



Doc. 16408

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Journalism in the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Ms Lise SELNES, Norway, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy welcomes the attention to the protection of journalists in the Middle East of rapporteur Mr Constantinos Efstathiou (Cyprus, SOC) for the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media. The committee joins the condemnation of the deliberate targeting and killing of journalists in Gaza and the continuing blanket restrictions applied by Israel on access for international journalists and media outlets to Gaza.
2. The committee underlines that freedom of expression is a core democratic principle protected under international human rights law, and that any restrictions must comply with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality. Journalists must be able to perform their essential work without interference, intimidation or harm.
3. The committee underlines that journalists are protected under article 79 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions. This protection is fundamental to realising individuals' right to free speech. The protection of journalists is of the greatest importance in times of conflict and war, as it enables the discovery of human rights violations and war crimes and their exposure to the world. By doing so, journalists play an important role in the pursuit of justice for victims and the accountability of the perpetrators. Attacks on the press in both Gaza and Israel should be evaluated against this background. Especially attacks against Palestinian and Israeli journalists who uncover or bring forward serious war crimes, possible actions of ethnic cleansing and of genocidal violence should be condemned.
4. In this respect, the committee underlines the importance given by the Parliamentary Assembly to the protection of journalists, and the broader work of the Council of Europe on both their protection and safety. It recalls the Assembly commemoration, "Victory for Viktoria" that honours journalists killed or disappeared in conflict, and promotes freedom of expression and media independence.
5. While acknowledging the security risks and restrictions that may guide the granting of journalistic access in times of war, restrictions on independent reporting risk creating an information vacuum, contributing to disinformation, polarisation, and weakened accountability at both national and international levels.
6. It is therefore essential that governments are attentive to the heightened obligation to demonstrate transparency and accountability, particularly once operational constraints are lifted. Equally, mechanisms such as geographic limitations, delayed access, pooled reporting, liability waivers, and time-limited permits are all tools that are possible to maintain journalistic access even at times of operational constraints.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 16204](#), Reference 4895 of 27 June 2025. Reporting committee: Committee on Culture, Science and Education. See [Doc. 16401](#). Opinion approved by the committee on 20 March 2026.



7. With this in mind, the committee welcomes calls to reassess access for independent foreign media to Gaza following the agreement of President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict of 9 October 2025, and its subsequent endorsement by United Nations Security Council [Resolution 2803 \(2025\)](#) on 17 November 2025.

8. Finally, the committee stresses that impunity for attacks against civilians, including journalists, undermines prospects for future peace, reconciliation and democratic stability in the region. Reiterating the Assembly's commitment to contributing to a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East, it emphasises that independent investigations and accountability for violations of international humanitarian law are essential elements in rebuilding trust between communities and strengthening the conditions for lasting peace.

B. Proposed amendments

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 2, insert the following paragraph:

Attacks against journalists, restrictions on media access and the spread of disinformation in the context of the Gaza conflict reflect a broader and deeply worrying deterioration of conditions for freedom of expression and press freedom in situations of conflict. Impunity for violations committed against journalists risks normalising attacks on independent media, undermining access to reliable information, and weakening democratic safeguards far beyond the region. In the case of Gaza and the broader region, attacks on the free press cannot be separated from human rights violations and war crimes that are committed against both Palestinian people and Israeli civilians.

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 10, insert the following paragraph:

The Assembly reaffirms its long-standing commitment to the protection and safety of journalists, including through its initiatives aimed at promoting media freedom and combating impunity for crimes committed against journalists in conflict situations. In this respect, it recalls the Assembly commemoration "Victory for Viktoria", honouring journalists killed or disappeared in conflict and reaffirming the essential role of independent journalism in democratic societies.

Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

At the end of the draft resolution, insert the following paragraph:

With regard to the conditions for sustainable peace, the Assembly:

- stresses that independent journalism and unhindered access to reliable information are essential safeguards against disinformation, radicalisation and impunity;*
- emphasises that transparency and accountability are indispensable for rebuilding trust between communities and creating the conditions for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East;*
- reiterates its commitment to a peaceful, just and sustainable future for Israelis and Palestinians based on the two-State solution and in full respect for international law.*

C. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Lise Selnes, rapporteur for opinion

1. Introduction

1. I welcome the report prepared by Mr Constantinos Efstathiou (Cyprus, SOC) on journalism in the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict.

2. Journalists play an essential role in documenting armed conflict, informing the international community and contributing to public oversight of the conduct of all parties. Their work becomes particularly important in situations characterised by widespread destruction, humanitarian suffering and competing narratives. In such contexts, independent reporting constitutes an important safeguard against disinformation, radicalisation and impunity.

3. The report of Mr Efstathiou is right to focus on the deliberate targeting and killing of journalists in Gaza. Attacks against journalists are the most egregious interference with freedom of expression. The report also reiterates the international obligation to conduct prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all unlawful killing of journalists and other civilians. Persistent concerns, some which predate the conflict, regarding impunity for serious violations committed against journalists in Gaza and the West Bank have eroded public confidence, denied justice to victims and their families, and created a chilling effect on the work of journalists.

4. The conflict in Gaza has underlined the importance of freedom of expression as well as uncensored and unhindered news media. The persistence of deeply divergent narratives surrounding the conflict further demonstrates the need for independent reporting and access to reliable information. In its own work, including through the Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy has sought to facilitate dialogue and exchanges aimed at bridging differing perspectives and fostering mutual understanding between interlocutors from across the region.

5. In this respect, transparency, accountability and access to trustworthy information are essential conditions for meaningful dialogue and confidence building to support a peaceful, just and sustainable future for Israelis and Palestinians based on the two-State solution and in full respect for international law.

2. Explanatory note

2.1. Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

The amendment seeks to place the situation of journalists in Gaza within the broader context of growing threats to press freedom and independent reporting in situations of armed conflict. While the draft resolution rightly addresses the specific conditions faced by journalists in Gaza, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy considers that attacks against journalists, restrictions on media access and the spread of disinformation also raise wider concerns relating to accountability and the protection of freedom of expression, as highlighted in Assembly [Resolution 2618 \(2025\)](#) “Journalists matter: the need to step up efforts to liberate Ukrainian journalists held in captivity by the Russian Federation”.

2.2. Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

The amendment seeks to reinforce the connection between the present report and the wider work of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe concerning the protection and safety of journalists. It recalls the Assembly’s long-standing commitment to media freedom and to combating impunity for crimes committed against journalists, particularly in situations of conflict and crisis.

In recalling the Assembly commemoration “Victory for Viktoria”, the amendment also underlines the symbolic and democratic importance attached by the Assembly to the role of journalists in defending freedom of expression and ensuring public access to information.

2.3. Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

The amendment reflects the view of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy that transparency, accountability and access to trustworthy information are essential conditions for meaningful dialogue and the rebuilding of trust between communities. This is an important component of broader efforts aimed at promoting stability, reconciliation and a sustainable peace in the Middle East.