



**ALJAZEERA
MEDIA INSTITUTE**

SHIREEN ABU AKLEH Speaking Truth to Silence

**An In-Depth Study
of her Field Reports from Palestine**

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Shireen Abu Akleh

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An In-Depth Study of her Field Reports from Palestine

This book was produced in collaboration between
Al Jazeera Media Institute and **Dialectic E-Comm and
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Foreword from Al Jazeera Media Institute

It is one year since the assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh, Al Jazeera's senior correspondent in Palestine. The anniversary arrives only shortly after the celebration of the World Press Freedom Day. But efforts by the international community to hold her killers to account have evaporated, as have any promises to do so.

Israeli forces targeted and murdered Shireen as she was doing her job. She was wearing a clearly marked Press jacket at the time. The bullet which killed her struck her in the head just below her helmet, a clear indication that she was targeted by a sniper.

At the time of her death, Shireen's murder became a global issue as people around the world rushed to condemn her killing and to celebrate her extraordinary career. But few truly understand the ability Shireen had for influencing public opinion about the Israeli occupation of Palestine in either the Arab or global worlds.

While bringing the plight of the Palestinians to a global audience, Shireen was never regarded as a political activist or an actor entrenched in an ideological camp, even though she worked in a political environment hostile to practising her profession. She faced enormous obstacles in carrying out her professional work – she was with Al Jazeera for 25 years – from the high walls imposed by the Israeli occupation forces to the internal disputes among the Palestinians themselves.

Shireen's work, in the face of multiple obstacles, difficulties and dangers, was of such a high quality that Walid Omary, the Al Jazeera bureau chief in Palestine, who has contributed to this book, described her as "the indicator by which we measure our professionalism".

It is important to understand how she navigated such a complex political landscape while remaining objective, balanced and, above all, committed to revealing the truth. This book seeks to do exactly that. Through a methodical analysis of her many hundreds of field reports from the ground, we have examined exactly how Shireen carried out her work, her dedication to telling the human story and the lengths she went to to ensure absolute accuracy and integrity.

Shireen was a war journalist, a field journalist, a journalist of the human story and a witness to history. She gave a voice to the voiceless. She was the voice of Palestine. Her death is a profound loss to the profession and to the world.

Introduction

Walid Omary

Al Jazeera Bureau Chief - Palestine



As we travelled from Jenin to Nablus, accompanying the body of Shireen Abu Akleh to the Forensic Medicine Institute at An-Najah University, villagers came out to the cross-roads and scattered roses on the Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance carrying her body.

In some of the towns, like Sileh Al-Dahr, they insisted that Shireen not pass through their village except on the shoulders of the mourners. Our hearts were heavy with sorrow. Following behind the ambulance carrying Shireen's body, her friend and colleague, Givara Budeiri, was overcome with emotion and said to me: "Whenever you refused a request from us or we felt unable to ask you for something, we would send in Shireen. What are we going to do now?"

Truly, this was Shireen. She was a compassionate human being first and foremost, earning the trust of her colleagues and subordinates alike. She was a source of comfort for their troubles and an embodiment of professionalism.

Shireen was the role model against whom I, and many colleagues, measured ourselves in terms of professionalism, ethics and humanity. She never refused anyone who sought her help, never made a mistake in her work, never fell short and never complained about any task assigned to her. She bravely faced the challenges and risks of her job, always learning and teaching. She was a teacher at Birzeit University, as well as previously being a student there.

After her death, we uncovered some beautiful and noble humanitarian aspects of her personality that she had hidden from us. We only got to know about them after her depar-

ture. She supported many people in need, generously providing iftar meals during Ramadan to some of the worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as donating to many needy non-profit organisations.

Shireen was a Christian in her religion, a Palestinian in her patriotism and a global citizen in her perspective. She also held American citizenship and she had a broad outlook on life. Shireen was a veteran in the field of journalism.

She had a love for the people and the people adored her back. They expressed this by coming out to the entrances of their villages between Jenin and Nablus as we travelled with her body.

Shireen, the people and Al Jazeera

Shireen's memory will forever remain etched in our hearts. In every place and event, her spirit and echo remain. Here she had completed a live interview on Al Jazeera, about a family who had lost a loved one in defence of their country and fellow citizens. Here she had prepared a report and human-interest story about a devastated family. Over here was where she had narrated the story of a Palestinian killed by Israeli forces and the suffering of a prisoner. And right there is where she revealed to people and the world the complexities and dangers of everyday life for Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

Shireen shared the stories of Palestinian children and their struggles on their way to school due to the Israeli occupa-

tion. She also reported on the pain of their fathers who were imprisoned by the occupation forces. She covered wars and peace talks, reported on achievements and failures and captured the joys and sorrows of Palestinian life.

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Shireen took a risk by reporting on the first infected individual in Palestine while wearing protective gear for Al Jazeera. The patient was a student who had just returned from France.



Throughout her coverage, Shireen travelled the length and breadth of Palestine, from Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip on the border with Egypt, to Ras Al-Naqoura on the border with Lebanon. From Jaffa on the Mediterranean Sea to Majdal Shams in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. From Jenin to Hebron, and from Nazareth to Bir Il-Saba. She was in every location and at every event, telling the story of

the people over the course of her 25 years as a senior correspondent for Al Jazeera. She dug out the truth and brought it to the audience. She even helped dig up the ground with the families of killed Palestinians in the Jenin camp during their battle of resilience against the invasion by the occupation forces in 2002.

Shireen's contributions to journalism are remarkable and extensive, having produced an impressive number of reports, possibly exceeding 2,500. This includes her report titled "The Story of a People" which spanned 25 years, and live interviews that covered a diverse range of topics such as sports, health, education, economy, politics and war. Her professional career was distinguished, making her a renowned journalist, not just locally, but also regionally and globally. She reported on stories and events on both sides of the Green Line. Additionally, she covered events in Jordan, Syria, the United States, Britain, The Hague, the Vatican, Rome, Thailand and Egypt.

Shireen was a renowned and respected journalist at Al Jazeera, where she felt at home and was recognised as one of its most talented reporters. Her dedication to her work was evident in the countless reports she produced covering various topics, both in her home country and around the world. But in the course of carrying out her duties as a journalist, her life was tragically cut short by a ruthless act of violence committed by an Israeli sniper with a deadly American bullet. The incident not only robbed her family and friends of a beloved daughter and colleague, but also deprived the world of an exceptional journalist whose work had touched the lives of countless people.

As usual, Shireen was at the forefront of journalists covering the crackdown by Israeli forces on the Jenin refugee camp on May 11, 2022. She stood alongside her colleagues, Ali Al-Samoudi (who narrowly escaped a bullet that grazed his shoulder), Shatha Hanaysha and Mujahid Al-Saadi, all of whom miraculously survived the gunfire aimed at them. Behind her were fellow Al Jazeera team members Majdi Benoura, Mohannad Nairoukh and Mohammed Salama, amongst others. Shireen was killed at the peak of her humanity, generosity and professional excellence.

Shireen, a true daughter of her country

Shireen's memory lives on in every incident, battle and place, spanning the West Bank from north to south. At the western entrance to the city of Nablus, the roundabout of Deir Sharaf carries a stone engraved with Shireen's name and image, and directly below is the road leading to Jenin. On the main road near the village of Ajjah, between Jenin and Nablus, you will find the Shireen Abu Akleh roundabout with her name and image. If you arrive at the village of Beit Imrin north of Nablus by the eastern entrance, you will see the "Shireen Abu Akleh Street" sign. Even at the Al Jazeera headquarters in Ramallah, the address reads "4 Shireen Abu Akleh Street, Al-Manara, Ramallah", serving as a tribute to her legacy.

The universities of Birzeit, the American University in Jenin-Ramallah, the American University in Beirut and Yarmouk in Jordan have all decided to commemorate Shireen

by granting scholarships and awards for distinguished students in her name.

Every week since her death, visitors have come to her office, bringing flowers and drawings, and visit her tomb in Jerusalem to pay their respects and recite Al Fatiha (the opening chapter of the Holy Quran) and the Lord's Prayer in respect to her.

A group of fifth-grade students at the Friends School prepared a project titled "Journalists' Rights, Shireen as a Model". Students at the Shaghaf Center for the hearing impaired in Nablus immortalised her image with olive branches on a mosaic mural they prepared with their teacher and gifted it to Al Jazeera's offices in Ramallah.

The Shireen Abu Akleh Museum of Media is a joint project between the Ramallah Municipality and Al Jazeera Media Network to commemorate her memory. It will be located in the city of Ramallah and will become one of its important landmarks.

Additionally, a memorial statue designed by the world-renowned artist Mohammed Sbaaneh, will be erected at the site of her death in the Haddaf neighbourhood, at the entrance of the Jenin refugee camp.

Jenin can be described as the great poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote about Gaza: "It has a martyr who is served by a martyr, photographed by a martyr, bid farewell by a martyr, and prayed for by a martyr." Shireen was a martyr who used to document the stories and sacrifices of her people

for freedom, and she was killed by the same criminal forces which killed those she was reporting about.

I met Shireen Abu Akleh when we were chosen by Birzeit University to become instructors on radio training and competency. This centre was established by the university in 1996 to become a hub for the Media Institute later on. We were selected by Nabil Al-Khatib and Hikmat Abdul Hadi, who were responsible for establishing the Media Training Institute at the university. It had been producing a successful radio programme on the modernised Voice of Palestine radio channel, alongside our colleague Asif Hamidi, the current news director at Al Jazeera. At that time, I was a correspondent for Radio Orient in Paris and Al-Alam in Germany. I was also responsible for the Israeli section in the Palestinian office, as well as the Al-Awda magazine and Al-Quds newspaper, but with limited experience in television work.

Al Jazeera had launched a few months prior to that. I worked as a sole correspondent for them in their first year. When they began broadcasting around the clock, the workload increased. After several unsuccessful trials with various correspondents, the choice was settled on Shireen in July 1997. From then until the day of her death, she never once let me down. She always went beyond expectations, was a flawless journalist and an ethical and impeccable person. She had a pure heart, a pure conscience and was a true daughter of the country.

That's why Shireen is remembered by both the young and old, officials and the general public. She resembled her peo-

ple in their suffering, resilience, openness, generosity, ethics, sacrifices, bravery, kindness and unity.

Shireen had a unique eloquence that conveyed her thoughts. Which is “the language of the simple but elusive”, as described by Amani Awad, the language editor at Al Jazeera. Awad says: “Her news reports and human stories are characterised by depth and fluency, strong presentation, simplicity of expression, harmony with the narrative, objective balance, alignment with the truth, transparency and a fiery spirit which was enthusiastic. She was a voice full of Palestinian lament and empathy for people’s sorrows, which reached the hearts and minds without effort, touching the soul with captivating tenderness of emotions.”

It is no wonder then, that the voice of Um Ahmad from the Jenin refugee camp (a local woman who went viral on social media), echoes as the young men carry Shireen’s body on their shoulders. The city and its camp have come out to bid her farewell on her final journey. Um Ahmad’s voice resounds among the mourners: “From the proud city of Jenin, a shining candle has emerged. Oh youth, do not leave, this is Shireen who sacrificed herself. Say oh Allah, say oh Allah. This is Shireen, she will not be forgotten.” The wailing and weeping become overwhelming, and tears burn our eyes. Shireen, who used to say about Jenin and its camp that she loved: “If you want to feel strong, say I am on my way to Jenin.”

Shireen, ethics and professionalism in the field

Shireen adhered to the ethics of journalism as if they were part of a sacred text. She never deviated from them in her coverage, especially when it came to preserving the dignity of victims and the feelings of their families. She respected children and minors, and exercised accuracy after verifying information, by conveying it without embellishment or distortion. Thus, the ethics of the profession were her own ethics, and her respect for those she dealt with was evident. She never yielded to the interests of any political or sectarian group, which was what everyone admired about her. In short, she belonged to all groups and communities of the people.

Shireen reported the news first-hand from the scene, facing dangers that were constantly present in the field. She reached the farthest points possible, with many examples ranging from the many crackdowns on the Jenin refugee camp since 2002, to her coverage on the day of her death in May 2022. She covered events during the Al-Aqsa Intifada (from various onsite locations), the siege of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, the coverage of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the wars that followed it. She also covered the war in Lebanon in 2006 and the Israeli occupation forces' kidnapping of Ahmad Sa'adat (the Secretary-General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and Fuad Al-Shobaki (Brigadier General). Fuad al-Shobaki was responsible for finance and military supplies in the Fatah

movement, from Jericho in 2006. For seven hours, Shireen was the only journalist to enter Jericho before the occupation forces closed it, broadcasting the kidnapping operation live on air.

She also distinguished herself in covering the events in Sheikh Jarrah, Bab Al-Amud, Al-Aqsa Mosque and the protests inside the Green Line, when the conflict broke out with the resistance in Gaza in May 2021. In the space of one day, she would conduct direct field interviews for Al Jazeera's news bulletins from Jerusalem, Lod, Nazareth, Umm Al-Fahm and Bethlehem. More than 600 kilometres in total. This is just a small sample of what she reported on from the field. She was always present, verified her information and was precise in her reporting. She steered away from exaggeration, incitement, slogans, emotions and from showmanship.

Between surveillance and monitoring

Shireen operated, like her Palestinian journalist peers, in difficult and sensitive circumstances. The dangers did not lie only in the field environments, but also in the intricacies and nature of the situation. The Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank, the Israeli occupation and settlers' control in the West Bank of occupied Jerusalem and the Israeli authority within the Green Line. Moreover, dealing professionally with political factions, organisations and society at large was not simple.

The work was not straightforward; there were many twists and turns. Israeli authorities had previously decided to withdraw the credentials of Al Jazeera journalists during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which was distinguished in its coverage in 2002. However, the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the decision on the basis of its illegality. The primary goal behind this was to besiege Al Jazeera and obstruct its coverage of the Intifada. But the Israeli government's press office could not substantiate its resolve as there was no incitement, lie or fabrication that they could point to in Al Jazeera's coverage, so it backed down. The Israeli military censorship also followed suit, unable to find any pretext or charge to rely on.

Shireen persisted tirelessly with her colleagues amidst the severe turmoil that often sweeps the region. She carried her journalistic responsibility and aligned with the truth persistently. This was despite the increased constraints and risks, especially after the conflict between Fatah and Hamas over the Palestinian Authority. This conflict had seriously threatened the freedom of journalists, and reporting



had become more dangerous. Nonetheless, she continued to cover and report the news be it good or bad.

The reality was bitter and it was not easy to convey the true story of what was happening to the Palestinian people. This division increased the difficulty, complexity and danger of the mission. It was as if what the Palestinians were suffering under occupation was not enough but they also had to endure the infighting of their own brothers. Not to mention, what coverage in a conservative society involves in terms of considerations and approaches.

Shireen Abu Akleh was a Palestinian journalist who had worked amidst political contradictions, social constraints and monitoring by authorities and factions, in addition to Israeli occupation and the oppression of her people. She believed in conveying the truth and telling the story to the world.

Shireen expressed her journalistic message based on conveying the truth and telling the story in her famous saying: “It may not have been easy for me to change reality, but at least I was able to deliver that voice to the world.” That voice is the voice of the oppressed, not only in Palestine but throughout the world.

Shireen gained significant experience and established a network of relationships that enabled her to obtain accurate information and verify it before broadcasting it to viewers on Al Jazeera’s screen as quickly as possible. She was able to maintain a reasonable balance while reporting on the internal complexities, conflicts and struggles of the Palestinian

cause. It is not easy to be a daughter of the cause and belong to its people while simultaneously reporting the news with a reasonable balance, despite being a victim herself. However, she did so with remarkable composure and extraordinary professionalism.

Shireen faced many challenges in her reporting, including the difficult stories of destruction, killing and suffering that she has had to report on. Things such as spending a night with her team in the northern Jordan Valley to monitor Israeli forces and settlers attacking Palestinians, their fields, crops and livestock. She also reported on the suffering of the residents of Masafer Yatta in the southern West Bank: especially the children on their way to the distant schools, the plight of the refugee camps, the story of the Khan Al-Ahmar village and the threat of its destruction and the strategic consequences that would follow.

Shireen conveyed the truth to her viewers through words and images, and although some thought that she was not affected by the events, she kept her feelings to herself and did not expose or exploit them for personal gain. She played an important role in raising awareness of the Palestinian cause and the suffering of its people worldwide.

Shireen developed strong relationships with various international organisations, who recognised her as a professional and balanced Palestinian journalist who reported honestly and objectively on the struggles of the Palestinian people. She earned high esteem from numerous foreign entities, which motivated her to master multiple languages includ-

ing English, Armenian, French and Hebrew. Additionally, she was a passionate reader of literature, history and science.

Shireen was an active feminist and social activist who was dedicated to her community. She served on the administrative board for the Popular Art Centre in Al-Bireh city, which is home to Palestine's most renowned folk arts group. They have been organising the Palestine International Festival for over 30 years. It is a vital cultural and national artistic event in Palestine.

Lastly, we discovered after her tragic death, that Shireen sponsored orphans and aided disadvantaged students to the best of her ability.

Part one:

Professional Values in Journalism: Shireen Abu Akleh

Mohamed El Bakkali

Al Jazeera Correspondent in Europe,
based in Paris

“ We are covering a just cause...
It doesn't need flashy slogans and
words, it needs the presentation
of facts. ”

Shireen Abu Akleh
in an interview with Al Jazeera Journalism Review



Introduction

On May 11, 2022, the world was shocked by the news of the assassination of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. The sorrow was profound and the tragedy unimaginable, leaving everyone who knew her work devastated. Death or injury is always a possibility for journalists working in conflict zones, but what happened to Shireen Abu Akleh was inconceivable. A perfect storm of elements came together to make this tragedy different from any previous one. The most important of these was the direct, unprovoked targeting of Shireen, indicating that her killing was intentional. Video and photographs documented the horrific moments leading up to her death in detail, along with testimonies that corroborated the images and put them in context. The one detail of this crime that must never be forgotten, however, was the victim's name: Shireen Abu Akleh.

