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## Journalism in the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict

### Report<sup>1</sup>

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Rapporteur: Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU, Cyprus, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

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1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 16204](#), Reference 4895 on 27 June 2025.



## A. Draft resolution<sup>2</sup>

1. The Parliamentary Assembly strongly condemns the deliberate targeting and killing of local journalists in Gaza by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and Israel's prohibition on international journalists and media outlets accessing the Gaza Strip.
2. The Assembly's condemnation also extends to the flagrant violations of press freedom and the harassment of journalists by Hamas, as well as the absence in Gaza of a legal and practical framework guaranteeing freedom of expression and information in accordance with international law.
3. Since the launch of Israel's military campaign in response to the appalling terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas and other militias on 7 October 2023, more than 220 journalists have been killed by the IDF in Gaza. At least 68 of these journalists have apparently been targeted or killed in the course of carrying out their work. This includes at least three journalists killed in January 2026, after the October 2025 ceasefire.
4. Moreover, the Assembly expresses its grave concern that, since 7 October 2023, Israeli airstrikes have destroyed most telecommunications and media infrastructure, and the humanitarian and economic situation has greatly deteriorated, which impacts directly on the work of local journalists.
5. The Assembly is disturbed by the IDF's denial of allegations that they deliberately target and kill journalists, and their claim that they direct their strikes only towards military targets and military operatives, avoiding targeting civilian objects and civilians, including media organisations and journalists as such.
6. In that regard, the IDF has released documents that purport to reveal the involvement of Al Jazeera journalists as terrorist operatives and that indicate close co-operation between Hamas and the media network. Al Jazeera refutes these claims, and international press associations do not consider them to be substantiated.
7. The Assembly also emphasises that violations of press freedom by Hamas have also been widespread and under-reported, primarily due to the fear of reprisals, given that Hamas is known for violently targeting, persecuting and killing its critics.
8. The Assembly deeply deplores and condemns Israel's policy and practice of refusing international journalists access to Gaza for reporting purposes. This prohibition has not changed even after a ceasefire was agreed between Israel and Hamas as part of Donald Trump's peace plan. The Israeli High Court of Justice has postponed on several occasions a ruling on a petition filed by the Foreign Press Association calling for free, independent press access to Gaza.
9. The Assembly adds its voice once more to all those calling for the full respect by Israel of its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.
10. The Assembly firmly reiterates that freedom of information is linked to the safety and protection of journalists, and stresses that journalists are society's eyes and ears, bearing witness to the situation on the ground during political and military operations, most importantly in the face of humanitarian catastrophes and crises.
11. The Assembly underlines that journalists working in areas of armed conflict are civilians and are protected as such under international humanitarian law, provided that they do nothing to adversely affect their legal status. Targeting and killing journalists and their families is a war crime, which cannot meet with impunity.
12. The deliberate exposure of local journalists to life-threatening circumstances, or even death, and the lack of access for international journalists to the Gaza Strip, has allowed the perpetration of violations of human rights and humanitarian international law by Israel, without facing any accountability.
13. As regards the IDF's claims about the alleged close co-operation between the deceased journalists and Hamas, as well as other terrorist organisations, the Assembly points out that these cannot be verified by independent journalists without unrestricted access to the Gaza Strip.
14. The Assembly recalls its [Resolution 2623 \(2025\)](#) in which it urgently called for the protection of journalists working in Gaza, deploring "the exceptionally high number of journalists killed or injured in Gaza", calling on all parties "to ensure their protection and the safe unhindered access of all journalists to conflict areas".

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2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 23 April 2026.

