The full response received by Hen Mazzig on 13 November 2026 has been included below. The invitation for a response by Free Press Unlimited has been included under the response.

"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.

Celebrating the October 7 attacks disqualifies someone from being a neutral reporter. On that day Hamas murdered about 1,200 people, most of them civilians, among them children, entire families and a 91-year-old Holocaust survivor. It raped women, and it kidnapped 251 people, including a nine-month-old baby and people in their eighties. Nothing justifies celebrating that. Free Press Unlimited says the military's documents cannot be verified. The Israeli military can settle that by publishing the originals, and I think it should."

The invitation for response as sent by Free Press Unlimited:

Dear Mr Mazzig,

I am reaching out on behalf of the international press freedom organization Free Press Unlimited. We would like to invite your response to findings we will publish in a forthcoming report about the delegitimisation of Palestinian journalists before and after they were killed, in particular the cases of Anas Al-Sharif and Hossam Shabat. To ensure that we accurately reflect any views or actions taken by you in relation to the matters included in the report, we respectfully request your response by **17 November 2026**. Please find a summary of the key findings of the report at the bottom of this email.

In the publication, we refer to your commentary on journalist Anas al-Sharif and Palestinian journalists in general and mention you in the context of ‘a network of official and independent actors who were involved in constructing and amplifying delegitimization narratives’ about Palestinian journalists and their work. We specifically refer to your statements in this CBC article: https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/israel-is-killing-journalists-and-getting-away-with-it-say-advocates-1.7618703 and posts

about Anas Al-Sharif, in which you refer to him as a Hamas terrorist:https://x.com/search?q=from%3AHenMazzig%20Anas%20Al%20Sharif&src=typed_query&f=live. In a short profile of your work, the report notes you are a former IDF commander and senior researcher at Tel Aviv Institute. It notes your X account has nearly 300k followers, that you run a Substack and have written for media outlets like The New York Times, and have been featured on CNN and the BBC The report references reporting from the Forward from 2018, and notes your response to the Forward at the time, in which you stated that you were a paid contractor of the Israeli government at the time, but also noted that the government never told you to do anything, or paid you for anything other than his advice on fighting antisemitism. https://forward.com/israel/412206/did-this-pro-israel-superstar-work-as-a-secret-agent-on-college-campuses/

Any response received before **November 17th** will be incorporated in the report. If you have any questions, please contact me at jdezeeuw@freepressunlimited.org. We thank you in advance for confirming receipt of this email.

On behalf of the Investigations unit at Free Press Unlimited,

Your sincerely,

Summary of key findings

The report analyzes public and online statements in which official and independent actors have referred to the two Palestinian journalists as terrorists, propaganda operatives, or participants in hostilities without providing credible evidence of these allegations. In the report, we refer to these allegations as 'delegitimisation narratives': 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. FPU conducted digital and open source research to answer the research questions: 'How have delegitimisation narratives around killed Gazan journalists been constructed?' and 'How did these narratives reach legacy media – and thereby large audiences?'.

With regard to the allegations issued against Anas al Sharif and Hossam Shabat, the report outlines the applicable legal framework under international humanitarian law,

which prescribes that journalists can only be legitimate targets during armed conflict if and for so long as they participate directly in hostilities. The report finds that the IDF provided no credible evidence that meets this threshold, nor that supports the allegations made in these two cases. The report notes, among others, that the screenshots the IDF distributed to substantiate its allegations were unverifiable due to Israel's refusal to release the original documents, remain uncorroborated, and do not contain evidence relevant to the applicable legal threshold (both in time and scope). With regard to materials shared by other actors, including photos of the journalists with leaders of a terrorist organisation or posts from their social media accounts, the report notes in reference to the applicable legal framework (including the interpretation by the Israeli authorities) that 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', and thereby do not justify any attacks against them.

To research the aforementioned questions, the report relies 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. Second, an examination of 98 publications from 14 major legacy media outlets across seven Western countries to assess how allegations against the two journalists were reported.

The first key finding is that delegitimisation narratives about Al-Sharif and Shabat were constructed and amplified through a specific network of both official actors, meaning (individuals employed by) the IDF and other Israeli government bodies, and independent actors. 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 (e.g. OSINT-researchers handing over 'evidence' to the IDF and meeting with IDF officials), attending meetings organized by government bodies in which messaging was coordinated, and in some cases, even engaged in paid collaborations with Israeli ministries. In both cases, our analysis demonstrates that

delegitimisation followed a recognisable pattern, moving from allegations of propaganda to allegations of terrorism.

During periods of heightened international criticism of Israeli military operations, delegitimisation activity intensified considerably. Second, our analysis of legacy media demonstrates that these narratives were frequently reproduced by international legacy media in ways inconsistent with fundamental journalistic safeguards. Despite the severe nature of the allegations, for example, 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. While the severity of these shortcomings varied, together they contributed to the wider dissemination and normalisation of these unsupported and severe allegations.

The report argues that insight into delegitimisation is relevant because the protection of journalists in armed conflict is contingent on their status as civilians. Accusations of participation in combat or terrorism can influence how the legitimacy of attacks on journalists is assessed and can thus impact accountability for violations of international humanitarian law