

Palestinians step up pressure on Israel over Abu Akleh killing probe

Author:

Sun, 2022-05-15 21:43

RAMALLAH: Palestinian Justice Minister Mohammed Al-Shalaldeh said Israel bears full responsibility for the assassination of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, and that it was a premeditated crime that amounts to a war crime.

Abu Akleh was shot in the head on Wednesday morning during an Israeli military raid in the West Bank town of Jenin.

Six days after Israel denied its soldiers were responsible, an Israel Defence Force officer told Haaretz that an Israeli soldier seemed to have had fired at Abu Akleh and killed her.

The officer added that an Israeli soldier sitting in an army vehicle with a rifle equipped with a telescopic lens fired at Abu Akleh from 190 meters and killed her.

During his subsequent interrogation, the soldier said he did not know he shot at Abu Akleh when he fired, had not seen her, and did not know her identity.

Al-Shalaldeh said: "Let the one who fired know that this projectile is in our possession, and the evidence for that is that we cannot participate with the Israelis in this investigation because we also have sovereignty under the Israeli occupation, and therefore we do not allow that it is a joint investigation, and have many similar bad experiences with the occupying power."

He added that examining the bullet would take time due to the nature of forensic investigations.

"All specialists and experts in this regard take all legal measures, but in principle, we say in terms of evidence, and the criminal evidence says that the projectile came from ... the Israeli occupation soldiers," said the minister.

Israeli TV Channel 12 reported that the US asked Israel for clarification regarding the investigation into the death of Abu Akleh, who was a Palestinian-American citizen.

The Palestinian public prosecutor requested an autopsy of Abu Akleh's body to find out the cause of death and to locate any evidence to link it to the party responsible for it.

On May 12, the Institute of Forensic Medicine at An-Najah National University in Nablus revealed that the shot that killed Abu Akleh left her with no chance of survival even with medical intervention.

Dr Rayan Al-Ali, director of the institute, said that the bullet created a complete laceration of the brain and skull on impact.

Al-Ali indicated that the distance of the shot could not be accurately determined. "All we can conclude now is that the distance is more than a meter, and this means that the shooting came from a (distant) source," he said

He pointed out that the doctors found a mutilated projectile, and added: "The size of the injury makes us know the nature of the weapon used, and what we can say now is that it is a long, belted, high-speed weapon,"

Al-Ali stressed that it was not possible to disclose any further information at this time.

The director of Al Jazeera's office in Ramallah, Walid Al-Omari, confirmed the occupation forces' role in Abu Akleh's death a speech in front of An-Najah University Hospital in Nablus.

The testimonies of eyewitnesses, from fellow journalists to civilians present at the moment of Abu Akleh's death, also imply that the gunfire came from the IDF.

Al-Omari said: "We have a premeditated crime, and a clear field assassination, where journalists, including Abu Akleh, wore what distinguishes them and protects them. The shooting of them came deliberately."

An internal investigation conducted by the IDF revealed that an Israeli sniper from the Dovdovan special unit had fired through a hole in his armoured military vehicle, and likely hit Abu Akleh by mistake.

"The army's investigation is a partial investigation, so they requested the bullet from the Palestinian side because of its great scientific importance, and examining the bullet enables it to confirm whether it was fired from an Israeli or non-Israeli rifle," a senior Israeli defense expert told Arab News.



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Uproar over Israeli plan to build 4,000 settlement units in occupied West Bank
Israeli police violence mars funeral of Palestinian journalist Abu Akleh

[Ethiopian ex-peacekeepers from Tigray arrive in Sudan for asylum](#)

Sun, 2022-05-15 22:02

KASSALA, Sudan: Some 40 former peacekeepers hailing from Ethiopia's war-racked Tigray region arrived Sunday in eastern Sudan after seeking asylum, according to an AFP correspondent.

Last month, more than 500 UN peacekeepers who were deployed in the disputed Abyei region between Sudan and South Sudan asked Khartoum for asylum, citing fears for their safety if they were to return home.