15. For all these reasons, the Assembly urges Israel to halt the targeting of journalists and to fully adhere to all relevant international human rights and humanitarian obligations in this respect.
16. The Assembly urges Israel to immediately:
  - 16.1. refrain from targeting journalists and their families, as well as any other civilians;
  - 16.2. carry out full and independent investigations into all killings of journalists in Gaza, make public the conclusions, and take any steps necessary to punish those responsible and provide redress;
  - 16.3. allow access to the Gaza Strip to local and foreign journalists, as well as international organisations responsible for providing information or carrying out investigations, and facilitate their work in safe conditions.
17. The Assembly calls on the International Criminal Court to investigate the alleged war crimes committed by the Israeli army against journalists in Gaza and the crimes committed by Hamas against Israeli journalists during the attacks of 7 October 2023.
18. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:
  - 18.1. support the request by international press associations for the immediate granting of free and safe access of international media to Gaza so that the situation on the ground can be observed and reported;
  - 18.2. maintain pressure on Israel to ensure a thorough and impartial investigation into all violations against journalists during the Israel-Gaza conflict;
  - 18.3. plead for and facilitate the evacuation of Palestinian journalists and their families from Gaza where it is needed for their immediate protection and provide them with psychological and material support.

## B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Constantinos Efstathiou, rapporteur<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Introduction

1. This report originates in the motion for a resolution entitled “The erosion of press freedom through violence against journalists in the Middle East” ([Doc. 16204](#)), which was referred for report to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on 27 June 2025. The signatories are concerned by the fact that the Israel-Gaza conflict has become the deadliest war for journalists in recent history. Moreover, press freedom is being eroded through legislative measures and political intimidation.

2. During the committee work I noticed that the title of the motion for a resolution was slightly misleading, since the motion itself focuses on the Israel-Gaza conflict only, and not on the much broader and more ambiguous term of “Middle East”. Therefore, I suggested changing the title of my report into “Journalism in the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict”, and the committee accepted this change of title on 12 March 2026.

### 2. Purpose and structure of the report

3. In line with the motion for a resolution, the report examines threats to freedom of expression and media freedom during the Israel-Gaza conflict and assesses their compatibility with international norms safeguarding journalists and other media workers.

4. I will consider the following issues:

- international humanitarian law regarding the protection of journalists at war;
- violations of international humanitarian law by Israel regarding local journalists inside Gaza;
- legal actions brought before Israel’s Supreme Court regarding the free access of international journalists into the Gaza Strip;
- Hamas’ attacks on press freedom and freedom of expression in Gaza.

### 3. International legislation for the protection of journalists

5. Israel is a member State of the United Nations since 11 May 1949 and the Knesset (parliament) was granted observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 2 December 1957.

6. Palestine is a non-member observer State in the United Nations since 29 November 2012<sup>4</sup> and the Palestinian National Council was granted partner for democracy status with the Assembly on 4 October 2011 by [Resolution 1830 \(2011\) of the Assembly](#).

7. In accordance with international humanitarian law, journalists are considered as civilians provided that they take no action adversely affecting this status.<sup>5</sup>

8. The [Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War](#) and especially Article 79 of the [Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts](#) (Protocol 1) extend the protection of humanitarian law to journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict. These journalists are to be considered as civilians within the meaning of Article 50, paragraph 1, of Protocol 1. As such, journalists are to be protected under the Conventions and this Protocol, provided that they take no action adversely affecting their status as civilians, and without prejudice to the right of war correspondents accredited to the armed forces to the status provided for in Article 4 A (4) of the Third Convention. They may obtain an identity card that attests to this status as a journalist similar to the model in Annex II of this Protocol, which shall be issued by the government of the State of which the journalist is a national or in whose territory they reside or in which the news medium employing them is located. If justified by imperative security reasons, a party to the conflict may subject civilians to assigned residence or internment but these measures cannot be used as a form of punishment.

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3. The explanatory memorandum is drawn up under the responsibility of the rapporteur.

4. See [United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19](#) and [United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-10/23](#).

5. The only exception relates to war correspondents who accompany the armed forces. If captured, they are to be considered prisoners of war (POWs), they cannot be prosecuted for taking a direct part in hostilities, and their detention aims to prevent further participation in the conflict. They must be released and repatriated without delay after the end of hostilities.

