

From Tagging to Targeting

How online delegitimisation narratives targeting Palestinian journalists were constructed and reproduced

An investigative report by Free Press Unlimited

FREE PRESS UNLIMITED

Colophon

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About Free Press Unlimited
Free Press Unlimited is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Free Press Unlimited helps local journalists in conflict areas to provide their audience with independent news and reliable information. The information that people need to survive and give shape to their own future.

Editorial note
The research for this report has been conducted by the Investigative Unit of Free Press Unlimited, which investigates cold cases of journalist murders and researches associated topics that affect the safety of journalists. The report contains references to the sources consulted. Any additional queries about the research methodology or sources can be directed at: investigations@freepressunlimited.org. Responses received from the parties mentioned in this report have been incorporated in the report. The full responses are available through: https://freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting

Correction November 20, 2026

This report has been updated on two points pertaining to Mr Eitan Fischberger:

- On page 28, the sentence *"and attended a trip to Gaza organised by the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism upon the invitation of an IDF spokesperson"* has been corrected to *"and attended a press trip to Gaza organised upon the invitation of an IDF spokesperson"*. The original source, an article in the Columbia Journalism Review, notes that this trip was "one of a handful of recent delegations organized by various arms of the Israeli government, including the Diaspora Affairs Ministry" organized in the same period (summer 2025). The trip Mr Fischberger attended was not organized or sponsored by the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, but concerned an IDF press tour of Gaza, alongside journalists from The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, AFP, and other outlets. The same correction has been made on p. 90.
- On page 29, the word 'chapter' has been added to the sentence: "the former Director General of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, with whom he wrote a book".

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Executive Summary

Until they were killed, Palestinian journalists Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat reported from Gaza every day through international media and their own social media channels. In the period after 7 October 2023, they gained international visibility and recognition with their persistent reporting amid rising attacks on Palestinian journalists covering the conflict. While Israel denied international journalists independent access to Gaza, journalists like Al-Sharif and Shabat became the eyes and ears on the ground in Gaza for audiences around the world. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) killed Hossam Shabat in March 2025 and Anas Al-Sharif in August 2025 and claimed their killings on X, alleging that the journalists were terrorists and therefore legitimate targets without providing any credible evidence. In the immediate aftermath, numerous international legacy media outlets included these allegations in their reporting of the journalists' killings. This report by Free Press Unlimited (FPU) investigates how the allegations, for which no credible evidence was provided nor found by FPU, were constructed online, and how they reached mainstream audiences and gained credibility through legacy media.

These points are relevant because the delegitimisation of Palestinian journalists by Israel extends well beyond these two cases, and directly affects their safety. Since 7 October 2023, Israeli officials and a range of independent actors have systematically portrayed Palestinian and Lebanese journalists as terrorists, culminating in a list released in October 2026 in which the IDF accused 170 individuals of having been Hamas operatives masking as journalists. Existing reports have shown that in many cases, Israel has not provided any evidence of these claims at all, has made claims that were disproven, or admitted it fabricated evidence. False allegations of terrorism come with significant danger. Journalists are civilians under international humanitarian law. Killing them is a violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime. They can only become a legitimate target if, and only for as long as, they participate directly in the hostilities.

Accusing journalists of terrorism without providing credible evidence therefore not only puts their lives at risk by making them a target, if these allegations are accepted or go unchallenged, they also undermine the public perception and political pressure national and international actors exert on Israel. This obstructs accountability and reduces the political costs associated with attacks against journalists. Free Press Unlimited conducted this investigation to shine light on the drivers and consequences of the delegitimisation of Palestinian journalists, which carries lessons for other contexts in which disinformation is used to cast doubts on journalists and declare them an open target.

Our investigation is based on two methods: a chronological reconstruction of the delegitimisation campaigns that targeted Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat, analysing social media activity, official statements, thinktank publications and other publicly available material (Chapter 3). Second, we examined 98 publications from fourteen major legacy media outlets across seven Western countries to assess how allegations against the two journalists were reported. The coding framework is derived from the IFJ Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists (the Bordeaux Declaration), focusing on four core principles: the right of reply, independent verification, contextualisation and discrediting of sources (Chapter 4). The report also contains a detailed legal analysis of the allegations made against Al-Sharif and Shabat (Appendix 1) and an overview of the actors mapped as part of Chapter 3 (Appendix 2).

The investigation has two main findings. Firstly, the analysis of both cases reveals a network of both official actors and independent actors who (directly or indirectly) constructed and amplified delegitimisation narratives about Al-Sharif and Shabat. In this report, the term 'network' is used to refer to an information ecosystem in which delegitimisation narratives were created and gained visibility, but it does not refer to a centrally coordinated or otherwise directed structure. Through a chronological analysis using a snowball sampling method, our findings show examples of actors in- and outside the Israeli government and the IDF reinforcing each other's messaging about the journalists by reposting and adding to the same

narratives, exchanging information about the journalists (e.g. OSINT-researchers handing over 'evidence' to the IDF and meeting with IDF officials), attending meetings organized by government bodies, and in some cases, even engaging in paid collaborations with Israeli ministries. Through social media posts, reports and public statements, actors outside the IDF contributed to the visibility of these delegitimisation narratives and increased their credibility among some audiences, despite the lack of credible evidence provided by the IDF.

In both cases, our analysis demonstrates that delegitimisation followed a recognisable pattern. Initial attacks focused on portraying the journalists' reporting as propaganda. Over time, these claims evolved into false allegations that the journalists themselves were active members of a terrorist organisation. During periods of heightened international criticism of Israeli military operations, delegitimisation activity intensified considerably. Despite the absence of credible evidence for the allegations, and the journalists' verifiable and visible conduct of journalistic activities, the terrorism frame became increasingly prominent in reporting surrounding both journalists.

Second, our analysis of legacy media demonstrates that these narratives were frequently reproduced by international legacy media in ways inconsistent with fundamental journalistic safeguards. In more than 80% of the publications analysed, we identified at least one departure from key principles of the Bordeaux Declaration. Despite the severe nature of the allegation, more than 72% of the publications about Al-Sharif and Shabat did not demonstrate any attempts to independently verify allegations of terrorism made against the journalists. Nearly a quarter did not provide a meaningful right of reply to the journalists or their employers, despite their public statements being readily available. Around one third of the publications incorporated those public responses. Nearly half of the publications failed to provide a broader context regarding documented patterns of attacks against Palestinian journalists or previous delegitimisation campaigns. While the severity of these shortcomings varied, together they contributed to the wider dissemination and normalisation of these unsupported and severe allegations.

Together, these findings address the question of how it is possible that unsubstantiated allegations of terrorism against Palestinian journalists emerge, gain traction among mainstream audiences, and eventually contribute to the lack of effective international scrutiny over the killing of these journalists. They add to the existing body of research that demonstrates the Israeli government invests in disinformation campaigns intended to sow doubt about attacks on civilians, to evade accountability for these attacks under international humanitarian law. At the current tally by the Committee to Protect Journalists, Israel has killed 189 Palestinian journalists in Gaza in the past three years with total impunity. This investigation shines light on the strategic way in which delegitimisation is employed by the IDF, as well as other actors, to uphold this state of impunity. The report is intended to sensitize audiences about the mechanics and consequences of this strategy for the safety of journalists. If this strategy is left unexposed and unsubstantiated allegations continue to reach mainstream audiences, this can set a dangerous precedent that undermines the protection of journalists in conflicts around the globe. While the scale of killings and allegations issued by Israel against Palestinian journalists without credible evidence is unprecedented, journalists in many other contexts face severe safety risks because state actors falsely accuse journalists of being a terrorist, a communist or a traitor. This research therefore has implications beyond the current scope, and specifically deals with the question how delegitimisation narratives could reach mainstream audiences and gain credibility through legacy media, and how such spillover could be limited in the future.

In the report, we call upon the government of Israel to immediately cease all attacks on journalists and uphold its obligations under international humanitarian law; this includes refraining from delegitimising Palestinian journalists in order to justify physical attacks against them. In accordance with international humanitarian law, Israel should allow for public scrutiny of these claims by sharing all available evidence in a verifiable manner, including with other states, and giving access to international media to facilitate reporting of these incidents.

Based on the findings of this report, we issue the following additional recommendations:

To (international) media organisations, in particular concerning the coverage of (the allegations against) Palestinian journalists:

- Uphold and adhere to basic journalistic standards and practices as determined by the Bordeaux Declaration[1], especially the right of reply. Importantly, provide adequate forms of the right of reply when (there is a pattern of) severe allegations issued, even when urgency and/or speed concerning news coverage is required.
- Engage in reflective discussions, internally and externally, on the standards and dilemmas in relation to independent verification of evidence for serious allegations against journalists, to contextualisation of their targeted killings and to respectful coverage of fellow journalists in general.
- Continue to call for access to Gaza for external journalists, amongst others, to investigate terrorism and/or propaganda allegations against Palestinian journalists. FPU applauds international media who have done so in the past.[2]
- Highlight and investigate potential delegitimisation attempts from (pro-Israeli) actors against Palestinian journalists, against international press coverage of said journalists[3], and against UN bodies[4] addressing the situation of Palestinian journalists.

To the International Community, including the United Nations (UN):

- Continue to investigate, document and publicly condemn the targeted killing of and attacks against Palestinian journalists by the IDF and call for impartial investigations, prosecution and accountability.
- In line with Special Rapporteur Khan's guidelines[5] on the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts, take preventative measures for the safety of journalists by investigating, reporting about and publicly condemning patterns of delegitimisation against them by the IDF.
- Highlight and debunk potential delegitimisation attempts from (pro-Israel) actors against UN bodies who work on and/or address the situation of Palestinian journalists.

To governments, especially those that are Member States of the Media Freedom Coalition and signatories of the Global Pledge[6]:

- Demand that the government of Israel provides verifiable and credible evidence of the allegations presented to justify the targeted strikes against Al-Sharif, Shabat and other Palestinian journalists, possibly constituting war crimes. If this access is not granted, attach concrete and impactful political consequences to this lack of action, bilaterally and through international institutions and alliances.
- Continue to call on the government of Israel to refrain from attacking journalists and media outlets and to protect their status as civilians during armed conflict, and repeat the call to allow international media entry into Gaza.

1 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ.
2 Al Jazeera Staff & AFP. (2025, April 30). World's top media outlets urge Israel to allow independent access to Gaza. Published by Al Jazeera.
3 Sky News. (2025, August 10). Benjamin Netanyahu vows to defeat Hamas as he condemns 'global campaign of lies' over starving Gazans. Published by Sky News.
4 Middle Eastern Eye (MEE) Staff. (2024, January 31). War on Gaza: Netanyahu says Unrwa mission 'must be terminated'. Published by MEE.
5 Khan, I. (2026, July 10). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. Published by the UN.
6 Media Freedom Coalition (MFC). (2019, July 11). Global Pledge. Published by MFC.

To the Office of the Prosecution (OTP) of the International Criminal Court (ICC):

- Continue to gather evidence of targeted attacks against journalists in Palestine and continue to include such cases in the ICC-investigation into the situation in Palestine. FPU welcomes ongoing efforts by OTP in this regard[7].

To the OHCHR Investigative Branch:

- In accordance with UN Resolution A/HRC/62/L.12/Rev.1[8], continue to increase investigative expertise to strengthen efforts to address impunity for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law against journalists.
- Include delegitimisation campaigns by conflict parties into the scope of investigations into killings and attacks against journalists as indicative of the planned, ordered or intended nature of such crimes.

To Social Media Platforms, particularly X:

- Uphold respective community guidelines[9], especially in relation to incitement of violence against, for instance, (Palestinian) journalists, in order to not facilitate this type of illegal content online.

7 Reporter Sans Frontières (RSF). (2024, January 8). RSF secures inclusion of crimes against journalists in ICC investigation into Palestine. Published by RSF.
8 UN Human Rights Council (HRC). (2026, June 29). A/HRC/62/L.12/Rev.1. Published by the UN HRC.
9 For example, X's community guidelines: X Help Center. (n.d.). The X Rules. Published by X.

Abbreviations

AP	Associated Press
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAMERA	Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
Col.	Colonel
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
ELNET	European Leadership Network
FAFO	Fuck Around and Find Out
FDD	Foundation for Defense of Democracies
FPU	Free Press Unlimited
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IIHCC	Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
JPS	Journalistic Standards and Practices
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MoP	Member of Parliament
MWL	Media Watch Legal
NOS	Nederlandse Omroep Stichting
NYT	The New York Times
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PVV	Partij Voor de Vrijheid
RoR	Right of Reply
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
Rtd.	Retired
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UPI	United Press International

1. Introduction

On 28 March 2026, Israel assassinated Lebanese journalists Ali Shuaib, Mohammad Ftouni and Fatima Ftouni, by targeting their vehicle, which was marked as 'Press', with a drone strike. The IDF claimed the strike on X stating they eliminated Ali Hassan Shuaib, and alleged he 'operated as a Hezbollah operative under the guise of a journalist'. The IDF wrote: 'Turns out the "press vest" was just a cover for terror'.[10] Accompanying the text is an image of the journalist in a Hezbollah uniform. But when media inquired about the source of the photo, the IDF stated: 'Unfortunately there isn't really a picture of it, it was photoshopped'.[11] The case is illustrative of a wider pattern of hybrid attacks on journalists by Israel, combining physical violence with attacks on their reputation and credibility to portray this violence as legitimate.

Israel, as an IDF spokesperson declared in 2024, 'has never and will never deliberately target journalists'.[12] Nevertheless, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) to date tallied 241 journalists in Gaza, Iran, Lebanon and Yemen who have been killed by Israel since 7 October 2023.[13] This renders the conflict the deadliest period for journalists since CPJ began gathering its data on journalist killings in 1992.[14] The CPJ confirmed in 74 cases that the journalists and media workers in question were murdered, i.e. directly targeted in retaliation for their work.[15] 32 of them were Palestinian journalists[16] from Gaza.[17] Like it did in the case of Ali Hassan Shuaib, the IDF and other Israeli authorities have repeatedly defended killings of journalists by alleging that the journalists were terrorists affiliated with Hamas or other militant groups.[18] It has done so in nearly all of the 32 cases documented by CPJ, and in dozens more not included in CPJ's list as journalist murders.[19] As is documented in greater detail in this report (Appendix 1), Israel typically provides no evidence of these allegations at all. In other cases, it presents screenshots of documents without releasing the original documents or allowing for an (independent) investigation, which raises serious doubt about the authenticity of these documents - on top of other indicators that these documents contain anomalies and errors. Despite the lack of credible evidence provided, such allegations have regularly reached mainstream audiences and gained credibility through republication in legacy media. For example, the day after Palestinian journalist Anas Al-Sharif was killed, the German newspaper *Bild* headlined: *'The murdered journalist is alleged to have been a terrorist'*.[20]

Such allegations have far-reaching consequences. Under international humanitarian law, journalists are considered civilians and are protected from direct attacks,[21] unless and for such time as they directly participated in hostilities.[22] For conduct by a journalist to meet this threshold, three criteria must be met,

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10 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2026, March 28). "ELIMINATED: For years,". Published on X.
11 Yingst, T. [@TreyYingst]. (2026, March 29). "After killing Ali". Published on X.
12 IDF Spokesperson Nir Dinar in: Yee, V., Bashir, A.B. & Gupta, G. (2024, January 30). The War the World Can't See. Published by NYT.
13 Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (2026, June 2). Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war. Published by CPJ. **On the definition of a journalist**: CPJ defines journalists as those who regularly cover news or comment on public affairs through any medium to report or share fact-based information with an audience. See: Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (2026, July 1). Board votes to affirm CPJ's existing definition of who is a journalist. Published by CPJ.
14 CPJ. (2026, June 2). Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war. Published by CPJ.
15 CPJ. (2026, June 2). Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war. Published by CPJ.
16 In its database, CPJ only tallies journalists who were murdered in a certain locality, not media workers. That is why we focus on journalists.
17 CPJ. (n.d.). 32 Journalists Killed in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Published by CPJ. These numbers have been updated after the CPJ review in July 2026, and the subsequent audit of the data as published on 24 September 2026.
18 See for example:
(1) Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2025, August 11). "As we said". Published on X. & (2) Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.
19 Israel Defense Forces (IDF). (n.d.). The Press Files: Exposed—Hamas and PIJ military operatives posed as journalists. Published by the Israel Defense Forces.
20 [1] Deutscher Presserat, 'Mehr als 300 Zuschriften: Presserat entscheidet über Massenbeschwerde zu Nahost-Berichterstattung,' (2025, December 15). Published by Deutscher Presserat.
21 ICRC. (n.d.). Article 79 – Measures of protection for journalists. Published by ICRC.
22 ICRC. (n.d.). Rule 6. Civilians' Loss of Protection from Attack. Published by ICRC. [Article 13(3) of Additional Protocol II.]

including the criterion of direct causation: an individual must have engaged in an act that has a direct causal link with the level of harm that is inflicted.[23] Journalistic activities do not meet these criteria.[24] A strike on a journalist could only be legitimate under international humanitarian law if the party responsible has verified that the journalist at that time participated directly in hostilities, for example by taking part in combat. The burden of proof lies with the party conducting the attack, and the journalist (civilian) enjoys the benefit of the doubt. Alleging journalists were terrorists, or claiming a camera is a Hamas camera,[25] without substantiating such claims, immediately puts journalists' lives at risk and affects the public perception of the legitimacy of these attacks. The pattern of Israel alleging journalists are engaged in militant activity without providing credible evidence (including in cases in which it has announced investigations), predates 7 October 2023.[26]

Following our inquiry for a response to the findings in this report, the IDF provided the following response:

'There have been numerous cases in which terrorists operated under a civilian guise, including posing as journalists, to advance terror activities. In these cases, any action taken by the IDF against them was due to their involvement in terror activity and for no other reason.

The IDF strongly rejects the claims presented. The IDF does not intentionally harm journalists or their family members, and on the contrary, operates solely against military targets, in accordance with international law, and employs all possible measures to mitigate harm to civilians, including journalists. Any claim of intentional harm to civilians—including family members of journalists due to their professional activity, is completely false and entirely contrary to IDF values, orders, and operational procedures.'

Previous investigations have revealed evidence of an active policy by the Israeli government to delegitimise Palestinian journalists in Gaza. On 14 August 2025, Israeli outlet +972 Magazine published an article on the existence of an Israeli "delegitimisation cell", an intelligence unit assigned to 'identify Gaza-based journalists it could portray as undercover Hamas operatives, in an effort to curtail growing global outrage over Israel's killing of reporters.'[27] Multiple sources told +972 Magazine that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) treated the media as an extension of the battlefield, which they used to discredit Palestinian journalists and their work in order to limit international backlash.[28] Recent assassinations and smears of journalists in Lebanon by an IDF spokesperson indicate that this approach has not been limited to Palestinian journalists alone.[29]

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23 See Appendix 1 for the legal framework in greater detail. The International Committee of the Red Cross has listed three constitutive elements in order to qualify as direct participation in hostilities. A specific act must meet the following cumulative criteria: 1. The act must be likely to adversely affect the military operations or military capacity of a party to an armed conflict or, alternatively, to inflict death, injury, or destruction on persons or objects protected against direct attack (threshold of harm), and 2. there must be a direct causal link between the act and the harm likely to result either from that act, or from a coordinated military operation of which that act constitutes an integral part (direct causation), and 3. the act must be specifically designed to directly cause the required threshold of harm in support of a party to the conflict and to the detriment of another (belligerent nexus). For further reading, see: Melzer, N. (2009). Interpretive guidance on the notion of direct participation in hostilities under international humanitarian law. *International Committee of the Red Cross.*

24 Appendix 1

25 Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "Ahmed Abu Aziz," (2025, August 25), published in CPJ; Reuters, "Visual evidence upends Israel's official story deadly attack Gaza hospital,' (2025, September 26), Published by Reuters

26 Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "Deadly Pattern: 20 Journalists Died by Israeli Military Fire in 22 Years. No One Has Been Held Accountable," (2023, May 9), published by CPJ

27 Abraham, Y. (2025, August 14). 'Legitimization Cell': Israeli unit tasked with linking Gaza journalists to Hamas. Published by +972 Magazine.

28 Abraham, Y. (2025, August 14). 'Legitimization Cell': Israeli unit tasked with linking Gaza journalists to Hamas. Published by +972 Magazine.

29 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2026, March 28). "The Defense Army". Published on X.

Apart from delegitimisation campaigns initiated by state actors against specific journalists, research by Open Measures and Free Press Unlimited demonstrated how reporting by Palestinian journalists has been portrayed as untrustworthy using frames that suggest images from Gaza have been staged or faked.[30] Since 7 October 2023, the terms 'Pallywood' and 'Gazawood' have consistently appeared online, peaking during critical events such as the July 2025 famine in Gaza to portray Palestinian suffering as exaggerated or staged.[31] Delegitimisation efforts online have therefore accused journalists not only of unreliable reporting, but also of being linked to terror groups. While these reports demonstrate an effort by both Israeli officials and actors in the online sphere to portray journalists as linked to Hamas and as untrustworthy, a detailed analysis of how and where these frames were constructed and how they end up in legacy media was missing. This investigation therefore aims to answer the question:

a) How have delegitimisation narratives around killed Gazan journalists been constructed and;
b) How did these narratives reach legacy media – and thereby large audiences?

During armed conflict, journalists perform a set of internationally recognised functions: they inform the public (for example on the location of hostilities and safe passages), document events, bear witness to harm, preserve historical records, and, ultimately, facilitate accountability. The killing of journalists has directly impacted the ability of the people in Gaza and the international community to benefit from these functions. It is therefore crucial to understand the context in which journalists are killed,[32] particularly considering the sharp increase[33] of journalists and media workers killed in conflict-affected countries in recent years.[34]

More generally, this dynamic also affects the ability of NGOs like Free Press Unlimited (FPU), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters without Borders (RSF) and other international institutions to provide support to journalists. Both FPU and CPJ have experienced backlash for speaking out about the safety of Palestinian journalists. A baseless complaint was filed against FPU for allegedly creating a 'misleading commercial' when it included numbers of Palestinian journalists killed by Israel in its public communication,[35] while CPJ has been accused of 'quietly' removing names from its database to 'inflate accusations against Israel', despite the organization's transparency about its methodology and (audited) revisions and updates of its database.[36] In June 2026, CPJ publicly announced a comprehensive review of its database of journalists and media workers killed in Israel and Palestine between October 2023 and August 2026 after Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad published obituaries in which it identified a number of individuals included in the CPJ-database.

30 Open Measures. (2025, September 17). 'Pallywood' Conspiracy Theories Saw Increased Interest After Reports of Famine in Gaza. Published by Open Measures.
31 Open Measures. (2025, September 17). 'Pallywood' Conspiracy Theories Saw Increased Interest After Reports of Famine in Gaza. Published by Open Measures.
32 RSF. (2026, January 26). At Israeli Supreme Court hearing RSF condemned the ongoing ban on international journalists' access to Gaza which violates international law. Published by RSF.
33 UNESCO Observatory of Killed Journalists (2026). https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/observatory; UNESCO (2024) 'Journalists at the frontlines of crises and emergencies: Highlights of the UNESCO Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity 2024', https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391763.
34 In 2024, more than 60% of all recorded killings of journalists took place in war-torn countries, the highest percentage in more than ten years. In 2025, 60 of the 93 journalists killed that year were in conflict zones. Many of the journalists killed in such locations in these years were killed by Israel. For more information please see UNESCO's Observatory of Killed Journalists 2024 and 2025: https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/observatory/statistics?hub=72609.
35 Free Press Unlimited (FPU) (2026, March 25). Journalism will not be intimidated (and neither will Free Press Unlimited). Published by FPU.
36 See for example efforts by NGO Monitor, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israel Defence Forces.

Understanding how disinformation spread before and following journalist killings, is important beyond Gaza. While the scale of killings and allegations issued by Israel against Palestinian journalists without credible evidence is unprecedented, journalists in many other contexts face severe safety risks because state actors falsely accuse journalists of being a terrorist,[37] a communist,[38] or a traitor.[39] This research therefore has implications beyond the current scope, and specifically deals with the question how delegitimisation narratives could reach mainstream audiences and gain credibility through legacy media, and how such spillover could be limited in the future.

37 See for example cases from Russia and Turkey: https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/06/russian-journalist-sentenced-bogus-terrorism-charges and https://www.article19.org/judicial-harassment-in-turkey/

38 See cases from the Philippines: https://lens.civicus.org/interview/philippines-the-government-treats-journalists-as-security-threats-rather-than-contributors-to-public-debate/

39 See cases from Serbia https://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2026/06/22/serbia-journalist-dinko-gruhonjic-is-no-longer-safe-in-serbia-the-regime-bears-direct-responsibility/ and https://sindikatmedija.me/en/safejournalists-en/safejournalists-serbian-authorities-must-urgently-investigate-attack-on-journalist-veran-matic/

2. Methodology

For the purposes of this report, we understand 'delegitimisation narratives' to mean efforts beyond legitimate media criticism, in which journalists are portrayed in a way that discredits their status as a journalist or their journalistic credibility, without providing credible evidence of such allegations. This includes depicting a journalist as a terrorist, as a sympathizer of terrorist organisations, or as an individual sharing propaganda - all allegations that have been issued by the IDF and other actors against Palestinian journalists in justification of their targeting. Our research is designed to better understand *how* such narratives evolve and end up being shared by legacy media. We hypothesize that there are broadly two routes by which delegitimisation narratives can be adopted by legacy media. First, there is a supply of delegitimisation narratives that can spill over from the relatively niche online sphere to legacy media. Second, we hypothesise that the inadequate application of journalistic standards - such as a failure to provide the right to reply to the subjects of such allegations, or independent verification of claims and accusations - may facilitate the reproduction of delegitimisation narratives in legacy media.

In order to research this, we adopted a two-pronged approach. Firstly, we conducted a detailed analysis of two cases of killed Gazan journalists who were subjected to delegitimisation campaigns: Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. In order to better understand how these delegitimisation campaigns originated and evolved, we chronologically analysed these cases to shed light on where specific messages were created, how they changed over time and where they spread. Secondly, to further understand how delegitimisation frames spilled over from social media into mainstream (legacy) media outlets, we identified fourteen legacy media outlets and analysed the extent to which key journalistic principles - derived from the IFJ Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists (also known as 'the Bordeaux Declaration')[40] - were applied in their coverage of the killed Gazan journalists in question.

2a. Tracing narratives; the cases of Anas Al-Sarif and Hosham al Shabat

In order to get a detailed understanding of how delegitimisation works, we have focused on the sample of Gazan journalists that were killed by Israel. At first, we analysed the 32 journalists identified by CPJ to have been murdered by Israel in Gaza[41], and searched on social media (predominantly on X and Telegram) for delegitimisation frames from official Israeli channels and from independent sources. As of September 2026, we found that 24 of these 32 journalists were directly delegitimised on social media, of which 16 by Israeli official channels, predominantly the IDF and its spokespersons, after their murder. Some of the journalists on the list were not directly targeted with delegitimisation, but were made to look 'guilty by association', meaning they were killed alongside a journalist who was targeted with delegitimisation.[42] Four journalists on the list were subjected to such delegitimisation efforts before their assassination. These journalists are Anas Al-Sharif, Hossam Shabat, Ismail Al-Ghoul and Mohammed Washah.[43]

40 International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ.
41 As of 19 August 2026.
42 CPJ Staff. (2025, July 24). CPJ calls for Anas al-Sharif's protection in face of Israeli smears. Published by CPJ.
43 The true number is likely higher, as FPU identified preventive delegitimisation narratives by Israeli official channels in the case of Wael al Dahdouh, Hassan Eslaiah, Motaz Azaiza, Ismail Abu Omar, Hazma Murtaja, among others, all targeted journalists but who do not feature on the list of CPJ for various reasons.

Case selection and investigative strategy

From the 24 cases of journalists that were targets of delegitimisation campaigns[44], we selected the cases of Anas Al-Sharif and Hosham Shabat, not only because they were both subjected to delegitimisation efforts before and after their murders, but also because of the popularity and reach of these two journalists. Anas Al-Sharif has been described by commentators as 'the face and voice of Gaza.'[45] He garnered millions of followers online and continued reporting from the frontlines even after his friends and colleagues, including Hossam Shabat and Ismail al Ghoul, had been killed. Because of this popularity, western media have reported about the killings more extensively, which provides more opportunities to investigate spillovers to legacy media. Additionally, the cases were selected because in both cases we noticed frames about the journalist, initially used online by (pro-)Israeli voices, also surfacing in legacy media outlets.

Our detailed chronological analysis started identifying a set of actors and accounts that have delegitimised Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat online, using earlier work by Daraj Media,[46] an independent digital media platform that monitors attacks on Palestinian journalists, +972 Magazine,[47] an independent, online, nonprofit magazine run by a group of Palestinian and Israeli journalists, and Forbidden Stories,[48] an international network of journalists that investigates cases where journalists have been silenced. Based on their earlier work, we identified a set of actors actively delegitimising Palestinian journalists and their work, and subsequently checked the accounts that feature in these publications on social media platforms, predominantly X and Telegram, utilising a snowball method whereby we searched for other (larger) accounts that frequently share or comment on these actors and added them to our list.

We supplemented this list of actors by conducting various searches on X, Telegram and other social media platforms via OpenMeasures and Junkipedia, specifically looking for accounts that engage in the delegitimisation of Palestinian journalists, using the following frames:

1) Palestinian journalists are acting as terrorists or militants
2) Palestininian journalists are part of a terrorist organisation, specifically Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), fulfilling different roles not necessarily fighting roles
3) Palestinian journalists are creating and/or disseminating propaganda, i.e. 'there are no journalists left in Gaza, only propaganda operatives'

We performed our searches in English, Arabic and Hebrew, and identified a set of actors who were outspoken about Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat, in other words who published multiple posts and had tens of thousands of followers on social media channels. We noticed that this set of actors consisted of a mix of:

- Israeli official accounts, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, the Israel Defence Forces, or the former Arabic language IDF spokesperson Avichay Adraee.
- Individual actors operating outside of the Israeli government or its armed forces. Some of the individuals under this header have previously worked for the Israeli government, have conducted work visits to Israel or have received financial support from the Israeli government, but are currently, as far as our research found, not officially connected to the government of Israel or its armed forces.

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44 Last tally done by Free Press Unlimited in May 2026.

45 (1) Polgreen. L. (2025, August 21). He Was the Face and Voice of Gaza. Israel Assassinated Him. Published by NYT. & (2) Salem, M. (2025, August 12). Anas Al-Sharif became the face of the war in Gaza for millions. Then Israel killed him. Published by CNN.

46 (1) Daraj Media. (2024, December 30). Israeli Influencers Launch Misinformation Campaign Against Gaza Journalists. Published by Daraj Media. & (2) Arab Facts Hub. (2025, January 1). Fake Israeli Accounts Lead Smear Campaigns Against Journalists in Gaza. Published by Arab Facts Hub.

47 Abraham, Y. (2025, August 14). 'Legitimization Cell': Israeli unit tasked with linking Gaza journalists to Hamas. Published by +972 Magazine.

48 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.

The focus here shifted mostly to English speaking accounts and channels due to language limitations, but also due to the nature of these accounts, most of which seem to be aimed at shaming media and journalists in front of international, western, audiences. Many of the collected messages referred to the 'western media bias', and the media's reluctance to 'factcheck' their reporting.

Actor Mapping

In Appendix 2, we have included an Actor Mapping which includes actors we identified who are active in this information ecosystem, and who have created and/or disseminated delegitimisation narratives on Anas Al-Sharif and/or Hossam Shabat. The accounts these actors use amplify each other through sharing, liking, quoting and responding, and in some cases they highlight each other's work in their own publications. Appendix 2 constitutes an overview of the key actors and their relations, as far as we were able to map those in this current investigation. The goal of Appendix 2 is to provide background information about a set of actors active in this environment in order to increase transparency about these connections and affiliations for future reporting. As stated above and in appendix 2, this list is not an exhaustive overview of actors who shared similar allegations about Al-Sharif and Shabat, but reflects the results of our snowball sample and contains relevant actors from the information ecosystem analyzed for this report. In this report, we refer to this ecosystem in which delegitimisation narratives were created and gained visibility with the term 'network'. This term does not imply or refer to a centrally coordinated or otherwise directed structure.

2b. Analysing legacy media narratives

The chronological analysis of how delegitimisation narratives have evolved - starting from its early creation and adaptation - already provides an understanding of how spillover takes place. To provide a more systematic analysis of how these narratives ended up in legacy media, we also systematically evaluate the reporting by legacy media outlets themselves.

Sample selection

We selected 14 legacy media outlets writing about Anas Al-Sharif and/or Hossam Shabat. We selected fourteen legacy media outlets originating in seven western countries: The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, France, Germany, The United States, Canada and Australia. We focus on outlets in western countries because of Israel's concerns that it may lose western support as a result of negative coverage in western media.[49] The seven countries selected historically maintain good relations with Israel, and their media play a major role in the international news cycle.

We selected the media outlets based on the size of their (online) audiences. While our sample of newspapers is not wholly representative, it does cover significant audiences in these countries. Altogether, the sample we selected accounts for a large diverse audience, which helps us to understand how this large audience has been informed.

The 14 media outlets we selected are the BBC (UK), The Sun (UK), NOS (the Netherlands), De Telegraaf (the Netherlands), Le Figaro (France), Le Parisien (France), Tagesschau (Germany), Bild (Germany), the New York Times (USA), Fox News (USA), CBC News (Canada), TVA Nouvelle (Canada), News.com.au (Australia), The Australian (Australia). We decided not to include live blogs, reposts of earlier articles or broadcasts and links to other websites (The Australian and news.com.au often directly link to other articles

49 Abraham, Y. (2025, August 14). 'Legitimization Cell': Israeli unit tasked with linking Gaza journalists to Hamas. Published by +972 Magazine.

on other platforms). Live blogs were not included because of the complications of doing analysis on them over a longer period of time. We searched the websites of these fourteen outlets for articles mentioning Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. In total, the 14 media outlets published 90 articles and 8 opinion pieces about Anas Al-Sharif and/or Hossam Shabat.

Coding framework

To analyze the manner in which the legacy media in our sample have reported on journalist killings in Gaza and the extent to which the allegations against Al Sharif and Shabat were reproduced through legacy media, we created a coding framework on the basis of the IFJ Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists (also known as 'the Bordeaux Declaration').[50] The Bordeaux Declaration was selected because it is rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and because the IFJ is the 'world's largest organisation of journalists, representing 600,000 media professionals from 187 trade unions and associations in more than 140 countries'.[51]

On the basis of the Bordeaux Declaration, we identified four potential deviations from the Charter in articles that contain the allegations. Our coding methodology is not a formal assessment of journalistic ethics such as those completed by Media or Press Councils, but an analytical tool to categorize the recurring patterns in articles in which the delegitimisation narratives have been reproduced. The full coding scheme has been added in Appendix 3.

1) **Inadequate Right of Reply (RoR):** the way in which (if at all) the journalists (or their families and/or employers) were offered a right to reply regarding the allegations made.

2) **Lack of independent verification:** repeat or reproduce the delegitimisation narrative, without critically examining the factual merit of the allegations through journalistic methods.

3) **Lack of context:** quote or cite individuals or institutions without providing situational context or context of the individuals or institutions in question, for example omitting relevant affiliations of the individuals cited with one of the parties to the armed conflict.

4) **Discrediting of selected sources:** uneven or unbalanced discrediting of (the reliability of) sources, including ad hominem attacks and inaccurate information.

We collected 98 publications from the 14 outlets that mentioned Anas Al-Sharif and/or Hossam Shabat and coded for these four deviations from the Declaration. Coding has been done through a coding scheme and have been cross-verified separately by two researchers. The exact coding scheme is outlined under Appendix 3.

The next chapter provides an analysis of the dynamics of delegitimisation of Anas Al-Sharif in these pivotal moments, how the messages evolve over time, how the actors spread delegitimising frames and how these frames find their way to audiences through social and legacy media. In Chapter 4, we present our analysis of legacy media coverage of the two journalists.

50 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ.
51 IFJ. (n.d.). About IFJ: The Global Voice of Journalists. Published by IFJ.

3. Fabricating Terrorism Allegations: the cases of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat

'The BBC understands Sharif worked for a Hamas media team in Gaza before the current conflict'.[52] The allegation that journalist Anas Al-Sharif worked for a Hamas media team was seen for the first time on a Telegram-channel; ten months later it was presented as a factual statement by the BBC. As we have analyzed in Appendix 1 in greater detail, the IDF (and other actors who issued this allegation) did not provide credible evidence of this and other allegations in line with the requirements under international humanitarian law. In this chapter, we analyse this chronology in the cases of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat, to gain better understanding of how these narratives originated online and spread to legacy media. This analysis results in three main findings:

First, we observe a shift over time in the narrative used against both journalists, from the narrative that they are spreading false information to the narrative that they are active combatants for Hamas.

Second, we find that both absolute and negative coverage about the two journalists spiked at two critical moments during Israel's genocidal violence: the siege of Northern Gaza in October 2024, and the famine in Gaza in the summer of 2025. These two moments resulted in serious negative media coverage of Israel's actions, much of which was due to reporting by Palestinian journalists, like Al-Sharif and Shabat, in Gaza. Israel cares deeply about how it is perceived internationally, particularly in the west, which explains why delegitimisation of the journalists peaked at these two pivotal moments.

Third, we discover a network of official and independent actors interacting with each other inside the online information ecosystem targeting Palestinian journalists. Earlier research already demonstrated Israel's new strategy of relying on third parties 'to make the voice of the Israeli government heard'.[53] Our findings further indicate that such interaction blurs the line between public opinion and government propaganda, which in turn has implications for how attacks against journalists are perceived and accepted.

In this chapter we provide an in-depth chronological analysis of the collected posts that targeted Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. The findings provide the first part of the answer to the question of how these narratives were created, spread online, and ultimately reached large audiences through the coverage by legacy media outlets. Chapter 4 builds on these findings, and analyses the vulnerabilities of legacy media themselves, that made them more susceptible to – knowingly or unknowingly – spreading these narratives further.

52 Davies, A. (2025, August 13). Who were the Al Jazeera journalists killed by Israel in Gaza?. Published by BBC.
53 B"Z, I. (2017, December 24). The Army of Truth of the State of Israel. Published by The7Eye.



Anas Al-Sharif (3 December 1996 – 10 August 2025) was a Palestinian journalist, born in the Jabalia refugee camp in Northern Gaza. Documenting and reporting on the Israeli bombardment, devastation and ensuing famine in Northern Gaza to millions of people around the world[54], he soon became known as 'the voice of Gaza'.[55] Driven by an early ambition to pursue journalism, he studied mass communications at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza.[56] He began his career as a cameraman at Al-Shamal Media Network, a Palestinian news organisation local to Northern Gaza.[57] In December 2023, he joined Al Jazeera and from then on appeared almost daily in front of the camera on its Arabic channels.[58] On his own social media, Al-Sharif also reported on the relentless Israeli war crimes taking place in his immediate surroundings, such as drone strikes on civilians[59], the destruction of Gazan hospitals[60], and bombings of residential buildings.[61] In 2024, Amnesty International Australia awarded him a Human Rights Defender Award[62] and he also won a Pulitzer Prize for one of his photos taken in Northern Gaza.[63]

After Al-Sharif had been accused of being a terrorist[64] by the IDF, and after he had been repeatedly threatened in an attempt to stop him from reporting[65], he was killed along with four other journalists in a press tent next to Al-Shifa hospital, by an Israeli drone strike on 10 August 2025. Al-Sharif is survived by his wife Bayan, his daughter Sham and son Salah.[66]

54 Salem, M. (2025, August 12). Anas Al-Sharif became the face of the war in Gaza for millions. Then Israel killed him. Published by CNN.
55 The New Arab Staff. (2025, August 11). Who was Anas al-Sharif, the Al Jazeera journalist killed by Israel in Gaza City?. Published by The New Arab.
56 The New Arab Staff. (2025, August 11). Who was Anas al-Sharif, the Al Jazeera journalist killed by Israel in Gaza City?. Published by The New Arab. https://www.newarab.com/news/who-was-anas-al-sharif-journalist-killed-israel-gaza
57 The New Arab Staff. (2025, August 11). Who was Anas al-Sharif, the Al Jazeera journalist killed by Israel in Gaza City?. Published by The New Arab.
58 Salem, M. (2025, August 12). Anas Al-Sharif became the face of the war in Gaza for millions. Then Israel killed him. Published by CNN.
59 Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2024, October 18). "Extremely difficult scenes". Published on X.
60 Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2023, December 16). "Horrific scenes beyond" Published on X.
61 Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2023, December 16). "Report on the" Published on X.
62 Amnesty International Australia. (2024, December 12). Human Rights Defender Awards. Published by Amnesty International Australia.
63 Pulitzer. (2024). The 2024 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Breaking News Photography. Published by Pulitzer.
64 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.
65 NOS. (2025, August 11). August 11 on Nieuwsuur: Israel kills prominent journalist • Mass hack at population survey • New academic year. Published by NOS.
66 Al Jazeera Staff. (2025, August 10). Anas al-Sharif among four Al Jazeera journalists killed by Israel in Gaza. Published by Al Jazeera.



Hossam Shabat (10 October 2001 – 24 March 2025) was a Palestinian journalist from Beit Hanoun[67] in Northern Gaza, from where he worked for Al Jazeera Mubasher and Drop Site News.[68] Shabat was in his early twenties when he started reporting for Al Jazeera before graduating from the University College of Applied Sciences in Gaza, where he studied Media.[69] He also actively worked to promote and contribute to charitable initiatives that support displaced Gazan families.[70] Shabat spoke about the dire circumstances in which he worked as a journalist – plagued by displacement, hunger and sleeping rough.[71] Yet, he refused to leave Northern Gaza and, consequently, did not see his family for almost 400 days.[72]

Shabat received death threats by call, text and social media messages throughout the war.[73] In September 2026, Free Press Unlimited interviewed Hossam's brother, Wessam Shabat. Wessam said that Hossam was called by the Israeli army at the beginning of the war and told to stop reporting or they would bomb his home.[74] Another threat that stood out to Wessam was made by a member of the Israeli army, who called Hossam a day before the January 2025 ceasefire was announced. According to Wessam, the individual threatened Hossam, saying 'get ready, we are going to target you. We are going to target and strike you now'.[75]

In October 2024, the IDF had accused him of being a Hamas-sniper[76] and, a month later, he was wounded in an Israeli airstrike. Hossam's brother Wessam told us: 'it [disinformation] was shared on official Israeli army pages, and on fake accounts affiliated with the army or settlers. Settlers were sending messages to Hossam and threatening him, especially on Twitter. The incitement and threats on Twitter were the reason Hossam was targeted. The army targeted Hossam without any excuse or verification.'[77]

According to Wessam, his brother was not affiliated with any organisation and did not have a political agenda. 'His only crime was documenting the truth, showing the world what was happening', Wessam said.[78] On 24 March 2025, near the Indonesian hospital in Beit Lahia in Northern Gaza, an Israeli strike targeted his car and killed him.[79] Shabat is survived by his brother Wessam, his mother and other loved ones.[80]

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67 Goodman, A. (2025, March 25). Remembering Hossam Shabat: Gaza Journalist Killed by Israel Was Placed on "Hit List" Before His Death [Interview with Sharif Abdel Kouddous]. Published by Democracy Now!.
68 Drop Site News. (2026, March 24). Remembering Palestinian Journalist Hossam Shabat. Published by Drop Site News.
69 Shireen Observatory. (n.d.). Hussam Basel Abdul Karim Shabat. Published by Shireen Observatory.
70 Stop Murdering Journalists. (n.d.). Hossam Shabat. Published by Stop Murdering Journalists.
71 Goodman, A. (2025, March 25). Remembering Hossam Shabat: Gaza Journalist Killed by Israel Was Placed on "Hit List" Before His Death [Interview with Sharif Abdel Kouddous]. Published by Democracy Now!.
72 Al Jazeera. (2025, March 24). Al Jazeera journalist Hossam Shabat killed in Israeli attack on Gaza. Published by Al Jazeera.
73 Drop Site News. (2025, March 24). Statement from Drop Site News on Israel's Murder of Our Colleague Hossam Shabat: We Hold Both Israel and the U.S. Government Responsible. Published by Drop Site News. & Interview Wessam Shabat, September 2026.
74 Interview Wessam Shabat, September 2026.
75 Interview Wessam Shabat, September 2026.
76 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.
77 Interview Wessam Shabat, September 2026.
78 Interview Wessam Shabat, September 2026.
79 CPJ. (n.d.). Hossam Shabat. Published by CPJ.
80 Drop Site News. (2025, March 24). Statement from Drop Site News on Israel's Murder of Our Colleague Hossam Shabat: We Hold Both Israel and the U.S. Government Responsible. Published by Drop Site News.

