



**Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA)**

**Special Report:**

**The Occupations Attacks against female/male journalists while covering the peaceful return marches in Gaza Strip**

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## **The Occupations Attacks against female/male journalists while covering the peaceful return marches in Gaza Strip**

Dozens of the attacks and direct targeting against the journalists during the peaceful return marches in five locations in Gaza Strip borders since the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 2018 (until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018), have constituted an express and further evidence on the adoption of the Israeli occupation forces of an official policy based on banishing the media and journalists and keep them away from the events to prevent them from media coverage, by various ways, even murder, as in the cases of the journalists, Yassir Murtaja and Ahmad Abu Hussein.

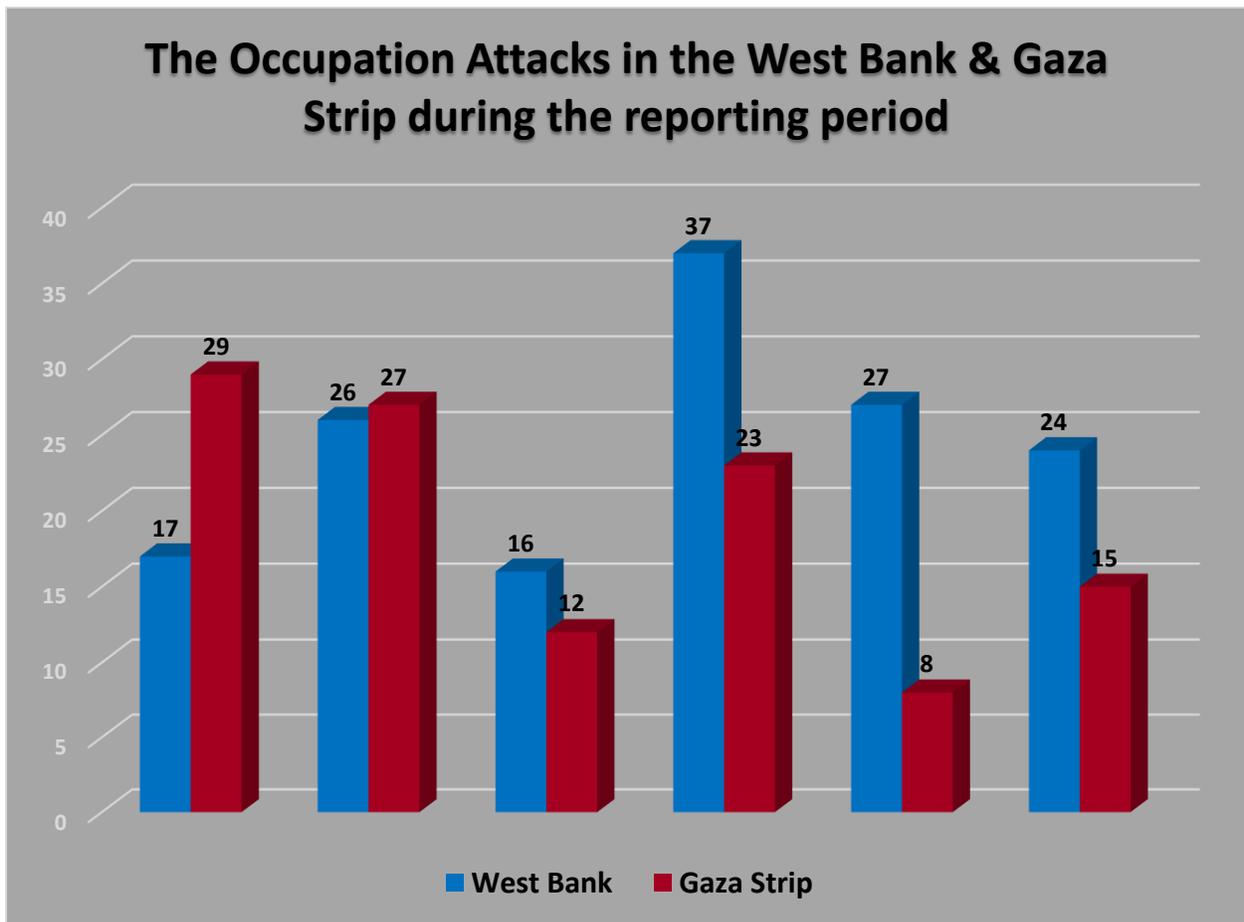
Disregarding the protection and immunity given to the media and journalists by the international laws to enable them to work freely, the Israeli Occupation forces, throughout the days of the return marches organized in the eastern provinces of Gaza Strip, have considered journalists and media agencies as one of its soldiers and snipers main targets, in order to cover the offences committed by the Israeli army against thousands of the demonstrators in the Palestinian peaceful marches who were participating in these marches and to prevent the Palestinian voice to reach out to the world.

