report’s [announcement](#), titled, “Round-up: 45 journalists killed in the line of duty worldwide – a drop despite the tragedy in Gaza,” excludes most of the Palestinian journalists killed by Israel in 2023, particularly in the past few months. It claims 16 fewer journalists were killed worldwide in 2023 than in 2022. This doesn’t reflect reality.

UN Secretary-General: In Gaza, more children, more journalists, more UN aid workers killed than anywhere else in the world! [pic.twitter.com/2kH8tNz8OF](https://pic.twitter.com/2kH8tNz8OF)

— Ambassador Majed Bamya 🇵🇸 (@majedbamya) [November 7, 2023](#)

The report claims that (as of December 1, 2023), only 13 Palestinian journalists were killed while *actively* reporting, noting separately that 56 journalists were killed in Gaza, “if we include journalists killed in circumstances unproven to be related to their duties.”

Other sources put the overall number of Palestinian journalists killed in the enclave much higher. The UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [reported](#) on December 1 that 73 journalists and media workers had been killed, citing to the Palestinian

Journalists' Syndicate (PJS).

While The Committee to Protect Journalists' (CPJ) December 20, 2023 [numbers](#) are lower (at least 61 Palestinian journalists killed since October 7), CPJ at least didn't disregard dozens of slain Palestinian journalists like RSF did.

In fact, in contrast to RSF's cheerful *"things are much better for journalists than previous years"* tone, CPJ emphasized that in the first 10 weeks of Israel's war on Gaza, *"[more journalists](#) have been killed than have ever been killed in a single country over an entire year."* It voiced its concern about, *"an apparent [pattern of targeting](#) of journalists and their families by the Israeli military."*

That summary is far more honest, and shocking, than the watered-down RSF report.

I hope western journalists look into his eyes and watch this well.

It has even been translated for you. [pic.twitter.com/rh3pOpdnPu](https://pic.twitter.com/rh3pOpdnPu)

— Lowkey (@LowkeyOnline) [January 8, 2024](#)

It isn't clear how RSF discerns which circumstances were *"unproven to be related"* to the duties of slain Gazan journalists, nor who is *"actively reporting"* when Gaza is under relentless Israeli bombardment and suffers frequent internet cuts. In fact, given the nonstop Israeli bombing (and sniping) throughout the Strip, it would be nearly impossible to discern whether journalists were reporting (including from their homes) at the time of their death.

However, in the methodology section near the end of its more detailed [report](#), RSF notes it *"logs a journalist's death in its press freedom barometer when they are killed in the exercise of their duties or in connection with their status as a journalist."*

Many Palestinian journalists in Gaza have received death threats from officers in the Israeli army precisely due to their status as journalists. And many of those threatened have subsequently been killed, along with family members, when Israeli airstrikes targeted their homes or places of shelter.

We also have the precedent in prior wars (in 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021) of Israel bombing Gazan media buildings (including one I was in in 2009) with varying severity, damaging and finally [destroying two major media buildings](#) in 2021. This is clearly intended to stop the flow of reports from Gaza under Israeli bombs, and so is the killing of journalists.

On December 15, the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate [criticized](#) the RSF report, going as far as accusing RSF of complicity with Israel's war crimes against Palestinian journalists through whitewashing.

This is the same PJS whose statistics the UN's OCHA cites, statistics which PJS says are *"accurate and based on professional and legal documentation that follows the highest standards in documenting crimes against journalists."* This documentation includes journalists who Israeli airstrikes targeted in their homes, killed precisely because they are journalists.

In [response](#), RSF claimed it, *“did not yet have sufficient evidence or indications,”* to state that any more than 14 journalists in the Gaza Strip (as of December 23, the date of its response) *“had been killed in the course of their work or because of it.”*

RSF called the PJS accusations *“inane,”* complaining that they *“damage our organisation’s image,”* and chastised the PSJ to not *“impugn our motives,”* or *“quarrel”* over numbers. “Quarreling over numbers” is a pretty cavalier objection from an organization espousing concern over journalists being targeted.

At least three journalists were shot dead, at least three killed by an Israeli airstrike on media outlets in central Gaza City, and many more were killed by Israeli airstrikes on “safe” areas – areas south of Wadi Gaza, which Israel had commanded civilians to flee to for their “safety.” In spite of this command, Israeli bombings continued all over the strip, including all the way south to Rafah.

Still many more – in Gaza City, as well as to the north and to the south of it – were killed at home with their families, including [one](#) journalist in Khan Younis, killed along with 11 members of his family when an Israeli airstrike targeted his home on November 2. On November 23, a journalist was [killed](#) in an Israeli airstrike on his home in Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, along with 20 family members.

The Cradle [reported](#) that, *“The Israeli army sent a letter to legacy news outlets, Reuters and AFP.”* The letter said, *“The [Israeli Army] is targeting all Hamas military activity throughout Gaza. Under these circumstances, we cannot guarantee your employees’ safety.”*

One Israeli bombing of a journalist’s home on November 7 [killed](#) him and 42 family members. Like many of his slain colleagues, he was a journalist for Palestinian Authority-run Wafa news. Many of the other murdered journalists worked for: Palestinian Authority-run Palestine TV, independent news agencies, local TV and radio programs, and larger outlets like al Jazeera. Others worked with Hamas-affiliated media and radio. Still others were freelancers.

On November 5, PJS [reported](#) that at least 20 of the journalists killed (since October 7) *“were intentionally targeted by strikes on their homes or during their work covering Israel’s attacks.”* This tally is already greater than RSF’s reported total of 13 journalists killed at work or because of their work, even though the RSF report covers a period of almost a month more.