This is not to say people are not equal in the face of such tragedy, but Shireen's was a familiar face in households throughout Palestine and the Arab region because of her reports for Al Jazeera which spanned a quarter of a century before her assassination. She represented the voice of Palestine in the Arab conscience, through hundreds of field reports in which she took viewers through all the developments of the Palestinian cause in times of peace and war.

With the concept of the "law of proximity", which represents a basic rule in the selection of news in the media, Shireen Abu Akleh was able to ensure stories were relevant to all Arabs, even if their geographic locations were diverse. Her im-

age was linked to the Palestinian cause with all its bearing, symbolism and initiative in the Arab-Islamic conscience. People's reactions to the news of her assassination on the morning of May 11, 2022 reflected this. They did not feel that it was related to the "normal" targeting of a journalist in a conflict area, as with the other 86 journalists¹ who died in various conflict zones during that same year.

Outside the Arab world, the reactions were no less distraught. Images from the scene of the assassination unfolded, showing that one of the most important journalists of her generation had been deliberately targeted. Israel is accused of the crime, but international action has not been effective in bringing the perpetrators to justice, either in the International Criminal Court or in the Security Council. Despite American support of Israel and Western attempts to downplay the assassination, the crime has taken on an international dimension that could have brought justice if it weren't for the collusion of major powers with Israel. However, beyond the calculations and vicissitudes of international politics, there is a question that arises: What made Shireen Abu Akleh an inspiring journalistic icon during her life and after her death?

It is often said that it is death that brings sainthood to certain figures, but this did not apply to Shireen Abu Akleh. She did not need to die to make a name for herself in the world of journalism. She had already made it during her lifetime, through her daily work over three decades of profession-

¹ News, UN. "Killings of Journalists up 50 per Cent in 2022: UNESCO | UN News." United Nations. United Nations, January 17, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132507>.

al practice, including 25 years at Al Jazeera. When death came to her in the form of a bullet while she was in the field continuing her journalistic mission, people's reactions to the news of her murder were to be expected. Her image of seriousness and professionalism that she had built for herself, and which she ultimately signed in blood, held true in the hearts of the Arab world.

In this chapter of the book, we will address this particular aspect of Shireen's life. Beyond words of lamentation, we will analyse and explain her television reports throughout her years of work to illustrate and celebrate the professional values that characterised her work.

In this study, we will focus on four key values that summarise the professional and ethical commitment, the sense of humanity, and the creative requirements of field television reporting. These values include:

1. The human being: highlighting the presence of human stories in Shireen Abu Akleh's reports.
2. Respect for professional ethics: accuracy, balance, and objectivity.
3. Representing the role of the field: showing the importance of being on the ground to report events and provide a first-hand account.
4. Power control: demonstrating the role of the media in challenging power structures and holding those in power accountable.

Study Methodology

For this study, we will employ the methodology of content analysis, utilising a random sample of 50 television reports produced by Shireen Abu Akleh between 2000 and 2022. All these reports are newscasts, with an average duration of two and a half minutes and are split between news reports and feature stories.

The news reports cover political, economic or social events, and are characterised by their rapid preparation, execution and broadcasting, as they cover events that cannot be delayed. On the other hand, the feature stories, or television stories, address a specific topic or story and are not necessarily related to a specific event.

The sample of reports studied was selected based on the “simple random sample” methodology, which ensures that “each factor of the study group has an equal opportunity like the rest of the other elements”². This selection was made to meet the sample selection criteria represented by:

- Providing equal opportunities for Indigenous community units in selection. A simple random sample ensures that each of Shireen Abu Akleh’s reports has an equal chance of being represented in the study sample. This means that no report was chosen for itself and the probability of any report is equal to the probability of all other reports, just as when choosing between a similar set of elements by lot.

² Dargent, Claude. “ Chapitre 5 - Construire un échantillon ”, Sociologie des opinions. Sous la direction de Dargent Claude. Armand Colin, 2011, pp. 93-114.

- Ensuring that the sample is representative of the original study group, so that the sum of the reports that make up the sample represents the rest of the reports by possessing all their characteristics.
- Avoiding bias in sample selection, such as deliberately choosing one report over another which may be fuelled by the motives of the selection itself, and consequently affect the outcome of the study.

However, for the sample to be truly representative, its size must be sufficient. Although social, information and communication sciences do not accurately determine the required size, the size must be sufficient to allow the results to be generalised to the entire study group. In other words, the number of reports studied in our case must be sufficient to be able to generalise the results of the study to all of Shireen Abu Akleh's reports. Therefore, we consider the study of 50 reports out of the total reports by Shireen Abu Akleh to be a large enough representative sample, and its results generalisable.

We will use qualitative sociology methods because combining quantitative and qualitative study represents a source of research enrichment and a path towards a comprehensive approach. It is a tool to fill gaps and achieve integration between different points of view, which makes the results obtained by adopting different methodological methods in the study of the same topic more credible and convincing.

In this study, we chose to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches by adopting the following deconstructive

tools: content analysis, discourse analysis, and participatory observation. While content analysis and discourse analysis are well-known tools in social research and media and communication research, it is worth defining -participatory observation- more accurately. This technique is based on the researcher's involvement within the group concerned with the study to establish a strong organic relationship with this group, gaining sufficient knowledge from the inside of its beliefs and behaviours in the sociological sense. This involvement means that the researcher becomes part of the group which is being studied, enabling them to have accurate knowledge of the contexts, tools, and outcomes of this production process.

Although this technique did not emerge within the folds of this research, its use was invaluable in the analysis process because the journalistic field, like any other professional field, has its own symbols, terminology, and rules of work. The researcher's affiliation with the media field enables them to work with the observation-by-participation technique, giving them a great ability to analyse and dismantle that may not be available to others outside this field.

Some of the most important pieces of data that may be absent from outside the media field are the real difficulties and constraints faced by journalists in the field, especially in an environment that is not friendly but openly hostile.

Chapter One:

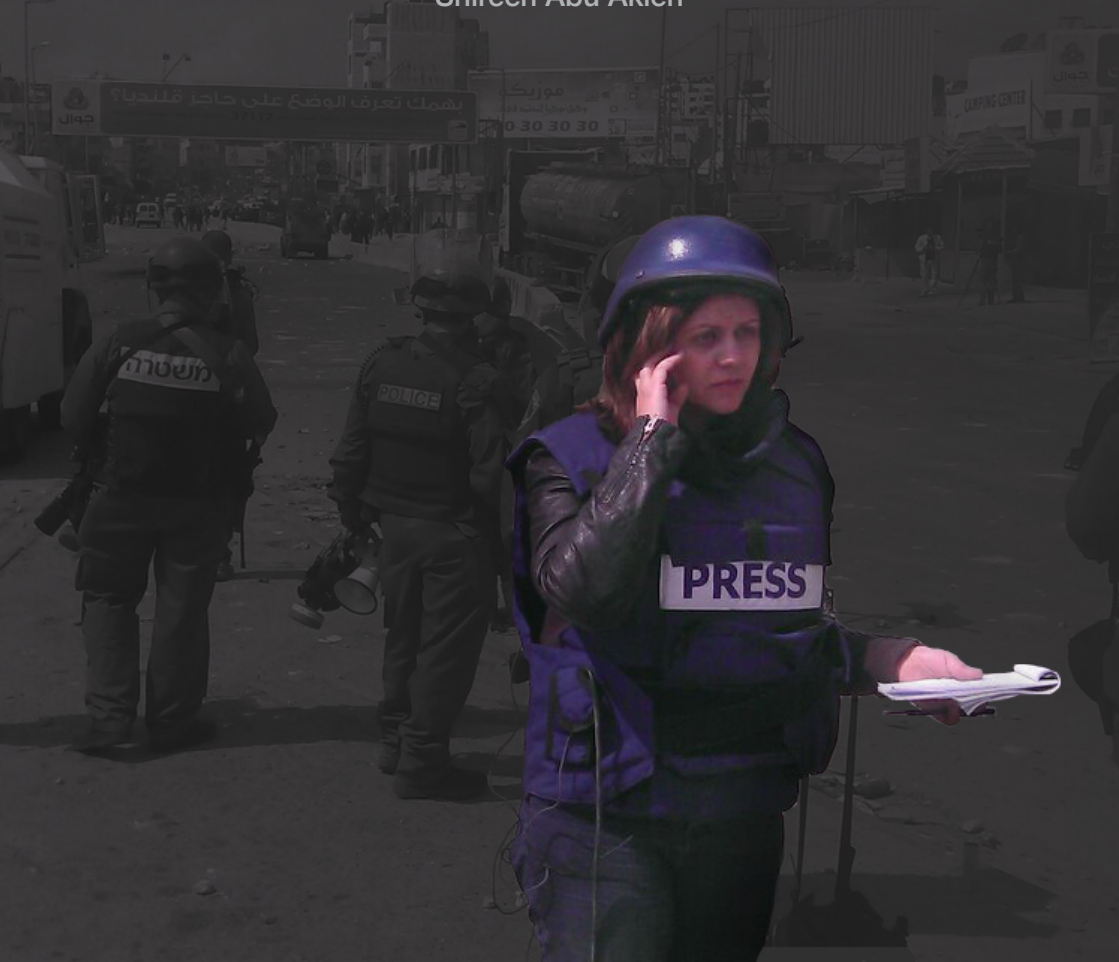
**Opportunities and Burdens
in a Unique Professional
Environment**

“

I will never forget the magnitude of
the destruction, nor the feeling that
death was sometimes close at hand

”

Shireen Abu Akleh



Shireen Abu Akleh and Al Jazeera are inseparable entities. In a short period of time since joining the channel, Shireen Abu Akleh became one of the most significant and prominent Al Jazeera correspondents, representing the Arab viewer. Three requirements were fulfilled to complete this picture. First, the matter of Palestine, with all its symbolism in the Arab collective conscience, was addressed. Second, Al Jazeera, with all its professional values, constituted a real media revolution, unprecedented since the independence of the Arab countries and the formation of the national state. Third, the professional performance of Shireen Abu Akleh and her professional presence gave her credibility in the eyes of the Arab public. Her killing only strengthened it.

We are looking at a relationship between the journalist, their media organisation, and the cause. Therefore, it is not possible to analyse the journalistic product in isolation from the institutional and value affiliation. Journalistic work is ultimately not an individual creative work but the result of collective work in which the journalist is linked to a hierarchy with its own conditions and constraints. Thus, it is impossible to discuss Shireen Abu Akleh's experience separately from that of Al Jazeera or the professional values that Shireen adhered to independently of those to which Al Jazeera is committed.

In this chapter, we will examine the impact of the institutional affiliation of journalists and reporters on their professional performance through the process of adapting to the working culture. Each journalist belongs to a media institution with its own professional values and editorial line that ought to be compatible with the convictions of the journalist. We

will then explore the impact of this relationship on Shireen Abu Akleh and her connection with Al Jazeera.

1 - The reporter and the media organisation - building shared professional values

As with other social institutions, media organisations are complex and organised social institutions, and a journalist is just one part of them. The journalist practises their profession according to a hierarchical organisation and journalistic work is as much a result of social pathways than individual work.

In other words, the work of a television reporter - even if they appear on the screen and sign off reports in their name (and may become a star or icon in their institution) - is still subject to the team's briefing, organising and editing. This makes the final product a team effort and subject to a hierarchy. The reporter's work is subject to interconnected decision circles. The margin of freedom available to a journalist narrows or expands based on the editorial line of the institution, the prevailing values, and the constraints faced by the organisation itself.

It can be observed that press institutions usually operate according to Weberian theory, associated with bureaucratic rationality. The daily and weekly production of media institutions are based on an administrative hierarchy that places

the experience of any journalist in the context of institutional constraints related to their position within this hierarchy, their relationship with their colleagues and so on.³

Since the 1990s, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has noted that the constraints faced by the journalist in their professional practices are directly related to the superstructure that he calls the “journalistic field”. To understand the practices of the journalist, it is necessary to be aware of the position of their institution within the field of journalism, and therefore their position within their own institution. This double positioning makes it possible to observe the details within which the journalist moves.⁴

According to Bourdieu, the journalist is subject to the influences of the institution in which they work, while the institution is also subject to the influences of what he called the “journalistic field” to which it belongs. As a result, the journalist’s work is directly affected by their position within their institution and by the position of their institution within the public space. This is determined by sets of indicators such as the institution’s presence, credibility, audience, professional and ethical values and more.

The impact of the institution’s values on the journalist is evident at this level in the work of every journalist. Media institutions, like the rest of society, have their own culture that embodies their policies and values. Maurice Thévenet de-

³ Eric Neveu, *Sociologie du journalisme*, Collection Repère, 3eme éd, Paris, la Découverte, 2009, p: 42

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *L’emprise du journalisme*, Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, 1994, 101-102, pp. 3-9

defined enterprise culture as: “The sum of fundamental beliefs and assumptions shared by the organisation’s members. They work unconsciously, allow problems to be solved, and constantly evolve.”⁵

Edgar Schein suggests that institutional culture represents the shared beliefs that groups adopt to solve problems, adapt and integrate internally. This is also what they transfer to other members as the “correct” way to view, think and feel about those problems. Schein identifies several criteria that help to understand institutional culture and values:⁶

1. Behavioural habits of individuals, including their observed behaviours, the traditions they adhere to and the rituals they engage in during different situations.
2. Undeclared values and the standards adopted within the group.
3. Formal philosophy, including the policies and ideologies that determine the behaviour of the team.
4. Conditions of work on both physical and psychological levels.
5. Required skills, thinking habits, and the approved language system.

⁵ Maurice Thévenet, *Audit la culture d'entreprise*, Collection Audit, Editions d'Organisations, Paris, 1986, pp : 43-44

⁶ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational culture and Leadership*, 3rd Ed, Jossey Bass, California, 2004, p : 17

2 - Belonging to Al Jazeera - career opportunities and field constraints

If we adopt Bourdieu's analysis and link it to the fundamental role of values and culture in the work of a journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh's affiliation with Al Jazeera has provided her with numerous opportunities and burdens.

Affiliation with an institution such as Al Jazeera offers significant opportunities, mainly represented by working in a world-class media environment with high professional standards. The code of professional conduct stipulates that journalists must "adhere to the journalistic values of honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity, giving no priority to commercial or political over professional consideration". The aim is to reach and announce the truth unambiguously and unquestionably in its authenticity or accuracy.⁷ These values are reiterated in all the documents establishing the work of Al Jazeera, where the standards include "the priority of raising the value of professional standards over other considerations".⁸ This professional environment is suitable for every journalist aspiring to a professional practice committed to the rules and ethics of the profession. Belonging to it reflects directly on the journalist's daily work, final product, relationship with the audience, news sources and centres of power and influence directly or indirectly related to the journalist's work.

⁷ <https://network.aljazeera.net/en/our-values/standards>

⁸ *ibid*

Al Jazeera, established in 1996, marked a milestone in the history of Arab media. For decades, Western media dominated the flow of media coverage, with a one-sided direction from North to South. As a result, countries in the Global South were often absent from international media coverage or, when covered, were presented through an “Orientalist” lens that perpetuated stereotypes and preconceptions, sometimes turning their coverage into folklore or exoticism. Countless studies have been conducted on this subject.

The Palestinian issue was covered in a biased manner in favour of Israel within this Western hegemony. Even media outlets that claimed to be professional and committed to journalistic integrity, such as BBC radio, were found to be influenced by Israeli pressure and lobbying efforts, as well as internal policies and biases. This was evident in their coverage of the conflict, where facts that condemned the Israeli side were not always presented.⁹

Al Jazeera has challenged this imbalance by providing a platform for Arab voices and perspectives. It has addressed dominant narratives and stereotypes, contributing to a more diverse and balanced media landscape.

Being part of Al Jazeera means belonging to a channel that disrupts the traditional media landscape dominated by Western media and establishes a new model distinguished by professional media output produced in an Arab environment for the Arab audience. Additionally, it means being

⁹ Hamdan, Bothaina Abdelmonim. “The Media Coverage of the BBC to the Palestine Issue ‘The World Tonight News Program’ as Case Study (November- December 2008),” 2010. https://fada.birzeit.edu/bitstream/20.500.11889/1478/1/thesis_216.pdf

part of an institution that redefines media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict by providing live coverage from inside the occupied territories that adheres to professional ethics and avoids propaganda.

Al Jazeera's vision of "boldly seeking the truth and being the voice of the voiceless" found its true embodiment in the coverage of the Palestinian cause, where truth-seeking becomes a voice for the oppressed and voiceless. This context offers a positive working environment for any journalist who values the best practices of the profession. For a Palestinian journalist covering events in Palestine, working for Al Jazeera offers an opportunity to differentiate their coverage from that of other channels, whether Western or Arab, that do not adopt the same position on the Palestinian cause.

Working for Al Jazeera is an opportunity to write a new history for Arab media and the Palestinian cause, free from the biases and prejudices of Western media. It offers an opportunity to build a narrative that documents the facts on the ground with audio and visual evidence and gives them the utmost importance, disregarding prejudices and stereotypes that have influenced coverage of the Palestinian cause for decades.

However, this affiliation comes with a cost. Working in a hostile environment to uphold professional standards that seek the truth puts the journalist in direct confrontation with an occupational army that automatically opposes any version of events that does not align with its narrative. This narrative is one which is often presented and received by the Western press in glowing terms.

The position of the occupation army towards Al Jazeera and its journalists was neither surprising nor secret, as it had been expressed in repeated and hostile official statements. The army even targeted Al Jazeera's offices and crews directly, as seen in the recent Gaza war, and has attacked Al Jazeera journalists multiple times before this particular crime, the assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh in broad daylight.

Working for Al Jazeera in occupied Palestine offers professional journalists an exceptional experience based on upholding the values of the profession, but it also carries the burden of working in a hostile environment that puts them in the crosshairs of the occupation. Nonetheless, is it appropriate for a Palestinian to work for and identify with a channel that puts the human being at the centre of its attention, especially if they are part of the oppressed community? Does this automatically mean that the channel's coverage of the occupied territories serves the Palestinian narrative, and does this constitute bias or leniency according to professional standards?

If this is the case, it could become more of a publicity stunt than a professional practice committed to upholding professional standards. Can a journalist be neutral towards their cause, especially when it comes to something as emotive as the Palestinian cause?

