

# Israel Killed Another Journalist. Canadian Politicians Refuse to Name The Perpetrator.

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Alex Cosh

May 12, 2022

**“This was not a mistake. This was intentional.”**



Screenshot of Al Jazeera video/YouTube.

***Written by Alex Cosh***

The Israeli army shot and killed high-profile Al Jazeera (AJ) journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in Palestine on Wednesday, according to the Palestinian health ministry, but Canadian politicians are refusing to name Israel as the perpetrator.

As reported by AJ, Israeli forces shot Abu Akleh in the head while she was reporting on Israeli raids in the city of Jenin in the occupied West Bank. She was wearing a press vest and was stood next to other journalists when she was killed.

Abu Akleh's colleague, Ali al-Samoudi, was also wounded by Israeli fire, but is now in a stable condition.

Speaking to AJ, al-Samoudi said: “We were going to film the Israeli army operation and suddenly they shot us without asking us to leave or stop filming.”

“The first bullet hit me and the second bullet hit Shireen ... there was no Palestinian military resistance at all at the scene.”

al-Samoudi's account was corroborated by another local journalist who was on scene. Shatha Hanaysha told AJ: "The [Israeli] occupation army did not stop firing even after she collapsed ... The army was adamant on shooting to kill."

In a statement, AJ said: "In a blatant murder, violating international laws and norms, the Israeli occupation forces assassinated in cold blood Al Jazeera's correspondent in Palestine, Shireen Abu Akleh."

"Al Jazeera Media Network condemns this heinous crime, which intends to only prevent the media from conducting their duty."

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In a graphic video shared on social media by AJ producer Linah Alsaafin, the sound of gunfire continued after Abu Akleh collapsed, despite frantic calls from bystanders for an ambulance.

Abu Akleh's press vest is clearly visible in the disturbing footage. Further gunshots can be heard as a man tries to lift Abu Akleh.

In a separate report, AJ notes that 86 Palestinian journalists have been killed since 1967. Journalists are protected as civilians under international humanitarian law, meaning military attacks against them are illegal.

As explained by the International Committee of the Red Cross:

"While no specific status exists for journalists and the equipment they use, both journalists and their equipment benefit from the general protection enjoyed by civilians and civilian objects unless they make an effective contribution to military action."

Abu Akleh's colleagues expressed deep sorrow over the killing. Broadcaster Dena Tahruri said: "I'm reeling from the news of the death of my friend and colleague Shireen Abu Akleh, a veteran Al Jazeera correspondent."

"This is absolutely horrifying."

I'm reeling from the news of the death of my friend and colleague Shireen Abu Akleh, a veteran Al Jazeera correspondent. Israeli forces shot her in the head while she reporting in Jenin while clearly wearing a press vest.

This is absolutely horrifying <https://t.co/KqadakhnH>

— Dena Tahruri (@Dena) May 11, 2022

The Israeli Foreign Ministry sought to cast blame for the murder on Palestinians, a suggestion that was promptly debunked by a field researcher with the Israeli human rights group, B'Tselem.

The Foreign Ministry shared a video of what appears to be an armed Palestinian fighter with the caption: “Palestinian terrorists, firing indiscriminately, are likely to have hit Al Jazeera journalist [Shireen Abu Akleh].”

The Ministry quoted the shooter as saying they had wounded a soldier, but claimed that no Israeli soldiers were killed or injured that morning.

The Ministry quoted Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett saying: “According to the information we have gathered, it appears likely that armed Palestinians — who were firing indiscriminately at the time — were responsible for the unfortunate death of the journalist.”

However, B'Tselem said their field researcher documented the exact locations of the Palestinian fighter in the video and the place where Abu Akleh died.

The group concluded: “Documentation of Palestinian gunfire distributed by Israeli military cannot be the gunfire that killed Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.”

[pic.twitter.com/X4dQVaBjBK](https://pic.twitter.com/X4dQVaBjBK)

— B'Tselem בתסלם (@btselem) May 11, 2022

Following B'Tselem's investigation, the Israeli Foreign Ministry walked back its original claim, suggesting: “There was no claim that the gunfire in the [video shared by the Foreign Ministry] killed journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.”

The Israeli government has also claimed its army did not direct any fire at journalists, citing the military's “preliminary” investigation of its own actions.

