

## **"Silencing the Press"**

**Report No. 23**

### **Israeli Occupation Forces' Violations against Local and International Media Personnel Working in the occupied Palestinian territory**



**01 April 2022- 31 March 2023**

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### Introduction

Israeli occupation forces (IOF) continued the systematic attacks against local and international media personnel<sup>1</sup> working in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) despite the protection that journalists, as civilians, enjoy under international law. IOF grave violations against journalists include violations of right to life, threats to their personal safety by targeting them with live and rubber bullets, physical assault that includes beating and humiliation, restrictions on the freedom of movement, bombardment of their offices and other violations demonstrating a well-planned scheme to isolate the oPt from the rest of the world and to provide a cover-up for crimes against civilians and impose a narrative opposite to the reality on the ground.

This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the “Silencing the Press” series issued by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR). It covers the period from 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 and documents in detail the relevant information and data that PCHR’s staff could access. This information reveals facts about these violations based on victims and eyewitnesses’ testimonies as well as PCHR’s field investigations.

Cases addressed in the report only includes IOF attacks, and PCHR’s staff has verified occurrence of these attacks on grounds of journalistic work or freedom of expression, excluding tens of cases that may have occurred on other grounds or there was insufficient information about them. During the reporting period, PCHR documented a total of (35) violations; most of them occurred in the West Bank. These violations included:

- Violations of the right to life and bodily integrity;
- Assaults on journalists, including beating and other forms of violence; physical and verbal assault, and degrading and humiliating treatment;
- Detention and arrests;
- Restrictions on the freedom of movement, including banning journalists’ access to certain areas and covering events and preventing journalists from moving between the West bank and Gaza Strip or traveling outside the oPt;
- Closure of media institutions; and
- Print ban on newspapers in the oPt.

It should be noted that violations in this regard are often multi-layered although an incident may include multiple violations, exp. Detaining a crew of journalists, physically assaulting them or threatening them with arrest, banning them from covering incidents or access to a certain area.

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<sup>1</sup> Media personnel includes journalists, reporters, cameramen and workers at press offices. All these categories will be referred to as «journalists» in this report.

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## Israeli Occupation Forces Attacks on Journalists and Media Institutions in oPt in 2023

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The killing of Al-Jazeera TV reporter, Shireen Abu 'Aqleh, and the injury of her colleague by IOF's fire in Jenin refugee camp while she was covering clashes between IOF and members of Palestinian armed groups was the bloodiest and most heinous crime committed against journalists during the reporting period. Moreover, IOF attacks against journalists and media institutions continued in the West Bank in general and in occupied East Jerusalem in particular. Those attacks were committed while journalists were covering incidents on the grounds, including peaceful protests organized by Palestinian civilians and international solidarity and human rights activists against the confiscation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank for the benefit of annexation wall and settlement expansion. Other attacks against journalists occurred, including shooting incidents, roads closures, Israeli bombardment, house demolitions, attacks on events and protests on national occasions and other attacks carried out by IOF on a daily basis.

Moreover, there was a significant increase in settlers' attacks against journalists during the reporting period, including physical assaults (beating, pushing, threatening, and banning them from photographing). Those attacks were committed before Israeli soldiers and under their protection, as they do not only take any action, but in many cases, they assault journalists, prevent them from covering incidents and order them to leave.

Those attacks included violations of the right to personal security; assault and harassment; firing tear gas canisters at them; shooting and wounding journalists; preventing them from taking photos and covering incidents; raiding, searching, closing and banning media offices; raiding journalists' houses; and banning the print of newspapers.

During the reporting period, the policy of arresting and detaining journalists continued. Many are still under arrest; some already tried and sentenced, some placed under administrative detention, and others have neither been tried nor indicted. Those journalists were detained on grounds of their journalistic work, claiming that they incited against IOF on social media or being in a closed military zone.

**PCHR has documented (35) attacks<sup>2</sup> by IOF against media and were as follows:**

- (1) female journalist killed while on duty.
- (12) journalists were injured with different bullets.
- (8) assaults and evidence of beating and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.
- (5) arrested and detained.
- (4) incidents where journalists were banned coverage.
- (2) journalists banned from traveling abroad.
- (1) media institution banned from working.

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<sup>2</sup> There are dozens of cases documented by PCHR related to Prosecutions of Palestinians on grounds of expressing their opinion on social media.

- (2) newspapers banned in the West Bank.

PCHR has categorized the crimes and violations committed by IOF against journalists depending on the type of attack, as each incident could comprise multiple violations, so PCHR categorization is based on the most significant violation in a given incident.