The debate on professional neutrality is not new and is not specific to the Palestinian cause. The debate on empathy versus neutrality has existed since the advent of journalism. Should a journalist be neutral or empathetic? Should they restrict themselves to reporting events in a "cold" way, or do they consider themselves to have a position to defend?

Arguably, in journalism, the role that journalists observe in their profession seems to determine what they perceive as expected behaviour in relation to their situation. The representation that groups have of themselves with their vision and perception determines their vision of their place in the social world. This representation meets the concept of the societal role which, according to Guy Rocher, is formed from the rules governing the work of individuals who occupy a particular position or function in a group or society. This role is considered specific in the structure of social behaviour that results from coercion exercised by collective patterns.¹⁰

The controversy surrounding the journalist's role is directly related to responsible journalistic practice, the competing definitions of the functions of the media in society, the varying assessments of the public's need for and right to media coverage and the different visions of the nature of news itself. These issues have sparked a debate about the role that the press should play and whether it should have an active, participating role or an objective role. Dangerous deviations from either approach must be avoided.

As for the neutral role, it is based on limiting the task of the journalist to presenting information to the public without interpretation. Morris Janowitz likened the neutral role to the "gatekeeper" and the participating role to the "intercessor lawyer" - or petitioning advocate.¹¹ The gatekeeper focuses

¹⁰ Guy Rocher, *Introduction à la sociologie générale*, tome I, *L'Action sociale* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 45.

¹¹ Morris Janowitz, "Professional Models in Journalism: The Gatekeeper and the Advocate," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 4 (December 1975), p. 660.

on separating news from opinion, while the lawyer defends, criticises and interprets.

Perhaps Antonio Gramsci's classification of intellectuals applies to journalists, as he considers that the creative intellectual who formulates ideology is more important than the organiser who manages or disseminates the ideology, and from the mere educator. And so on until we reach those who have no initiative and whose work is limited to implementation. The conflict here is between two social functions. There is the reflective function, which considers that journalism reflects reality as it is, with its pros and cons without interference, and the active function, which believes that the press should aspire to cultivate a new and different reality, not just convey an image of the existing reality. The boundaries between these two functions are not precisely demarcated, and there is considerable overlap between them.

Studies in the United States, for example, have shown the tendency of journalists and communicators to prefer objectivity and non-participation, unlike the French school, which has historically been known to favour partisan and ideological involvement of journalists. A study¹² by the American scholar John Schmalzbauer and the French scholar Cyril Lemieux showed that French journalists, who describe themselves as objective and unbiased, admit that they often break these rules because of several practical obstacles, such as deadlines, limited means of work, fear of losing news sources and administrative hierarchy. American jour-

¹² Cyril Lemieux, and John Schmalzbauer. "Involvement and detachment among French and American journalists: to be or not to be a 'real' professional." *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology* (2000): 148-69.

nalists, who usually embrace the concept of objectivity, do not consider themselves completely neutral. But what happens when you are a Palestinian journalist reporting on Palestine? Your land is occupied and your displaced people are being violated and attacked by the occupation army every day. Can the journalist maintain their cold impartiality while witnessing all these violations, or will they become in one way or another involved in the cause to the extent that they may be discredited and moved from the ranks of a journalist to the ranks of an activist?

This issue is not specific to the Palestinian cause, though it serves as a clear example. It is a problem that exists in all instances where there is a clear distinction between aggressor and victim. Examples are colonialism, persecution of ethnic minorities, apartheid and so on. In such cases, there is a powerful colonising party or ruler who controls all the means of power, and a weaker party, which is the owner of the land or the belief, or of a different race or colour.

In the Palestinian cause, all these elements have converged to make the situation very clear: an occupier who is an aggressor against the rightful owners of the land, violating their rights. A group of people who face all kinds of violations, including killing, arrest, displacement and demolition of homes.

This does not mean that journalists should choose between cold neutrality and blatant bias, or between professionalism and propaganda. Instead, there is a third option that moves away from the coverage of cold neutrality that rebalances the power imbalance between the victim and the execution-

er without compromising the truth. This option gives a voice to victims without falling into the trap of propaganda. Social science researchers use this option to avoid falling into the trap of becoming too involved in the cause they are researching.¹³ This distance refers to the journalist's adoption of professional rules without compromising the truth but with a moral obligation that exposes the violations to which vulnerable groups are subjected. It becomes a triumph for both humanity and the profession. The principle of the triumph of humanity solves this artificial problem. Cold neutrality that equates the criminal with the victim is not sensible.

This principle is based on the premise that the truth is the essence of the media process. In a conflict between an aggressor and a victim, it is sufficient for the journalist to report the truth. The victim asks for nothing more than the truth. This makes the task of a professional journalist easier. Their sole job is to be careful to convey the truth as they see it in the field. Thus, the journalist triumphs for both humanity and the profession.

Shireen Abu Akleh and Al Jazeera have both understood this balancing act well. As a result, they produce reports that convey the true picture without propaganda or misinformation, and in full compliance with the rules and ethics of the profession. The human story in these reports is strongly present and forms the mainstay of the reports that Shireen Abu Akleh completed throughout her career, as we will see in the next chapter.

¹³ Elias Norbert, *Engagement et distanciation. Contributions à la sociologie de la connaissance*. Traduit de l'Allemand par Michel Hulin, FAYARD – 1983

Chapter Two:

The Human Side of the Story in Shireen Abu Akleh's Reports

“

I chose journalism
to be close to people

”

Shireen Abu Akleh



We can define a television report as telling the story with audio and video from the field. Therefore, the pillars of the television report according to this definition are four: story, sound, image, and the field. Although the people are not explicitly mentioned among these pillars, they are present in every aspect, making them the essence and basis of a television report.

When we talk about a narrative, it would not be complete without the human side. In other words, it is the story of a person in motion or the story of a human being who strives. There can be no TV report without people, as the reports tell people's stories. Most of the time, these are ordinary people living in unusual situations, such as war, refugees, displacement or other disasters.

These are stories which capture the viewer's interest and allow them to relate to the characters, either through sympathy or repulsion, much like in cinema or documentaries. The power and charm of television, especially in its fieldwork, lies in giving the journalist the opportunity to tell people's stories and allowing the viewer to watch and interact with these stories.

However, storytelling is its own artform. Not everyone can capture the attention of others. This is true in everyday life, where those who have the ability to engage are better able than others to garner attention and influence others. The international novelist Gabriel García Márquez once said: "I lived to tell."¹⁴ On television, it is not left up to chance and

¹⁴ Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Vivre pour la raconter*, Traduit de l'espagnole par: Annie Morvan, Bernard Grasset, 2003

intuition. There is training, experience and skill involved, all of which Shireen Abu Akleh had competently perfected.

The power of storytelling is linked to the narrator's ability, its source is in the nature and momentum of its environment. There are environments that are richer with histories than others. When it comes to Palestine, it is a mine of inexhaustible tales, and the stories of the people in it are compelling, honest, and influential. There are the people of Palestine, the occupational forces, the resistance, and the life that must continue. Even the details of ordinary daily life such as education, hospitalisation, and crossing checkpoints, which in other regions of the world represent a normal daily life, become powerful and amazing stories under occupation. They are an act of resistance, so long as the occupation forces prevent Palestinians from carrying out these ordinary daily activities.

Without the need to analyse each report separately, it can be said with confidence that all of Shireen Abu Akleh's reports were, as expected, essentially based on people's daily stories and their relationship with and resistance to the occupation.

1 - Conveying big issues through small details

Take this report that aired on September 26, 2008, for example. "300,000 Palestinians performed the last Friday prayers

of Ramadan.”¹⁵ The report begins by telling the story of a group of worshippers who were travelling to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque. We can hear Shireen’s voice in the background saying: “They have barely managed to sleep, as a long and arduous journey to Jerusalem awaits them for the Good Friday prayers in the month of Ramadan, which coincides with Laylat Al-Qadr.” It highlights small but important human details that emphasise the gravity of the situation, such as the Palestinians’ longing to enter Al-Aqsa Mosque: “As they barely managed to sleep in order to be able to go to Al-Aqsa Mosque on an arduous and long journey”. But this small detail was able to highlight the importance of this journey for these worshippers. This is what we call telling big issues through small details.



As important as this journey is for worshippers, the difficulties they face in navigating it are also underlined. There is an occupation that prevents journeys for men under 50 and women under the age of 45.

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhYWdZZQh2Q&list>

The power of words amplifies the power of the image. The report takes us from the atmosphere of the journey to the atmosphere of repression faced by worshippers. The picture speaks louder than any words. Soldiers beat worshippers and prevent them from continuing their journey. The caption that accompanies the photograph shows the viewer the details. It identifies the place and mentions some details that the image cannot clarify. We hear Shireen's voice saying: "At the Bethlehem checkpoint, south of Jerusalem, dozens of women were cursed and beaten by soldiers. At the Qalandia checkpoint, north of Jerusalem, a number of young men who tried to breach the checkpoint were arrested. The regulations only allow men over the age of fifty and women over the age of forty-five to pass."

2 - The power of images and words

Through the story of these worshippers, Shireen expands on the subject, moving into the Old City of Jerusalem, where she photographs checkpoints and Israeli soldiers blocking the corridors and preventing worshippers from reaching Al-Aqsa Mosque. As the story is told through its characters, the report we hear is a series of testimonies from Palestinians who wished for the inherent right to worship before being prevented by the occupation. This includes the prayers that some worshippers raised to God inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We watch a Jerusalemite woman raise her prayers in front of the camera, saying: "I wish for happiness, I wish for Palestine to find a solution so that the country remains with us. God Help us, our circumstances are a tragedy."

3 - The people's story: Not always tragic

People's stories in Shireen Abu Akleh's reports are not necessarily tragic or painful. While the occupation's violations against the Palestinian people frame stories that can be addressed especially in times of tension and confrontation, the stories that document these violations are stories that are also full of life - not necessarily happy stories, but stories of people's daily lives where people are resilient. Primarily in the face of occupation and secondly in the face of difficulties in life.

In this same report, in which Shireen tells the story of worshippers who were forcibly prevented from reaching the mosque, there are other scenes that come to life. Worshipers who manage to enter turn Jerusalem into a vibrant city where shops witness economic activity that has been absent from the city during the rest of the week. This is reflected in the report through an interview with a merchant from Jerusalem who says: "The city of Jerusalem on Friday is the happiest day of the week, but as long as people from the West Bank are prevented from entering, it affects our business. We miss our families, our mothers, and our fathers." Another merchant adds: "Friday is good because it means we'll have more customers. The other days are empty. The Old City is almost empty." The human side of the story here is told by its own people, making it more reliable and engaging for the viewer.

4 - Using numbers to illustrate the people's story

Telling a humanitarian story does not mean overstating the difficult situation of those involved but conveying the truth without trivialisation or exaggeration. Two things are particularly effective in achieving this: images and numbers.

Images are the cornerstone of television reporting and are essential to confirming the credibility of a story. Meanwhile, numbers provide irrefutable evidence that allows for generalisation. When a TV report tells a story, it provides limited examples of the issue at hand. The report cannot convey the stories of all the worshippers who were prevented from reaching the Al-Aqsa Mosque but can instead choose one or two representative stories that can encompass others in the same situation. Similarly, in opinion polls, it is not necessary to poll everyone on a particular topic to obtain a broad picture. Instead, a representative sample is sufficient.

Numbers play an essential role in this regard. In her report, Shireen Abu Akleh presents the stories of worshippers who were prevented from reaching the mosque and were beaten. She then presents statistics from the United Nations stating that “about 630 military checkpoints are still cutting off the West Bank, but the situation in the city of Jerusalem remains the most difficult, in light of the Israeli plans to tighten Israeli control over it”.

The figure of 630 checkpoints takes the story to another level by demonstrating the true extent and impact: denying Palestinians freedom of movement, whether for prayer or hospitalisation, is not a single or specific case, but a widespread one. This suggests a greater objective of the occupation, which is expressed by Ziad Hammouri, director of the Jerusalem Centre for Social and Economic Rights in 2008, as “to keep an Arab minority in Jerusalem and to expel some 200,000 Palestinian citizens out of Jerusalem”.

These figures clarify that these are not special case scenarios but generalised ones, so that viewers understand that this is not an exceptional, isolated incident. They provide irrefutable evidence of violations, particularly as these figures are issued either by the occupation itself or by independent organisations.

5 - Empathetic journalism without bias: The people’s story

In another report¹⁶, Shireen narrates the demise of a Palestinian youth at the hands of an Israeli settler west of Ramallah. In this report, the image and the words come together to tell the story of a young student who went out to protest against Israeli attacks on Palestinians, only to be hit by a bullet fired by a settler with the intention of killing.

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Z7illoYApl&list>

The pulse of the story begins powerfully with scenes of the young man being taken to the hospital and attempts to rescue him. In the commentary, Shireen tells us the story of the young man, so we know that his name is Muhammad Sh-reiteh, and that he is a high school student from the village of Al-Mazraa Al-Gharbia. By following the story, the viewer has hope that he can be saved, but this hope is quickly extinguished with Shireen's announcement that Muhammad "will not celebrate in this year's graduation ceremony, as these hands were unable to help him in the last moments of his life". The report is based on the story of the young man, beginning with his name and a brief segment about him, and then accompanying him on a failed rescue journey to the hospital, which will result in his death.



Shireen's decision to mention the name of the young man at the beginning of the report was important. First, it is part of the rule of providing the necessary information that the image does not show, and second, it is what can be called "sympathetic journalism".

When we talk about professional journalism, there is no room for bias or falling into the trap of propaganda. So, empathy here does not mean being biased or not abiding by the rules. Instead, it means not forgetting that one of the key roles of journalism is to hold people in authority accountable. This can only be done by revealing the facts and violations committed by the transgressing party. Sympathetic journalism means, among other things, the defence of people's basic rights, primarily the right to life. This is not done by the logic of political statements that declare a position in support, but rather by adopting professional rules that make it a priority to show the truth that the transgressing party wishes to hide, and to reveal the truth about the violations to which the victim is subjected.

The mention of the name of the teenager means, among other things, that the boy is not just a statistic among the numbers of dead Palestinians, but a person with a name, family and life. Very similar to the lives of many viewers who can identify with him. This brings the viewers closer when it becomes clear that it is about a human being with hopes, ambitions, frustrations and difficulties. The difference being that he lived under occupation and found himself facing a bullet that ended his life without having committed a crime. This psychological proximity takes the victims out of the cold circle of numbers, which contributes to attracting the attention of the viewer and helps raise the level of empathy.

It can be said without hesitation that Shireen has mastered the art of creating this emotional familiarity between the heroes of her reports and viewers. By highlighting the human side of the stories that express the subject being covered,

she moves away from the declarative or direct discourse. She adopts the method of reporting based on the human story in a way that can attract attention and achieve the required sympathy towards the victims of persecution.

6 - The impact of human stories

The human side of the story is evident in a report about Israel's issue of demolition notices to Palestinians in Silwan.¹⁷ The report begins with a photo of Shireen standing with the owners of a house who have received a notice of demolition. Shireen's comment in the report provides new details, informing the viewer that: "Nidal Al-Rajabi received several notices of demolition within a few months for his house in Silwan, Jerusalem, under the pretext of it being unlicensed." The succinctness, non-repetitive elements of a TV report are essential, not only in narrative but also the accompanying pictures and interviews. The report is an integrated unit between its three elements: commentary, image and interviews. In this report, Shireen provides limited details about the problem Nidal Al-Rajabi faces, which is the Israeli authorities' desire to demolish his house. Shireen adopts what we call the psychological proximity law, mentioning Nidal's name and his problem. This approach generates empathy for him among viewers who reject injustice and violations of people's rights.

Shireen then gives the floor to Nidal to tell his story himself,

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNczGGSn2VY&list>

acknowledging that the best people to tell the story are its key players themselves. Nidal provides additional details with a humanitarian impact that a reporter cannot provide due to the rule of professional impartiality. “One puts down their blood, sweat and tears to build their house, to live in, to raise their children in, to thrive with their children in. They come at you from everywhere: ‘We want to demolish your home, we want to demolish your home’.”



The report’s dramatic rhythm is elevated by accompanying Nidal into the house being threatened with demolition. The viewer knows from the photo and caption that this is a simple house where Nidal lives with his wife and five children. The municipality refuses to supply him with water, and he has repeatedly tried to obtain a building permit but has been rejected.

In less than a minute and a quarter, the viewer is able to understand the story through the data, including the text, image, interviews and background audio, which are comple-

mentary to each other. The story is interesting and naturally generates empathy, thanks to its nature and the narrative techniques employed. The power of the story lies not only in how it is told but also in the intensification and shortening of its meaning, given that time on television is measured in seconds, not minutes.

7 - From personalisation to generalisation in human stories

In television reports, we distinguish between special cases where the story is specific to the individual and does not go beyond them, and general stories. In most cases however, the individual's circumstance can be a widespread model, within what we call in the television literature the generalisation of the report. Individual stories, called portraits or first-person stories, are less frequent in television than reports that express collective situations.

In this report, Shireen Abu Akleh exhibited struggle as an expression of the general situation faced by Palestinians. "He is not an exception, but like his neighbours who received demolition notices," as the report states. Moreover, pointing out that it affects not only homeowners but also shopkeepers. The report states that, "orders also affected a number of shop owners (scenes of shops) in Silwan, such as this one, whose owner was forced to pay a heavy fine to the occupation authorities."

8 - Photos and interviews as witnesses to the people's story

The strength of a human story in a television report is its witnesses. The witnesses are the photographs and the interviews with those concerned, who provide their testimonies on what is happening to them and with them, to ensure the credibility of the story.

In the report, the image that attests to the credibility of the statement is presented throughout the report. We see people, places and situations that speak for themselves - and we also see documents. When Shireen talks about the shops threatened with demolition, the shop owner shows the documents received from the occupation authorities, imposing fines and warning of demolition. The image here transcends its aesthetic dimension to a documentary dimension, through a document that proves the authenticity of the story. That is one of the roles and strengths of television.