Shift of the narrative

In the cases of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat, we collected 269 posts published on social media, predominantly X and Telegram: 162 on Anas Al-Sharif and 107 on Hossam Shabat. The narrative we observed in these posts can be divided into two main categories: the journalist as someone who spreads propaganda or fake news and the journalist as part of a terrorist organisation/acting as an active combatant, such as a sniper operative or the leader of a rocket launching squad. Of the posts collected, 145 (Al-Sharif) and 102 (Shabat) refer to the journalists as terrorists, while 36 (Al-Sharif) and 18 (Shabat) refer to the journalist as spreaders of propaganda.

We found two distinct narratives, which were constructed and disseminated in different periods of the conflict. The first narrative, suggesting that the journalists in question were spreaders of fake news or propaganda, or were acting as journalists in the service of Hamas, appeared before the second narrative, from late 2023/early 2024 onwards.[81] At this point in time we only found one accusation that the journalists were active combatants. During this period, the allegations made are based on (old) screenshots from the journalists' social media accounts and other public information, in which, for example, the journalists carry a green scarf often associated with Hamas, or are present at large public gatherings of Hamas (including in their capacity as journalists). Such photos do not provide evidence of membership of Hamas, as some of those spreading the allegations purport. In this phase, there is also no international media coverage of terrorism allegations. In our sample of legacy media, searches for Hossam Shabat and Anas Al-Sharif yielded limited results, apart from reports by the BBC[82], The Sun[83], NOS[84] and CBC News[85], where Al-Sharif or Shabat were cited as local or Palestinian journalists practising their profession.

We observed the first explicit mention of the second frame ('the journalist is a terrorist' and/or 'the journalist is a combatant for a terrorist organisation') on social media in December 2023 (Anas Al-Sharif) and September 2024 (Hossam Shabat) respectively. As the conflict progresses and intensifies, and the reporting of the journalists in question increases, we observe in both cases that individual accounts began to publish 'scoops' or 'exposés' that the journalists were members of Hamas and/or active as terrorists or combatants. In this period, the journalists were increasingly gaining traction with their reports internationally, increasing the exposure of Israel's conduct in Gaza. Delegitimisation aimed at their work no longer sufficed, and we hypothesise this is why the journalists were targeted with increasingly stronger narratives.

In this phase, actors sharing these allegations do so in a thread or a single post, mainly referring to (old) screenshots of Sharif and Shabat's social media accounts. In the case of Hossam Shabat, it is an 18 September 2024 post by Khaled Hassan[86], and in the case of Anas Al-Sharif, it is a 22 October 2024 post by Eitan Fischberger.[87] Both Hassan and Fischberger identify themselves as researchers on their accounts.[88] Fischberger is a former IDF sergeant, who currently identifies himself as a journalist and OSINT investigator.[89] In a response to FPU, Fischberger stated "I am an independent OSINT researcher and analyst. I am not paid by the Israeli government, the IDF, or any ministry. I have never had a paid collaboration with any of them, and I do not coordinate my work or my messaging with them. My only

81 The Amit Terrorism and Intelligence Research Institute (ATIRI). (2023, December 26). Photojournalists in the service of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Published by ATIRI.
82 Gritten, D. (2023, November 21). Israeli tanks surround north Gaza's Indonesian Hospital. Published by BBC.
83 Baker, J. (2023, November 20). STORMING IN Israel advances on ANOTHER Hamas 'terror HQ' hospital after tunnels found under al-Shifa facility & 31 babies evacuated. Published by The Sun.
84 NOS. 2024, October 20). Dozens killed in Israeli airstrike on residential complex in North Gaza. Published by NOS.
85 Reuters, T. (2024, January 29). Aid agency UNRWA says it could run out of funding for Gaza in a month. Published by CBC.
86 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 18). "Today, I want". Published on X.
87 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 22). "Meet Al Jazeera's Anas". Published on X.
88 A more elaborate profile of both Eitan Fischberger and Khaled Hassan is included in Appendix 2.
89 Fischberger, E. (2026). About. Published on Fisch Files.

interaction with the IDF in connection with my investigative work was a press tour of Gaza, attended by reporters from The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and AFP, among others. Nobody paid me for it, and nobody told me or suggested to me what to say about it".

Not long after these two 'exposés', on 23 October 2024, the IDF itself publicly issued its first terrorism allegations (see Appendix 1: Evidence Discussion) against both Al-Sharif and Shabat, several months before killing Al-Sharif and Shabat in August and March 2025, respectively.90 The vast majority of posts repeating the allegation of involvement in active combat or terrorism surfaced after this post by the IDF: in the cases of Hossam Shabat and Anas Al-Sharif, 84 out of 102, and 139 out of the 145 posts respectively, referring to the journalists as terrorists appeared after 23 October 2024. This indicates that Israel's decision to delegitimise the journalists as terrorists without providing credible evidence impacts how the journalists are described from then onwards.

Delegitimisation peaks coincide with critical events in Gaza

Another pattern that emerges clearly from both cases is that the delegitimisation of Al-Sharif and Shabat peaked during their coverage of two pivotal events: the siege of Northern Gaza in October 2024, and during the famine in the summer of 2025. While both journalists reported consistently since 7 October 2023, online delegitimisation of their journalistic work peaked particularly following the aftermath of their coverage of these events, which also drew significant international attention.

In the summer of 2025, videos, images and articles demonstrated widespread famine caused by Israel's lockdown of Gaza.[91] On 22 August 2025, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) officially proclaimed a famine[92], but supplies had already become increasingly scarce months before.[93] Media outlets, international organisations and states continuously criticised Israel for what they identified as the purposeful starvation of the population of Gaza. For example, a statement issued by 28 states called for an immediate end to the war and the resulting starvation of Gazan civilians, reiterating their suffering at the hands of Israel: 'The suffering of civilians in Gaza has reached new depths. The Israeli government's aid delivery model is dangerous, fuels instability and deprives Gazans of human dignity'.[94]

Open Measures and Free Press Unlimited already demonstrated in earlier research that the aforementioned Pallywood frames, a portmanteau of 'Hollywood' and 'Palestine', which falsely suggests that (journalists') images of suffering and violence in Gaza are staged, increased towards the summer of 2025. The highest volume of posts featuring the 'Pallywood' and 'Gazawood' frames coincided with the onset of conflict in 2023 and the denial by Israeli officials of the reports of famine in Gaza in July 2025.[95]

90 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.
91 (1) Graham-Harrison, E. (2025, July 31). The mathematics of starvation: how Israel caused a famine in Gaza. Published by The Guardian. & (2) The Red Cross. (2026, May 11). What is happening in Gaza? Published by The Red Cross UK.
92 World Health Organization (2025, August 22). Famine confirmed for first time in Gaza. Published by WHO.
93 UN. (2025, July 29). In Gaza, mounting evidence of famine and widespread starvation. Published by UN News.
94 Jacobo, J. (2025, July 22). 28 countries sign statement calling for end of war in Gaza. Published by ABC News.
95 Open Measures. (2025, September 17). 'Pallywood' Conspiracy Theories Saw Increased Interest After Reports of Famine in Gaza. Published by Open Measures.

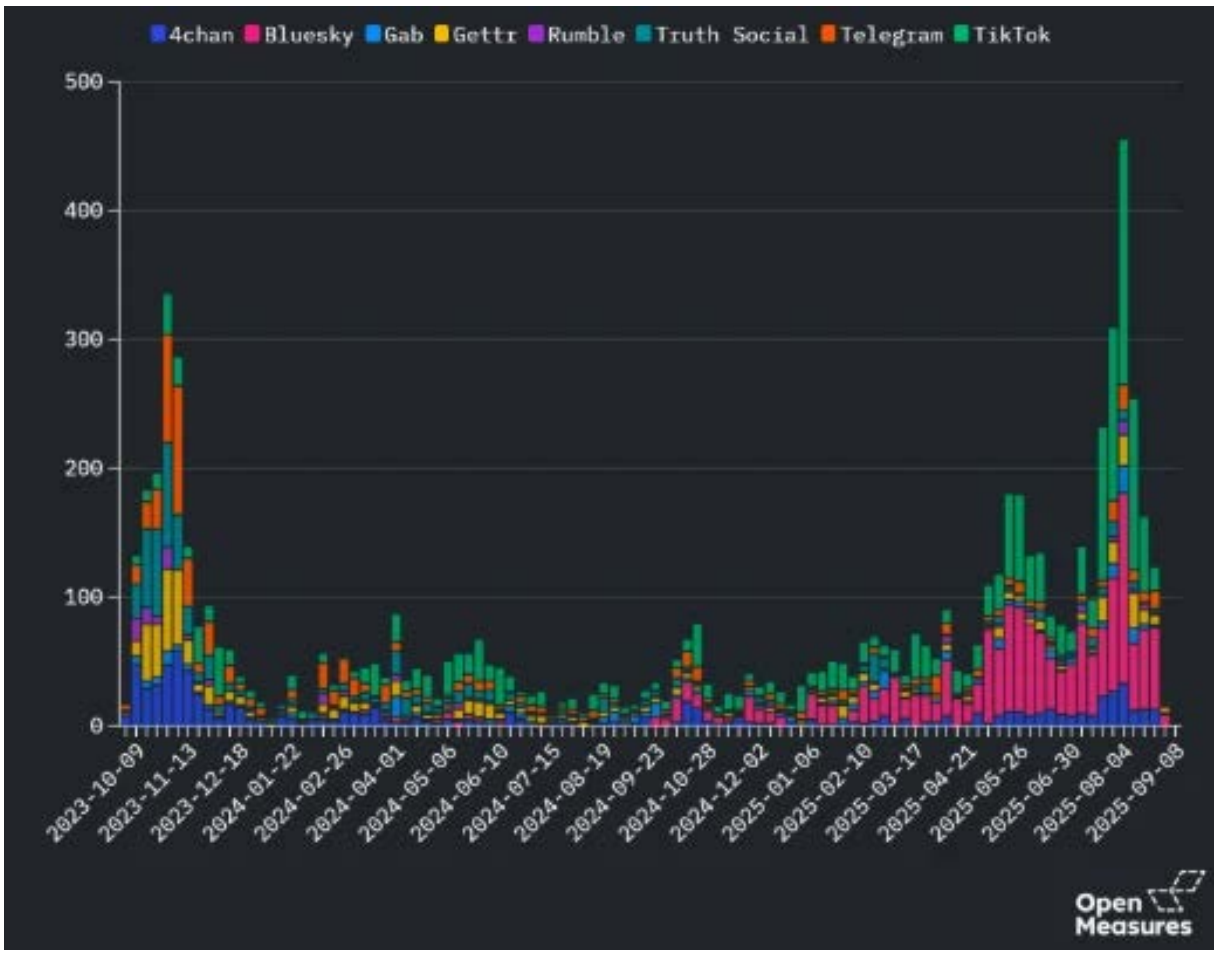


Figure 1 – Number of posts per week containing "Pallywood" or "Gazawood" across Open Measures' sources from 7 October 2023, to 3 September 2025, sorted by the platforms on which they appeared. (Graphic made with Flourish using Open Measures data). Source: Open Measures.[96]

We found the same dynamic in the cases of Al-Sharif and Shabat where both absolute and negative coverage about the two journalists spiked at two critical moments during the genocide: the October 2024 siege of Northern Gaza (which both Al-Sharif and Shabat were reporting on the ground) and the summer 2025 famine. These two moments resulted in increased negative international media coverage of Israel's actions, a lot of which was due to the visibility of these events through reporting by Palestinian journalists in Gaza, like Al-Sharif and Shabat, who had garnered a substantial international following at this point. In October 2024, the siege of Northern Gaza led to increased international condemnation of Israel's actions. Shortly after, on 23 October 2024, the IDF published unsupported allegations through official channels that six Al Jazeera journalists, including Shabat and Al-Sharif, were terrorists affiliated with Hamas.[97] In the summer of 2025, reporting on the famine in Gaza coincided with a flurry of online activity targeting Anas Al-Sharif, also by official channels such as the IDF Spokesperson Arabic.[98] FPU approached the former spokesperson for comment, but did not receive a response. Although this data cannot demonstrate the intent to intensify targeting of Palestinian journalists following increased international scrutiny of the Israeli government, the findings align with the aforementioned reporting by 972+ Magazine, which found that the IDF harbored a specific 'delegitimisation cell' tasked to 'identify Gaza-

96 Open Measures. (2025, September 17). 'Pallywood' Conspiracy Theories Saw Increased Interest After Reports of Famine in Gaza. Published by Open Measures.

97 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.

98 Committee to Protect Journalists (2025, July 24). CPJ calls for Anas al-Sharif's protection in face of Israeli smears. Published by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

based journalists it could portray as undercover Hamas operatives, in an effort to blunt growing global outrage over Israel's killing of reporters.'[99] In similar vein, IDF-veteran testimonies, gathered by the Israeli group Breaking the Silence[100], reveal that the IDF employs so-called 'retroactive incrimination': looking for evidence of Hamas-connections among those killed in airstrikes after the fact, especially for strikes with no clear military purpose.[101] According to Breaking the Silence, the IDF uses this as a tool "to avoid carrying out real investigations"[102] about the consequences of its airstrikes. Hence, there are indications that the IDF utilises delegitimisation tactics in order to evade accountability for its actions. Therefore, the peaks in the delegitimisation of Al-Sharif and Shabat cannot be seen separately from key developments on the ground in Gaza. The IDF did not respond to these allegations after inquiry by FPU, and referred to its full statement shared in the introduction of this report.

Network of interacting official and independent actors

Within the information ecosystem where Palestinian journalists were discredited online, we found that official actors, affiliated with the IDF and other Israeli governmental institutions, and independent actors regularly interacted. Our findings show that actors in- and outside the Israeli government and IDF reinforced each other's messaging about the journalists by reposting and adding to the same narratives, exchanging information about the journalists, attending meetings organized by government bodies, and in some cases, even engaged in paid collaborations with Israeli ministries. Through social media posts, reports and public statements, actors outside the IDF contributed to the visibility of these delegitimisation narratives and increased their credibility among some audiences, despite the lack of credible evidence provided by the IDF. We refer to this ecosystem as a 'network' in which delegitimisation narratives were created and gained visibility, but it does not refer to a centrally coordinated or otherwise directed structure.

The existence of such a network is relevant because it illustrates that, what often appears to be purely bottom-up popular support for Israel's actions, is regularly influenced by the Israeli government's public diplomacy (*hasbara* in Hebrew) strategy. Independent and bottom-up support for the targeting of journalists lends critical legitimacy to Israel's actions in its struggle for what Prime Minister Netanyahu has described as the 'eighth front', or the struggle of hearts and minds.[103] Israel's efforts previously focused more on legacy media, but during a meeting on 26 September 2025, Netanyahu told US-based influencers that 'weapons change over time … and we have to fight with the weapons that apply to the battlefield in which we are engaged … the most important ones [today] are the social media.[104]

Earlier research already demonstrated that Israeli ministries adopted a new approach to conducting information operations: covert propaganda carried out through third or fourth parties that do not always declare their ties to the government.[105] Israeli media outlet The Seventh Eye summarized it as follows in 2017: [the role of these parties is] 'to make the voice of the Israeli government heard – but through civilians, who will prevent the message from being colored with government colors.'[106] FPU conducted a scrape of all leaked internal documents from the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, as published on the website of The Seventh Eye, and found documents indicating collaboration between the Ministry, media outlets, civil society and advocacy organizations and academic and research institutions.[107]

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99 Abraham, Y. (2025, August 14). 'Legitimization Cell': Israeli unit tasked with linking Gaza journalists to Hamas. Published by +972 Magazine.

100 Breaking the Silence's website can be found here.

101 Mednick, S. (2026, August 25). A year after Israeli strikes killed journalists at a hospital, no one has been held accountable. Published by AP News.

102 Mednick, S. (2026, August 25). A year after Israeli strikes killed journalists at a hospital, no one has been held accountable. Published by AP News.

103 Cleveland-Stout, N. (2026, July 24). The Eighth Front: Inside Israel's $1 Billion Influence Campaign. Published on Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

104 Middle East Eye (2025, September 27). We have to fight. Published on Instagram.

105 B"Z, I. (2017, December 24). The Army of Truth of the State of Israel. Published by The7Eye; Abraham, Y. (2025, August 14). 'Legitimization Cell': Israeli unit tasked with linking Gaza journalists to Hamas. Published by +972 Magazine.

106 B"Z, I. (2017, December 24). The Army of Truth of the State of Israel. Published by The7Eye.

107 The documents can be found here.

More recently, in September 2025, two significant developments demonstrated the extent to which Israel invests in influencing public opinion online, particularly in the United States. Firstly, a $1.5 million per month contract was drawn up between Israel and Brad Parscale, a former campaign strategist for President Donald Trump in which Parcale's firm Clock Tower X LLC was hired as strategic communications firm to combat antisemitism using AI platforms to shape outputs of chatbots.[108] Secondly, Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA) filings submitted to the United States Department of Justice demonstrate that Israel launched a two-track influence operation in the US in which a firm called Bridges Partners LLC was hired to manage a network of influencers.[109] The documents show that the firm was created in June 2025 in Delaware and 'received nearly $200,000 to recruit and coordinate US-based social media influencers'.[110] Both Bridges Partners and Brad Parscale refused to respond to requests for comment by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.[111] The developments demonstrate that Israel is exploring and initiating novel ways of influencing public opinion online using the latest technological developments. Furthermore, this suggests that Israel is increasingly relying on funding organisations directly rather than relying on domestic support networks such as AIPAC, that operate independently from the government of Israel.[112] In total, the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft reported that Israel had spent more than $1 billion on public diplomacy since 2023, including more than $100 million on US based foreign agents.[113] In 2026, Israel is on track to 'become the single-biggest FARA spender'.[114]

Within the scope of this research, direct coordination of specific messages about Al Sharif and Shabat between state actors and private individuals cannot be definitively proven or demonstrated. Yet, as noted, our research shows that actors outside the Israeli government have engaged with Israeli officials, official bodies, and/or with actors who have strong ties to the Israeli government on the matter of delegitimising Palestinian journalists and their work. These include meetings organised by Israeli official bodies with independent actors to discuss future spending on public diplomacy (hasbara in Hebrew); attempts to corroborate or supplement Israeli official information on Palestinian journalists online; and sharing information about Palestinian journalists directly with the IDF.

Several independent actors in our dataset (who disseminated delegitimisation frames about Shabat and/or Al Sharif) participated in meetings with Israeli officials to discuss future spending for public diplomacy. In December 2024, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its additional budget $150 million specifically meant for hasbara.[115] At the time, the sum was more than 20 times what was usually allocated.[116] In the months that followed, Israeli media observed an increase in the number of international delegations to visit Israel, whose aim was to spread the Israeli narrative in international media.[117] This included the largest delegation in Israel's history, consisting of more than 1000 influencers from the United States.[118] At the time, Israeli media reported that Minister Gideon Sa'ar did not have a clear idea

108 Business and Human Rights Centre (2025, November 14). Israel/OPT: Clock Tower X allegedly hired by Israeli government to create 'pro-Israel' content, training ChatGPT and targeting Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Youtube, incl. cos. response and non-responses. Published by the Business and Human Rights Center.
109 Elia-Shalev, A. (2025, September 30). Inside Israel's 'Esther Project': DOJ filings reveal paid US influencer campaign amid AI-powered PR blitz. Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency.
110 Elia-Shalev, A. (2025, September 30). Inside Israel's 'Esther Project': DOJ filings reveal paid US influencer campaign amid AI-powered PR blitz. Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency.
111 Elia-Shalev, A. (2025, September 30). Inside Israel's 'Esther Project': DOJ filings reveal paid US influencer campaign amid AI-powered PR blitz. Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency.
112 Cleveland-Stout, N. (2026, July 24). The Eighth Front: Inside Israel's $1 Billion Influence Campaign. Published on Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.
113 Cleveland-Stout, N. (2026, July 24). The Eighth Front: Inside Israel's $1 Billion Influence Campaign. Published on Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.
114 Cleveland-Stout, N. (2026, July 24). The Eighth Front: Inside Israel's $1 Billion Influence Campaign. Published on Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.
115 JTA & Staff, T. (2024, December 29). Foreign Ministry to receive massive budget for public diplomacy abroad. Published by The Times of Israel.
116 JTA & Staff, T. (2024, December 29). Foreign Ministry to receive massive budget for public diplomacy abroad. Published by The Times of Israel.
117 i24 News. (2025, August 21). Israel to bring influencers and officials in global PR campaign. Published by i24 News.
118 Kahana. A. (2025, February 12). Israel hosts largest public diplomacy delegation in history. Published by Israel Hayom.

of how to spend the money so his Ministry invited influencers and public opinion leaders to take part in brainstorming sessions at the Ministry's premises.[119] Among them were former spokesperson Eylon Levy, FDD's Jonathan Conricus, NGO Monitor President Gerald Steinberg, Palestine Media Watch-founder Itamar Marcus, and representatives from ELNET and Honest Reporting.[120] Honest Reporting is a pro-Israel advocacy group that describes itself as a 'media watchdog exposing anti-Israel bias',[121] which actively contributes to delegitimising Palestinian journalists online (see Appendix 2). According to reporting by *Jewish Insider*, Honest Reporting specifically asked during this meeting to receive details about journalists killed in IDF actions who were members of terrorist organisations.[122] The (at the time) Executive Director of Honest Reporting said about this in an op-ed: "As I pointed out to Sa'ar, the identity of so-called journalists killed in Gaza that day who were really terrorists should have been provided to HonestReporting before we woke up so we could help expose them to the world".[123] A year later, in December 2025, the budget for hasbara was again increased, this time to $725 million.[124] Honest Reporting was approached for comment by FPU, but did not respond to this inquiry.

Additionally, we found direct interactions between Israeli official bodies and independent actors on the delegitimisation of Palestinian journalists, including collaborations. For example, in the case of the Media Watch Legal website, a website created by the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism that shares disinformation regarding Palestinian journalists, the Ministry noted that it collaborates with the independent OSINT account Middle East Buka on the website itself.[125] This reference has recently been removed but can still be seen in archived versions of the site.[126] Media Watch Legal and the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs were approached for comment by FPU, but did not respond to this inquiry.

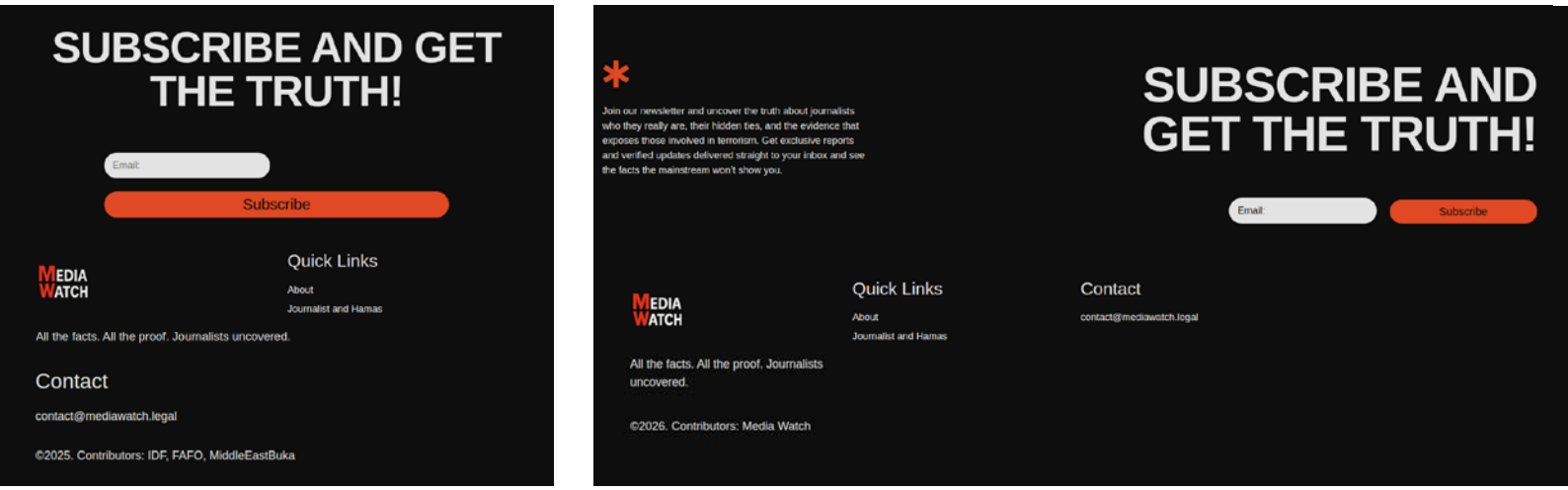


Figure 2 – *Left image:* screengrab from archived version of Media Watch Legal, 2 December 2025.[127] The bottom left corner details contributors as IDF, FAFO, MiddleEastBuka. *Right image:* screengrab on 3 August 2026, lists contributors only as Media Watch.[128] Source: Media Watch Legal from 2 December 2025 and 3 August 2026.

119 ELNET (2024, December 27). Jewish Insider: Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs Gideon Sa'ar : $150 million on Public Diplomacy. Published on ELNET. Accessible via archive.org.
120 Harkov, L. (2024, December 26). Israel's foreign minister is looking for a way to spend $150 million on public diplomacy. Published by Jewish Insider.
121 See: https://www.youtube.com/@HonestReportingVideo
122 Harkov, L. (2024, December 26). Israel's foreign minister is looking for a way to spend $150 million on public diplomacy. Published by Jewish Insider.
123 Hoffman, G. (2025, January 3). Foreign Minister Sa'ar can spend $150m. on public diplomacy. This is how he should do it - opinion. Published by the Jerusalem Post.
124 Freiberg, N. (2025, December 7). Sa'ar at summit of Israeli envoys: We cannot succeed without improved public diplomacy. Published by The Times of Israel.
125 Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.
126 Media Watch Legal. (2025, December 2). Fake "journalists". Archived by Archive.is.
127 Media Watch Legal. (2025, December 2). Fake "journalists". Archived by Archive.is.
128 Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.



Another example is that of Khaled Hassan, a British-Egyptian national security and foreign policy researcher, who focused on digital threats, radicalisation and disinformation and antisemitism,[129] and was one of the most outspoken individuals in the targeting of Hossam Shabat. He visited the IDF's spokesperson unit on 16 September 2024, meeting former spokesperson Avichay Adraee two days before attacking Hossam Shabat on X.[130] Hassan later used a GIF image to mock Al-Sharif's death, and subsequently bragged that he had also submitted evidence about Al-Sharif and Shabat to the IDF shortly before they were assassinated.[131]

Figure 3 – Khaled Hassan's response to an unidentified X user, bragging about his support for the targeted assasination of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. Source: @Khaledzakariah.[132]

Apart from meeting with then-IDF spokesperson Avichay Adraee, Hassan has various connections with the network of pro-Israel actors active in the online discourse on Palestinian journalists: he co-authored the Asserson Report with David Collier, in which they alleged that the BBC breached its own guidelines more than 1500 times in their reporting of the war.[133] He also featured in several podcasts and interviews, including a podcast from the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs, published 23 September 2025, where Yossi Kuperwasser (former Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs who also connected Richard Landes to a contact when setting up GAZAWOOD) is active as a senior project manager[134], two interviews with disinformation channel Visegrad24[135], and several interviews with the Misgav Institute.[136] The Misgav Institute for National Security and Zionist Strategy is a right-wing Israeli thinktank that employs individuals with strong connections to Israel's government, such as former Strategic Affairs Minister and Israeli Ambassador to the UN and U.S. Gilad Erdan.[137] Finally, Hassan also works as a council member at President's Voice of the People[138] and has visited the inaugural Voice of the People summit organised by Herzog in March 2025.[139] In response to FPU, Hassan stated among others that he exposed Shabat's 'open and public support for the kidnapping, murder and torture of civilians'

129 The Jewish Chronicle. (n.d.). Khaled Hassan. Published by The Jewish Chronicle.
130 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 16). "I was delighted". Published on X.
131 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, September 26). "Do you know". Published on X.
132 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, September 26). "Do you know". Published on X.
133 Turner, C. & Sawer, P (2024, September 7). BBC 'breached guidelines 1,500 times' over Israel-Hamas war. Published by The Telegraph.
134 Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs. (2024, September 23). Is the BBC Lying About the Gaza War? An Egyptian Expert's Shocking Evidence. Published on YouTube.
135 Visegrad24 (2025, October 9). The Secret Society You Didn't Know Existed | Khaled Hassan. Published on YouTube. & Visegrad24 (2026, June 5). Expert on Extremism Warns Britain | Khaled Hassan. Published on YouTube.
136 Misgav Institute for National Security and Zionist Strategy (2026, July 15). Egypt and Turkey's Unholy Alliance | Khaled Hassan. Published on YouTube. & Misgav Institute for National Security and Zionist Strategy (2026, May 7). Israel in 10: Iran mulls Trump deal, Radwan commander killed, Egypt's double role | Khaled Hassan. Published on YouTube.
137 Misgav Institute for National Security and Zionist Strategy (n.d.). Gilad Erdan. Published by the Misgav Institute.
138 Hassan, K. [@thegrandstrategy]. (n.d.). Account on Substack.
139 Pasko, S. (2025, March 17). Israeli President Herzog's Vision of Voice of the People Unveiled With Global Jewish Leaders. Published by Media Line.

and stated: 'As for my role in exposing Shabat and others, I can tell you one thing: I slept like a baby the day I heard that the IDF had delivered justice to those who engaged in and supported the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.[140]

Another example is featured in a June 2025 podcast of former Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy, State of a Nation. Levy stated in March 2024 that this podcast series was partially funded by the Israeli Ministry for Diaspora.[141] In the June 2025 episode, Eitan Fischberger – an American writer and self-identified open source (OSINT) investigator who frequently targets Palestinian journalists (such as Al-Sharif and Shabat) and their work – explicitly noted to Levy that what he finds online 'gives more credence to the IDF's allegations'.[142] Earlier research by factchecking platform Misbar found that Fischberger's posts 'show a pattern of cherry-picking evidence, generalizing, and dehumanizing - especially field journalists - by implying official ties to Hamas without concrete proof. He often appeals to emotions to boost engagement, benefiting from a broad amplification network that includes verified accounts and prominent figures who help spread his content.'[143] Responding to FPU regarding Misbar's work, Fischberger noted that Misbar repeatedly accused him of publishing misleading information, largely because they disagree with his interpretations of material that they cannot establish is false.

In the June 2025 podcast, Eylon Levy sums up the strategy further: 'When the IDF says he was a deputy company commander, none of this OSINT that you are uncovering directly supports that claim, but it's circumstantial evidence that the claim that he is a deputy commander is not outrageous at all.'[144] Fischberger follows the same line of argument: 'I mean it's contemporaneous evidence right, so in other words, if the IDF says something, and then they unfortunately on some occasions don't provide the evidence to back it up, and international media is skeptical, which they have every right to be and they should be, it doesn't explain to me and some other observers why they often don't entertain the additional open source evidence that is then provided.'[145] In a response to FPU, Fischberger noted: 'I stand by what I said. The IDF does not always publish evidence behind its allegations, as doing so could potentially endanger its sources in Gaza. This is exactly why open-source work matters. The IDF's case rests on internal Hamas records, testimonies, and other materials that militaires are under no general obligation to divulge publicly (even if I wish they would).'

Fischberger *(for a full profile on both Fischberger and Levy please see Appendix 2: Actor Mapping)* is a former IDF Sergeant who also worked as an intern for the Israeli Mission to the United Nations[146] and attended a press trip to Gaza organised upon the invitation of an IDF spokesperson.[147] According to Fischberger's response, this press tour of Gaza was his "only interaction with the IDF in connection with his investigative work, which was attended by reporters from The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and AFP, among others." Fischberger stated: 'Nobody paid me for it, and nobody told me or suggested to me what to say about it. Everything I publish comes from open sources and is posted publicly with screenshots, linked, or both attached, so anyone can check it.'

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140 The full response by Khaled Hassan can be found here: https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting/methodology-accountability

141 Horovitz, D. (2024, March 31). The stunning rise, curious suspension and insistent return of Israel's star spokesman. Published by The Times of Israel.

142 EylON the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas' Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on YouTube.

143 Misbar's Editorial Team. (2025, September 14). How Eitan Fischberger Uses Open-Source Tools To Promote Israeli Propaganda. Published by Misbar.

144 EylON the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas' Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on YouTube

145 EylON the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas' Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on YouTube.

146 The Algemeiner. (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by The Algemeiner.

147 Barshad, A. (2025, October 6). Israel's Influencer Insiders. Published by Columbia Journalism Review.

Fischberger also frequently collaborates and interacts on social media and elsewhere, with other prominent pro-Israel voices, including Brig. Gen. (rtd.) Yossi Kuperwasser (the former Director General of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, with whom he wrote a book chapter), Dan Diker (President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs), Dr. Einat Wolf, GAZAWOOD1, Andrew Fox, and Khaled Hassan.[148] On his website Fisch Files, he describes himself as a 'writer and OSINT analyst' and 'accidental investigative journalist'.[149]

Finally, Haaretz revealed in 2021 that the person who runs Hebrew language Telegram channel Abu Ali Express (and its English language variant 'englishabuali') had been paid as a consultant by the IDF for two years for 'psychological operations on social media'.[150] The IDF confirmed the contract at the time, but commented that it did not share information with the channel to help with its articles and stated the contract was concluded in accordance with regulations. It is not known whether the channel was paid by the IDF since this publication and/or continues to receive funding. Abu Ali Express is an Israeli Telegram channel run by Israeli citizen Gilad Cohen; it has more than 577k subscribers[151] and covers Arab affairs on social media, including Telegram and Twitter, as well as on its own website. It is one of the key propagators of posts targeting Hossam Shabat and Anas Al-Sharif: between 7 October 2023 and 7 October 2025, we observed 47 posts targeting Anas Al-Sharif and another six targeting Hossam Shabat.[152]

As of September 2022, Abu Ali Express was the Telegram channel with the most views per post in Israel.[153] Many of its stories and posts are reproduced on more legacy Israeli media outlets, such as Maariv, Globes, Ynet, Arutz Sheva, and also on Israeli television channels. The Hebrew version of Abu Ali Express spiked in popularity after 7 October, sometimes getting more than 25 million views per day.[154] Abu Ali Express was also one of the first Telegram channels without clear ownership who received an exclusive interview with a sitting head of state, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.[155] After Anas Al-Sharif was assassinated, Abu Ali Express celebrated the news with its hundreds of thousands of followers (see figure 4).

The subchapters below are an in-depth chronological reconstruction of delegitimising posts targeting Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat, demonstrating both the shift in the narrative used to target both journalists, and hint at collaboration and coordination between various actors active in this ecosystem.

148 See for example: Fischberger, E. [EFischberger]. (n.d.). Replies. Published on X. & See Appendix 2: Key Actor Mapping.
149 Fischberger, E. (2026). About. Published on Fisch Files.
150 Kubovich, Y. (2021, August 18). Israeli Army Employs Popular Blogger for Psyops on Social Media. Published by Haaretz.
151 Abu Ali Express Telegram Channel: https://t.me/s/abualiexpress. Accessed last on 16 November 2026.
152 Abu Ali Express (2023, October 7 - 2025, October 7). "Anas Al-sharif" in Hebrew and "Hossam Shabat" in Hebrew. Search conducted inside Open Measures.
153 Kubovich, Y. (2021, August 18). Israeli Army Employs Popular Blogger for Psyops on Social Media. Published by Haaretz.
154 Abu Ali Express. (n.d.). Abu Ali Express. Published by Abu Ali Express.
155 Maariv Online. (2025, September 4). There has never been one like this before: Netanyahu's surprising interview - on a new platform. Published by Maariv Online.

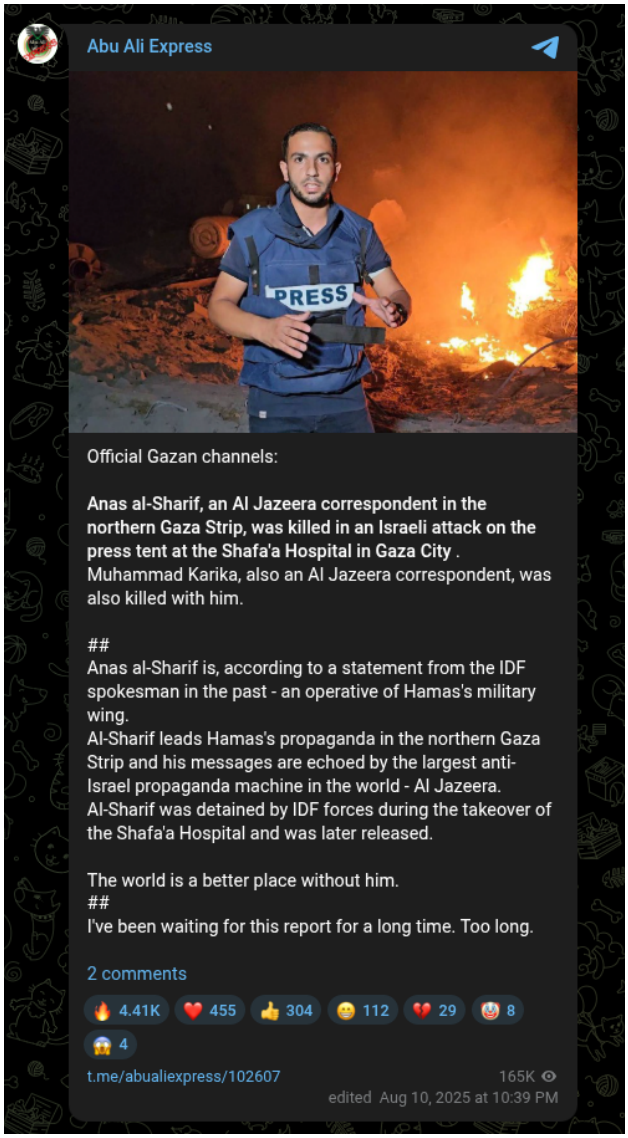


Figure 4 – Abu Ali Express in English (translated from Hebrew) Telegram post of 10 August 2025. The post gained 165k views. Source: Abu Ali Express in English on Telegram.[156]

156 Abu Ali Express in English. (2025, August 10). "Official Gazan channels". Published on Telegram

3a. Anas Al-Sharif

We collected 162 social media posts targeting Anas Al-Sharif, of which 92 were published after his assassination on 10 August 2025. The reconstruction below is based on these posts.

October 2023 - January 2024: Threats against Anas Al-Sharif & killing of his father

On 22 November 2023, Anas Al-Sharif revealed on his social media channels that he had received threats from Israeli military officers to stop his reporting and leave Northern Gaza.[157] He had also received voice notes via Whatsapp disclosing his location to him.[158] In the same social media message, Al-Sharif declared his determination to continue reporting.

On 11 December 2023, an Israeli airstrike hit Anas Al-Sharif's home in the Jabalia refugee camp, killing his father. The same day, at 16:48 CET, the aforementioned Hebrew Telegram channel Abu Ali Express, a very popular communication channel[159] with more than 577k subscribers[160], posted a message referencing the killing of Al-Sharif's father, and directly threatening Al-Sharif himself: "Anas, run away, we'll be coming to you soon!!!"[161] We searched Open Measures, a social media analysis tool, for references to Anas Al-Sharif on the Abu Ali Express channel between 7 October 2023 and 7 October 2025, and found 47 posts. The posts refer to Anas Al-Sharif as a promoter of propaganda and fake news, and as a terrorist in the service of Hamas.[162] Several of the posts on the channel also threatened Al-Sharif, called for violence against him, or celebrated his eventual assassination. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been interviewed on the channel twice in a period of six months.[163] For comparison, Natanyahu rarely gives interviews to Israeli media.[164] Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported 'the channel is suspected of being a military influence arm, and received funding from the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism after the war began'.[165]

We observed that Anas Al-Sharif continued his reporting, which included a couple of widely shared posts on 16 December 2023, where he shared videos he recorded while walking around in the Kamal Adwan Hospital complex and its surroundings, following a raid by the IDF. Al-Sharif described a terrible stench, and body parts strewn around. The recordings are hard to watch: a cat can be seen gnawing on what seems to be body parts, and the destruction is immense.[166] He recorded witnesses who told him that hospital patients were among the dead: 'This is the body of one of the injured (patients) who were inside the hospital. … The bulldozers drove over them and left,' Al-Sharif said, according to an NBC News article.[167]

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157 Al Jazeera Channel. (2023, November 23). "More information". Published on Facebook.
158 Mandour, M. et al. (2023, October 19). Attacks, arrests, threats, censorship: The high risks of reporting during the Israel-Gaza war. Published by CPJ.
159 (1) Kubovic. Y. (2021, August 18). Israeli Army Employs Popular Blogger for Psyops on Social Media. Published by Haaretz. & (2) Benjakob, O. (2026, January 8). As Netanyahu Seeks Another Term, Israel Is Relying on 1959 Law to Defend Against Deepfake Attacks. Published by Haaretz.
160 Recorded on 16 November 2026.
161 Abu Ali Express. (2023, December 11). "Gazan journalist Anas". Published on Telegram.
162 Open Measures search for "Anas Al-Sharif" and combinations thereof inside "AbuAliExpress" Telegram Channel, between 7 October 2023 and 7 October 2025.
163 Freiberg, N. & Berman, L. (2025, November 21). Netanyahu: 'There will not be a Palestinian state,' even at cost of ties with Saudis. Published by The Times of Israel.
164 Shalev, T. (2025, December 1). Entering election year, Netanyahu's government targets Israel's free press. Published by CNN.
165 Benjakob, O. (2026, January 8). As Netanyahu Seeks Another Term, Israel Is Relying on 1959 Law to Defend Against Deepfake Attacks. Published by Haaretz.
166 (1) Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2023, December 16). "A very difficult" Published on X. & (2) Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2023, December 16). "Horrific scenes beyond" Published on X. (3) Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2023, December 16). "Report on the" Published on X.
167 NBC News. (2024, December 18). Details emerge on three hostage killings; IDF accused of raiding hospital. Published by NBC News.

On the same day, we observed two posts aiming to counter Al-Sharif's reporting. The first was published on a very popular English language Telegram channel, 'beholdisraelchannel', run by its founder and president Amir Tsarfati. The channel currently has more than 580k subscribers, and is outspoken on the narrative that Palestinian journalists are terrorists.[168] Tsarfati posted: "Anas Al-Sharif (in the top photo), a Gazan journalist whose father was killed a few days ago as a result of IDF attacks, is slandering the IDF with a new blood libel: "The occupation bulldozers buried dozens of sick and displaced people while alive in the Kamal Adwan hospital." These aren't journalists; they are terrorists!"[169]

The second reaction was published on Abu Ali Express and on its English version, 'English Abu Ali', accusing Al-Sharif of slandering the IDF. The post was viewed more than 143k times on the Hebrew channel.[170] Another post on the same day, this time accusing both Al Jazeera and Anas Al-Sharif of 'vigorously promoting the blood libel of Gazan journalist Anas Al-Sharif', was viewed more than 156k times.[171]

On 27 December 2023, the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Center at the Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (IIHCC) published an investigative report on its own website, analysing five journalists in Gaza and associating them with Hamas through work and photos with Hamas leadership.[172] In it, they also provide details about Anas Al-Sharif, including publishing his personal WhatsApp number. The IIHCC is run by retired IDF Colonel Shlomo Mofaz, who has over 25 years of intelligence experience and closely collaborates with Israeli intelligence.[173] The IIHCC published two more such reports in February 2024[174] and December 2025[175], arguing that 'half' and later '60% of the Gazans killed that were classified as journalists belonged to Hamas or other terror groups'. The reports do not provide evidence of any involvement in terrorism.