Although there has been an attempt to conceal the formal political and military cover of the offences committed by the Israeli occupation army against the media and journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the past years, it has become more obvious and exposed in the return marches.

It does not require clearer evidence than the defiance of the Israeli Defense Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, represented in murdering the Palestinian journalist, Yasser Abdulrahman Murtaja, by one of his soldiers, while he was covering the events of the return march on 6 April 2018, and his announcement and explicit call to target journalists with murder. "I do not know who he is (referring to the journalist, Murtaja), whether he was a

photographer or not. Whoever turns on a drone (a small aircraft for aerial photography) above the Israeli army forces should know that he is risking his life” commented Lieberman on the murder of the journalist, Murtaja, as reported by the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, on 8 April 2018 during his participation in the ceremony of Mimouna in Ashdod.

The journalist, Murtaja (when shot dead) was at a distance of 350 meters away from the border fence, where the Israeli army soldiers and snipers were deployed against the demonstrators at the peaceful marches covered by Murtaja using the drone (even though some resources have denied that he used a drone).



The injury of Murtaja, who was wearing the Press helmet and vest, reflects the targeting with murder, especially he was shot by an Israeli sniper with an explosive bullet through

his lower left flank (in other words, in a very weak and unprotected area of the body given that he was wearing the Press vest) coming out from his right flank, causing rupture in his inner organs and membranes, damage to his spleen, and rupture to some of his arteries, leading to massive blood loss, which is why the physicians have provided him with 16 units of blood while they were trying to save his life (he passed away 10 hours after his injury).

This deliberate crime raises a critical question addressed to the Israeli Army Minister: Why the Israeli sniper has deliberately shot an explosive bullet at the “journalist Murtaja/who has turned a drone for photography” while he could bring down the drone itself and destroy it, (if the soldiers have any doubts or concerns about the drone), which could be easily and undoubtedly destroyed, especially since the journalist Murtaja was standing at a distance of 350 meters away from the Israeli soldiers when he was shot dead, so there was plenty of time for the soldiers to bring down the small drone flying over the demonstrators?

**(The Israeli Occupation Attacks in the West Bank & Gaza Strip during the reporting period)**

<b>Month</b>	<b>West Bank</b>	<b>Gaza Strip</b>	<b>Total</b>
April	17	29	46
May	26	27	53
June	16	12	28
July	37	23	60
August	27	8	35
September	24	15	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>261</b>

In substantially similar circumstances, the Israeli occupation soldiers have murdered the journalist, Ahmad Abu Hussein, while he was at a distance of 300 meters approximately,

from the border fence, wearing the Press vest. (He was injured on 13 April 2018, and he died on 25 April 2018, with serious wounds). He was shot with an explosive bullet in his left flank while he was covering the return march in the east of Jabalia. He underwent several surgeries in many hospitals in Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Israel, but none of them have actually saved his life. He breathed his last breath 12 days following his injury (Wednesday afternoon, corresponding 25 April 2018).

