

Israel’s War on Journalists

When you’re committing a crime, you don’t want to be caught on camera. In Gaza, journalists have been the last living witnesses to a genocide — humans trapped under the most dire circumstances, forced to document the slaughter of their own people, their friends, and their families.

They did not have the luxury of retreat. The streets they filmed were their own streets. The funerals they photographed were for their neighbors, their friends, their relatives. They ate from the same dwindling food supplies, drank from the same contaminated water, and slept in the same makeshift shelters.

Every broadcast, every photograph, every social media post they shared was an act of defiance against the machinery of erasure. And one by one, they were hunted down and killed.

This is not the fog of war. It is the calculated destruction of those who dare to reveal it.

Statistical Proof

The Gaza Conflict since October 7, 2023, has produced the highest journalist mortality rate in recorded history: **130.81 journalists killed per year**. In other wars, the figure rarely exceeds single digits.

The standard deviation of journalist deaths per year across global conflicts is so small that Gaza’s figure produces a **z-score of 96.82** — far beyond the 3σ threshold used in scientific analysis to reject the null hypothesis. In plain language: there is no statistical chance this is random. This is an anomaly, and in the context of Gaza’s complete ban on foreign press, it points directly to intentional targeting.

War	Duration (Years)	Journalists Killed	Journalists Killed/Year
Chinese Civil War	4.34	2	0.46
Korean War	3.09	5	1.62
Vietnam War	19.50	63	3.23
Algerian War	7.68	4	0.52
Lebanese Civil War	15.59	16	1.03
Soviet–Afghan War	9.17	7	0.76
First Gulf War	0.58	3	5.17
Yugoslav Wars	10.38	14	1.35
First Chechen War	1.73	6	3.47
Second Chechen War	9.70	6	0.62

War	Duration (Years)	Journalists Killed	Journalists Killed/Year
Iraq War	8.84	31	3.51
War in Afghanistan	19.75	23	1.16
Second Congo War	4.96	4	0.81
Darfur Conflict	22.17*	10	0.45
Syrian Civil War	14.49*	35	2.42
Libyan Civil War (2011)	0.69	2	2.90
Yemeni Civil War	10.52*	12	1.14
Gaza Conflict	1.85	242	130.81

*Ongoing conflicts as of August 11, 2025.

Legal Implications

International humanitarian law is unequivocal. **Article 79** of Additional Protocol I (1977) explicitly protects journalists as civilians, unless they directly participate in hostilities. **Geneva Convention IV Article 27** mandates humane treatment for all civilians. **Additional Protocol I Article 51** prohibits any attack on civilians. The **Rome Statute of the ICC Article 8(2)(b)(i)** defines the intentional targeting of civilians as a war crime.

Customary IHL **Rule 34** forbids attacks on journalists altogether. These protections are reinforced by **UDHR Article 19** and **ICCPR Article 19**, guaranteeing the right to seek, receive, and share information.

In Gaza, these laws are being shredded. The state ban on foreign press, combined with the targeted killing of nearly every high-profile local reporter, is not an accident — it is a strategy of suppression.

Case Studies

These names are more than entries in a casualty list. They are lives cut short mid-sentence — people who carried cameras instead of rifles, microphones instead of ammunition. Each one bore the impossible dual burden of surviving a genocide while documenting it for the world. They did not work from the safety of distant bureaus; their offices were the streets under bombardment, the hospital corridors crowded with the wounded, the rubble of homes turned to graves. To understand the scale and intent of Israel's war on journalists, we must begin with the stories of those who were silenced — not as statistics, but as human beings.

Hossam Shabat

Hossam Shabat was 23 years old, a Palestinian correspondent in northern Gaza for Al Jazeera Mubasher and contributor to the U.S.-based Drop Site News. Born in Beit Hanoun, he grew up under siege, but he still carried ordinary dreams — to graduate, to work, to one day live without checkpoints and curfews.

Those dreams were transformed after October 7, 2023. For 18 months, Hossam documented the war's horrors in northern Gaza minute by minute. He covered airstrikes, mass displacement, starvation, and the destruction of his own family's restaurant. He lost more than thirty relatives, yet never stopped working. He often slept in schools, on pavements, or in tents. He endured hunger for months. He regularly received death threats.

On March 24, 2025, just days after Israel ended a brief ceasefire, Hossam was interviewing a resident before heading to the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahia for a live broadcast. He wore his clearly marked press vest. His car, parked nearby, was ready for the trip.

An Israeli drone operator — almost certainly able to identify him — fired a single missile. It struck next to his car, killing him instantly. Fellow journalist Ahmed al-Bursh, just 50 meters away, had been about to join him. The strike was not random artillery; it was a deliberate assassination from a hovering, observing machine.

His final words, prepared in case of his death, read:

"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 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.

