



General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 August 2014

English only

Human Rights Council

Twenty-seventh session

Agenda item 7

Human rights situation in Palestine and other
occupied Arab territories

Written statement* submitted by Press the Emblem Campaign, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in
accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 August 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.14-15014 (E)



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15 journalists and media workers killed during operation “Protective Edge”: the responsible have to be held accountable

Introduction

As of the day of submission of this contribution (25th August), 15 journalists and media workers have been killed in the context of the operation “Protective Edge” launched by the Israeli forces on 8 July 2014 on the Gaza Strip. Additionally, many journalists were injured by Israeli attacks, the houses of 16 of them were destroyed (often purposely targeted), and 8 media outlets were shelled. The Israeli army also interrupted the broadcasting of different TV and radio stations as well as media websites¹.

The lack of protection given to media workers in the most longstanding conflict is matter of deep concern; it represents an unprecedented escalation of violations against journalists by the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) in the West Bank observed in recent years. The Israeli violations against Palestinian journalists are the most dangerous, life threatening, and the most frequent.

The Press Emblem Campaign (PEC) denounces the harassment against journalists and media workers as well as the smear campaign of the Israeli diplomacy against foreign journalists falsely accused to work for Hamas² that leads to a sneaky form of self-censorship.

The PEC also deplores methods employed by the Hamas authorities and their representatives against visiting international journalists in Gaza over the past month. Foreign reporters working in Gaza have been harassed, threatened or questioned over stories or information they have reported. The PEC denounces the system of "vetting" Hamas is putting in place, a procedure that would allow for the blacklisting of specific journalists.

Media outlets attacked

The IOF destroyed 8 media outlets in the Gaza Strip. 5 of them were targeted deliberately, i.e.: the 3 headquarters of Al-Aqsa TV and satellite channel, the office of Alwataniya Agency for Media, and Al-Jazeera TV premises. 2 media outlets were hit indirectly, the first by the shelling of a nearby building, the second by the bombing of the building inside which the outlet was located.

Three headquarters of Al-Aqsa TV and satellite channel (where 325 journalists, media workers, programmers and employees work) were shelled, as well as the Alwataniya Agency for Media (where 35 journalists and employees were present). Al-Jazeera TV office was shelled a day after the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman threatened to close Al-Jazeera office. The destruction of Forsan Al-Hyriya radio station resulted from the shelling of a nearby house. The shelling of a building where Sawt Al-Watan radio was located caused material damages and injured employees.

In addition to shelling and destroying media outlets, the Israeli occupation army deliberately disturbed the broadcasting of 7 radio and TV stations and websites, and used these stations to broadcast inciting messages against the Palestinian resistance, as they did in their previous attacks on the Gaza Strip. The following radio stations and websites were targeted: Al-Aqsa radio, Sawt Al-Quds radio, Sawat Al-Sha'eb, Filistin Il-Yom TV and website, Al-Ra'ei website.

¹ PEC pays tribute to the work of Palestinian Center for Development & Media Freedoms (MADA) which provided an impressive amount of reliable information, see more at http://www.madacenter.org/report.php?lang=1&id=1487&category_id=13&year=2014

² http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2014/08/04/tve-alvarez-attaque-israe_n_5648135.html?utm_hp_ref=algeria

The victims of crimes

- 9 July **Hamed Shehab** (Palestinian, aged 30, media worker at 24 Media) hit by an Israeli air strike while driving home on Omar al-Mukhtar street in a car clearly marked as a media vehicle, the word "TV" printed on the front hood of the car;
- 10 July **Mohammed Smeri** (Palestinian, Gaza Now website) killed in an Israeli war jet bombardment on Deir Albalah town, south of the Gaza Strip;
- 20 July **Khalid Hamad** (Palestinian, aged 25, Continue TV Production) was killed during Israeli artillery shelling of the city's Shujaya (aka Shuja'iyya) residential district while wearing a vest clearly marked "Press";
- 23 July **Abdulrahman Ziad Abu Hayyin** (Palestinian, aged 28, Al-Kitab TV) killed by an Israeli bomb which destroyed his house in Al-Shajaia neighbourhood in Gaza city, his brother and grandfather were also killed in the attack;
- 29 July **Baha' Edeen Gharib** (Palestinian, aged 59, Palestine TV) was killed along side with her daughter Ola by a rocket fired from Israeli drone while he was going by car to a hospital to treat his daughter;
- Ezat Abu Duhair** (Palestinian, aged 23, Al-Huriya Media Network) died along with four members of his family when his house was shelled by the Israeli Air Force
- 30 July **Ahed Afif Zaqout** (Palestinian, aged 49, Palestine TV) was killed in his apartment during an attack on the Italian tower in Gaza City;
- Rami Rayan** (Palestinian, aged 25, Palestinian Network for Press and Media) killed by Israeli shelling when he was reporting on a previous shelling of Shojayah market in Gaza city;
- Sameh Al-Aryan** (Palestinian, aged 26, Al-Aqsa TV) killed by Israeli shelling when he was reporting on a previous shelling of Shojayah market in Gaza city;
- 31 July **Mohammed Majed Daher** (Palestinian, aged 27, Al-Resallah weekly newspaper) succumbed to severe injuries suffered in the bombing (without a previous warning) by an Israeli airplane of his three-floor house on Sunday 20 July in Al-Shajaiea neighborhood in Gaza city, i n the shelling of his house his daughter Dana whose age is a year and two months, his parents, his brother and his sister were killed;
- 1 August **Abdullah Nasr Fahjan** (Palestinian, aged 21, photo reporter) was taking photos at Al-Falouje street in Al-Jineene neighborhood in Rafah when an Israeli drone targeted him at around 12:20 pm, and he got severe injuries in his head, he died at around 3:00 pm;
- 2 August **Shadi Hamdi Ayad** (Palestinian, aged 24, freelance) was killed following the shelling of Alzaytoun neighborhood in Gaza City by Israeli Forces, his father who was accompanying him was also killed;
- Mohammed Nur al-Din Al-Dairi** (Palestinian, aged 26, Palestinian Network for Press and Media) died from a severe wounds he suffered in the head on 30/07/2014, after the shelling of the Shojae'ya market in Gaza City;
- 4 August **Hamada Khaled Maqqat** (Palestinian, aged 24), editing director of the online news site SAJA died when the IDF bombarded his house in Gaza,
- 13 August **Simone Camilli** (Italian, aged 38, Associated Press) and **Ali Shehda Abu Afesh** (Palestine, Associated Press) died when an unexploded missile believed to have been dropped in an Israeli airstrike blew up as Gaza police engineers were working to neutralize it in the northern town of Beit Lahiya.

Conclusion and recommendations

The large number of targets and the way in which media organizations and journalists have been attacked by the IOF, suggest that a strategy has been finalized at the highest levels of the State of Israel. Targeting non-combatants is itself a war crime that, as such, must not enjoy impunity.

The Press Emblem Campaign calls on:

- the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 to investigate, in the framework of his mandate, on the violation of the fundamental freedoms and rights of journalists and media workers, with a particular attention on the violation of the rights of women journalists;
 - the members of the Independent, international commission of inquiry created by decision of the Human Rights Council³ at its 21st Special session to investigate and identify those responsible for the crimes committed against media outlet, journalists and media workers.
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³ A/HRC/RES/S-21/1 (OP 13)