The murders of the journalists, Murtaja and Abu Hussein, are added to another 41 murders of journalists committed by the Israeli occupation forces since the beginning of the year 2000, in the West Bank, and Gaza Strip, including 17 murder crimes during the attack on Gaza in 2014 not to mention the dozens of injured female/male journalists during that attack, resulting in permanent disabilities to some of them.

Although they are considered two of the most serious and critical crimes, the murders of the journalists, Murtaja and Abu Hussein, in this deliberate manner are not the only crimes committed by the Israeli occupation army as part of its efforts aimed at banishing the media and journalists to prevent them from covering the peaceful return marches.

In addition to these two crimes, the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA), since the return peaceful marches have launched on 30 March 2018 until 30 May 2018, has also documented at least 46 injuries by live and explosive bullets in Gaza Strip alone without the West Bank, most of which fall under the serious and dangerous injuries resulting in severe wounds of the female/male journalists which got them off the work field, at varying periods, not to mention the concerns among the journalists for fear of the deliberate targeting.

Such injuries of the journalists caused by live and prohibited explosive bullets of the Israeli Occupation reflect side of what is taking place on the ground.

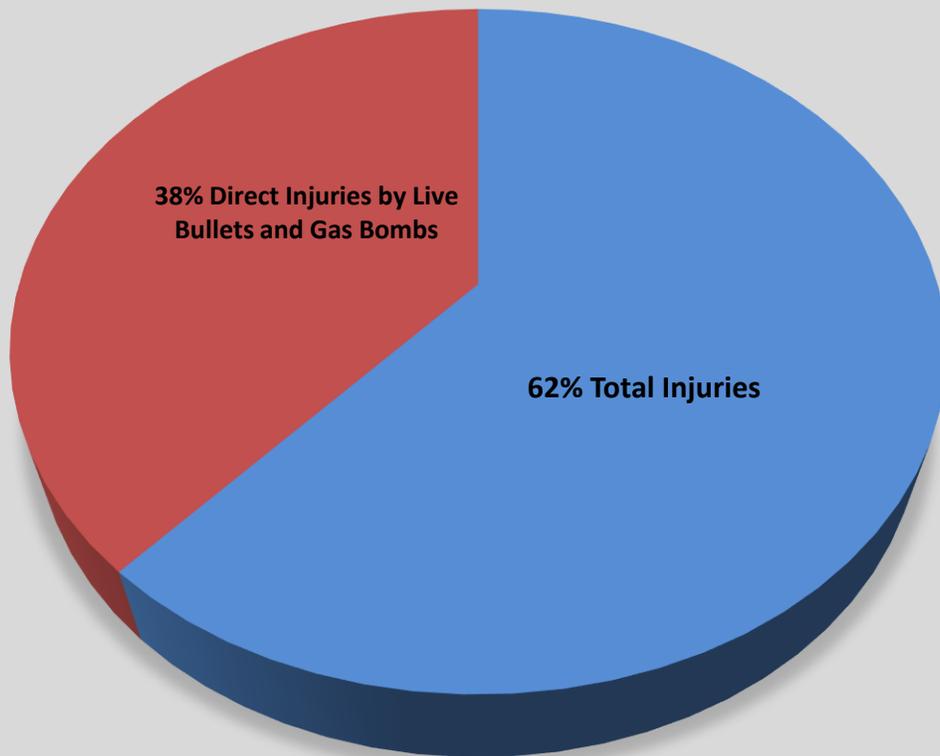
During the reporting period, the peaceful return marches injuries have affected the following female and male journalists: Ahmad Salem Barbakh (injured by a gunshot in the abdomen), Mahmoud Adnan Madoukh (injured by a gunshot in the left leg), Ahmad Abdelnasser Qafah (injured by a gunshot in his thigh), Mohammad Ali Qadoura (injured

