

Israel Cracks Down on the Press

By [Mya Guarnieri](#)

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Jared Malsin, the editor of the English edition of [Maan News Agency](#), has been detained by Israeli authorities.

Malsin, a Jewish-American who lives and works in the West Bank, was picked up on Tuesday at Ben Gurion International Airport, as he and his partner returned from vacation in the Czech Republic. After being subjected to eight hours of interrogation, Malsin was deemed a security threat and was slated to be deported to Prague Thursday morning.

Why?

[Maan states](#): Hebrew-language interrogation transcripts obtained by Ma'an reveal that Malsin was deemed a security risk on the apparent basis of his political beliefs. Interrogators gathered online research into the journalist's writing history, which the transcripts indicate included news stories "criticizing the State of Israel," among other allegations that he "authored articles inside the territories."

Although Bethlehem-based Maan is identified as a Palestinian news service, it is widely known as an independent media outlet-free of political agendas and noted for its unbiased reporting. As such, it is attracting a steadily growing readership, receiving over 3 million visitors a month.

Malsin appealed the deportation order and was scheduled to stand before a judge in Tel Aviv on Thursday morning. But according to Maan's lawyer, Castro Daoud, the hearing has been delayed until Sunday for unknown reasons.

In the meantime, Daoud says, Malsin remains in the custody of Israeli authorities.

Since his detainment, which Israeli officials initially denied, Malsin has had little contact with the outside world. Daoud has had only one brief meeting with his client and Malsin has made a short phone call to Maan staff writer and sub-editor, George Hale.

Speaking to The Huffington Post, Hale reports that Malsin was shocked by the detainment. Malsin was also surprised that Israeli security officials were questioning him about the International Solidarity Movement, an activist group that Malsin has no affiliation with.

"He [Malsin] is the last person who would be involved with the ISM. He is a journalist," Hale says, "and his reporting is impartial."

Hale adds: "I think that there are a lot of assumptions about Maan and the people who work here-that we're here to demonize Israel. We're not."

Despite the fact that the Israeli Government Press Office [GPO] refuses to issue press passes to Maan employees, Hales says that both Malsin and Maan enjoy good working relationships with the Israeli Defense Forces [IDF] and other governmental bodies.

“We [Maan] talk to the IDF and include the Israeli point of view [in our articles],” Hale says, “Destroying our English department is destroying [that] side of the story.”

Hale states that Malsin’s partner, Faith Rowold, who does not have legal representation, was deported to Prague.

When considered within a larger context, Malsin’s detention seems to point to a government intent on silencing dissent.

In September, the prominent Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions [BDS] activist Mohammed Othman was picked up by the IDF as he attempted to enter the West Bank via Jordan. Othman was returning from a visit to Norway, a country whose government had recently divested from an Israeli corporation directly involved in the occupation. Othman was widely credited as having been a crucial player in Norway’s decision to divest.

After months in administrative detention without charges, held on the basis of evidence that neither Othman nor his lawyer was allowed to see, Othman was finally released yesterday, January 13.

Recently, the IDF has also arrested various leaders of non-violent grassroots movements against the separation barrier. In December, Abdallah Abu Rahmah, coordinator of the Bil’in Popular Committee Against the Wall was arrested on charges of incitement and stone throwing. Abu Rahmah is also accused of arms possession for displaying empty tear gas canisters and discharged rubber bullets—both shot at him and other protestors during the weekly non-violent demonstrations held in his village.

On January 12, Ibrahim Amirah, the coordinator of the Ni’ilin Popular Committee Against the Wall was arrested. Amirah has been detained and released without charges twice in the past.

Additionally, the IDF conducted a night raid on the West Bank home of the ISM’s media coordinator, Eva Novakova. While Novakova was arrested and deported on the grounds that she had overstayed her visa, critics of her deportation point out that it’s unusual for the IDF to go to such lengths due to an expired visa.

Hale says that, to the best of his knowledge, Malsin has a valid Israeli visa. Malsin’s detention is “arbitrary,” Hale says. “It’s a violation of press freedom.”

** Mya Guarnieri is a Tel Aviv-based journalist and writer. A regular contributor to The Jerusalem Post and The National, her writing has also appeared in Outlook India- India’s Newsweek subsidiary- as well as Haaretz, The Jewish Daily Forward, Maan News Agency, Common Ground News Service, Mondoweiss, Zeek, Daily News Egypt, and The Khaleej Times amongst other international publications. Additionally, her creative work is forthcoming in The Kenyon Review Online.*

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