

*More than 120 individuals and groups urge UN to probe Israeli attacks on journalists in Lebanon*

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Geneva, March 1 (RHC)-- More than 120 individuals and organizations have demanded a UN investigation into Israel's assaults on reporters in southern Lebanon. The appeal, addressed to UN rights chief Volker Turk, expressed concern over Israel's "apparent deliberate targeting of journalists and media workers in Lebanon."

The letter urged "an investigation to establish the facts and circumstances" around the attacks and for the findings to be published "with a view to holding those responsible accountable." Signatories included the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), local and regional rights groups, Lebanese lawmakers, and media outlets including Al Jazeera.

A separate letter sent to UNESCO chief Audrey Azoulay urged her office to "advocate for accountability for the apparent war crimes committed by Israel in south Lebanon."

On November 21st last year, Al-Mayadeen reporters Farah Omar and Rabih Maamari were killed in Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon. Following the strike, the Israeli military said it was "aware of a claim regarding journalists in the area who were killed as a result of [Israeli] fire." It said there were "active hostilities" in the area. The regime claimed the incident was under review.

Another attack on October 13th last year killed Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah and wounded six others, including two AFP journalists. In December, Israel said the October strikes occurred in an "active combat zone." The regime made a similar claim it was reviewing the strike.

An AFP investigation into the October strikes, jointly conducted with Airwars, an NGO that investigates attacks on civilians in conflict situations, found the attack involved a 120-mm tank shell only used by the Israeli military in this region.

A Reuters investigation found that two Israeli tank rounds fired from the same position across the border were used in the October attack. Media organizations have repeatedly protested against Israel's deliberate targeting of journalists, describing it as a war crime under international humanitarian law.

Journalists have also been deliberately targeted in Gaza since October 7, 2023, when Israel launched its onslaught on Gaza. At least 120 journalists have been killed in Gaza since. In its annual report released on February 15, the CPJ said 72 of 99 journalists killed worldwide in 2023 were Palestinians reporting on Gaza.

"In December 2023, CPJ reported that more journalists were killed in the first three months of the Israel-Gaza war than have ever been killed in a single country over an entire year," the CPJ said.

The toll of journalists killed in Gaza since October 7th has even surpassed that of World War II – 69 media personnel were killed in that war, which lasted from 1939 to 1945.

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