by a gunshot in his shoulder), Wissam Atef Mousa (injured by two gunshots in both of his legs, one of the bullets is believed to be a 250 mm which caused a severe rupture in his left leg), Izz Abdelaziz Abu Shanab (injured by an explosive bullet in his left leg), Mohammad Ali Al-Hajjar (injured by fragments in his hand and knee after the bullet missed him and hit a body next to him), Mohammad Hassan Al-Sawalhi (injured by an explosive bullet in his foot), Abdulrahman ?Hani Al-Khalut (injured by an explosive bullet in his foot), Yasser Fathi Qdaih (injured by an explosive gunshot in his abdomen which led to the removal of a part of his spleen), Wael Hamdan Al-Dahdouh (injured by a gunshot in his hand), Mohammad Ismail Abu Dahrouj (injured by a gunshot in the thigh), Majdi Fathi Sulaiman (injured by a gunshot through his leg), Ahmad Fathi Zaqout (injured by fragments of an explosive bullet in his hand and armpit/lower arm), Daoud Nimer Abu Al-Kas (injured by fragments in the hand), Rafi Khitam Al-Mileh (injured by a gunshot in his hand and fragments in the elbow), Abdullah Al-Shourbaji (injured by a gunshot through his pelvis out of his thigh causing wounds in the colon and the femur as the physicians found the he needed several months of therapy to recover from the injury), Yahya Timraz (injured by a gunshot through his excellent thigh), Mahmoud Salman Al-Arini (injured by a gunshot through his right hand), Mutasem Ahmad Daloul (injured by an explosive gunshot in his hand), Yasmeen Al-Naouq (injured by a gunshot in her back), Mohammad Wael Abdeljawad Al-Dweik (injured by fragments of a gunshot in his hand), Farhan Abu Hadayed (injured by a gunshot through his left leg), Sami Jamal Al-Batran (injured by a metal bullet in his left shoulder-causing an entry and exit), Haitham Adnan Madoukh (injured by a gunshot in his lower knee causing him bones-laceration and intravenous cutting requiring three surgeries), the French News agency photographer, Mohammad Abdelrazeq Al-Baba (injured by a gunshot in his right leg causing him fractures), Anatolia News Agency photographer, Ali Hassan Mousa Jad (injured by a gunshot through the palm of his right hand), Reuters News Agency photographer, Mohammad Imad Al-Za'noun (injured by an explosive bullet fragments in his right hand and both knees), Adel Ibrahim Al-Hawajri (injured by a fragment in the gastrocnemius muscle causing an entry and exit),

Moein Tayseer Aldabba (injured by a gunshot in his right hand/causing an entry and exit and severe laceration, snapped tendons of his fingers, and several fractures), Nihad Mohammad Abdelnabi (injured by an explosive bullet in his left thigh), Abdelkareem Hamdouna (injured by fragments in his right thigh), Zaki Yahya Awad (injured by a gunshot through both of his legs/causing an entry and exit, his gastrocnemius muscle was removed, the intravenous cutting was repaired, his leg was placed in a cast, and he was given 15 blood units), Subhey Mousa Abu Al- Hossain (injured by a gunshot in the right thigh), Alaa Abdelfattah Al-Namla (injured by a fragment in his ear and another in his head causing moderate wounds which required 4 stitches in the ear and three in the head), Mohammad Samih Abu Sultan (injured by a gunshot in the left knee/causing an entry and exit, was given four blood units), Mahmoud Saed Shatta (injured by a gunshot in the thigh/causing an entry and exit, required 10 stitches), Attiya Nasser Hijazi (injured by a gunshot above the knee/causing an entry and exist, in addition to a fragment which stabilized in his knee), Bilal Loay Al-Abadsa (injured by an explosive bullet in the right foot and a fragment in his left foot causing bone fragmentation and fractures in the first and second toes, the big toe and the long toe), Mazen Sulaiman Qudaih (injured by a fragment in his index finger), Anas Al-Sharif (injured by a fragment in the abdomen), and Akram Ramadan Shabir (injured by an explosive bullet causing wounds to his both thighs-required placing platinum in the right thigh).

