



INPUT ON THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF ISRAEL'S POLICIES AND PRACTICES TOWARD THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY AFTER 7 OCTOBER 2023

April 29, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the call by the Special Rapporteur on the Role of Media in the context of Israel's Policies and Practices toward the Palestinian People, especially after 7 October 2023, the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) submits this input to inform the Special Rapporteur's report to be presented at the 62nd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

The ECLJ is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative Status with the United Nations ECOSOC.¹

The ECLJ's input first provides information regarding the way in which Hamas² and other like-minded terrorist organizations unlawfully rely on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) protective status applicable to journalists, not terrorists. Second, it provides information regarding the control terrorists have over the media in Gaza. Third, it provides information regarding censorship and retaliatory measures against journalists and media personnel for their coverage of Israeli or Palestinian issues.

II. TERRORISTS IN GAZA HAVE BEEN UNLAWFULLY RELYING ON IHL PROTECTIVE STATUS APPLICABLE TO JOURNALISTS, NOT TERRORISTS

Here, the ECLJ responds to the Special Rapporteur's call for input regarding the targeting and repression of Palestinian journalists and media workers.

Under IHL, journalists are protected if they "take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians."³ If a journalist is also a Hamas or any other terrorist organization operative, then the journalist becomes a legitimate military target.

¹ Consultative Status for the European Centre for Law and Justice, U.N. DEP'T OF ECON. & SOC. AFFS: NGO BRANCH, <http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/>.

² Hamas is an internationally declared terrorist organization. *See, e.g., U.S. Dep't of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 2022*, BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM (2022), https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Country_Reports_on_Terrorism_2022-v3.pdf; Council Common Position (EU) 2009/468, 2009 O.J. (L 151/45) (EN), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009E0468>.

³ Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) art 79, June 8, 1977, 1125 U.N.T.S. 3, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-79>; *See also* Michael N. Schmitt, *Legal Protection of the Media in*

A recent Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center study “asserts that a majority of Gaza-based journalists killed since the outbreak of the [October 7] war were operatives in, or closely affiliated with, terrorist organizations — primarily Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.”⁴

The ECLJ provides specific examples below.

On April 9, 2026, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reported the elimination of “Muhammad Samir Muhammad Washah, a Hamas terrorist operating under the guise of an Al Jazeera journalist. Washah, a key terrorist in Hamas’ rocket & weapons production HQ, was also involved in the production and transfer of weapons through Gaza.”⁵

On August 10, 2025, the “IDF conducted a precision strike in Gaza City targeting Anas Al-Sharif, a Hamas terrorist who posed as a journalist for the Qatari network Al Jazeera. Al-Sharif, head of a Hamas cell, was responsible for facilitating and advancing rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and IDF forces.”⁶ Documents recovered in Gaza “confirm his operational position within Hamas and his integration into the Al Jazeera network.”⁷

On May 15, 2025, the IDF eliminated “Hassan Abdel Fattah Mohammed Aslih, who operated under the guise of a journalist and owner of a news network. Aslih, a terrorist from the Hamas Khan Yunis brigade, infiltrated Israel and participated in the October 7th massacre.”⁸

On March 14, 2025, “[s]everal terrorists operating under the cover of journalists in Gaza” were eliminated.⁹ “The terrorists struck were operating a drone intended to carry out terrorist attacks against IDF troops operating in Gaza[.] [T]he drone was consistently used by the Islamic Jihad Terrorist Organization.”¹⁰

Armed Conflict: Gaza, ARTICLES OF WAR, LIEBER INST. W. POINT (May 18, 2021), <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/legal-protection-media-armed-conflict-gaza/>.

⁴ *Majority of Journalists Killed in Gaza Linked to Terror Organizations, Study Says*, THE TIMES OF ISR. (Dec. 11, 2025), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/majority-of-journalists-killed-in-gaza-linked-to-terror-organizations-study-says/>; *See also About 60% of the Gazans Classified as “Journalists” and Other Media Personnel Killed in the Gaza Strip War Belonged to Hamas and Other Terrorist Organizations*, THE MEIR AMIT INTEL. AND TERRORISM INFO. CTR. AT THE ISRAELI INTEL. HERITAGE AND COMMEMORATION CTR. (Dec. 16, 2025), <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/about-60-of-the-gazans-classified-as-journalists-and-other-media-personnel-killed-in-the-gaza-strip-war-belonged-to-hamas-and-other-terrorist-organizations/>.

⁵ Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X (Apr. 9, 2026, 3:12 AM), <https://x.com/IDF/status/2042138527639470570>.