The photograph is reinforced by the photographic testimony of the authors of the story. When talking about shop owners, a shop owner named Muhammad Nassar presents his testimony supported by documents attesting to its credibility. "The first fine, I was fined 50,000, the second fine 45,000, and the third fine was 20,000. Three monetary fines, Va'ad payments (building maintenance), Arnona (city taxes) and regular taxes. I can't keep up."

But a generalised picture can be more powerful and credible, and this is presented in the form of figures proving that this is not a special or exceptional case. This is what Shireen did in her report. After presenting specific cases, she went on to state that: “About 65 percent of the neighbourhood’s residents received notices to demolish their homes or seize their land in order to turn them into public facilities or biblical gardens that serve the settlers who control a number of points and outposts in the town.”

At the beginning of the report, we saw photographs of specific individuals, whose names are given, and the footage ranges from medium to very close shots. We then move to a general and comprehensive view of the town of Silwan, which is witnessing these events, so that the report can be placed in its proper context.

Again, there are testimonies to reinforce the general nature of this context, this time not from someone directly involved in the story, but from an expert. This expert maintains the necessary distance and has the necessary information that enables him to provide analysis, opinion or general information about the issue in its comprehensive dimension. The interview is with Jawad Siam, from the Wadi Hilweh Information Centre in Silwan, who explains “that it goes even beyond demolishing facilities to permanently removing the ground in a stadium to establish a settlement road connecting the settlement of the City of David with the settlement of Abu Tor or al-Thawri”.

Because it’s Palestine, news of death is not uncommon. Before she herself was assassinated, Shireen covered hun-

dreds of assassination stories. The moment of death is a powerful, intense moment in which there is a clash with life when it comes to Palestine.

In this report about the killing of two Palestinians by Israeli gunfire in Hebron¹⁸, the human story is presented differently. The dead have written their story in blood and gone away, but someone has to relate the details of the story. And no one is better and more capable of doing that than a mother.

The report begins by contextualising the story, where the allegation that Palestinians are trying to stab Israelis has become a pretext for shooting Palestinians with impunity. This is what happened this time with two people who were killed by Israeli bullets under the same pretext. The report then takes us through the mass funeral to the details of the Palestinians, including Bayan Osaily, whose mother asks for nothing more than a final farewell look and a grave for her daughter. The mother here personifies the human side of the story, as she is the bereaved who only asks to receive her daughter's body. As she says in the report: "I want to check on her, I want to check on her because honouring the deceased is burying them. We want to be reassured ... we don't even know where our children are buried or kept."

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76Vu0ItXLL0&list>



Although this testimony is short - about 12 seconds - it tells a horrific human story: Israel's detention of the bodies of dead Palestinians. Contrary to what is expected in such cases, the mother was not crying, but rather showed herself amidst the funeral crowd as solid, steadfast and resilient. In doing so, she sends a message that the violations and aggressions of the occupation forces are matched only by the spirit of the Palestinians and their ability to survive.

This is how the people are present in all of Shireen Abu Akleh's reports, and it meets both professional and ethical requirements. The professional requirement is a commitment to the rules of a good television report, which is described as "the story from the field with sound".

Chapter Three:

Professional Ethics in Shireen Abu Akleh's Reports

“

It may not be easy for me to
change reality, but at least I was
able to convey that voice to the
world

”

Shireen Abu Akleh



Professional ethics in journalism are defined as ethical controls that frame the practice of the profession at various stages of media material production, in a way that prevents professionals from slipping up. This might be in the journalist's relationship with the news material itself or in their relationship with news sources, audience, or officials and colleagues within the institution.

Thus, professional ethics expand to include the content of media, the method of production and the journalist's relationship with all parties involved in the media production process. Perhaps this is what has prompted some to say that professional ethics represent the only acceptable way to restrict the freedom of the journalist¹⁹. This is because all other types of restrictions are unacceptable under international conventions and recognised professional values, and prevent the press from performing its supposed roles, especially those of social responsibility and accountability of authority.

Ethics include peremptory norms, such as truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, integrity, commitment and respect for the private lives of individuals. As well as other rules that prohibit involvement in fabrication, lying, insulting, plagiarism, incitement to hatred or violence, and other values enshrined in many professional ethical literatures.²⁰

Some of these ethics are preserved in the guidelines or laws

¹⁹ Claude-Jean Bertrand. *La déontologie des médias*. Presses universitaires de France, 1999.

²⁰ Aidan White, *Vous dire la vérité : initiative pour un journalisme éthique*, Paris, Ed 4, Victoire, 2010.

governing the press, others are left to the conscience of the professional journalist. If violating the ethics stipulated in the guidelines or laws entails penalties such as imprisonment or financial fines, as in cases of defamation, insult, slander or publishing false news, those related to the journalist's conscience are often not subject to any material penalties. The latter may result in symbolic penalties related to the journalist's credibility and legal status.²¹

In general, professional ethics are influenced by the political and economic contexts that frame professional practice, but the decisive factor is mainly related to the values of the journalist and his professional self-representation, as well as the values of the institution, its culture and work charters.

1 - Foundation values and a journalist's commitment to professional ethics

Regarding professionalism, Al Jazeera's code of ethics²² stipulates that journalists must adhere to values of honesty, boldness, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity without prioritising commercial or political considerations over professionalism. The code also emphasises the importance of seeking the truth and announcing it in reports, programmes and news bulletins in an unambigu-

²¹ Mohamed El Bakkali, *The Question of Professionalism and Ideology in Journalism* (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2018).

²² <https://network.aljazeera.net/en/our-values/standards>

ous and accurate manner, while treating the audience with respect and presenting clear and realistic pictures of issues and news. Additionally, the code stresses the need to consider the feelings of victims of crimes, wars, persecution and disasters, as well as their families and spectators, and to respect the privacy of individuals and public taste.

Al Jazeera also welcomes fair and honest competition, while avoiding allowing it to undermine performance levels so that the scoop does not become a goal in and of itself. Furthermore, the organisation is committed to presenting different points of view and opinions without favouritism or bias towards any of them, and to distinguishing between news material, analysis and commentary to avoid propaganda and speculation.²³

Al Jazeera's literature conforms to the highest standards adopted in best professional practice, providing an appropriate environment for adhering to professional ethics. While the individual role of the journalist in adhering to professional ethics is essential, it is insufficient in the absence of an institutional climate that prioritises these ethics in journalistic work. Journalism is a profession that requires exceptional ethical expertise. When a journalist joins an institution, they must harmonise the institution's values with their own. This process puts professional ethics and best practices to the test.²⁴

Being affiliated with an institution that values professional ethics is crucial for a journalist's commitment to these eth-

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Mohamed El Bakkali, *The Question of Professionalism and Ideology in Journalism* (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2018).

ics. Without institutional commitment, there may be a wide gap between the journalist's vision and the institution's vision of professional and ethical commitment. This can result in an incompatible process that typically favours institutions since they have a stronger social standing than individuals. Thus, journalists may find themselves obliged to submit to the institution's rules or leave.

Professional ethics are also linked to work contexts and constraints, which include the need for speed and efficiency. This makes journalists vulnerable to making professional and ethical errors, whether intentionally or unintentionally.²⁵

Media organisations often operate under time pressure, which can limit the ability to reflect and review work. This fast-paced culture, driven by the need for constant new content, can lead to a lack of social consciousness and political perspective.²⁶ This is particularly evident in 24-hour news channels that are constantly searching for breaking news to keep their audiences engaged. Social media has only added to this pressure, as individuals can now easily film and broadcast their own news.

This time pressure creates a difficult equation for media organisations, as they must balance the need for accuracy with the desire for a competitive advantage. Al Jazeera's code of conduct, which prioritises professionalism over commercial or political considerations, provides a supportive environment for journalists to uphold professional eth-

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ Nahwand al-Qadiri Isa, *An Analysis of Arab Satellite Television Culture Reveals an Impending Disintegration* (Beirut, Lebanon: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2008).

ics despite these challenges. However, journalists must still have the courage to face external pressures from centres of power and influence.

In the next section of this chapter, we will examine Shireen Abu Akleh's adherence to ethical values in her journalism. Given the complexity of ethical issues in practice, we will establish a set of standards for this evaluation, including accuracy and balance.

2 - Accurate information: Numbers can be more accurate than words

Accuracy is the cornerstone of the news process, making it a crucial aspect of any press release. Authenticity of news is the primary requirement for accuracy, which means that accurate news should express the truth of what happened without exaggeration or distortion. The language used to describe the news should be specific and avoid generalities, while images should clearly convey what is happening. Multiple sources need to be verified to ensure accuracy, which also requires intellectual and moral integrity to prevent manipulation of the truth.

In her report, “Extremist Groups Storming the Courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque”²⁷, Shireen Abu Akleh starts by describing the storming and provides footage that shows the event from different angles. She states: “The raid began before

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1MjQajQCRY&list>

eight in the morning by the Israeli occupation forces, who fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at dozens of Palestinians who were inside the mosque. Clashes led to the injury of dozens of Palestinians, but what was a precedent was the storming of the Qibli Mosque by the occupation forces to besiege the steadfast people inside.”

The commentary is not merely descriptive, but also answers the fundamental questions familiar to writing a TV story: What? Who? When? Where? How? And, if possible: Why? The commentary provides precise details about the raid, including its time (before eight o'clock in the morning), the weapons used by the occupation army against the Palestinians (rubber bullets and stun grenades), the number of Palestinians inside the mosque (dozens), and the number of injuries (also dozens).

In all the reports that Shireen Abu Akleh has done, the language of numbers, precise details, and adequate information is present, avoiding general or loose language that may provoke emotions or feelings. Despite the clear and unequivocal attack by the occupational forces on worshipers and residents in their homes, the report stays objective and factual.

The report on the first Friday of Ramadan at Al-Aqsa Mosque starts with scenes of Israeli bulldozers setting up concrete checkpoints.²⁸ Shireen Abu Akleh provides accurate information about the situation without exaggeration, derogation or truncation. She says: “This is how Israel began its prepa-

²⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1MjQajQCRY&list=PL_zZHeVP9zhJ4K8hcYswa_osgmY2O7wXI&index=99

rations for the first Friday in Ramadan at the Qalandia crossing, which separates Jerusalem from the Palestinian cities in the northern West Bank. The occupation forces placed more concrete barriers, which were met with stones, possibly from young men who hoped to enter the city of Jerusalem.”



In the first paragraph, the report specifies the exact time and place and describes the scene from both sides. On one hand, the occupation forces set up more checkpoints to prevent the flow of worshippers to Al-Aqsa Mosque. On the other hand, there are young men throwing stones at soldiers. Although it's not clear if all the young men wanted to enter Al-Aqsa Mosque, the word “perhaps” is used to indicate doubt. This word is useful in the report to accurately convey the correspondent's uncertainty about the intentions of some of the young men and whether they joined the confrontation without the intention of entering Jerusalem. The

doubt, however, doesn't change the essence of the news, which is about the act of confrontation shown in the picture.

3 - Sticking to the Truth and Remaining Objective

After identifying the exact location of the Qalandia crossing, the commentary describes the opposite scene of youths throwing stones at soldiers, specifying that the reason may be because these youths wanted to enter Jerusalem. The report then moves on to the direct effects of what the Israeli army was doing, in a logical and smooth transition, showing scenes of Palestinian citizens at the occupation checkpoints waiting. The commentary provides adequate and accurate information that clarifies and interprets the image, without exaggerating, generalising, or drifting beyond "victimised rhetoric".

According to the report, Israeli instructions specify that only men over the age of 50, and women over the age of 45, are allowed to pray in Al-Aqsa Mosque, and everyone who is younger is returned. The interviews then complemented the picture through the testimonies of women, one of whom, for example, is 43 years old, two years below the permissible age and has been denied access to Al-Aqsa Mosque. "I've been waiting since 6 o'clock. I'm 43. They won't let me pass without a permit," she says. Then, there is an interview with another Palestinian woman, who says: "We have been waiting since 5 o'clock in the morning year after year to go into

Jerusalem and pray there.”

4 - Balanced coverage: Seeing all sides of the picture

The report not only relays scenes of those denied entry to Al-Aqsa Mosque but also accompanies those who managed to reach it. The report balances scenes of tension, confrontation, sadness and sorrow of those denied entrance with manifestations of jubilation and joy by those reaching Jerusalem. This creates a required balance in professional television reporting.

The report could have merely shown cases of the Israeli military’s denial of Palestinians wishing to enter Jerusalem, following the principle that people should reach their places of worship without any restriction, so that the news would be solely that they are prevented. However, Shireen was keen to present the other side of the picture, through the testimonies of those who managed to enter as well.

For this reason, the report moves into Jerusalem, where scenes of joy permeate the faces of those who managed to enter. Whoever enters must be able to endure walking for hours due to the banning of vehicles. As one Palestinian woman put it: “We are forbidden our comfort and our cars. We have an elderly man with a walking stick, they forbade us to climb up in the car. I can’t walk either.” Or another interview with an elderly man who says: “We walk with a stick

from this pillar to this point (the door of the mosque), we walk on foot. I'm 80 years old."

Nevertheless, Shireen captures the joy spreading in Jerusalem, and her caption is appropriate for the photo: "But the scene in Jerusalem on this day is different from any other day, as the alleys of the city come to life and street vendors are dotted throughout. Al-Aqsa squares are full of worshippers, unlike the rest of the year when Palestinians who are not residents of Jerusalem and inside Israel are forbidden to pray there."

5 - Truth first. Even if it's 'the bitter truth'

During times of occupation, it may be tempting to avoid discussing issues on which there is internal disagreement among Palestinians or where a Palestinian party may be accused of prioritising private interest over national interest. However, in her career, Shireen Abu Akleh presented many reports explaining the internal Palestinian reality, which suffers from division and differences in opinion regarding how to confront the occupation. There may even be groups whose interests prevail over the national interest. The logic behind this is that "truth comes first, even if it is the bitter truth".

For example, consider this report²⁹, which discusses the issue of building the city of Rawabi near Ramallah. There

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VV2Uj9adx9I&list>

was turmoil over it because of the participation of 12 Israeli companies in its construction. This drew criticism from Palestinian parties and various NGOs. The commentary, which is accompanied by scenes of the project, confirms that the company did not deny contracting with these Israeli companies, along with dozens of Palestinian and foreign companies. Shireen met Bashar al-Masri, chairman of Rawabi, who justifies his company's use of Israeli companies: "These agreements are agreements for the supply of raw materials that are not available in the West Bank or services that are not available in the West Bank. For example, cement, we don't have cement, we don't have sand because sea sand comes from the sea, and it is forbidden to import it except from Israel."

But balance requires the other view that rejects all these arguments. That is exactly what the report moves on to do. Immediately after the interview that provided these justifications, Shireen's voice comes to us saying that "the argument was not enough from the point of view of some Palestinians". We note that the report used the word "some" to refer to those who disagree and to emphasise the relativity of positions and the absence of consensus on this disagreement.

This was followed by an interview with Salah Haniyeh, the general coordinator of economic monitoring, who rejects all the arguments presented by the chairman of Rawabi. Salah Haniyeh says: "There is no preventing contracting with Israeli companies in the matter of cement and sand, but you know this issue has consequences. By contracting with cement companies in Israel, you will have to hire companies

to install a cement factory, and companies of Israeli experts to develop the cement factory, meaning it is a continuous cycle.”



Interestingly, the balance here was not only at the conventional level, by showing two different positions while interviewing, but also by the very close duration of the interview. The duration of the first interview was 23 seconds, while the duration of the second interview was 20 seconds, which means a great concern for the real balance, even to the extent of the duration of the interview. The balance goes even further by evoking the same Israeli view that several Knesset members reject the participation of Israeli companies in building housing for Palestinians.

Scenes of the Israeli government and Knesset meetings appear and Shireen's comment comes on. When they speak about 48 Israeli Knesset members signing a petition calling for a boycott of Israeli companies participating in the con-

struction of the new Palestinian cities. Bear in mind, that these companies signed a pledge not to use any materials produced in the settlements. It follows with an interview with Roni Parwan, an Israeli Knesset member, who completely rejects the idea of these Israeli companies participating in this project.

6 - Photos: Revealing the truth and preserving dignity

The issue of publishing shocking violent images in the press is an ongoing subject of debate in the field of journalism. While some argue that such images are necessary to inform the public of the whole truth, others believe that the dignity of the victims should be respected and viewers should not be exposed to graphic footage.

In its editorial standards manual, Al Jazeera takes a cautious approach to violence in its reporting. It advises against showing scenes of violence unless it is necessary to do so within the context of the news article. When such scenes are shown, they should be obscured or indicated on the screen with a warning. The manual also recommends avoiding close-up shots of corpses to preserve the dignity of the dead.

The Palestine conflict provides a real-life example of how these guidelines can be implemented. Shireen Abu Akleh is known for her strict adherence to these rules. In her reports,

she shows images of violence only when necessary. When she does, she avoids close-ups and shocking footage. By balancing the need to inform the public with the need to protect the dignity of the victims, Al Jazeera's approach to publishing violent images in its reporting serves as a model for responsible journalism.³⁰

When displaying images of bodies, editorial standards recommend the "preservation of the dignity of the deceased by avoiding close-up shots. If necessary, the display should be limited to a few seconds, using medium or long shots or still images to reduce the impact of violent scenes." In reality, Palestine represents a real laboratory for implementing these recommendations, given the scale of violence practised against its inhabitants by occupying forces. In Shireen Abu Aqla's reports, it is easy to observe the precise adherence to these rules regarding images. Examples from her reports include:

- In a report published on December 11, 2015, regarding the killing of two Palestinians, one in his 60s.³¹

The report begins by discussing Israel's accusation that the dead man had attempted to run over Israelis in a bid to justify his killing, and in the accompanying footage, there is a distant shot of the dead man lying on the ground, but his features are not visible. (6 seconds into the report).

³⁰ https://network.aljazeera.net/sites/default/files/documents/2022/ED_1EN.pdf

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XebbCxIPVsM&list>

In the report at 01:21, we see images of another dead Palestinian during his funeral. This time, the shot is medium, but the dead man is covered with a shroud and nothing can be seen of him.