The December 2023 IIHCC report was picked up by the aforementioned Eitan Fischberger, who played a pivotal role in discrediting Anas Al-Sharif and other Palestinian journalists online in the ensuing years. On 8 January 2024, Fischberger started a thread on 'some Hamas photojournalists in Gaza', directly thanking IIHCC for the information and the photos.[176] It's one of the first times that Eitan Fischberger dedicates a post to Anas Al-Sharif. Between then and December 2025, Fischberger published extensively about Al-Sharif and other Palestinian journalists[177], and in doing so became a central player in a network of social media accounts with the same purpose.[178] His account currently has more than 68.900 followers.[179]

Fischberger is not the only actor who began publishing delegitimising content about Palestinian journalists in early 2024. David Collier, according to his social media an independent investigative journalist, published a report on 9 January 2024, one day after Fischberger's post.[180] The report is titled 'A modern-day antisemitic conspiracy theory promoted by mainstream media'. In it, Collier states it

168 580,748 subscribers as of 14 August 2026: https://t.me/beholdisraelchannel.
169 Tsarfati, A. (2023, December 16). "Kamal Adwan Hospital". Published on Telegram.
170 The post reads: "Anas Al-Sharif (in the top photo), a Gazan journalist whose father was killed a few days ago as a result of IDF strikes — a new slander [accusation] against the IDF — at Kamal Adwan Hospital. View the post here.
171 Abu Ali Express. (2023, December 16). "Qatari Al Jazeera". Published on Telegram.
172 The Amit Terrorism and Intelligence Research Institute (ATIRI) at the Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (IIHCC). (2023, December 26). Photojournalists in the service of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Published by ATIRI.
173 Institute for National and International Security (INIS). (n.d.). Dr Shlomo Mofaz. Published by INIS.
174 The Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (MAITIC). (2024, January 6). More than half of the Palestinian journalists killed in the Gaza Strip during Operation Iron Swords were affiliated with terrorist organizations (Full version). Published by MAITIC.
175 The Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (MAITIC). (2025, December 16.). 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. Published by ATIRI.
176 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, January 8). "Brief [...] on some". Published on X.
177 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger] on Al-Sharif and Shabat. Published on X.
178 For a more complete mapping of actors, please see Appendix 2: Network Mapping.
179 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. Account on X. [Followers recorded on 26 May 2026].
180 Collier, D (2024, January). Special report: The journalists of Gaza. A modern-day antisemitic conspiracy theory promoted by mainstream media. Published by David Collier, p. 3

is a Hamas propaganda claim that Israel is killing a disproportionate number of journalists.[181] Without providing evidence of this claim, the report even suggests that 'like Hamas', 'it is in the interest of the Committee to Protect Journalists to push these numbers as high as possible'.[182] In the report, Collier goes through the social media accounts, insofar available, of the Palestinian journalists and media workers listed by CPJ at that time.[183] In the report, he applies his own threshold for assessing whether the killing of a journalist is legitimate ('A search was made for definitive and visible support [on social media] for terrorism against civilians'), instead of the threshold applicable under international humanitarian law, which is followed by CPJ (see Appendix 1).[184] While CPJ already at the time of the report stated under each entry that its research, given the complexities of covering armed conflict, is based on preliminary reporting and will be updated when new information becomes available, as the organization indeed did,[185] Collier cites selectively from the organization's methodology in the report,[186] applies arbitrary criteria,[187] and regularly implies guilt by association ('this is an image of his cousin - not him. The respectful response [under the photo] is his. But it does raise questions about how close to his household Hamas may have been').[188]

While debate about the definitions of various databases of journalist killings is important and legitimate,[189] the report makes various unsubstantiated allegations, including against CPJ and its staff, and dismisses concerns over journalist killings by Israel all together as 'fiction' and propaganda. The over 170 journalists killed by Israel in Gaza, Iran, Lebanon and Yemen that CPJ recorded since Collier's report[190] underline the absurdity of these claims, but also point at the painful lack of accountability after journalist killings started to rise early in the war. Colliers' claims meanwhile found fertile ground, and were cited by various actors included in this report.[191] David Collier did not respond to FPU's request for response.

March 2024: Al-Shifa hospital raid and arrest of journalist Ismail al Ghoul

Between 18 March and 1 April 2024, the IDF raided Al Shifa hospital in Gaza, destroying it almost completely.[192] At the start of the raid, the IDF arrested Al Jazeera Correspondent Ismail al Ghoul, holding him in custody for 12 hours.[193] Also at the start of the raid, on 18 March at 08:15 PM (CET), Anas Al-Sharif started reporting on the IDF's attack, noting it was one of the hardest days to cover since the start of the

181 Collier, D. [@mishtal]. (2024, January 9). "Exclusive: Hamas propaganda". Published on X.
182 Collier, D (2024, January). Special report: The journalists of Gaza. A modern-day antisemitic conspiracy theory promoted by mainstream media. Published by David Collier, p. 23
183 60 journalists and 10 media workers according to CPJ (January 2024)
184 Collier, D (2024, January). Special report: The journalists of Gaza. A modern-day antisemitic conspiracy theory promoted by mainstream media. Published by David Collier, p. 39
185 CPJ updated its database between 2023-2026 on a rolling basis when new information became available, and held a thorough and audited review of its data regarding journalists killed in the Israel-Gaza war in 2026:https://cpj.org/2026/06/cpj-undertakes-review-of-its-documentation-of-journalists-killed-in-israel-gaza-war-since-2023/. Of the 19 journalists Collier argues should be removed from the CPJ-list (p. 12-42), CPJ removed two in 2026 when new information showed they had been engaged in combat, while one had already been removed in 2024 for this reason. 2 journalists were removed (one already in 2024) when new information showed they were not journalists. The other 14 were maintained on the list, and additional sources reconfirmed their status. Moreover, by the time of the review, the audited review confirmed that an additional 175 Palestinian journalists were killed by Israel in Gaza.
186 The report refers to CPJ's statement (at the time) that it at least seeks confirmation from two sources after listing a casualty, but leaves out the next sentence, which states that CPJ subsequently seeks out more details about the circumstances of their deaths before adding the name to their database. In the report, Collier consistently refers to the first sentence, maintaining that CPJ's methodology means that the public sources cited in each entry equate all sources consulted and available.
187 The report, for example, states journalists killed at home should not be included in the database.
188 Collier, D (2024, January). Special report: The journalists of Gaza. A modern-day antisemitic conspiracy theory promoted by mainstream media. Published by David Collier, p. 31
189 See for example the debate following CPJ's audited review in 2026: https://www.cjr.org/the_media_today/who-counts-committee-protect-journalists-cpj-definition-gaza-israel-war-conflict-hamas-idf-combatants
190 CPJ. (2026, September 30). Journalist casualties during the Israel-Gaza war and related regional conflicts. Published by CPJ.
191 CAMERA (2025, August 11). British outlets bury terror affiliation of Anas Al-Sharif. Published by CAMERA.; Landes, R. [@richard_landes]. "David Collier has". Published on X.
192 Knell, Y. & Seddon, S. (2024, April 1). Gaza's al-Shifa hospital in ruins after two-week Israeli raid. Published by BBC.
193 Al Jazeera English. (2024, March 18). "Al Jazeera's correspondent". Published on Facebook.

war.[194] The next day, Avichay Adraee, then-IDF Spokesperson Arabic, posted an image on X and directly tagged Anas' account.[195] Adraee stated: 'This "journalist," who suddenly donned the media vest during the war, lies once again. He knows how Hamas uses Al-Shifa Hospital for terrorist purposes, yet he serves Hamas's false claims in service of its agenda, which has brought only destruction and ruin to Gaza. We will soon dismantle the claims and lies of this "journalist" with evidence.'[196] It's the one of the first times that the IDF Spokesperson purposefully casts doubt on Anas' role as a journalist. In the next one and a half years, Avichay Adraee became one of the most active government officials in smear campaigns against Palestinian journalists and their work.

On 22 March 2024, in the middle of the siege on Al Shifa Hospital, Hussain Abdul-Hussain published an article in the Asia Times, noting that Al Jazeera should 'report, not inflame, the Gaza war'.[197] Abdul-Hussain is a research fellow for the US-based pro-Israel think-tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

The threats and harassment continued after that, and Anas reported on 6 April 2024 that he had trouble getting access to the internet as his SIM cards would constantly get blocked: 'I'm here in the street looking for [phone] signal so I can finish my reporting. … On top of that, every day my phone signal is being blocked, every day they're blocking my SIM cards. I go through around five SIM cards every day just so I can get my reports out.'[198]

July-August 2024: Killing of Ismail al Ghoul and persistent bombings of schools

On 31 July 2024, Israel killed Al Jazeera reporter Ismail al Ghoul, a good friend of Anas Al-Sharif.[199] In an emotional goodbye message on 9 August 2024, he referred to his friend as a persistent reporter who missed his family from which he had been separated for months, but who continued nonetheless because of the importance of his work.[200] Al-Sharif closed the message with: 'Even after you, Ismail, I will not stop covering the news… despite the risks, and despite the targeting. I expect to be targeted at any moment.'[201]

Around the same time, in early August 2024, Israel bombed several schools in Gaza City that were housing thousands of displaced civilians, alleging that they were actually Hamas hideouts.[202] Al-Sharif made live reports of some of the bombings, including a live report of the 4 August 2024 double bombing of a school.[203] On 10 August 2024, Tamer Almisshal, a popular presenter for Al Jazeera with more than 1 million followers on X, published a post supporting Al-Sharif's work: 'May your effort be blessed and may God protect you, O Voice of Gaza via #AlJazeera .. Proud of Anas Al-Sharif and all the colleagues, knights of sound and image.'[204]

194 (1) Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2023, December 16). "The hardest day". Published on X. & (2) Middle-East Eye. [@MiddleEastEye]. (2024, March 31). "A Palestinian father". Published on X.
195 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2024, March 19). "The so-called journalist". Published on X.
196 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2024, March 19). "The so-called journalist". Published on X.
197 Abdul-Hussain, H. (2024, March 22). Al Jazeera should report, not inflame, the Gaza war. Published by Asia Times.
198 The Listening Post. [@ajlisteningpost]."'You go to". Published on Instagram.
199 AP Ramallah. (2024, July 31). Two Al-Jazeera reporters killed as Israeli airstrike hits car in northern Gaza. Published by The Guardian.
200 AJ+. (2024, August 9). "Colleague of Slain". Published on Facebook.
201 AJ+. (2024, August 9). "Colleague of Slain". Published on Facebook.
202 (1) OHCHR. (2024, August 5). UN Human Rights Office in Palestine horrified by pattern of Israeli strikes on schools in Gaza and use of lethal force in the West Bank. Published by the UN. & (2) McKernan, B. (2024, August 10). Israel strikes on Gaza school site kill at least 80, Palestinian officials say. Published by The Guardian.
203 Al Jazeera. (2024, August 4). Al Jazeera reporter witnesses Israeli attack on school. Published by Al Jazeera.
204 Almisshal, T. [@TamerMisshal]. (2024, August 10). "May your effort". Published on X.

Below Tamer's post, former IDF Spokesperson Avichay Adraee commented: 'The sound and image of lies. It's clear he's proud of them. He's covering up Hamas and Islamic Jihad's crimes of taking refuge inside schools… I'm convinced he knows the names of many of the Hamas terrorists killed inside the school, but he's operating within a false media charade with motives that have nothing to do with the people of Gaza.'[205]

A day later on 11 August 2024, Adraee doubled down, publishing a post at 1:37 PM stating: 'A tweet of mine that riled up the biased media… Why? Because it hit the nail on the head. The media uproar came after I pointed to the theatrics of the so-called "journalist" Anas al-Sharif...They say "a picture is worth a thousand words," so here are examples that #[illegible] couldn't delete from his page... He said "principles of free and fair journalism," he said.'[206] The Times of Israel picked up the story and ran with the header: 'IDF spokesman says Al Jazeera covering up Hamas activity in targeted Gaza school.'[207] The article proceeds to reiterate Adraee's and the IDF's comments regarding the targeting of the school. The Times of Israel is 'the largest and most influential English-language news website covering Israel, the Middle East and the Jewish World', reaching 'over 80 million visitors and reaching 730 million page views in 2025'.[208]

October 2024: Siege of northern Gaza

In early October 2024, Israel announced it would initiate its siege of Northern Gaza, where Anas Al-Sharif was one of the few remaining reporters. The siege began with a new attack on Jabalia refugee camp, Al-Sharif's hometown, for the first time since January 2024. Spectators noted that the siege was part of the controversial 'Generals Plan', hinting at a plan proposed by a group of retired senior officers led by Major-General (rtd.) Giora Eiland.[209] In short, the plan proposed the wholesale transfer of northern Gaza's population to the south, beyond the Netzarim corridor, effectively ethnically cleansing the area.[210] Eiland told Haaretz: 'It's permissible and even recommended to starve an enemy to death, provided you've allowed the civilians corridors of exits beforehand. And that is exactly what I am proposing'.[211] A commentary in Israeli newspaper Haaretz noted that the plan constituted a war crime.[212] Being the main reporter left in the area, Anas Al-Sharif reported extensively on the siege, including a report on 18 October 2024 that included video footage of a child being struck by an Israeli drone. When citizens try to help the child, they are targeted by another drone strike.[213] The post gathered millions of views.

Days before, on 10 October 2024, Anas Al-Sharif and journalist Hossam Shabat reported that they narrowly survived an attack by Israeli forces while reporting from Jabalia refugee camp. According to Al-Sharif, they were chased by an Israeli quadcopter that fired on them.[214] Their colleague, Fadi al-Wahidi was shot in the neck by a sniper bullet.[215]

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205 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2025, August 10). "The sound and". Published on X.
206 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2025, August 11). "A tweet of". Published on X.
207 Staff, T. (2024, August 12). IDF spokesman says Al Jazeera covering up Hamas activity in targeted Gaza school. Published by The Times of Israel.
208 The Times of Israel (No Date). Meet The Times of Israel. Published on The Times of Israel.
209 (1) Bowen, J. (2024, October 12). Israeli attack on northern Gaza hints at retired general's 'surrender or starve' plan for war. Published by BBC. & (2) McKernan, B. (2024, October 26). 'Israel is trying to erase our presence': Palestinians say 'generals' plan' to clear north Gaza is under way. Published by The Guardian. & (3) Caner, T. & Dekel, U. (2024, October 25). "The Generals' Plan"— Right Direction, Wrong Implementation. Published by INSS.
210 Fleischmann, L. (2024, October 28). Israel's 'generals' plan' to clear Palestinians from north of Gaza could pave the way for settlers to return. Published by City St. Georges University of London.
211 Hecht, R. (2024, September 27). Retired Israeli General Giora Eiland Called for Starving Gaza. Does He Regret It?. Published by Haaretz.
212 Haaretz Editorial. (2024, October 22). Is Israel Really Implementing a Plan of Siege and Starvation in Gaza?. Published by Haaretz.
213 Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2024, October 18). "Extremely difficult scenes". Published on X.
214 Al Jazeera Arabic. (2024, October 9). Al Jazeera correspondent Anas Al-Sharif recounts the moment Al Jazeera cameraman Fadi Al-Wahidi was injured. Published on Youtube.
215 Al Jazeera. (2024, October 10). Al Jazeera cameramen in critical condition after Israeli shooting in Gaza. Published by Al Jazeera.

On 19 October 2024, in response to the drone video, the channel 'GAZAWOOD1' conducted an 'analysis' and argued that Al-Sharif's 18 October video was staged.[216] Gazawood is a portmanteau between 'Gaza' and 'Hollywood', aimed at delegitimising Palestinian suffering as being staged. Forbidden Stories, The Seventh Eye and Fake Reporter have uncovered that GAZAWOOD is a collaborative project between Idan Knochen, an ultra-orthodox Jewish children's novelist from Jerusalem and historian Richard Landes, who first coined the term Pallywood. Yossi Kuperwasser, former Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, was identified by Landes as involved in the project.[217] Kuperwasser denied involvement and said about this to Free Press Unlimited: 'I have nothing to add regarding Gazawood. I helped connect Richard Landes to somebody, and I have no knowledge if something came out of it since I did not follow it.'

In the post itself, GAZAWOOD extensively thanks 'CherylWroteIt' for its expertise. CherylWroteIt is a vocal pro-Israel account on X that has since changed its name to 'Chaya's Clan', and again to 'Mor Edge Insight'[218], after allegations surfaced that the owner of the account was not an Israeli woman but a British man, who was using the account for scamming purposes.[219] The account was created in August 2023 and has since posted 125.9k times, which is around 114 posts per day for three years straight.[220] The GAZAWOOD account was created in November 2023, and has been a loud voice in delegitimising Palestinian journalists (59.8k posts), often collaborating with or supporting other (anonymous) accounts with hundreds of thousands of followers[221], such as 'The Mossad: Satirical and Awesome'[222], OSINT613 and Imshin.[223] The account is very active and interacts with other actors mentioned in this report, such as Eitan Fischberger on X.[224]

On 22 October 2024, an interview with Anas Al-Sharif, in which he detailed the complications of working as a journalist in Gaza and being under constant threat for reporting, was published in The Nation.[225] On the same day, several posts were published by vocal pro-Israel accounts targeting Anas and his reporting. Of particular note is the thread by Eitan Fischberger published on 22 October 2024, at 09:36 PM. Fischberger opens the thread with: 'Meet Al Jazeera's Anas Jamal Al-Sharif, the most prolific "journalist" left in North Gaza. Pretty much every piece of propaganda coming from Jabalia originates with this monster. Do not believe a word he says. THREAD.'[226] In his response to FPU, Fischberger noted: 'What prompted my thread is in the thread itself. The second post is a screenshot of one of Al-Sharif's posts that had 10.5 million views. When I saw a propagandist with his record reaching an audience that size, I decided that it was time to show people who he really was.'

The thread, which attracted more than 525k views as of May 2026, consists predominantly of posts from Al-Sharif's own social media accounts, including photos of Anas with senior Hamas officials. The post references reports by pro-Israel thinktanks, including the January 2024 ITIC report Fischberger had cited before, and an 8 November 2023 post by the Middle-East Media Research Institute (MEMRI).[227] After the thread was published on 22 October 2024, it was used by other accounts and channels, and repeatedly by Fischberger himself, as 'evidence' of Anas Al-Sharif's links to terrorism.[228]

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216 GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. (2024, October 19). "A video posted". Published on X.
217 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.
218 Mor Edge Insight [@MorEdge_Insight]. Account on X.
219 Cheryl, C. [@CherylWroteIt]. Account on X.
220 Mor Edge Insight [@MorEdge_Insight]. Account on X.
221 GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD2] replying to @EFischberger. Published on X.
222 On 6 June 2026 the account was claimed by Shawn Eni. Shawn Eni [@ShawnEni]. (2026, June 6). I'm Shawn Eni. Published on X.
223 Imshin [@imshin]. (2024, March 6). @GAZAWOOD1 looks into. Published on X.
GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD2] replying to @EFischberger. Published on X.
225 Amer, R. K. (2024, October 22). "The Israeli Army Martyred My Father": What Gaza's Journalists Have Endured. Published by The Nation.
226 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 22). "Meet Al Jazeera's Anas". Published on X.
227 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 22). "Which @MEMRIReports documented". Published on X.
228 Repost of Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 23). "BREAKING: Less than" by Avi Yamini. Published on X.

Within 24 hours, the IDF published a post that issued the same allegations issued by Fischberger. Asked about the timing of these posts, Fischberger told FPU: 'the timing was a coincidence, which he says he pointed out publicly the next day. Publishing a press release on 23 October 2024, the IDF stated it 'exposes 6 Al Jazeera journalists as being part of Hamas':

'The IDF has disclosed intelligence information and numerous documents found in Gaza confirming military affiliation of six Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza with Hamas and the Islamic Jihad terrorist organisations, including personnel tables, lists of terrorist training courses, phone directories, and salary documents for terrorists. These documents serve as proof of the integration of Hamas terrorists within the Qatari Al Jazeera media network. Most of the journalists that the IDF has exposed as operatives in Hamas' military wing spearhead the propaganda for Hamas at Al Jazeera, especially in northern Gaza.'[229]

This post has been viewed 4.3 million times as of October 2026, and has been cited by pro-Israel sources as proof that Anas Al-Sharif and five of his colleagues were part of Hamas.[230] In response to the post, Eitan Fischberger tweeted: 'BREAKING: Less than 24 hours after my exposé on Anas Al-Sharif's Hamas ties, the IDF reveals that he—as well as 5 other Al Jazeera "journalists"—are members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. I previously found evidence tying both Hossam Shabat and Ismail Abu Omar to the terror groups.'[231] The post was shared 413 times, including by large accounts such as Avi Yamini from Rebel News Australia (619k followers).[232]

The former IDF Spokesperson Arabic Avichay Andraee also cited the IDF's exposé, noting: 'Anas Al-Sharif, your true identity has been exposed... The Hamas documents found in Gaza, which we reveal today, leave no room for doubt—Anas Al-Sharif is an activist in Hamas's military wing. You may try to present yourself as a journalist who feels the pain of Gaza's people, but now everyone knows that you are affiliated with and employed by Hamas.'[233]

On the same day, other individuals and accounts that have been active on this topic take the news and run with it. This includes Abu Ali Express (and its English counterpart), which first notes that it's not really new information, but that it now has an official stamp,[234] and in a post a day later, asking 'why hasn't a drone paid him a visit? What's preventing it?'[235] Fischberger also continues his coverage on 23 October, noting that 'while the IDF's evidence is more than sufficient on its own, it can also be backed up by open source material,'[236] referring back to his earlier posts.

The IDF message was also shared directly by the X and Telegram channels belonging to OSINTDefender, a US-based Open Source Investigation channel. The X channel has 1.6 million viewers, and the post itself was viewed 300k times.[237] Fischberger responded to the post by plugging his own post from earlier that day.[238] According to the Ukrainian Molfar Intelligence Institute, the account was owned by Simon Anderson, a US military member from Georgia who has amplified Russian propaganda.[239] OSINTDefender was pushed by X owner Elon Musk as a good source for following the war after 7 October 2023,[240] and

229 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.
230 See for example: Open Source Intel. [@Osint613]. (2025, March 24). "On October 23". Published on X; Levy, E. [@EylonALevy]. (2024, October 23). "More of". Published on X; Collier, D. (2024, October 23). "Absolutely nobody". Published on X.
231 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 23). "BREAKING: Less than". Published on X.
232 Repost of Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 23). "BREAKING: Less than" by Avi Yamini. Published on X.
233 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2024, October 23). "Anas Al-Sharif, your true". Published on X.
234 Abu Ali Express. (2024, October 23). "The IDF spokesman". Published on Telegram.
235 Abu Ali Express. (2024, October 24). "After the IDF". Published on Telegram.
236 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 23). "1. Anas Al-Sharif". Published on X.
237 OSINTdefender. [@sentdefender]. (2024, October 23). "The Israel Defense". Published on X.
238 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 23). "The IDF's evidence". Published on X.
239 Molfar Institute (2023, October 23). Russian US soldiers spread propaganda under the guise of OSINT analysts. Published by Molfar Institute.
240 Menn, J. (2023, October 26). Accounts Musk recommended on X are connected to a teen and a U.S. soldier. Published by The Washington Post. & (2) Frauenfelder, M. (2023, October 9). Elon Musk promotes antisemitic account as "good" source for Israel war news. Published by BoingBoing.

has been identified by researchers at the University of Washington as one of the most influential accounts on X, with some of its posts reaching a wider audience than legacy media.[241]

Via these larger English-language social media channels, western experts and media outlets further picked up the story, spreading the frame deeper into the mainstream. Key among those is Fox News Live's 'Breaking news' segment, in which they shared the IDF's post live on Fox News, quoting the post verbatim without providing any context or RoR from the journalists or Al Jazeera.[242] The host read the X post out loud, and moved on to the next segment.

Another example is Joe Truzman, at the time a research fellow for the American pro-Israel think-tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), who directly quoted the IDF.[243] On the same day, Associated Press News ran an article with the headline: 'Israel accuses 6 Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza of being Palestinian militants'.[244] The article centralizes the IDF's alleged evidence, repeating that the journalists held various roles within Hamas and Palestinian Jihad. Despite the serious impact of the claims, AP did not allow any of the Palestinian journalists themselves a right of reply. When we spoke to a nephew of Anas Al-Sharif, a journalist and cameraman himself who worked regularly with Al-Sharif, he noted that western media did not reach out to Al-Sharif to request a comment on the IDF's allegations.[245]

The New York Post ran an article that presented the Israeli evidence as 'definitive proof' that at least six Al Jazeera journalists were operatives for Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror groups.[246] Then the FDD published another full-length analysis six days later on 29 October 2024, presenting the IDF's findings as solid facts.[247]

The increased coverage fed back into social media, with several channels asking for Al-Sharif's targeted killing, including Abu Ali Express.[248] In early November 2024, days after the increased attention to the IDF's terrorism claims, Meta shut down Al-Sharif's Instagram account, which had 1.2 million followers at the time, and a view rate exceeding one billion.[249]

June - August 2025: Famine denial, increased smears, and targeted killing

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, we saw a spike in frames aimed at denying the existence of a famine in Gaza, specifically those relating to 'Pallywood'. These frames also surfaced in legacy media outlets. For example, in a piece widely cited by Israeli officials[250] published by the German newspaper Bild, photographs of Palestinian journalist Anas Zayed Fteiha were alleged to have been staged.[251] Bild did not speak to Fteiha about the allegations. Subsequent and extensive fact-checking by other outlets

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241 Caulfield, M., Bayar, M.C. & Aske, A.B. (2023, October 20). The 'new elites' of X: Identifying the most influential accounts engaged in Hamas/Israel discourse. Published by the Center for Informed Public of the University of Washington.

242 LiveNOW from FOX. (2024, October 2023). Israel-Hamas war: IDF exposes Al Jazeera journalists as Hamas terrorists. Published on YouTube.

243 Truzman, J. [@JoeTruzman]. (2024, October 23). "The Israeli military". Published on X.

244 Jeffery, J. & Gambrell, J. (2024, October 24). Israel accuses 6 Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza of being Palestinian militants. Published by AP News.

245 Interview Mahmoud Shalha, September 2026.

246 Reyes, R. (2024, October 23). IDF names 6 Al Jazeera journalists as members of Hamas, Islamic Jihad after uncovering documents. Published by the New York Post.

247 Sharawi, A. (2024, October 29). Captured Documents Show Al Jazeera Ties to Hamas, Islamic Jihad. Published by FDD.

248 (1) What's new. [@Gloz111]. (2024, October 24). "After the IDF". Published on X. & (2) Abu Ali Express in English. (2024, October 24). "The IDF spokesman. Published on Telegram.

249 (1) Translating Palestine. [@translating_falasteen]. (n.d.). "Al-Jazeera correspondent Anas". Published on Instagram. & (2) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, November 6). "Meta has shut". Published on X. & (3) Odisho, T. (2024, November 6). Palestinian Journalist Says Instagram Account Suspended Weeks After Leaked Documents Found Meta Censoring Pro-Palestinian Posts. Published by The Latin Times.

250 (1) Israel Foreign Ministry. [@IsraelMFA]. (2025, August 7). "BILD exposed Pallywood:". Published on X. & (2) Israel. [@Israel]. "BILD exposed Pallywood:". Published on X.

251 Müller, M.J., Vehlewald, H.J. & Deuser, A. (2025, August 5). This Gaza photographer is staging Hamas propaganda. Published by BILD.

such as German outlet Deutsche Welle and French outlet Libération who did manage to speak to Fteiha proved that the photo was not staged.[252] Bild has kept the article online nonetheless.

During this period, when negative publicity towards Israel increased, we also saw an increase in the volume and intensity of smears by Israeli officials and affiliated channels against Anas Al-Sharif as well, who was reporting extensively on the famine. On 20 July 2025, Al-Sharif reported being famished, hungry and exhausted, while filming a close-up of a woman collapsing on the ground before breaking down in tears himself.[253]

In response to this report, several accounts that were active before, such as Abu Ali Express (and its English version), Eitan Fischberger and former IDF Spokesperson Arabic Avichay Adraee all published posts mere hours apart, attacking Al-Sharif's report and the journalist himself. For example, Adraee posted that Al-Sharif's tears were just 'crocodile tears' shed over a false and fabricated Hamas play: 'Suddenly, all the Hamas tools and mouthpieces began crying live on air in a recurring Brotherhood behavior after all the propaganda tools failed to cover up Hamas's defeat. These people do not hear the voice of conscience, nor are they affected by the call of faith or mercy…'[254] Fischberger on the other hand responded to an Al Jazeera post sharing Al-Sharif's call for help, stating 'Your journo is a terrorist' and retweeting his October 2024 thread in which he claimed to have uncovered Al-Sharif's role as Hamas operative.[255]

In the days that followed, both Adraee and Fischberger continued their smears of Al-Sharif.[256] The Committee to Protect journalists and the journalist himself noted at this time that Al-Sharif was 'being targeted by an Israeli military smear campaign', which Al-Sharif believed to be a precursor to his assassination.[257] This led the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) to call for Al-Sharif's protection. CPJ noted that Adraee published four videos, on 12, 20, 23 and 24 July 2025, discrediting Al-Sharif and labeling him as a terrorist, which the press freedom body said was an attempt to 'manufacture consent'.[258] According to Al-Sharif's nephew, the threats took several forms, including phone calls, smear campaigns on social media, and WhatsApp messages.[259] Fischberger said in a response to FPU that he rejects the word smear, which he sees as a false claim: 'What I published about Anas al-Sharif was his own material'.[260]

On 10 August 2025, at approximately 11:00 AM, the IDF conducted a targeted airstrike on a press tent, located inside a hospital complex, where Anas Al-Sharif was working with five other journalists: reporter Mohammed Qreiqeh, cameramen Mohammed Noufal and Ibrahim Zaher, and freelancers Moamen Aliwa and Mohammad al-Khaldi. Al-Sharif had been expecting his assassination, and wrote a message to be published after his death, which starts with: 'This is my will and my final message. If these words reach you, know that Israel has succeeded in killing me and silencing my voice.'[261]

252 1) Ashraf, A. (2025, August 15). Fact check: Gaza famine photos not staged. Published by DW.
& (2) Check News Service. (2025, August 8). Is this photo of an aid distribution in Gaza a staged event, as claimed by the German newspaper. "Bild"?. Published by Liberation.
253 AJ+. [@ajplus]. (2025, July 20). "Al Jazeera journalist Anas". Published on Instagram.
254 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2025, July 20). "The tears of". Published on X.
255 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, July 20). "Your journo is". Published on X.
256 (1) Avichay Adraee. (2025, July 24). "Anas al-Sharif launched". Published on Facebook. & (2) Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2025, July 23). "Today's film is". Published on X. & (3) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, July 20). "Feel-good story of". Published on X.
257 CPJ Staff. (2025, July 24). CPJ calls for Anas al-Sharif's protection in face of Israeli smears. Published by CPJ.
258 CPJ Staff. (2025, July 24). CPJ calls for Anas al-Sharif's protection in face of Israeli smears. Published by CPJ.
259 Interview with Mahmoud Shalha, September 2026.
260 The full response by Eitan Fischberger can be found on: https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting/methodology-accountability
261 Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2025, August 11). "This is my". Published on X.

The IDF's statement on X came on 11 August 2025 at 11:13 PM, and left no room for doubt that the strike was targeted, not an accident, and was meant to kill Al-Sharif: 'STRUCK: Hamas terrorist Anas Al-Sharif, who posed as an Al Jazeera journalist. Al-Sharif was the head of a Hamas terrorist cell and advanced rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and IDF troops. Intelligence and documents from Gaza, including rosters, terrorist training lists and salary records, prove he was a Hamas operative integrated into Al Jazeera. A press badge isn't a shield for terrorism.'[262]

After the targeted killing of Al-Sharif, frames that associated him with terrorism charges skyrocketed, both online and in legacy media. A Junkipedia search of 'Anas Al-Sharif' and 'Hamas' in the previous 12 months came up with 746 posts in total, with nearly 550 posts published on 11 August 2025, hours after Al-Sharif's murder. We collected and analysed more than 92 social media posts between 10 and 13 August 2025 and found a combination of Israeli official accounts, affiliated accounts and independent accounts, all referring to Anas Al-Sharif as a member of Hamas and/or as engaging in propaganda.

For example, even before the IDF published anything on X about its assassination of Al-Sharif, Abu Ali Express and its English version 'englishabuali' published a post on Telegram at 10:47 PM announcing Al-Sharif's murder, reiterating the terrorism accusations and stating: 'The world is a better place without him. # I've been waiting for this report for a long time.'[263] FDD research fellow Joe Truzman, at 10:59 PM, wrote: 'Notable elimination: The IDF said it struck and killed Anas al-Sharif, who it said posed as a journalist for Al-Jazeera. The IDF said he was a member of Hamas.'[264]

The GAZAWOOD1 account, also at 10:59 PM, wrote: 'He was part of Hamas's propaganda apparatus — perhaps its most prominent figure.'[265] At 11:08 PM, Israeli journalist Noa Magid wrote: 'Finally - Hamas terrorist Anas Jamal al-Sharif, a cell commander, has been eliminated. He operated under the guise of an Al Jazeera journalist, serving as a key figure in Hamas's propaganda machine and hiding his role in its murderous Nukhba force.'[266]

262 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2025, August 10). "STRUCK: Hamas terrorist". Published on X.
263 Abu Ali Express in English. (2025, August 10). "Official Gazan channels". Published on Telegram
264 Truzman, J. [@JoeTruzman]. (2025, August 10). "Notable elimination: The". Published on X.
265 GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. (2025, August 10). "According to reports,". Published on X.
266 Magid, N. [@NoaMagid]. (2025, August 10). "Finally – Hamas terrorist". Published on X.

In the early hours and days after the murder, a wide range of actors published posts repeating smears against Anas Al-Sharif. This includes but is not limited to: Israeli official accounts[267], United States Government representatives[268], Eitan Fischberger[269], HonestReporting[270], David Collier[271], popular Osint account OSINT613[272], Israeli journalist Emily Schrader[273], former Israeli spokesperson Eylon Levy[274], FDD senior fellow Jonathan Conricus[275], FDD fellow Joe Truzman[276] and their boss at FDD Jonathan Schanzer[277], and GAZAWOOD[278]. The content of these posts is often similar, calling Al-Sharif a terrorist and referring to the IDF's alleged evidence, Al-Sharif's posts on social media, and photos of Al-Sharif with Hamas affiliated individuals. In response to FPU, OSINT613 stated 'there is a fundamental distinction between investigating military affiliations and determining whether someone was lawfully targeted. Our role is to examine and report publicly available evidence, not determine the legality of military operations' and 'we categorically reject any suggestion of coordination with Israeli organizations.[279]

Among the 162 posts collected between 7 October 2023 and 7 October 2025, there are 37 posts that 'call out' legacy media outlets, shaming them for 'amplifying Al Jazeera propaganda' by using reports from Anas Al-Sharif. Honest Reporting for example posted on 12 August 2025, at 5:01 PM: 'Western press have eaten up Al Jazeera *cough* Hamas propaganda over Anas Al-Sharif's elimination by the IDF. Here's a (thread) of some of the most egregious coverage.'[280] The thread calls out the Associated Press, Sky News, International Business Times, Guardian, The Independent, and The Times for their 'biased reporting'. Additionally, we observed posts of accounts actively sharing disinformation by misrepresenting legacy media statements. EretzIsrael, a channel with more than 90k followers, posted: 'The BBC reports

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267 We observed at least ten posts from official Israeli accounts, see data collection sheet. The actual amount of posts is likely higher as our search was not meant as an exhaustive effort.
268 Huckabee, M. [@GovMikeHuckabee]. (25, August 12). "Real journalists should". Published on X.
269 (1) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 11). "Breaking: Vicious terrorist". Published on X.
(2) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 11). "To all the". Published on X.
(3) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 11). "Not one single". Published on X.
(4) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 11). "Some rare *actual*". Published on X.
(5) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 12). "Jaw-dropping statement from". Published on X.
(6) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 13). "Breaking: Qatar's Education". Published on X.
(7) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 13). "The president of". Published on X.
(8) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 16). "Exclusive: Al Jazeera has". Published on X.
(9) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 19). "There's no reason". Published on X.
(10) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 21). "Breaking: Coordinated Campaign". Published on X.
270 (1) Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 11). "1/ @CNN, @BBCNews". Published on X.
(2) Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 12). "Meet "journalist" Anas". Published on X.
(3) Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 12). "Western press have". Published on X.
(4) Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 13). "The president of". Published on X.
(5) Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 13). "So often, it's". Published on X.
(6) Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 14). "Israel revealed Hamas". Published on X.
(7) Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 22). "Anas Al-Sharif was". Published on X.
271 (1) Collier, D. [@mishtal]. (2025, August 11). "Anas al-Sharif was". Published on X.
(2) Collier, D. [@mishtal]. (2025, August 11). "A reminder from". Published on X.
(3) Collier, D. [@mishtal]. (2025, August 11). "Archived proof that". Published on X.
(4) Collier, D. [@mishtal]. (2025, August 11). "A truly sickening". Published on X.
(5) Collier, D. [@mishtal]. (2025, August 12). "Exclusive: Much of". Published on X.
(6) Collier, D. [@mishtal]. (2025, August 13). "I love the". Published on X.
272 Open Source Intel. [@Osint613]. (2025, August 11). "IDF publishes new". Published on X. [1.2 million views]
273 (1) Schrader, E.K. [@emilykschrader]. (2025, August 11). "The "journalist" / Hamas". Published on X.
(2) Schrader, E.K. [@emilykschrader]. (2025, August 12). "Well this is". Published on X.
274 (1) Levy, E.A. [@EylonALevy]. (2025, August 11). "Israeli intelligence revealed". Published on X.
(2) Levy, E.A. [@EylonALevy]. (2025, August 12). "The President of". Published on X.
(3) Levy, E.A. [@EylonALevy]. (2025, August 17). "Hamas journalist Anas". Published on X.
275 Conricus, J. [@jconricus]. (2025, August 11). "Dual purpose villain:". Published on X.
276 (1) Truzman, J. [@JoeTruzman]. (2025, August 12). "I think people". Published on X.
(2) Truzman, J. [@JoeTruzman]. (2025, August 13). "It's Anas al-Sharif". Published on X.
277 Schanzer, J. [JSchanzer]. (2025, August 11). "Israel accused yet". Published on X.
278 (1) GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. (2025, August 11). "Some doubted the". Published on X.
(2) GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. (2025, August 12). "In memory of". Published on X.
(3) GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. (2025, August 13). "This is Anas". Published on X.
279 The full response of OSINT613 can be found here: https://freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting
280 Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 12). "Western press have". Published on X.

that an entire Hamas cell, posing as an Al Jazeera news crew in Gaza City, was killed in an Israeli airstrike. Among those eliminated was Anas Al-Sharif.'[281] The BBC however did not report this, as can be heard in the video itself.

After Anas' assassination, frames increasingly flow into mainstream news

In addition to the increase in social media dissemination of the 'Anas Al-Sharif is a terrorist' frame, we also saw spillover of the frame used by the IDF to legitimise the assassination into legacy media and via channels with a large social media following.

Examples include the German tabloid Bild, which published two articles on 11 August 2025, the first at 4:36 PM with the headline: 'The murdered journalist is alleged to have been a terrorist'[282], and the second at 10:37 PM with the headline 'Israel kills Gaza reporter: Journalist or terrorist?' with the first sentence reading 'Photos show him with the Hamas leader.'[283] The German Press Council has since concluded that Bild "did not provide sufficient objective evidence for the claim" and reprimanded the outlet for a 'gross disregard for the duty of care under Article 2 and as a serious violation of the personal honor of the slain journalist under Article 9 of the Press Code'.[284]

The frame also surfaced in two of the largest media outlets in the world, CNN and the BBC. CNN stated: 'CNN has established that, before the war in Gaza, Al-Sharif worked for a Hamas media team in the strip.'[285] CNN did not mention how it established that Al–Sharif worked for Hamas, nor what his role in the media team was.

The BBC for its part stated: 'The BBC understands Sharif worked for a Hamas media team in Gaza before the current conflict.'[286] A leaked internal email sent by 'Global Journalism', part of the BBC's Global News Team, contains an "essential amendment and correction" request for this specific sentence. A whistleblower told Novara Media: 'The email admits a reported line that should never have made it onto the BBC's front page was published without evidence, yet the error remains uncorrected and no one has been held accountable. In any other newsroom, such a grave editorial breach on a matter of major public interest, namely the targeted killing of a fellow journalist, would have led to senior resignations'.[287] The BBC has refused to alter this particular statement, despite the lack of verifiable evidence of Al-Sharif's involvement with Hamas. Eitan Fischberger and others have meanwhile referred to the piece as 'some rare *actual* journalism from the BBC'.[288] FPU approached the BBC for comment, but did not receive a response.

Other major news outlets such as the Dutch public broadcaster NOS cited the BBC's statement. The NOS noted for example: 'The BBC says it has information that Sharif has worked for Hamas' media team in the past. On his social media he's seen in the company of Hamas leadership figures.'[289] Similarly, the German news paper Bild directly quoted the BBC-claim, without further scrutiny: 'The BBC has learned that Sharif worked with a Hamas media team before the current conflict in Gaza'[290]. Just like the BBC, the NOS and BILD have not altered the statement since the leaked internal email surfaced, nor have they incorporated it in later articles, despite the public criticism that the BBC has received on its use.

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281 Eretz Israel. [@EretzIsrael]. (2025, August 11). "The BBC reports". Published on X.
282 BILD. (2025, August 11). The murdered journalist is alleged to have been a terrorist. Published by BILD.
283 BILD. (2025, August 11). Israel kills Gaza reporter: Journalist or terrorist?. Published by BILD.
284 Presserat. (2025, December 15). Several reprimands for Middle East reporting. Published by Presserat.
285 Salem, M. (2025, August 12). Anas Al-Sharif became the face of the war in Gaza for millions. Then Israel killed him. Published by CNN.
286 Davies, A. (2025, August 13). Who were the Al Jazeera journalists killed by Israel in Gaza?. Published by BBC.
287 Williamson, H. (2025, September 10). BBC Ignored Internal Request to Correct Claim Anas Al-Sharif Worked With Hamas. Published by Novara Media.
288 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 11). "Some rare *actual*". Published on X.
289 Lamper, E. (2025, August 11). With the death of journalist Anas al-Sharif, Palestinians lose their 'voice in Gaza'. Published by NOS.
290 BILD. (2025, August 11). Israel kills Gaza reporter: Journalist or terrorist?. Published by BILD.

Outlets with a more conservative-leaning, also quote the BBC's statement, with the New York Sun referencing it in an article written by Novi Zhukovsky and Jotam Confino.[291] Confino is the Middle East Correspondent at The Telegraph, but also contributes to other outlets, and has been actively targeting Palestinian journalists, including Al-Sharif, on his social media accounts.[292] In their article for The New York Sun, the writers quote Eitan Fischberger's X posts, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting (CAMERA), and UN Watch, all Pro-Israel advocates.[293] By putting the BBC's statement next to statements from these Pro-Israel voices, the article lends the BBC's legitimacy to them.

Another way for these unfounded narratives to reach more mainstream audiences, and gain legitimacy along the way, is through legacy media. De Telegraaf for example is the biggest newspaper in the Netherlands, with an online reach of more than 4.8 million.[294] Between 11 and 13 August 2025, just days after the assassination of Anas Al-Sharif, De Telegraaf published several articles repeating delegitimisation frames against Al-Sharif. One of these articles was entitled: 'Doodgeschoten Gaza-journalist Anas Al-Sharif (28) had schijn tegen: ster van omstreden Al-Jazeera maakte vrolijke selfies met terreurleider Hamas' [The odds were stacked against shot and killed Gazan-journalist Anas al-Sharif (28): Al-Jazeera star took cheerful selfies with Hamas terrorist leader].[295] The newspaper notes that Al-Sharif's selfies with Hamas leaders and his message on 7 October were an indication of his involvement in Hamas.

Wierd Duk, one of the Netherlands' most outspoken pro-Israel journalists with around 242k followers on X, wrote an article for de Telegraaf on 13 August 2025 and published it on his X account. The post was viewed at least 78k times and shared by more than 350 individual accounts. In the article, Duk criticizes Dutch media for, in his words, not mentioning that all journalists in Gaza are controlled by Hamas. 'Alle verslaggevers die nog in Gaza zijn staan onder controle van Hamas, de beelden die zijn naar buiten brengen zijn bedoeld als propaganda' [All reporters still in Gaza are controlled by Hamas, and the images spread are meant as propaganda], Duk notes.[296] Earlier research had found that Duk is one of the 30 most influential X personalities globally to spread content from the GAZAWOOD account, a collaborative disinformation project.[297] Fake Reporter, an Israeli media watchdog, noted that GAZAWOOD1 relies on a network of influential X accounts to amplify its message.[298] FPU approached Wierd Duk for comment, but did not receive a response.

In another example from De Telegraaf, a column on 11 August 2025 about Al-Sharif was titled: 'journalist' Anas al-Sharif was een Hamas-propagandist die de moord op Joden verheerlijkte' [journalist Anas al-Sharif was a Hamas-propagana operative who glorified the killing of Jews].[299] In the column Andrew Fox is cited and introduced as a British Middle-East expert and former army officer, and therefore a seemingly legitimate source. However, Andrew Fox is a vocal defender of the IDF, and has gone on several embedded trips with the IDF. In an article on his own Substack, Fox notes: 'When is a journalist a military target? Perhaps not as often as they should be.'[300] Fox appears to identify journalists as a legitimate military target in reference to an (alleged) reporting bias.[301]

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291 Zhukovsky, N. & Confino, J. (2025, August 11). While International Community Mourns a Slain Al Jazeera Journalist, Anas al-Sharif, Pro-Israel Voices Summon Proof of His Ties to Terror. Published by the New York Sun.
292 Confino, J. [@mrconfino] (no date). Advanced search on X of "Al-Sharif". Accessible via X.
293 Zhukovsky, N. & Confino, J. (2025, August 11). While International Community Mourns a Slain Al Jazeera Journalist, Anas al-Sharif, Pro-Israel Voices Summon Proof of His Ties to Terror. Published by the New York Sun.
294 Mediahuis. (n.d.). De Telegraaf. Published by Mediahuis.
295 Dekkers, R. (2025, August 11). Shot dead Gaza journalist Anas al-Sharif (28) had the odds stacked against him: star of controversial Al-Jazeera took cheerful selfies with terror leader Hamas. Published by De Telegraaf.
296 Duk, W. (2025, August 13). Wierd Duk: at the NOS they spoke about slain 'journalist' Anas Al-Sharif as if he were a friend. Published by De Telegraaf.
297 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.
298 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.
299 De Winter, L. (2025, August 12). Leon de Winter: 'Journalist' Anas al-Sharif was a Hamas propagandist who glorified the murder of Jews. Published by De Telegraaf.
300 Fox, A. (2025, August 11). When is a journalist a military target?. Published by Andrew Fox.
301 Overton, I. (2025, August 12). When is a journalist a military target? Former British Major and pundit Andrew Fox says "perhaps not as often as they should be". Why his argument should concern us all. Published by Action on Armed Violence.