Interned persons must be released as soon as the reasons that necessitated their internment no longer exist. Rules governing civilian internees' treatment and conditions of detention under international humanitarian law are very similar to those applicable to prisoners of war.

9. In non-international armed conflicts, Article 3 common to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and especially [Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts](#) (Protocol II) provide that individuals who have been detained for reasons related to the conflict must also be treated humanely at all times. Specifically, they are protected against murder, torture and cruel, humiliating and degrading treatment. Individuals detained for involvement in hostilities are not exempt from criminal prosecution under the relevant domestic law.

10. In the absence of a specific international convention that provides a definition of the concepts of freedom of information and the rights of journalists, the implementation of these principles is subject to the constraints imposed by national laws, which are often guided by the principle of public order. Consequently, journalists and the media may be subject to various charges under national law, including threats to national security, enemy propaganda, incitement to violence, internal disturbances, hatred, separatism, defamation.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. The Council of Europe and the protection of journalists in Gaza

11. The [European Convention on Human Rights \(ETS No. 5\)](#) protects journalists notably through Article 10 on freedom of expression, which includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. Moreover, other articles of the Convention are relevant in the context of journalistic activities in times of conflict, such as Article 2 (right to life), Article 3 (prohibition of torture), Article 5 (right to liberty and security), Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), and Article 18 (limitation on use of restriction on rights).<sup>7</sup>

12. [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors](#) condemns the alarming and unacceptable level of threats to journalists and media actors in Europe and provides specific guidelines to member States to act in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution, promotion of information, education and awareness rising.<sup>8</sup>

13. The [Resolution on the safety of journalists of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society of 11 June 2021](#) invited the Council of Europe to carry out a comprehensive campaign at European level to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and support corresponding campaigns at national level, leading to the launch in 2023 of "[Journalists Matter: Council of Europe campaign for the safety of journalists](#)".

14. The Parliamentary Assembly has also addressed the issue of the protection of journalists for several years, most recently in [Resolution 2618 \(2025\)](#) "Journalists matter: the need to step up efforts to liberate Ukrainian journalists held in captivity by the Russian Federation".

15. Regarding the issue of the protection of journalists in Gaza, in January 2025 the Assembly reiterated in its [Resolution 2582 \(2025\)](#) "The absolute and urgent need to end the humanitarian crisis for women, children and the hostages in Gaza" the importance of free press in a democratic society and the responsibilities of the parties to the Israel-Gaza conflict in guaranteeing safety for journalists, especially when working in zones of military conflict. The resolution called on Israel to immediately allow access to the Gaza Strip for local and foreign journalists and for international organisations responsible for providing information or carrying out investigations, and to facilitate their work in safe conditions.

16. Furthermore, in June 2025 the Assembly adopted [Resolution 2609 \(2025\)](#) "Global peace under threat: halting the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and addressing the wider conflict in the Middle East", in which it called for immediate and full access for international journalists and independent media outlets reporting on Gaza, which would improve independent and objective reporting.

17. During an urgent debate on 30 September 2025, the Assembly adopted [Resolution 2623 \(2025\)](#) "Urgent call to put an end to the devastating humanitarian catastrophe and the killing of journalists in Gaza", in which the Assembly deplored "the exceptionally high number of journalists killed or injured in Gaza," reiterating that journalists and media workers are civilians under international humanitarian law, and called on all parties "to ensure their protection and safe and unhindered access to Gaza and conflict areas."

