

**Freedom and security of the press operating in areas of conflict**

*Presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media*

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Good afternoon, my name is Amelia Evans, I am the Deputy Director of Advocacy at the Committee to Protect Journalists – a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting press freedom worldwide.

This briefing could not be more critical. It comes during what is the deadliest period for journalists since our organization began gathering data in 1992. CPJ has documented at least 108 journalists and media workers that have been killed in the Israel-Gaza war since it began on October 7, 2023; 103 of these 108 journalists were Palestinian.

We have evidence that three of these deaths were the result of the Israeli Defence Forces targeting journalists, a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Ten other cases of suspected targeting require further investigation, something made difficult by the conditions of war. We have also documented 51 cases of journalist arrests, as well as multiple assaults, threats, cyberattacks, censorship, and killings of family members. The scale and impunity around these abuses is terrifying, and risks creating a grave new precedent around the treatment of journalists in conflict.

Risks to reporting are not just confined to Gaza, at least 15 journalists have been killed since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, including Irish cameraman Pierre Zakrewski. Active conflicts in Myanmar, Sudan and Ethiopia have also led to recent deaths or detentions of journalists—to name just a few.

There are also alarming practices and precedents developing around the issue of access. Since October 7, international media have been prohibited from crossing into Gaza—despite over 2,000 international journalists seeking accreditation—with just a handful of exceptions where a military escort was provided. This puts tremendous pressure on the Gazan journalists left struggling to survive, and creates a vacuum for propaganda, mis- and disinformation. For a period, the military in Ukraine was also restricting accreditation and access to the frontline, although in February 2024 loosened these restrictions.

There are many issues to discuss: soaring insurance costs; unique local contexts; the changing use of technology to target and silence journalists covering conflict. How the international community responds—or if it will fail to respond—to these disturbing developments has never

been more critical. Ireland understands this, having tragically lost journalists who were reporting in Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, Northern Ireland and the Republic in recent years. How Ireland can push for greater protection and accountability are questions that I hope this Committee—and country—keeps asking.