At least three members of Dutch right-wing political parties: René Dercksen (fmr. Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV), currently Belang Van Nederland (BVNL))[302], Sebastian Stoteler (PVV member of parliament)[303], and Annette Raijer (PVV MoP)[304] cited or reposted Leon de Winter's column on their social media pages, further amplifying the frame that Al-Sharif is a terrorist, and lending political legitimacy to it.

On 15 August 2025, Le Point, one of France's main news magazines, published an article by Erwan Seznec.[305] Seznec cites an Israeli collective called Middle East Buka, presenting it as a credible source for information about terrorism allegations against Palestinian journalists. Middle East Buka is an OSINT channel run on Telegram and X; its aim is the delegitimisation of Palestinian suffering.[306] It is a contributor on the Media Watch Legal website, a platform that collects evidence on journalists killed by Israel and links them to terrorism, often solely based on their 'close proximity' to other individuals.[307] According to its own contributor list of 2 December 2025, Media Watch is a collaboration between the IDF, FAFO, and Middle East Buka[308], something that has since changed on the website. The website is funded and run by the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism.[309]

On 22 August 2025, Honest Reporting, an organisation that 'monitors the media' for 'exposing and responding to media bias', and also organises 'missions to Israel',[310] published an analysis regarding a New York Times' essay on the murder of Al-Sharif: 'Anas Al-Sharif was a terrorist. But @nytimes doesn't care. Yet more shilling for Hamas in the NYT, courtesy of Lydia Polgreen's latest ridiculous Israel-bash. Read our analysis'.[311] On 25 August 2025, this narrative was picked up by Brittany Bernstein of the National Review, whose article read: 'The "Face and Voice of Gaza" Was Also a Member of Hamas'.[312] The goal of the article was to 'fact check' a New York Times essay in wake of Al-Sharif's murder. Bernstein directly cites Honest Reporting as well. A day later, on 26 August 2025, Mark R. Levin, who runs a popular conservative radio show, and whose X account boasts 5 million followers, shared the article by The National Review, garnering more than 50.000 views.[313]

Next to the terrorism frame surfacing in legacy media, we also noticed the frame being shared by politicians and (international) government representatives with large followings online. The clearest example we found was US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee who retweeted the post of IDF Spokesperson LTC Shodani[314], writing: 'Real journalists should be outraged that someone posing as "journalist" was employed by savage terror group Hamas. One can't be an objective reporter & terrorist at the same time.'[315] The post elicited another response from Eitan Fischberger, who again took the opportunity to push his own post.[316]

302 Dercksen, R. [ReneDercksen]. (2025, August 12). "That is how". Published on X.
303 Stöteler, S. [stoteler_pvv]. Repost of: Soesan, J. [@JoopSoesan]. (2025, August 13). "For everyone who". Published on X.
304 Raijer, A. [ARaijer_PVV] (date unknown). Retweet. Published on X.
305 Seznec, E. (2025, August 15). Why is the list of 270 journalists killed in Gaza published by Al-Jazeera being contested?. Published by Le Point.
306 (1) Middle East Buka. [@MiddleEastBuka]. Account on X. & (2) Middle East Buka. [@MiddleEastBuka] Account on Telegram.
307 (1) Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism. & (2) Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF). (n.d.). "Gazawood": The deadly accusations against Gaza's journalists. Published by RSF.
308 Media Watch Legal. (2025, December 2). Fake "journalists". Archived by Archive.is.
309 Chikli, A. [@AmichaiChikli]. (2025, September 2). "We took a". Published on X.
310 Honest Reporting. (n.d.). About us. Published by Honest Reporting.
311 Honest Reporting. [@HonestReporting]. (2025, August 22). "Anas Al-Sharif was". Published on X.
312 Bernstein, B. (2025, August 25). The 'Face and Voice of Gaza' Was Also a Member of Hamas. Published by The National Review.
313 Levin, M.R. (2025, August 26). "New York Times supports the". Published on X.
314 Mazor, A. (LTC). [LTC_Ariella] (2025, August 11). "Important clarification on". Published on X.
315 Huckabee, M. [@GovMikeHuckabee]. (25, August 12). "Real journalists should". Published on X.
316 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, August 12). "Here's how "objective"". Published on X.



Another example of a politician with a significant following sharing attacks on Al-Sharif is Israeli Minister of Diaspora Affairs Amichai Chikli who reposted a tweet from disinformation channel GAZAWOOD1 on 9 September 2025:

Chikli has since deleted the post, but we were able to retrieve it using Junkipedia. Just a couple of days earlier, on 2 September, Chikli's Ministry had launched mediawatch.legal[317], a website that attacks Palestinian journalists, using open source 'evidence' and intelligence provided by the IDF painting the journalists as terrorists. The video shared by GAZAWOOD and reposted by Chikli also features on the Media Watch Legal website.[318]

Figure 5 – Screenshot of Amichai Chikli reposting GAZAWOOD on 9 September 2025, a month after the assassination of Anas Al-Sharif. Source: Junkipedia.

317 Chikli, A. [@AmichaiChikli]. (2025, September 2). "We took a". Published on X.
318 (1) Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism. & (2) GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. (2025, September 9). "In a wedding". Published on X.

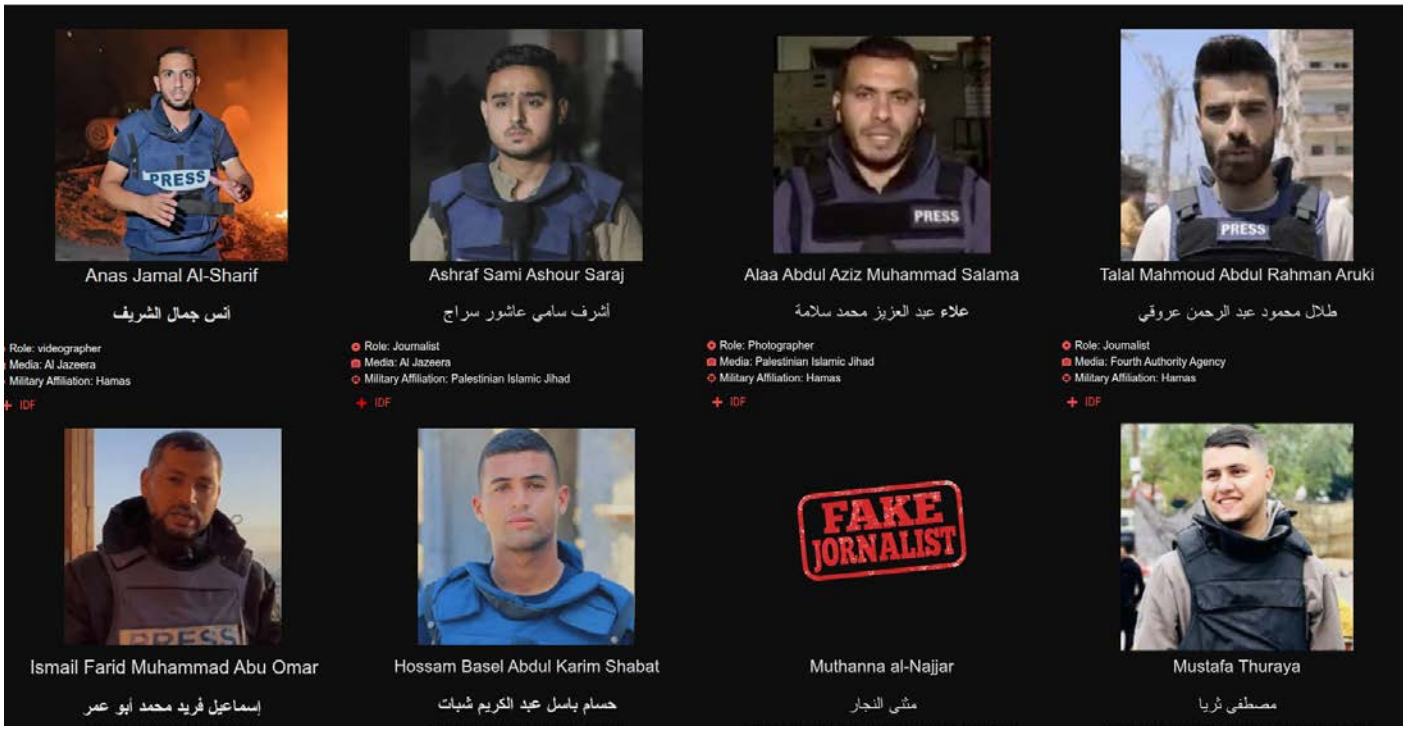


Figure 6 – Screenshot from the Media Watch Legal website, where journalists are given a profile based on unverified evidence. Hovering over the names of the journalists reveals their alleged affiliation or simply a 'fake journalist' banner. Both Anas Al-Sharif (top left) and Hossam Shabat (bottom, second from left) feature. Source: Media Watch Legal.[319]

3b. Hossam Shabat

We collected 107 posts on social media targeting Hossam Shabat and his work. Of those, 21 were published before Shabat's assassination in March 2025, and 86 after. This subchapter provides a chronological observation of these posts.

December 2023 - March 2024: death threats and first smears

Shabat disclosed that he regularly received death threats via text and call.[320] On 27 December 2023 for example, Shabat published a statement on X saying he was called by Israeli Intelligence and told to delete all his posts or they would bomb his house. Shabat refused, and his house was subsequently bombed.[321] Despite these threats and the bombing of his house, Shabat said he 'continued to cover the events, with death stalking him everywhere'.[322]

On 30 January 2024 we noted that the English-language version of Abu Ali Express was among the first major channels to report on Shabat's coverage.[323] This specific post notes: "The Gazan "journalist" Hassam Shabat spreads a blood plot directed against IDF soldiers and tweets that "a major crime was discovered in the north of the Gaza Strip and bodies of Gazans were found handcuffed and blindfolded

319 Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.
320 Ibsais, A. (2025, March 25). How Western media silence enables the killing of Palestinian journalists. Published by Mondoweiss.
321 Shabat, H. [@HossamShabat]. (2023, December 27). "I will talk". Published on X.
322 Shabat, H. [@HossamShabat]. (2023, December 27). "I will talk". Published on X.
323 The Abu Ali channels (Hebrew and English) are a set of popular Telegram channels run by Gilad Cohen. The Hebrew channel has more than half a million subscribers, while the English version has around 32k subscribers. See Appendix 2 for more information.

who were executed and their bodies were covered with trash and rubble." The tweet has been widely circulated on Palestinian channels in the last hour."[324] Israeli newspaper Haaretz had earlier reported serious indications that the Abu Ali channels were supported by the IDF.[325]

On 23 March 2024, Hossam Shabat shared testimonies about alleged rapes by IDF soldiers in al-Shifa hospital during live coverage. Al Jazeera rectified the report a day later, stating that the testimony was proven to be false.[326] On 24 March 2024, Eitan Fischberger published a post about the reporting error, which has been viewed 440k times. The post does not only criticize the report in question, but just like with Anas Al-Sharif, Fischberger 'took a look' at Shabat's social media presence in order to insinuate he is not a journalist but part of Hamas. In the thread, he states among others: 'Hamas propaganda has gone into overdrive about supposed rapes inside Shifa Hospital' and draws suspicion to Shabat by stating he is 'coy' about his employer and reports occasionally without a press vest, which Fischberger erroneously claims is obligatory - adding 'wonder what else he's up to when the vest isn't around'.[327] Again, Eitan Fischberger is one of the first to publicly attack Shabat this way. To FPU, Fischberger said about this: *"Being "among the first" is not the criticism you think it is. My 24 March 2024 thread opened with the claim of mass rapes at Shifa Hospital that Shabat was promoting. Al Jazeera deleted that testimony within a day, and its former managing director, Yasser Abu Hilalah, wrote that "Hamas investigations" had found the story fabricated.*

On the vest, read what I wrote. I said he "occasionally" reported without one, which already acknowledges that he usually wore it. There was nothing to omit. On his employer, I showed that his profiles did not clearly name his outlet and that the outlet's name appeared blurred out on his Hamas government-issued press badge. The same thread showed he launched a Telegram channel at 6:50 a.m. on October 7, minutes into the massacre, and posted images of it all day, along with laughing emojis and descriptions of the attackers as "heroes." In October 2024, the IDF named him as a sniper in Hamas's Beit Hanoun Battalion."

September - October 2024: Siege of northern Gaza and targeted assassination attempt

Khaled Hassan is a national security and geopolitics researcher and council member for President Herzog's 'Voice of the People'. On
16 September 2024, Hassan went to Israel where he met Avichay Adraee, then IDF Spokesperson Arabic at the Spokesperson Unit itself.[328]

324 Abu Ali Express in English. (2024, January 30). "The Gazan "journalist"". Published on Telegram
325 Kubovic. Y. (2021, August 18). Israeli Army Employs Popular Blogger for Psyops on Social Media. Published by Haaretz.
326 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, March 24). "Over the last". Published on X.
327 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger] (2024, March 24). "Over the last 24 hours". Published on X.
328 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 16). "I was delighted". Published on X.



Figure 7 – Avichay Adraee and Khaled Hassan. Source: @Khaledzakariah on X, 16 September 2024.[329]

Just two days later Hassan wrote a post about Shabat. On 18 September 2024, Hassan called out Shabat, allegedly sharing what he said is evidence that Shabat was involved with Hamas. 'Hossam, I'd suggest you make contact with the IDF to pass on all information you have on the hostages and Hamas, as well as refrain from using any pagers for the rest of your life!'[330] In the post, Hassan refers to social media posts by Shabat about, among others, the terrorist attack on 7 October 2023 (for a full analysis of these messages, please refer to appendix 1]. Khaled Hassan subsequently threatened and attacked Shabat in posts in October 2024 and also around his death in March 2025. The 18 September 2024 post, which has been viewed nearly 150k times, was cited by other pro-Israel voices as additional proof that Hossam Shabat was part of Hamas, despite the post not containing any evidence of that. Hassan referred to the post as additional evidence just after Shabat was murdered.[331] Furthermore, Hassan responded to his own post with denigrating and inciting comments, and told the BBC to 'bid farewell' to one of their sources:

329 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 16). "I was delighted". Published on X.
330 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 18). "Today, I want". Published on X.
331 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, March 24). "This is important:". Published on X.



Figure 8 – X posts by Khaled Hassan about Shabat. Source: Khaled Hassan on X.[332]

Just a month later, on 23 October 2024, the IDF 'confirmed' Hassan's suspicions by publishing documents supposedly detailing Shabat's role as a terrorist. In response to the IDF's post, Khaled Hassan posted that he had exposed Shabat, warned him to collaborate with the IDF, and that he had reported Shabat to the IDF.[333] In response to FPU, Hassan stated "You dismissed IDF and Israeli security intelligence identifying Shabat as a "sniper operative from the Beit Hanoun Battalion of Hamas who operated under civilian cover". You chose to dismiss this evidence despite Shabat's open and public support for the kidnapping, murder and torture of civilians."

Just like Anas Al-Sharif, Hossam Shabat was one of the six Al Jazeera journalists who were labeled as terrorists by the IDF on 23 October 2024.[334] In the case of Shabat, we noticed that Associated Press (AP News picked up the story with an insinuating title: 'Israel accuses 6 Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza of being Palestinian militants.' The article, written by Jack Jefferey and John Gambrell, does not provide any of the six journalists with a right of reply, despite some of the six being, in AP's words, 'mainstays in the outlet's [Al Jazeera] 24-hour live coverage of Gaza'.[335] Despite that, and because AP is a news wire, the article, including the title has been shared many times in, among others, the Canadian Press, The Independent, Independent Espanol, CE Notificiarias English, AP Spanish, Naharnet, Yerepouni Daily News, Vanguardia, EuroNews Portugal/Spain/English, and Thai News Service.

On 23 October 2024, the New York Times also wrote about the IDF's allegations, but included a note on photos that were not part of the IDF's evidence package, which means that the author Aaron Boxerman did background research into the journalists. Boxerman wrote: 'At least one of the journalists, Mr. Shabat, wrote posts on social media praising Hamas, and uploaded photos of himself wearing the green-and-white scarf of its student movement.'[336] It is unclear whether Aaron Boxerman found these posts and photos on Shabat's own social media channels, or whether he took them from an intermediary like Fischberger or Khalid Hassan. We approached Boxerman on 25 March 2026 but received no response.

Also on 23 October 2024, United Press International (UPI, a major English-language newswire, published a press release with the IDF frame as title, providing no context within the title and the first line of the body: 'Israel's military accuses 6 Al Jazeera journalists of acting as Hamas operatives. Israel's military said it uncovered documents that it says proves six journalists with the Middle East-based news source

332 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 18). "Today, I want". Published on X.
333 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, October 23). "Almost a month". Published on X.
334 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.
335 Jeffery, J. & Gambrell, J. (2024, October 24). Israel accuses 6 Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza of being Palestinian militants. Published by AP News.
336 Boxerman, A. (2024, October 23). Israel Accuses 6 Al Jazeera Reporters of Belonging to Militant Groups. Published by the New York Times.

Al Jazeera are operatives with Hamas and other Palestinian-linked terror squads.'[337] None of the six journalists were given a right of reply by UPI, despite being very active online.

Apart from these legacy outlets copying the IDF's frame, we observed accounts on X with millions of followers also copying the frame, without any critical note about the veracity of the documents.[338] A key example here is OSINTdefender, an X account that had around 800k followers as of October 2023, and 1.8 million followers as of January 2026. The account has been identified by the University of Washington as a 'new elite' on X, meaning an account that sometimes outperforms traditional news sources in both total views and views per tweet.[339] Underneath the post, which itself garnered nearly 300k views, VividProwess (500k followers) and Eitan Fischberger, two outspoken accounts in this ecosystem, use the popularity of OSINTdefender to increase traction on their own posts.

After the intensification of smears against Shabat, he reported on 20 November 2024 that Israeli forces tried to assassinate him in a double-tap attack.[340] Shabat noted that he was injured341 but was later able to resume his work.

March 2025: Israel breaks the ceasefire and assassinates Hossam Shabat

A ceasefire had been in effect since 19 January 2025, but two months later, on 18 March 2025, Israel unilaterally declared the ceasefire to be over, and resumed hostilities with a wave of airstrikes that killed more than 400 people.342 On 19 March 2025, Israel killed 5 UN staffers in an attack on a UN compound in Deir al Balah.[343] On 23 March 2025, Israel attacked a convoy of ambulances, a firetruck and a UN vehicle, killing 15 aid workers, a UN agency staffer and several others.[344] The massacre drew widespread condemnation.[345] Then, in the morning of 24 March 2025, Israel killed journalist Mohammed Mansour in an airstrike on his house.[346] Since breaking the ceasefire 5 days earlier, Israel had received international backlash for its return to hostilities.[347] Hossam Shabat was reporting on these hostilities when the Israeli government assassinated him.

On 24 March 2025, at around 3:30 PM local time, Hossam Shabat was killed in a targeted drone strike on his vehicle, in the northern Gazan city of Beit Lahya.[348] Shabat was on his way back from the house of his colleague Mohammed Mansour who had been killed in an Israeli airstrike with his wife and son mere hours before.[349] Immediately after the attack we observed dozens of posts from a variety of official, affiliated and independent channels. Using the snowball method, we collected a sample of 60 posts published on

337 Benson, C. (2024, October 23). Israel's military accuses 6 Al Jazeera journalists of acting as Hamas operatives. Published by UPI.
338 OSINTdefender. [@sentdefender]. (2024, October 23). "The Israel Defense". Published on X.
339 Caulfield, M., Bayar, M.C. & Aske, A.B. (2023, October 20). The 'new elites' of X: Identifying the most influential accounts engaged in Hamas/Israel discourse. Published by Center for an Informed Public (University of Washington).
340 (1) Shabat, H. [@HossamShabat]. (2024, November 20). "Tonight, I was". Published on X.
& (2) Zhang, S. (2024, November 20). Israel Targets, Injures One of the Only Journalists Left in North Gaza in Strike. Published by Truthout.
341 Shabat, H. [@HossamShabat]. (2024, November 20). "Sitting next to". Published on X.
342 Baba, A., Estrin, D. & Lonsdorf, K. (2025, March 18). Israel declares ceasefire 'over' as it launches airstrikes in Gaza, killing hundreds. Published by NPR.
343 Kekatos, M. (2025, May 27). Timeline of Israel's actions in Gaza after end of ceasefire with Hamas. Published by ABC News.
344 Tondo, L., Tantesh, M.A. & Borger, J. (2025, April 15). The Gaza paramedic killings: a visual timeline. Published by The Guardian.
345 El Damanhoury, K. & Dahman, I. & Tanno, S. (2025, April 2). Bodies of missing aid workers found in Gaza 'mass grave' following Israeli attacks. Published by CNN.
346 CPJ. (2025, March 24). Mohammed Mansour. Published by CPJ.
347 UN. (2025, March 19). Israel continues to violate the ceasefire agreement; UN facilities are being attacked – Letter from the State of Palestine (A/ES-10/1027-S/2025/173). Published by the UN.
348 RSF. (2025, March 25). Gaza: RSF condemns targeted Israeli strike that killed Al-Jazeera correspondent Hossam Shabat. Published by RSF.
349 Kester, S. (2025, March 28). "If you read this, I will be dead,' Hossam Shabat (23) wrote beforehand, because so many Palestinian journalists had already been murdered. Published by De Volkskrant.

24 and 25 March 2026, and analysed publications in media outlets, aiming to be able to describe how disinformation flowed from these channels to these outlets. Below we will dive into some instances that exemplify different types of flow dynamics.

On the 24th, mere minutes after the incident, we observed a spate of activity on various Hebrew-language Telegram groups. A search of different spelling variations of Shabat's name on OpenMeasures came back with more than 20 different Hebrew-language Telegram groups all celebrating the death of 'Hamas terrorist' Hossam Shabat. In a group run by Israeli journalist Yoseph Haddad for example, Haddad wrote: 'Terrorists with a PRESS vest are still terrorists, it's good that they were eliminated! Let them now cover hell... Every big dog has his day!!!'[350]

On X, one of the first accounts to share the news that Shabat had been assassinated was Open Source Intel (OSINT613), a large X account with nearly one million followers at the time, and more than 1.7 million followers as of September 2026. The account published at least four posts on 24 March 2025, of which the first, at 2:57 PM CET, garnered 836K views as of May 2026.[351] The post is a thread of photos and videos, referring to Khaled Hassan's September 2024 post, and closing with sharing the IDF documents from October 2024 as evidence of Shabat's role as a sniper in Hamas.[352] Another post by this account from 4:20 PM the same day is a response to a TV segment by Trey Yingst, Chief Foreign Correspondent at Fox: 'IDF provides receipts'.[353]

In the video posted on Fox News on 24 March 2025, Trey Yingst, Chief Foreign Correspondent at Fox reported that Hossam Shabat had been killed in Gaza. The video has been viewed more than 2.1 million times. In response to the post, Yingst received direct criticism from several Pro-Israel accounts, including outspoken voices who previously discredited Shabat and Al-Sharif, such as Khaled Hassan[354], LizaRosen0000[355], GAZAWOOD1[356], Open Source Intel, Eitan Fischberger[357], and Yehuda Teitelbaum[358]. Khaled Hassan[359], Open Source Intel360, GAZAWOOD1361, and Fischberger362 all refer to their own posts as proof of Shabat's ties with Hamas.

350 Haddad, Y. (2025, March 24). "The IDF eliminated". Published on Telegram.
351 Open Source Intel. [@Osint613]. (2025, March 24). "Israel eliminated al jazeera". Published on X.
352 Open Source Intel. [@Osint613]. (2025, March 24). "Israel eliminated al jazeera". Published on X.
353 Open Source Intel. [@Osint613]. (2025, March 24). "IDF provides receipts". Published on X.
354 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, March 24). "What bloody journalist,". Published on X.
355 Rosen, L. [@LisaRosen0000]. (2025, March 24). "He was a". Published on X.
356 GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. "Him?". Published on X.
357 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, March 24). "Just once, I'd". Published on X.
358 Yingst, T. [@TreyYingst]. (2025, March 24). "Palestinian journalists Mohammed". Published on X.
359 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, March 24). "What bloody journalist,". Published on X.
360 Open Source Intel. [@Osint613]. (2025, March 24). "IDF provides receipts". Published on X.
361 GAZAWOOD - the PALLYWOOD saga. [@GAZAWOOD1]. "Him?". Published on X.
362 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, March 24). "You keep falling". Published on X.

The segment by Yingst not only attracted a lot of attention from accounts that were already vocal in this context, but also from larger accounts, with hundreds of thousands of followers. For example, two of these responses came from Dave Rubin, a very popular US-based conservative voice with more than 1.6 million followers on X.[363] In the latter response, Rubin refers to Open Source Intel's post from earlier that day.[364]

Responses also came from people like Jeremy Redfern, former Press Secretary for Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and currently employed as deputy chief of staff to the AG of Florida,[365] Marina Medvin, an attorney with 360k followers on X[366], David Draiman, lead singer of metal band Disturbed[367], Stella Escobedo, news anchor at conservative media outlet One America Network[368], and Elad Radson, a former Israeli diplomat.[369] This demonstrates an uptick of the narrative among influential individuals.

Further on 24 March 2025, Eitan Fischberger posted that 'all the receipts were there' to show that Shabat was a Hamas terror operative, referring to his earlier post from a year before, in March 2024.[370] Fischberger's post was also shared by several larger X channels, such as AGHamilton29 (220k followers).[371]

On the same day, Khaled Hassan wrote that he had 'explicitly warned Hossam Shabat to pass all information he had to the IDF', and that his post from 18 September 2024 contained evidence of Shabat's involvement with Hamas.[372] Khaled Hassan's post was cited in the Washington Free Beacon on 24 March 2025 as well.[373] The Washington Free Beacon is a conservative outlet with ties to the United States Republican Party; its main funder is Republican Paul Singer.[374] The outlet, which has nearly a million visitors each month[375], used Hassan's post to attack Trey Yingst's report from 24 March 2025.

Avichay Adraee, at the time the IDF's Arabic Spokesperson, posted on 25 March 2025 on X: "#BREAKING The Israel Defense Forces and Shin Bet have eliminated the Hamas terrorist #Hussam_Shabat, who was also employed as a journalist at #AlJazeera".[376] The IDF posted shortly after this post on X as well, claiming the killing from one day earlier, and stating: 'Over 6 months ago, Hossam Basel Abdul Karim Shabat's role within the Hamas terrorist organization was exposed by us here on @X. He carried out all of his actions under the cover of an @AlJazeera journalist. Yesterday, he was eliminated by the IDF'.[377]

One day later, on 26 March 2025, the Israeli Ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg Idit Rosenzweig-Abu attacked Belgian newspaper De Standaard for their reporting on the murder of Shabat, stating: 'Hossam Shabat has a Hamas "soldier" number, is on Hamas lists of operatives and list participants in weapons training. Journalistic credibility-OUT. Gatekeepers on steroids hiding essential facts - IN.'[378]

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363 Rubin, D. [RubinReport]. (2025, March 24)."Trey, how do". Published on X.
364 Rubin, D. [RubinReport]. (2025, March 24). Repost of: Open Source Intel. [@Osint613]. (2025, March 24). "Israel eliminated al jazeera". Published on X.
365 Redfern, J. [@JeremyRedfernFL]. (2025, March 24). "Hossam Shabat on". Published on X.
366 Medvin, M. [@MarinaMedvin]. (2025, March 24). "Sounds like they". Published on X.
367 Draiman, D. [davidmdraiman]. Repost of: Levy, E. [@EylonALevy]. (2025, March 24). "Hossam Shabat was". Published on X.
368 Escobedo, S. [@StellaEscoTV]. (2025, March 24). "Just because they". Published on X.
369 Radson, E. [@EladRadson]. (2025, March 24). "What is happening". Published on X.
370 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, March 24). "Ladies and gentlemen:". Published on X.
371 AG. [@AGHamilton29]. (2025, March 24). Repost of: Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2025, March 24). "Ladies and gentlemen:". Published on X.
372 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, March 24). "This is important:". Published on X.
373 Kredo, A. (2025, March 24). Fox News Accuses Israel of Killing 'Two Palestinian Journalists.' Both Have Terror Affiliations. Published by the Washington Free Beacon.
374 PBS News. (2017. October 28). AP report: Website with GOP ties funded research on Trump dossier. Published by PBS News.
375 Similar Web. (n.d.). freebeacon.com Website Analysis for May 2026. Published by Similar Web.
376 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. (2025, March 25). "Breaking". Published on X.
377 IDF. (2025, March 25). "Over 6 months". Published on X.
378 Rosenzweig-Abu, I. (2025, March 26). In @destandaard: "Israel". Published on X.

In September 2025, about a year after Hossam Shabat's assassination, Khaled Hassan posted how proud he was to have shared evidence with the IDF: 'Do you know that I submitted a dossier with evidence of his [Anas Al-Sharif] and Hossam Shabat's involvement to the IDF, and shortly afterward they were eliminated? It's an achievement I'm proud of and always happy to remember.'[379]

379 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, September 26). "Do you know". Published on X.

4. Legacy media reproduce delegitimisation frames

The previous chapter provided insight into how delegitimisation frames are created and disseminated on social media networks, through a network of official and independent actors, using a combination of 'official' and open-source information. In this chapter, we analyse to what extent those delegitimisation frames created on social media have been reproduced by legacy media outlets in ways that appear inconsistent with fundamental journalistic principles included in the IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists (the Bordeaux Declaration). In more than 80% of the publications analysed, we identified at least one departure from principles of the Bordeaux Declaration.

More specifically, a quarter of the publications did not offer any form of right of reply, while more than 70% of the publications did not mention or otherwise demonstrate that an independent verification of the allegations had taken place. Almost half of the publications did not provide essential contextual information, and another 11% discredited certain sources, including through ad hominem attacks. Finally, in the case of Anas Al-Sharif, we find that all types of deviations increased after his murder, with a statistically significant increase of the lack of independent verification as well as lack of context over time. This indicates an increased lack of journalistic scrutiny and thoroughness in relation to the serious allegations against Al-Sharif after his assassination.

Overall, these deviations facilitated the reproduction of narratives targeting Palestinian journalists by legacy media, and could therefore reach large mainstream audiences and gain credibility. Because of the observed deviations of the Bordeaux Declaration, critical information about the origin, spread, purpose, and evidentiary strength of delegitimisation frames targeting Palestinian journalists Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat was not sufficiently conveyed to large audiences worldwide. This has implications for the public understanding of the situation for journalists in Gaza, legal accountability for perpetrators of attacks against them, and the protection of journalists under international humanitarian law in general.

This chapter will discuss the application of standards and practices of the Bordeaux Declaration by legacy media, and how legacy media have deviated from these standards and practices. We also highlight positive examples of the application of these journalistic standards and practices in the coverage of Palestinian journalists Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. Finally, we track the number of deviations featured in publications in our sample over time, focusing on articles about Al-Sharif only, since Shabat's sub-sample contained too few articles.

The application of the Bordeaux Declaration by legacy media

On the basis of the Bordeaux Declaration, we identified four types of deviations from the Charter in articles that can contribute to the reproduction of the allegations against Al Sharif and Shabat (see Chapter 2). This coding methodology is not a formal assessment of journalistic ethics such as those conducted by Media or Press Councils, but an analytical tool to categorize the recurring patterns in articles in which the described delegitimisation narratives have been reproduced.[380] These are:

1) Inadequate right of reply (RoR)
2) Lack of independent verification of evidence
3) Lack of context
4) Discrediting of selected sources

380 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ.

The 14 media outlets across 7 western countries featured in this investigation were selected based on the size of their global reach. As explained in the methodology section of this report, the publications produced by these media constitute a sample that had an important impact globally on the general discourse and narrative pertaining to these two journalists. Within the publications of these media outlets, we subsequently searched for all references of Anas Al-Sharif and/or Hossam Shabat, and identified 98 publications in total. These publications are split into 89 news articles and 9 opinion pieces or columns.[381]

We observed at least one of the four deviations of the Bordeaux Declaration – in 79 out of the 98 publications. Through this lack of adherence to the standards of the Bordeaux Declaration, media outlets, to varying degrees and with varying degrees of intentionality, reproduced and shared narratives that contributed to the delegitimisation of the two journalists.

Across the news outlets in our sample, we found the following distribution of deviations:

Outlet	Total # of publications	# of publications containing Bordeaux deviations
BBC	8	7
The Sun	3	2
NOS	8	3
De Telegraaf	8	8
Le Parisien	6	5
Le Figaro	11	10
Tagesschau.de	3	3
BILD	3	3
New York Times	13	10
Fox News	4	4
CBC News	17	11
TVA Nouvelles	4	4
News.com.au	5	5
The Australian	5	4

Figure 9 – Distribution of deviations of the Bordeaux Declaration per news outlet in our sample. One article can contain more than one deviation.

Figure 9 depicts the accumulated deviations per news outlet. Importantly, there were no news outlets for which we did not identify any of the four deviations in the articles that mention Al Sharif and/or Shabat. Dutch national broadcaster NOS came closest: five of the eight articles contain no deviations according to our coding framework. In other words, all news outlets in our samples have published articles that contain one or more deviations, even though the deviations themselves differ in severity. In particular, Dutch news outlet De Telegraaf and Australian news outlet The Australian featured all four recorded deviations in a significant number of their articles (respectively 50% and 40%).[382]

381 See Annex 1: Methodology for a more detailed description of our methodology, including how and why we selected the media outlets in question.

382 (1) Ground News. (n.d.). De Telegraaf. Published by Ground News. & (2) Ground News. (n.d.). The Australian. Published by Ground News.

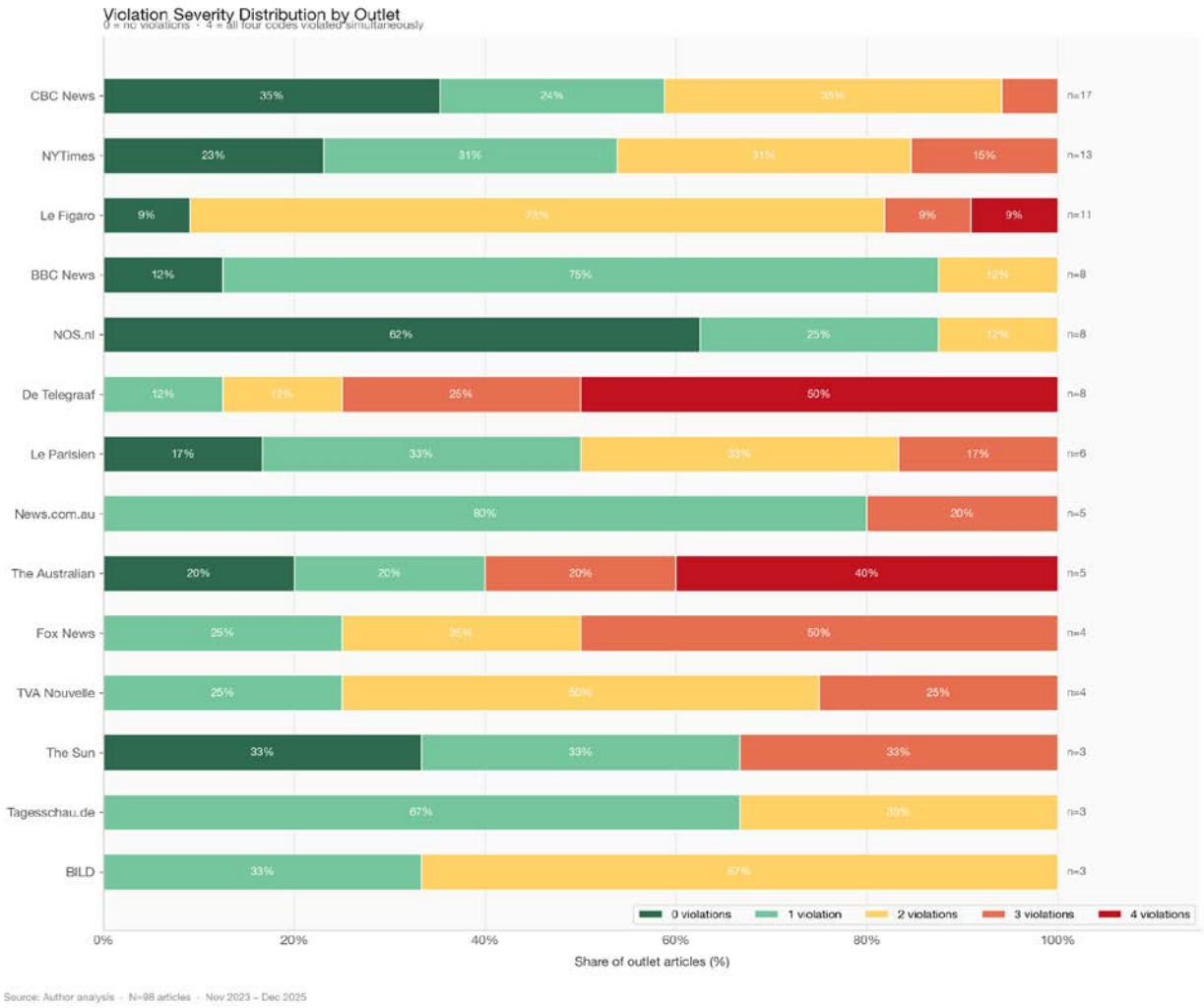


Figure 10 – Accumulated deviations of the Bordeaux Declaration per news outlet in our sample. Source: FPU.

Subsequently, FPU reached out to all outlets covered in this investigation. On 12 May 2026, we distributed a first round of invitations for an open conversation, the aim being to better understand the editorial considerations and decision-making processes involved in reporting on this particular issue. Of the 14 outlets reached, only Dutch media organisations De Telegraaf and NOS agreed to do an interview with us, while German outlet Bild declined to participate. Canadian CBC News responded that they do not give interviews on this particular topic, and forwarded CBC's Journalistic Standards and Practices[383], which we consulted. The remaining ten outlets did not respond to our initial invitation. On 3 June 2026, we sent a reminder to these ten outlets but none of them responded.

383 CBC. (n.d.) Journalistic Standards and Practices. Published by CBC.

Analysis – A lack of right of reply (RoR), independent verification, critical context and discrediting of selected sources

A lack of Right of Reply (RoR)

RoR is a well-established journalistic practice designed to facilitate equal, accurate and fair (media) coverage of various relevant points of views, especially in relation to allegations, criticism or assertions made.[384] Therefore, if a journalist makes an allegation in a journalistic publication, they are obliged to provide the person or institution facing that allegation with an opportunity to respond to it.[385] As a rule of thumb, the weight of this obligation is proportional to the severity of the allegation. Offering the right to reply is therefore particularly important when severe allegations are included in journalistic publications, such as those of serious crimes including terrorism. Right of reply offers those accused with the opportunity to defend themselves by denying or even disproving the allegations against them and correcting any factual inaccuracies. This principle is thereby crucial to ensuring balanced and fair reporting.

The fact that the accused party is no longer alive does not automatically relieve journalists from the obligation to offer the right of reply. While relatives of the deceased can, in most jurisdictions, not make defamation claims on their behalf, offering the right to reply in cases such as those of Anas al Sharif and Shabat holds clear moral and ethical value. As has been set out in this report, the perception of the legitimacy of attacks against journalists impacts the extent to which justice and accountability for their deaths are sought. Moreover, leaving such allegations unanswered can also have repercussions for remaining colleagues on the ground who face similar allegations - in the cases at hand, the same allegations were issued by the IDF against (among others) fellow Al Jazeera-reporters in Gaza.

Allegations of terrorism issued about reporters during an armed conflict should therefore meet the highest possible journalistic standards. This means approaching the journalist or their relatives for comment, or, if those are not possible, using a personal statement by the journalist. If these are not feasible, media who sought right of reply (see below) have resorted to obtaining a public statement by the employer, in this case Al Jazeera.

Based on this, we analysed whether the right of reply was adequate in relation to the allegations raised, splitting it into five tiers of RoR: 1) no right of reply, 2) approaching the journalist for comment, 3) approaching his news organisation for comment, 4) using the journalist's personal public statement and 5) using a public statement by the news organisation for which the journalist worked. For this report, we have only coded for examples of the first tier – no RoR – as a deviation since it constitutes an unequivocal deviation of journalistic standards in any case, but particularly in relation to allegations of terrorism. We decided to focus on the first tier and not include the other tiers in the current tally and analysis due to difficulties with objectively ascertaining whether a particular form of RoR constitutes a deviation of the Bordeaux Declaration.

80.61% of the analysed publications directly and explicitly included allegations that Al-Sharif and/or Shabat were terrorists, 28.57% of those publications included allegations that the journalists were affiliated to Hamas in another way and 11.22% references allegations that they were propagandists, for Hamas or otherwise. The articles that did not include any of these allegations were articles that were not about the two journalists, and merely referred to Al-Sharif or Shabat as sources for other topics. In stark contrast to the prevalence of the allegations, **24.74% of the analysed publications mentioned *no* form of RoR** for either the journalists or their news organisation in relation to the allegations made against them. Furthermore, despite both journalists publishing statements in response to the IDF's allegations in

384 EBSCO (n.d.). Right of reply. Published by EBSCO.
385 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [art. 2 & 5]

October 2024[386], and (their teams) posthumously in March 2025[387] (Shabat) and August 2025 (Al-Sharif),[388] a mere 34.02% of the outlets covered in our investigation used these particular statements of either of the journalists. 47.42% used a public statement by Al Jazeera as a way of providing RoR.[389]

Positive examples of RoR

In our sample, good examples of outlets approaching the journalists or using their statements in their reporting exist. For instance, nearly all of the articles from our sample covering the assassination of Shabat provided some form of right of reply. Le Parisien, The Australian and CBC News all relied on a personal statement released by Shabat's social media channels hours after the murder.

Canadian CBC News reached out to Hossam Shabat and Ashraf Saraj after the IDF published unverifiable allegations that they and four other Al Jazeera journalists were terrorists. Shabat called the IDF allegations 'fabricated dossiers" and an 'obvious attempt to pre-emptively justify our murder.'[390] He further noted: "Despite these dangerous and untrue threats made against us, we remain committed to our profession and will continue to report the facts on the ground as the genocide regretfully continues unabated.'[391] Saraj told CBC he was "innocent of all of these accusations" and that he has "no involvement in any military activities'.[392] CBC also used a public statement by Al Jazeera in which the organisation called the allegations 'baseless, and said the IDF is instead trying to silence the few remaining journalists in the war-torn enclave'.[393] Taken together with commentary from international press freedom organisation Committee to Protect Journalists, who noted that this 'isn't the first time Israel has accused journalists of militant involvement "without producing credible evidence."'[394], these rebuttal statements provide readers with a more complete picture of the credibility and purpose of the allegations raised.

The New York Times also used a social media statement by Shabat saying that: 'the Israeli accusations were intended to turn him and his colleagues into "killable targets"'.[395] The outlet also used a statement from Al Jazeera in which they 'strongly denied the allegations and placed them in a long history of hostility towards the network'.[396] Despite the fact that the New York Times did not approach the journalist or employer, their use of the issued public statements provides readers with the perspective of the journalist and his outlet as well.