6. See [The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law](#).

7. For more information see [Protection of journalists and journalistic activities – ECHR-KS](#).

8. See also the [Implementation Guide for CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#).

## 5. Violations of international law regarding local journalists in Gaza

18. According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), more than 220 journalists have been killed by the Israeli army in Gaza since the launch of Israel's military campaign in response to the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas and other militias on 7 October 2023. This would include three journalists killed in January 2026, after the October 2025 ceasefire. At least 68 of these journalists would have been targeted or killed in the course of carrying out their work, according to RSF information.<sup>9</sup>

19. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) provides slightly different figures that comprise other related conflicts: 257 journalists and media workers killed by Israel, of which 207 were Palestinians killed in Gaza, 1 Palestinian killed in Gaza during the Iran war, 2 Palestinians killed in Israeli detention centers, 31 Yemenis in Yemen, 6 Lebanese in Lebanon during the war on Gaza, 7 Lebanese in Lebanon during the Iran war, 3 Iranians in Iran during the 12-day war. Moreover, CPJ mentions 174 journalists reported injured, 2 journalists reported missing, 106 journalists arrested, multiple assaults, threats, cyberattacks, censorship, and killings of family members.<sup>10</sup>

20. The most recent examples of journalists killed in Gaza include Mohammed Washah, an Al Jazeera journalist, and Amal El Shamali, a freelance journalist, both killed in drone attacks on 8 April 2026 and 9 March 2026 respectively.<sup>11</sup> Before that, on 21 January 2026, three journalists identified as Anas Ghneim, Mohammed Salah Qashta and Abdoul Raouf Shaath were killed in an airstrike on their vehicle whilst they were filming, in Al-Zhara, a camp set up by the Egyptians for displaced people. According to the Israeli army, it had struck three "suspects" operating a drone in the area.<sup>12</sup>

21. Most of the journalists killed are Palestinian. Foreign journalists have been almost totally barred from entering the Gaza Strip, and the few which have gained access are obliged to be accompanied by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), thus in effect subjecting them to surveillance. In this regard, petitions by the Foreign Press Association requesting that international media and journalists be allowed to enter Gaza freely have been so far rejected by Israel's Supreme Court, which justified this rejection on the grounds that reporters could endanger Israeli military forces by reporting their positions (see below).

22. Media coverage of the war in Gaza from the ground is carried out by both professional and non-professional journalist, including young women and men, who have bravely continued to use social media to inform the world about the daily life of the Gaza population over the last two years. The majority of independent and semi-independent media outlets are today lacking the material and financial means they need to function; Israeli airstrikes have destroyed most telecommunications and media infrastructure, and the humanitarian, security and economic crises heavily impact the lives, safety and working conditions of local journalists as well as of the rest of the population, which also reduces their ability to carry on their reporting work.

23. The IDF stands accused of deliberately targeting and killing not only civilians but also journalists. It persistently denies such accusations, stating that it "directs its strikes only towards military targets and military operatives, and does not target civilian objects and civilians, including media organisations and journalists as such". In that regard, IDF has released documents which purport to reveal "the involvement of Al Jazeera journalists as terrorist operatives"<sup>13</sup> and indicate "close co-operation between Hamas and the network".<sup>14</sup>

24. A recent study by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center<sup>15</sup> has examined the identities of 266 individuals who were identified as journalists or media workers and were killed in Gaza between 7 October 2023 and 30 November 2023. The study found that at least 157 of these individuals were members of terrorist groups or were clearly affiliated with them. This included 104 individuals who were linked to Hamas and 45 who were linked to Islamic Jihad. Some others were linked to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades as well as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of

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9. See ["At Israeli Supreme Court hearing RSF condemns the ongoing ban on international journalists' access to Gaza which violates international law"](#).

10. See ["Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza"](#).

11. See ["Mohammed Washah, journaliste d'Al-Jazira, tué dans une attaque israélienne dans la bande de Gaza"](#).

12. See ["Gaza: trois journalistes, dont un collaborateur de l'AFP, tués par une frappe israélienne"](#).

13. See ["Documents Expose 6 Al Jazeera Journalists as Terrorists in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Terror Organizations"](#).

14. See ["Hamas Documents Reveal the Depth of the Collaboration Between Al Jazeera and the Hamas Terrorist Organization"](#).