### **Legal Protection for Journalists under international humanitarian law**

The international humanitarian law (IHL) considers journalists an integral part of civilians and affirms that their presence in dangerous conflict areas should not be a justification for targeting them. The Four Geneva Conventions do not have specific stipulations on special protection for journalists; yet, the Third Geneva Convention (1949) relative to the treatment of prisoners of war granted war correspondents the status and privileges of prisoners of war, in case they were captured. Hence, IHL has not given special privilege or protection to journalists covering armed conflicts but stressed that they are civilians and must be treated on this basis. Article 79 of Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions stipulates that:

1. Journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians within the meaning of Article 50, paragraph (1).
2. They shall be protected as such under the Conventions and this Protocol, provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians, and without prejudice to the right of war correspondents accredited to the armed forces to the status provided for in Article 4 (4-A) of the Third Convention.
3. They may obtain an identity card similar to the model in Annex II of this Protocol. This card, which shall be issued by the government of the State of which the journalist is a national or in whose territory he resides or in which the news medium employing him is located, shall attest to his status as a journalist.

Article (50) of Protocol I, stipulates that: *“A civilian is any person who does not belong to one of the categories of persons referred to in Article 4 A 1), 2), 3) and 6) of the Third Convention and in Article 43 of this Protocol. In case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered to be a civilian.” Thus, the presence within the civilian population of individuals who do not come within the definition of civilians does not deprive the population of its civilian character.”*

Thus, the mere presence of journalists among the armed forces of a party does not justify directly targeting them by the other party. Accordingly, the principle of proportionality shall be respected in attacks on any military target with presence of journalists at the time as the anticipated military advantage shall be proportionate to justify it; otherwise, this may amount to a war crime as it has caused civilian losses to an extent disproportionate to the substantial military advantage.

In the light of the above, journalists do not have special protection and the convention has merely emphasized their civilian character. As the number of victims among journalists has increased, the United Nations has worked through the Security Council to reaffirm the civilian character of journalists and that they should not be targeted in any way. Security Council resolution 2222 of May 2015 provides that:

*“Journalists, media professionals and associated personnel engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians and shall be respected and protected as such, provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians. This is without prejudice to the right of war correspondents accredited to the armed forces to the status of prisoners of war provided for in article 4.A.4 of the Third Geneva Convention.”*

The resolution also condemns the impunity for attacks against journalists in situations of armed conflict as it provides that *“the Security Council strongly condemns the prevailing impunity for violations and abuses committed against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in situations of armed conflict, which in turn may contribute to the recurrence of these acts.”*

Under IHL, civilians shall enjoy a set of various rights, most notably that they shall never be the object of attack as long as they are in their civilian status, according to Article 51 of Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions:

- 1. The civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations. To give effect to this protection, the following rules, which are additional to other applicable rules of international law, shall be observed in all circumstances.*
- 2. The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited.*
- 3. Civilians shall enjoy the protection afforded by this Section, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities.*

IHL classifies war correspondents as “Persons who accompany the armed forces without actually being members thereof”. If this category falls into the power of the enemy, it shall be treated as a prisoner of war until final releasing and repatriation. Therefore, civilian journalists enjoy more protection than war correspondents and they should not be targeted in any way.

### **Protection for press institutions and equipment**

Press institutions are civilian objects and therefore should not be targeted by any party to the conflict. Press institutions remain civilian objects, as long as they do not make an effective contribution to hostilities. Therefore, the parties to the conflict have an obligation to distinguish between civilian objects and military objects. Article 48 of Additional Protocol I stipulates that:

*“In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives.”* In addition, Article 52 of Additional Protocol I stipulate, *“Civilian objects shall not be the object of attack or of reprisals. Civilian objects are all objects which are not military objectives as defined in paragraph 2”*. In light of the above, press institutions are civilian objects, even if they broadcast news or statements hostile to one of the parties to the conflict. Moreover, paragraph (3) of Article 52 stipulates that: *“In case of doubt whether an object which is normally dedicated to civilian purposes, such as a place of worship, a house or other dwelling or a school, is being used to make an effective contribution to military action, it shall be presumed not to be so used.”*

Press institutions may lose the protection provided by IHL if it hosted combat action provided that they are being used to make an effective contribution to military action, so their total or partial destruction offers a definite military advantage. Accordingly, merely broadcasting news or statements inciting combat action or even rumors is not a sufficient justification for targeting a press institution, so the latter still enjoys its civilian status. Paragraph (2) of Article 52 of Protocol I stipulates, *“Attacks shall be limited strictly to military objectives. In so far as objects are concerned, military objectives are limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.”*

Press equipment, such as live broadcasting vehicles, broadcast towers, cameras and other equipment, are considered civilian objects that shall not be targeted unless they effectively contribute to hostilities and attacking them would have a definite military advantage. Thus, any targeting of press equipment or broadcast towers is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, amounting to a war crime.

### **IOF violations against journalists working in local and international media**

#### **I. Violations of the right to life and bodily integrity**

During the reporting period, a female journalist was killed, and 12 other journalists were injured by IOF; 2 of them were shot with live bullets, 6 were shot with rubber-coated bullets, 3 were hit with stun grenades, and 2 were hit with teargas canisters. Investigations showed that IOF directly targeted journalists and their unjustified shooting was often intended to inflict harm to journalists in disregard for discrimination and proportionality principles in use of force.