⁶ *IDF Eliminates Hamas Terrorist Masquerading as Al Jazeera Journalist in Gaza City – August 10, 2025*, PERMANENT MISSION OF ISR. TO THE MULTILATERAL ORG.S IN FR. (Aug. 13, 2025), <https://embassies.gov.il/multilateral-organizations-france/en/news/idf-eliminates-hamas-terrorist-masquerading-al-jazeera-journalist-gaza-city-august-10-2025>.

⁷ *IDF Eliminates Hamas Terrorist Masquerading as Al Jazeera Journalist in Gaza City – August 10, 2025*, *supra* note 6.

⁸ Press Release, IDF, The IDF and ISA Conducted a Precise Strike That Eliminated the Terrorist Hassan Abdel Fattah Mohammed Aslih (May 15, 2025), <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/may-25-pr/the-idf-and-isa-conducted-a-precise-strike-that-eliminated-the-terrorist-hassan-abdel-fattah-mohammed-aslih/>.

⁹ Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X (Mar. 15, 2025), <https://x.com/IDF/status/1901052913507856703> (hereafter IFD X post 1).

¹⁰ *Id.*

On August 1, 2024, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) “eliminated Ismail al-Ghoul, a Hamas Military Wing operative and Nukhba terrorist who participated in the October 7th Massacre. He also worked as a journalist for the Al Jazeera channel.”¹¹ He was recruited by Hamas in 2014.¹²

On January 7, 2024, “an IAF aircraft directed by troops targeted the operators of a drone, posing a threat to [Israeli] soldiers near Rafah. The operators were later identified as al-Dahdouh and Thuria.”¹³ The IDF confirmed that “journalists Hamza al-Dahdouh and Mustafa Thuria were members of Gaza-based terrorist organizations.”¹⁴

The above examples demonstrate that Israel has been lawfully targeting terrorist operatives who were disguised as journalists. The narrative that Israel has been targeting journalists is false.

III. TERRORISTS IN GAZA HAVE BEEN USING THE MEDIA TO SUPPORT THEIR DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST ISRAEL

Here, the ECLJ responds to the Special Rapporteur’s call for input regarding the dissemination of disinformation and narratives discrediting the work of Palestinian journalists.

According to a recent Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center study, “Hamas’ media system is an extensive network which integrates overt and covert, formal and informal communication channels and targets diverse audiences.”¹⁵ Hamas “exercises full control, administratively, financially and strategically over its affiliated media outlets in terms of content and messaging, although such bodies are represented as independent.”¹⁶

Moreover, Hamas’ media system serves as a propaganda and incitement tool and is used to “sabotage Israel’s resilience by disseminating fake news . . . [and] sowing doubts to demoralize the Israeli public, widen rifts and escalate crises.”¹⁷

Among the media outlets directly owned by Hamas and subordinate to its government media information office are the websites al-Risalah, Felesteen, al-Aqsa TV, al-Aqsa Radio, the Palinfo website, the website of the Izz al-Din Brigades, Hamas’ military-terrorist wing and its Telegram channels. There are also media outlets fully affiliated with Hamas yet presented as independent channels,

¹¹ Press Release, IDF, ELIMINATED: Ismail al-Ghoul, a Hamas Military Wing Operative and Nukhba Terrorist, (Aug. 1, 2024), <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/august-24-pr/eliminated-ismail-al-ghoul-a-hamas-military-wing-operative-and-nukhba-terrorist/>.

¹² *Table of the Activity of Hamas’ Military Wing from 2021 – Found on Hamas Computers*, ISR. DEF. FORCES, <https://web.archive.org/web/20240806200613/https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC0308202432432> (last visited Apr. 29, 2026).

¹³ Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X (Jan. 10, 2024), <https://x.com/IDF/status/1745177413565223266> (hereafter IFD X post 2).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Avishai Karo, *Hamas Media as Reflected in Documents Brought Back from the Gaza Strip*, THE MEIR AMIT INTEL. AND TERRORISM INFO. CTR. AT THE ISRAELI INTEL. HERITAGE AND COMMEMORATION CTR. (Feb. 22, 2026), https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2026/02/E_034_26.pdf.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

including the Shehab and Safa news agencies, local radio stations and “independent” journalists and correspondents.¹⁸

Al-Risalah, for example, “is Hamas’ journalistic platform and its content reflects Hamas’ ideology, promotes its messages and both its organization and budget are controlled by the movement. For many years its editor was senior Hamas figure Ghazi Hamad, who was later appointed Hamas spokesperson.”¹⁹

The Shehab news agency is one of the most influential media outlets.²⁰ “Operating primarily from the Gaza Strip, [it is] affiliated with Hamas although it represents itself as an ‘independent news agency.’ Its connection to Hamas is apparently structural and ideological, and it serves de facto as one of its main propaganda arms.”²¹