No RoR

Critically, FPU found a substantial number of cases in which no RoR was sought. Le Figaro exemplifies how the provision of RoR can vary between different publications from the same outlet: an article published on 24 March 2025 states that the accusation against Shabat is something 'he vehemently denies'[397], while an article published one day later, on 25 March 2025 article, does not provide any form of right of reply,

386 Boxerman, A. (2024, October 23). Israel Accuses 6 Al Jazeera Reporters of Belonging to Militant Groups. Published by The New York Times.
387 Shabat, H. [@hossam_shbat]. (2025, March 24). "This is Hossam's". Published on Instagram.
388 Al-Sharif, A. [@AnasAlSharif0]. (2025, August 11). "This is my". Published on X.
389 It needs to be noted that these numbers are not mutually exclusive as there are publications that used combinations of RoR, such as the journalists' statement and a statement by their employer, or a statement and an interview with Al Jazeera.
390 Jabakhanji, S. (2024, October 24). Al Jazeera calls Israeli army claims 'baseless' after IDF accuses 6 journalists of being militants. Published by CBC.
391 Jabakhanji, S. (2024, October 24). Al Jazeera calls Israeli army claims 'baseless' after IDF accuses 6 journalists of being militants. Published by CBC.
392 Jabakhanji, S. (2024, October 24). Al Jazeera calls Israeli army claims 'baseless' after IDF accuses 6 journalists of being militants. Published by CBC.
393 Jabakhanji, S. (2024, October 24). Al Jazeera calls Israeli army claims 'baseless' after IDF accuses 6 journalists of being militants. Published by CBC.
394 Jabakhanji, S. (2024, October 24). Al Jazeera calls Israeli army claims 'baseless' after IDF accuses 6 journalists of being militants. Published by CBC.
395 Boxerman, A. (2024, October 23). Israel Accuses 6 Al Jazeera Reporters of Belonging to Militant Groups. Published by the New York Times.
396 Boxerman, A. (2024, October 23). Israel Accuses 6 Al Jazeera Reporters of Belonging to Militant Groups. Published by the New York Times.
397 Le Figaro & AFP. (2025, March 24). Israel-Hamas War: IDF says it unknowingly fired on a Red Cross building. Published by Le Figaro.

relying solely on the IDF's press release.[398] Dutch outlet De Telegraaf did not provide a RoR in six of its eight publications on the topic. Of those six publications, four are columns and two are news articles. In the interview FPU held with De Telegraaf's Editor-in-Chief Kamran Ullah, Ullah pointed at the different RoR standards that apply to columns compared to news articles.[399] Under the Dutch Press Code, personal opinions in publications, including in columns or opinion pieces, are indeed exempted from the obligation to provide RoR.[400] Ullah added that while the right of reply is not required, columns should not include factual inaccuracies, which he stated is reviewed by the editorial staff before the publication of each column. In the case of the terrorism allegations against the two journalists, he added that columns who repeat these allegations can meet this threshold, for example when the columnist in question refers to other sources that have published the allegation before. In our sample, some of the columns do illustrate that the line between personal opinion and factual statement can be hard to distinguish - for example in a column in the Telegraaf in August 2025: "the Netherlands is not allowed to know that he [Anas al-Sharif] was a Hamas-propagandist who glorified the murder of Jews".[401]

Apart from the columns, in two of the four news articles published on the topic by De Telegraaf, the outlet did not provide any form of RoR either. A discussion piece on the dilemmas that soldiers can face on the battlefield, published a week after al Sharif's killing, opened with the header: 'Can you kill a journalist when he is helping the enemy?'.[402] The article discusses the legitimacy of the assassination of Anas Al-Sharif, detailing the allegations against him. However, the article does not make any reference to Al Jazeera's or Al-Sharif's own denial of the allegations, nor demonstrates other attempts to seek RoR. Additionally, an article about activists laying flowers at a resistance monument in the city of Utrecht included the sentence: 'According to Israel, Al-Sharif was a propagandist and Hamas member.'[403] Here too, De Telegraaf provides no form of RoR. Across outlets, a failure to provide RoR was especially prevalent in articles that mentioned the assassination of Al-Sharif or Shabat as context to another news story (i.e. the double tap attack on Nasser Hospital on 25 August 2025). Importantly, as mentioned in the previous section, other outlets, such as the NOS[404], did provide RoR to Al Jazeera in the same situation.

Relatives and colleagues of both journalists confirmed to Free Press Unlimited that, when they were still alive, neither Al Sharif nor Shabat had received requests for a response to the IDF's allegations from Western media. Wessam Shabat, the brother of Hossam Shabat told us: 'From the day Hossam was targeted until today, no one has contacted us, not even the military, the BBC or any other agency, even regarding claims published by the BBC that Hassam was a Qassam fighter… The BBC published the false claim without any verification, without any inquiry or interview with any family member… They simply published the military narrative.'[405] The BBC did, as far as Free Press Unlimited could establish, not cover the terrorism allegation against Shabat prior to his death, but published in March 2025 in its Spanish and Arabic editions: "the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed in a statement on Tuesday that they had "eliminated Shabbat," whom they described as a "terrorist." The statement indicated that the Al Jazeera journalist was "a terrorist sniper fighting in the ranks of Hamas".[406] The article refers to public (posthumous) statements by Shabat and Al Jazeera, but does not indicate an attempt to seek RoR from Shabat's relatives or employer.

398 Le Figaro. (2025, March 25). Middle East: Civil Defense announces 14 deaths after Israeli strikes. Published by Le Figaro.
399 Interview FPU with Kamran Ullah, 26 May 2026.
400 Raad voor de Journalistiek. Leidraad (2024). https://rvdj.nl/leidraad/
401 De Winter, L. (2025, August 12). Leon de Winter: 'Journalist' Anas al-Sharif was a Hamas propagandist who glorified the murder of Jews. Published by De Telegraaf.
402 Schoonhoven, S. (2025, August 17). The war in Gaza exposes dilemmas on the battlefield: Is it permissible to kill a journalist if they are helping the enemy?. Published by De Telegraaf.
403 Roeske, E. (2025, August 14). Anger after flowers for controversial journalist Anas al-Sharif at resistance monument: 'Clumsy choice provokes controversy'. Published by De Telegraaf.
404 Lamper, E. (2025, August 17). Israel portrays journalists in Gaza as Hamas fighters but provides no evidence. Published by NOS.
405 Interview Wessam Shabat, September 2026.
406 BBC Mundo. (2025, March 25). If you are reading this, it's because I've been killed": Hossam Shabat, the Palestinian journalist who was the target of an Israeli attack and left a message to be published after his death. Published by BBC News Mundo and BBC Arabic.

Complexities of providing adequate RoR

In our conversation, editor-in-chief of de Telegraaf Kamran Ullah spoke about the difficulties the newspaper faces in terms of 'identifying where and from whom RoR was to be asked in a situation such as this one', in which the context, lack of resources (De Telegraaf only has one correspondent for the region) and urgency of 'first-line reporting' complicate the RoR process.[407] These factors provide insight as to the way in which delegitimisation narratives (can) appear in legacy media, but they do not rule out the possibility of offering RoR for severe allegations in situations such as the ones at hand. De Telegraaf could have provided the accused journalists with a form of right of reply in articles and opinion pieces alike, either by approaching them or their employers, or using their or their employers' recurring public statements, denying the allegations. This particularly applies to articles outside the scope of 'first-line reporting', such as the article published a week after Al Sharif's killing. Not providing a right of reply in any form for such severe allegations is difficult to reconcile with the journalistic standards as outlined in the Bordeaux Declaration, which also specifies that "the notion of urgency or immediacy in the dissemination of information shall not take precedence over the verification of facts, sources and/or the offer of a reply."[408]

In cases where a party to an armed conflict publishes allegations that are used to legitimize assassinations of journalists, it remains imperative that journalists engage in proper journalistic practices and demonstrate efforts to provide a right of reply, proportionate to the allegations in question. In doing so, outlets provide readers with more comprehensive information, enabling them to make informed judgements and decisions on the matter. Without any such attempt, outlets risk amplifying and lending credibility to unfounded accusations against journalists to mainstream audiences.

Lack of independent verification

It follows from the principles in the Bordeaux Declaration, which call for the respect of facts and honest collection of the news, that journalists should attempt to verify allegations presented by sources or other parties prior to reporting the allegation themselves.[409] For the purposes of this report, we refer to independent verification, i.e. verification of issued allegations by the journalist themselves, beyond restating the allegation issued by others. Independent verification might entail, for instance, an in-depth analysis of the content and reliability of documents, photos or other relevant materials presented, or search for corroborating information. By doing so, a journalist provides insight into what can be considered a proven fact and what remains disputed in relation to the allegation. Importantly, the need for speedy news dissemination should not trump the need for verification of the facts.[410] This is particularly relevant when there are reasons to question the veracity of allegations, e.g. because of the interests of the party that issues the allegation, or the pattern of similar allegations for which no evidence has been provided. Consequently, when journalists do not independently verify the evidence used to justify a targeted assassination, like those of Al-Sharif and Shabat, they can create a false balance – 'presenting two opposing views as equally supported by evidence and expertise when one is not'.[411]

In 72.16% of the articles published by the media outlets in question on Al-Sharif and Shabat, we found no or inadequate attempts to independently verify the factual merit of the allegations presented by the IDF against the journalists. Importantly, from our sample, a trend in the news coverage emerges before and after the publication of the IDF's allegations against the two journalists on the 23 October 2024[412]: the four outlets that mentioned the journalists before 23 October 2024 only mentioned them in their capacity as journalists on the ground. However, the four articles published immediately after the IDF's allegations of 23 October 2024 all presented the IDF's evidence – e.g. screenshots of phone directories, an injury

407 Interview Free Press Unlimited with Kamran Ullah, 26 May 2026.
408 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [art. 5]
409 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [art. 1&2]
410 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [art. 5]
411 Elliot, P. (n.d.). False Balance Statement. Published by The Canadian Association of Journalists.
412 Israel Defense Forces. (n.d.). Documents Expose 6 Al Jazeera Journalists as Terrorists in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Terror Organizations. Published by the IDF.

tracking document, lists of Hamas operatives and lists of participants in a military training[413] – without critically and independently examining it. Furthermore, all publications in our sample that were published after October 2024 refer to the IDF's unverified evidence, which means that whether the information was true or not, the frame itself continued to be reported.

Positive examples of independent verification

One of the few strong examples of journalists engaging in independent verification of the evidence was featured in an article by Taggesschau.de which specifically tries to answer the question of what the documents presented by the IDF show. For instance, the outlet was able to verify Anas' birthday and marital status from the documents, but mentioned that for other information included in the screenshots shared by the IDF, 'an evaluation remains difficult, and their authenticity cannot be verified definitively.'[414] They also contested the IDF's assertion that Al-Sharif was allegedly posing as a journalist through an analysis of his social media, showing that 'he worked as a journalist on a daily basis in recent weeks and months'.[415] On 26 August 2025, the New York Times also published an article in which it was noted that 'none of the documents produced by the IDF could be independently verified, and the most recent one was from 2023.'[416] Critically, none of the outlets that engaged in independent verification could verify or corroborate the allegations and materials presented by the IDF.

No or inadequate independent verification

In stark contrast, Australian online news outlet News.com.au noted in an article about Al-Sharif: 'The IDF had previously disclosed intelligence information and many documents found in the Gaza Strip, confirming his military affiliation to Hamas'.[417] However, the article does not mention whether the outlet attempted to verify the evidence which forms the basis of the accusations themselves. Additionally, the BCC claimed the following: 'The BBC understands Sharif worked for a Hamas media team in Gaza before the current conflict.'[418] It offered neither evidence of this claim nor any explanation of how the BBC arrived at this conclusion. Later, an article by Novara Media reported that the BCC refused to correct this particular claim, even after internal concerns about its validity were raised.[419] These are examples of news outlets sharing claims made by the IDF without investigating them independently.

Additionally, in other articles, international press freedom organisations such as Reporters without Borders (RSF) and the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) are quoted as saying that 'these accusations were made "without evidence"'.[420] In the case of Shabat, The Australian, CBC News, Le Figaro (two reports) and Le Parisien wrote about his assassination by the IDF, but only CBC News tried to independently verify the evidence presented by the IDF to legitimize the strike. The other four outlets included some form of reflection on the IDF's evidence, generally in the form of a third party opinion about it. The Australian, for example, noted that Jonathan Dagher of Reporters Without Borders stated that the evidence can 'in no way justify his murder'.[421] However, there is no indication that the outlets in question tried to verify the evidence themselves, for example by requesting access to it from the IDF. Although mentioning the verdict of credible third parties undermines the legitimacy of the IDF's 'evidence' to some degree, it does not constitute an independent verification by the media outlets

413 See Appendix 1 – Evidence Discussion.
414 Echtermann, A., Helberg, C. & Yesil, M. (2025, August 13). What is known about the slain Anas al-Sharif. Published by Tagesschau.de.
415 Echtermann, A., Helberg, C. & Yesil, M. (2025, August 13). What is known about the slain Anas al-Sharif. Published by Tagesschau.de.
416 Boxerman, A. (2025, August 26).The Deadly Risks of Reporting in Gaza. Published by the New York Times.
417 AFP. (2025, August 11). Mourners gather in Gaza for funeral of Al Jazeera staff killed by Israel. Published by News.com.au.
418 Davies, A. (2025, August 13). Who were the Al Jazeera journalists killed by Israel in Gaza?. Published by BBC.
419 Williamson, H. (2025, September 10). BBC Ignored Internal Request to Correct Claim Anas Al-Sharif Worked With Hamas. Published by Novara Media.
420 Le Figaro. (2025, August 11). Gaza Strip: RSF, the UN, and Qatar condemn the deaths of journalists killed by the Israeli army. Published by Le Figaro.
421 AFP. (2025, March 26). Israel says Al Jazeera journalist it killed in Gaza was Hamas 'sniper'. Published by The Australian.

themselves. As the evidence discussion (Appendix 1) shows, the 'evidence' presented by the IDF and its proponents[422] does not alter the protected status of Al-Sharif and Shabat as journalists under international law.[423]

Therefore, it is imperative that journalists make every effort to independently verify presented evidence, especially when reporting on serious allegations against other journalists, so that their readers are able to fully grasp the reliability of the evidence presented. If not done and referred to properly, the varying narratives presented by the different parties involved are all presented as equally reliable, while the (lack of) evidence might suggest otherwise. As a result, media outlets risk reproducing and strengthening false delegitimisation frames in public discourse.

(Correcting) breaking news reporting and independent verification

The difficulties of independent verification in breaking news reporting, which requires time and capacity, are understandable and also applicable to other topics and media debates. When we asked NOS Deputy Editor-in-Chief Lucas Waagmeester about these difficulties, and how the NOS overcomes them, he noted that the NOS sees the news it provides as a form of historiography.[424] Some articles, especially breaking news reports published immediately after the event has happened, might be found to be outdated or irrelevant at a later stage. But changing the articles in hindsight is not favoured, as it skews the public's understanding of how the news evolved over time. What could be an option though, according to Waagmeester, is to publish another article at a later stage, when the dust of breaking news has settled, to revisit and discuss the initial publication again. To that extent, on 17 August 2025, the NOS published an article titled 'Israel paints journalists in Gaza as Hamas fighters, but does not provide evidence' [Israël zet journalisten in Gaza neer als Hamasstrijder, maar levert geen bewijs], in which the broadcaster dives deeper into the dynamics of Israeli delegitimisation efforts that were referenced in earlier breaking news-reporting. The article, among others, notes that "there was no conclusive evidence for any of the journalists [accused".

Waagmeester noted that this ought to be common media literacy, which journalists and media expect audiences to have: the ability to understand that the news is continuously evolving and that what you are reading is constantly under development. If you take one breaking news article published a year ago and analyse it against the information known today, you will most likely find errors and omissions. It nevertheless also underlines that it is difficult to amend the dynamic such allegations create once they have been shared. For example, on 11 August 2025, hours after its initial publication, the NOS updated an article to add that, according to a BBC statement, the BBC had found information that Al-Sharif had previously done work for a Hamas media team. The BBC did not specify what information formed the basis for that assessment. Since then, a leaked internal email from within the BBC showed that BBC staff urged the statement to be altered as they were not aware of the evidence on which the BBC made the statement.[425] Despite the NOS article that provides valuable context on the (pattern of) unfounded allegations against Palestinian journalists, this specific accusation remains visible and/or without update in the NOS reporting.[426]

422 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.
423 See Appendix 1: Evidence Discussion.
424 Interview Free Press Unlimited with Lucas Waagmeester, 7 July 2026.
425 Williamson, H. (2025, September 10). BBC Ignored Internal Request to Correct Claim Anas Al-Sharif Worked With Hamas. Published by Novara Media.
426 As of 6 November 2026.

Waagmeester noted that in the hectic world of breaking news, it is difficult to take the time and revisit earlier publications, let alone those from more than a year ago. He noted that media outlets are 'like racing cars with no rear view mirrors', always going fast and rarely looking behind. Kamran Ullah, De Telegraaf Editor-in-Chief, similarly said that breaking news reporting is often done under serious pressure and with incomplete information, with limited time for reflection. At the NOS, Waagmeeser says, they try to take the time to organise sessions to reflect on how certain news was covered and whether additional background is required for readers. But in a fast-paced environment like breaking news, there rarely seems to be time to reflect on earlier publications in an organised manner, which leads to loose ends in earlier publications that did not receive a follow-up. The dynamics and considerations at the NOS specifically, which is one of the media outlets in our sample with the least deviations from the Bordeaux Declaration, demonstrate the complications for media outlets in their new coverage of breaking news. However, article 5 of the Bordeaux Declaration specifically prescribes that the "'urgency or immediacy in the dissemination of information shall not take precedence over the verification of facts.'[427] Therefore, it remains paramount for journalists to reflect on the need to reproduce allegations such as these in first-line reporting, in particular when there is a pattern of unfounded allegations of this sort. Independent verification of evidence, offering right to reply, and providing context on this pattern can all contribute to inadvertently lending credibility to unfounded allegations.

Lack of critical context

As the Bordeaux Declaration demands 'respect for the facts and for the right of the public to truth'[428], providing critical context around an allegation, criticism or assertion is essential. Not categorising the accusations against Al-Sharif and Shabat, and their murders, as part of a pattern in which Israel repeatedly delegitimised journalists it (had) targeted journalists, deprives audiences of critical context about the source and reliability of such allegations.

FPU observed that 47.42% of the analysed articles did not provide critical context to the reported events. This includes the following: firstly, the allegations against, and targeted killings of Al-Sharif and Shabat are treated in these publications as singular cases, and are not placed in a distinctive wider trend in which Israel used delegitimisation campaigns against Palestinian journalists to justify attacks against them. Secondly, some cited sources are not fully or adequately introduced, which means that important information on their political stances or track records of delegitimisation is left out.

Positive examples where critical context is provided

Some outlets published contextual pieces into Israel's murder of Palestinian journalists, in which the IDF's allegations are approached from a different angle. Rather than framed as an allegation against which the journalists have to defend themselves, the IDF's allegations are mentioned as part of a campaign to silence reports from Gaza. To give a positive example, German broadcaster Tagesschau.de provides important context by quoting CPJ's Regional Director Sara Qudah, who said that 'Israel's pattern of labeling journalists as militants without credible evidence raises serious questions about its intentions and its respect for press freedom.'[429]

Similarly, Dutch broadcaster NOS published an article in May 2025, in which they referred to the 'hitlist' published by the IDF and interviewed Gazan journalist Hind Khoudary who was targeted with similar allegations. The interview provides critical background into the safety situation for Palestinian journalists in Gaza, and the difficulties they experience trying to operate under that constant threat. Khoudary

427 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [art. 5]
428 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [art. 1]
429 Tagesschau.de. (2026, August 11). Federal government demands explanation from Israel. Published by Taggesschau.de.

noted: 'We have seen before that journalists were threatened and accused, and subsequently targeted by the army.'[430] This contextualises the assassinations of Al-Sharif and Shabat as part of an interconnected pattern, causing them to not be seen as isolated and individual cases. Additionally, conducting an extensive interview with a journalist who has faced terrorist-allegations herself constitutes an appropriate way of providing RoR. In general, such separate publications offer valuable background to readers on the credibility and purpose of the IDF's continuing allegations.

No provision of critical context

By comparison, in an article dated 11 August 2025, the New York Times did not include similar critical context, when it wrote: 'Israel said it targeted Al-Sharif, accusing him of working with Hamas.'[431] The outlet did not mention that Israel had accused several other journalists without providing credible evidence.[432] As another example, we highlight Canada's national public news service, CBC News, which published seventeen articles referencing Al-Sharif and/or Shabat, among which we found eleven articles with deviations of varying degrees. In ten out of the eleven articles, we found a lack of context, with eight of those ten deviations pertaining to the fact that CBC did not place the delegitimisation and discrediting of the journalist in a wider trend. In response to FPU's interview request, CBC referred to CBC's Journalistic Standards and Practices (JSP).[433]

Lack of context around cited sources

Moreover, in the remaining CBC article, Hen Mazzig was cited as a 'former IDF commander and senior researcher at Tel Aviv Institute'.[434] Mazzig told FPU: 'I served for nearly five years as a humanitarian affairs officer in COGAT, the military unit that coordinates with Palestinian civilians and international organizations in the West Bank and Gaza'. In the article, he is quoted saying "Israel doesn't target journalists. Period", adding "If journalists are killed, it's because Hamas turned Gaza into a battlefield where civilians and reporters are caught in the crossfire". What CBC News did not mention is that Mazzig himself published multiple posts targeting Palestinian journalists generally and Al-Sharif[435] specifically. For example in January 2025 he wrote: 'Save this screenshot for when he [Al-Sharif] trades the camera for a weapon and Al Jazeera pretends he was just a "neutral reporter."'[436] CBC's standards state that 'the values of accuracy, fairness and integrity guide our handling of sources and the information they bring'.[437] It can be questioned whether the way in which Mazzig is included as a source and commentator in the article reflects these standards, when the posts underline he contributed to the delegitimization of the targeted journalists himself. Approached by FPU for comment, Mazzig noted: 'I posted about Anas Al-Sharif on X three times. No one in the Israeli government or military, or anyone else, asked me to write those posts, gave me material for them, or paid me for them.'

CBC News is not the only example we identified; several legacy media outlets cited pro-Israel voices without providing context on their affiliations. Two other examples are significant: Avichay Adraee[438], Israeli IDF-colonel and former spokesperson for Arabic media and Eitan Fischberger[439], Israeli-American ex-IDF soldier, journalist and social media figure.

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430 Habiballah, N. (2025, May 29). Gaza journalists fear being targeted by the Israeli army: 'Words are our only weapon'. Published by NOS.
431 Ibrahim, N. & Paik, S. (2025, August 11). Gazans Mourn Al Jazeera Journalists Killed in Israeli Strike. Published by the New York Times.
432 RSF. (2024, August 30). Ismail al-Ghoul's killing: targeted and discredited, Palestinian journalists suffer double punishment in Gaza. Published by RSF.
433 CBC. (n.d.) Journalistic Standard and Practices. Published by CBC.
434 Brown, C. (2025, August 27). Israel is killing journalists and getting away with it, say advocates. Published by CBC.
435 Mazzig, H. [@HenMazzig] on Al-Sharif. Published on X.
436 Mazzig, H. [@HenMazzig]. (2025, January 18). "Al Jazeera "journalist" Anas". Published on X.
437 CBC. (n.d.) Journalistic Standard and Practices. Published by CBC.
438 Adraee, A. (n.d.). Avichay Adraee is a Colonel in the Israel Defense Forces who serves as the head of the Arab media division of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit. Published by Avichay Adraee.
439 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. Account on X.

Adraee is either only anonymously introduced as an 'an army spokesperson', for example in *Le Figaro*,[440] or only by name as, for instance, 'Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee'[441], without referring to his role in discrediting Palestinian journalists. This lack of context omits his track record as one of the most outspoken official actors disseminating unfounded allegations against Palestinian journalists. For example, before Al-Sharif's assassination, Adraee published at least twelve social media posts on X delegitimising and threatening Al-Sharif before his murder, and another seven after the murder.[442] Despite the tone of these messages, we found no examples where this context was provided for Avichay Adraae in our sample, despite several outlets speaking to the Committee to Protect Journalists who issued several warnings about Adraee's inciting behaviour online in the run-up to Al-Sharif's murder. By not providing this background, serious terrorism accusations, such as accusing Al-Sharif of 'propaganda and [contributing to] "a false Hamas-campaign about famine"'[443] and of being 'a terrorist, a member of Hamas, who "was posing as a journalist,"'[444] become more believable to the reader because they seem to be coming from an 'official source'.

In our interview with NOS deputy Editor-in-Chief Lucas Waagmeester, we asked him about the NOS' use of "army spokesperson"[445] without providing Avichay Adraee's name and relevant context about his delegitimisation activity online.[446] Waagmeester reflected on the difficulties that journalists and media face when having to deal with unreliable official sources that have been proven to skew the facts. Official sources, such as IDF spokespersons, are relevant sources that cannot and should not be ignored, even though journalists and media are often very well aware of their attempts to influence public discourse with false or unverified information. Waagmeeser noted that journalists and media, at least (at) the NOS, are frustrated with this dynamic, and that it is part of an ongoing conversation about how to inform the public accurately about the truthfulness of statements from official sources. As a start though, we believe that providing a more complete context for such sources can help readers make more informed decisions. If readers are aware that Avichay Adraee, during his career as IDF Spokesperson Arabic, has targeted dozens of journalists with delegitimisation frames and even threatened journalists online, they are better equipped to evaluate Adraee's remarks about the status of such journalists.

Secondly, we observed the use of Eitan Fischberger as a source by German outlet Bild, who introduced him as a 'freelance journalist and former IDF-soldier'.[447] Fischberger regularly undermines the legitimacy of Palestinian journalists through open-source investigations[448]. For example, in one instance, Fischberger: 'Pretty much every piece of propaganda coming from Jabalia originates with this monster [Al-Sharif].'[449] In total, we collected a non-exhaustive list of 25 delegitimising posts about Al-Sharif and 19 posts on Shabat published by Fischberger. Failure to include such context can legitimise his viewpoints without scrutinising his role in legitimising and calling for violence against Palestinian journalists.

440 Henry, M. (2025, August 11). A few days after the announcement of a military escalation in Gaza, Israel claims responsibility for the killing of an Al Jazeera journalist. Published by Le Figaro.
441 Reuters, T. (2025, August 10). Al Jazeera correspondent Anas al-Sharif among 6 journalists killed in Israeli strike. Published by CBC.
442 More information on Avichay Adraee in Appendix 2: Key Actor Mapping.
443 NOS. (2025, August 11). Israel kills prominent Al Jazeera journalist Anas al-Sharif. Published by NOS.
444 LD. (2025, August 11). Gaza: Who is Anas al-Sharif, the Palestinian journalist targeted and killed by the Israeli army?. Published by Le Parisien.
445 NOS. (2025, August 11). Israel kills prominent Al Jazeera journalist Anas al-Sharif. Published by NOS.
446 Interview FPU with Lucas Waagmeester, 7 July 2026.
447 BILD. (2025, August 11). Israel kills Gaza reporter: Journalist or terrorist?. Published by BILD.
448 Misbar's Editorial Team. (2025, September 14). How Eitan Fischberger Uses Open-Source Tools To Promote Israeli Propaganda. Published by Misbar.
449 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 22). "Meet Al Jazeera's Anas". Published on X.

Providing context about Israel's past actions in relation to delegitimising and assassinating journalists as well as about the track record and affiliations of cited sources is critical for sketching the full extent of the situation for readers. Failure to include such context, whether it is in breaking news reporting or in background pieces published at a later stage, could cause incomplete and abstracted narratives that favour certain parties to seep into legacy media.

Discrediting of selected sources

Using ad hominem attacks and/or spreading inaccurate information to discredit specific sources, as well as unevenly providing context on funding or affiliation, increases the perception of untrustworthiness and can lead to prejudice against the journalists and those covering attacks against them. The Bordeaux Declaration includes the following references on the use of personal attacks that are not rooted in facts, even in the case of opinion articles or columns: 'Journalists shall ensure that the dissemination of information or opinion does not contribute to hatred or prejudice'[450] and 'the journalist will consider serious professional misconduct to be plagiarism, distortion of facts, slander, libel, defamation, unfounded accusations.'[451] 11.34% of the analysed articles contained statements in which selected sources were discredited, including personal attacks on the character of the journalist or their employer. In particular, Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf (five out of eight articles) and Australian news outlet The Australian (three out of five articles) published articles containing such statements.

Discrediting of journalists, Al Jazeera and other outlets

Examples of such attacks include calling Shabat a 'Gazan copy slave'[452] and referring to all 'journalists, doctors, nurses and teachers in Gaza as Hamas members'.[453] In two different columns published in the Telegraaf, Al Sharif was described as a 'full-fledged servant of Hamas and an executor of the propaganda war, and thus a target in the conflict'[454] and as a journalist 'paid by a financier of a warring party, such as Qatar", consequently, becoming 'part of the conflict'.[455] Al-Jazeera is also targeted with discrediting rhetoric in the column, which states that the news organisation is the 'propaganda mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood-sympathising tyrannical family of the slave state of Qatar.'[456] The fact that Al-Jazeera is a news organisation which is primarily funded by the Qatari state does not prove or equate to allegations of propaganda nor automatically discredits the organisation's refutations of the accusations against its journalists. Finally, some publications discredit other news outlets for their reporting on (the murder of) Al-Sharif and Shabat. For instance, in a column in De Telegraaf, Dutch media NOS was accused of reporting about 'the killed "journalist" Anas Al-Sharif like he was a friend'[457] and a journalist from for The Australian wrote: 'The false starvation photo and others like it outed by Netanyahu in a fiery press conference last week are like the lie spun by the BBC and the ABC that there is no evidence to support Israel's claim Al Jazeera reporter Anas al-Sharif, killed last week in Gaza City.'[458]

De Telegraaf's Editor-in-Chief Kamran Ullah agreed that columnists are entitled to extensive freedom of expression while the 'facts must be correct'.[459] Ullah noted that in a complicated information environment, where there are many competing views on the truth, and many sources for both the accusation and the refutation, it is up to columnists to form their own opinion, adding that it is dangerous to interfere with their freedom to form that opinion. While we agree with that principle, in any situation where, as Ullah notes, it can be difficult to find the facts, opinionmakers should refrain from phrasing their opinions as truth, especially

450 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [Art. 9].
451 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [Art. 10].
452 Hoogland, R. (2024, December 2). Sometimes I would like to evaporate myself. Published by De Telegraaf.
453 Mitchell, C. (2025, August 17). 'Words as gospel': Warped moral code of Hamas's media enablers. Published by the Australian.
454 De Winter, L. (2025, August 19). Leon de Winter: mass hysteria caused by a tsunami of distortions. Published by De Telegraaf.
455 De Winter, L. (2025, August 12). Leon de Winter: 'Journalist' Anas al-Sharif was a Hamas propagandist who glorified the murder of Jews. Published by De Telegraaf.
456 De Winter, L. (2025, August 12). Leon de Winter: 'Journalist' Anas al-Sharif was a Hamas propagandist who glorified the murder of Jews. Published by De Telegraaf.
457 Duk, W. (2025, August 13). Wierd Duk: At the NOS they spoke about slain 'journalist' Anas Al-Sharif as if he were a friend. Published by De Telegraaf.
458 Mitchell, C. (2025, August 17). 'Words as gospel': Warped moral code of Hamas's media enablers. Published by the Australian.
459 Interview FPU with Kamran Ullah, 26 May 2026.

in situations where these opinions can serve to legitimise targeted assassinations of journalists. Moreover, according to the Bordeaux Declaration, 'journalists shall ensure that the dissemination of information or opinion does not contribute to hatred or prejudice', and 'will consider serious professional misconduct to be plagiarism, distortion of facts, slander, libel, defamation, and unfounded accusation'.[460] In this context, it is hard to explain why De Telegraaf columns containing the following quotes would pass the editorial review of factual statements made: 'all reporters still operating in Gaza are controlled by Hamas, and they only share images meant as propaganda: pro-Hamas, anti-Israel'[461] and 'Al-Sharif was a full fledged servant of Hamas and operator in the propaganda war, and therefore a target.'[462]

Change of deviations over time – before and after Al-Sharif's murder

FPU also tracked the number of deviations featured in publications in our sample over time: specifically before and after 10 August 2025, when Al-Sharif was assassinated by the IDF. We chose to focus only on articles about Al-Sharif, because doing a similar analysis for the publications on Shabat only, before and after his death, would likely not yield representative results since that sub-sample contained too few articles.

Concerning Al-Sharif, figure 11 shows increases over time for every category within our sample. This indicates that all types of deviations observed by FPU tend to increase after his murder. However, only the difference found in articles containing a lack of independent verification and the difference found in articles with a lack of context are significant. This means that these measured differences over time are reliable and that it is highly unlikely that they have occurred just by chance. The differences over time observed for other types of deviations are not significant, therefore, we cannot make similarly generalised conclusions about these measurements. Still, we can conclude that there was an increase of 45 percentage points concerning the amount of articles not featuring independent verification and an increase of 34 percentage points concerning articles lacking critical context about his murder. This implies the following: after Al-Sharif's murder, news outlets engaged in significantly less independent verification of the evidence presented by the IDF and provided critical context. This indicates an increased lack of journalistic scrutiny and thoroughness in relation to the serious allegations against Al-Sharif, once he had been assassinated.

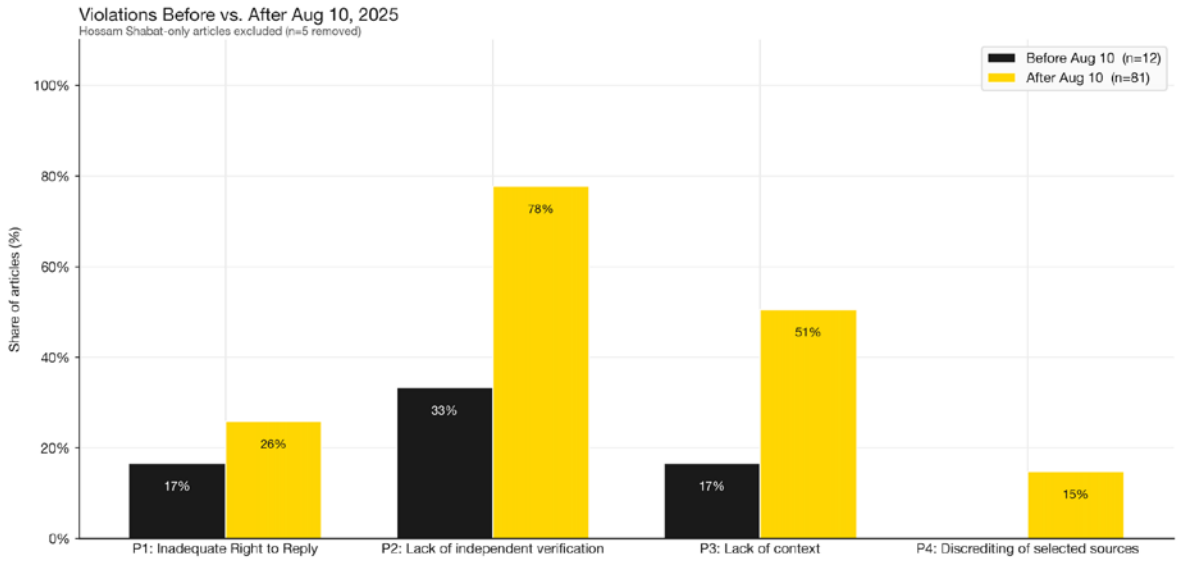


Figure 11 – Different deviations of the Bordeaux Declaration recorded over time: before and after the targeted assassination of Anas Al-Sharif 10 of August 2025. Source: FPU.

460 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ. [art. 10]
461 Duk, W. (2025, August 13). Wierd Duk: At the NOS they spoke about slain 'journalist' Anas Al-Sharif as if he were a friend. Published by De Telegraaf.
462 De Winter, L. (2025, August 19). Leon de Winter: Mass hysteria caused by a tsunami of distortions. Published by De Telegraaf.

In conclusion, FPU found that an overwhelming majority of the articles which mentioned Al-Sharif or Shabat featured deviations from journalistic practices, as set out in the Bordeaux Declaration: a lack of RoR, no independent verification of 'evidence' for these serious allegations, a lack of critical context and discrediting of selected sources. Crucially, while we understand that rapid coverage of breaking news or the publication of opinion articles can bring forth dilemmas in this regard, that should not be used as an excuse for explaining deviations of standard journalistic ethics and practices. Furthermore, after Al-Sharif's murder, news outlets engaged in significantly less independent verification of the evidence presented to 'prove' the allegations against Al-Sharif, and offered less critical contextualisation of the facts, indicating a decreasing level of journalistic scrutiny over time.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

'If you're reading this, it means I have been killed - most likely targeted - by the Israeli occupation forces. When this all began, I was only 21 years old - a college student with dreams like anyone else. For the past 18 months, I have dedicated every moment of my life to my people. I documented the horrors in northern Gaza minute by minute, determined to show the world the truth they tried to bury. I slept on pavements, in schools, in tents - anywhere I could. Each day was a battle for survival. I endured hunger for months, yet I never left my people's side'.

Hossam Shabat wrote these words in a final message intended for publication in the event of his killing. They underline the tragedy documented in this report: with international media access barred, the Palestinian journalists who were facing the consequences of Israel's violence in Gaza first-hand, were the only ones who could document what was happening and inform people across the world.

This report documents how both Hossam Shabat and Anas Al-Sharif, like many of their colleagues before and after them, were accused of terrorism by Israel. Our evidence analysis (Appendix 1) highlights that neither the IDF nor the other online actors included in this report who spread this allegation provided credible evidence in line with the requirements of international humanitarian law. Despite calls from other states, international bodies and international media, Israel furthermore refused independent investigations or access to the original documents it claims to have to support these claims.

Our findings demonstrate how delegitimisation narratives developed by the IDF and independent actors in online information environments could migrate into legacy media, and highlights the role established journalistic safeguards can play in preventing the further reach of unsubstantiated allegations against journalists. When unsubstantiated allegations expand in reach and gain legitimacy, this can have significant implications for the public perception of (the legitimacy of) attacks on journalists. In conjunction with other factors that foster the lack of accountability for Israel's attacks on journalists, the successful distribution of delegitimisation frames by the IDF and other actors has contributed to the state of total impunity for attacks on Palestinian journalists in Gaza, the deadliest conflict for journalists in recent history.

Bringing together the findings from the preceding chapters, we come to three main conclusions:

First, our chronological social media analysis of 269 posts targeting Hossam Shabat and Anas Al-Sharif indicates that initial delegitimisation efforts by official and independent actors focused on undermining the journalists' credibility by portraying their reporting as propaganda or misinformation. Over time, these claims evolved into allegations that the journalists themselves were active members of terrorist organisations, a switch largely driven by actors with affiliations to the Israeli government and its military, and by the IDF itself after it published unsubstantiated allegations against Al-Sharif and Shabat. The latter allegation was repeated after their deaths to justify their killing by the IDF.

Subsequently, we find that actors in- and outside the Israeli government and IDF reinforced each other's messaging about the journalists by reposting and adding to the same narratives, exchanging information about the journalists (e.g. OSINT-researchers claiming to have provided the IDF with evidence), and in some cases, even paid collaborations. The analysis reveals a set of individuals and organisations most active in this delegitimisation ecosystem; they can be divided into official actors and independent actors with varying degrees of connections to each other. Importantly, more than a quarter of the posts produced by this set of actors specifically direct their attacks towards (Western) media, journalists, academics, NGOs and international institutions who do not amplify the delegitimisation frames. Furthermore, 12% of the analyzed posts called for violence against the two journalists, celebrated their deaths or threatened the journalists to stop their work. During periods of heightened international

criticism of Israeli military operations, regularly following coverage of these operations by journalists on the ground, delegitimisation activity intensified considerably and gained visibility.

Second, our legacy media analysis of 98 publications from 14 media outlets in seven countries finds that lapses in adherence to journalistic ethics and standards enabled unsubstantiated and severe allegations against Shabat and Al-Sharif to migrate into coverage by legacy media outlets, gaining additional legitimacy and reaching millions worldwide. Our analysis demonstrates that these narratives were frequently reproduced without consistently and sufficiently applying common and widely accepted journalistic safeguards: more than 80% of the publications analysed contained at least one departure from key principles of the Bordeaux Declaration.

Most notably, despite the lack of credible evidence and the severity of the allegations, we find that in more than a quarter of the publications, the media outlets in our sample did not provide any form of right of reply to the journalist, their family, or the media organisation(s) they worked for. More than 72% of the publications failed to demonstrate attempts to independently verify allegations of terrorism made against the journalist, while more than 11% of the publications discredited sources, in some cases spreading false information about the journalists or their colleagues as well.

Third, our conversations with De Telegraaf and NOS complemented the legacy media analysis and provided insight into the way newsrooms deal with the allegations made by Israel against Palestinian journalists. We observed three factors that, to varying degrees depending on the news outlet, contribute to the visibility of these unsubstantiated allegations in legacy media. Firstly, the demand for rapid breaking-news reporting, which can compete with the commitment to providing accurate and comprehensive information including relevant context. Secondly, the obligation media have to report on information provided by official sources or to present 'both sides', as well as the dilemmas they face when official sources have a history of spreading inaccurate information and unsubstantiated allegations. The first two factors are not unique to coverage about Israel, and also emerge when covering untruthful statements by leaders of other governments. Lastly, a lack of capacity to verify allegations fast, as well as a lack of direct access of newsrooms to Palestinian journalists and experts who can verify allegations requiring knowledge of language and context, also contributed to delays in verifying allegations and conducting comprehensive reporting.

Reflections and recommendations

Our findings explain how unsubstantiated allegations of terrorism against Palestinian journalists emerged, gained traction among mainstream audiences, and eventually contributed to the lack of effective international scrutiny over the killing of these journalists. They add to the existing body of research that demonstrates the investments of the Israeli government in disinformation campaigns intended to sow doubt about civilian targets struck by the IDF to evade accountability for these attacks under international humanitarian law. At the current tally by the Committee to Protect Journalists, Israel has killed 189 Palestinian journalists in Gaza in the past three years with total impunity.[463] This investigation has deconstructed the strategic way in which delegitimisation is employed by the IDF and other actors to uphold this state of impunity, and exposes the mechanics and consequences of this strategy for the safety of journalists.

Our findings stress that delegitimisation, and thereby disinformation, does not just take place online but forms part of a broader information environment in which state actors, affiliated organisations, and independent commentators collectively attempt to shape how attacks on journalists are interpreted and acted upon. The interaction between these actors deserves greater scrutiny, particularly in conflicts where independent access is restricted and information from the ground is difficult to verify, because it sheds

463 Committee to Protect Journalists. Journalist casualties in the Israel-Gaza war. Published by Committee to Protect Journalists

light on how particular frames and narratives can thrive. This is particularly relevant because existing research on Israel's information strategy has demonstrated the state's use of emerging technologies and covert collaborations to limit exposure to international backlash. This includes engineering collaborations between government and civilian actors, such as influencers, religious leaders, and open-source analysts, to enhance the perception of diverse, grassroots support for its viewpoints from neutral experts. In terms of emerging technologies, the manipulation of AI chatbot outputs by inundating the web with thousands of websites built for this purpose, is a striking example. Crucially, the actors in these networks recognise that disinformation gains traction when repeated by different voices across different platforms, and they appear to deliberately inject false, misleading, or inaccurate information into breaking-news coverage, where vulnerability to republishing unverified information is highest.

Our findings also invite reflection on the specific risks faced by local journalists, and in particular Palestinian journalists. Local journalists, in this case Palestinian journalists covering from Gaza, are more vulnerable to physical attacks and delegitimisation than their international colleagues, who often have greater access to safety resources and institutional support. They also benefit from institutionalised biases about the credibility of local versus international sources and historical patterns around the perceived (ab) normality of violence in some contexts, and the persistent 'hierarchy of grief'.[464] In other contexts - such as Russia claiming that a journalist is part of a terrorist organisation - media and readers would recognise that this is a severe allegation for which no evidence is provided. Legacy media outlets have a responsibility to recognize this inherent vulnerability and ensure that reporting about their in-country colleagues is as complete and truthful as possible.

The dynamics identified in this report are not unique to the two journalists in question; they also provide insight into other delegitimisation campaigns in other contexts. For that reason, media outlets must engage in conversation on journalistic standards, practices and ethics, especially in war time and when covering inherently more vulnerable subjects. This research has shown that, despite the best intentions of many journalists and media outlets, deviations from accepted standards and practices paved the way for delegitimisation and state-led disinformation to find its way to mainstream audiences. We urge legacy media to rethink how they cover the news, particularly when reporting breaking news, and how they apply these guidelines to their reporting on a daily basis.

To conclude, we first and foremost call upon the government of Israel to immediately cease all attacks on journalists and uphold its obligations under international humanitarian law; this includes refraining from delegitimising Palestinian journalists in order to justify physical attacks against them. In accordance with international humanitarian law, Israel should allow for public scrutiny of these claims by sharing all available evidence in a verifiable manner, including with other states, and giving access to international media to facilitate reporting of these incidents.

Based on the findings of this report, we issue the following additional recommendations:

To (international) media organisations, in particular concerning the coverage of (the allegations against) Palestinian journalists:

- Uphold and adhere to basic journalistic standards and practices as determined by the Bordeaux Declaration[465], especially the right of reply. Importantly, provide adequate forms of the right of reply, even when urgency and/or speed concerning news coverage is required.
- Engage in reflective discussions, internally and externally, on the standards and dilemmas in relation to independent verification of evidence for serious allegations against journalists, to contextualisation of their targeted killings and to respectful coverage of fellow journalists in general.