Michael Bueckert, vice president of the advocacy group Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, told *The Maple* he was horrified by the news of Israel's killing of another journalist. He noted that Abu Akleh was very experienced and adept at reporting from war zones.

“She has been reporting on the ground from the area for decades, so she is someone who knows how to stay out of being in the crossfire,” said Bueckert. “The statements from journalists who were with her say that she was deliberately targeted.”

“This was not a mistake. This was intentional.”

Canadian lawmakers issued statements Wednesday expressing concern about the killing, but none would name Israel as the culprit nor call for sanctions against the apartheid state.

*The Maple* reached out to Global Affairs Minister Melanie Joly's office, which responded with a link to a tweet posted by Joly, reading: "Journalists must be safe to do their work— a right protected under international law."

"The news of Shireen Abu Akleh's death while she was doing her job, is devastating."

*The Maple* asked Joly's office if she would name Israel as the perpetrator of the killing, and take action against the apartheid state accordingly. No response was provided.

The Prime Minister's Office directed requests for comment from *The Maple* to Minister Joly, and had not provided any public statement at the time of publication.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh tweeted: "This is horrifying. The killing of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh must be thoroughly investigated and those responsible must be held accountable."

*The Maple* contacted Singh asking if he would acknowledge Israel as the perpetrator, and if the NDP would subsequently put pressure on the Liberal government to sanction the apartheid state, but did not receive a response.

NDP MP Niki Ashton issued a more forthright statement. "The execution of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is shocking and horrific news. There must be an international investigation now. There must be justice," she wrote.

The execution of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is shocking and horrific news. There must be an international investigation now. There must be justice.

<https://t.co/Ngri00XZkx>

— Niki Ashton (@nikiashton) May 11, 2022

Conservative Party interim leader Candice Bergen, meanwhile, did not issue any statement on the killing and did not respond to a request for comment from *The Maple*.

Yesterday, Conservative MPs blocked a motion in Parliament by NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice, who sought unanimous consent for a call for an independent investigation into Abu Akleh's death.

Bueckert said it is disheartening that Canadian politicians have not yet named Israel as the perpetrator.

"Even when there is a case as clear as this, Canadian officials will just refuse to directly criticize Israel for its actions," he explained.

The latest news follows a pattern, said Bueckert, who cited Reporters Without Borders' estimation that 144 Palestinian journalists have been fired at with live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas in just the past four years that Palestinians have participated in the Great March of Return protests against the Israeli occupation.

A group of journalistic organizations and human rights groups, including the International Federation of Journalists, filed a case to the International Criminal Court last month alleging that "Israel's systematic targeting of journalists working in Palestine and its failure to properly investigate killings of media workers amount to war crimes."

The complainants now want the killing of Abu Akleh to be included in that investigation.

Given the high international regard for Abu Akleh, Bueckert said it is likely that the Israeli authorities are panicking over the situation and will continue seeking to avert blame. However, he noted, Israeli forces kill Palestinians, including children, on a regular basis.

As well, just last week, Israel's top court evicted approximately 1,000 Palestinians from a part of the West Bank so that the land could be used by the Israeli army. The decision paves the way for the largest displacement of Palestinians since 1967.

"Most cases do not get any attention, especially from Canadian officials who say absolutely nothing," said Bueckert.

Most statements from Canadian politicians regarding the killing of Abu Akleh, Bueckert added, have so far spoken in general about the need for an "investigation," likely referring to Israel's offer to investigate its own actions. But Israel has "absolutely no credibility whatsoever" to investigate itself, he said.

"What we actually need is an independent and international investigation, preferably at the level of the International Criminal Court," said Bueckert.

"Unfortunately, Canada has until now opposed every effort to bring the crimes against Palestinians to the ICC."

Bueckert said Canadian MPs from all parties should also push for a ban on military transfers to Israel.

Canada exported \$19 million in military goods and technology to Israel in 2020, including automatic weapons, explosives, military vessels, vehicles, training and imaging equipment, and military software. Israel had the highest number of Canadian arms export permits utilized in that year.

*Editor's note, May 12, 2022: This story has been updated to note that Conservative MPs blocked a motion in Parliament by NDP MP Alex Boulerice, who sought unanimous consent for a call for an independent investigation into Abu Akleh's death.*