“The Safa news agency is a Palestinian news agency operating from the Gaza Strip which also represents itself as an ‘independent and professional’ media body but is clearly affiliated with Hamas and is a conduit for the organization’s propaganda.”²² Its “content aligns completely with Hamas’ propaganda and incitement, as does its terminology.”²³

Hamas has also been working directly with the Al Jazeera network. Following the October 7 attack, “Al Jazeera gave Hamas’ political and military leadership a platform for conveying their messages and promoted Hamas’ psychological warfare by showing videos of hostages . . . and pictures of Hamas terrorists attacking IDF forces in the Gaza Strip.”²⁴ Many Al Jazeera journalists “were simultaneously operatives in Hamas’ military wing. Some of them accompanied the waves of infiltration into Israeli territory” during the October 7 attack.²⁵

Talal al-‘Aruqi, for example, was “a field reporter for the Al Jazeera Mubasher network in the Gaza Strip.”²⁶ “His name appeared on a 2023 list of Hamas operatives where he was identified as a squad commander with the rank of captain in the Jerusalem Brigade.”²⁷

Hussam Shabat was a Gazan journalist who “worked for the Al Jazeera Mubasher channel as a freelance correspondent, covering the war in the Gaza Strip, especially in the north. He was considered a prominent voice documenting the destruction and the humanitarian distress in the

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Avishai Karo, *Documentary Evidence of Hamas-Al Jazeera Relations and Cooperation*, THE MEIR AMIT INTEL. AND TERRORISM INFO. CTR. AT THE ISRAELI INTEL. HERITAGE AND COMMEMORATION CTR. (Oct. 19, 2025), https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2025/10/E_098_25.pdf; *See also* Steven Scheer, *Israel Extends Al Jazeera Ban by 45 days, Citing Security Threat*, REUTERS (June 9, 2024, 9:45 AM), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-extends-al-jazeera-ban-by-45-days-cites-security-threat-2024-06-09/>.

²⁵ Karo, *supra* note 24.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

Strip.”²⁸ “His name appeared in documents brought back from the Gaza Strip on a list of operatives of Company 1 (the anti-tank company) of the Beit Hanoun Battalion in Hamas’ military wing and he was referred to as a sniper.”²⁹

And in a 2022 document,

Hamis describes how it provided Al Jazeera with clear instructions on covering a failed Islamic Jihad rocket launch in Jabaliya, which resulted in the deaths of several civilians. The instructions included avoiding the use of the word “massacre” to describe the event, reducing the display of images from the incident, and ensuring that panel members did not criticize Hamas.³⁰

Certainly, Hamas and other terrorists in Gaza have been using the media to support their disinformation campaign against Israel. Such tactics are shameful and must be addressed by the international community.

IV. OBJECTIVE JOURNALISTS IN GAZA ARE CENSORED AND RETALIATED AGAINST BY HAMAS

Here, the ECLJ responds to the Special Rapporteur’s call for input regarding censorship and retaliatory measures against journalists and media personnel for their coverage of Israeli or Palestinian issues. In contrast to the previous section, this section focuses primarily on journalists and media personnel who were not collaborating with Hamas or other terrorist organizations.

Hamis and its affiliates intimidate and even assault journalists to ensure they do not report the “wrong” message.³¹ Journalists “know that deviating from Hamas’s version of events places their freedom and even their lives in danger.”³² On May 20, 2025, PEN America, an organization that works to protect free expression worldwide,³³ stated:

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Press Release, IDF, Hamas Documents Reveal the Depth of the Collaboration Between Al Jazeera and the Hamas Terrorist Organization (Oct. 29, 2024), <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/october-24-pr/hamas-documents-reveal-the-depth-of-the-collaboration-between-al-jazeera-and-the-hamas-terrorist-organization/>.

³¹ Toi Staff, *Hamis Admits Intimidating Foreign Press Who Reported Wrong ‘Message,’* THE TIMES OF ISR. (Aug. 15, 2014, 4:59 PM), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamis-admits-intimidating-foreign-press-who-reported-wrong-message/> (Hamis has engaged in these tactics for years. In 2019, for example, Palestinian journalist Hani Al-Agha was “severely beaten and tortured for more than 20 consecutive days” by Hamas); *Palestinian Journalist “Tortured by Hamas,”* INT’L FED’N OF JOURNALISTS (Nov. 1, 2019), <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/palestinian-journalist-tortured-by-hamas>; *See also, Violations of Freedom of the Press in Gaza*, IDF (Jan. 25, 2018), <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/hamis/violations-of-freedom-of-the-press-in-gaza/>; Search Results for Articles Relating to Hamas, COMM. TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS, <https://cpj.org/tags/hamis/page/2/> (last visited Apr. 29, 2026).