464 See: Jannis J. Grimm, Justus M. Könneker, and Mariam Salehi, "Hierarchies in Death: Coverage of Palestinian and Israeli Victims in the Context of October 7 and the War on Gaza," Peacebuilding (2025), https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2025.2569080

465 IFJ. (n.d.). Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists. Published by IFJ.

- Continue to call for access to Gaza for external journalists, amongst others, to investigate terrorism and/or propaganda allegations against Palestinian journalists. FPU applauds international media who have done so in the past.[466]
- Highlight and investigate potential delegitimisation attempts from (pro-Israeli) actors against Palestinian journalists, against international press coverage of said journalists[467], against UN bodies[468] and against the ICC.[469]

To the International Community, including the United Nations (UN):

- Continue to investigate, document and publicly condemn the targeted killing of and attacks against Palestinian journalists by the IDF and call for impartial prosecution and accountability.
- In line with Special Rapporteur Khan's guidelines[470] on the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts, take preventative measures for the safety of journalists by investigating, reporting about and publicly condemning patterns of delegitimisation against them by the IDF.
- Highlight and debunk potential delegitimisation attempts from (pro-Israel) actors against UN bodies, such as UNRWA.

To governments, especially those that are Member States of the Media Freedom Coalition and signatories of the Global Pledge[471]:

- Demand that the government of Israel grants full access to the evidence presented to justify the targeted strikes against Al-Sharif, Shabat and other Palestinian journalists, possibly constituting war crimes. If this access is not granted, attach concrete and impactful political consequences to this lack of action, bilaterally and through international institutions and alliances.

To the Office of the Prosecution (OTP) of the International Criminal Court (ICC):

- Continue to gather evidence of targeted attacks against journalists in Palestine and continue to include such cases in the ICC-investigation into the situation in Palestine. FPU welcomes ongoing efforts by OTP in this regard[472].
- Highlight and debunk delegitimisation attempts from (pro-Israel) actors against the ICC, its prosecutors, or actors otherwise involved in the judicial process.

466 Al Jazeera Staff & AFP. (2025, April 30). World's top media outlets urge Israel to allow independent access to Gaza. Published by Al Jazeera.
467 Sky News. (2025, August 10). Benjamin Netanyahu vows to defeat Hamas as he condemns 'global campaign of lies' over starving Gazans. Published by Sky News.
468 Middle Eastern Eye (MEE) Staff. (2024, January 31). War on Gaza: Netanyahu says Unrwa mission 'must be terminated'. Published by MEE.
469 Beaumont, P. (2024, November 21). 'Reward for terrorism': Israeli politicians unite to condemn ICC arrest warrant for Netanyahu. Published by The Guardian.
470 Khan, I. (2026, July 10). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. Published by the UN.
471 Media Freedom Coalition (MFC). (2019, July 11). Global Pledge. Published by MFC.
472 Reporter Sans Frontières (RSF). (2024, January 8). RSF secures inclusion of crimes against journalists in ICC investigation into Palestine. Published by RSF.

To the OHCHR Investigative Branch:

- In accordance with UN Resolution A/HRC/62/L.12/Rev.1[473], continue to increase investigative expertise to strengthen efforts to address impunity for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law against journalists.
- Include delegitimisation campaigns by conflict parties into the scope of investigations into killings and attacks against journalists as indicative of the planned, ordered or intended nature of such crimes.

To Social Media Platforms, particularly X:

- Uphold respective community guidelines[474], especially in relation to incitement of violence against, for instance, (Palestinian) journalists, in order to not facilitate this type of illegal content online.

473 UN Human Rights Council (HRC). (2026, June 29). A/HRC/62/L.12/Rev.1. Published by the UN HRC.
474 For example, X's community guidelines: X Help Center. (n.d.). The X Rules. Published by X.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Evidence Discussion

Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat both reported on a daily basis from Gaza from 7 October 2023 onwards, including for international outlets Reuters and Al Jazeera. From December 2023, Anas Al-Sharif appeared almost daily in front of the camera on Al Jazeera's Arabic channels.[1] In 2024, he won a Pulitzer Prize for one the photos he took in Northern Gaza.[2] After Hossam Shabat's killing, the Washington Post commemorated his 'live reporting from on the ground' and 'heartfelt interviews', noting he documented 'moments of grief and tragedy in crowded hospitals, displacement camps and the sites of strikes'.[3] Despite their visible journalistic activity, both faced allegations by the IDF and other actors of involvement in terrorism before and after their death.[4] These allegations had grave consequences for their safety and reputation, and were issued by the Israeli Defence Forces to argue its lethal attacks on Al-Sharif on 10 August 2025 and Shabat on 12 March 2025 were lawful. This appendix outlines the relevant legal framework for targeted attacks on journalists in armed conflict and analyzes the factual basis of the allegations issued against Al-Sharif and Shabat by the IDF and other actors. Based on this analysis, we find that none of these materials provide credible factual evidence of these allegations, and thereby fail to provide a legitimate justification under international humanitarian law for the targeted killings of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat by the IDF.

Relevant legal framework

The protection of journalists in armed conflict is governed by both international humanitarian law and international human rights law.[5] Under international human rights law, states should refrain from violating journalists' rights[6] and should take effective measures to protect journalists against others who interfere with their rights, including through physical attacks.[7] States may never cause journalists physical harm in retaliation for their work.[8] During armed conflict, the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) apply as well.[9] Journalists are civilians under IHL and must be protected accordingly.[10] Civilians may never be the target of attack during an armed conflict,[11] and parties must take all feasible precautions to protect the civilian population and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks.[12] This applies

1 Salem, M. (2025, August 12). Anas Al-Sharif became the face of the war in Gaza for millions. Then Israel killed him. Published by CNN; Echtermann, A., Helberg, C. & Yesil, M. (2025, August 13). What is known about the slain Anas al-Sharif. Published by Tagesschau.de.

2 Pulitzer. (2024). The 2024 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Breaking News Photography. Published by Pulitzer.

3 Westfall, S. (2025). "Israeli strikes kill two Gaza journalists, including Al Jazeera reporter." The Washington Post. Published March 25, 2025.

4 See for the IDF allegations: Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X; Israel Defense Forces \[@IDF\]. (2025, August 11). Published on X; Adraee, A. (2025, March 25). [Post on X]. Published on X

5 See also: United Nations Human Rights Council. (2026). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. A/HRC/62/67/Add.2. UN Digital Library – A/HRC/62/67/Add.2

6 The right to freedom of expression, generally the most relevant human right invoked in situations involving the rights of journalists, may belegitimately restricted by states in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) under the following conditions: the restriction is prescribed by law, serves a legitimate aim, and meets the threshold of necessity and proportionality. See Human Rights Committee (2011). General comment No. 34. CCPR/C/GC/34. Published by the United Nations.

7 Human Rights Committee (2011). General comment No. 34. CCPR/C/GC/34. Published by the United Nations, para. 23

8 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2012). Resolution 21/12: Safety of journalists (A/HRC/RES/21/12). Published by the United Nations.

9 Consisting of the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, the Additional Protocols, and customary international law

10 IHL does not provide a fixed definition of the term journalism. In line with other sources of international law, under IHL, individuals who conduct journalistic activities are considered to be journalists. See also: ICRC. (n.d.). Article 79 – Measures of protection for journalists. Published by ICRC.

11 ICRC. (n.d.). Rule 1 – The Principle of Distinction between Civilians and Combatants. Published by ICRC. ICRC Customary IHL Database – Rule 1

12 ICRC. (n.d.). Rule 22 – Principle of distinction between civilian objects and military objectives. Published by ICRC. ICRC Customary IHL Database – Rule 22

to both international and non-international armed conflicts.[13] Intentionally targeting a civilian is also considered a war crime under international criminal law.[14] To enjoy protection under IHL as civilians, journalists who cover armed conflict do not have to use press cards, carry accreditation or mark their vests and vehicles as 'press'.[15] In line with Art. 57 of the first Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, parties to an armed conflict 'shall take constant care to spare the civilian population'.[16] The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression states that this entails that parties must take the specific protection needs of journalists (as civilians) into account, including those that follow from their proximity to the armed conflict.[17] This includes the risks caused by public attacks on journalists in armed conflict. The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression noted that *"measures to discredit, denigrate, and delegitimize the work of journalists online and offline threaten the safety of journalists (..) and may also amount to a violation of international humanitarian law"*.[18]

The guiding principle is unequivocal: journalists covering armed conflicts must be protected and may not be targeted. Journalists, like other civilians, cannot be a legitimate target unless and only for such time they participated directly in the hostilities.[19] This exception is thus time-bound: civilians only lose their protection for as long as they participate in the hostilities.[20] In its interpretive guidance to the Geneva Conventions, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) lists three criteria that must all be met to establish this:[21]

- The act must meet the threshold of harm, meaning that it must be likely that the act leads to harm to the military capacity of another party or inflicts death, injury, or destruction of persons or objects protected against direct attack;
- There must be a direct causal link between the act and the harm;
- The act must have been designed to directly cause the required harm in support of a party to the conflict and to the detriment of another (the 'belligerent nexus').

With regard to the requirement of 'unless and for such time', the ICRC notes that the 'suspension of protection lasts exactly as long as the corresponding civilian engagement in direct participation in hostilities'. This means that civilians lose and gain protection in line with their temporal engagement in hostilities. If individuals 'continuously prepare, execute or command acts that amount to direct participation in hostilities' they fulfill a 'constant combat'-role and are not considered civilians, but members of an organized armed group (and as such do not enjoy protection as civilians).[22]

13 ICRC. (n.d.). Rule 1
14 Rome Statute Art. 8(2)(e)(i) and Art. 8(2)(b)(i)
15 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2026). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. A/HRC/62/67/Add.2. UN Digital Library – A/HRC/62/67/Add.2, guideline 6
16 ICRC. (n.d.). Article 57. Precautions in attack. Published by ICRC.
17 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2026). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. A/HRC/62/67/Add.2. UN Digital Library – A/HRC/62/67/Add.2, par. 31
18 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2026). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. A/HRC/62/67/Add.2. UN Digital Library – A/HRC/62/67/Add.2, par. 33
19 ICRC. (n.d.). Rule 6. Civilians' Loss of Protection from Attack. Published by ICRC. [Article 13(3) of Additional Protocol II.]
20 ICRC. (2009). Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law. Published by ICRC. [VII]
21 ICRC. (2009). Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law. Published by ICRC. [V]
22 ICRC. (2009). Interpretive Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities under International Humanitarian Law. Published by ICRC. [VII]

If parties harm a journalist and argue that the journalist was a legitimate target, they must meet all criteria for the targeted attack to be considered legitimate. The benefit of doubt lies with the civilian in question.[23] Regular journalistic activities, such as documenting hostilities, do not meet this threshold. These activities are conducted to inform and investigate in the public interest, not to cause harm.[24] The dissemination of information alone is therefore never sufficient to qualify journalistic activities as 'direct participation in hostilities'. Even if media outlets are spreading propaganda or support the general war effort, this on its own is not enough to qualify as 'direct participation in hostilities'.[25] The ICRC lists the following examples of activities that could be considered 'a direct part in hostilities': 'transmitting tactical military information for use in attacks' or 'otherwise directly assisting military operations'.[26] These activities are outside the range of journalistic activities.

The interpretation of the ICRC is authoritative and widely cited by, among others, international and regional legal institutions.[27] While courts in Israel have cited sections of the ICRC's interpretation as 'part of customary international law',[28] the Israeli government has stated it 'has serious reservations regarding the methodology applied in the ICRC Study on Customary International Law, and consequently, regarding many of its conclusions'.[29] With regards to the protection of civilians and the interpretation of 'direct participation in hostilities' (DPH), Israel's Supreme Court, the High Court of Justice, has offered an interpretation in a ruling from 2006.[30] The IDF has, insofar as we could establish, not issued recent publications about its general interpretation of DPH. However, older documents published by the Israeli authorities refer to the 2006 ruling of the High Court of Justice.[31] This decision offers the following interpretation of the three elements that constitute DPH:

- **'Taking part in hostilities':** hostilities refers to 'acts which by nature and objective are intended to cause damage to the army'. A civilian takes part when 'using weapons in an armed conflict, when gathering intelligence, or while preparing himself for the hostilities', noting that a civilian does not need to bear arms for this criterion to be met (para. 33)
- **'Direct':** the Court notes that a clear, agreed upon definition of the term 'direct' does not exist. Nevertheless, the Court classifies as 'taking direct part': 'a person who collects intelligence on the army, (..) a person who operates weapons which unlawful combatants use, or supervises their operation, or provides service to them, be the distance from the battlefield as it may'. It continues to note that 'a person who sells food or medicine to an unlawful combatant' is not taking part directly, and neither is a person 'who aids the unlawful combatants by general strategic analysis, (..) logistical, general support, including monetary aid' or 'who distributes propaganda'. (para. 34-35)

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23 ICRC. (2026). Frequently asked questions: How does international humanitarian law protect journalists? Published by ICRC

24 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2026). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. A/HRC/62/67/Add.2. UN Digital Library – A/HRC/62/67/Add.2, 6; ICRC. (2026). Frequently asked questions: How does international humanitarian law protect journalists? Published by ICRC

25 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2026). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. A/HRC/62/67/Add.2. UN Digital Library – A/HRC/62/67/Add.2, 6; See also: Prosecutor v Dragomir Milošević (Trial Judgment), Case No IT-98-29/1-T (ICTY, Trial Chamber III, 12 December 2007), par. 580

26 ICRC. (2026). Frequently asked questions: How does international humanitarian law protect journalists? Published by ICRC

27 See M. Milanovic & S. Sivakumaran. (2022, November). Assessing the authority of the ICRC Customary IHL Study. Published in IRRC No. 920-921.

28 M. Milanovic & S. Sivakumaran. (2022, November). Assessing the authority of the ICRC Customary IHL Study. Published in IRRC No. 920-921

29 State of Israel. (2022). Comments from the State of Israel on the International Law Commission's Draft Principles on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts as adopted by the Commission in 2019 on first reading. Published by the International Law Commission. Para. 108

30 The Public Committee against Torture in Israel et al. v. The Government of Israel et al. (14 December 2006). Supreme Court of Israel. Published in English by the ICRC, para. 31-40

31 The Turkel Commission (2013, February). Second report: Israel's Mechanisms for Examining and Investigating Complaints and Claims of Violations of the Laws of Armed Conflict According to International Law. Published by the Israeli government; State of ISrael. (2015, May). The 2014 Gaza Conflict: Factual and Legal Aspects. Published by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Chapter VII: Israel's Investigation of Alleged Violations of the Law of Armed Conflict]. The 2023 publication by the Israeli MoFa on the 'Hamas-Israel Conflict 2023: Key Legal Aspects' does not specifically discuss the interpretation of 'direct participation in hostilities.

- **'For such time':** the Court rejects the State's position that it is not bound by this requirement, noting it is part of customary IHL. It finds that an agreed upon definition is not available, but notes that during 'short rest periods' in between 'revolving' civilian participation in hostilities, the protection granted to civilians is not applicable. On the other hand, a 'civilian taking a direct part in hostilities one single time, or sporadically, who later detaches himself from that activity, is entitled to protection from attack' (para 38-40)

Lastly, the Court points at the importance of proportionality, adding that 'information which has been most thoroughly verified is needed regarding the identity and activity of the civilian who is allegedly taking part in the hostilities' (para. 40). The Court states that 'the burden of proof on the attacking army is heavy' (para. 40). The Court's interpretation is thus broader than that of the ICRC, and e.g. does not categorically require causality between the act and the harm caused. However, similarly to the ICRC interpretation, spreading propaganda or supporting the general war effort do not meet the threshold of DPH. The IDF confirmed this in a June 2024 press statement: 'the IDF does not see Hamas' media networks, or journalists, as such, as members of Hamas military wing. Accordingly, IDF does not target journalists as such. IDF directives and protocols set clear guidelines on the identification of specific individuals as members of the Hamas military wing or as persons that directly participate in hostilities and are therefore legitimate targets. The IDF will continue to fight Hamas according to international law while emphasizing the protection of civilians, including journalists'.[32]

The allegations against Anas Al-Sharif

On 11 August 2025, the IDF posted on X: 'Struck: Hamas terrorist Anas Al-Sharif, who posed as an Al Jazeera journalist', alleging he was 'the head of a Hamas terrorist cell' that conducted rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and IDF troops.[33] On its website, the IDF states that Anas Al-Sharif held the position of 'Company-level Military Officer in the Artillery Company of the Northern Gaza Brigade.[34] As was described in Chapter 3, the IDF and various other actors already issued similar allegations prior to Al-Sharif's death. The IDF thus confirmed it targeted and killed Al-Sharif, and claims he was a legitimate target ('A terrorist is a terrorist, even if Al Jazeera gave him a press badge').[35] To argue this claim, the IDF and other actors refer to 'documents recovered from Gaza by the IDF' and Al-Sharif's social media accounts.[36] Prior to October 2024, the allegations were only based on the latter: for example, Eitan Fischberger's thread on X consists of screenshots of Al-Sharif's Telegram and photos, largely taken between 2017 and 2021, of him with Hamas officials.[37] The following section assesses these materials against the relevant legal question: do they provide evidence of direct participation in hostilities at the time of Al-Sharif's killing?

Starting with those photos and screenshots, it is clear from (both interpretations of) the applicable legal framework that, on their own, (historical) photos with leaders of a terrorist organisation or the mere expression of political thoughts or (alleged) sympathies with a party to the conflict are not sufficient to demonstrate that a journalist has 'participated directly in hostilities'. These photos and social media screenshots do not provide evidence of direct participation, and can therefore not be used to justify a targeted attack against Al-Sharif.

32 IDF (2024, June 25). IDF Clarification Regarding Claims on Targeting Journalists. Published by the IDF.
33 Israel Defense Forces \[@IDF\]. (2025, August 11). Published on X.
34 Israel Defense Forces \[@IDF\]. (n.d.). "Anas Jamal Mahmoud Al-Sharif". Published by the IDF
35 Permanent Mission of Israel to the Multilateral Organisations in France. (2025, August 13). IDF Eliminates Hamas Terrorist Masquerading as Al Jazeera Journalist in Gaza City – August 10, 2025. Published by the Permanent Mission of Israel to the Multilateral Organisations in France
36 EyION the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas' Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on YouTube.
37 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 22). "Meet Al Jazeera's Anas". Published on X.

The photos and screenshots are moreover provided out-of-context, driving the perception of 'guilt by association'. As has been set out in detail by international media including 972+ and the Belgian broadcaster VRT, photos with Hamas officials in Gaza are not evidence of formal ties with Hamas. As the VRT shows, several of these photos can be traced back to official press moments attended by various journalists. Similar photos with Hamas leadership or fighters exist of international journalists, including from Fox News.[38] Moreover, through screenshots of posts by Anas Al-Sharif, the implication is made that his sympathies lay with Hamas. One Telegram-post of 7 October 2023 - which was deleted by Al-Sharif - that read "9 hours and the heroes are still roaming the country, killing and capturing" received particular attention.[39] These accounts omit that Al-Sharif also regularly posted critically about Hamas, underlining that these screenshots do not reflect the full picture of his (potential) political views nor confirm any formal ties to, or activities for, Hamas.[40] As has been stated, even if these were his views on that day, they do not merit the loss of his protected status as journalist and do not justify his targeted killing nearly two years later.

On 23 October 2024, ten months before the strike on Al-Sharif, the IDF published the allegation that six Al Jazeera journalists, including Anas Al-Sharif, were terrorists.[41] The IDF shared a pdf consisting of four screenshots, three of which have been edited with overlays in English (Figure 12). The document is titled "Head of a Terrorist Cell in the Hamas Terrorist Organization who Posed as a Journalist". It has been reused in this form by the IDF to date, including in its publication in October 2026 of a list of 170 individuals it alleges are terrorists posing as journalists.[42] According to the IDF, the screenshots are part of "Intelligence and documents from Gaza, including rosters, terrorist training lists and salary records", which should prove his operational position with Hamas.[43] The screenshots are labelled as a "phone directory of the East Jabaliya Battalion of Hamas", "Hamas Operatives' injury tracking document from 2023", and "List of Hamas operatives of the Northern Gaza Strip Brigade".[44] On the final page of the document, the IDF states Al-Sharif headed a rocket-launching platoon and was a member of Hamas' East Jabaliya Battalion.

38 Shehada, M. (2025, August 15). 'Hamas in disguise': Israel's tried-and-true tactic to smear Palestinian journalists. Published by +972 Magazine; VRT. (2025, August 13). Journalist Anas Al-Sharif krijgt zonder geloofwaardig bewijs het label "terrorist". Published by VRT NWS fact-check.

39 See for example: (1) Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, October 22). "Meet Al Jazeera's Anas". Published on X. & (2) Abu Ali Express. (2023, December 11). "Gazan journalist Anas". Published on Telegram. & (3) Malin, E. [@ElliotMalin]. (2025, August 11). "Nice "journalist" you". Published on X.

40 VRT. (2025, August 13). Journalist Anas Al-Sharif krijgt zonder geloofwaardig bewijs het label "terrorist". Published by VRT NWS fact-check.

41 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X.

42 Permanent Mission of Israel to the Multilateral Organisations in France. (2025, August 13). IDF Eliminates Hamas Terrorist Masquerading as Al Jazeera Journalist in Gaza City – August 10, 2025. Published by the Permanent Mission of Israel to the Multilateral Organisations in France; Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism; Israel Defense Forces (IDF). (n.d.). The Press Files: Exposed—Hamas and PIJ military operatives posed as journalists. Published by the Israel Defense Forces.

43 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2025, August 10). "STRUCK: Hamas terrorist". Published on X.

44 (1) Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2024, October 23). "EXPOSED: 6 Al Jazeera". Published on X. & (2) Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.



Figure 12 – Screenshots of documents presented by the IDF to legitimize Al-Sharif's assassination. Source: IDF.[45]

Before assessing the screenshots against the applicable legal standards, it is important to note that there are three reasons why the authenticity of the document is doubtful and unverifiable. Firstly, the document is not an authentic file, but was created by the IDF and contains a collage of screenshots. The original documents from which these screenshots were taken were never provided, and their metadata is thus missing. The screenshots are furthermore all undated,[46] and no information was released about their provenance or other details that could help verify their authenticity. Despite repeated requests from international media, the Dutch government, and international organizations, the IDF has refused to provide the authentic documents and has not allowed an independent investigation to take place.[47] External evidence of the existence of these documents, which the IDF says it has uncovered in Gaza, such as the phone directory, was not provided by the IDF, nor uncovered, despite multiple international media investigations.[48]

Specific details in the screenshots furthermore raise doubts about the authenticity of these documents. The screenshots refer to different military affiliations for Al-Sharif, and because only cropped rows are released, the provided military ID cannot be cross-verified. In the screenshot the IDF attributes to 2023, his rank is alleged to be 'fighter' at the Northern Brigade. In the undated screenshot, which appears to be older, given that the latest date featured on it is January 1st, 2019, he is said to be a 'Team commander' of the '2nd artillery company of the Northern Brigade'. The third screenshot again claims another role and

45 Israel Defense Forces. (n.d.). Documents Expose 6 Al Jazeera Journalists as Terrorists in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Terror Organizations. Published by the IDF.

46 The screenshot titled 'Hamas Operatives Injury Tracking Document From 2023' is the only one in which a date is included in the title, but his date (2023) does not follow from the screenshot itself. It is not listed in the screenshot, which lists injuries from the years 2011-2020, and cannot be verified as the original documents were not released.

47 Fadel, L., & ElBardicy, M. (2025, August 13). Al Jazeera reporter's death a 'significant escalation' of dangers media face, CPJ says. Published by NSPR (NPR).;Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (n.d.). Anas al-Sharif. Published by Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ); Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2025, September 4). Vragen van de leden Paternotte (D66) en Piri (GroenLinks-PvdA) aan de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap over de dood van Al Jazeera-journalist Anas al-Sharif in Gaza (Aanhangsel van de Handelingen, 2024–2025, nr. 2993); United Nations. (2025, August 12). Gaza: UN experts condemn killing of Al Jazeera journalist Anas al-Sharif and call for accountability. Published by UNISPAL; Fouda, M. (2025, August 11). Israel faces widespread condemnation after Al Jazeera correspondent killed in Gaza. Published by Euronews; Echtermann, A., Helberg, C. & Yesil, M. (2025, August 13). What is known about the slain Anas al-Sharif. Published by Tagesschau.de. & (2) Bodkin, H. (2025, August 11). Why Israel believes Al Jazeera reporter killed in Gaza was a terrorist. Published by The Telegraph

48 Shehada, M. (2025, August 15). 'Hamas in disguise': Israel's tried-and-true tactic to smear Palestinian journalists. Published by +972 Magazine; VRT. (2025, August 13). Journalist Anas Al-Sharif krijgt zonder geloofwaardig bewijs het label "terrorist". Published by VRT NWS fact-check; Echtermann, A., Helberg, C., & Yesil, M. (2025, August 13). Israels Vorwürfe gegen Journalisten: Was über den getöteten Anas al-Sharif bekannt ist. Published by tagesschau.de (NDR);

states he is part of the Nukhba battalion, the elite special forces unit of Hamas' military wing.[49] The latter is even more puzzling given the content of the second screenshot, which asserts Al-Sharif endured severe hearing loss and vision impairment already in 2017 in the course of duty.

Under "financial income details", this screenshot also notes 'suspended' under 'status' (the IDF translation says 'frozen'), which could refer to the payment or to his combatant status - but in either case does not support the IDF claim that he received salary from Hamas.[50] Two months after Al-Sharif's murder, the Amit Terrorism Intelligence Research Institute (ATIRI), an Israeli research centre with close ties to the IDF, published two documents that it alleges contain a roster of personnel in the East Jabalia Battalion of Hamas' military wing as of April 26, 2023, and a Financial report of Company 2 in the East Jabalia Battalion for February 2023.[51] On the personnel roster, Anas Al-Sharif allegedly appears as an 'operative' and 'media officer', and on the second as having received 16 USD for 'communications'. These documents again list a different affiliation for Al-Sharif which, according to the dates provided by the IDF and ATIRI, would have been fulfilled simultaneously with this role as a 'fighter' for the Northern Brigade. For these screenshots, no original documents or metadata have been provided either.

The Committee to Protect Journalists concluded it does not regard the documents provided by the IDF credible.[52] This assessment is also informed by the fact that there is a pattern of unsubstantiated claims by the IDF in cases of journalists it targeted and killed. These include the case of journalists Hamza Al-Dahdouh and Mustafa Thuraya, in which the Washington Post debunked the IDF's claim that the journalists had posed an "immediate threat to IDF troops".[53] After the assassination of journalist Ismail al Ghoul, the IDF presented a screenshot allegedly demonstrating al Ghoul's rank in Hamas' military wing. But according to the IDF's screenshot, al-Ghoul would have received a military rank on 1st of July 2007, when he was just 10 years old.[54] An expert on Hamas interviewed by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) noted that he had never seen such a document before and that its authenticity could not be verified given that no raw or corroborating data was released.[55] In March 2026, following its assassination of three Lebanese journalists, the IDF confirmed to Fox News it had photoshopped the photo it published of one of them, Ali Hassan Shuaib, which showed him in military fatigues.[56] In October 2026, the IDF published a list of 170 individuals it alleges are terrorists posing as journalists - only 76 of the individuals named are even listed as journalists by CPJ, and in 59 cases the IDF makes this claim without any reference to evidence whatsoever.[57]

Critically, even if these documents were authentic, they do not meet the standards of the applicable legal framework, including according to the interpretation of Israel's Supreme Court. None of the documents provided offer evidence of direct participation in hostilities contemporary to the period in which Al-Sharif was killed - a key requirement under IHL, as civilians only lose their protection for as long as they take part in hostilities. Nor do the screenshots provide evidence that Al-Sharif fulfilled a continuous combat function. For example, the 'List of Hamas Operatives' registers 3 December 2013 as Al-Sharif's alleged

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49 Omar Ashour, "How Hamas Fights: Hybrid Defence and Combat Effectiveness in Gaza," Terrorism and Political Violence (2025), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2025.2586683#d1e467

50 The Times of Israel. (2025, August 12). Amid global outcry, IDF says Al Jazeera reporter it killed was receiving Hamas salary. Published by The Times of Israel.

51 ATIRI. (2025, October 10). Documentary Evidence of Hamas-Al Jazeera Relations and Cooperation. Published by ATIRI at the Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center.

52 Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (n.d.). Anas al-Sharif. Published by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

53 Loveluck, L., Piper, I., Cahlan, S., Harb, H., & Balousha, H. (2024, March 19). Drone footage raises questions about Israeli justification for deadly strike on Gaza journalists. Published by The Washington Post.

54 RSF. (2024, August 30). Ismail al-Ghoul's killing: targeted and discredited, Palestinian journalists suffer double punishment in Gaza. Published by RSF.

55 According to RSF, that does not mean the document is not genuine but that without further information about the documents it is impossible to believe the IDF's claims.

56 Israel Defense Forces. [@IDF]. (2026, March 28). "ELIMINATED: For years,". Published on X;(1) r/Panarab. [Scared_Positive_8690]. (2026, April 7). "According to Fox News,". Published on Reddit. & (2) Shehada, M. [@muhammadshehad2] (2026, March 29). "If he was". Published on X.

57 The Press Files: Exposed—Hamas and PIJ military operatives posed as journalists. Published by the Israel Defense Forces.

date of enlistment.[58] On that date, Al-Sharif was exactly 17 years old. None of the documents provided list dates after April 2023. Similarly, the documents provided do not offer operational evidence regarding Al-Sharif's alleged participation in hostilities, such as geolocations, communications or other factual data that would demonstrate he took part in conduct designed to inflict harm onto the IDF around the time of his killing. As has been stated, it is up to the IDF to substantiate its allegation and justification for the strike on Al-Sharif. It has not done so to date, while both Al Jazeera and Al-Sharif have extensively denied his involvement with Hamas, pointing to Israel's earlier practice of painting Al Jazeera journalists as part of Hamas.[59] Al-Sharif's extensive and highly visible journalistic activity until his death further reinforces the conclusion that the available evidence supports his status and work as a journalist.

Hossam Shabat

Hossam Shabat was killed on 24 March 2025. A day later, the IDF's Arabic spokesperson Avichay Adraee posted on X confirming the IDF had eliminated Hossam Shabat.[60] In the post, Adraee refers to Shabat as 'the Hamas terrorist', stating he served as a sniper in the Beit Hanoun Battalion of Hamas' military wing. Similarly to Anas Al-Sharif, this allegation had already been shared by the IDF and other online actors before Shabat's death.[61] Shabat was mentioned in the IDF post on 23 October 2024, in which the IDF labelled six Al Jazeera-journalists as terrorists,[62] and self-proclaimed OSINT-researcher Eitan Fischberger posted a thread on 24 March 2024 in which he referred to Shabat's posts as 'Hamas propaganda'. After Shabat's death, a year later, he added 'Yes, the IDF confirmed he was a Hamas terrorist back in October 2024'.[63] Similar to the case of Al-Sharif, the online allegations were initially argued in reference to screenshots from Shabat's social media, and later included the screenshots shared by the IDF in October 2024, allegedly taken from documents found in Gaza (see Figure 13).

With regards to the social media screenshots shared by among others Khaled Hassan and Eitan Fischberger, the same framework applies: under IHL, social media posts that reflect political standpoints or historical photos with Hamas officials on their own cannot justify the loss of civilian protection through a targeted killing. In the case of Shabat, Khaled Hassan specifically alleged that he 'was present in person, received and celebrated Hamas terrorists as they brought Israeli hostages into Gaza on 7 October'.[64] He refers to three screenshots from Shabat's Facebook-page, posted on 7 October 2023. One of the screenshots is a still of a video, which appears to have been taken by Shabat in Beit Hanoun, his hometown in the northeast edge of Gaza. Shabat's caption reads 'the heroes in Beit Hanoun'.[65] Regardless of the sentiment expressed in the caption, the photo only demonstrates he was present on the street in Beit Hanoun and documenting the events on the ground. Neither are odd for a journalist based in Beit Hanoun, and the video does not provide evidence of any ties with Hamas or involvement in terrorist activities on 7 October. His Facebook-page[66] reflects ongoing reporting throughout the day, including photos in Beit Hanoun Hospital,[67] videos of Hamas fighters returning to Beit Hanon, and footage of the central market after it was struck that day.[68] Similarly, regardless of the sentiment, the second screenshot, which reads 'all of Beit Hanoun is at the garage, welcoming the kidnapped soldiers' followed

58 Israel Defense Forces. (n.d.). Documents Expose 6 Al Jazeera Journalists as Terrorists in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Terror Organizations. Published by the IDF.
59 Al Jazeera. (2025, August 11). Israel kills Anas al-Sharif, three Al Jazeera staff in Gaza: What we know. Published by Al Jazeera.
60 Adraee, A. (2025, March 25). [Post on X]. Published on X.
61 See also the allegations by Khaled Hassan from September 2024: Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 18). "Today, I want". Published on X.
62 Israel Defense Forces. (n.d.). Documents Expose 6 Al Jazeera Journalists as Terrorists in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Terror Organizations. Published by the IDF.
63 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, March 24). "Over the last". Published on X.
64 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 18). "Today, I want". Published on X.
65 Shabat, H. (2023, October 7). Published on Facebook
66 The Facebook-profile of Hossam Shabat: https://www.facebook.com/hsam.shbat.465943
67 Shabat, H. (2023, October 7). Published on Facebook; Shabat, H. (2023, October 7). Published on Facebook
68 Shabat, H. (2023, October 7). Published on Facebook

by two laughing emojis,[69] does not show Shabat participated in hostilities. The third screenshot shows a photo, posted by Shabat on 7 October, of fighters of the Qassam Brigades (Hamas' military wing) who breach the border fence and enter Israel on motorbikes.[70] Khaled Hassan claims this screenshot shows Shabat 'infiltrating Israel with Hamas terrorists', but, as Daraj Media already pointed out, the photo has a watermark reading 'Military Media' in Arabic, which is the label of the Al Qassem Brigades.[71] We replicated and verified Daraj Media's research. A reverse search of the image shows the photo was posted on Al Qassem Brigades' Telegram channel at 09:50 AM local time. Shabat posted the video on his Facebook account at 10:10 AM, so 20 minutes later (Figure 14). The source of the photo is Al Qassem Brigade, not Shabat. The photo does not substantiate the claim that Shabat was present at the border crossing.



Figure 14 – Screenshot of the Al Qassem Brigades Telegram channel, with the video of Hamas fighters breaching the border fence visible on the right, second from the top. The time, 2:50 AM, is visible because the channel was approached from a VPN based in EST, meaning 7 hours time difference. The local time is therefore 09:50 AM. Source: Telegram

Various social media posts of Shabat used online to argue that he was engaged in terrorism provide information that is not relevant to the applicable legal framework (e.g. an undated photo in which Shabat poses with Hamas police officers).[72] These screenshots are also regularly presented out of context. For example, Eitan Fischberger posts two photos of Shabat on Facebook without a press vest, suggesting it is suspicious he reports without 'an obligatory press vest'.[73] While press vests are in fact not obligatory for journalists,[74] Fischberger omits that Shabat has regularly posted photos in which he wears a press vest.[75] He also claims Shabat is 'coy' online about who his employer is, while contemporary posts show he openly referred to Al-Jazeera.[76] Fischberger also draws suspicion to the fact that Shabat started his Telegram-channel on 7 October 2023 at 6:50am, '20 minutes after the Hamas-led massacre began'.[77] Shabat, who was still studying media and communications at this time, opened his Facebook-account well before 2023, and he first posted a video of the strikes from Gaza there at 6:36am.[78] The strikes were later reported to have started around 6:30am.[79] These early posts on Telegram and Facebook do not provide evidence of inside knowledge or involvement in the hostilities

69 Shabat, H. (2023, October 7). Published on Facebook
70 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 18). "Today, I want". Published on X; https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1FXZ9LknRE/. [original post]
71 Daraj Media. (2024, December 16). Israeli influencers launch misleading propaganda against Gaza journalists. Published by Daraj.
72 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, March 24). "Over the last". Published on X.
73 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, March 24). "Over the last". Published on X.
74 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2026). Guidelines on strengthening the protection of journalists working in armed conflicts. A/HRC/62/67/Add.2. UN Digital Library – A/HRC/62/67/Add.2
75 See also: Daraj Media. (2024, December 16). Israeli Influencers Launch Disinformation Campaign Against Gaza Journalists. Published by Daraj Media.
76 See for example: https://x.com/HossamShabat/status/1752783991759843835?s=20 ["My documentary on the horrific crimes of the enemy. Broadcast on Al Jazeera"]
77 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (2024, March 24). "Over the last". Published on X.
78 Shabat, H. (2023, October 7). Published on Facebook
79 Reuters. (2023, October 7). How the Hamas attack on Israel unfolded. Published by Reuters.

on 7 October. None of the screenshots and photos included in the cited allegations demonstrate that Hossam Shabat was a combatant of Hamas, let alone a sniper operative in an anti-tank battalion.

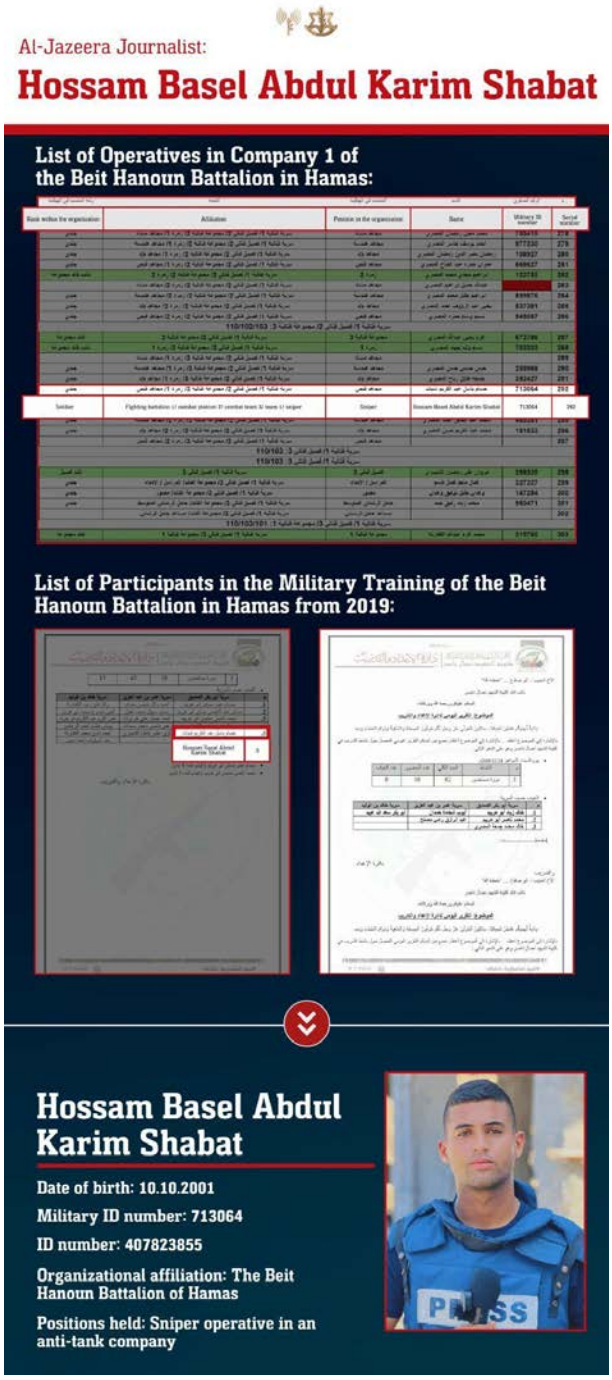


Figure 15 – Screenshots of documents presented by the IDF to legitimize Shabat's assassination. Source: IDF.[80]

Similarly to the document shared by the IDF about Anas Al-Sharif, the collage of screenshots the IDF shared in October 2024 about Shabat, remains unverifiable. No authentic documents were provided, including after requests from international media, and the document only provides cropped lines, making it impossible to cross-verify his Military ID and other information. The document (Figure 15) consists of a screenshot, allegedly from a list of operatives in Company 1 of the Beit Hanoun Battalion in Hamas, and a List of Participants in the Military Training of the same Battalion in 2019, which list Hossam's name.[81] While the document's authenticity is unsubstantiated, even if Shabat had received training from Hamas in 2019, under IHL, this could not justify the loss of civilian status and targeting by the IDF in 2025. The upper screenshot, which lists Shabat as a sniper in the first company of the battalion, is undated. No further details or corroborating information was shared by the IDF. Shabat firmly denied the allegations,[82] and was, as stated, visibly active as a journalist on a daily basis until his death in March 2025.

80 Israel Defense Forces. (n.d.). Documents Expose 6 Al Jazeera Journalists as Terrorists in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Terror Organizations. Published by the IDF.

81 Israel Defense Forces. (n.d.). Documents Expose 6 Al Jazeera Journalists as Terrorists in the Hamas and Islamic Jihad Terror Organizations. Published by the IDF

82 Committee to Protect Journalists. Hossam Shabat. Published by CPJ

Conclusion

The IDF, and other actors, have alleged that Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat were terrorists instead of journalists. These statements were made to justify the targeted killing of both journalists by the IDF. Our analysis shows in detail that none of the materials presented by the IDF and other actors provide credible evidence of this claim, nor do they provide factual evidence to back the allegation that these journalists participated directly in hostilities - the relevant threshold under international humanitarian law. The analysis further highlights serious doubts about the authenticity of several documents presented as evidence by the IDF, and points at the pattern of unsubstantiated claims made by the IDF in the past three years about Palestinian journalists to justify their targeting, including earlier reporting on the existence of a 'Legitimization Cell' within the IDF. The IDF refuses to release the original documents, while the screenshots it has provided in collage documents are generally undated, contain contradictions and cannot be corroborated through metadata or other information about provenance. The analyzed social media screenshots are not relevant to the applicable rules under IHL, rely on the perception of 'guilt by association', omit information or present the screenshots out of context. The allegations were thus made without presenting credible factual evidence and do not provide a justification for the targeted killing of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. The responsible actors nevertheless made these allegations, despite the fact that the benefit of the doubt lies with civilians under IHL, and despite the strong and visible counterindications: the daily public reporting about the events in Gaza by both journalists until their deaths.

The IDF responded the following to FPU to these findings:

"There have been numerous cases in which terrorists operated under a civilian guise, including posing as journalists, to advance terror activities. In these cases, any action taken by the IDF against them was due to their involvement in terror activity and for no other reason.

The IDF strongly rejects the claims presented. The IDF does not intentionally harm journalists or their family members, and on the contrary, operates solely against military targets, in accordance with international law, and employs all possible measures to mitigate harm to civilians, including journalists. Any claim of intentional harm to civilians—including family members of journalists due to their professional activity, is completely false and entirely contrary to IDF values, orders, and operational procedures."

Appendix 2 – Actor Mapping

This appendix provides additional information about the actors featured in this report in relation to the dissemination of delegitimisation narratives concerning Anas Al-Sharif and/or Hossam Shabat, including associated frames regarding Palestinian journalists such as 'Gazawood'. The accounts these actors use amplify each other through sharing, liking, quoting and responding, and in some cases highlighting each other's work in their own publications. The actors in this appendix were collected and selected using a snowballing method in which researchers followed algorithms of the used social media platforms to identify actors that interact with each other or refer to each other's work. Additionally, search engine searches for the journalists Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat in conjunction with terms like "Hamas" or "terrorist" identified actors active within this information ecosystem as well.

The appendix does not provide an exhaustive overview of the actors who shared and amplified such narratives, but provides an overview of the actors mentioned in this report, and their relationships to each other, insofar as we were able to map those. We divided these actors in two main categories: official actors who work for the Government of Israel and its armed forces, and individual actors outside of the Government of Israel. Some of the individuals included in the second category of actors have previously worked for the Israeli government, but are, as far as we could identify, not currently employed or contracted by the Government of Israel or its armed forces.

Finally, this appendix provides an overview of media outlets discussed throughout the chronological description of delegitimisation against Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. We approached each actor mentioned in this overview (Appendix 2) for comment insofar as possible. Where indicated, the actors responded to our inquiry. We also included the full responses we received on our website, which you can find here: https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting. If not clearly indicated, the actors in question did not respond to our inquiry.

Official Actors

Former Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson Arabic Avichay Adraee

Avichay Adraee is a colonel in the IDF who served as the head of the Arabic media division of the IDF's Spokesperson's Unit until 2026.[1] Adraee began his military service in the Intelligence Directorate's Unit 8200, where he was responsible for signals intelligence and cyber intelligence.[2] Adraee has been one of the most vocal Israeli officials discrediting Palestinian journalists and their work and accusing them of terrorism in various posts: we collected 18 posts targeting Al-Sharif and 4 posts targeting Shabat on X alone. Adraee regularly recorded short video clips, which he published on his social media accounts. After seeing one of the clips, Anas Al-Sharif noted: 'He doesn't want me to report on any of the massacres that are happening… Whether he threatens us or bombs us, our message will go on until our final breath.'[3] His social media accounts are very popular: his X account has more than 830k followers,[4] his TikTok account had 1.2 million followers[5] and his Facebook account had more than 3.7 million followers.[6]

1 Adraee, A. (n.d.). Avichay Adraee is a Colonel in the Israel Defense Forces who serves as the head of the Arab media division of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit. Published by Avichay Adraee; The Times of Israel, "Senior Female Muslim Officer Tapped as Next IDF Arabic-Language Spokesperson," (2025), published in The Times of Israel

2 The New Arab Staff. (2025, November 11). Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee set to retire. Published by The New Arab.

