

# Parliamentary Human Rights Report Excludes Mention of Shireen Abu Akleh

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**A new report is being criticized for not mentioning Israel's killing of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and giving scant attention to Israel's other abuses.**



Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.

***Written by Alex Cosh***

A new [parliamentary committee report](#) examining the international situation of human rights defenders and journalists is being criticized for not mentioning Israel's killing of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and giving scant attention to Israel's other abuses.

In May, Israeli forces [shot and killed](#) the Al Jazeera correspondent while she was covering a military raid in the city of Jenin. Forensic analysis [later confirmed](#) the Israeli shooter could clearly see Abu Akleh's press vest and repeatedly opened fire on her with an intention to kill despite a lack of any hostile fire in the area. The analysis followed more than a dozen previous journalistic and institutional reports all pointing to Israel as the culprit.

The parliamentary report, titled "The Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists And Media Organizations," was published this month by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. The committee's mandate, adopted in February, was

to study attacks on human rights defenders (HRDs) and journalists, and examine “how Canada can support their efforts.”

The report warns: “The growing rate of the infringement of rights of journalists and other HRDs has been associated with the global rise in authoritarianism and a decline of the rules-based international order.” It also specifically notes: “The Subcommittee heard that journalists and other HRDs are being killed at an alarming rate around the globe” and that “the majority of killings are going uninvestigated and unpunished.”

In a set of 12 recommendations, which include calls to support specific journalists in jurisdictions ranging from Hong Kong to Ukraine, the report makes no mention of Abu Akleh. Regarding Israel, the report does briefly note that:

“The Subcommittee was told by one witness that in Israel, the government has designated Palestinian civil society organizations as terrorist entities allowing it to seize their assets, make arrests of staff and affiliates, close their offices and effectively shut them down entirely.”

However, the report adds, “Committee members are of different views on this.”

The Israeli raids referenced in the report were carried out over the summer. As reported by *The Guardian* at the time:

“In October (2021) Israel outlawed Al-Haq; Addameer, which advocates for Palestinian prisoners; the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees; the Union of Agricultural Work Committees; the Bisan Center for Research and Development; and Defence for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P) ... Israel argued the groups had ties to the militant Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a secular, leftwing movement with political and armed wings.”

However, *The Guardian* report noted: “Israel has provided little evidence to back up the accusations. All six organisations deny the allegations and three have challenged the designation in Israel’s courts.”

In August, UN experts said the raids amount to a “severe suppression of human rights defenders and are illegal and unacceptable.” They added that Israel’s designation of the groups as terrorist entities are “illegitimate and unjustifiable and no concrete and credible evidence substantiating Israel’s allegations has ever been provided.”

The parliamentary committee report also included a section dedicated to the dangers faced by journalists reporting in conflict zones, but makes no mention of the risks faced by Palestinian journalists covering Israeli military operations.

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According to the organization Reporters Without Borders, 144 Palestinian journalists have been hit by live ammunition, rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas fired by Israeli forces since the Great March of Return protests began in 2018.

In a list paying tribute to killed or imprisoned journalists and human rights activists, the parliamentary committee report does not name any Palestinians or Israelis.

This omission was noted by Michael Bueckert, vice president of the advocacy group Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME).

"[The report] almost entirely ignores Israeli violations in a year when journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was murdered and 6 Pal. human rights groups were shut down," Bueckert tweeted Tuesday. "The report has a section on the killings of journalists, but it does not mention Shireen Abu Akleh who was killed by Israeli forces over 6 months ago."

However, he noted, "Recommendation 6 [in the report] is positive, as it calls on Canada to use every opportunity to condemn countries which violate the rights of journalists and human rights defenders 'whether or not they are allies.' It is critical that such an approach is finally applied to Israel."

"Although entirely expected, it is still outrageous that a Canadian parliamentary report on human rights violations would give a pass to Israel."

Parliament's foreign affairs committee has issued a report on the situation facing human rights defenders and journalists. Yet it almost entirely ignores Israeli violations in a year when journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was murdered and 6 Pal. human rights groups were shut down. [pic.twitter.com/xpp541kYi5](https://pic.twitter.com/xpp541kYi5)

— Michael Bueckert (@mbueckert) November 15, 2022

In the immediate aftermath of Abu Akleh's death, Canadian diplomats flagged the Israeli military's tack record of attacking journalists and its failure to properly investigate such attacks, documents obtained by *The Maple* in July revealed.

The day after Abu Akleh's death, Canadian representatives noted that the Israeli government's initial narrative about how Abu Akleh died had been "largely debunked."

As well, Canadian officials closely monitored responses from allied countries before issuing their own statements about the killing and the subsequent attack by Israeli security forces on Abu Akleh's funeral procession.

Meanwhile, Israel is refusing to cooperate with a criminal investigation into the killing. As reported by BBC News Tuesday:

“Israel has called the US Department of Justice's decision to investigate the killing of Palestinian-American reporter Shireen Abu Aqla a ‘mistake.’ Outgoing Defence Minister Benny Gantz said he had told US representatives that Israel would not co-operate ... The DoJ and FBI declined to comment, but Abu Aqla's family praised the ‘important step toward accountability.’”

Israel previously admitted that one of its soldiers was likely responsible for the killing, but claimed the shooting was likely accidental and said it would not press criminal charges against the individual.

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