By God, I fulfilled my duty as a journalist. I risked everything to report the truth, and now, I am finally at rest—something I haven't known in the past 18 months. I did all this because I believe in the Palestinian cause. I believe this land is ours, and it has been the highest honor of my life to die defending it and serving its people.

I ask you now: do not stop speaking about Gaza. Do not let the world look away. Keep fighting, keep telling our stories—until Palestine is free.

— For the last time, Hossam Shabat, from northern Gaza."

Fatima Hassouna

Fatima Hassouna was 25 years old, a Gaza City native and one of the few remaining female photojournalists working in the enclave. A graduate in multimedia from the University College of Applied Sciences, she had a keen eye for capturing resilience amidst devastation.

Her photographs were not just images — they were fragments of life under siege. Children chasing each other through bombed-out streets. Women kneading bread in the shell of a destroyed kitchen. A father holding the tiny body of his son wrapped in a white

shroud. Her work appeared in international outlets and in the 2025 documentary *Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk*, selected for Cannes.

She was engaged to be married and sometimes joked with friends about what kind of wedding dress she might wear, even as she carried her camera into dangerous zones. In April 2025, she told the documentary's director she would attend the Cannes screening — but she would return to Gaza, because “my people need me here.”

On April 16, 2025, Israeli missiles struck her family's apartment on the second floor of a five-story building in northern Gaza. Fatima, six members of her family, and her pregnant sister were killed instantly. Forensic Architecture concluded that the strike was not collateral damage but a direct hit on her apartment. She had once posted: “If I die, I want a loud death.” She got one. The world just has to listen.

Anas al-Sharif

Anas al-Sharif was 28 years old, one of Al Jazeera's most recognized correspondents in Gaza. From Jabaliya refugee camp, he had lived his entire life under blockade. In December 2023, his father was killed in an Israeli airstrike. Friends urged him to evacuate northern Gaza. He refused. “If I leave,” he said, “who will tell the story?”

Anas's reporting reached hundreds of thousands via X and Telegram. He filmed in the immediate aftermath of bombings, his voice steady even as explosions echoed. He reported from starvation-stricken neighborhoods, makeshift hospitals, and funeral processions. He had become a symbol of Gaza's defiance — and a clear target.

On August 10, 2025, he and five other journalists were inside a tent near al-Shifa Hospital, a known press location. An Israeli missile struck directly, killing all six.

His final message, prepared in April 2025, was published posthumously:

“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. First, peace be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings.

Allah knows I gave every effort and all my strength to be a support and a voice for my people, ever since I opened my eyes to life in the alleys and streets of the Jabalia refugee camp. My hope was that Allah would extend my life so I could return with my family and loved ones to our original town of occupied Asqalan (Al-Majdal). But Allah's will came first, and His decree is final. I have lived through pain in all its details, tasted suffering and loss many times, yet I never once hesitated to convey the truth as it is, without distortion or falsification — so that Allah may bear witness against those who stayed silent, those who accepted our killing, those who choked our breath, and whose hearts were unmoved by the scattered remains of our children and women, doing nothing to stop the massacre that our people have faced for more than a year and a half.

I entrust you with Palestine — the jewel in the crown of the Muslim world, the heartbeat of every free person in this world. I entrust you with its people, with its wronged and innocent children who never had the time to dream or live in safety and peace. Their pure bodies were crushed under thousands of tons of Israeli bombs and missiles, torn apart and scattered across the walls.

I urge you not to let chains silence you, nor borders restrain you. Be bridges toward the liberation of the land and its people, until the sun of dignity and freedom rises over our stolen homeland. I entrust you to take care of my family... my beloved daughter Sham... my dear son Salah... my beloved mother... and my lifelong companion, my beloved wife, Umm Salah (Bayan). Stand by them, support them.

If I die, I die steadfast upon my principles. I testify before Allah that I am content with His decree, certain of meeting Him, and assured that what is with Allah is better and everlasting. O Allah, accept me among the martyrs... Do not forget Gaza... And do not forget me in your sincere prayers for forgiveness and acceptance.

— Anas Jamal al-Sharif, April 6, 2025.”

Conclusion

These were not random deaths. They were human beings — sons, daughters, parents, friends — working under siege, under bombardment, under famine, to show the world a genocide in real time. They ate the same meager food as their neighbors, mourned the same dead, and walked the same streets littered with debris. And they kept their cameras rolling until the moment they became the subject of someone else’s footage.

When a state kills journalists at this scale, it is not silencing individuals — it is assassinating truth. The deaths of Hossam Shabat, Fatima Hassouna, Anas al-Sharif, and hundreds more are deliberate acts in a coordinated campaign to erase the record of what is happening in Gaza.

History will remember them. The only question is whether the world will honor them by seeking justice, or abandon them to the silence their killers tried to impose.