15. See ["Majority of journalists killed in Gaza linked to terror organizations, study says"](#).

Palestine and the Popular Resistance Committees. According to the authors, the study's conclusions are based on public records, Palestinian media reports, and Hamas documents seized by the IDF during ground operations in Gaza.

25. Al Jazeera refutes these claims,<sup>16</sup> and international press associations do not consider them to be substantiated.<sup>17</sup>

26. On 10 October 2025, a ceasefire was agreed between Israel and Hamas as part of US President Donald Trump's peace plan. The agreement<sup>18</sup> did not change the situation vis-à-vis international journalists, and it even excluded the media coverage of exchanges of hostages and prisoners.

27. It is important to note that the challenges faced by the press in Gaza are not solely related to actions taken by Israel. Indeed, the Gaza Strip has been a dangerous place for journalists long before 7 October 2023.

28. There are numerous accounts of journalists explaining the difficulties of practising journalism under Hamas rule. Examples include photographers being bullied and having their equipment confiscated for taking pictures of Hamas operatives in compromising circumstances (such as gunmen preparing to shoot rockets from within civilian structures and/or fighting in civilian clothing).<sup>19</sup> A journalist acknowledged off the record that there are no images of Hamas people, gunmen or rocket launchers because of fear of being killed by Hamas operatives.<sup>20</sup> Another journalist expressed moral concerns about self-censorship because of fear for their personal safety which prevented them from telling a story exposing how Hamas' launching rockets were putting so many more lives at risk, while the rocket-makers themselves were at a safe distance.<sup>21</sup>

29. During the war, press freedom violations by Hamas have been vastly underreported, mostly for fear of reprisals, as Hamas is known for violently targeting and killing its critics. The CPJ speaks about intimidation, threats, detentions, bans of media outlets, and assaults.<sup>22</sup> RSF has reported threats and physical attacks on local journalists covering the protests by the Gaza population against Hamas, with one journalist receiving a death threat.<sup>23</sup>

## 6. Awareness actions undertaken by the media and journalists' associations

30. On 5 June 2025, RSF, the CJP and over 200 media outlets issued a public appeal<sup>24</sup> calling for immediate, independent and unrestricted access for international media to Gaza and for the full protection of journalists who continue to report in spite of the siege. The open letter considers that the situation constitutes a direct attack on press freedom and the right to information, and stresses that in such a pivotal moment, with renewed military action and efforts to resume the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, it is vital that Israel open Gaza's borders for international journalists to be able to report freely and that Israel abide by its international obligations to protect journalists as civilians.

31. Moreover, on 24 July 2025 the [European Federation of Journalists \(EFJ\)](#), in co-ordination with the [Palestinian Journalists Syndicate \(PJS\)](#), sent an open letter to the European Commission titled "[Our letter to the EU on Gaza: starvation as a weapon, silence as complicity](#)". This letter calls for courage from the public authorities in reacting to the current humanitarian catastrophe and what it considers the deliberate starvation and collective punishment of the population by the Israeli Government, and stresses that now only local journalists remain in Gaza to bear witness. The letter demands that the European Commission "publicly and officially support the suspension of the agreement between the EU and Israel, the urgent evacuation of civilians in immediate danger, international calls to allow foreign journalists access to Gaza, the protection of local reporters", and calls "for an international investigation into systematic starvation as a war crime."

16. See e.g. "[Al Jazeera condemns killing of journalist in Israeli strike in Gaza](#)".

17. See e.g. "['Gazawood': The deadly accusations against Gaza's journalists](#)", and "[Israel kills Al Jazeera journalists in targeted Gaza City airstrike](#)".

