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News organizations send letter to leaders of Israel and Egypt seeking access to Gaza Strip as war escalates

From CNN's Oliver Darcy

A coalition of 11 news organizations sent a letter on Monday to the leaders of Israel and Egypt, asking their governments to grant access for international journalists to enter the Gaza Strip to cover the ongoing war.

"As the current crisis enters its sixth week, the need for more journalists to document events on the ground is greater than ever — particularly when so much information is being shared informally via social media," the letter said.

The letter, which was addressed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, was signed by CNN, BBC News, The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, the Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, CBS News, ABC News, ITV News and Sky News.

The news organization noted in the letter that "while we have been able to see images and read accounts from inside Gaza, the only reliable reporting has come from a small number of incredibly brave journalists who are working to document events there."

"We understand the risks that reporting on the ground in a time of conflict entails, but we also know that factual, impartial information is vital to enable the world to understand this crisis," the letter said. "As professional news organizations with decades of experience, we have the security and planning infrastructure in place to manage those risks."

More background: The lack of direct access to the Gaza Strip has posed significant challenges for news organizations trying to report on Israel's campaign against Hamas.

Since the onset of the war, western news organizations have largely covered the war from Israel, having virtually no ability to get personnel inside the Gaza Strip independently. Instead, newsrooms have largely relied on freelancers and producers to get news out from the war-torn environment.

In the last few weeks, some journalists, including for CNN, have been granted the ability to embed with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as they carry out missions inside the Palestinian territory. But those journalists have had to agree to various conditions, including staying with the IDF during their brief time inside Gaza.