IOF have committed their systematic violations against journalists despite all the distinctive signs that emphasize the nature of their work, including the press uniform and press equipment. Moreover, Israeli snipers intend to target journalists' upper bodies in order to inflict harm to them so often. This undoubtedly confirms that the soldiers have orders, or at least permission, to inflict bodily harm on journalists and deter them from covering Israeli crimes.



The number of journalists killed by IOF's fire in the oPt since September 2000 has risen to 25; 23 of them were Palestinians and 2 were foreigners. In the West Bank, 8 journalists, including an Italian journalist, were killed while 17 journalists, including a British journalist, were killed in the Gaza Strip.

- **The killing of journalist Shireen Abu 'Aqleh**

- On 11 May 2022, Al-Jazeera TV reporter, Shireen Abu 'Aqleh (51),<sup>3</sup> was killed by an Israeli sniper while covering clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian armed group members in Jenin refugee camp, north of the West Bank. Abu 'Aqleh was directly shot in the head by an Israeli sniper while her colleague 'Ali al-Samoudi (55), a photojournalist, was shot with a live bullet in the back when he tried to rescue her. Both of them were wearing the blue PRESS-marked vest and helmet, distinctively showing they were journalists.
- According to data collected by PCHR's staff, Shireen Abu 'Aqleh was injured while wearing a helmet and blue flak jacket both marked with the word "PRESS." IOF, who deployed in the area and whose snipers topped roofs of houses there, opened fire at Abu 'Aqleh, wounding her with a live bullet below the ear, i.e. the only area not covered by the helmet. Thus, the injury indicates an intent of fatal shooting.
- Investigations conducted by the Palestinian Public Prosecution that came similar to PCHR's data has also confirmed that Shireen was deliberately targeted by an Israeli sniper, as it was a fatal shooting right below the helmet, emphasizing that the shot came from IOF.
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized that "the shots that killed Abu Akleh and injured her colleague Ali Sammoudi came from Israeli Security Forces and not from indiscriminate firing by armed Palestinians, as initially claimed by Israeli authorities."
- The Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ravina Shamdasani, said in a press conference held in Geneva on 24 June 2022, that "in accordance with our global human rights monitoring methodology, our office inspected photo, video and audio material, visited the scene, consulted experts, reviewed official communications and interviewed witnesses. According to our findings, shots that killed Abu 'Aqleh came from Israeli Security Forces and not from indiscriminate firing by armed Palestinians."
- At the beginning, Israel denied responsibility for the killing of journalist Abu Aqleh, claiming that Abu Aqleh was killed "from indiscriminate firing by armed Palestinians. However, in the first full reversal of its earlier position, Israel later declared that it was "highly likely" that Shireen Abu Akleh was killed by Israeli fire, but by accident.

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<sup>3</sup> PCHR filed a report to the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry regarding the situation into the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), in which it addressed the killing of Journalist Abu 'Aqleh and confirmed that she was entitled to protection as a civilian in accordance with international humanitarian law and customary international law. Specifically, Article (79-1) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention, which stipulates: "*Journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians*".

- Also, on 13 May, IOF assaulted mourners participating in the funeral of Abu 'Aqleh. They established dozens of police checkpoints in occupied East Jerusalem and tried to prevent the transport of her body from the French Hospital to the Roman Catholic Church in Hebron Gate area in East Jerusalem's Old City. Also, they assaulted civilians and journalists at the hospital's main gate. While taking Abu 'Akleh's coffin out of the hospital morgue, IOF stopped and attacked the funeral procession, that was scheduled to carry the coffin on foot from the hospital to the church so that all those gathered, and her beloved ones could bid her farewell. When the mourners refused to put down the coffin to be taken by vehicle to the church, IOF unjustifiably and violently raided the Hospital yard and building, fired rubber bullets at the mourners and violently beat them. IOF forcefully pushed and beat the pallbearers with batons, nearly causing the coffin to drop to the ground were it not for the steadfastness of the pallbearers.

In a later development, Al Jazeera TV Network filed Abu Aqleh's assassination case before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. Al-Jazeera affirmed in a statement on 06 December that Abu 'Aqleh and her colleagues were directly shot by IOF, and Israel's claim that Shireen was mistakenly killed- in an exchange of fire, is baseless.

### Journalists wounded in the West Bank

PCHR has documented 11 cases in which journalists were directly injured while covering incidents in the West Bank; 2 were shot with live bullets, 6 with rubber bullets and 3 sustained stun grenade shrapnel wounds.

### The most prominent cases were as follows:

- **On 11 June 2022**, journalist 'Abdul Hafeez al-Hashlamoun, a photographer at European Pressphoto Agency (EPA), was directly hit with a stun grenade in his head by IOF while he was covering clashes between IOF and Palestinian young men in Tarqumiyah village, south of Hebron. Al-Hashlamoun was wearing the PRESS-marked vest when an Israeli soldier opened fire at him at close range while covering incidents that broke out in the village. Al-Hashlamoun was immediately evacuated to the hospital and received treatment.
- **On 24 June 2022**, journalist Ibrahim Ayoub 'Ata (29) was shot with a live bullet in his leg by IOF while he was on duty. 'Ata was injured during IOF's incursion into Deir Abu Mash'al village, northwest of Ramallah, where clashes broke out between IOF and Palestinian young men who forced the Israeli soldiers out.