3 Middle East Eye (2025, August 15). A resurfaced video. Published on Facebook.

4 Adraee, A. [@AvichayAdraee]. Account on X.

5 Account since deleted – link.

6 Account since deleted – link.

Israel Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism - Minister Amichai Chikli - Media Watch Legal

The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism was formed in 1999 with the goal of improving Israel-Jewish diaspora relations. The current minister is Amichai Chikli. Since 7 October 2023, the Ministry has been involved in several activities that attempt to shape international frames about Israel and Gaza. At the height of the famine in Gaza, in August 2025, the Ministry arranged for 10 American and Israeli social media influencers 'to briefly enter the Gaza Strip as part of a campaign to "reveal the truth" about the humanitarian conditions'.[7]

The Ministry also funds MediaWatch.legal (MWL),8 a website that collects photos and personal identifiers of Palestinian journalists and associates them with terrorism. The evidence used for these allegations is often weak: in the case of Al-Jazeera Gaza bureau chief Wael Al-Dahdouh for example, the site notes that his military affiliation is that he 'was in close proximity to a terrorist', meaning Al-Dahdouh own son, Hamza Al-Dahdouh, a journalist himself who was assassinated in January 2024.[9] The evidence used is a photo of Wael with his son Hamza.

On 2 September 2025, Minister Amichai Chikli announced the launch of MWL.[10] Within a short space of time, multiple accounts in this information ecosystem reposted[11] or copied and shared the exact same announcement message,[12] demonstrating how actors within this ecosystem copy each other's posts, sometimes verbatim.

An analysis of the MediaWatch.legal website, conducted by students from Utrecht University's Open-Source Global Justice Lab at FPU's request, showed that the website contains 52 profiles[13], including Hossam Shabat and Anas Al-Sharif. The website draws most of its data directly from the IDF and MiddleEastBuka, an OSINT channel run by an individual who identified himself as 'Michael', a software engineer in his mid-30s from central Israel.[14] According to the website's source code, the domain is hosted in Germany.

The platform also published a report after CPJ brought attention to the targeting of Palestinian journalists. The report was drafted by an organisation called Penlink and was initiated to 'identify possible links between the deceased journalists and known Hamas affiliates using the Tangles System. The process involved locating the Facebook profiles of the deceased journalists and cross-analysing their friend lists to identify any connections to recognized Hamas affiliates.'[15]

The site includes a channel where people are invited to report on 'fake' journalists with terror ties. 'We're inviting everyone to provide information. We've added a "report" button to the site. We invite people to share with us the information they have about journalists,' Hadas Maimon, executive director of strategic narrative and global communications for the ministry, told Jewish News Syndicate.[16]

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7 Haaretz. (2025, August 21). 'See the Truth With My Own Eyes'. Israel Brings U.S., Israeli Social Media Influencers to Gaza Aid Sites to Fight 'Hamas Hunger Campaign'. Published by Haaretz.

8 Chikli, A. [@AmichayChikli]. (2025, September 2). "We took a" Published on X.

9 Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.

10 Chikli, A. [@AmichayChikli]. (2025, September 2). "We took a". Published on X.

11 See for example (1) Gazawood [@GAZAWOOD1] (2025, September 2). We took a". Published on X & (2) Amir Tsarfati [beholdisraelchannel] (2025, September 2). "We took a". Published on Telegram & (3) Eitan Fischberger [@EFischberger] (2025, September 2). "We took a". Published on X & (4) Erin Molan [@Erin_molan] (2025, September 2). "We took a". Published on X.

12 See for example: (1) Mariana News. [Marianasoux]. (2025, September 2). "A thorough investigation". Published on X. & (2) Martinez, A. [@AngelMartmma24]. (2025, September 3). "We took a". Published on X. & (3) Bowcott, D. [@DebraBowcott]. (2025, September 2). "Take a close". Published on X. & (4) K [...]. [@@westport60]. (2025, September 3). "We took a". Published on X. & (5) Eye on Antisemitism [@AntisemitismEye]. (2025, September 2). "We took a". Published on X.

13 As of June 2026.

14 Merlin, O. (2024, November 29). Inside Israel's civilian revolution: The rise of citizen-run news channels. Published by The Jerusalem Post.

15 Penlink.com. (n.d.). Connections between Palestinian journalists and Hamas. Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.

16 Isaac, D. (2025, September 3). Israeli ministers shares report on 'so-called' journalists' terror ties. Published by The Jewish News Syndicate (JNS).

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Minister Gideon Sa'ar

In December 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) announced it would receive an additional financial impetus of more than $150 million specifically meant for public diplomacy, hasbara in Hebrew.[17] At the time, the sum was more than 20 times more than typically allocated.[18] According to Jewish Weekly, Sa'ar's office released a statement saying the budget would be used to influence sentiment in the foreign press and on social media.[19]

In the months following, Israeli media observed an increase in the number of international delegations to visit Israel, aimed at helping spread the Israeli narrative in international media.[20] This included the largest delegation in Israel's history, consisting of more than a thousand influencers from the United States.[21] At the time, Israeli media reported that Minister Gideon Sa'ar did not have a clear way to spend the money so his ministry invited influencers and public opinion leaders for brainstorming sessions.[22] According to Gill Hoffman of Honest Reporting, Sa'ar took notes, reacted, and frequently issued immediate directives to Foreign Ministry staff'.[23]

Among those present were former spokesperson Eylon Levy, FDD's Jonathan Conricus, NGO Monitor President Gerald Steinberg, Palestine Media Watch founder Itamar Marcus, StandWithUs Jerusalem Executive director Michael Dickson and representatives from ELNET, Jewish Agency and Honest Reporting.[24] Several organizations present suggested that information be relayed faster to them by Israeli authorities. "Among the suggestions to improve the Foreign Ministry's work that came up in Thursday's meeting was that the Jewish Agency emissaries receive information that can be relayed to the public as soon as diplomats do", reported Jewish Insider about the meeting. Honest Reporting asked specifically to receive details about journalists killed in IDF actions who were members of terrorist organizations.[25] A year later, in December 2025, the budget was again increased, this time to $725 million.[26]

Discussing the new $725 million budget, The Times of Israel reported on the expenditure of the 2025 budget, using public filings, Knesset testimony and Israeli business reporting.[27] Roughly $50 million was spent on social media advertising and $40 million on hosting 400 foreign delegations of lawmakers, pastors, influencers, and university presidents. The Foreign Ministry also created a 'media war room' to live monitor 250 outlets and more than 10,000 Israel-related news items.[28] The Ministry also signed a contract worth $900.000 for a 'paid influencer network' called "the Esther Project".[29] To that extent, the ministry, at the start of 2025, had set a goal of bringing 550 delegations of influencers to Israel by the

17 Freiberg, N. (2025, December 7). Sa'ar at summit of Israeli envoys: We cannot succeed without improved public diplomacy. Published by The Times of Israel.

18 JTA & Staff, T. (2024, December 29). Foreign Ministry to receive massive budget for public diplomacy abroad. Published by The Times of Israel. & Barsky, A. (2024, November 24). The government approved the budget increase for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - these are the amounts. Published by Maariv.

19 Elia-Shalev, A. (2024, December 30). Israel has spent millions trying win hearts and minds abroad. It's about to spend 20 times more. Published by The Jewish News of Northern California.

20 i24 News. (2025, August 21). Israel to bring influencers and officials in global PR campaign. Published by i24 News.

21 Kahana. A. (2025, February 12). Israel hosts largest public diplomacy delegation in history. Published by Israel Hayom.

22 European Leadership Network (2024, December 27). Jewish Insider: Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs Gideon Sa'ar : $150 million on Public Diplomacy. Published by ELNET. Reachable via Archive.org.

23 (1) Harkov, L. (2024, December 26). Israel's foreign minister is looking for a way to spend $150 million on public diplomacy. Published by Jewish Insider. & (2) Hoffman, G. (2025, January 3). Foreign Minister Sa'ar can spend $150m. on public diplomacy. This is how he should do it - opinion. Published by the Jerusalem Post.

24 Harkov, L. (2024, December 26). Israel's foreign minister is looking for a way to spend $150 million on public diplomacy. Published by Jewish Insider.

25 Harkov, L. (2024, December 26). Israel's foreign minister is looking for a way to spend $150 million on public diplomacy. Published by Jewish Insider.

26 Freiberg, N. (2025, December 7). Sa'ar at summit of Israeli envoys: We cannot succeed without improved public diplomacy. Published by The Times of Israel.

27 Elia-Shalev, A. (2026, April 30). Israel just quintupled its PR budget to $730 million; experts say it won't work. Published by the Times of Israel.

28 Elia-Shalev, A. (2026, April 30). Israel just quintupled its PR budget to $730 million; experts say it won't work. Published by the Times of Israel.

29 Elia-Shalev, A. (2026, April 30). Israel just quintupled its PR budget to $730 million; experts say it won't work. Published by the Times of Israel.

end of 2025, an initiative which, according to a Ministry source speaking to Haaretz, reflects a broader transformation in hasbara efforts: "We're working with influencers, sometimes with delegations of influencers. Their networks have huge followings, and their messages are more effective than if they came directly from the ministry."[30]

Individual and/or non-governmental actors (currently) outside the Israeli government:

Abu Ali Express - Gilad Cohen

Abu Ali Express is an Israeli channel that covers Arab affairs on social media, including Telegram and Twitter, as well as on its own website. It is run by Israeli citizen Gilad Cohen, who Haaretz in 2021 reported had been hired for a period of two years by the IDF as a consultant for 'psychological operations on 'social media'.[31] In response, the IDF told Haaretz, that while they did employ 'G.', the IDF "doesn't make use of his [G.'s] personal accounts on social media. Moreover, the Telegram page in question doesn't receive information from the IDF to help with its articles, or at all."[32] In a meeting between representatives of the Military Correspondents' Cell and senior IDF officers organised to get clarity on the role of Cohen in defaming Israeli journalists, the IDF had informed the correspondents that Cohen's name was banned from publication because of a 'military censorship decision due to his exposure to sensitive information', and that publication of his name could 'harm him and the security of the state'.[33] A few weeks later, the IDF backtracked and stated Cohen had not received intelligence information and that his name could be published.[34]

As of September 2022, it was the Telegram channel with the most views per post in Israel. Many of its stories and posts are reproduced on more mainstream Israeli media outlets, such as Maariv, Globes, Ynet, Arutz Sheva, and on Israeli television channels. The Hebrew version of Abu Ali Express spiked in popularity after October 7, sometimes getting more than 25 million views per day.[35] In September 2025, Israeli outlet Maariv noted that it was remarkable that Abu Ali Express, an anonymous Telegram channel, received an exclusive interview with a sitting head of state, Benjamin Netanyahu.[36]

Eitan Fischberger

Eitan Fischberger is a former IDF Sergeant, currently open source investigator, with his own substack (Fish Files) and an active X account. He previously worked for a variety of organisations active in the same field, such as CAMERA (as an on-campus coordinator between 2019 and 2021)[37] and NGO Monitor (between August 2021 and February 2022)[38], and published in Jewish News Syndicate[39], Jewish Journal[40], The Algemeiner[41], National Review[42], Manhattan Institute's City Journal[43], The Hill[44], The Washington Free

30 Peleg, B. & Lis, J. (2025, July 20). Foreign Ministry to Fund Israel Tour for MAGA, America First pro-Trump Influencers. Published by Haaretz.
31 Kubovich, Y. (2021, August 18). Israeli Army Employs Popular Blogger for Psyops on Social Media. Published by Haaretz.
32 Kubovich, Y. (2021, August 18). Israeli Army Employs Popular Blogger for Psyops on Social Media. Published by Haaretz.
33 Kubovich, Y. (2022, February 21). The IDF terminated the employment of the manager of the Telegram channel who defamed journalists and elected officials. Published by Haaretz.
34 Kubovich, Y. (2022, February 21). The IDF terminated the employment of the manager of the Telegram channel who defamed journalists and elected officials. Published by Haaretz.
35 Abu Ali Express. (n.d.). Abu Ali Express. Published by Abu Ali Express.
36 Maariv Online. (2025, September 4). There has never been one like this before: Netanyahu's surprising interview - on a new platform. Published by Maariv Online.
37 Eitan Fischberger (n.d.) Published on LinkedIn.
38 Eitan Fischberger (n.d.) Published on LinkedIn.
39 Jewish News Syndicate (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by Jewish News Syndicate.
40 Fischberger, E. (2022, September 20). Radicalization 101: How Anti-Western Forces Infect American Campuses. Published by Jewish Journal.
41 The Algemeiner. (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by The Algemeiner.
42 National Review (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by National Review.
43 City Journal. (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by City Journal.
44 Fischberger, E. (2024, April 3). Why aren't the perpetrators of the Oct. 7 attack designated as terrorist organizations? Published by The Hill.

Beacon[45], and The Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (JCFA)[46], among others. Fischberger previously interned for the Israeli Mission to the United Nations[47], and attended a press trip to Gaza organised upon the invitation of an IDF spokesperson.[48] He co-authored an article with Brig. Gen. (rtd.) Yossi Kuperwasser (former Director General of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, and currently director of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Head of the Institute for the Research of the Methodology of Intelligence at the IIHCC), titled "The Security Implications of Muslim Migration".[49] He also contributed to a book called 'Contested and Uncontested Truth: the Essential Guide to Israel's Legitimacy'[50], written by Josh Wikoff with contributions from several other actors in this environment, including Dr. Einat Wolf, Dan Diker (president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs), Andrew Fox, and Khaled Hassan.[51]

On 7 October 2023, Fischberger's X account had around 2000 followers, which has increased to around 69k as of May 2026. He regularly interacts on his X account with Honest Reporting[52] GAZAWOOD[53], and Osint613[54], among others. As was documented by factchecking platform Misbar, most of his posts on X are simply responses or retweets about a variety of topics, but for his more investigative-focused work, Fischberger generally sources information from social media channels, accounts and other openly available sources, and uses it to try and generate attention and action, often tagging other actors on social media to increase the reach of his posts. As Misbar noted: "Through this method, Fischberger not only repeats the official narrative but also legitimizes it by backing it with supposed open-source investigations, which ultimately recycle the same talking points in a more persuasive form for his audience."[55] In response to questions from Columbia Journalism Review (CJR), Fischberger firmly rejected the categorization of propaganda. He stated: 'People can call me a propagandist', adding: 'I'm just describing reality as I see it." Of the IDF, he said according to CJR, "if they're manipulating me" into spreading a certain message, "they're doing a really good job of it. I don't even notice it at all.'[56]

Fischberger himself noted on a June 2025 podcast with Eylon Levy that what he finds online "gives more credence to the IDF's allegations".[57] Earlier in the interview, Fischberger states: "I mean it's contemporaneous evidence right, so in other words, if the IDF says something, and then they unfortunately on some occasions don't provide the evidence to back it up, and international media is skeptical, which they have every right to be and they should be, it doesn't explain to me and some other observers why they often don't entertain the additional open source evidence that is then provided."[58]

Fischberger also features on a podcast called 'Chosen Links by Boaz', episode seven, with David Collier, Gill Hoffman (Honest Reporting), Olga Deutsch (VP of NGO Monitor), Shira Eisenberg (Stealth AI startup).[59]

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45 Washington Free Beacon (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by the Washington Free Beacon.
46 Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by the JCFA.
47 The Algemeiner. (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger. Published by The Algemeiner.
48 Barshad, A. (2025, October 6). Israel's Influencer Insiders. Published by Columbia Journalism Review.
49 Kasher, A. et al. (2019). The Migration Wave into Europe, An Existential Dilemma. Published by Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.
50 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger].(2025, November 8). Excited to have finally received. Published by X.
51 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (n.d.). Reposts. Published on X.
52 Fischberger, E. [@EFischberger]. (n.d.). Search: HonestReporting. Published on X.
53 Fischberger, E. [EFischberger]. (n.d.). Search: Gazawood1. Published on X.
54 Fischberger, E. [EFischberger]. (n.d.). Search: Osint613. Published on X.
55 Misbar's Editorial Team. (2025, September 14). How Eitan Fischberger Uses Open-Source Tools To Promote Israeli Propaganda. Published by Misbar.
56 Barshad, A. (2025, October 6). Israel's Influencer Insiders. Published by Columbia Journalism Review
57 EylON the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas' Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on YouTube.
58 EylON the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas' Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on YouTube.
59 Hepner, B. (2024, October 15). Chosen Links by Boaz – Ep 7: Fact Checkers – Guardians of Truth. Published by Jewish Journal.

The full response of Eitan Fischberger can be found on https://freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting. In relation to this section, in its response, Fischberger states among others:

I am an independent OSINT researcher and analyst. I am not paid by the Israeli government, the IDF, or any ministry. I have never had a paid collaboration with any of them, and I do not coordinate my work or my messaging with them. My only interaction with the IDF in connection with my investigative work was a press tour of Gaza, attended by reporters from The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and AFP, among others. Nobody paid me for it, and nobody told me or suggested to me what to say about it. Everything I publish comes from open sources and is posted publicly with screenshots, links, or both attached, so anyone can check it. Writing 25 posts about Anas Al-Sharif and 19 about Hossam Shabat does not make me part of a "network." It makes me thorough.

On the episode of EylON, Fischberger stated; I stand by what I said. The IDF does not always publish the evidence behind its allegations, as doing so could potentially endanger its sources in Gaza. This is exactly why open-source work matters. The IDF's case rests on internal Hamas records, testimonies, and other material that militaries are under no general obligation to divulge publicly (even if I wish they would).

My work rests on what these men published themselves, in public. That is what contemporaneous evidence means. When a man listed in Hamas records as a military operative also spent October 7 celebrating the attack and posed with Hamas leaders, those records become more believable, not less. My work was never meant to replace the IDF's documents. But it does complement them.

On Misbar, Fischberger stated: I would be hesitant to use Misbar as a source for your coverage of me and my work. For a "fact-checking platform," it seems to have a rather flimsy grasp of facts. For example, its report about me that you reference says that I "leverage my journalistic background." But I have never worked as a journalist. It also states that I am a "former military censor," which is completely made up. I have absolutely no idea what they're talking about. Finally, Misbar writes that I have relied on "leaked conversations from private Telegram groups," which I have never done.

I've read Misbar's full article again and am struggling to identify a single instance, even in their own investigation, where they demonstrate that I've fabricated a screenshot, invented a quote, or manufactured evidence. Instead, they repeatedly accuse me of publishing "misleading" information, largely because they disagree with my interpretations of material that they cannot establish is false. Misbar says I chose a handful of posts out of more than 43,000 on Al-Sharif's Telegram channel. Yes, that is how evidence works. You do not need 43,000 posts to show a man celebrating murder. You need one."

Khaled Hassan

Hassan is a British-Egyptian national security and foreign policy researcher, focusing on digital threats, radicalisation and disinformation.[60] He wrote for The Telegraph[61], The Jewish Chronicle[62], and the Times of Israel[63] amongst others, and appeared in a podcast by Visegrad24 founder Stefan Thompson.[64] Hassan participates as a Council Member at Israeli President Herzog's organization Voice of the People[65] and has visited the inaugural Voice of the People summit organized by Herzog in March 2025.[66] The summit brought together 50 people from Israel, 50 from North America, and 50 from other regions to address rising antisemitism, strengthen Israel-Diaspora ties and promote internal diversity.[67] Hassan is a fellow at

60 The Jewish Chronicle. (n.d.). Khaled Hassan. Published by The Jewish Chronicle.
61 The Telegraph (n.d.). Khaled Hassan. Published by The Telegraph.
62 The Jewish Chronicle. (n.d.). Khaled Hassan. Published by The Jewish Chronicle.
63 Times of Israel (n.d.). The Blogs: Khaled Hassan. Published by Times of Israel.
64 Visegrad24. (2025, October 9). The Secret Society You Didn't Know Existed | Khaled Hassan. Published on YouTube.
65 Hassan, K. [@thegrandstrategy]. (n.d.). Account on Substack.
66 Pasko, S. (2025, March 17). Israeli President Herzog's Vision of Voice of the People Unveiled With Global Jewish Leaders. Published by Media Line.
67 Pasko, S. (2025, March 17). Israeli President Herzog's Vision of Voice of the People Unveiled With Global Jewish Leaders. Published by Media Line.

the Ideological Defense Institute,[68] a nonprofit research organization aimed at 'defending Judeo-Christian principles that shaped Western civilization against anti-Western theological and ideological systems'.[69]

Hassan was particularly active online in discrediting Hossam Shabat, and his posts have been cited by other actors as evidence of Shabat's involvement with terrorism. Of note is his 18 September 2024 post, one month before the IDF's exposé, in which Hassan tells Shabat to surrender himself to the IDF, adding photographs that allegedly confirm Shabat was 'present in person, receiving and celebrating Hamas terrorists as they brought Israeli hostages into Gaza on October 7th'.[70] As is described in greater detail in Appendix 1, the 18 September 2024 post consists of three photos, none of which provide evidence of this claim. Research shows that one of these photos was not taken by Shabat, like Hassan claimed, but instead by Hamas operatives and was first published on the Al Qassem Brigades Telegram channel.[71]

Two days earlier, Khalid Hassan had shared a photo of his meeting with then IDF Spokesperson Arabic Avichay Adraee at the Spokesperson office in Israel.[72] Hassan was visiting Israel for the first time.[73] In November 2024, Hassan again said that he had met the IDF spokesperson Arabic in Israel, and added that he, in the context of Israel's hasbara efforts, 'a few days ago, met with someone else very senior within the IDF and security establishment.'[74]

After Shabat's killing, Hassan wrote in another post on X: "When I advised a Gazan, Hossam Shabat, here on Twitter for all to see, to hand himself over to the IDF or expect to be eliminated, I meant every single word. This was his last warning. Hossam didn't listen and, therefore, was eliminated in weeks, as I promised'.[75] In September 2025, Khaled posted that he had 'submitted evidence' to the IDF: "Do you know that I submitted a dossier with evidence of his [Anas Al-Sharif] and Hossam Shabat's involvement to the IDF, and shortly afterward they were eliminated? It's an achievement I'm proud of and always happy to remember."[76]

Ten days earlier, the Asserson Report[77] was published containing analysis by Khaled Hassan and David Collier, which alleged that the BBC breached its own guidelines more than 1500 times in their reporting of the war.[78] The report was subsequently cited by the Israeli MFA as proof of the BBC's bias.[79]
The full response of Khaled Hassan can be found on https://freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting. In relation to this section, in its response, Hassan states among others:

'Although I fundamentally believe that shameless organisations like yours legitimise and enable terrorism, I have nevertheless chosen to respond. I do so in the hope that my reply, which you promised to publish in full, will expose to the public exactly who you are.

Your attempt to legitimise terrorists masquerading as journalists is one of the most shameful acts of betrayal of the profession of journalism. You have accused me of the "delegitimisation of Palestinian journalists" Hossam Shabat and Anas al-Sharif.

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68 Ideological Defense Institute. Biography Khaled Hassan. Published by IDI.
69 Ideological Defense Institute. About us. Published by IDI.
70 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 18). "Today, I want". Published on X.
71 For a more comprehensive analysis of the presented evidence see Appendix 3: Key Evidence Discussion.
72 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, September 16). "I was delighted". Published on X.
73 Merlin, O. (2024, October 1). Muslim to Jewish convert, researcher, and activist Khaled Hassan talks Israel - interview. Published by The Jerusalem Post; Hassan, K. [@Khaledzakariah]. (2024, September 13). "Thank you, Israel". Published on X.
74 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2024, November 7). "I met with". Published on X.
75 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, July 13). "A couple of days ago". Published on X.
76 Hassan, K. [@Khaledhzakariah]. (2025, September 26). "Do you know". Published on X.
77 Asserson, T. (2024, September). The Asserson Report. Published by Asserson law firm.
78 Turner, C. & Sawer, P (2024, September 7). BBC 'breached guidelines 1,500 times' over Israel-Hamas war. Published by The Telegraph.
79 Israel Foreign Ministry. [@IsraelMFA]. (2024, September 8). "From @Telegraph : "The". Published on X.

(..) If you were unaware of Shabat's public support for and connection to terrorism prior to writing to me, then I expect an apology and your gratitude. If, however, you have chosen to dismiss the wealth of sources showing him openly supporting Jihad, then, like many across Europe, you are a despicable degenerate working for a despicable organisation that whitewashes terrorism as activism and journalism.

(..)As for my role in exposing Shabat and others, I can tell you one thing: I slept like a baby the day I heard that the IDF had delivered justice to those who engaged in and supported the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. In fact, your message reminded me of one of my proudest achievements: standing with my people, the Jewish people, and with humanity in our pursuit of justice against Palestinian Islamic terrorism.'

Eylon Levy - Former Spokesperson State of Israel

Levy is a former spokesperson for the State of Israel, a position from which he was suspended in March 2024, allegedly following an online row with UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron.[80] Levy previously served in COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body overseeing policy for the Palestinian territories.[81] He also worked as an international media advisor for Israeli President Herzog.[82] The Jerusalem Post describes Levy as the number one most influential young visionaries in its '2025 most influential young zionist' competition, describing that Levy conducted more than 500 media interviews and drove billions of impressions across social media.[83] Levy currently runs his own podcast under the banner of 'EylON the Record', called 'Israel: State Of A Nation', in which he interviews individuals such as Eitan Fischberger[84], Andrew Fox[85], Natasha Hausdorff from UK Lawyers for Israel[86], Hilel Neuer from UN Watch[87], FDD's Jonathan Conricus[88], NGO Monitor President Gerald Steinberg[89], former Knesset member and foreign policy advisor Dr. Einat Wilf[90], and Honest Reporting board member Salo Aizenberg[91], among others. The podcast is partly funded by the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism.[92] Levy noted: "We secured partial funding from the Diaspora Ministry for State of a Nation. Minister Amichai Chikli is behind us. Now we're crowdfunding. The grant that we've received from the ministry is for matching funding."[93]

Aside from the podcast episode in which Levy discusses the allegations against Palestinians with Eitan Fischberger,[94] he (re)posted the allegations against Anas al-Sharif on his X-account in six posts, stating among others 'Anas al-Sharif was a team commander in Hamas' Northern Brigade' and 'He was

80 Gritten, D. (2024, March 21). Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy suspended after UK online row. Published by BBC.
81 Gritten, D. (2024, March 21). Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy suspended after UK online row. Published by BBC.
82 Gritten, D. (2024, March 21). Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy suspended after UK online row. Published by BBC.
83 Jerusalem Post Staff. (2025, September 21). 25 ViZionaries: Eylon Levy - No. 1. Published by The Jerusalem Post.
84 EylON the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on Apple Podcasts.
85 EylON the Record. (2024, December 19). Debunking Hamas' Lies on Gaza Death Toll with Military Expert Andrew Fox. Published on YouTube.
86 EylON the Record. (2024, October 21). Blaming the Victims | The Legal Case for Israel With Natasha Hausdorff. Published on YouTube.
87 EylON the Record. (2024, August 25). Rotten from the Top Down | UN Watchdog Hillel Neuer Names Names and Produces Evidence. Published on YouTube.
88 EylON the Record (2024, August 7). Information Warfare | Jonathan Conricus on Israel's 8th front. Published on YouTube.
89 EylON the Record (2024, June 14). Lawfare, Newspeak, and Corruption | NGO Monitor exposes the seedy underbelly of "Human Rights Orgs". Published on YouTube.
90 EylON the Record (2024, February 16). They Say Gas The Jews, But What They ACTUALLY Mean is... | Einat Wilf on Westsplaining. Published on YouTube.
91 EylON the Record (2025, March 18). Citizen Sleuth Exposes the Truth | The Facts vs. Hamas' Lies. Published on YouTube.
92 Horovitz, D. (2024, March 31). The stunning rise, curious suspension and insistent return of Israel's star spokesman. Published by The Times of Israel.
93 Horovitz, D. (2024, March 31). The stunning rise, curious suspension and insistent return of Israel's star spokesman. Published by The Times of Israel.
94 EylON the Record. (2025, June 4). Hamas Media Training Program | How BBC & Mainstream Media Fall For Lies. Published on Apple Podcasts

responsible for rocket attacks, and he moonlit as a Hamas content creator'.[95] He also posted multiple times about Hossam Shabat, stating 'he was a Hamas military operative', referring to the screenshots published by the IDF.[96]

Honest Reporting

Honest Reporting is a pro-Israel advocacy group founded in 2000 and a USA non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The organisation describes itself as a 'media watchdog exposing anti-Israel bias.'[97] Honest Reporting has been a constant voice in discrediting Palestinian journalists. Its current CEO is Jack Alexander, who previously worked at AIPAC.[98] Several of Honest Reporting's current and previous staff have a history of employment with the Israeli government and with NGOs such as NGO Monitor [covered below] and UN Watch. For example, its editorial director, Simon Polsker, worked in the IDF Spokesperson Unit, and as a managing editor at UN Watch and NGO Monitor.[99] Other (former) Honest Reporting staff members have had engagements with the IDF too, but also with the Israeli Ministry of Public Diplomacy,[100] AIPAC[101] and media outlets like the Jerusalem Post.[102]

Honest Reporting staff actively contributes to discrediting Palestinian journalists, and collaborate with other actors in this field, such as The Algemeiner. HR staff have for example written many articles published by The Algemeiner, either under the shared 'Honest Reporting Staff' title[103] or under their own names.[104]

Honest Reporting has received funds from several conservative and pro-Israel philanthropies such as the Adam and Gill Milstein Foundation[105], Newton D. and Rochelle F. Becker Foundation[106], and Koret Foundation[107]. In December 2024, Honest Reporting executive director Gill Hoffman[108] joined more than 30 organizations for a brainstorming session with Israel's Foreign Minister Gideo Sa'ar on Israel's new strategy for public diplomacy, with Sa'ar 'frequently issuing immediate directives to his staff'.[109] During the session, an Honest Reporting representative asked specifically to receive details about journalists killed in IDF actions who were members of terrorist organizations.[110] Specifically, Hoffman pointed out: "The identity of so-called journalists killed in Gaza that day who were really terrorists should have been provided to HonestReporting before we woke up so we could help expose them to the world."[111] A week later, in January 2024, Hoffman published an opinion piece in The Jerusalem Post in which he offered advice to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Gideon Sa'ar, including recommending efforts to train pro-Israel advocates around the world and increased support for outspoken spokespersons such as Eylon Levy.[112]

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95 Levy, E. (2025, August 11). "Israeli intelligence revealed". Published on X.
96 Levy, E. (2025, March 24). "Hossam Shabat was not a journalist". Published on X.
97 Honest Reporting. (n.d.). Account on LinkedIn.
98 Honest Reporting Staff. HonestReporting Announces Appointment of Jacki Alexander as New Global CEO. Published by Honest Reporting.
99 Plosker, S. (n.d.) Account on LinkedIn.
100 Harash, R. (n.d.). Account on LinkedIn.
101 Honest Reporting. (n.d.). 23 associated members. Published on LinkedIn.
102 The Jerusalem Post. (n.d.). Gil Hoffman. Published by The Jerusalem Post.
103 The Algemeiner. (n.d.). HonestReporting Staff. Published on The Algemeiner.
104 (1) The Algemeiner. (n.d.). Rachel O'Donoghue. Published on The Algemeiner. & (2) The Algemeiner. (n.d.). Gil Hoffman. Published on The Algemeiner. & (3) The Algemeiner. (n.d.). Jacki Alexander. Published on The Algemeiner.
105 The Adam and Gila Milstein Family Foundation (n.d.). Who we support. Published on the Milstein foundation website. Note: only approachable with VPN from Israel or the United States.
106 Philanthropy (n.d.). Who does The Newton D & Rochelle F Becker Foundation fund?. Published by Philanthropy.
107 The International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN). (2015, March). The Business of Backlash: The Attack on the Palestinian Movement and Other Movements for Justice. Published by IJAN.
108 Hofmann fulfilled this role until 2026
109 (1) Harkov, L. (2024, December 26). Israel's foreign minister is looking for a way to spend $150 million on public diplomacy. Published by Jewish Insider. & (2) Hoffman, G. (2025, January 3). Foreign Minister Sa'ar can spend $150m. on public diplomacy. This is how he should do it - opinion. Published by the Jerusalem Post.
110 Harkov, L. (2024, December 26). Israel's foreign minister is looking for a way to spend $150 million on public diplomacy. Published by Jewish Insider.
111 Hoffman, G. (2025, January 3). Foreign Minister Sa'ar can spend $150m. on public diplomacy. This is how he should do it - opinion. Published by the Jerusalem Post.
112 Hoffman, G. (2025, January 3). Foreign Minister Sa'ar can spend $150m. on public diplomacy. This is how he should do it - opinion. Published by the Jerusalem Post.

Earlier, on 8 November 2023, Honest Reporting had released a report alleging that Palestinian photojournalists who reported on the 7 October attacks had coordinated with Hamas, and that it made them legitimate military targets.[113] A day later, Israeli PM Netanyahu's office echoed the sentiment,[114] while then-Cabinet Minister Danny Danon quoted Honest Reporting's report and stated: 'Photographers employed by some of the largest and most prominent global media organizations, including AP and Reuters, took an active part in the massacre of Israel's Southern communities on October 7.'[115] Honest Reporting's work was condemned by major news outlets, forcing the organization on the defensive and to admit that they were 'only raising questions' rather than provide definitive answers.[116] Journalists Lee Fang and Jack Poulson subsequently reported that Gill Hoffman gave a talk on 15 November 2023 to the Hasbara Fellowships as part of its leadership briefing series, in which he referred to the report as a major success. Fang describes that Hofman stated that the release of the report shifted attention away from the IDF war in Gaza and cast doubt on the reliability of reports from inside Gaza. "You can't trust the journalists that come out of Gaza".'[117]

Fang and Poulson noted that Hoffman subsequently characterized himself and his organisation as a participant in the media battlefield, noting that 'victory on the media battlefield eases pressure on the IDF and goes a long way to deciding how much time Israel has to complete an operation'.[118]

NGO Monitor

Founded by Israeli academic Gerald Steinberg, NGO Monitor[119] was initially run from the Institute of Contemporary Affairs within the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA).[120] Reporting from 2014 showed Steinberg stated he worked for the Israeli government as a consultant two years after founding NGO Monitor.[121] NGO Monitor states on its website that it does not receive any financial support from governments and that it is an independent and non-partisan organisation.

NGO Monitor repeatedly disseminated the allegations against Anas al Sharif and other Palestinian journalists in its publications about NGOs such as Committee to Protect Journalists,[122] and RSF[123]. In its 2025 submission to the UN Secretary General's report on the Safety of Journalists, NGO Monitor repeats the allegations against, among others, Al Jazeera journalists in reference to the statement from the IDF. The submission alleges: 'Additionally, Al Jazeera correspondents served as Hamas military commanders and participated in the October 7 attacks' in reference to allegations by Avichay Adraee.[124] In these publications, NGO Monitor refers, among others, to publications from Honest Reporting and CAMERA. Earlier, it accused several NGOs of 'exploiting' the death of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, claiming that these groups seek to portray Israel as criminal and use any opportunity to do so.[125]

113 Honest Reporting Staff (2023, November 8). Broken Borders: AP & Reuters Pictures of Hamas Atrocities Raise Ethical Questions. Published by Honest Reporting.
114 Prime Minister of Israel [@IsraeliPM]. (2023, November 9). "The National Public". Published on X.
115 Danny Danon [@dannydanon]. (2023, November 9). "Yesterday a major". Published on X.
116 Balmer, C. (2023, November 11). HonestReporting accepts news groups had no prior warning of Oct. 7 Hamas attack. Published by Reuters.
117 Fang, L. & Poulson, J. (2023, December 8). Inside the Pro-Israel Information War. Published by Lee Fang.
118 Fang, L. & Poulson, J. (2023, December 8). Inside the Pro-Israel Information War. Published by Lee Fang.
119 For a full analysis of NGO Monitor's operations we recommend reading the 2018 PWG report: Policy Working Group (PWG). (2018, September). NGO Monitor: Shrinking Space. Defaming human rights organizations that criticize the Israeli occupation. Published by PWG.
120 White, B. (2020). Delegitimizing Solidarity: Israel Smears Palestine Advocacy as Anti-Semitic. Journal of Palestine Studies, 49(2), 65-79. DOI. Archived link of NGO Monitor's ties to JCPA can be found here.
121 972+Magazine (2014, April 29) What is NGO Monitor's connection to the Israeli government? Published by 972
122 NGO Monitor (2026, May 25). Committee to Protect Journalists. Published by NGO Monitor
123 NGO Monitor (2025, September 16). [Opinion] Toxic Triangle: The NGO Industry, State Funding, and Media Manipulation. Published by NGO Monitor.
124 NGO Monitor (2025, February 27). Submission of NGO Monitor to the Secretary General's report on the Safety of Journalists. Published by NGO Monitor
125 NGO Monitor (2022, May 16). NGOs Exploit the Death of Al-Jazeera Reporter. Published by NGO Monitor

NGO Monitor describes itself as a 'globally recognized research institute promoting democratic values and good governance', which publishes 'fact-based research and independent analysis about NGOs, their funders and other stakeholders, primarily in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict'.[126] Reports by NGO Monitor have been used by pro-Israel voices to attack NGOs and international organizations and civil society organisations.[127] In The Netherlands for example, Member of Parliament and leader of the far-right Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV) Geert Wilders and his then-colleague Gideon Markuszower have used a report by NGO Monitor to question the Dutch government's funding of organisations mentioned in the report.[128] Dutch newspaper NRC reported that several Dutch political parties, including VVD, PVV and BBB, received NGO Monitor in Parliament, despite the earlier qualification by former VVD Minister Stef Blok, who noted that NGO Monitor is unreliable and said 'a lot of the allegations of NGO Monitor are based on selective quotations, half facts and insinuations'.[129]

Different parties have reported on NGO Monitor's disputable methodology and raised concerns about its ties to the government of Israel.[130] An article by Dutch newspaper NRC reported that leaked emails from the Israeli Ministry of Justice demonstrate that the organisation is not an independent research institute, but an instrument of the Israeli government.[131] According to the emails, representatives of NGO Monitor regularly took part in meetings between Israeli ministries.[132] In at least one case in 2016, a report by NGO Monitor investigating NGOs financed by Germany in Israel, was rebranded into a government report.[133]

Several international advisory board members of NGO Monitor also feature in our investigation, such as Einat Wilf, Andrew Fox and Richard Kemp.[134]

GAZAWOOD

GAZAWOOD, Gazawood, or GAZAWOOD1, is a portmanteau of 'Gaza' and 'Hollywood'. It is a collaborative disinformation project aimed at delegitimising Palestinian suffering. Two key individuals involved in the creation of the project are Idan Knochen, an Israeli writer of teen fiction and Richard Landes, an American historian.[135] According to Forbidden Stories, Landes also identified Brigadier General (rtd.) Yossi Kuperwasser, former head of the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, as part of the project. Kuperwasser stated to Forbidden Stories and Free Press Unlimited that he was not involved in the project, but only connected Richard Landes to somebody he knew.[136] The accounts that Gazawood runs are rife with disinformation: Israeli NGO Fake Reporter found that only 5.75% of Gazawood's posts were credible.[137] Earlier research by Forbidden Stories and its partners demonstrated that Gazawood relies on a network of influencers with large followings to amplify its message, including several accounts that feature in our current investigation, such as The Mossad: Satirical and Awesome, De Telegraaf columnist Wierd Duk, and Open Source Intel.[138]

126 NGO Monitor (n.d.) About NGO Monitor. About NGO Monitor
127 NGO Monitor (n.d.). NGO Monitor in the media. Published by NGO Monitor.
128 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (2025, December 10). Het NGO Monitor-rapport. Published by Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal.
129 Heck, W. & Derix, S. (2025, July 4). De zichtbare en onzichtbare invloed van Israël in de Tweede Kamer. Published by NRC.
130 In addition to the sources mentioned, see e.g.: Kalm, S, Strömbom, L. & Uhlin, A. (2019, July 16). Civil Society Democratising Global Governance? Potentials and Limitations of "Counter-Democracy". Global Society, 33:4, p. 499-519
131 Heck, W. (2026, April 23). Israëlische organisatie brengt ngo's via De Telegraaf in het nauw – en blijkt niet 'onafhankelijk'. Published by NRC.
132 Library of Leaks (2024, December 1). NGO Monitor - Israel Ministry of Justice Leak. Published by Library of Leaks.
133 Heck, W. (2026, April 23). Israëlische organisatie brengt ngo's via De Telegraaf in het nauw – en blijkt niet 'onafhankelijk'. Published by NRC & Library of Leaks (2024, December 1). NGO Monitor - Israel Ministry of Justice Leak. Published by Library of Leaks.
134 NGO Monitor (n.d.). About. Published by NGO Monitor.
135 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.
136 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.
137 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.
138 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.

Originally coined by Richard Landes in 2003, the term Gazawood and variations of it like Pallywood have been adopted online to discredit images and videos of Palestinian suffering and spread distrust about the veracity of images from Gaza and Palestine. As illustrated earlier in this report, the quote has achieved considerable reach - and achieved increased visibility during the onset of conflict in 2023 and the denial by Israeli officials of the reports of famine in Gaza in July 2025.[139]

Gazawood has a linktr.ee account on which it shares links to all its social media channels, including LinkedIn, Instagram, Telegram, Facebook and YouTube, and on which it monetizes the account via PayPal, Buymeacoffee and IsraelGives.[140] On the IsraelGives website, Gazawood ran a campaign in 2024-25 that by its own description, was aimed at becoming a central 'hasbara center' that exposes fake news spread about Israel.[141] It noted that Gazawood was meeting with 'key individuals, including news channels and members of parliament, to discuss the future of the project and how to further develop it'.[142]

CAMERA - Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis
Founded in 1982, CAMERA 'monitors, documents, reviews and archives Middle East coverage and directly contacts reporters, editors, producers and publishers concerning distorted or inaccurate coverage, offering factual information to refute errors'.[143] CAMERA currently has a membership of over 65,000 members, who receive periodic emails and 'monographs'.[144] It has affiliates on US campuses and internationally, such as CAMERA on Campus and CAMERA UK. Eitan Fischberger was a CAMERA on Campus coordinator for two years.[145] CAMERA notes that it is non-partisan and that it fosters 'rigorous reporting'. In its response to Free Press Unlimited, CAMERA also underlined 'CAMERA is entirely independent, without government direction or funding'.

CAMERA reposted the IDF's allegations that Hossam Shabat was a Hamas sniper in a post about the New York Times,[146] and the IDF's allegations against Anas Al-Sharif in a post about Amnesty International.[147] In a larger X thread on 29 August 2025, CAMERA discredited several Palestinian journalists including Anas Al-Sharif, Ismail al Ghoul, Hamza al Dahdouh, citing articles from Honest Reporting and the Algemeiner.[148] It reposted these allegations in several other posts on X and on its website.[149]

The full response of CAMERA can be found on https://freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting. In relation to this section, in its response, CAMERA states among others:

'CAMERA is an independent nonprofit watchdog whose media work is devoted to one essential principle: the public deserves accurate and complete reporting, as promised in journalistic codes of ethics. We hold news organizations accountable when they fall short of that responsibility, including by omitting information material to understanding the events they cover. This is a fundamental function of a free press.

(..) Rigorous scrutiny of who is presented to the public as an unaligned journalist is a journalistic necessity, not a smear, and anyone concerned with the safety of journalists should likewise condemn the widespread misuse of the "journalist" title.

139 Open Measures. (2025, September 17). 'Pallywood' Conspiracy Theories Saw Increased Interest After Reports of Famine in Gaza. Published by Open Measures.
140 Gazawood Official (n.d.). Linktr.ee Gazawood Official. Linktr.ee.
141 Gazawood (n.d.). IsraelGives Gazawood. Published on IsraelGives.
142 Gazawood (n.d.). IsraelGives Gazawood. Published on IsraelGives.
143 CAMERA (n.d.) About. Published by CAMERA.
144 CAMERA (n.d.) About. Published by CAMERA.
145 Eitan Fischberger (2021). After 2 Wonderful. Published on LinkedIn. & Fischber, E. (2019, October 17). Apartheid Here, Apartheid There, Apartheid Truly Everywhere. Published by CAMERA.
146 CAMERA [@CAMERA4Truth]. (2025, April 4). Last week, the. Published on X.
147 CAMERA [@CAMERA4Truth]. (2025, August 25). Just LAST WEEK. Published on X.
148 CAMERA [@CAMERA4Truth]. (2025, August 29. THREAD: Countless Media. Published on X.
149 CAMERA. Articles on Anas Al-Sharif). Published by CAMERA.