## Israel Threatens Journalists, Kills Family Members

Many Gaza journalists [report](#) being threatened by the Israeli army. CPJ [noted](#) it is *“deeply alarmed by the pattern of journalists in Gaza reporting receiving threats, and subsequently, their family members being killed.”*

The majority of journalists have received direct threats over the last 10 weeks. Sari Mansour and Saeed Al-Taweel were subjected to incitement, receiving direct threats before being targeted. Anas Al-Sharif received threats to his life relating to his work in northern Gaza.

— Anan Quzmar (@QuzmarAnan) [December 22, 2023](#)

One such incident followed a threat to Al-Jazeera Arabic reporter Anas Al-Sharif. CPJ [noted](#) he had received multiple phone calls from officers in the Israeli army instructing him to cease coverage and leave northern Gaza. Additionally, he received voice notes on WhatsApp disclosing his location. His 90-year-old father was killed on December 11 by an Israeli airstrike on their home in the Jabalia refugee camp.

On November 13, CPJ [noted](#), *“eight family members of photojournalist Yasser Qudih were killed when their house in southern Gaza was struck by four missiles. Qudih survived the attack.”*

On October 25, an Israel airstrike on the Nuseirat refugee camp in the center of Gaza killed the wife, son, daughter, and grandson of Al-Jazeera’s bureau chief for Gaza, Wael Al Dahdoh.

Hossam Shabat threatened by Israeli occupation forces

Gazan journalist Hossam Shabat received an intimidating call from Israeli forces to stop documenting their actions in northern Gaza and to remove the material he had published online. [pic.twitter.com/Q2AemkoFoQ](https://pic.twitter.com/Q2AemkoFoQ)

— MintPress News (@MintPressNews) [December 27, 2023](#)

The popular young independent journalist, Motaz Azaiza, reported receiving multiple threats from anonymous numbers urging him to cease his coverage, CPJ [reported](#), noting that another Al-Jazeera correspondent, Youmna El-Sayed, said her husband received a threatening phone call from a man who identified himself as a member of the IDF and told the family *“to leave or die.”*

#### PEGASUS: ISRAEL’S WAR ON JOURNALISTS

A new report from Amnesty International reveals a spike in the use of Israeli “Pegasus” spyware tools used by Israeli spyware companies to target journalists’ privacy – including used to track and directly threaten the safety of journalists... [pic.twitter.com/E50fxfc3XT](https://pic.twitter.com/E50fxfc3XT)

— Patrick Henningsen (@21WIRE) [January 9, 2024](#)

#### RSF Bias: Not Only in Palestine

Whereas RSF only reluctantly, as an afterthought, mentioned Palestinian journalists killed in “circumstances unproven to be related to their duties,” in a 2021 [report](#) on Syria, it stated, *“at least 300 professional and non-professional journalists have been killed while covering artillery bombardments and airstrikes or murdered by the various parties to the conflict,”* since 2011, going on to say, *“this figure could in reality be even higher.”*

It cited a [report](#) by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) claiming the number could be up to 700. While endorsing these numbers, the RSF also gave a caveat, albeit a much meeker one than the one about Gaza journalists: *“Confirming such estimates is not currently possible because of the difficulty of accessing information.”*

Aside from reporting numbers it could not confirm, RSF cited a body in no way impartial or credible. As an [investigative article](#) noted, the SNHR is “based in Qatar... funded by foreign governments and staffed by top opposition leaders,” and “has openly clamored for Western military intervention.”

In 2017, Stephen Lendman [wrote](#) of RSF’s attempt to shut down a panel sponsored by the Swiss Press Club in which British journalist Vanessa Beeley would be participating. “An organization that defends freedom of information is asking me to censor a press conference,” the club’s executive director Guy Mettan said at the time. He refused to cancel the event.

RSF’s 2023 roundup also didn’t include two Russian journalists killed this year, one by a Ukrainian cluster bomb strike and the other by a Ukrainian drone attack (targeting journalists).

Sputnik [pursued](#) the matter and reported that RSF, “refused to give any comments to Sputnik” citing “editorial policy.”

Journalist Christelle Neant likewise noted RSF’s glaring omission of the Russian journalists. She [wrote](#) about the body’s funding from various governments, and more notably from regime change agencies: the Open Society foundation, The Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for Democracy, funded by the US Congress.

RSF’s notorious funders explain why it cherry picks or inflates its reports. The borderless organization has lines it won’t cross. It reports a grain of truth but otherwise whitewashes the crimes of Israel and Washington.

Additional Notes:

On December 19, freelance journalist Adel Zorob [was killed](#) in an Israeli airstrike on his home in Rafah, southern Gaza, along with 25 family members.

On [December 30](#), journalist Jabr Abu Hadrous ascended as a martyr with several of his family members after the IOF bombed his home in Nusseirat camp, central #Gaza, becoming the 106th journalist in Gaza to be martyred since October 7th.

On January 7, 2024, journalist Hamza Al Dahdouh (son of Al-Jazeera Gaza bureau chief Wael Al Dahdouh), was killed in an Israeli drone strike along with freelance journalist Mustafa Thuraya, according to Al-Jazeera Arabic. They were driving to an assignment in southern Gaza when the strike occurred.

All that remains for Al Jazeera Journalist Wael Al-Dahdouh in his family is his daughter.  
Israel took the lives of his entire family after they killed his oldest son Hamza today.

Israel is a terrorist entity. [pic.twitter.com/itOR8gJD42](https://pic.twitter.com/itOR8gJD42)

— Marwa Osman || مروة عثمان (@Marwa\_\_Osman) [January 7, 2024](#)

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