'Ata said to PCHR's fieldworker the following:

*"I am a cameraman working for Deir Abu Mash'al Facebook page and continuously cover all incidents taking place in the village. I was covering IOF's incursion into the village live on Facebook and standing around 100 meters away from the area where clashes erupted between IOF and Palestinian young men, noting that I was wearing the*

*PRESS-marked vest and helmet. Meanwhile, an Israeli soldier rushed towards me and directly opened fire at me, wounding me with a live bullet in my right leg below the knee. I then felt severe pain and warmth in my leg that I could barely move 2.5 meters towards a civilian car parked there. The car then drove me to Ramallah Hospital for treatment."*

- **On 19 August 2022**, journalist Fadi 'Abdul Rahim Ibrahim Yaseen (44), a photojournalist at Palestine TV, was shot with a rubber-coated bullet in his foot while covering clashes that accompanied IOF's suppression of Kafr Qaddum weekly peaceful protest organized by Palestinians in Kafr Qaddoum village, Qalqilya.

Yaseen talked to PCHR's fieldworker about how he was injured:

*"Kafr Qaddum weekly protest is organized against land confiscations and closure of the main street in favor of Kedumim settlement. Like every week, the protest started following Friday prayer toward the closed entrance and protesters chanted national slogans and were raising flags. IOF then fired stun grenades, teargas canisters and live bullets. I was covering what was happening when Israeli soldiers fired rubber-coated bullets at me, wounding me in the right knee. I received treatment on the spot and then returned to cover, noting that I was wearing the PRESS-marked flak jacket and gas mask and showing my camera and press equipment."*

- **On 22 August 2022**, journalist Anal Basem al-Jada' (33), from Qalqilya, was shot with a rubber-coated bullet in his right hand by IOF while covering Kafr Qaddum weekly protest in Qalqilya.

Al-Jada' said to PCHR's fieldworker:

*"On Friday, 26 August 2022, I was with my colleagues covering Kafr Qaddum weekly protest. We were around 200 meters away from the Israeli soldiers and 100 meters away from the protesters 4 Israeli soldiers dressed in the dark green uniforms and armed with different types of weapons started indiscriminately firing rubber-coated bullets. Despite wearing the distinctive PRESS-marked blue flak jacket and helmet, a bullet hit my right hand, causing light bruises. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) crew provided me first aid, but I was still in pain, so the paramedics advised me to go to the hospital."*

- **On 05 October 2022**, journalist Loay al-Samhan, a photographer at Palestine TV, was shot with a plastic bullet in his hand; and another journalist namely Mahmoud Fawzi, a cameraman at Event Media, was injured with a plastic bullet in his arm while they were covering clashes between IOF and Palestinians in Deir al-Hatab village in Nablus. Both journalists were taken to the hospital for treatment.

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- **On 12 January 2022**, two journalists namely Hasan Mohammed Qamhiya (41), a freelance journalist, and Naser Ishtayieh (50), a photographer at Sipa USA News Agency, were injured by IOF fire while covering incidents that accompanied the incursion into Nablus.

Qamhiya said to PCHR's fieldworker:

*"On Thursday morning, 12 January 2023, while I was at my Advertising company on Faisal Street in central Nablus, I learnt that IOF raided Nablus's Old City. Immediately, I headed to the area to cover what was going on. When I arrived, I saw an IOF patrol in front of a bakery in the Blacksmiths Market in the Old City. I tried to cross the street, but suddenly IOF directly opened fire at me and wounded my right leg. Instantly, people there drove me in a taxi to Rafidia Governmental Hospital for treatment."*

Journalist Naser Shtayyeh (50) said to PCHR:

*"At about 08:40 on Thursday morning, 12 January 2023, when I was by chance on al-Showterah Street near the Nablus Municipality Library close to Nablus's old City wearing the "PRESS" flak jacket and on duty working as a photographer for Sipa USA, I learned that IOF raided the Blacksmiths Market in Nablus's old city, which was across the street. Immediately, I headed there, and when I arrived at the traffic light separating al-Showterah Street from the Blacksmiths Market, I saw four Israeli military patrols at the Market entrance right in front of the Granada Cinema. Suddenly, I heard an explosion followed by heavy gunfire. As a result, I was hit by grenade shrapnel in the feet and then taken to Rafidia Governmental Hospital in Nablus by a PRCS ambulance for treatment but was soon discharged."*

- **On 13 February 2023**, journalist Wael Dawoud al-Salaymeh, a photographer at Al-Jazeera TV channel, was wounded with a rubber-coated bullet in his right leg whilst covering the clashes between Palestinians and IOF erupted following the latter's attempt to demolish a residential building in Jabal Al-Mukaber in occupied Jerusalem. It should be noted that al-Salaymeh was wearing the distinctive PRESS flak jacket when he was shot by IOF.