In the next shot, we see the victim with his face uncovered, and his mother saying goodbye to him. We are told that she had said goodbye to her daughter two months earlier in the same place. This shot, although close, is not gratuitous because the victim was hit in the chest.

This report is not an exception but provides a model for all of Shireen Abu Aqla's reports, in which strict adherence to these rules is maintained to balance showing the truth while preserving people's dignity and not shocking the audience.



Chapter Four:

**Field Work - The Hard Road
to the Truth**

“

We couldn't see our homes... We carried cameras and travelled through military checkpoints and rough roads... We slept in hospitals... or with people we didn't know, and despite the danger, we insisted on continuing our work

Shireen Abu Akleh

”



Shireen's commitment to fieldwork was an essential aspect of her professional journalism practice. Tragically, she was killed while carrying out her journalistic mission. Her presence in the field serves as a documented testimony to the violations committed by the occupation forces against the true landowners, which is likely why she and other journalists are continuously targeted.

Throughout her journalistic career, Shireen's actual place of work was in the field, with all the difficulties and dangers that it entailed. Most especially, in a hostile environment like that of occupation and apartheid. Some of these difficulties are related to the nature of the journalistic work itself, while others are related to the institution for which Shireen Abu Akleh worked, namely Al Jazeera. Additionally, there were challenges inherent to the hostile environment in which Shireen practised her work.

1 - Difficulties and constraints of field journalism

Fieldwork presents unique challenges for journalists, stemming from the nature of their work. In contrast to working in a newsroom or studio, where journalists have greater control over their work environment, fieldwork requires them to operate within the unpredictable contexts of their reporting. Rather than being able to control events, journalists must navigate them, seeking to interact with their surroundings while minimising any associated difficulties.

Journalists face a multitude of challenges during fieldwork, ranging from adverse weather conditions to life-threatening risks. These challenges are particularly pronounced when covering areas of conflict or war zones, where the obstacles can be even more daunting or even deadly.

In this tense environment, field reporters face various editorial and institutional constraints. They are constantly required to prove their worth to their organisation and justify their position. Time pressure is perhaps the most significant challenge for journalists, especially those working for 24-hour news channels. They are expected to work quickly, with turnover times as short as a few hours. Unlike other researchers or investigators, journalists do not have the luxury of time to explore every aspect of a story thoroughly. It is widely acknowledged that media turnover time is not the same as that of scientific or judicial research.³²

The expectations for a journalist are comparable to those for a scientific researcher or an investigator seeking justice. However, the challenges of fieldwork are intensified as the need for speed can compromise the requirement of accuracy. Thus, a field journalist is in a perpetual search to balance two seemingly conflicting qualities - accuracy and speed, both of which are essential for any credible journalistic work.

After nearly 25 years of working with Al Jazeera, Shireen was recognised as a journalist who upheld accuracy, verification and ethical standards in her reporting, despite the many constraints she faced in the field. The events leading

³² Thomas Ferenczi. "L'information et ses contraintes", Thomas Ferenczi éd., Le journalisme. Presses Universitaires de France, 2007, pp. 7-22.

up to her death are a testament to her professional commitment to balancing precision and speed.

On May 11, 2022, Shireen arrived in Jenin, where occupation forces were preparing to storm the city. She immediately began sending updates about the situation, with her final email stating: “The occupation forces storm Jenin and surround a house in the Jabriyat area. On the way there now, I’ll tell you as soon as the picture becomes clearer.” This message exemplifies Shireen’s dedication to fieldwork, as she quickly coordinated with the newsroom and provided preliminary information (speed), while also waiting to gather more information to ensure accuracy (precision).

Subject: قوات الاحتلال تتقدم جنين وتُحاصر منزلاً في حي الجابريات

في الطريق الى هناك ، اوافيكم بخبر فور اتضاح الصورة

Shireen AbuAqleh

Correspondent | Input Department

News Directorate

Al Jazeera Channel

شبكة الجزيرة الإعلامية
ALJAZEERA MEDIA NETWORK

Shireen's commitment to fieldwork was evident in her coverage leading up to her death. Her skill at handling emergencies with professionalism was a natural extension of her work, as seen in all her television reports. This level of preparation is just one of the many challenges of fieldwork. Unlike in a newsroom or studio, the journalist cannot plan their schedule beyond a limited extent. Everything depends on the development of events, which can have consequences for their personal lives and mental and physical health.

2 - When the journalist becomes historian

When examining Shireen Abu Akleh's television reports, it becomes evident that her fieldwork extended widely, geographically, covering most of the occupied Palestinian territory over the past 25 years. This extensive coverage allowed her to bear witness to and document these events in a way that went beyond simple news reports that quickly became outdated. Her work provides valuable documentary material that contributes to the writing of history in a political and cultural context where different narratives and interpretations of events are in conflict. In this context, the documentation of events and their preservation are crucial. Audio and video recordings of these events, with the journalist's physical presence, provides irrefutable credibility, like historical narratives documented by people of the past.

It is true that the importance of an event in its journalistic

sense is tied to its timeliness, and its news value diminishes over time. However, history ultimately comprises a series of interconnected events and a journalist's task of documenting these events with a vision that upholds professional values and truth adds another characteristic to their work: that of the historian. This was precisely the case with Shireen Abu Akleh.

It is important to note that an event, as raw material for a journalist's work, is defined as an unusual occurrence as opposed to the mundane. These events can be expected or unexpected, such as an attack, disaster, war, election, reform or speech. As such, they serve as engines of social and political transformation. Therefore, a journalist's role in their fieldwork regarding current events goes beyond simply relaying information to influencing and contributing to the dynamics of major social and political transformations.

This becomes particularly evident in the context of an occupation. Here, a journalist not only assumes the role of historian we previously mentioned, but also acts as a mediator in the process of social and political transformations, whether they intend to or not.

Shireen Abu Akleh demonstrated exceptional skill in her ability to provide accurate and consistent reporting from the field. An example of this can be seen in her report³³ on the strict checkpoints in Hebron. The report showcases students studying at the Ibrahimia School in the Old City of Hebron, only a few metres away from their homes. How-

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8fmakA5GFQ&list>

ever, due to Israeli checkpoints, even going to school has become a complicated task that's comparable to moving from city to city. Shireen's commentary highlights the documentary nature of the report, showcasing Israeli oppression through audio and video evidence.

The report also highlights how journalists, just like students, are prevented from passing through the checkpoints. Shireen's documentation includes standing in front of the camera at one of the checkpoints to demonstrate the issue. She says: "This is another checkpoint in the vicinity of the Old City of Hebron, through which we tried to enter, but the occupation soldiers, after checking our IDs and searching our equipment, asked us to go out again and informed us that it was forbidden to enter the Old City because of the Jewish holidays."

Despite being banned, Shireen and her team do not give up. They try to cross through other checkpoints and, when refused again, they get as close as possible to the Cave of the Patriarchs through a Palestinian neighbourhood. Shireen notes: "The neighbourhood seemed like a ghost town as Palestinian residents prefer not to leave their homes during these days to avoid harassment by soldiers except when necessary." The camera continues to document the scene through interviews with witnesses, including a woman from Hebron who was denied entry.

The report also captures scenes from the daily life of Palestinians inside Hebron, where they live, "as if they were inside a prison surrounded by a fence, the opposite side of which is a completely different scene". This different scene

includes streets teeming with settlers celebrating Jewish holidays. Overall, Shireen's report serves as a vital historical document that provides evidence of Israeli violations and captures the daily life of Palestinians living under occupation.



The report shifts from scenes of settler celebrations to a starkly different image - the Tomb of the Patriarchs (The Ibrahimi Mosque) - shrouded in silence. Shireen Abu Akleh's voice can be heard in the background as she comments on the surroundings: "The Ibrahimi Mosque remains silent, no Athan (Muslim call to prayer) can be raised and Muslims are not allowed to enter for more than two consecutive days."

To provide further evidence of the account's authenticity, the report presents the testimony of the director of the Tomb of the Patriarchs, who confirms that the mosque has been closed to visitors, worshippers, and even employees for several days. "Yesterday, it was closed to employees,

visitors, and worshippers, and today, of course, it remains closed under the pretext of Jewish holidays,” he explains.

To paint a complete picture of the situation, Shireen Abu Akleh appears in front of the camera to summarise the 70-years-long oppression of the Palestinians. “Until a few years ago, the vicinity of the Ibrahimi Mosque was bustling with Palestinians, but today it is devastated by settlements,” she says. “You can walk around its squares and surroundings and think you are in the heart of an Israeli city, until a Palestinian comes up to you and says: ‘Welcome to the occupied city of Hebron’.”



In less than three minutes, Shireen’s report sheds light on the brutality of the occupation and the injustice inflicted upon Palestinians, who are denied access to their own land and places of worship. The report is focused and intense, driving home the message about the urgent need for change.

3 - Bearing witness in the occupied homeland

It is evident that Shireen's coverage spanned the whole of the occupied homeland. From the West Bank to Jerusalem, Hebron, Qalandia and all the way to the sprawling border villages. Shireen was present at the scene in all these areas, as evidenced by her appearance in front of the camera in what is called the "piece to camera" in television parlance.

The "piece to camera" is the part where the television reporter appears to speak in front of the camera, providing audio and video from the scene where the story they are covering is taking place. The main objective of this inset, which usually lasts only about 20 seconds, is to lend credibility to the report because it is filmed at the scene of the event, which means that the reporter who prepared the report did so from the field, as they saw what happened, heard what was said, and documented it, rather than simply being a carrier of the news or image.

Upon reviewing a sample of reports completed by Shireen Abu Akleh, it can be noted that Shireen covered all Palestinian cities and towns that witnessed significant events during the past two decades and was present at most of the events that Palestine has known. She covered Jerusalem, Jenin, Hebron, Qalandia, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and villages affected by violations and terror by the occupation.

However, despite the comprehensive coverage of the entire occupied territory, there was a discrepancy in the presence of certain areas, undeniably due to their significance and the nature of the events they witnessed. Unsurprisingly, occupied Jerusalem had more coverage than others - it was the subject of about 30 percent of Shireen Abu Akleh's reports.

This seems understandable given the centrality of Jerusalem to the Palestinians and its position in the conflict narrative, which has placed it at the heart of all Palestinian liberation battles and violations committed by Israel. The topics addressed in the reports ranged from the issue of the occupation's desecration of Al-Aqsa Mosque by settlers and the prevention of worshippers from reaching it, to the confrontations that occur between Palestinian youths and the occupation army, and Palestinian strikes in protest against Israeli attacks and others.

In addition to these topics, which can be described as recurring over recent decades with repeated Israeli violations, there have been other topics related to occasional events in some towns. One such example is Silwan, the village of Al-Walaja southwest of Jerusalem, or the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, whose residents Israel wants to expel.

From Jenin, Shireen's presence was notable when it came to covering the Israeli army's continuous attempts to storm the city and the confrontations it witnessed, qualifying her a "war correspondent". On May 11, 2022, she was assassinated by an Israeli bullet while reporting on a story there, like dozens of previous coverages that she accomplished, in which the Israeli army attempted to storm the city.

In the West Bank, Shireen was frequently present in Ramallah (15 percent of her reports), following the PA's activities, its attitudes towards violations and residents' anger at the attacks. In Hebron (approximately 10 percent of the reports), from the Qalandia refugee camp south of Ramallah, from the village of Abu Ghoneim and others. Shireen was present on the ground following the settlement process, the attempt to break up the Palestinian lands, and the uprising of Palestinian youths.

These are some of the titles of the reports completed by Shireen Abu Akleh:

- A Complete Strike in the West Bank and Gaza to Protest the Practices of the Israeli Occupation.
- The Israeli Occupation Demolishes for the Second Time the House of "Khansa" of Palestine.
- Israeli Occupation Kills a Palestinian Worker Under the Pretext of Trying to Set Fires West of Ramallah.
- The Separation Barrier in Jerusalem: The Home of a Palestinian Family is Completely Isolated from the Rest of the Village.
- From Khirbet Hums Jordan Valley, the Israeli Occupation Evacuates More Than 100 Palestinians from Their Homes.
- East of Qalqilya: Weekly Anti-settlement Marches Begin in the West Bank.

- From Jenin: Dozens Were Injured After the Occupation Dispersed a Demonstration in Solidarity with the Prisoners.
- The Daily Suffering of the Palestinians of Hebron.

Thus, we can see that the fieldwork, which formed the basis of Shireen Abu Akleh's work, extended throughout the geographical area of the occupied homeland and included all its tragedies and sufferings without distinction between one region and another nor between one issue and another. The only determinant is the importance of the news and its impact.

In general, the topics covered by Shireen Abu Akleh can be summarised into three main categories:

1. Israeli violations: attacks, arrests, construction of the apartheid wall, checkpoints, etc.
2. Resistance of the Palestinian people: strikes, direct confrontation, civil disobedience, military resistance operations and resistance at Al-Aqsa Mosque.
3. Daily life of Palestinians under occupation: These topics are often the subject of a TV story (Fischer), and are removed from the pressure of fast-paced daily news reports. They may be related in some way to daily life events, such as the olive season, education as an act of resistance, celebrations of holidays, etc.

Chapter Five:

**Monitoring Authority -
When a Journalist Holds
the Powerful to Account**

“

Shireen was the benchmark by which I measured myself, my colleagues and their professionalism, ethics and humanity

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Walid Omary

Al Jazeera's Bureau Chief in Palestine



The relationship between the journalist and authority, regardless of the type of authority, varies from subordination to conflict depending on various contexts. This can be because of political, institutional and individual factors related to the journalist's professional role and self-values.

It is well-known that those in power can engage or intimidate if they have interests and benefits that incentivise individuals to approach them. They may use mechanisms of coercion that instil fear of their anger. Journalists are even more vulnerable to these influences because they possess what those in power want and fear most: the power of words.

Power seeks to control the public sphere. In Habermas' theory, the statements that contribute to the formation of representations and values may either strengthen or challenge the authority's grip on power. Therefore, depending on the context and balance of power, those in power are willing to offer enticements or use coercive measures to achieve this goal.

Why was Shireen Abu Akleh killed, along with hundreds of other journalists, writers and intellectuals? They did not carry weapons or ask for power; they only had their words. However, words possess influence because they can create parallel representations and convictions that may ultimately lead to action. As a result, professional journalists who are focused on words are often in direct confrontation with centres of power and influence.

While the primary role of a journalist is to inform, there are other secondary roles within this function, sometimes unin-

tentional. This can include building grand perceptions and representations of self and others and formulating different forms of interactions with complex issues.

The power of journalism to influence and shape public opinion provokes those in power to attempt to influence the nature and formulation of news. In democratic countries, attempts to influence the media may occur through communicative processes. However, in authoritarian regimes, apartheid regimes, or occupied countries, such attempts may escalate to threats or even deaths.

1 - The complex relationship between journalism and power

Since the advent of journalism, the ambiguous relationship between journalists and power has been of interest to professionals and studied and analysed by researchers in the field of media and communication sciences. The media itself represents a form of power and, according to John Thompson, is one of four forms of symbolic power alongside economic, political and coercive power.³⁴

This classification of power has been adopted by Nick Couldry³⁵, who defines the power of the media through its ability to “construct truth”, meaning what the recipient represents

³⁴ John B. THOMPSON *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1995, p:17

³⁵ COULDRY, Nick, *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age*, Routledge, 2000, London

as truth. Media organisations can frame events by creating messages in symbolic forms that society relies on as a source of understanding the world around it.

In the same sense, Oliver Boyd-Barrett asserts that the media portrays, reflects, filters and interacts with the “real world”, so that our perceptions of the world are influenced by the media.³⁶ The pervasive assumptions about the power of the media should rather be understood as “a strongly present social and cultural system for the production, dissemination, and circulation of symbols, signs, messages, meanings and values”³⁷.

Without delving into the theories that weigh up the relationship between journalism and power, we can refer to the widely accepted theoretical classification by (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien)³⁸. They describe the nature of the relations that unite the media, power, and society through some metaphors.

1 - The function of the “watchdog,” as researchers have coined the term, is one in which the media plays the role of censoring powerful and influential institutions in society. It represents its position as a supervisory authority over other authorities. This role means that the journalist monitors, observes and holds these institutions accountable within the

³⁶ BOYD-BARRETT, Oliver, “Theory in Media Research”, *The Media Book*, Chris Newbold, Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Hilde Van Den Bulck (Eds), Arnold: London, 2002, p:16

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ George A. Donohue, Phillip J. Tichenor, Clarice N. Olien *Journal of Communication*, Volume 45, Issue 2, June 1995, Pages 115–132,

framework of the journalism profession, which represents an extension of the classification of journalism as a fourth authority. The role of surveillance is crucial in democracies, where voters can better understand the functioning of politics in their country and therefore make informed decisions about the choice of their rulers, however this role becomes even more important in situations of occupation and apartheid. The monitoring role played by the press becomes decisive in revealing the facts that the occupation force tries to hide and goes beyond its political part to take on a historical and social dimension.

2 - The “guard dog” metaphor suggests that the media serves as a guard for groups that are powerful and influential enough to establish and control their own security systems. Although the media may criticise these powerful forces if they clash with each other or if a member of these dominant classes violates the rules and values of the existing order, the focus of the criticism is on the individual rather than the system itself. According to this theory, the media that guard the influential institutions in society are very keen to follow up on any new element that may affect the functioning of the existing system. This description applies to most media outlets that belong to industrial, financial or political groups and are closely linked to power. This assessment of the relationship with power is not confined to the journalistic sphere but also extends to intellectuals and writers.

In 1932, Paul Nizan published “Les Chiens de Garde”³⁹ to denounce the philosophers and writers of his time who, under

³⁹ Paul Nizan, *Les chiens de garde*, éditions Rieder, 1932, Paris

the cover of intellectual neutrality, were content to become guardians of the existing order. In 1997, the French journalist and researcher Serge Halimi published a book with a big impact entitled “Les Nouveaux Chiens de Garde”⁴⁰ about journalists, columnists, and media experts who, due to their links to the centres of finance and power, became guardians and defenders of the existing regime, far from the values of pluralism, independence and objectivity.

