

Should We Mourn The Death Of An Antisemitic Journalist?

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By Moshe Phillips

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Excuse me if I don't sit shiva for her



Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, a Christian, was killed during a firefight between IDF and Islamist militants in Jenin. (Screen cap: Twitter)

A reporter for an openly antisemitic media network was killed this week. Should Jews mourn her death?

The journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, was shot to death in the Palestinian Authority-controlled city of Jenin, where Israeli soldiers were trying to arrest Palestinian Arab terrorists, and the terrorists were shooting at the Israelis. It appears that Akleh was killed, accidentally, by the Palestinians.

I say "accidentally" because Akleh was a reporter for the antisemitic Al Jazeera network, a media agency that Palestinian terrorists obviously love. In the video footage of the incident, you can hear one of the terrorists yell after the shooting, "Injured! Oh man, Shireen! Shireen! Ambulance! Ambulance!" The terrorist obviously recognized her, and even was on a first-name basis with her.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett called the death of the antisemitic journalist “unfortunate” and “regrettable.” Defense Minister Benny Gantz said, “I would like to express my sorrow at the loss of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.” Justice Minister Gideon Saar called her death “tragic.” Foreign Minister Yair Lapid referred to her death as “sad.”

I understand that politicians sometimes feel the need to say certain things, for political reasons, even if they are untrue. But the rest of us are not bound by politicians’ cold little calculations. So I’ll ask out loud what many of us are thinking: Is sadness really the appropriate Jewish response in this instance? Is Akleh’s demise truly “tragic”?

Put another way, if a reporter for the Nazi newspaper *Der Sturmer* was killed in 1942, should Jews have mourned?

Obviously, we are not in the midst of a Holocaust today. But the principle is the same. If someone spreads hatred against the Jewish people, potentially inciting her readers to murder Jews, should we weep over her death?

Al Jazeera, which is funded by the government of Qatar, is not merely critical of Israel. It actively promotes antisemitism. So says Jonathan Greenblatt, director of the left-leaning Anti-Defamation League.

Greenblatt wrote about Al Jazeera in a 2018 op-ed in *The Hill*, which is still posted on the ADL website, along with other ADL materials exposing Al Jazeera, calling it “downright hateful to the Jewish people” and “a major exporter of hateful content against the Jewish people, Israel, and the United States.”

Greenblatt revealed that in early 2018, U.S. officials asked the ADL if a recent staffing change at Al Jazeera had resulted in a “shift in Al Jazeera’s intolerant messaging.” Greenblatt’s reply: “Sadly, we have determined that Al Jazeera continues to propagate a steady stream of hateful content.”

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Here are some examples that the ADL cited of statements published by the media agency that Shireen Abu Akleh represented:

— Al Jazeera has published articles referring to the Holocaust as “the alleged Holocaust.”

— An Al Jazeera writer called Israel a metastasizing “cancerous gland.”

— Al Jazeera broadcast a speech by Hamas official Fathi Hamad “in which he encouraged ‘the cleansing of Palestine of the filth of the Jews’ by 2022 and called for the establishment of a Caliphate ‘after the nation has been healed of its cancer, the Jews’.”

— Al Jazeera “also routinely glorifies violence against Israeli Jews,” calling dead terrorists “martyrs,” praising live terrorists as “resisters,” and defending terrorist groups as “the resistance.”

— Another Al Jazeera article “accused the Jewish people of ‘killing the Prophets,’ and falsely asserted that the historical existence of a Jewish temple in Jerusalem is a malicious fabrication.”

— Al Jazeera recently published “an article on its Arabic news webpage targeted at youth to decry the supposed ‘control of the Jews over the pornography industry’.”

This is the media agency that Shireen Abu Akleh represented.

This is the hate machine of which she was a proud and longtime part.

She could have resigned in protest at any time. She never did. That was her choice.

If Akleh had represented a media network that promoted the hatred of, say, African Americans, that would be reprehensible. The fact that she represented a media network that promoted the hatred of Jews is equally reprehensible. So while I’m not organizing any parties to celebrate Akleh’s death, please excuse me if I don’t sit *shiva* for her.

I’m not going to pretend that she was a normal, responsible journalist whose death we should mourn. She chose to be part of what is probably the world’s largest antisemitic media network. We don’t have to honor her, or her choices.



Moshe Phillips is a commentator on Jewish affairs whose writings appear regularly in the American and Israeli press. He was a U.S. delegate to the 38th World Zionist Congress in 2020. His views are his own.