Journalist al-Salaymeh (58) talked to PCHR about his injury:

*"I went with Al-Jazeera crew at around 06:00 to Jabal Al-Mukaber neighborhood, where IOF surrounded Bashir family houses near the American Street. After the demolition and during IOF's withdrawal from the American Street right at the entrance to Bashir neighborhood, clashes broke out between the Palestinians protestors and IOF; meanwhile, an IOF SUV drove towards the press crews, and heavily fired tear gas canisters and stun grenades followed by rubber bullets wounding me in the right leg. I was only 100 meters away from the Israeli soldier in the military SUV. Nuran Charitable Association paramedics arrived and treated me on the spot, but I was then referred to Al-Makassed Hospital."*

*Al-Salaymeh confirmed that a report by his colleague Najwan al-Samri, a reporter at Al-Jazeera, that he later saw proved that the Israeli soldier directly targeted him while covering, adding that it was all documented in the videos published by Al-Jazeera TV.*

- **On 22 March 2023**, journalist Suleiman Abu Srour (29), a photographer for the Palestinian News and Information Agency WAFA, was injured by stun grenade shrapnel in the shoulder while covering the clashes between IOF and Palestinian youths in Jericho.

Abu Srour said to PCHR the following:

*"I am a photographer and reporter for WAFA in Jericho and the Jordan Valleys. While I was on duty as a photographer and wearing the PRESS-marked helmet and flak jacket, IOF opened fire at a Palestinian vehicle. The vehicle fled the scene but a passenger in it was wounded, I along with other young men rushed to cover the shooting and saw who was inside the vehicle. At the time, the Israeli soldiers began screaming and fired a heavy barrage of stun grenades and tear gas canisters at us. As a result, I sustained minor wounds in the shoulder by stun grenade shrapnel and was treated at the Jericho Governmental Hospital."*

### Journalist Wounded in the Gaza Strip

- **On 24 March 2023**, photojournalist Hasan 'AbdulFattah Mohammad Eslayeh (37) was wounded with a tear gas canister in the shoulder whilst covering the confrontations between Palestinian young men and IOF near the border fence, east of Khan Yunis, southern Gaza Strip. Eslayeh was treated on the spot by the PRCS paramedics.

At the time, Dozens of young men and boys gathered on Friday afternoon only tens of meters away from the barbed-wire fence along eastern Khuza'a town, east of Khan Yunis, burned tires, raised Palestinian flags and chanted slogans, in protest against the Israeli escalating violations in the West Bank. A number of young men approached the border fence trying to throw stones and fix flags on the fence, but IOF stationed along the fence fired live bullets and tear gas canisters at the protestors. The incident, which lasted for at least two hours, wounded two Palestinians, including journalist Eslayeh.

## II. Violence, assault, degrading and inhumane treatment against journalists:

During the reporting period, PCHR documented many cases in which 8 journalists, including a woman, were subjected to beating and other forms of violence and inhumane and degrading treatment by Israeli forces and settlers. Those attacks were as follows:

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- **On 15 April 2022**, the Israeli soldiers assaulted journalist Rami Al-Khatib, who works in the Media Department at Ministry of Islamic Endowments (Awqaf), while covering events in Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Journalist Al-Khatib (40) said to PCHR that:

*“At around 08:00 on Friday, 15 April 2022, during the Israeli raid of Al-Aqsa Mosque, I was in the Dome of the Rock square documenting the Israeli attacks as a photographer working for the Media Department of the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf). During which, a number of Israeli soldiers surrounded me and asked, “What are you doing?” They did not give me a chance to answer and started beating me with batons. I fell on the ground and fainted. I sustained wounds in the face and in the body as well as a fracture in my hand, so I was taken to Al-Makassed hospital to receive treatment and had my hand splinted”. Al-Khatib added that the Israeli forces broke his camera and assaulted him again the next morning while covering the settlers’ raids into Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Israeli forces’ assaults on the worshipers. They beat him again and impeded his journalistic work.”*

- **On 06 May 2022**, the Israeli soldiers assaulted journalist Ahmad Jalajel, a reporter for news websites, by beating and pushing him. as a result, he sustained bruises while covering the clashes between the Israeli forces and Palestinians at Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- **On 10 May 2022**, settlers attacked Palestine TV staff and prevented them from covering the clashes between the Israeli soldiers and Palestinians at the entrance to ‘Azzun village, Qalqilya. The attacked journalists were identified as Palestine TV reporter Ahmad Shawar, cameraman Bashar Nazzal and the car driver. The settlers threw stones at the staff and beat them with sticks in front of the Israeli soldiers and prevented them from covering.
- **On 13 May 2022**, IOF assaulted two journalists during the funeral of journalist Sherin Abu ‘Akleh. Tens of thousands of Palestinians flocked to the Zion Cemetery in the occupied city of Jerusalem to participate in the Funeral all the way to her final resting place. However, the Israeli forces attacked the mourners, causing wounds and bruises to many of them, including journalist Ashraf Shweiki, who was attacked in front of the St Louis French Hospital in Sheikh Jarrah.
- **On 08 September 2022**, IOF arrested journalist and News Director at Palestine TV, Yousuf Mohammad ‘Adi (36), on Al-Wad Street, in central Old City of occupied East Jerusalem, and brutally assaulted him; as a result, he sustained bruises, wounds and fractures.