3 - “Lapdog journalism”, refers to a type of journalism that serves as a mouthpiece for those in power and fails to challenge their authority or actions. It functions as a model of journalism that is subservient to those in power, perpetuating exploitation and social inequalities that benefit the powerful. This type of journalism reinforces the status quo and identifies with the interests of authority, rather than serving as a watchdog for the public interest. To promote social justice and fairness, journalists must maintain independence and objectivity, holding those in power accountable for their actions. By doing so, they can ensure that the perspectives of marginalised groups are highlighted and that the voices of all members of society are heard and represented in the public discourse.

4 - In addition to the previously mentioned models, there are other detailed models that intersect in one way or another, such as the function of a “guide or agenda setter” who provides citizens with sufficient information about policies and decision-makers to enable them to make informed decisions. Proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, this the-

⁴⁰ Serge Halimi, *Les nouveaux chiens de garde*, Raison d’agir, Paris, 1997

ory is based on the idea that the media accurately shapes the public's interests. McCombs and Shaw summarised the mechanism with a famous phrase: "Most of the time, journalism may not succeed in determining what people should think, but it is very effective at telling them what to think about."⁴¹ In other words, journalism can effectively direct people's thinking to certain issues rather than others by focusing media coverage on them. The influence of the media at this level is not limited to the selection process, but can also take the form of exclusion, which involves depriving certain events of visibility in the media landscape by judging that the necessary media and/or political conditions are not met for the event to find its way into the media.

The work of the media is primarily based on the path of "selection, exclusion and inclusion,"⁴² which is a fundamental conception for understanding the power and influence of the media. Through this path, the media presents different narratives of "truth". By selecting, excluding and including certain events, the media can create a space through which different and sometimes contradictory discourses move. As Régis Dupré wrote, "journalistic work represents the pinnacle of intellectual work, as it moves from abstract thought to realistic work".⁴³

⁴¹ Derville, Grégory. "Chapitre 2. L'influence politique des médias au-delà de la propagande", , *Le pouvoir des médias*. sous la direction de Derville Grégory. Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2017, pp. 41-85.

⁴² BEBAWI, Saba, Media power and global television news: The Role of Al Jazeera English, London New York, I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd . 2016, p: 95

⁴³ Antoine Spire, *Le pouvoir du journalisme*, Communication & Langages Année 1983 55 pp. 110-122

Regarding Shireen Abu Akleh's reports, it can be easily observed that they fall under the category of monitoring journalism, as represented by the Palestinian Authority (PA), which is subject to occupation. Her reports expose the actions of the de facto authority and shed light on their impact on the lives of Palestinians.

Shireen Abu Akleh's reports fall within the realm of PA's monitoring journalism, representing the occupation by exposing and documenting the violations and attacks carried out by the Israeli army and settlers. Throughout her 25 years of fieldwork, a consistent thread runs through her reports, which is to expose violations and document them with audio and video, without resorting to propaganda, exaggeration or violating professional rules and ethics. The monitoring process takes place on multiple levels, including revealing what the PA/occupation wants to hide, scrutinising their narratives, and giving voice to parties that the PA/occupation wishes to silence.

2 - Triumph in the face of occupation: Uncovering what has been hidden

The occupation is keen on implementing its plans regardless of how bloody or immoral they may be. It also seeks to keep violations away from cameras or portray them in a narrative that justifies them at the international level. This fabrication process begins with designating the occupation army as the "Israel Defence Forces" and continues with jus-

tifying every killing of a Palestinian as an attempt to stab a soldier or commit a terrorist act.

Despite enjoying unprecedented international support, the truth behind the occupation's actions cannot be hidden from the diligent work of journalists like Shireen Abu Akleh. Through her reporting, the truth is revealed and the profession of journalism triumphs in the face of occupation's efforts to conceal the truth.

Modern international relations consider the role of world public opinion and its influence on political decision-making and the selection of officials. As a result, all countries, whether democratic or dictatorial (with North Korea being a special case), are keen on their image at the global level. The process of building perceptions of world public opinion on any issue is not separate from media work, as it strongly influences the process of "building truth" that follows international positions.

Therefore, there is a desire to hide facts and manipulate data to present the image of the occupation in a position of self-defence against a group of "saboteurs and terrorists". This narrative can only succeed by concealing the facts of the conflict, whether in its historical dimension of Judaisation and changing geography or in its eventual dimension of blaming the victim for violations and not the aggressor.

For Palestinian journalists covering the situation in the occupied territories, the relationship with the de facto power of occupation is already tense and hostile. Occupation forces,

by nature, do not want their practices to be visible, especially if it is like the Israeli occupation, which is looking for a narrative that justifies its existence in the land of a people expelled and displaced. In this case, it finds itself in natural contradiction with every professional journalistic practice. This explains the scale of attacks on journalists in the occupied territories, which amount to murder.

According to figures from Reporters Without Borders,⁴⁴ Israel has killed 35 Palestinian journalists since 2000. These figures mean that more than one journalist is killed each year by Israeli bullets. Figures from the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate suggest that the death toll in fact exceeded 48 during the same period.⁴⁵

Here, we will be discussing the risks that Palestinian journalists face while practising journalism in the occupied territories. Although there are no specific figures available for injuries and arrests, there is a hostile climate that makes it difficult for journalists to work against the occupation's narrative. In such an environment, journalism can become a "crime" that may lead to punishment or murder, as has happened with Shireen herself.

The work of a journalist and an activist in this context often clash, and a journalist needs an institution to support them. Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, talked about

⁴⁴ https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/05/14/israel-est-regulierement-accuse-de-cibler-les-journalistes_6126094_3210.html

⁴⁵ <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/monde/syndicat-palestinien-46-journalistes-ont-%C3%A9t%C3%A9-tu%C3%A9s-par-isra%C3%ABl-depuis-lan-2000/2032355>

the role of the journalist and how it relates to the values and culture of their institution. In this regard, Shireen Abu Akleh found support in Al Jazeera, which encourages courageous, professional practice despite the dangers.

The Al Jazeera Code of Professional Honour stresses the importance of journalistic values like honesty, boldness, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity. Moreover, the charter emphasises the need to support colleagues in the profession and to cooperate with Arab and international press unions to defend freedom of the press and media. Institutions like Al Jazeera play an essential role in supporting journalists working in hostile environments and upholding the values of professional journalism.⁴⁶

However, adopting a bold approach in practising journalism is not enough without bold journalists. Fieldwork is the decisive factor and, at this level, it is easy to see from the topics covered and the locations she reported from that Shireen Abu Aqla played her role in “monitoring the authority of the occupation” with great courage. She did this by revealing facts documented with conclusive evidence in the form of images and live testimony. We will provide some examples of her reports.

The next report we will study addresses the suffering of the residents of Burin village in Nablus due to settler attacks⁴⁷. The report begins with pictures from inside the village. Along with the pictures documenting these attacks, the report in-

⁴⁶ <https://network.aljazeera.net/en/our-values/standards>

⁴⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5plCA-jQYgg>

cludes testimonies from the villagers about daily incursions by settlers, accompanied by pictures of the devastation left behind by the attacks. These daily incursions have forced people to stay in their homes, making the village “like a prison. Children only leave it for school”, as Shireen explains. Moreover, settlers steal livestock, and “those chickens were delivered only after the sheep were poisoned and what remain of the animals have been stolen.”



All this means that the villagers live in a constant state of fear, watching fearfully for their children return from school each day. All these attacks occur in the sight and hearing of, and with the support of, the occupation army. In her report, Shireen explains that the army patrols only intervene to support the settlers. Throughout the report, we see what “the authority” does not want to show, which is the continuous attacks supported and enabled by the occupation army, thus undermining the Israeli narrative that places the responsibility for the confrontations on the Palestinians and denies the army’s support for settlers during their attacks.

Here we have another example of Shireen Abu Akleh's courageous reporting, as she documents the occupation's expulsion of more than 100 Palestinians from their homes.⁴⁸ The report begins with footage of Palestinian families being forcibly removed from their homes by Israeli soldiers, accompanied by interviews with the families who describe their despair and helplessness in the face of the eviction orders.

Shireen highlights the fact that these families have been living in their homes for generations and have legal ownership documents but the occupation authorities still claim that they are living there illegally. She also reports on the demolition of homes and the confiscation of land in the area, all in violation of international law.

Through her reporting, Shireen sheds light on the devastating impact of the occupation on Palestinian families and exposes the injustices and human rights violations that are taking place daily. Her work is a powerful example of the critical role that journalists can play in holding those in power to account, and in bringing to light the voices and experiences of those who are too often silenced and marginalised.

The residents of Khirbet Homs, located in the Jordan Valley and home to around 10,000 Palestinians, live in harsh conditions in tents and shantytowns. The occupation forces prevent them from building proper homes, and they rely on livestock and agriculture to survive. Israel treats this area as a security zone where military exercises are sometimes

⁴⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L4OitvI7Io>

conducted. These exercises serve as a pretext to expel the residents from their homes for a period determined by the occupation, and no residents can object to the decision without it being implemented by force.

In this report, journalist Shireen Abu Akleh follows one of the frequent eviction orders that residents live under. She follows the residents as they are forced to evacuate their homes in the early hours of the morning and spend the whole day out in the open.

The report begins with a photo taken by Shireen before sunrise from inside the Jordan Valley, with the tents in which residents live in the background. “It is not yet six o’clock in the morning, and yet everyone who lives in Khirbet Homs in the Jordan Valley has woken up and is preparing to leave their homes waiting for a long, hard day,” Shireen says. “Today’s story is not a rare event, but rather a story of the suffering of Palestinian families in the Jordan Valley due to the occupation, throughout the year.”



The viewer is then presented with an audio and video transmission of the “journey of suffering”. Children, women and

men carrying some of their belongings are seen moving in tractors, while others are accompanied by their sheep without a specific destination. The strength of the images is supported by the text of the report, which provides full details of the story: “Sixteen Palestinian families woke up before daybreak to evacuate their homes in implementation of the orders of the occupation army. They were forced to stay out of their homes from 6am to 8pm. Some took their sheep, while others left them behind, taking their children and a little food and water. There was no specific destination ahead of them. What was important for the occupation was their exit from these lands chosen by the army to conduct its military training.”

The photos show a Palestinian child peering from behind a scarred and battered wall. Another shows a father putting his child in the tractor to leave. This report is an example of reports that reveal what the occupation wants to hide. The story and accompanying photos put the occupation in the position of accusation before international and humanitarian law. This is confirmed by the occupation’s attempt to prevent filming and its threat to arrest the Al Jazeera team, which was documented on camera.



The report continues to accompany the displaced on this journey and draws the testimonies of some of them, in which the harsh humanitarian cases of children, women and men in a difficult situation are recounted. The report ends with the image of children sleeping on the ground while eating.

In this report, everything that the occupation wishes to hide is collected. Here is a story that destroys the occupation's narrative, based on justifying all practices and violations and trying to hold the Palestinians responsible. It is about peaceful civilian families who are repeatedly displaced from their homes for no reason. Then there are the army's attempts to prevent filming, which were documented by the camera. Finally there are the symbolic and clear images of the violations suffered by the most vulnerable groups.



3 - Verifying the Israeli narrative: When journalism exposes the occupation

The process of verification in journalism is based on confirming the truth of the narrative of the most powerful party that has the tools of coercion and the ability to hide facts. This falls within the realm of “Watchdog Journalism” and is a form of investigative journalism whose mission is to alert public opinion about the credibility of the words and actions of officials and workers in the public sphere.

Verification has been associated with journalism since its inception. However, it has taken its form more clearly since 2000 in the United States, and has become a stand-alone journalistic genre with the advent of social media and the development of modern technologies that have allowed easy falsification and dissemination of information. This has also provided journalists with tools to detect and reduce this sort of falsification.

Regardless of the technical aspect of this professional orientation, the work of verification requires the journalist to engage in professional practice. This elevates the truth and doesn’t allow it to be traded for the privilege of proximity to the authority or the controlling elites. It allows the press to restore its credibility and commitment to the public.

Although Shireen Abu Akleh did not specialise in investigative journalism, most of her reports were in some way part

of this type of journalism. They were based on searching for and revealing hidden facts and confronting the authority with what it tries to hide. In fact, this role played by Shireen in the course of her work was consistent with the nature of her daily work for a quarter of a century. There were a set of conditions that made her not just a bearer of the news being conveyed, but a witness and documenter of the narrative based on self-observation and testimony.

Let's look at this report on the transfer of young Israelis to settle in the West Bank to reinforce settlements.⁴⁹ This report comes at a time when Israel was claiming that it had frozen settlements (as Israel had previously set a 10-month freeze period), but before the period expired, Israel had begun preparing to restart building informal settlements. The story is based on a report by the Israeli movement, Peace Now, which unveiled three new settlement projects for which the foundation stone was laid, and even began relocating young settlers to them.

The report relies on testimony from Peace Now officials, who assert that: "Israel has begun a project to bring students to live in settlements, specifically in empty houses inside settlements, and to provide scholarships for those who come to live there. This is a kind of strengthening of existing settlements." Moreover, the report conveys documented testimonies from Peace Now that say: "Despite the decision to freeze settlement in the West Bank, Israel is building six hundred new settlement units in 60 different settlements in

⁴⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-j2kpXca_8

addition to the 2,000 settlement units that it had begun to establish before the freeze.”

This is made clear by the Palestinian side through Nimr Hammad, an adviser to the Palestinian president, who stresses that: “The construction of settlements means that the two-state solution will become unattainable.”

Shireen is not satisfied with Peace Now’s report, so she goes to the field where settlement work is still ongoing, naming the settlements of Modiin Illit, Givat Ze’ev and Ma’ale Adumim. The importance of this disclosure is to refute the Israeli narrative that affirmed its commitment to the freeze in implementation of UN Security Council resolutions. And thus, we can question Israel’s seriousness regarding the resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians, which at that stage promoted its intention to resume these negotiations.

In another report⁵⁰, Shireen documents on camera Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians. The importance of documenting these scenes is to refute the Israeli narrative based on the discourse of grievances and clarify the true picture before international public opinion, which is not necessarily in line with the positions of its governments. This also helps to embarrass Israel in front of its supporters, who publicly support a two-state solution and consider the attack on worshippers unacceptable.

The report begins with images of attacks inside Al-Aqsa Mosque, with clear footage highlighting the Israeli army’s

⁵⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWf3HXda58I&list>

attacks on Palestinians. In the background, we hear the sounds of gunfire, while Shireen's commentary clarifies the image further. "Jerusalem barely has a chance to calm down before it revolts again. The same scene faces Jerusalemites every night. The Israeli occupation soldiers, armed with full gear and weapons, are deployed throughout the city and its neighbourhoods, aiming to deter the people of Jerusalem from expressing their anger at the restrictions and violations they face. Restrictions that threaten the most basic aspects of their lives, including prayer. Another confrontation occurs during which the occupation avoids storming Al-Aqsa squares, apparently because of international pressure and condemnation. They have not spared the worshippers though from repression during the departure of Al-Aqsa after dawn prayers."

From the mosque, where worshippers are attacked at dawn, Shireen moves in the morning to the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. Here residents face pressure to evacuate the neighbourhood where they have lived for decades in favour of settlers. The report quotes the testimony of a woman named Nafud Hammad, who says: "I got married in 1975 here, and I am living in the very same house. And my children were born here, and I got them married here, and they bore children here. So, imagine in a moment they uproot you from your home and only place you know. How would any of the sons of Adam (human beings) feel? It means that they uproot us as one uproots a tree from the ground."



The importance of this report in the context of PA surveillance is to document Israel's violation of international law, whether in attacks or in the attempt to expel the residents of Sheikh Jarrah. These testimonies become evidence for moral condemnation and a way to dismantle the Israeli narrative.

Conclusion

The public may not need such a study to judge the professional work Shireen Abu Akleh has done throughout her media career. The public, despite all that may be said about the emotion and volatility of its judgments, has its tools to measure, evaluate and read what it receives through the media, especially if this reception has spanned more than a quarter of a century.

Although we do not have accurate tools to measure the public's attitude towards each journalist's professional work, (as this needs to be studied separately) the sadness and shock expressed by this audience through social media following the assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh, tells us a lot about the esteem in which she was held by her followers and in professional circles.

It is true that the public usually bases its judgments on impressionistic observations that are influenced by its positions about coverage, its level of knowledge, culture and even its political positions. But observation, despite its simplicity, is an essential tool in building cognitive perceptions. It often constitutes a starting point in the humanities as well as in experimental sciences, so its importance cannot be underestimated. Especially when it comes to observation that extends over time, without being subject to the effects of fluctuation and change that may sometimes characterise the audience's attitudes.

On the other hand, the public's judgments based on their observations, despite their importance, do not amount to the epistemological conclusions reached on the basis of a study that invokes the scientific rules recognised in academic studies. The words of the people, even if they are unanimous, are not reflected in the scientific field, unless supported by a study that determines the true from the impressionist. This is precisely the role of this study and the motivation for its completion.

In fact, the conclusions reached by the study went far beyond the general observations of the public to conclude that the professional work of Shireen Abu Akleh was distinguished on many levels. This could only be achieved by a journalist who combined professional competence and cognitive capacity and adhered above all to professional ethics and rules. The results of the study confirmed that accuracy and balance, for example, were a prominent feature of Shireen Abu Akleh's reports.

It is true that her affiliation with the land and the cause was clear in all her reports, but this was not at the expense of the values, rules and ethics of the profession. On the one hand, this affiliation enabled her to have accurate knowledge of the Palestinian cause historically and presently, which was necessary for deep professional media coverage. On the other hand, it prevented her from falling into cold neutrality that equates the aggressor with the victim, as has happened in many international media institutions that have served as mouthpieces for the occupation as a result, justifying its violations and repeating its narrative in the name of "neutrality".

Dual affiliation with both the cause and the profession, in an institution that raises the premise of “truth first” and elevates the values of “precision, balance and integrity”, was embodied in Shireen Abu Akleh’s work. It was what can be called “human-sympathetic journalism” but without prejudice.

