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‘A war needs field reporting from both sides’: French media appeal for access to Gaza

A petition signed by nearly 100 French journalists calls for the Gaza Strip to be opened up to allow them to inform the public on the events there.



A journalist sits with a camera in the southern Israeli city of Sderot watching the skyline of the northern Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment on October 18, 2023. © Jack Guez, AFP

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[A petition](#) signed by nearly 100 French journalists demanding access to Gaza and the protection of journalists covering the conflict between Israel and Hamas militants comes from a simple assessment: a war needs to have field reporting from both sides.

“We were able to record the stories of the victims of Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7, we need to work in security to report on what is happening in Gaza [...] let us enter the Gaza Strip so that we can do our job. We understand the risks,” reads the missive.

Since the blockade Israel imposed on Gaza 16 years ago, journalists cannot enter the Palestinian territory without authorisation from Israeli authorities. With the outbreak of the latest war, “Israeli authorities are not letting us (journalists) enter the Gaza Strip [...] the other possibility would be to enter through Rafah but we cannot enter because the crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt is closed,” journalist Céline Martelet, who signed the petition, said to FRANCE 24.

The international media has continued reporting on the situation in Gaza despite the restrictions, but there is a glaring disparity between the quantity and quality of information coming out of Israel and Gaza.

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“We have talked a lot about what happened on October 7, which is necessary because of the revisionism of some people saying what happened didn’t happen. But there is an imbalance because

there are only a few journalists in Gaza and [some] have been killed”, said Méline Huet, a FRANCE 24 reporter who just came back from Israel and signed the petition.

With Gaza under siege and missile strikes [killing Palestinian journalists](#), their foreign colleagues try to report on the events from outside the enclave.

“The [Gaza hospital explosion](#) is a good example of how difficult it is to talk about the situation on the ground without seeing it with our own eyes,” said Huet. The Al-Ahli Arab Hospital blast on October 17 is still the subject of many questions, with the exact [cause of the blast](#) and the death toll contested by Hamas authorities and Israel.

Protection of Palestinian journalists in the field

The French journalists' appeal also calls for the protection of their colleagues currently trying to work in the Gaza Strip.

Huet noted that her Palestinian counterparts reporting from the ground in Gaza lack proper working conditions. “They are taking care of their wounded and trying to survive themselves,” she said. Allowing foreign journalists into Gaza should go hand in hand with letting humanitarian aid in and ensuring the freedom of movement of Palestinian journalists under siege, “because there has to be some truth”, said Huet.



Palestinians, mostly journalists, gather around the bodies of two Palestinian reporters, Mohammed Soboh and Said al-Tawil, who were killed by an Israeli air strike in Gaza City, on October 10, 2023. © Fatima Shbair, AP

‘There will be nothing left to report’

Journalists have [already paid a high price](#) amid the growing violence in the region. “As we write these lines, 28 journalists have been killed, according to the NGO Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), including 23 Palestinians, 4 Israelis and a Lebanese citizen. Dozens of others have been injured,” reads the petition.

Journalists are increasingly becoming targets as they report on the war, not just collateral victims. Reporters without Borders (RSF) recently released initial findings of an investigation stating that Reuters video journalist Issam Abdallah, who was killed in strikes in the Lebanese village of Alma el-Chaab near the Israeli border on October 13, was directly “targeted” along with several of his colleagues. According to RSF, the strikes came from the direction of the Israeli border east of where the journalists were standing.

Following the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel that killed some 1,400 people, according to Israeli officials, Israeli forces moved to reinforce the existing blockade on Gaza. The citizens of the coastal territory have since been living in siege-like conditions, without electricity, food or fuel, under Israeli bombardment, while Hamas militants continue firing rockets into Israel on a daily basis.

Israeli authorities may eventually heed the appeal from journalists, but some fear that this will happen only when Israel's ground operation in Gaza is over.