According to ‘Adi and eyewitnesses’ testimonies and viral footages, IOF permanently stationed opposite to the Hospice Hotel on al-Wad Street stopped Yousuf ‘Adi, who was with his colleague heading to Al-Aqsa Mosque via al-Wad Street and asked them to show their ID cards. After ‘Adi showed his permit, they started searching him in a humiliating

manner, and when he asked them to stop, the soldiers violently assaulted him and dragged him to the ground. He started screaming for help from passers-by who tried to intervene, but IOF prevented tens of them who gathered in the area from approaching 'Adi, and started hitting him on the head, pulling his hair and slamming his head to the ground and the iron bars of a barrier several times until he fainted. Despite fainting, the Israeli soldiers dragged and handcuffed him and then searched and assaulted him again by kicking and beating, though he was immobile and could not act to what they did to him. 'Adi described what he was subjected to by saying "I kept saying to myself that I was going to die, they chose to kill me for no reason".

In his testimony, 'Adi said that he was taken via al-Wad Street to a vehicle that drove him to a police station, which he did not recognize, and remained outside for 3 hours in the vehicle in front of the police station while handcuffed and under the beating sun. When he called for help from the Israeli police officers who were passing by the police station, the Israeli soldiers heavily beat him, so he fainted again. Later, he was taken to Hadassah Hospital, where it turned out that he sustained wounds and bruises that required stitches in addition to two fractures in his nose. 'Adi added that he heard the police saying to the doctors that he had fallen when the doctors asked about the reason of his injuries. 'Adi said that he was referred at dawn to a police station near the Old City and interrogated. An Israeli officer told him that he scolded the Israeli soldiers for not doing more to his face that was covered in blood. 'Adi indicated that he was first addressed with charges of posing threat to the police officers' lives and then of assaulting a policeman, and finally charges of failure to comply with the police officers. He added that he was referred to court and released on Friday on bail of 500 shekels and banned him from entering Israel for 30 days as well as paying another 500 shekels to enter Israel.

- **On 20 October 2022**, Israeli soldiers assaulted journalist Mu'tassim Saqf al-Hait, a photographer for Quds News Network, while he was covering the clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli forces at the northern entrance to al-Bireh city. Although the Journalist was wearing the distinctive PRESS flak jacket, one of the soldiers hit him with his weapon. Moreover, the soldiers prevented the rest of journalists from covering the events and forced them to leave the area after the soldiers threw stun grenades at them.

### III. Detention and Arrests against Journalists

During the reporting period, around (5) journalists, including a woman, were detained or arrested by IOF whether on duty or from their own houses after raiding and searching them merely on grounds of being a journalist. Four journalists are still under arrest; some of them have been sentenced, others have been put under administrative detention and their detention was renewed more than once. Other detained journalists have not been sentenced nor charged. The arrests and detention were as follows:

- **On 19 July 2022**, IOF arrested journalist ‘Amer ‘AbdulHaleem Abu ‘Arafa (37), a reporter for Quds Press News Agency, from his home in Deir Samet village, west of Dura, southwest of Hebron, after raiding it at dawn. The Israeli soldiers searched the house and confiscated 23,000 shekels from his wife. ‘Arafa was placed under administrative detention for 8 months in ‘Ofer prison, west of Ramallah, and released on 16 March 2023.

Journalist Abu ‘Arafa’s wife, Safaa Ibrahim Al-Hroub (30), said to PCHR’s fieldworker that:

*“At approximately 02:30, we woke up to noise near the house, so my husband went to see what was going on, but suddenly, there were heavy knocks on the door. My husband opened the door to see Israeli soldiers in front of him. They asked him “Are you ‘Amer?” and he answered yes. They took him outside, and around 30 soldiers raided the house, and one of them said “we will search”. I told him that my three children were asleep and that my brother was in the house too. He asked me to take the children to one of the rooms, and then the soldiers started searching. After 20 minutes, one of the soldiers came and said that a female soldier wanted to search us in the bathroom. After that, one of the soldiers asked, “Where is the money in the house?”, I said, “I have 23,000 shekels for a car down payment.” The soldier took the money and counted it and then brought my husband from outside. The soldier then talked about the money with the other soldiers, wrote down the money confiscated in a seizure list, and left the house along with my husband and the money, noting that my husband is a journalist and works as a reporter for Quds Press.”*

- **On 20 July 2022**, IOF arrested journalist Faisal ‘Ezer Youssuf Al-Rifa’i, from ‘Anata village, east of occupied Jerusalem, and was referred to administrative detention.

‘Alawi Al-Rifa’i, Faisal Al-Rifa’i’s uncle, said that at approximately 02:00 on Wednesday, 20 July 2022, IOF raided Faisal’s house in ‘Anata village, but he was not home. They then raided it again at 05:00 and handed a summons to refer to the intelligence. Al-Rifa’i added that Faisal went to turn himself in with his father and was arrested, extending his detention to 26 July 2022. Al-Rifa’i said that a lawyer from Addameer “Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association” was hired for his nephew and told the family that Faisal was referred to administrative detention due to his alleged affiliation with Hamas.