This may seem contradictory. How can “empathy” and “absence of bias” be combined when by rational view they are incompatible extremes? This contradiction is illusory. The sympathy in question in this coverage is not that with one religious, ethnic, political or social group against another, but with a human being when they are violated or wronged. This sympathy is not in any way at the expense of the truth, whether through lying, falsification, concealment or exaggeration. It is based on revealing the truth and revealing it in full by telling people’s stories of suffering, by monitoring the authority and those who have the power and by revealing the violations they may commit against the most vulnerable.

The basic rule in all this is that “the truth alone serves a homeland”, so how, when a homeland is occupied and asks for only the truth, is this truth to be brought to light? The occupier is the one who is troubled by the truth and has no interest in its emergence. Empathy in this sense becomes a necessary moral condition for a professional journalistic practice that elevates the status of human beings, defends their right to life and dignity, and avoids falling into Israeli propaganda. And it avoids falling into the Israeli propaganda trap among the media, to the extent that major institutions and prominent journalists have found themselves repeating the Israeli narrative without scrutiny. The fulfilment of these

conditions assumes, in addition to professionalism, knowledge, ethical commitment and courage to enable the journalist to withstand the constraints imposed by the field. This is in addition to the risks posed by carrying out the role of “monitoring the authority”, especially when it comes to an occupation that represents the de facto authority.

While the reports accomplished by Shireen Abu Akleh enable the reader to discern the professional and ethical values that she has committed to throughout her career, her courage and boldness in observing the occupation and exposing its violations does not require evidence.

There is no evidence necessary beyond the blood that was shed by the occupation force’s bullet.

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Part Two:

Invoking the Palestinian Cause: Shireen Abu Akleh's Field Reports

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“ Amidst the vast amount of news in the world, it becomes difficult to keep the Palestinian cause on the news agenda. Therefore, we must always think of new angles to present the story in order to draw attention to it. ”

Shireen Abu Akleh
in an interview with Al Jazeera Journalism Review



Shireen Abu Akleh's field reports were a gold standard in journalism. They always adhered to the profession's ethics and guidelines, with accuracy in conveying information, inclusion of all the necessary news elements of a journalistic narrative (which provide comprehensive material for the subject), presence of a human story and exposure of the crimes of the occupation. In her reports, all these things are accomplished with absolute professionalism and objectivity.

This chapter of the book discusses how Shireen Abu Akleh's reports invoked the Palestinian cause. It uses a qualitative content analysis approach as a methodology. Our aim is to deconstruct these reports and extract the techniques Shireen Abu Akleh employed to call to mind the Palestinian cause and to make it pivotal on the international stage of public opinion.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the role of the media in contributing to the formation of public opinion. Specifically, when it comes to topics on national issues, crises and wars. It addresses the importance of the prose and information that journalists choose to adopt and broadcast in their reports and their impact on shaping collective memory and awareness of an issue. The aim is to understand the relationship between news elements and their impact from a social and cultural perspective in shaping public opinion and directing it.

The Formation of Public Opinion from a Social Perspective

Since 1899, sociologists have understood that the media not only influences public opinion but is also closely linked to sociology for several reasons. It can influence the recipient's emotions and create an interactive state between nations and peoples through sharing joys and sorrows.⁵¹ Hence, the media plays a crucial role in framing any conflict among the public. Therefore, mass communication tools are considered essential in creating and developing any popular movement or culture.

Several theories have been proposed in the social sciences about the impact of the media in creating collective and social change based on two main points. The first is that the media plays a pivotal role in changing the social environment, which consequently leads to a change in human behaviour regarding a particular issue or belief. The second point is based on the idea of direct influence on individuals who will in turn promote general social change in the community.⁵²

In their discussion of the role of the media in directing public opinion towards a particular issue, especially wars and conflicts, researchers tend to analyse the foundations on which

⁵¹ Yarros, V.S. (1899). "The Press and the Public Opinion", *American Journal of Sociology*, Nov., Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 373-382.

⁵²Palmer, J. R. (1971). "Theories of Social Change and the Mass Media", *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Oct., Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 127- 149.

journalists build their work. In other words, specialised theories in communication and journalism have focused mainly on analysing the basics of journalistic work - for example, how to obtain news, the way in which information is conveyed, the mechanism for choosing what to broadcast and other issues related to fieldwork.

Perhaps the most prominent theories related to the analysis of media content are the “Agenda-Setting” and “Framing” theories. The Agenda-Setting theory analyses the mechanism by which the media determines the issues it covers. The theory considers that the media determines what the public is interested in and what issues they are unaware of. Similarly, the Framing theory analyses the way in which the media addresses issues it has chosen to cover. Starting from choosing the information it presents and what it omits, to the nuances conveyed, the terminology used to describe the issues and their parties and the quality of the sources and their affiliations.

This chapter does not aim to provide an in-depth discussion of the “Framing” and “Agenda-Setting” theories, but rather it starts from this general concept and links it to the narrative used in Israeli and Western media. To shed light on the importance of Shireen Abu Akleh’s reports in building a counter-narrative that contributes to building Palestinian, Arab and international awareness of the Palestinian cause. Shireen Abu Akleh’s reports are considered some of the most important media sources that contribute to building this counter-narrative.

Language: Combating Propaganda

Policy researchers in communication and media sciences identify several elements that form the basis of news reports, through which the media agenda of any institution is determined, and the symbiotic relationship between political pathways and media content is studied. Language forms the cornerstone in understanding this relationship and in demonstrating the goal of the media in evoking or distorting the understanding of societies and their interaction towards a particular issue. In this context, the terminology used in a report plays the biggest role in determining the tone and policy of the media approach. This means the impact of the message the media content seeks to reinforce in the minds of the public in order to influence collective awareness through adopting a certain narrative.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Israeli occupation perceived the importance of the media as an influential tool among peoples to disseminate its narrative about the occupation of Palestine. This was mainly based on marketing the Israeli religious narrative of inherent ownership of Palestinian land by Jews, to legitimise what is known as the establishment of the Israeli state in global public opinion. It also relied on media marketing of the idea that the occupation is the victim, and in a position of self-defence against wars and fed-ayeen [freedom fighters] operations being carried out by the Palestinians since 1948. This Israeli media narrative aligns with the Western media that supports the Israeli occupation, but omits in its coverage the facts about the killings, displacement and geographical isolation in Palestine. For

many years, the Israeli occupation, its methodology, its supporting countries and those who sympathise with it have been trying to market a new framework for the Palestinian cause. This is based on terms such as economic peace, reducing conflicts and tolerance. This indicates a link between the media policies regarding the Palestinian narrative which coincide with a political escalation on the ground and the transformation in collective awareness and evoking memories.

Therefore, the media constitutes the main tool and the most dangerous weapon in directing Arab and global public opinion regarding the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the daily suffering of the Palestinians. The language used is at the heart of the battle in evoking the Palestinian cause. Terminology such as “occupational forces” as opposed to “Israeli army” contribute to undermining the legitimacy of those forces. Additionally, the use of subjective terms by many media outlets in describing events on the ground, such as the use of the term “clashes” instead of “Israeli attacks”, leads to equating the victim with the aggressor. It does not reflect the reality of these systematic attacks by the army on isolated citizens and the apartheid.

Furthermore, professionalism necessitates the use of descriptive terminology in reporting. Descriptive terminology such as a geographical-chronological account of the invasions and isolation attempts at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the forced evacuation of an area to clear it of Palestinians and the land confiscation all help to remind the viewer or reader of the constant goal of these invasions and attacks. This will allow the media to accurately convey what is happening on

the ground, and Israel's overall plan to occupy Palestine and expand its settlements. This accurate application of journalistic language was prominent in Shireen Abu Akleh's reports in all its forms. Even if they were political, related to security or military, cultural, economic or social in nature, Shireen utilised this artform to accentuate the essence of the Palestinian cause and the reality of the Israeli occupation.

So how did Shireen Abu Akleh's reports contribute to confronting the Israeli media narrative in a way that was able to influence global public opinion regarding the Palestinian cause? Can they be used to shape public opinion outside of Palestine about the truth of the issue, what the Palestinians are exposed to and the reality of the Israeli occupation? Can they be used to reshape and redirect collective awareness about the issue? Can they act as a tool to refute Israeli propaganda adopted by the majority of Western media, given the silence of the Arab media or at the very least, their minimal contribution? The following section of this chapter raises these questions through content analysis of a random sample of her field reports.

The second section of this chapter poses questions through analysing a random sample of Shireen Abu Akleh's field reports. Before reviewing these reports, it is necessary to note the impact of Shireen's assassination. The event effectively shed light on the Palestinian cause and created a state of consensus not only in Palestine and the Arab world, but also in most countries. Public reaction to the crime of assassination did not stop at the event itself, or at the emotional impact of the funeral procession that exposed more of the propaganda that the Israeli occupation is trying to estab-

lish. Shireen Abu Akleh's death increased the popularity of her reports among audiences who were not familiar with the reality of the occupation and the extent of its crimes in Palestine. This is due to the systematic media blackout that has been practised for years. Therefore, analysing a random sample of Abu Akleh's reports, based on the issues addressed through them, helps to provide a model for how journalists can produce objective news reports. This is regarding the Palestinian cause and how to contribute to spreading the facts related to the events taking place there under Israeli occupation. Additionally, analysing this content provides a practical model for linking linguistic anthropology and its role in the media hegemony of the occupation over the Palestinian cause.

Moreover, it is not only a matter of analysing the language, but also the performance through which Shireen Abu Akleh presented her reports, making her an influential journalistic figure. Her reports were characterised by several features, most notably: a calm voice while avoiding emotion and affectation, simplifying the information and delivering it smoothly to the public. Her accuracy, objectivity and presentation of documented information without introducing personal opinion or emotional influences that can detract from the objectivity of the report were distinct. This is despite being a Palestinian directly involved in the cause.

The Reports

This section presents an analysis of a random sample of reports by Shireen AbuAkleh between 2008 and 2022. The importance of these reports lies in how they constitute a comparative study, which can be recognised as evidence of Israel's violations and multiple breaches of international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They also demonstrate their systematic breach of all agreements and treaties subsequently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. For example, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and, finally, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The analysed content shows that Shireen's coverage of daily events focuses on several topics. These include Israeli settlement policies, the rights of prisoners, social and economic issues, political rights violations, the confiscation of natural resources, racial discrimination, policies of isolation and incursion attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Other topics such as attempts at the geographical isolation of various Palestinian towns and villages, the sectarian and regional isolation policies, the deliberate killing of civilians, the construction of the

separation wall, and the demolition of Palestinian homes are also covered. Through content analysis of the terminology used, information and facts presented, links between violations and Israeli occupation policies, visual material, and interviews, the content can be connected to prove the deliberate violations by the Israeli occupation. It can be used as documentary media material to evoke the Palestinian cause without any personal bias or interference.

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the content through two interconnected points. First, the extraction of the issues highlighted by Shireen in her reports. Second, the presentation and analysis of journalistic elements and professional values relied upon to highlight the Palestinian cause in the reports.

1. Invoking the Palestinian cause through freedom of worship

Shireen Abu Akleh's coverage of the Israeli incursions on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the prevention of Muslims from praying in it and the restrictions on Christians in Jerusalem played a role in highlighting the Israeli occupation's violation of freedom of worship in Palestine. Under this heading, Shireen shed light on the goals of the Israeli occupation resulting from these actions, especially in terms of emptying Jerusalem of Christians and the attempt at the geographic isolation concerning the Al-Aqsa Mosque. For example, in a report titled "Restrictions on Palestinian Christians during

Holy Week” from 2014, she compared the number of Christians living in the Old City in 2014 to their numbers in previous years (before the Nakba) to illustrate the effect of these policies on the Christian community. It demonstrates an obvious decrease in their numbers.

On the professional performance level, she maintained her neutrality and objectivity. She revealed a plan to rid Jerusalem of its Christian population by using numbers to substantiate her report. This made readers and viewers aware of the rapid decline in the number of Christians in the Old City of Jerusalem. Shireen emphasised the connection between national identity and the presence of Christians in their land. The report⁵³ includes an interview with a Palestinian woman in which she compares the stages of the suffering of Christ to the Palestinian Nakba since 1948. Shireen sheds light on several aspects of the Palestinian cause that document the violation of international laws and conventions by the Israeli occupation, such as isolation and the violation of the right to freedom of movement. Shireen argues that the repeated and escalating measures taken by Israeli forces against Muslims, such as not allowing them to practise their religious rites freely, are an integral part of the Israeli project to Judaize Jerusalem and to displace Palestinians from it.

Shireen’s report also highlights the Israeli blockades that prevent Palestinians from outside Jerusalem from entering the city as well as the restrictions placed on prayer at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In this way, the author documents the Israeli military presence and barriers in Jerusalem and

⁵³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AYjG415wQ4>

the crossings that obstruct the arrival of Muslim Palestinians to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. These ongoing measures often led to confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces. Shireen worked to refute the Israeli narrative about what they claim are “riots against Israelis” by conveying the actual events through audio and video. After documenting repeated attacks by Israeli forces using gas bombs, stun grenades, rubber bullets and sometimes live ammunition against Palestinians (young, old, men and women), Shireen aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical and symbolic context of the information.

One of the most debated ethical dilemmas among journalists and media researchers is the journalist’s stance on the issues they cover. Some believe that the journalist’s primary task is to convey the truth accurately and responsibly. Meanwhile others believe that it is the journalist’s social responsibility to provide information in what is known as “comprehensive truth”. Through this, the journalist objectively and professionally explains the context of the information and does not simply report on it.⁵⁴ Shireen Abu Akleh played this role with professionalism and proficiency. In her reports, she linked the Israeli forces’ prevention of Palestinians from entering Jerusalem and worshipping in the Al-Aqsa Mosque with the escalating frequency of incursions by right-wing extremist groups (such as the “Temple Mount” group) in the Old City. Most specifically affected were the courtyards of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Western Wall, or what Israelis call the “Wailing Wall”. (See report: Israel and extremist groups storm Al-Aqsa Mosque - 2014).

⁵⁴ Ward, S.J.A. (2005). *The Invention of journalism ethics: The long path to objectivity and beyond*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

To better understand the connection between these two occurrences and their context in the Arab-Israeli conflict, specifically the occupation's policy to undermine the Palestinian cause, she illustrated them in detail. Shireen described them⁵⁵ as “a basic step on the agenda of those groups to enhance Israel's complete control over the Al-Aqsa Mosque and allow Jews to enter and pray there without restrictions. Israel is trying to establish a reality that contradicts the existing historical situation in Al-Aqsa, by making Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque isolated with a minimum Palestinian presence, instead with a Jewish presence.”

This reality makes the one visit in which Palestinians are allowed to enter Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem (during Ramadan) a difficult journey. “The journey to pass through multiple checkpoints starts immediately after suhoor (the pre-fast meal),” she said. However, the harshest part was when she mentioned that some who enter the city “have not reached Al-Aqsa Mosque in many years due to the siege on Jerusalem”.

2. Invoking the Palestinian cause through covering settlements

To call to mind the Palestinian cause, one must examine the Israeli settlement projects that violate international law, and

⁵⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1MjQajQCRY&t=77s>

which the occupation tries to brush over in its narrative to polish its image in international public opinion.

Shireen Abu Akleh shed light on these violations from several angles as part of her journalistic mission to convey the suffering of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause. She focused on the settlement projects by covering several elements to convey the reality in a scientific and accurate manner. The first element she relied on was documenting the number of projects and settlements built by the occupation in each report and comparing them with the years that preceded them. This was in addition to presenting a detailed map of the geographic distribution of those settlements. For example, in a report titled “Vast Areas of Settlements in the West Bank”⁵⁶ in 2011, she presented the number of settlements built by the occupation and distributed in the West Bank and Jerusalem (estimated at around 179 settlements at that time). Shireen then went on to compare them with the number of settlement outposts that Israel had established since 2001 (which was estimated at about 143 outposts), and before that in the Old City of Jerusalem since the 1980s. She points out “where Israel seized dozens of Arab properties claiming ownership by Jews before 1948 or by claiming to have purchased them through fraud as happened in a few cases”, as stated in her report titled “Escalation of Settlement Organisations’ Activities in Occupied Jerusalem” in 2009.

However, the most important thing to shed light on is the ultimate purpose of these settlements, which is to isolate the Palestinian territories. “Dozens of them serve as corridors

⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zms3Pok2oNY>

connecting other settlements and controlling the most vital areas of land. These include the water sources, agricultural lands, Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley,” points out Shireen. she emphasised, “the need to be aware that the danger of settlements is not only measured by the areas they seize, but also by the infrastructural projects and bypass roads that connect them”. These details do not just come up in her reports by chance. They allow the public to build a clear and concise picture of the danger of this “non-random project that did not exist once upon a time. Every settlement serves a strategic goal for Israel and seizes a piece of the Palestinian dream”, says Shireen.

Therefore, this deliberate focus on continuous and escalating settlement establishment undermines Israel’s claim to be adopting a two-state solution. It demonstrates the reality of occupation in Palestine. It does not respect international law or calls from the international community to stop illegal settlements. Perhaps the most prominent indication of the occupation’s circumvention of international law has been in its strategic construction planning. Shireen reports that “settlement construction has taken on an accelerating trend since 2007, and while Israel announced a partial freeze in 2009, it has returned at a faster pace since the end of last September when Israel approved the construction of 13,000 settlement units, while the number of settlers reached about 600,000 settlers, more than a third of them living in Jerusalem alone.” (Report on the vast areas of settlements in the West Bank, 2011).

In one sentence, Shireen has summed up the Israeli project by describing settlements as “seizing a piece of the Pal-

estinian dream, a dream that Israel wants to reduce from a state to 12 cantons or a Palestinian conglomerate living apart from each other”.