In addition to the aforementioned in regard to using live ammunition by the Israeli occupation army against the journalists, and of course, the peaceful demonstrators, as well as the evidence and other proofs noticed during the monitoring and documenting the Israeli attacks and crimes against the media and journalists while covering the peaceful return marches, the firing of gas bombs and tear gas, which is usually done by the security forces around the world for the purpose of dispersing the demonstrators (not harming them), is a process used by the Israeli occupation army to cause critical harm to the journalists (and of course the demonstrators taking part in the peaceful return marches), in which the Israeli soldiers fire gas bombs directly against the bodies of the journalists in many cases.

**The Journalists' Direct Injuries by Live Bullets and Gas Bombs out of the Total Injuries during the Return Marches in Gaza**



There is no clearer evidence on the seriousness of these practices and deliberate targeting of journalists (as well as demonstrators) causing severe physical injuries and suffering to the victims, than the injury of Reuters photographer, Bassam Mohammad Masoud, while he was covering the events of the peaceful return march in the east of Khuza'a, in Khan Younis, on the 18 May 2018, with two gas bombs. The first injured his abdomen, while the other injured him 20 minutes following his first injury, in his ear, causing him severe wounds and laceration leading to 12 stitches even though he was doing his job as a journalist at a distance of 350 meters away from the soldiers deployed at the separating fence, and he was wearing the Press vest and helmet the moment he was injured.

The injury of the young man, Haitham Sobhey Abu Sabla (not a journalist, but a demonstrator aged 23 years old), by a gas bomb through his face, that has settled down inside his mouth, causing severe smash to his teeth and an inner hemorrhage inside his head (this is considered one of the cruelest and severest injuries registered as of the eruption of the return marches) to emphasize the fact that, without a doubt, the ammunition and armaments which are supposed to be “non-lethal” become extremely dangerous and lethal in the hands of the Israeli soldiers.

