

# Shireen Abu Akleh: UN Finds Journalist Was Killed by Israeli Forces

UN Human Rights Office also said it was 'deeply disturbing' that Israeli authorities had not conducted a criminal investigation

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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*The United Nations (UN) has concluded that [Israeli](#) forces fired the fatal bullet that killed the Palestinian-American journalist [Shireen Abu Akleh](#) in the occupied West Bank last month, its findings showed on Friday.*

UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva that the organisation found that the shots that killed Abu Akleh came from Israeli forces.

“It is deeply disturbing that the Israeli authorities have not conducted a criminal investigation,” she said.

“We at the UN Human Rights Office have concluded our independent monitoring into the incident.

“All information we have gathered – including official information from the Israeli military and the Palestinian attorney-general – is consistent with the finding that the shots that killed Abu Akleh and injured her colleague Ali Sammoudi came from Israeli Security Forces and not from indiscriminate firing by armed Palestinians, as initially claimed by Israeli authorities.”

Multiple eyewitnesses, including Middle East Eye [contributor Shatha Hanaysa](#), said the 51-year-old veteran Al Jazeera journalist was shot dead by Israeli snipers while reporting during a raid in the West Bank city of Jenin.

However, Israel quickly tried to suggest Palestinian gunmen were responsible, with both Israel’s military and its US embassy [tweeting](#) a video of Palestinian gunmen in Jenin firing down an alley.

## ‘Well-aimed bullets’

In response to the UN’s findings, Israel’s army said on Friday it was “not possible” to determine how Abu Akleh was killed.

“The IDF (Israeli army) investigation clearly concludes that Ms Abu Akleh was not intentionally shot by an IDF soldier and that it is not possible to determine whether she was killed by a Palestinian gunman shooting indiscriminately... or inadvertently by an IDF soldier.”

During the press conference, Shamdasani told reporters that the investigation examined multiple sources, including photos, videos, and audio material, visiting the scene, consulting experts, reviewing official communications and interviewing witnesses.

The findings showed that seven journalists arrived at the western entrance of the Jenin refugee camp soon after 6am.

At around 6.30 am, as four of the journalists turned into a particular street, when “several single, seemingly well-aimed bullets” were fired at them from the direction of the Israeli security forces, according to Shamdasani.

“One single bullet injured Ali Sammoudi in the shoulder, another single bullet hit Abu Akleh in the head and killed her instantly,” she said.

## US senators call for investigation

UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet has urged Israel to open a criminal investigation into Abu Akleh’s killing and all other killings by Israeli forces in the West Bank and in the context of law enforcement operations in Gaza.

On Thursday, two dozen US senators called on President Joe Biden and the FBI to launch an “independent investigation under US auspices to determine the truth” about Abu Akleh’s death.

Led by Senator Chris Van Hollen, the letter read:

“the US government has an obligation to ensure that a comprehensive, impartial, and open investigation into her shooting death is conducted – on in which all parties can have full confidence in the ultimate findings.

“In order to protect freedom of the press, a thorough and transparent investigation under US auspices must be conducted to get to the truth and provide accountability for the killing of this American citizen and journalist.”

Several international news agencies that have looked into the shooting have also concluded that the fatal bullet was fired from Israeli forces.

While Al Jazeera has referred the case to the International Criminal Court and vowed to bring the killers to justice using international legal platforms, Israel has said it is not subject to the court’s mandate because it is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, and that abuses in Palestinian territories cannot be investigated because Palestine is not a state.

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*Featured image: Shireen Abu Akleh was an icon in Palestine and throughout much of the Arabic speaking world for her reporting from the occupied territories (Illustration/MEE)*

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