On Sunday, an official with Sudan's refugee commission confirmed that hundreds of Ethiopian peacekeepers requested asylum after the end of their

mission in Abyei.

“Arrivals of the asylum seekers will continue daily until they are all moved,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

An AFP correspondent said the ex-peacekeepers who arrived on Sunday were taken to the Um Gargour refugee camp in eastern Sudan.

The Abyei region has been contested since South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011.

The United Nations established a peacekeeping mission that year and has since deployed some 4,000 mainly Ethiopian peacekeepers to the region.

Last month, Ethiopia’s defense ministry said the peacekeepers from Tigray refusing to return were victims of rebel “propaganda.”

But Tigrayan peacekeepers interviewed by AFP all said they were worried about their safety, with one senior officer saying that other returnees had been arrested or killed in Ethiopia.

The war in northern Ethiopia broke out in November 2020, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray in response to what he said were rebel attacks on army camps.

Last year, around 120 Tigrayan ex-peacekeepers who were posted in the Darfur region sought asylum in Sudan, according to the UN.

Sudan has received tens of thousands of Ethiopian refugees since the outbreak of the Tigray conflict.



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Ethiopian peacekeepers from Tigray seek asylum in Sudan
Tigray rebels agree to 'cessation of hostilities'

Beating of Palestinian mourners recalls apartheid: Tutu foundation

Sat, 2022-05-14 23:36

JOHANNESBURG: Israeli police charging the funeral of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is “reminiscent” of violence during apartheid South Africa, the foundation of the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu said on Saturday.

“The scenes of members of the Israeli security forces attacking pallbearers at the funeral in Jerusalem of slain journalist Shireen Abu Akleh were chillingly reminiscent of the brutality meted out to mourners at the funerals of anti-apartheid activists in South Africa during our struggle for freedom,” Mamphele Ramphele, director of the Desmond Tutu Foundation, said in a statement.

“As Archbishop Tutu taught us, the perpetrators of violence and human rights violations might think they are advancing their goals, but are in fact undermining their own humanity and integrity,” she said.

Ramphele added that members of the Israeli security forces were “evidently responsible” for Abu Akleh being shot in the head on Wednesday as she covered news in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

“To further inflame the situation by attacking her funeral cortege is like seeking to extinguish righteous flames with a can of petrol,” she said.

Other South Africans also joined an international outcry after Israeli security forces attacked the pallbearers on Friday.

Political analyst Eusebius McKaiser on Twitter said the violence was all too familiar.

“South Africans have such memory. Apartheid police also liked attacking us at our funerals after murdering us,” he wrote.

Human Rights Watch has accused Israel of committing crimes of apartheid against Palestinians in Gaza, the occupied West Bank and inside Israel.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Tutu died late last year after a lifetime battling injustice, during which he called for Palestinian statehood.

Israel’s police chief on Saturday ordered an investigation into the actions of officers at the funeral of Abu Akleh.

“The Israel police commissioner in coordination with the minister of public security has instructed that an investigation be conducted into the incident,” the police said in a statement.

They had coordinated funeral arrangements with the journalist’s family but “rioters tried to sabotage the ceremony and harm the police,” it said.

“As with any operational incident, and certainly an incident in which police officers were exposed to violence by rioters and in which force was subsequently used by the police, the Israel Police will be looking into the events that ensued during the funeral,” it added.

Spain’s Foreign Ministry, in a tweet, called “totally unacceptable” the scenes showing “disproportionate use of violence by the Israeli police” at the funeral.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock expressed deep shock “that the

funeral ceremony could not be held in peace and dignity.”



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Egypt slams Israeli attack on funeral of Al Jazeera journalist
Uproar over Israeli plan to build 4,000 settlement units in occupied West Bank

[British PM to travel to UAE Sunday after president's death](#)

Author:

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Sat, 2022-05-14 23:17

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will fly to the UAE on Sunday to pay his condolences following the death of President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Downing Street said.

Johnson's visit will also "reinforce the close bond between the United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates," the statement said.

Those bonds "will continue under the Presidency of His Highness Sheikh

Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan,” it added.