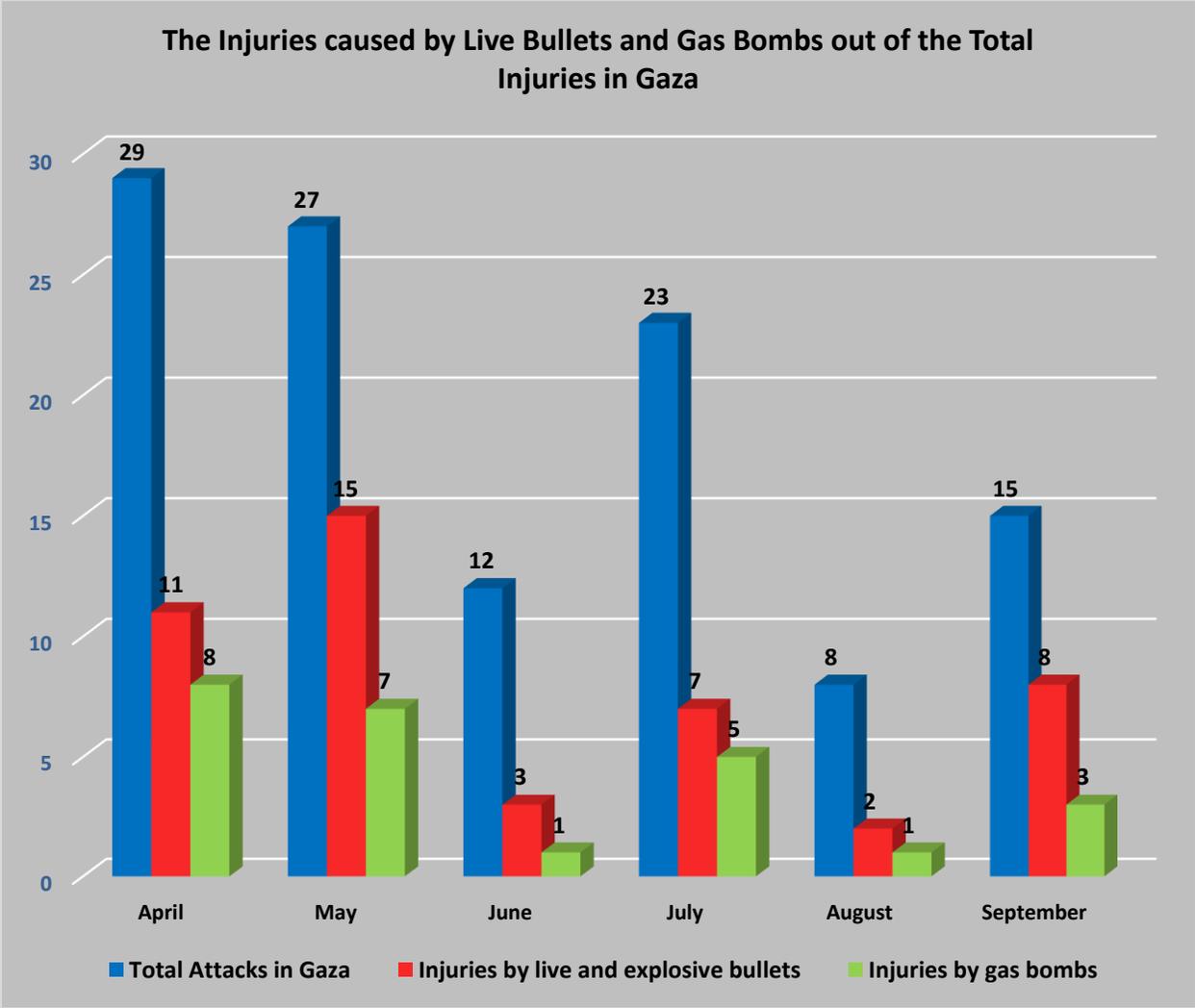
**(The Israeli Occupation Attacks against the Journalists while covering Return Marches in Gaza)**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Total Israeli Attacks in Gaza</b>	<b>Injuries by live and explosive bullets</b>	<b>Injuries by gas bombs</b>
April <sup>1</sup>	29	11- (two of which have died)	8
May	27	15	7
June	12	3	1
July	23	7	5
August	8	2	1
September	15	8	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>25</b>

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<sup>1</sup> Here, under April’s injuries, fall the attacks which took place on the first day of the Return Marches, on 30 March 2018 – note that five journalists were injured by live bullets, and a sixth one was injured by a gas bomb on 30 March 2018, among those included in the above number.

Particularly striking is that the young man, Abu Sabla, was also injured while he was at Khuza'a, east of Khan Younes, which is the same area where the journalist, Masoud, was injured three weeks ago.



In this context, MADA field researches have monitored and documented, at least, 25 injuries of female/male journalists caused by gas bombs fired by Israeli soldiers directly at them in various parts of their bodies (some of them were seriously injured in sensitive parts of their bodies), namely: Ashraf Mohammad Abu Amra (injured by a gas bomb in his left foot), Ahmad Abu Olba (injured by a gas bomb in his chest), Ahmad Hasaballah (injured

