

Al Jazeera to refer journalist Samer Abudaqa's killing to ICC

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Mourners including Al Jazeera correspondent Wail al-Dahduh, second from left, attend the funeral of Samer Abudaqa in Khan Younis, Gaza [Belal Khaled/Anadolu Agency]

Doha, December 18 (RHC)-- The Al Jazeera Media Network says it will refer the killing of its cameraman Samer Abudaqa in Gaza to the International Criminal Court (ICC). In a statement on Saturday, the Qatar-based network said it has instructed its legal team to “urgently” refer the case of what it called “the assassination” of Al Jazeera Arabic cameraman Samer Abudaqa to the court in The Hague.

Abudaqa was killed by a drone attack on Friday while reporting on an earlier bombing of a school used as a shelter for displaced people in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

“Al Jazeera Media Network reiterates its denunciation and condemnation of the assassination crime of its colleague, Samer Abudaqa, who devoted 19 years with the Network to covering the ongoing conflict in the occupied Palestinian territories,” said the network’s statement.

“In addition to the assassination of Abudaqa by the Israeli occupation forces in the Gaza Strip, the legal file will also encompass recurrent attacks on the Network’s crews working and operating in the occupied Palestinian territories and instances of incitement against them.”

Targeting journalists is a war crime under Article 8 of the Rome Statute. The media network said it has set up a working group comprising its international legal team and international legal experts to submit a file to the court’s prosecutor.

Al Jazeera Arabic correspondent Wael Dahdouh – who lost his wife, son, daughter and grandson in a previous Israeli bombing – was wounded in the same attack on Friday. He was hit by shrapnel on his upper arm and managed to reach the Nasser Hospital where he was treated for minor injuries.

But rescue teams were unable to immediately reach Abudaqa and others at the site as they needed approval from Israeli forces to bulldoze through the debris to get to the location.

The 45-year-old was laid to rest in southern Gaza on Saturday, with dozens of mourners, including journalists, paying their respects. “We are carrying this human message, we are carrying this noble message,” Dahdouh said in his eulogy as mourners around him wept. “We will continue to do our duty with professionalism and transparency.”

Al Jazeera had previously submitted a formal request to the ICC to investigate and prosecute those responsible for shooting a veteran television reporter Shireen Abu Akleh in May 2022 while covering an Israeli military raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank.

Evidence provided in the request, filed in December 2022, includes a comprehensive six-month investigation by the network, gathering witness accounts and video footage, among other material. The ICC has acknowledged its receipt, yet no further steps have been taken.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) says the ongoing conflict in Gaza is the deadliest for journalists ever recorded, with at least 64 reporters and media workers killed in 10 weeks of the enclave’s bombing.

The CPJ has also called on the international authorities to “conduct an independent investigation into the attack to hold the perpetrators to account.”

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