CAMERA's references to Hussam Shabat and Anas al-Sharif reflect precisely that mission. When Israel shared captured documents affiliating the two with Hamas's Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, that disclosure was newsworthy — whether or not an advocacy organization feels the documents were sufficiently authenticated.

FPU's characterization of CAMERA as part of a coordinated "network of official and independent actors" might also be called a delegitimisation narrative. CAMERA is entirely independent, without government direction or funding. As journalists know, reporters and researchers routinely link to, quote, and embed publicly available material without forming an operational "network" with those they cite. This is all the more true with incidental references, such as the example you share of CAMERA embedding an X post by an individual researcher in order to embed the video he shared. Of course, having a researcher's commentary published in a Jewish newspaper like The Algemeiner is also straightforward journalism, not evidence of a secretive, bad-faith "network." Indeed, press-freedom advocacy organizations should be careful not to treat routine citations of Jewish commentators or publication in a Jewish newspaper as evidence of a coordinated network, which risks echoing longstanding antisemitic tropes about Jews operating through shadowy, interconnected cabals.'

Col. Richard Kemp

Richard Kemp is a former British armed forces commander who served on the international terrorism team of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee between 2002 and 2006. Kemp also sits on the board of NGO Monitor.[150] Kemp notes that his work at NGO Monitor is aimed at transparency around operations and funding of NGOs.[151] Kemp also regularly features in podcasts and articles as expert, such as at Foundation for Defense of Democracies[152] and at the Prager University Foundation[153], an American advocacy group promoting conservative and 'judeo-christian values'.[154] Legacy media have also cited Kemp as an expert, for example the BBC[155] and The Telegraph,[156] often failing to mention Kemp's affiliations including his position as a trustee of UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers[157], which raises money for the IDF[158], sometimes using distressing footage of the IDF killing Palestinians.[159] The BBC has since admitted regret for not mentioning Kemp's ties to Israel during a radio appearance in June 2025.[160] In the same month, Kemp wrote an article alleging that 'there were no 'journalists' in Gaza, just Hamas propaganda operatives', and that 'the jihadi terrorists have complete control of the Western media narrative'.[161]

150 NGO Monitor (n.d.). Col. Richard Kemp. Published by NGO Monitor.
151 NGO Monitor (n.d.). Col. Richard Kemp. Published by NGO Monitor.
152 May, C. D. & Col. Kemp, R. (2024, January 27). Colonel Richard Kemp on Israel's Long War. Published by Foundation for Defense of Democracy.
153 The Kairons Company (n.d.). Marissa Streit. Published by the Kairos Company. Note: Marissa Streit, CEO and founder of Prager University, served in Israel's military intelligence unit 8200.
154 PragerU. (n.d.) About. Published by PragerU.
155 StandWithus (2025, June 18). "WATCH: Former Commander". Published on Facebook.
156 Col. Kemp, R. (2023, April 13). Defenceless Ireland should be ashamed of itself. Published The Telegraph.
157 Charity Commission for England and Wales (n.d.). UK Friends of the Association for the Wellbeing of Israeli Soldiers. Published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.
158 Taylor, R. & Overton, I. (2023, November 10). Col Richard Kemp runs a charity that raises money for the IDF. Why is this not mentioned by the British media when they use him to speak about Israel and Gaza? Published by Action on Armed Violence.
159 Overton, I. (2025, June 20). BBC Admits 'Regret' After Again Failing to Disclose British Colonel's Links to Israeli Defence Force. Published by The Byline Times.
160 Overton, I. (2025, June 20). BBC Admits 'Regret' After Again Failing to Disclose British Colonel's Links to Israeli Defence Force. Published by The Byline Times.
161 Kemp, R. (2025, June 10). There are no 'journalists' in Gaza. Just Hamas propaganda operatives The jihadi terrorists have complete control of the Western media narrative. Published by The Daily Telegraph.

On 11 September 2024, Kemp also joined the European Leadership Network (ELNET)[162] delegation of senior defense officials on an official visit to Israel, where the delegates met with high-level Israeli officials, IDF representatives and survivors and families of hostages.[163] Just a few days earlier Kemp featured in a Sky News broadcast to comment about the BBC's 'horrific bias' towards Hamas, as mentioned in the Asserson Report, a report developed with contributions from David Collier and Khaled Hassan.[164]

Hen Mazzig

Mazzig is an active pro-Israel voice online and in legacy media. In a CBC article, Mazzig was cited as a "former IDF commander and senior fellow at Tel Aviv Institute", in which Mazzig argued why Israel does not target journalists.[165] Mazzig's X account has nearly 300k followers, but he also runs a Substack account and has written for media outlets like The New York Times, or features on CNN and the BBC.[166] In 2018, media outlet The Forward reported that Mazzig did work for and received money from the Israeli government, specifically the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and the government advertisement agency. Mazzig did not declare this payment, potentially a violation of the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA) according to The Forward. Mazzig is reported to have conducted among others a 'campus–apartheid campaign' and a 'campus campaign for pro-Israel people, in February, March, April and June 2017.[167] The Forward notes that his March-April 2017 tour was co-organized by CAMERA. Mazzig admitted to The Forward he was a paid contractor for the government of Israel, but stressed that the government never told him to do anything, or paid him for anything other than his advice.[168] Mazzig denied working for the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, as the Forward itself reported and that the Forward's own experts said there was no FARA violation established.

The full response of Hen Mazzig can be found on https://freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting. In relation to this section, in its response, Mazzig states among others:

'I posted about Anas Al-Sharif on X three times. No one in the Israeli government or military or anyone asked me to write those posts, gave me material for them, or paid me for them or to publish any content in regards to Israel-Palestine or when I call out anti-Jewish hate. Everything I cited was already public: the documents the Israeli military published on October 23, 2024, a post from Al-Sharif's own Telegram channel on October 7, 2023, which was later deleted and is preserved in the Internet Archive, and a photograph of him in Gaza.

In December 2024 I called him a Hamas terrorist and gave the military's documents as my basis. In January 2025 I wrote that he would one day trade 'the camera for a weapon.' On August 11, 2025, the day after he was killed, I wrote: 'Being a journalist shouldn't put a target on your back. But it's also not a free pass from accountability.' I never called for him or anyone to be harmed.

(..) Your profile calls me a former IDF commander and a senior researcher. I served for nearly five years as a humanitarian affairs officer in COGAT, the military unit that coordinates with Palestinian civilians and international organizations in the West Bank and Gaza. My title at the Tel Aviv Institute is Senior Fellow.

The Forward's 2018 article concerned a consulting contract with the Israeli Government Advertising Agency in 2017 and 2018. I confirmed it at the time, and my advice was about fighting antisemitism.

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162 ELNET is a Pro-Israel lobbying group set up to build relations between key European countries and Israel. Read more about ELNET via Bartal, Y. (2026, June). Pro-Israel lobbying deepens its ties in Europe. Published by Le Monde Diplomatique.

163 European Leadership Network (2024, September 11). ELNET Delegation of Senior Defense Officials Visits Israel. Published by ELNET. Reachable via Archive.org.

164 Sky News Australia (2024, September 8). 'Horrifically biased': Former British commander accuses BBC of anti-Israel bias.

165 Brown, C. (2025, August 27). Israel is killing journalists and getting away with it, say advocates. Published by CBC.

166 Hen Mazzig [@HenMazzig]. (n.d.). Hen Mazzig profile page. Published on X.

167 Pink, A. (2018. December 23). Did This Pro-Israel Superstar Work As A Secret Agent On College Campuses? Published by The Forward.

168 Pink, A. (2018. December 23). Did This Pro-Israel Superstar Work As A Secret Agent On College Campuses? Published by The Forward.

It predates the posts in your report by more than six years. If you cite it, please say that, and please do not place it beside your finding about paid collaborations with ministries in a way that suggests I was paid for these posts. I was not.'

David Collier

According to his own website, David Collier is 'an independent and undercover investigative journalist exposing extremism and antisemitism'.[169] Collier is a recurring name in messaging about allegations against Palestinian journalists and their work, as well as discrediting media and NGOs who write about killings of Palestinian journalists by Israel.[170] About Anas al-Sharif in particular, in addition to social media posts, Collier wrote a blog post in August 2025 in which he refers to Al-Sharif as a 'Hamas commander' and a 'religious fundamentalist'.[171]

In addition to his own blog, Collier writes for outspoken pro-Israeli magazines and news sites such as The Jewish Chronicle[172], The Algemeiner[173], Tablet Magazine[174], among others. His posts have often garnered millions of views, making him a key voice in this information ecosystem. An example is his so-called exposé of the 'face of famine Mohammed Al-Matouq'.[175] Al-Matouq is a child in Gaza who was said to be starving due to the famine in Gaza caused by Israel. A photograph of him, starving and with his bones protruding, ran on many legacy media outlets.[176] Pro-Israel voices like Collier pointed out that 'Al-Matouq suffered from cerebral palsy, has hypoxemia, and was born with a serious genetic disorder'. Collier used his disease as an argument that the famine in Gaza was in fact part of a 'narrative' meant to 'enable Hamas'.[177] But as human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch pointed out, Al-Matouq's disability meant he is even more vulnerable to starvation than healthy children.[178] The image came at a time when the IPC reported that 'over 20,000 children have been admitted for treatment for acute malnutrition between April and mid-July [2025], with more than 3,000 severely malnourished'.[179]

Collier often interacts with other accounts in this sphere, like Eitan Fischberger whom he thanked for his work.[180] and retweeting a post from Lt. Rol Peter Lerner, a former IDF Spokesperson, about the allegations against the six journalists of Al Jazeera.[181] He was also one of the analysts who worked on the Asserson Report (see: Khalid Hassan).[182]

169 David Collier (n.d.). About me. Published by David Collier.
170 See Chapter 3, including the Jan 2024 report Collier published.
171 Collier, D. (2025, August 21). Why are Al Jazeera Jihadists Being Sanctified as Heroic Journalists. Published by David Collier.
172 The Jewish Chronicle (n.d.). Latest from David Collier. Published by The Jewish Chronicle.
173 The Algemeiner (n.d.). David Collier. Published by The Algemeiner.
174 Tablet Magazine (n.d.). David Collier. Published by Tablet Magazine.
175 David Collier [@mishtal] (2025, July 27). "Exclusive: This is". Published on X.
176 Horn, A. (2025, July 31). Why this image of an emaciated Gazan boy sparked controversy. Published by ABC News.
177 David Collier [@mishtal] (2025, July 27). Exclusive: This is. Published on X.
178 İ erimoviÎ , E. (2025, August 20). Despite Efforts to Shift the Blame, Israeli Policies Are Starving Children. Published by Human Rights Watch.
179 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (2025, July 29). IPC ALERT: Worst-case scenario of Famine unfolding in the Gaza Strip. Published by IPC.
180 David Collier [@misthal] (2025, August 11). "Archived proof that". Published on X.
181 David Collier [@mishtal] (2025, August 11). "A reminder from". Published on X.
182 Asserson, T. (2024, September). The Asserson Report. Published by Asserson law firm.

Richard Landes

Landes is a retired historian, who first coined the term 'Pallywood' in 2003[183], and later founded the disinformation channel GAZAWOOD1.[184] Landes frequently writes for pro-Israeli outlets and platforms such as Tablet Magazine,[185] ISGAP[186] and Fathom.[187] His November 2023 article for Fathom Journal, for example, alleges that media have en masse fallen for Hamas propaganda regarding the bombing of Al-Ahli hospital on 17 October: "Had there been a real journalist in Gaza to film the undamaged hospital, or the small crater, we would have known right away. But no. There were none, only 'journalists fighting with their cameras' and keyboards passing propaganda off as news. … Western legacy media have repeatedly engaged in lethal journalism against Israel, not realising that the side they chose to support was actually fighting on team Global Jihad, and that every victory they gave them over Israel was a victory for the implacable enemies of their own democratic societies, their own free press."[188]

Foundation for Defense of Democracies

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) and several of its staff members including Senior Research Analyst Joe Truzman, Executive Director Jonathan Schanzer, and Senior Fellow Lt. Col (rtd.) Jonathan Conricus have discredited Palestinian journalists and their work on social media[189], and in among others articles[190], a podcast[191] and a TV interview[192]. In April 2001, when FDD was founded, it noted in an application to the Internal Revenue Service that the goal of the FDD was "to provide education to enhance Israel's image in North America and the public's understanding of issues affecting Israeli-Arab relations."[193] FDD staff includes several former Israeli intelligence, military and government officials, such as Lt. Col. (rtd.) Jonathan Conricus, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Tal Kelman, Eyal Hulata[194], and Major General (Ret.) Amir Eshel.[195]

The FDD has rejected allegations that it has acted on behalf of foreign governments and states it does not receive funding from foreign governments.[196] Claims of direct collaboration between the FDD and the government of Israel have not been backed up with evidence, nor has the FDD filled out US Foreign Agent registrations.

183 Landes, R. (2023, November 29). Pallywood's Latest Blockbuster. Published by Tablet Magazine.

184 Métézeau, F. (2025, April 11). Gazawood: Israeli NGO links account to large-scale disinformation. Published by Forbidden Stories.

185 Landes, R. (n.d.). Richard Landes. Published by Tabled Magazine.

186 The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism & Policy (n.d.). Richard Landes. Published on ISGAP; Fang, L. & Poulson, J. (2024, June 24). Israeli documents show expansive government effort to shape US discourse around Gaza war. Published by The Guardian.

187 Fathom Journal (n.d.). Richard Landes. Published by Fathom Journal.

188 Landes, R. (2023, November). Fathom Long Read | Lethal Journalism and the Pattern: Why the World Fell for Hamas' Al Ahli Lie. Published by Fathom Journal.

189 Foundation for Defense of Democracies [@FDD] (2024, October 24). "IDF Exposes Six". Published on X; Joe Truzman [@JoeTruzman] (2025, August 11). "Notable Elimination: The. Published on X. See also: https://x.com/JoeTruzman/status/1849088696156635626?a=qTvZqiDDVzrGW7_j8WA&s=20; https://x.com/JoeTruzman/status/1955123792445125099?a=_SnVFlq1m2F8dT7zg60&s=20; https://x.com/JoeTruzman/status/1955486471047221695?a=mCyXnxayhI5XCZlNbMA&s=20; Jonathan Conricus [@jconricus] (2025, August 11). "Dual purpose villain". Published on X. See also: https://x.com/jconricus/status/2105682333001203910?a=b2icazDdRznJW0OFxI8&s=20; Schanzer, J. [@JSchanzer] (2025, August 11). "Israel accused yet". Published on X. See also: https://x.com/JSchanzer/status/1849155233504469006?a=wWernCXFEp8yVNT5KS8&s=20

190 Schanzer, J. (2024, March 21). The Growing List of Al Jazeera Terrorists. Published by Foundation for Defense of Democracies; Dershowitz, T. (2025, November 17). Does Al Jazeera Collaborate with Hamas?. Published by Foundation for Defense of Democracies. FDD. (2024, October 29). Captured Documents Show Al Jazeera Ties to Hamas, Islamic Jihad. Published by FDD. FDD. (2025, September 8). A Foundation Led by a Terror Sympathizer Is Waging Lawfare Against Israel. Published by FDD. FDD (2024, January 11). Slain Gaza 'Journalists' Were Terrorists. Published by FDD.

191 Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) (2025, June 4). FDD Morning Brief | feat. Eitan Fischberger (Jun. 4). Published on YouTube.

192 I24NEWS English [@I24NEWS_EN] (2025, August 11). "He was a". Published on X.

193 Judis, J. (2015, August 18). The Little Think Tank That Could. Published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

194 Hulata served under Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Prime Minister Yair Lapid, and earlier served for more than 20 years in Israeli national security roles. See his profile on FDD.

195 Foundation for Defense of Democracies (n.d.). FDD Team. Published by FDD.

196 Magee, C. (2026, May 6). What is the FDD, the pro-Israel think tank shaping Trump's Iran policy? Published by Al Jazeera.

During the Israeli-American Council's annual conference of 2017, then Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs Sima Vaknin-Gil, who held that role between 2015 and 2019, seemed to suggest that her Ministry engaged with the FDD. Speaking about countering the BDS movement, Vaknin-Gil noted: "We have got the budget. We can bring things to the table that are quite different. We have three different sub-campaigns. Data gathering, working on activist organisations, money trail… This is something only a country, with its resources can do the best. We have FDD [Foundation for Defense of Democracies]. We have others working on this."[197]

(Former) FDD staff engaged in discrediting Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat

Joe Truzman was a senior research fellow at the FDD until May 2026 and an active voice in discrediting Palestinian journalists and activists, especially in the case of Anas Al-Sharif. Truzman states he assists non-governmental organizations and policymakers by tracking and identifying Palestinian armed groups and their members.[198] Truzman left FDD in 2026 and currently works as a researcher and writer for Honest Reporting.[199]

FDD Executive Director Jonathan Schanzer often testifies before US congress and appears in many legacy media outlets as an expert.[200] Schanzer also runs a podcast in which he has invited pro-Israel guests such as Richard Kemp, Eylon Levy, Eitan Fischberger, Andrew Fox, Dr. Einat Wilf, Erin Molan and Jonas Du of The Free Press.[201]

Jonathan Conricus is a former IDF Spokesperson and currently a senior fellow at FDD focused on the Middle East. He served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for 24 years as a combat commander in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, and was still active in the IDF in November 2023 when he was interviewed as an expert by his future colleague Jonathan Schanzer.[202] Conricus has been cited by Dutch columnist Leon de Winter in a column in de Telegraaf about Anas Al-Sharif.[203]

OSINT613 - Open Source Intel

Open Source Intel runs several social media accounts, of which his X account has nearly a million followers. The account presents itself as an analyst in geopolitics and open source intelligence, and notes on its website that it was founded in 2020.[204] Through the X account OSINT613, the organization has been active in discrediting Palestinian journalists Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. The website and social media channels are run by a man who identifies himself as the founder of Open Source Intel, Jay, based in Northern Israel, and a chief operating officer called Simcha Brodsky, also based in Israel.[205] Through the account OSINT613, he also used to sell 'Gaza's Most Wanted' card decks.[206] The account currently runs a website where it shares 'live intelligence'.[207]

197 Al Jazeera (2017, January). The Lobby: U.S.A.: The Witch Hunt. Published on YouTube via The Electronic Intifada. Minute 29:15.
198 Joe Truzman [@JoeTruzman]. Published on X. & The John Batchelor Show (2024, September 20). #GAZA: Rafah Crossing. Joe Truzman is a senior research analyst at FDD's Long War Journal, focused primarily on Palestinian militant groups and Hezbollah. Published on Audioboom.
199 Joe Truzman [@JoeTruzman] (n.d.). Profile. Published on X.
200 Foundation for Defense of Democracies (n.d.). Jonathan Schanzer. Published by Foundation for Defense of Democracies & Jonathan Schanzer (2026, January 22). Jonathan Schanzer on world leaders signing the Gaza Board of Peace charter – Fox News. Published on YouTube.
201 FDD Morning Brief by Jonathan Schanzer (n.d.). Playlist. Published on YouTube.
202 Jonathan Schanzer (2023, November 20). FDD Morning Brief | feat. Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus (Nov. 20). Published on YouTube.
203 De Winter, L. (2025, August 11). Leon de Winter: 'journalist' Anas al-Sharif was een Hamas-propagandist die de moord op Joden verheerlijkte. Published by De Telegraaf.
204 OSINT613 (n.d.) About Open Source Intel. Published by OSINT613.
205 OSINT613 (n.d.) About Open Source Intel. Published by OSINT613.
206 Gaza's Most Wanted (n.d.) Gaza's Most Wanted Cards. Accessible via Archive.
207 OSINT613 (n.d.). Home page. Published by OSINT613.

In May 2024, OSINT613 opened a TikTok account and published a video in which the presenter introduces himself as Simcha Brodsky.[208] In March 2025, Brodsky was introduced as a journalist based in Israel in an interview with Australian journalist Erin Molan.[209] Since then, OSINT613 notes that other actors in this information ecosystem are contributing to OSINT613 analysis[210], as Eitan Fischberger for example notes on his X profile.[211]

The full response of OSINT613 can be found on https://freepressunlimited.org/en/from-tagging-to-targeting. In relation to this section, in its response, OSINT613 states among others:

'Our reporting on Anas al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat relied on publicly available evidence, including IDF statements, captured Hamas documents, military records, photographs, videos and their own social media activity.'

(..) We are particularly concerned by the apparent disparity in your treatment of evidence. Israeli documents face intense skepticism, while denials from Al Jazeera and the individuals involved appear to receive greater weight. Your organization described the allegations against al-Sharif as "unfounded" in August 2025, before this investigation. That raises legitimate questions about your methodology and impartiality.

We also categorically reject any suggestion of coordination with Israeli organizations. OSINT613 operates independently and has NEVER received payment from the Israeli government, the IDF or any affiliated organizations. Our reporting required no coordination. The evidence is publicly accessible. Any allegation of paid or coordinated activity must be supported by evidence.

There is a fundamental distinction between investigating military affiliations and determining whether someone was lawfully targeted. Our role is to examine and report publicly available evidence, not determine the legality of military operations.'

Middle East Buka

An account active on Telegram (in Russian) and on X (in English), that contributed to the Media Watch Legal site, which is funded and hosted by the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs.[212] The channel published a set of posts on 12 June 2025 discrediting the journalists killed by Israel as identified by Al Jazeera.[213] Content on the Media Watch Legal website has in many cases been directly copied from Middle East Buka's post of 12 June 2025. Middle East Buka explained the methodology the account used to identify combatants in an X post on 10 April 2025, focusing heavily on the use of particular words and sentences in eulogy and mourning posts as indicators of involvement in terrorism.[214] It is not known who runs the account - the Jerusalem Post earlier identified the owner of the account as a man called Michael who asked to stay anonymous.[215]

208 Osint613 [@Osint613] (2024, May 22). Osint613 from Twitter. Published on TikTok.
209 Documenting Israel with Erin Molan (2025, May 27). Erin Molan interviews Simcha Brodsky @ JFEED regarding the anti-Hamas protests in Gaza. Published on YouTube.
210 OSINT613 (n.d.). The Team. Published by OSINT613.
211 Eitan Fischberger [@EFischberger]. (n.d.). Profile. Published on X.
212 Media Watch Legal. (n.d.). Fake "journalists". Published by The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism.
213 Middle East Buka [@MiddleEastBuka]. (2025, June 12). Gaza journalists death. Published on X.
214 Middle East Buka [@MiddleEastBuka]. Mourning posts a clue. Published on X.
215 https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-831219

Journalistenwatch.com

A German-Language blog founded in 2011 by Philip Wolfgang Beyer and Thomas Böhm.[216] They also run a Telegram channel with nearly 10.000 followers.[217] Die Zeit noted in 2019 that the portal had become one of the most influential media outlets of the New Right, a group the newspaper described as consisting of Islamophobic right-wing populists and nationalist extremists.[218] . In 2019, Die Zeit reported Journalistenwatch.com received funding from the far-right American think-tank The Middle East Forum (MEF)[219]. Journalistenwatch.com stated in a response that this 'dates back almost a decade and [donations from the MEF] were of minor economic significance anyway' (full response below). The website was included in a 2025 study of the German far-right social movement.[220] The website features two articles attacking Hossam Shabat and Anas Al-Sharif directly, with the article against Al-Sharif citing Eitan Fischberger as evidence of Sharif's terror ties.[221]

Free Press Unlimited received the following response by Journalistenwatch.com:

'First of all: The information you compiled via Journalistenwatch—including studies by explicitly far-left academic activists and the highly defamatory 2019 pamphlet from Die Zeit—is rife with bias and propagandistic narratives. It is just as one-sided as your portrayal of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat as independent journalists. For an organization that calls itself "Free Press Unlimited," this should actually be unacceptable. You engage in obvious whitewashing and the relativization of terrorism in favor of the Palestinian side, just like other NGOs such as the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) or Reporters Without Borders.

As regrettable as the killing of the two men was in the context of a legitimate counter-terrorism and retaliatory war, their classification as "journalists" is questionable. Al Jazeera is not a neutral broadcaster, but a propaganda channel financed by Qatar. Its editorial work has always been clearly pro-Palestinian, close to Hamas, and strictly anti-Zionist. The fact that you dismiss these objective facts, as well as Israel's evidence of the two men's proximity to Hamas, as "delegitimization," and one-sidedly emphasize the victim role—as emerges from your inquiry—raises the concern that the "report" you are currently preparing will be an equally one-sided, pseudo-scientific propaganda prop for the Palestinian side.

For our part, we openly acknowledge that we are not editorially neutral regarding this topic, but stand more on the side of Israel, because it is the only rule-of-law-based and democratic nation in the entire Middle East, whose right to exist—despite all legitimate criticism of individual government decisions and politicians—must be defended unconditionally. This has nothing to do with being "right-wing" or "Islamophobic," nor with individual donations from the Middle East Foundation that date back almost a decade and were of minor economic significance anyway (to speak of "funding" would be grotesque). I myself have only been responsible for Journalistenwatch since the end of 2024, and I cannot comment on the founders or the original funding structures. However, the circles of donors and supporters have been heterogeneous from the outset, and our medium is neither economically nor politically dependent in any way.'

216 Eckert, T., Elberg, C. & Röttger, T. (2019, May 24). The distributor: "Journalistenwatch" spreads misinformation with money and stories from the USA. Published by Correctiv.
217 Telegram-page @Jouwatch
218 Fuchs, C. (2019, July 18). Hetze ohne Spendenquittung. Published on Die Zeit.
219 Fuchs, C. (2019, July 18). Hetze ohne Spendenquittung. Published on Die Zeit.
220 Schmidt, N. (2017, December 22). Stresemann-Stiftung erhielt Geld rechter US-Finanziers. Published on Die Zeit.
221 Gong, B. (2025). Opportunities for extremism: a comparative study of German far-right social movement networks on Twitter/X, Telegram, and Gettr. Published by Information, Communication & Society.

Adam and Gila Milstein Foundation

The Adam and Gila Milstein foundation sponsors a wide range of pro-Israel lobby and advocacy groups such as Honest Reporting, CAMERA, NGO Monitor, UK Lawyers for Israel, Middle East Forum, Palestinian Media Watch, Heritage Foundation, The Algemeiner, and Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD).[222] There were allegations in 2018 that founder Adam Milstein also funded Canary Mission, a doxing platform meant to harass pro-Palestinian voices,[223] but Milstein has denied his involvement with the platform. The Intercept did show he praised the blacklist on X, posts which have since been deleted.[224] Adam Milstein is a founder of the Israel-American Council (IAC), and sat on the board for AIPAC, Jewish Funders Network, Birthright Israel and Stand With Us, all Pro-Israel advocacy groups.[225] IAC organizes a yearly conference, for which it received funding or support in 2024 and 2025 from the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora via OTD Global Inc.[226] Adam Milstein previously shared posts directly attacking Palestinian journalists on his social media channels, but deleted them during the course of this investigation.[227] A search on his X account for (variations of) Anas Al-Sharif gave no results. But using social media analysis tool Junkipedia, we were able to recover at least four posts targeting Al-Sharif alone between 7 October 2023 and 2025.

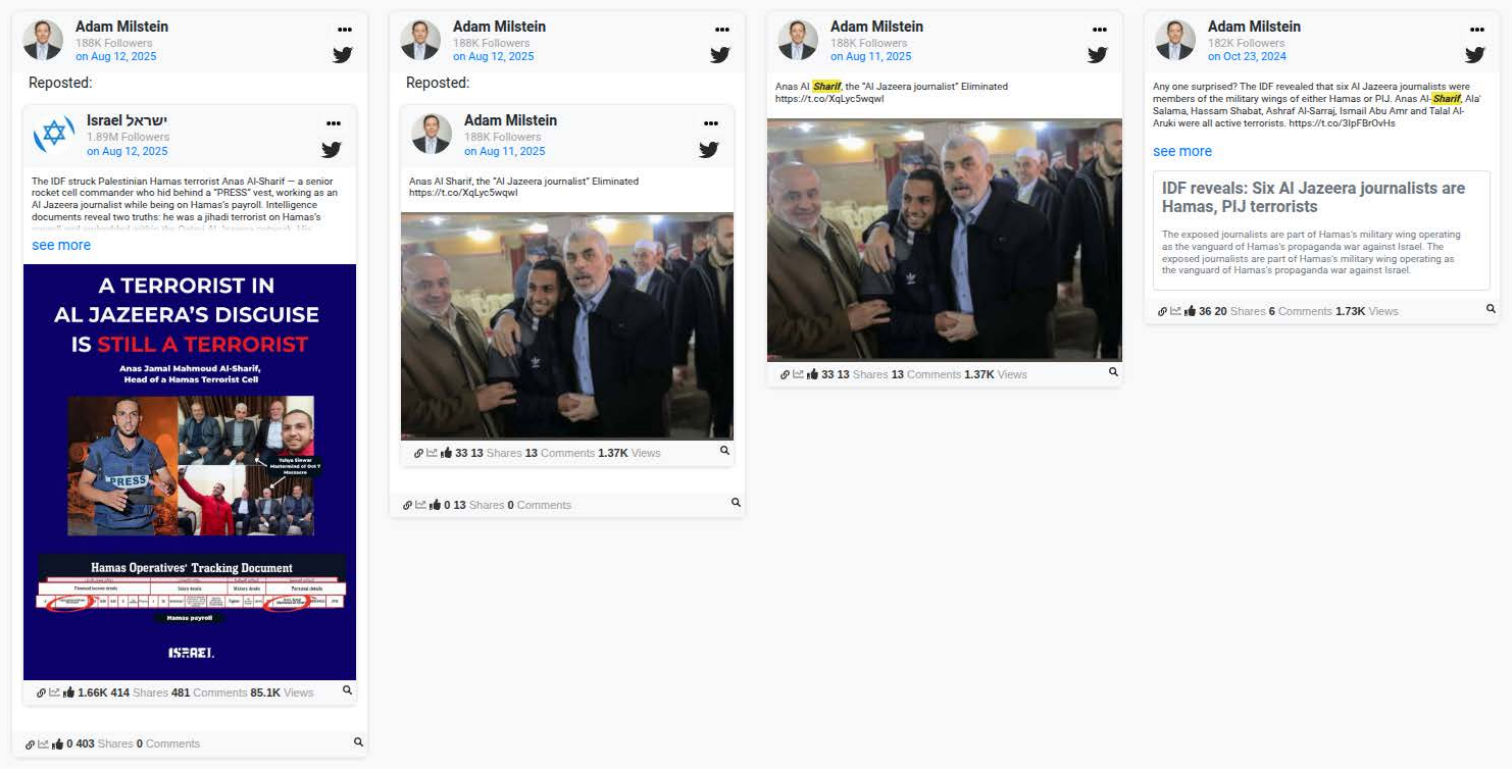


Figure 13: Screengrab of a section of Adam Milstein's posts on Anas Al-Sharif, dating back to October 2024. Milstein has since deleted all four of these posts. Source: Junkipedia.

222 The Adam and Gila Milstein Family Foundation (n.d.). Who we support. Published by Milstein Foundation. Note: only approachable with VPN from Israel or the United States.

223 The Intercept (2018, November 22). It's Killing the Student Movement": Canary Mission's Blacklist of Pro-Palestine Activists Is Taking a Toll. Published by The Intercept.

224 JTA staff (2018, August 28). Pro-Israel donor Adam Milstein denies report that he funds Canary Mission. Published by The Times of Israel.

225 Israeli American Council (n.d.). Adam Milstein. Board Member & Chairman Emeritus. Published on IAC360.

226 Government of Israel, Ministry of Diaspora and Combating Antisemitism (n.d.). Freedom of Information Database. Published by the Government of Israel.

227 See deleted posts for example here and here. We were able to retrieve the posts via Junkipedia.

Amir Tsarfati - Beholdisraelchannel

Amir Tsarfati has been a Bible teacher since 1999, and currently runs non-profit 'Behold Israel', including its popular Telegram (579k followers as of 2026) and Instagram (633k followers as of August 2026) channels.[228] He has been vocal about discrediting Palestinian journalists and their work, often directly quoting the IDF or others within this sphere. On his Telegram channel he published nine posts about Al-Sharif and three about Shabat.[229] Each of these posts has hundreds of thousands of views. In one post on the day of the murder of Anas Al-Sharif, Tsarfati refers to an article in Bild that calls Al-Sharif a terrorist as well.[230] Tsarfati uses his platform to support the IDF in their 'urgent needs during the war', receiving a plaque from the commander of 'Platoon Z',[231] part of the Moran unit, which in turn is part of the Precise Armament Array (within the Artillery Corps) of the IDF.[232]

Andrew Fox

Andrew Fox is a former British Army Officer, currently serving as research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society.[233] He also serves on the international advisory board of NGO Monitor.[234] Fox wrote a controversial article on his Substack on which he asked: "When is a journalist a military target? Perhaps not as often as they should be." Fox notes he sees journalists as a legitimate military target because they have a reporting bias.[235] Furthermore, he argues that Al Jazeera staff and facilities worldwide are legitimate military targets.[236] On X, the post yielded nearly 300k views.[237] Fox has been cited in a column in Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf as a source in a column about Anas al Sharif.[238] According to Action on Armed Violence, Andrew Fox traveled to Gaza on at least three occasions under military escort on European Leadership Network(ELNET)-organized trips.[239] In September 2024 for example, Fox joined an ELNET delegation of senior defense officials on an official visit to Israel, where the delegates met with high-level Israeli officials, IDF representatives and survivors and families of hostages.[240]

VividProwess

An anonymous X account with more than half a million followers that has been very active online in discrediting Palestinian journalists and their work. The account retweets or responds to others like Osint613, DaviCollier, Eitan Fischberger, Gazawood and CherylWroteIt (Chaya's Clan/Mor Edge Insight).[241] The account posted repeatedly about Anas al Sharif and other (Al Jazeera) journalists, and stated among others about Al-Sharif: "You knew you were going to die because you had been in Hamas for 10 years, had fired rockets at Israeli civilians, and had been part of Hamas's military wing. You were not a journalist; you were a terrorist."[242] In total, the account published 109.7k posts since April 2019, corresponding to more than 40 posts per day.[243] VividProwess presents himself as a 'proud Zionist and a proud Jew', but allegations have surfaced that the owner of the account is in fact Ashutosh Shukla from India,[244] something that he vehemently denies.[245]

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228 (1) Amir Tsarfati [@beholdisraelchannel] (n.d.). Profile page. Published on Telegram. & (2) Amir Tsarfati (n.d.). Profile page. Published on Instagram.
229 Amir Tsarfati [@beholdisraelchannel] (n.d.). Search: Anas Al-Sharif. Published on Telegram.
230 Amir Tsarfati [@beholdisraelchannel] (n.d.). Search: Anas Al-Sharif. Published on Telegram.
231 Amir Tsarfati [@beholdisrael] (2026, March 19). Today, the company. Publia Biblshed on X.
232 Israel Defense Forces (2021, December 12). Artillery Corps. Published by the IDF.
233 Henry Jackson Society (n.d.). Andrew Fox. Published by Henry Jackson Society.
234 NGO Monitor (n.d.). Board. Published by NGO Monitor.
235 Andrew Fox (2025, August 11). When is a journalist a military target? Published on Substack.
236 Andrew Fox (2025, August 11). When is a journalist a military target? Published on Substack.
237 Andrew Fox [@Mr_Andrew_Fox] (2025, August 11). "When does". Published on X.
238 De Winter, L. (2025, August 12). Leon de Winter: 'journalist' Anas al-Sharif was een Hamas-propagandist die de moord op Joden verheerlijkte. Published by De Telegraaf.
239 Overton, I. (2025, August 12). When is a journalist a military target? Former British Major and pundit Andrew Fox says "perhaps not as often as they should be". Why his argument should concern us all. Published by Action on Armed Violence.
240 European Leadership Network (2024, September 11). ELNET Delegation of Senior Defense Officials Visits Israel. Published by ELNET. Reachable via Archive.org.
241 Vivid. [@VividProwess]. "Journalist". Search via X.
242 Vivid. [@VividProwess]. "You knew you". Published on X.
243 As per August 2026.
244 Reverse Canary Mission (n.d.) Ashutosh Shukla (VividProwess). Published on Reverse Canary Mission.
245 Vivid. [@VividProwess]. "Time to address". Published on X.

LizaRosen0000

An anonymous account with more than 231k followers as of October 2026, and introduces herself as an Israeli living in Israel.[246] The account is a very vocal supporter of the Israeli government. The account is very active and posted more than 171.300 messages on X between May 2019 and October 2026, nearly 63 posts per day.[247] It regularly shares AI-generated videos or photos[248] and runs an Israel support community on X with more than 4500 members, which she created on 22 December 2024.[249] The account regularly interacts with others in this information system, including VividProwess[250] and Mor Edge Insight.[251]

Chaya's Clan/CherylWroteIt/Mor Edge Insight

CherylWroteIt was a very active anonymous account discrediting Palestinian journalists and their work. In August-September 2025, other pro-Israeli accounts found that the account was likely used as a scam[252], something that was denied by the account's anonymous owner. The account was defended by other accounts that faced similar accusations, such as VividProwess[253] and AntSpeaks,[254] and subsequently rebranded to Chaya's Clan, a new account with more than 200K followers.[255] In 2026, the account rebranded itself again, this time to Mor Edge Insight.[256] That account has 235k followers as of May 2026, and published a staggering 120.8k posts since August 2023, meaning more than 115 posts on average per day.[257] In addition to its described interactions with GAZAWOOD, the account shared terrorism allegations about Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat on X in at least 14 (re)posts.[258]

The Algemeiner

The Algemeiner is an online newspaper serving as an 'independent media voice covering the Middle East, Israel and matters of Jewish interest around the world.'[259] One of its founders, Dovid Ofune, is also the owner of the New York Sun, and since 2024 engaged in a bid to buy British newspaper The Telegraph.[260] It is one of the most outspoken papers about Palestinian journalists and features articles from individuals active in this environment such as Eitan Fischberger[261], Tamar Sternthal (director CAMERA)[262], Ira Stoll (North America Editor of the Jerusalem Post)[263] and Sabine Sterk (CEO of Time To Stand up for Israel).[264] In total, 22 articles[265] mentioning Anas Al-Sharif and 9 articles[266] mentioning Hossam Shabat featured on the Algemeiner, more than on any of the outlets in our legacy media sample.

246 Rosen, L. [@LizaRosen0000]. Account on X
247 Rosen, L. [@LizaRosen0000]. Account on X. & https://en.rattibha.com/LizaRosen0000?sort=reads
248 Rosen, L. [@LizaRozen0000]. Liza Rozen. Published by Rattibha.
249 X. (n.d.). Welcome to Communities. Published by X.
250 Rosen, L. [@LizaRozen0000]. (n.d.). Search for: VividProwess. Published on X.
251 Rosen, L. [@LizaRozen0000]. (n.d.). Search for: CherylWroteIt Published on X.
252 Jake Donnely [@RedWhiteBlueJew]. (2025, March 24). "Beware the CherylWroteIt". Published on X.
253 Vivid. [@VividProwess]. (n.d.). Search: "cheryl". Published on X.
254 Ant [@AntSpeaks]. (n.d.). Search: "cheryl". Published on X.
255 Chaya's Clan (n.d.). Profile page. Published on X. Visible via Archive.is.
256 MorEdgeInsight [@MorEdge_Insight]. (n.d.). Profile page. Published on X. https://x.com/MorEdge_Insight
257 MorEdgeInsight [@MorEdge_Insight]. (n.d.). Profile page. Published on X. https://x.com/MorEdge_Insight
258 MorEdge_Insight [@MorEdge_Insight]. N.d. "Anas al-Sharif. Published on X.
259 The Algemeiner (n.d.). About us. Published by The Algemeiner.
260 Sweney, D. & Croft, J. (2024, October 4). Who is Dovid Efune, leading contender to buy Daily Telegraph? Published by The Guardian.
261 The Algemeiner (n.d.). Eitan Fischberger/JNS.org. Published by The Algemeiner.
262 Sternthal, T. (2025, August 19). Hamas Documents Aren't Substantiation — But the Media Doesn't Care. Published by The Algemeiner.
263 Stroll, I. (2025, March 28). New York Times Conceals Hamas Role of 'Journalist' It Accuses Israel of Killing. Published by The Algemeiner.
264 Sterk, S. (2025, August 14). When the World Chooses the Lie, Over the Truth. Published by The Algemeiner.
265 The Algemeiner (n.d.). Search Results: Anas Al-Sharif. Published by The Algemeiner.
266 The Algemeiner (n.d.). Search Results: Hossam Shabat. Published by The Algemeiner.

The Algemeiner also serves as a platform amplifying content published by Honest Reporting staff. This includes articles by anonymous Honest Reporting staff[267], former executive director Gil Hoffman[268], Salo Aizenberg[269], Rinat Harash[270], Channa Rifkin[271] and Rachel O'Donnoghue.[272] The Algemeiner receives funding from outspoken pro-Israeli institutions such as the Adam & Gila Milstein foundation.[273]

267 Honest Reporting Staff (2025, August 18). Gaza Journalist Identified as Hamas Terrorist Won a Pulitzer; Reuters Can't See the Problem. Published by The Algemeiner & Honest Reporting Staff (2025, September 1). Israel Targets Terrorists, Not Journalists — But Media Ignores the Facts. Published by The Algemeiner & Honest Reporting Staff (2025, August 6). The Financial Times Relies on Hamas-Linked Journalist and Other Lies To Demonize Israel. Published by The Algemeiner.

268 Hoffman, G. (2025, December 25). Foreign Press Correspondents Honored Terrorists, Awarded Al Jazeera Cash Grant. Published by The Algemeiner

269 The Algemeiner (n.d.). Salo Aizenberg. Published by The Algemeiner

270 Harash, R. (2025, August 13). Gaza 'Journalist' Was a Hamas Terrorist — But the Media Ignores the Evidence. Published by The Algemeiner

271 Rifkin, C. (2025, August 22). Anas al-Sharif Was a Terrorist, But The New York Times Doesn't Care. Published by The Algemeiner.

272 O'Donoghue, R. (2025, September 8). Wall Street Journal vs. Wall Street Journal: A Paper at War With Its Own Reporting. Published by The Algemeiner

273 Adam and Gila Milstein Foundation (n.d.). Supported organizations. Published by Adam and Gila Milstein Foundation.

Appendix 3 – Methodology

Outlet	Country	Audience/reach online[1]
BBC	United Kingdom	40.1 million per month
The Sun	United Kingdom	21.4 million per month
NOS	Netherlands	8.5 million per month
De Telegraaf	Netherlands	6.3 million per month
Le Figaro	France	9% of people use weekly
Le Parisien	France	8% of people use weekly
Tageschau.de	Germany	17% of people use weekly
BILD	Germany	14% of people use weekly
The New York Times	United States	495 million visits per month
Fox News	United States	252 million visits per month
CBC News [EN]	Canada	23% of English speakers in Canada use weekly
TVA Nouvelle [FR]	Canada	27% of French speakers in Canada use weekly
News.com.au	Australia	24% of people use weekly
The Australian	Australia	9% of people use weekly

Figure 12: Outlets selected for analysis based on reach

Codes based on the Bordeaux Declaration:

1) **Right of reply:**
   a) No right of reply in any shape or form.
   b) Was the journalist approached for comment?
   c) Was Al Jazeera approached for comment?
   d) Was a (public, timely, relevant) statement of the journalist used?
   e) Was a (public, timely, relevant) statement of Al Jazeera used?

2) **Lack of independent verification:** repeat or adopt the frame, without critically examining the factual merit of the allegations using journalistic methods. This includes:
   a) No independent evaluation by the media outlet itself of the factual merits of (statements issued by) institutions or individuals, i.e. no independent effort to analyse documents and evidence presented by one side used to legitimize attacks on journalists.
   b) No evaluation of the authenticity of the evidence presented, i.e. not mentioning that no one has been able to verify underlying documents presented.
   c) No mention that independent evaluation was attempted but was unsuccessful, i.e. "We reached out to the IDF for comment or access, but haven't received a response."

1 These numbers are not exact and their template can vary due to different ways the outlets themselves report.

3) **Lack of context:** outlets quote or cite individuals or institutions without providing situational context or context of the individuals or institutions in question. This includes:
   a) Treating attacks on journalists and/or delegitimisation of journalists as stand-alone events, instead of placing them in a wider trend.
   b) Lack of transparency and/or background information about relevant affiliations of individuals and institutions quoted.

4) **Discrediting of selected sources:**
   a) Discrediting sources to undermine their trustworthiness, including through ad hominem attacks and/or by publishing inaccurate information.
   b) Providing background information about funding or affiliations of some sources or involved parties, but not others in the same publication.

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