by a gas bomb in his foot), Muneer Sameer Abu Hatab (injured by a gas bomb in his neck), Hashem Iyad Hamada (injured by a gas bomb in his head), Abdelraheem Mohammad Al-Khateeb (injured by a gas bomb in his foot), Mohammad Abdullah Joudeh (injured by a gas bomb in his hand), Nihad Fuad Abu Ghalyoun (injured by a gas bomb in his back), the journalist, Noor Talal Al-Najjar (injured with a gas bomb in her right foot), Bassam Mahmoud Masoud (injured by two gas bombs with a time lag of 20 minutes between both injuries, the first in his abdomen and the second in his ear, which caused him severe laceration in the ear), Mahmoud Bassam Al-Jamal (injured by a gas bomb in his right thigh), Ibrahim Sulaiman Abu Mustafa (injured by a gas bomb in his hand), Omar Adel Abu Khater (injured by a gas bomb in his right foot), Ashraf Mohammad Nassar Abu Arafa (injured by a gas bomb in his hand), and Ali Hassan Jadallah (injured by a gas bomb in his chest), Ayed Zakaria Fadel (injured by a gas bomb in his hand and leg), Zaki Yahya Awadallah (injured by a gas bomb in his back head – near the neck), the journalist, Safinaz Baker Allouh (injured by a gas bomb that bounced her after it injured one of the young men near her), Thaer Abu Rayash (injured by two gas bombs in the head and the foot), Anas Al-Shareef (injured by a gas bomb in the left shoulder causing him burns and displacement), Hiba Sami Awad (injured by a gas bomb in her left shoulder causing her scorch), BBC photographer, Mahmoud Al-Ajrami (injured by a gas bomb in his hand), Thaer Abu Rayash (injured by a gas bomb in his head causing him wounds which required six stitches), and Mountaser Husni Al-Sawaf (injured by a gas bomb in his left leg).

While Israel, during the aggression against Gaza in 2014, has tried to justify its crimes which have claimed the lives of 17 journalists, rather than destroying the headquarters of dozens of media institutions in addition to the injury of dozens of journalists, it should be noted that these journalists were at the location from which the rockets were fired or armed soldiers were deployed; however, no one can circulate these arguments when it comes to the crimes committed by the occupation army and snipers against the media and journalists while covering the peaceful return marches in Gaza Strip for the following reasons:

1. It should be noted first to the fact that the return marches were completely peaceful and they contained no armed attacks which could be invoked by the Israeli soldier to justify its use of live ammunition and deadly force in suppressing and targeting the demonstrators, and on top, to justify the targeting of journalists and market the idea that it is unintentional or occurs accidentally.
2. The martyrs, Yasser Murtaja and Ahmad Abu Hussein, and all the other injured journalists mentioned in this report, were, at the moment they were targeted, wearing the Press vest and helmet, hence their identification should not be confused.
3. All of the victims were at long-distance (200-350 meters) from the deployment points of Israeli soldiers; hence, the army cannot justify its deliberate targeting by claiming that they were close to “prohibited points” as it justified the murders and injuries of dozens of demonstrators taking part in the peaceful return marches.
4. The martyrs, Murtaja and Abu Hussein, along with other 46 journalists at least, were injured with live and explosive bullets, which mean they were intentionally targeted with murder or severe injury.
5. At least 25 other journalists were injured by gas bombs in various parts of their bodies (some in sensitive parts such as the head and chest), which provides an additional evidence that the Israeli soldiers have sought to cause the severest harm to journalists and have deliberately targeted them.
6. The Israeli attacks against the media and journalists during their coverage of the return marches are not limited to the aforementioned examples, but they also include dozens of other journalists whom were killed, as well as a total of 193 demonstrators (including 34 children and three women) and the injury of more than 21,000 demonstrators, 5300 of which were injured by live bullets, 464 injuries of which were described as serious since the eruption of return marches on 30 March, 2018, until 3 June 2018, that is, during the reporting period

according to the data and statistics of the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza Strip. Note that dozens of journalists had their limbs amputated due to their severe injuries.

The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) believes that the growing scope of the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation soldiers and authorities against the journalists and media, and their ongoing aggravation, quantitatively and qualitatively, is due to nothing but the direct result of the impunity of the Israeli occupation army and officers for the crimes they have committed in the past years. This has encouraged the Israeli occupation authorities and forces to continue committing such crimes, until it has created an official cover for such crimes as if they were a normal act. Therefore, MADA Center renews its call for the establishment of an independent investigation commission to investigate all the crimes committed by the occupation against the journalists in Palestine, especially the murder of the journalists Murtaja and Abu Hussein. It also calls on various international and human rights international organizations to work on prosecuting the perpetrators of all crimes and bring them to justice and to put an end to the impunity which is considered a direct motivation for the continuation and escalation of the Israeli occupation army crimes against journalists and the media in Palestine.