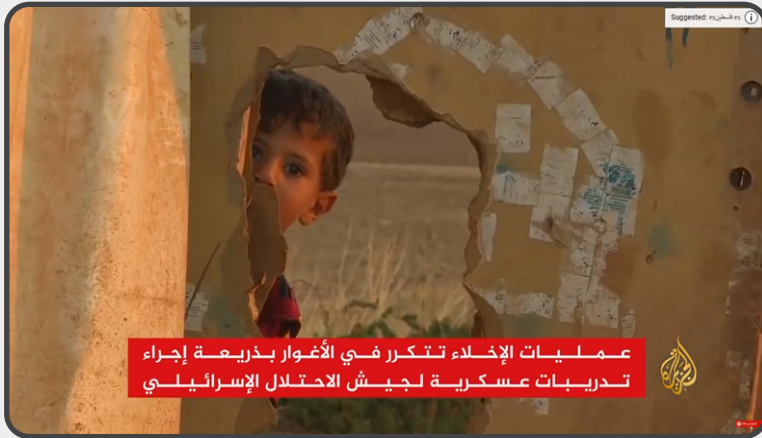
Interviews with relevant parties on the topics addressed in news reports play a pivotal role in providing credibility to the information presented in the report. Interviews can be with individuals who have experienced a certain situation to provide a clearer picture for the audience. Or they can be with institutions and governmental or non-governmental organisations to clarify and explain information. In this context, Shireen conducted interviews with representatives of European and Jewish organisations opposed to Israeli settlement construction to add additional perspective and fulfil the documentation criteria. The choice of the identity of the people interviewed, as in the case of settlements, may be intentional in selecting international and Jewish organisations. This is for several purposes, especially to draw the attention of global public opinion to the reality of what is happening in Palestine. Therefore, enabling her to evoke the Palestinian cause in international forums as a human rights issue in a professional and objective manner.

It is widely recognised that people’s stories are an effective means of shaping public opinion on a particular issue. In the case of Palestine, the human element is often absent from Western media, which is known for its bias towards the Israeli occupation. This is due to the significant influence of the Zionist lobby. Therefore, the people’s story also constitutes a fundamental element in Shireen Abu Akleh’s reports on the suffering of Palestinians caused by Israeli settlements. In her reports, she was able to communicate

this with responsibility and professionalism to preserve the dignity of the people first and foremost without exploiting them for media influence.

The Palestinian citizen is the first victim of settlement projects, which often take place on the ruins of demolished Palestinian homes and on stolen Palestinian land. The people imparted their suffering in Shireen's reports, and she took them to the world to expose the crimes of the occupational forces in Palestine. Israeli forces do not respect basic human rights such as the right to live in dignity and security. This is what she revealed through audio, imagery, information and documents. The suffering of the people in Palestine is expressed through their own eyes and in their own words. The interviews she conducted with families reflected her professionalism and ability to convey their suffering. All her reports were free of exploiting the difficult situation faced by families whose homes are threatened with demolition or destroyed, and those who are constantly subjected to incursions by settlers under the protection of the occupation forces (an integral part of the settlement policy). Calmly, the families expressed their suffering to Shireen's camera, describing the harassment, displacement and evictions they have endured. Perhaps the most striking feature of these reports is the direct interaction with them through audio and video documentation. For example, in her report⁵⁷ entitled "Israeli occupation expels more than 100 Palestinians from their homes" in 2018, she documented the struggle. "Sixteen Palestinian families who woke up before dawn at 6 am in the Jordan Valley, following orders from the occupying army to evacuate their homes," states Shireen.

⁵⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRJA-M5yfCE>



3. Invoking the Palestinian cause by showcasing Israeli violations of Palestinian economic and social rights

It is impossible to talk about the Israeli occupation's plan to displace and uproot Palestinians from their homes without addressing the policy of isolating Palestinian areas implemented by the occupying forces and the violations of economic and social rights this entails. These issues have played a pivotal role in Shireen Abu Akleh's work to expose the crimes of the occupation and convey the Palestinian reality in an attempt to confront the propaganda that distorts the issue and undermines it.

Western media does not report on the impact of the continuous violations of Israel of the economic and social rights

of the Palestinians. This impact takes different forms. The impact of the closure of commercial crossings (Gaza as a model) on basic economic needs and the impact of the construction of the separation walls and settlements on the Palestinians' economy. It is extensive and includes geographic and economic fragmentation, confiscation and seizure of Palestinian agricultural land, control and exploitation of Palestinian natural resources, imposition of the Israeli currency throughout Palestine and prevention and destruction of infrastructure.

In conveying the daily humanitarian anguish of the Palestinian people, Shireen Abu Akleh addressed these Israeli violations of rights by both the occupying forces and settlers. She dedicated space to documenting the confiscation of land by Israeli forces, specifically agricultural land. As well as the deprivation of Palestinian natural resources such as water, which violates international law and human rights law. Shireen also presented examples of the notifications received by Palestinian landowners and farmers to evacuate their land. The importance of this monitoring lies in the impact and the illegal context of the Israeli occupation policy of restricting Palestinians in all aspects of their lives and their resources, as stated in her report titled "Israeli forces demand Palestinian farmers to evacuate their land"⁵⁸ in 2012.

Cutting off water supplies to Palestinian areas and villages is another aspect of Israeli violations of economic and social rights, which Shireen Abu Akleh also extensively examined.

⁵⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyRTR6rMibM>

Shuafat refugee camp in Jerusalem is one example of Palestinian suffering from water scarcity. A report titled “The Suffering of Palestinians in East Jerusalem due to Water Cuts” in 2014 showed the distress of residents caused by Israeli water companies cutting off water supplies.



The occupation authorities have also prevented the development of infrastructure - in violation of the agreement signed by the Jordanian government in 1951 - to provide free water to the camp's residents. A comparison was made between the situation of Palestinians and the surrounding Israeli settlements, which enjoy advanced services and infrastructure, to highlight the policy of racial segregation practised by the occupation authorities. Even though it is in clear violation of international law that prohibits racial segregation under the Geneva Conventions and specifically Article 85(4), which states: “Practices of racial discrimination and other methods based on racial differentiation are contrary to humanity and degrading, which undermine personal dignity.” This is in addition to Article 3 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial

Discrimination, which includes “all persons belonging to different races or national or ethnic groups or to indigenous peoples”. The report also raises the discussion about the difficult reality in the camp due to the separation wall. The link between the absence of infrastructure services and the wall is in line with the policy of isolation. Through this, Shireen explains: “Israel reduces the Arab population in the city and gets rid of the burden of services provided to them. The Palestinians remain alone in an area not under the control of the Palestinian Authority; meanwhile, Israel is comfortable with its security control over it.”



4. Invoking the Palestinian cause through discussing the Israeli policy of demolitions and isolation

The apartheid policy of the occupation is not complete without the goal of displacing Palestinians from their land - meanwhile expanding the settlement areas - demolishing homes or allowing building permits. This aspect was also

highlighted in Shireen Abu Akleh's reports from several areas in the West Bank in Palestine.

The demolition process aims to expand the settlement areas and complete the process of evicting Palestinians and bringing in a greater number of settlers. This is a direct violation of international law. For example, Shireen demonstrated in a report titled "Israel Decides to Demolish Eight Palestinian Hamlets South of Hebron"⁵⁹ in 2012, an illustration of the goals of this policy. The report tells the story of the suffering of eight small hamlets south of the city of Hebron. "Lacking the simplest forms of civilisation and connected only by a single, several-kilometre-long, unpaved road that only tractors usually use", explains Shireen. The Israeli authorities prevent the development of any infrastructure in them. What is noteworthy is the highlighting of two fundamental points. First, the lack of interest in these hamlets, as "no one pays attention to those hamlets except for Israel, which decided to demolish them and evict their Palestinian inhabitants, who are already prohibited from building anything new." Second is the policy of the occupation in emptying Palestinian areas of their inhabitants, as Shireen pointed out that half of these hamlets are located within the occupied territories of 1967. "And the remaining half of the hamlets are located within the territories of 1948. It is a border area, with vast areas of land that Israel wants, minus its Palestinian inhabitants." These inhabitants represent "a thorn in Israel's side. If it succeeds in expelling them, it will secure a border strip between the Green Line and the southern West Bank."

⁵⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrFPesAomac&t=4s>



In another report titled “Israel Continues to Demolish Palestinian Homes”⁶⁰, Shireen recalls the case of American activist Rachel Corrie. Rachel was killed by Israeli bulldozers while protesting the policy of demolishing Palestinian homes in the Rafah area of the Gaza Strip. Shireen associated this to the occupation policy that is based on “acquitting its soldiers as long as the victims are Palestinians or friends and supporters of Palestine.” This incident revealed the failure of international law to protect Palestinians and thus prevent Israeli violations or advocate for the Palestinian cause in the midst of Western media blackout and Israeli narrative domination.

Perhaps the most important thing that can be observed in these reports that dealt with the policy of demolition and isolation is the racial segregation and isolation of Palestinian families from each other - even within the same village, which is a reality that many outside Palestine are unaware of.

⁶⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anvt8sDAaRU>



For example, a report entitled “Al Jazeera Documents the Suffering of a Palestinian Family with the Wall”⁶¹ in 2009, told the story of the Dweirish family who lived in an area located within the municipality of Bethlehem. The occupation authorities, contrary to all laws, even those of the occupation forces, decided to isolate the home of this family and attach it to the city of Jerusalem. This report shows a manner of isolation and the complete siege that this family experienced. On the one hand, its members no longer enjoy freedom of movement in Bethlehem. They also cannot enter Jerusalem due to the Israeli siege on the city, except with an Israeli permit which the occupation refuses to grant them. This siege also impacts several other aspects such as the right to education. The daughter of the homeowner was forced to leave her university because of she couldn’t travel there. Once again, racial segregation is clear. Shireen reports: “To the north, settlements expand and Israelis build more houses for themselves on Palestinian land. Nearby that wall draws the end line for Palestinian citizens. Between them, the life of a family disappears whose only fault is having no place on the maps or plans of Israel.”

⁶¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apb2aIqrST0>

Racial segregation is not limited to neighbourhoods only, but also extends to the dead. In a region in East Jerusalem, the occupation authorities isolated an area from the rest of Jerusalem by building the separation wall on village lands. As a result of this decision, one of the homeowners recounted how the wall separated his home from the burial place of his family. (See the report “The Separation Wall in Jerusalem... Isolates the Entire Palestinian Family’s House from the rest of the Village”).

5. Invoking the Palestinian Cause through discussing the right to education and children’s rights

The Israeli policy of isolation and racial segregation also violates the rights of children in Palestine. This includes the right to education and freedom of movement. In several of her reports, Shireen Abu Akleh highlighted the anguish of Palestinian students, who are forced by the separation wall to take rugged paths to reach their schools and cross military checkpoints that separate their schools from their villages. For example, see the report “Al-Nuḥman Village... Between Construction Prohibition and Home Demolition”⁶² in 2010, and the report “The Occupation Imposes Strict Inspection Measures on Hebron” in 2017.

International humanitarian law prohibits any attack on civilians, especially children, women and people with special needs. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

⁶² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoEVsNcjys&t=2s>

Child of 1989, clearly states that “a child has the right to equality, health, education, a clean environment, a safe place to live, and protection from all forms of harm”. The Israeli occupation violates the rights of children in Palestine, not only in exposing them to terrorism, intimidation, demolition of their homes and isolation operations, but also in their right to education. Children in Palestine need Israeli permission to enter their schools or kindergartens and to leave them peacefully. Kindergartens in Jerusalem, especially, are considered an example that reflects the struggle of Palestinian children in their right to education. Israeli forces built a wall that separates the kindergarten from the children’s homes. The matter is not limited to the wall alone, but times for entering and leaving school are also determined, turning the lives of children into a military operation. Shireen states: “At twelve noon, the children rush to the iron gate where Israeli soldiers are waiting for them. With their innocence and spontaneity, they do not realise that they are about to cross borders drawn by Israel between Jerusalem and their town of Al-Eizariya in the east.” (Report: Jerusalem and the Separation Wall...Kindergarten for Children under Occupation, 2009)⁶³.

Shireen skilfully links the stories of the suffering of children to the fundamental issues which are the restriction, destruction, isolation and displacement of Palestinians in order to expand the building of projects and settlements.

This connection appears in all reports about demolition and isolation of Palestinian citizens. For example, reports such as “Israel Issues Notices to Demolish Homes in Silwan Town”⁶⁴ in 2014, “Israel decides to demolish Eight Palestinian Homes in the South of Hebron”⁶⁵ in 2012 and

⁶³<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM2rbUHc0uw>

⁶⁴<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFHr9B2Wso0>

⁶⁵<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrFPesAomac&t=6s>

“New Events on the Ground ... Settlements Devour Occupied Jerusalem”⁶⁶ in 2011. Another example is “Frequent Arrests in the Palestinian Village of Awarta” in 2011⁶⁷.

Perhaps the most prominent and recent issue in the process of displacement and expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in order to seize them is the case of Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem. Here, Shireen documented Israeli harassment and threats. In her report entitled “Occupation Authorities Continue to Tighten the Screws on Residents of Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood in Jerusalem”⁶⁸ in 2022, the media contributed to rallying global public support. We can see the results in this report, “Widespread Solidarity with Families Threatened with Eviction in Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood” in 2022. In Palestine, and with the protection of occupation forces as part of the policy of ridding Jerusalem of Palestinians, settlers attack and invade Palestinian homes on the pretext that they belong to their ancestors. (Refer to the report “Escalation of Settlement Organisation Activities in Occupied Jerusalem” in 2009⁶⁹).

The Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood scenario shows the contradiction between the scenes of heavily armed occupation soldiers and the landowners who refuse to be uprooted or deported. If they go to court, it would only keep them in their homes for a certain number of years in exchange for acknowledging the settlers’ ownership of the land as is clarified in the report “Al-Jazeera’s Camera Documents Israeli Settlers’ Attacks on Palestinians”⁷⁰ in 2022. This is a simple

⁶⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOa0kEGfFqo>

⁶⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxNI7FZPtKg>

⁶⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITzvX5DwKew>

⁶⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTzOyRNUcwo>

⁷⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOfE7XnYijE>

example that summarises the Palestinian people's devotion to their land and existence in Palestine. Even if it is in the face of violent attacks with weapons, force and manipulation of laws that institutionalise racial discrimination, and reflect the weakness of the international community in curbing Israeli violations.



The most prominent violation discussed is the policy of the occupation in ending the Palestinian cause by replacing the Palestinian educational curriculum with the Israeli one. “It does not recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, replaces Palestinian symbols with Israeli ones, and replaces the Palestinian flag with the Israeli flag”, reports Shireen. This was revealed in a report titled “Israel Imposes its Educational Curriculum on Palestinian Institutions”⁷¹ in 2013. Shireen summarised the occupation's policy to undermine the cause and distort history in one sentence by saying “an occupation that steals land, changes history, distorts reality, seizes identity and seeks to reach the awareness of the Palestinian child”.

⁷¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHEs8pjSJk8>

6. Invoking Palestinian strife through the issue of Palestinian prisoners

The issue of prisoners is not limited to violations of their rights in Israeli prisons, it also pertains to several aspects that all constitute a breach of international laws and conventions. Shireen sheds light on this issue in her reports, especially regarding the denial of medical care and human rights, as stated in a report titled: “11 Palestinian Prisoners Continue Their Open Hunger Strike”⁷² in 2013. The arbitrary measures taken against them - contrary to international law - are explained in her report titled “Israeli Soldiers’ Heinous Actions Against Prisoners”⁷³ in 2010. She also highlights the violation of the rights of children in custody, for example as in the report “Israeli Court Convicts the Child Ahmed Manasra”⁷⁴ in 2016.



⁷² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VP7YdguLwLI>

⁷³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Qt2oVE8W3o>

⁷⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytXMvoD3Unw>

7. Invoking the Palestinian Cause through heritage and culture

“The elders die, and the young forget” is an Israeli saying that Shireen addressed in one of her reports, and which the Palestinians try to challenge with various forms of resistance and resilience. Cultural work is a part of building memory and collective awareness in Palestine. Like peoples’ stories, culture - especially art and heritage - plays an important role in bringing people closer together by defining their history and civilization and by exchanging stories, customs and traditions. The occupation recognises the importance of this aspect, which explains its continuous attacks on Palestinian heritage, culture and art, claiming ownership of Arabic foods, Palestinian heritage products and songs. Hence, cultural resistance is an essential tool for building awareness of the Palestinian cause, not only among young Palestinians who did not experience the Nakba or the invasions but also within Arab and global public opinion.

In Shireen Abu Akleh’s legacy, there are hundreds of stories about Palestinian industries, heritage, cultural and artistic life. She has said more than once in her reports that this is the heritage “the Palestinians seek to preserve as part of their memory, which the occupation seeks to scatter”. You can see examples in the reports “Nablus...the Cradle of the Ancient Soap Industry”⁷⁵ in 2018, “Spinning the Veins...a new Vision for Palestinian Embroidery”⁷⁶ in 2018 and “The Palestinian Heritage Festival in the West Bank”⁷⁷ in 2013.

⁷⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmgovyBOPVg>

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dt0UGluLWIk>

⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SjxnEFsBg5>

Conclusion

Through its media machine and influence on major Western media institutions, Israel attempts to portray the Palestinian cause as a conflict carried out by Palestinian rebels who do not want peace. In this section, we have attempted to present a model of ethical journalism that advocates for human rights by reviewing and discussing a small and random sample of Shireen Abu Akleh's reports through on-the-ground coverage. Shireen represents a model of committed journalism that has never compromised the ethics of the profession in conveying the suffering and struggles of the Palestinian people with emotional attachment and identity as a true daughter of this land.

We have examined random reports from Shireen Abu Akleh's channel on YouTube⁷⁸, which was established by Al Jazeera after her assassination. Through these reports, we have demonstrated it is possible to evoke the Palestinian cause and highlight Israeli violations of international law, international conventions and human rights law. Shireen provided important information, facts, figures, interviews and direct field scenes that shed light on Palestinian struggles. These reports are worthy of being included as material in journalism schools and used as legal documentation to raise awareness and advocate for the Palestinian cause in international forums. They provide coverage of Israeli violations and crimes at the heart of the Palestinian cause, all of which are prohibited by international law, such as displacement, apartheid, detention, restrictions on freedom of movement, denial of the right to live with dignity, freedom

⁷⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/@ShireenAboAkleh>

and security, the right to practise religious rites, the right to education, children's rights, economic, social, cultural, and political rights and the right to protect civilians during times of war. Over the course of 25 years, Shireen Abu Akleh covered these human rights issues with exceptional professionalism in thousands of reports.

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