Sheikh Mohammed was elected as president of the Gulf state on Saturday, official media in Abu Dhabi said, a day after the death of former leader Sheikh Khalifa at the age of 73.

In a statement on Friday, Johnson expressed his sadness at the Sheikh’s death, calling him “a wise and respected leader who will be missed enormously.”

The British leader visited the Emirates in March during a tour of the Gulf region.

The previous month Prince William, grandson of Queen Elizabeth II, attended the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the former British protectorate.

The two governments announced in September that the UAE will invest billions into the UK.

The five-year investment worth £10 billion (\$13.8 billion) will focus on technology, infrastructure and climate-focused energy transition.



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Middle East and world leaders mourn death of UAE President Sheikh Khalifa, praise ‘life rich in achievements’

Uproar over Israeli plan to build 4,000 settlement units in occupied West Bank

Author:

Sat, 2022-05-14 22:30

RAMALLAH: Fears over the future of the two-state solution in Palestine have mounted after Israel approved a plan to build more than 4,000 settlement units in the West Bank.

The move threatens Palestinians' hopes for a two-state solution and the establishment of an independent state.

If constructed, the settlements will sever the geographical contiguity between the occupied territories.

The Higher Planning Committee of the Israeli Civil Administration approved the construction of 4,427 new settlement-housing units in the occupied West Bank, according to NGO Peace Now.

Fifteen European countries, including France, Germany and Italy, have denounced the plans, and demanded that Israel shelve the proposal.

The US also confirmed its opposition to the new approvals.

The Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the approval of the new settlement plans that include 3,988 housing units, including many isolated outposts.

The ministry said in a statement that the approval was granted despite strong opposition from the US administration, which was expressed by more than one US official last week.

The UN stressed that efforts to build confidence between the Palestinian and Israeli sides and the establishment of a truce is a prelude to resolving the conflict.

The ministry said that "the racist colonial decision comes within the framework of the creeping annexation of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Masafer Yatta and the Jordan Valley – to eliminate any chance of establishing a viable, geographically connected and sovereign Palestinian state."

Some Palestinian critics argue that the Israeli government is racing against time to resolve the future of the final negotiated issues unilaterally and by force of occupation in accordance with Israel's interests.

It is also trying to preserve the ruling coalition at the expense of Palestinian land and the rights of people, they claim.

The ministry called on the US administration to fulfill its commitments and promises, and to translate its positions and words into actions to pressure the Israeli government to stop all its settlement activities in a way that leads to the protection of the two-state solution.

About 700,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank across 125 settlements considered illegal under international law. Some Israelis marked the recent approval with celebrations.

Critics warn that Israeli governments have tolerated and even encouraged settlers to seize Palestinian land in Area C, which forms 60 percent of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Settlement activities reached their peak during the term of former US president Donald Trump, who supported Israeli unconditionally.

The ruling Israeli regime of Prime Minister Naftali Bennet is an ultimate supporter of settlement expansion and settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, critics say, pointing to Bennet's tenure as mayor of a settlement in the West Bank.

Many in Palestine are deeply concerned that the expansion of settlements is detrimental to the two-state solution and forms a serious threat to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with geographical continuity – a longtime goal of Palestinian political figures.

Mustafa Barghouti, secretary-general of the Palestinian Initiative Party, told Arab News: "This confirms that Israel's intention is to destroy any possibility of establishing an independent Palestinian state."

Barghouti said that the expansion of settlement-building under the Naftali government "is faster than any previous right-wing government, and it is, of course, worse than the Netanyahu government."

He added: "It is shameful that parties such as the left-wing Meretz party and Mansour Abbas' party remain in such a government, which must be brought down immediately."

Barghouti said that Israel "will not be deterred unless sanctions by the US are imposed on it and the companies that invest in settlements."

He noted that the US imposed heavy sanctions on Russia in the wake of the Ukraine invasion, but did not impose a single punitive measure against Israel, despite its apparent violation of international law.





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OIC calls on UN to stop Israeli settlers' attacks Israel advances plans for nearly 4,500 West Bank settler homes