Journalist Faisal was charged with incitement on social media against the Israeli authorities. The Israeli ‘Ofer Court decided to release him a week after his arrest and fined him with 5,000 shekels. However, an appeal filed by the Military Prosecution challenged the release decision, so his detention continued.

- **On 01 August 2022**, IOF arrested journalist Nidal Abu ‘Aker (57), a TV host, after raiding his house in Dheisheh refugee camp, south of Bethlehem. IOF thoroughly searched the house, after detaining his wife and children in one of the rooms. Abu ‘Aker was referred to administrative detention for six months. On 17 January 2023, the administrative detention was renewed for another six months.



- **On 04 September 2022**, IOF arrested journalist Lama Hani Ghosheh (30) after raiding and searching her father's house during IOF's incursion into Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, north of occupied East Jerusalem's Old City.

Engineer Hani Ghosheh said that Israeli intelligence officer raided and searched his house while he was not home and violently arrested his daughter, Lama, in front of her two children, Karmel (5) and Qais (3) in addition to confiscating her cell phone and personal computer. Ghosheh said that his daughter was taken to room 4 in Moscovia detention center and was interrogated for several hours. The intelligence officers charged her with incitement and extended her detention until Monday.

Journalist Ghosheh was released nine days after her arrest on condition of house arrest and not using social media or phone, in addition finding her 50,000 shekels. During her house arrest, 2 court hearings were held for Ghosheh: one on 14 February 2023 and her trial was postponed continuing her house arrest until 21 March 2023. While on 21 March 2023, her trial was postponed again until the second hearing on 18 April 2023 during the time she remained under house arrest.

- **On 28 November 2022**, IOF arrested journalist Sabri Mousa Jibrin, from his house in Tuqu' village in Bethlehem.

On his brother's arrest, Tariq Mousa Jabarin (41), the Journalist's brother, said that IOF moved into Jabarin neighborhood in Tuqu' village at around 02:00 on the mentioned day, searched his parents' house, and arrested his brother, journalist Sabri Mousa Jibrin (31). Afterwards, IOF raided his house next door and handed him a summons to refer to the Israeli Etzion Interrogation Center. Jabarin added that at 09:00 he went to the Interrogation Center, where he was detained for 5 hours and interrogated about his political affiliation. Jabarin said that his brother, Sabri, was also detained in the Etzion Center, and when he asked about him, the intelligence officer told him they wanted to send a warning message to his brother; and this was the only reason behind his arrest, telling him that his brother will be released soon. One week before the arrest, Jabarin pointed out that his brother was detained by the so-called officer Abu Jameel in Bethlehem, coinciding with his brother on duty covering IOF's incursion into Janata village, east of Bethlehem. The officer detained him for half an hour and confiscated his cell phone and press ID card under the pretext of no photography allowed. The officer threatened him that he would be summoned and arrested.

#### IV. Restrictions on the freedom of movement

Restrictions on freedom of movement fall under a systematic policy in the context of the violations and collective punishments that the Israeli occupation forces continue to impose on Palestinian civilians in the oPt. Journalists face serious difficulties to access and cover incidents to practice their work, including banning their travel outside the oPt; restriction on moving

between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; preventing them from moving between the West Bank's villages, refugee camps and cities due to hundreds of Israeli military checkpoints; and restricting their access to cover specific incidents. However, Palestinian, and even international journalists suffer from this type of violations on a daily basis because it is unlimited and cannot be confined in certain cases. Despite this, PCHR monitored some cases:

### 1. Journalists banned access to certain areas:

- **On 04 September 2022**, IOF arrested Raneen Sawafta, a photographer at Reuters, in the Jordan Valleys, and prevented her from covering the shooting on an Israeli bus in the area. The Israeli soldiers confiscated the keys of a public vehicle she was using, although she introduced herself to the soldiers. Sawafta was detained for several hours, and interrogated between times before she was released.
- **On 08 September 2022**, Israeli soldiers detained three journalists working for 'Awdeh TV in Hebron's Old City and they were identified as Youssef Shehadeh, Nour al-Deen Banat, and Tariq Khamaysa. The journalists were forced to stand for three hours under the sun, during which the soldiers searched their press equipment and deleted photos and footage captured to use them for a report on IOF's violations. The journalists remained under custody until the Israeli police officers who had taken the journalists' press cards, arrived, gave the cards back and released them.

### 2. Journalists banned travel outside the oPt

During the reporting period, the Israeli occupation authorities banned two journalists, including a female journalist, from travelling outside the oPt. whether to practice their journalistic work or to participate in international conferences.

- **On 25 July 2022**, the Israeli authorities prevented journalist Majdoleen Hassouna, a reporter for TRT Channel, from traveling to Turkey via King Hussein Bridge crossing. It is noteworthy that journalist Hassouna has been banned travel for three years upon a decision by the Israeli intelligence. She received news confirming that her name had been removed from the ban list, so she decided to travel, but the Israeli authorities assured her at the crossing that she was still on the ban list.
- **On 26 July 2022**, the Israeli authorities prevented Mujahid Al-Sa'di, a freelance journalist, from traveling to Jordan via King Hussein Bridge, and interrogated him for two hours.