³² Itamar Marcus, *Survival First, Truth Second: Why Gazan Journalists Are Unreliable, and the PA Benefits – Opinion*, THE JERUSALEM POST (Sept. 1, 2025), <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-865806>; *See also* Robert Satloff, *Truth Is Hard to Get in Gaza*, WALL ST. J. (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/truth-is-hard-to-get-in-gaza-media-war-270622b2>.

³³ *About PEN America*, PEN AM., <https://pen.org/about-us/> (last visited Apr. 29, 2026).

Threats and violence against Palestinian journalists for doing their work are unacceptable and Hamas and its affiliates must cease such attacks. . . . The targeting of journalists through beatings, arrests, surveillance, and threats not only violates press freedom but chills coverage of critical issues, including public opposition to Hamas' rule and the humanitarian toll of the war.³⁴

The following examples evidence this harsh reality.

“On April 27, 2025, Tawfiq Abu Jarad, a correspondent for Ramallah-based Sawt al-Hurriya radio station, received a call from a Hamas security agent warning him not to cover a women’s anti-war demonstration in northern Gaza’s Beit Lahia.”³⁵ Hamas also warned Jarad “about his wife’s potential involvement in the demonstration.”³⁶ Previously, on November 15, 2023, he was beaten and questioned “by Hamas operatives in Rafah, who alleged he was ‘covering events in the Gaza Strip calling for a coup.’”³⁷ Jarad “filed a complaint to PJS over the intimidation, which slammed Hamas’s infringement on press freedom.”³⁸

On December 12, 2024, freelance photographer Ibrahim Muhareb, who, at the time, worked “for the local Quds Feed media network and the Turkish state-owned broadcaster TRT, told CPJ that he was beaten unconscious by armed men in plainclothes, who approached him in a tent where he was working near Nasser Hospital, west of Khan Yunis.”³⁹ “Some journalists eventually managed to pull him free, bandage his wounds, [and] take him for hospital treatment.”⁴⁰

“In January 2024, Mohammed Abu Aoun, a correspondent for Fatah-affiliated Awda TV was beaten by several members of Hamas’ Internal Security Service after a woman insulted Hamas during her interview with him near Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in central Gaza’s Deir al-Balah.”⁴¹

Al Jazeera also silenced critics of Hamas following the October 7 attack. On November 5, 2023, for example, “during a live Al Jazeera broadcast from al-Aqsa Hospital in Gaza, a network reporter interviewed a wounded Palestinian man. When the interviewee began to criticize Hamas for its operatives hiding among civilians, the reporter abruptly cut off the interview.”⁴²

³⁴ *Hamas Must Cease Intimidation of Palestinian Journalists amid Crackdown on Dissent in Gaza*, PEN AM. (May 20, 2025), <https://pen.org/press-release/hamas-must-cess-intimidation-of-palestinian-journalists-amid-crackdown-on-dissent-in-gaza/>.

³⁵ Mohamed Mandour, et al., *Attacks, Arrests, Threats, Censorship: The High Risks of Reporting During the Israel-Gaza War*, COMM. TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS, <https://cpj.org/2023/10/attacks-arrests-threats-censorship-the-high-risks-of-reporting-during-the-israel-gaza-war/> (last updated Jan. 6, 2026, 10:00 AM).

³⁶ *Gaza journalist Faces Hamas Threats and Censorship – Report*, THE JERUSALEM POST, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-854301> (last updated May 17, 2025, 11:55 AM).

³⁷ Michael Horovitz, *Watchdog: Gazan Reporters ‘Intimidated, Threatened, Assaulted by Hamas,’* THE TIMES OF ISR. (May 16, 2025, 6:50 AM), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/watchdog-gazan-reporters-face-beatings-threats-when-covering-anti-hamas-rallies/>.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ MANDOUR, *supra* note 35.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² Karo, *supra* note 24.

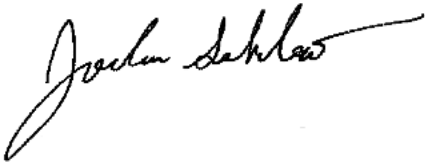
Despite these incidents, “violations by Hamas are underreported due to fear of reprisal.”⁴³

V. CONCLUSION

Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza continue to unlawfully rely on IHL protective status applicable to journalists, not terrorists. Hamas also controls much of the media in Gaza to ensure that the media disseminates disinformation to discredit Israel. Journalists in Gaza are also censored and retaliated against if their reports present Hamas in a negative light.

These tactics must stop. The international community must get involved to ensure journalists in Gaza can report on issues objectively and without fear of reprisal from Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Freedom of the press must be protected.

Respectfully submitted,



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⁴³ *Hamas Must Cease Intimidation of Palestinian Journalists Amid Crackdown on Dissent in Gaza*, *supra* note 34.