18. See "[Full text of the agreement signed by Israel and Hamas to 'end the war' on Gaza](#)".

19. See "[Hamas threatening journalists in Gaza who expose abuse of civilians](#)".

20. See "[Michael Grynszpan's Facebook post of 30 July 2014](#)".

21. See "[Three Men, A Tent and Some Shrubs: The Backstory of Our Hamas Report](#)".

22. See "[Gaza journalists speak out about Hamas intimidation, threats, assaults, and CPJ's webpages on Hamas](#)".

23. See "[Gaza: RSF condemns Hamas' threats against journalists bombarded by Israel](#)".

24. See "[Global media freedom organisations call for urgent, unrestricted access to Gaza for journalists](#)".

32. On 31 August 2025, hundreds of media outlets around the world, brought together by RSF and the campaigning platform Avaaz, launched a campaign<sup>25</sup> consisting of an entire or partial blackout of the front pages of print media, banners on online news sites, and audio or video messages broadcast by radio and television stations. This campaign called for the protection of Palestinian journalists in Gaza, the emergency evacuation of reporters seeking to leave the Strip, an end to impunity for Israeli crimes against Gaza's reporters and that foreign press be granted independent access to the territory.

## 7. Court proceedings

33. On 30 September 2025, RSF filed its fifth complaint against Israel with the International Criminal Court (ICC) since October 2023.<sup>26</sup> In all of these complaints, RSF has asked the ICC to investigate all 68 crimes against journalists and 2 crimes committed by Hamas against Israeli journalists during the attacks of 7 October 2023 as war crimes. RSF has also asked the ICC to investigate all deaths of journalists in the Gaza Strip.

34. On 26 November 2025, a complaint against persons unknown ("plainte contre X") was filed with the French National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor's Office by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the French Syndicat national des journalistes (SNJ).<sup>27</sup> This complaint alleges obstruction of the freedom of the press and war crimes and it is based on numerous testimonies from French journalists, which were collected anonymously to ensure their safety and enable them to continue their work. Although the complaint does not target any specific individual, the obstructions documented by the IFJ and the SNJ are committed by military and police units, customs and administrative services, but also by private individuals, including settlers in the occupied territories. French reporters on the ground describe a daily reality characterised by denial of access, checks, threats, the seizure of equipment, and at times physical assaults, being held at gunpoint, arrests, searches and interrogations, as well as arbitrary detention, expulsion, and sometimes manhunts. According to Inès Davau and Louise El Yafi, the lawyers representing IFJ and SNJ, "This is the first time that legal action of this nature – based both on systematic obstacles to the practice of journalism and on war crimes targeting these professionals – has been brought before a national court to protect French reporters in conflict zones. The protection of press freedom is a fundamental principle in any State governed by the rule of law. It fully justifies bringing the matter before the French courts when a French journalist is the victim of attacks on the exercise of their profession."

35. On 28 January 2026, the Israeli High Court of Justice postponed yet again a ruling on a petition of the Foreign Press Association (FPA) for free and independent press access to Gaza. The FPA had argued that there were no security arguments that justified Israel's blanket ban on allowing foreign journalists independent access to Gaza at a time when humanitarian aid workers and other officials were being allowed into Gaza. According to the FPA, the court's decision was taken following the presentation of classified security arguments by the Israeli Government. This presentation was carried out behind closed doors and without the presence of the FPA's attorneys.<sup>28</sup> The postponement of the court's ruling until 29 March came with a request to the State to provide an update on the situation in another two months' time, but, at the time of writing these lines (14 April 2026), there had been no such update from the court.

## 8. Exchange of views with Reporters without Borders

36. During the meeting of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of 12 March 2026, we had the opportunity of hearing Mr Jonathan Dagher, Middle East expert from Reporters Without Borders, Paris.

37. The exchange of views showed that the situation in Gaza remained very dangerous and very difficult for local journalists. Since the ceasefire three journalists had been killed in January and RSF was currently investigating the killing of a fourth journalist.

38. Mr Dagher focused on four main axes of the situation of journalists.

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25. See "RSF and Avaaz launch international media operation: "At the rate journalists are being killed in Gaza by the Israeli army, there will soon be no one left to keep you informed"".

26. See "RSF files fifth complaint with ICC about Israeli war crimes against journalists in Gaza".

27. See "France: la FIJ et le SNJ saisissent la justice contre les entraves à la liberté d'informer dans les territoires palestiniens".