## V. Media institutions closed

The Israeli authorities banned Voice of Palestine radio from operating in occupied Jerusalem and Israel for six months on charges of incitement against IOF.

- **On 14 March 2023**, the Israeli Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, signed a decision to close the Voice of Palestine Radio Station offices, an official Palestinian Authority (PA) channel, and ban their representatives from operating and broadcasting in occupied Jerusalem and Israel for six months. Pursuant to the decision, the Israeli authorities raided Marcel Production Company in Jerusalem on 20 March 2023, handed it an order to prohibit it from providing communications services to the Station, and summoned 5 journalists for interrogation on grounds of practicing their journalistic work for Palestine TV and they were identified as Layali 'Eid and Lana Kamela, Firas Hindawi, Walid Qamar and Yazan Haddad. All of them were interrogated in so-called Rooms 4 for several hours about the nature of their work, and they were warned of violating the order issued by the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben Gvir.

On her arrest and interrogation, Journalist, Lana Kamela, said that the Israeli intelligence threatened the five journalists of the consequences of working for Palestine TV, whether in interviews, reports, or full media coverage. Kamela emphasized that it is the company's mission to distribute their journalistic work and not theirs; however, the intelligence services directly warned them that anything related to them that would be broadcasted on Palestine TV and Radio would hold them liable under the pretext of violating the decision of the Minister of National Security. Kamela pointed out that the Israeli authorities did not ban the company's work but prevented it and the journalists from dealing with Palestine TV and Radio and that is what the decision is mainly about.

### VI: Newspapers banned in the oPt

IOF continue to ban al-Resalah and Palestine newspapers, which are published in Gaza City, from being printed in the West Bank's printing houses for 5 years. On 28 May 2014, the Israeli authorities issued a decision to ban the printing of the two newspapers in al-Ayyam Printing House in the West Bank, and informed the printing house of a military decision to ban publishing and distributing Palestine newspaper, which is originally published in Gaza City.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The report reviews IOF ongoing assaults on journalists and media personnel in the oPt in the period between 01 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. The most significant human rights violations against journalists over the year was the escalation of shooting crimes against journalists and media personnel in the West Bank that killed journalist Shiren Abu 'Akleh by an Israeli sniper while covering the confrontations between Palestinian young Palestinians and IOF though she was wearing the distinctive "PRESS" vest and being with her colleague in a place exposed to snipers. The reporting period also witnessed a significant increase in attacks against journalists in occupied Jerusalem, including beating them and pursuing and preventing them from covering incidents in the holy city. Moreover, IOF closed and banned Voice of Palestine Radio from operating in Jerusalem and Israel, warning the company that provides media services to the Radio of dealing with it allegedly for incitement against IOF.

PCHR monitored that IOF continued to commit crimes affecting the bodily integrity of journalists, including shootings that have killed and injured journalists while on duty.

PCHR also documented that IOF continued to arrest and detain journalists both in the field while on duty and from their houses during military raids and searches on grounds of their work.

Moreover, IOF continue to ban al-Resalah and Palestine newspapers, which are published in Gaza City, from being printed in the West Bank since 2014.

It should be noted that IOF have never conducted any serious investigations in the crimes committed against media personnel in the oPt, similarly to its handling of its other crimes committed against Palestinian civilians in the oPt.

#### **In light of that, PCHR:**

1. Emphasizes that targeting journalists, despite all the distinctive signs that show the nature of their work and IOF's deliberate targeting of their upper bodies, undoubtedly confirms that the soldiers have orders, or at least permission to inflict bodily harm on journalists and deter them from covering the incidents;
2. Considers these practices against media personnel as part of Israel's ongoing violations of Palestinian civilians' rights and proof of Israel's disregard for international humanitarian law, especially the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relevant to Protection of Civilians in Times of War;
3. Stresses that the majority of the Israeli attacks carried out against the journalists working in local and international news agencies were willful and intentional, especially that those journalists were in their press uniforms while on duty;

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## Israeli Occupation Forces Attacks on Journalists and Media Institutions in oPt in 2023

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4. Underscores that these systematic attacks aim at preventing media from covering and publishing the crimes committed by IOF against civilians in the oPt in attempt to “silence the press;”
5. Reiterates its call on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to meet their obligations under the Convention and immediately provide international protection for the Palestinian people and their property;
6. Urges the relevant international parties, especially the International Federation of Journalists and UN human rights protection mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteurs for the rights to freedom of expression and on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, to monitor violations and take a proper position on these incidents particularly those against journalists;
7. Calls upon the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Commission of Inquiry to visit the oPt and take a clear and firm position against the ongoing Israeli crimes against Palestinian civilians, including journalists; and
8. Urges the International Criminal Court to establish a portal through which a person can provide testimonies, complaints, videos and eyewitnesses, similar to what happened with Ukraine.