

In attack against press freedom, Israeli parliament extends law banning foreign media

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According to the UN, half a million people, or one in five people in the Gaza Strip, are facing

starvation while the entire population continues to face a critical risk of famine following 19 months of the Israeli invasion [Haitham Imad/EPA]

The file photo shows the interior of Knesset, the Israeli parliament.

Tel Aviv, May 22 (RHC)-- The Israeli parliament - the Knesset - has extended a law until November 30 that allows the shutdown of foreign media outlets operating within the occupied territories if they are deemed a threat to the security of the regime.

Back on April 1, 2024, the Knesset passed the so-called "Al Jazeera Law", which was specifically invoked to suspend the Qatar-based news network's operations in the occupied territories, but it temporarily shut down all foreign media outlets operating in Israel if deemed a threat to the regime's security.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleged, at the time, that "Al Jazeera harmed Israel's security" and, using the authority granted to him under the "Al Jazeera Law," ordered the network's shutdown within the occupied territories in May last year.

Al Jazeera, for its part, rejected at the time what it described as "slandorous accusations" and accused Netanyahu of "incitement", and supported the network's coverage of Israel's genocidal war in the besieged Gaza Strip.

According to a statement released by the Israeli parliament on Wednesday, 16 Knesset members voted in favor of an extension to the so-called law, while two opposed it, out of a total of 120 lawmakers.

However, the statement did not clarify how many lawmakers were present and did not indicate the position of the rest. In the Knesset, laws are passed by a majority of those present at the time of the vote.

The Al Jazeera Law - formally known as the "Temporary Order-Iron Swords" - which has been widely condemned by international and regional organizations as a blow to media freedom, was originally set to expire in May, but Israeli lawmakers voted on Wednesday to extend its validity until November 30.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA]

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