28. See "FPA Deeply Disappointed in Supreme Court's Postponement of Gaza Press Ruling", 28 January 2026.

39. The first point was exhaustion and incapacity to do the work properly. Journalists had been working nearly nonstop in dire circumstances for more than two years, losing their homes, their media offices, their newsrooms, living in their cars, in tents, near hospitals, not having access to any medical care, struggling to find food and water. Moreover, journalists also felt abandoned. During the war, there was at least some focus on their situation, but now the attention had shifted completely elsewhere. Mr Dagher also spoke about the two-way blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip. Very few journalists were able to leave Gaza and it had been nearly impossible to evacuate journalists. In most cases, the Israeli Government blocked the evacuation of journalists without any explanation, and sometimes even after having priorly approved it. Moreover, there was no independent access to the international press in Gaza. RSF had launched campaigns and formed partnerships with other organisations, but the ban continued.

40. The second point was danger. According to RSF information, more than 220 journalists had been killed in the Gaza Strip by the Israeli army, and at least 68 amongst those were targeted or killed for reasons related to their work. Investigating the death of these journalists was much more difficult, particularly in the context of very heavy civilian death tolls. As to the rest, and without access to the ground, RSF did not have more information on the circumstances of their death.

41. The third point was the complete destruction of infrastructure in Gaza. Almost all journalists were displaced in Gaza, most of them living in tents. They would gather near hospitals to have access to electricity and other facilities, and it also allowed them to report more effectively. Given that press equipment was destroyed, RSF tried to give journalists money within Gaza so they could buy equipment locally. Regarding infrastructure, RSF had proof that newsrooms were targeted by the Israeli army, and this was also a war crime.

42. The fourth point was precarity. What could be seen on the ground was freelance journalists. Insurance was a nightmare, and inflation had skyrocketed in recent months.

43. Mr Dagher mentioned two further points: journalists had been targeted by a fierce propaganda campaign, mostly by the Israeli authorities, accusing them of being propagandists, terrorists, affiliated with Hamas, even sometimes of having participated in the terrorist attack of 7 October 2023. The elements that RSF had investigated did not reveal any of the sort. When they asked the Israeli army to provide more information, they hid behind national security reasons.

44. According to RSF, the Israeli Government has imposed a blackout on the war in Gaza to make the job of journalists as difficult as possible. This was a threat to our right everywhere in the world to be informed. It was a threat to democracies and the right of people in democracies to form opinions and to make political choices based on free, independent and pluralistic information.

## 9. Conclusions

45. I would like to join my voice to all those calling for the full respect by Israel of its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

46. First of all, the Assembly must reiterate once more that journalists working in areas of armed conflict are civilians and are protected as such under international humanitarian law, provided that they do nothing to adversely affect their legal status, and that targeting and killing journalists and their families is a war crime, which cannot meet with impunity.

47. The Assembly must urge Israel to halt the targeting of journalists and to fully adhere to all relevant international human rights and humanitarian obligations in this respect.

48. The Assembly must urge the ICC to investigate the alleged war crimes committed by the Israeli army against journalists in Gaza.

49. Member States must continue to exert pressure for the immediate granting of free and safe access of international media to Gaza so that the situation on the ground can be observed and reported. Moreover, where it is needed they must call for and facilitate the evacuation of Palestinian journalists and their families from Gaza and provide them with psychological and material support.

50. Finally, we all must be guided by the fact that journalists are our eyes and ears, bearing witness to situation on the ground during political and military operations, and most importantly in the face of humanitarian catastrophes and crises. The exposure of journalists to life-threatening circumstances, or even

death, essentially deprives us of access to information, thereby giving Israel a free rein to commit aggression, atrocities and violations of humanitarian law, international law and human rights without facing any accountability.

51. Drawing upon these conclusions, I hereby propose a set of concrete measures in the draft resolution.