

Bi-Monthly Report Executive Summary

Press and Cultural Freedom Violations

LEBANON, SYRIA, JORDAN, PALESTINE

October-November 2013

The month of October 2013 was marked by the murder of four journalists in Iraq: *Al-Sharqiya* TV correspondent, Mohammad Karim Al-Badrani, and cameraman Mohammad Al-Ghanem were killed in Mosul, while filming a documentary about the population getting ready for Eid Al-Adha. Also, gunmen killed the official spokesman of the Ninawa governorate, Saad Zaghlul, near his house in the Al-Qadissiya neighborhood and *Al-Mosuliya* TV cameraman, Bashar Abdulqader Najm Al-Nuaimi.

In Syria, members of the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) killed *Al-Arabiya* correspondent, Mohammad Said in Rif Aleppo. Also, twelve journalists, citizen journalists and artists were killed in October: ten while covering the clashes between the armed opposition and the regime's army, and two under torture in the air force intelligence prisons. Eight Arab and foreign journalists were abducted, including members of the Sky News Arabia team, Lebanese cameraman Samir Kassab and Mauritanian reporter Isaac Moctar. In the 1948 Territories, unknown gunmen shot Palestinian artist Shafik Kabha in the village of Umm Al-Fahm. In Lebanon, a sniper opened fire on a car belonging to LBCI in Tripoli and another LBCI team narrowly escaped an explosion in the Bekaa village of Jalala. Also, unknown gunmen tried to kill Islam Al-Mushabka, an *Al-Ghad* newspaper correspondent, near his house in Al-Mafraq governorate, Jordan.

In November, seven citizen journalists and activists were killed in the Rif Dimashq governorate, including five on the same day. Seven others were killed in various other regions of Syria. Also, fourteen journalists and citizen journalists were abducted, especially in areas that have fallen into the hands of fundamentalist organizations and four citizen journalists were injured in the shelling of the Aleppo Media Center.

In Lebanon, customs agents assaulted an *Al-Jadeed* television crew in Beirut and broke its cameras. In the West Bank, Israeli forces attacked Palestinian journalists with teargas and rubber-coated bullets, while Israeli authorities arrested several Facebook activists in the 1948 Territories.

Below is a detailed summary of the violations compiled by the SKeyes Center in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine, in October and November 2013.



In **Lebanon**, a sniper opened fire at an LBCI car in Tripoli (10/26); another car was also severely damaged following a bomb explosion in the village of Jalala in the Bekaa (10/31), knowing that the bomb was not targeting the channel's car. Also, the Ministry of Finance did not pay its monthly contribution to the state-owned TV station *Télé Liban* (10/31) and the censorship committee asked the Interior Ministry to ban the short film "*Wahabtouka al-Moutaa*" (I offered you pleasure) and the French movie "*L'inconnu du lac*" (Stranger by the lake), which were subsequently withdrawn from the Beirut International Film Festival (10/03).

In November, agents of the Customs department assaulted the crew of "*Tahta Ta'ilat Al-Mas'uliya*", a weekly show on *Al-Jadeed* TV, and smashed their equipments. Four crew members, Riyad Kobeissi, Adib Farhat, Ali Chraim and Ali Khalifeh, were arrested and referred to the public prosecutor's office (11/26), who eventually released them and indicted a Colonel for their beating. The airport security had previously prevented the same team from filming and confiscated its cameras (11/18).

Additionally, young men tried to attack an LBCI crew in Kosba (11/30), during a sit-in in solidarity with Father Bandalimon Farah, accused of sexual molestation of children, while others tried to assault an *Al-Jadeed* team in Saida, near the house of one of the two alleged suicide bombers who carried out an attack against Iran's embassy in Beirut (11/22). Also, *Al-Jadeed* received threats sent to its correspondent Ramez El-Kadi's Twitter account (11/23).

Hezbollah members detained British journalist Martin Armstrong for 45 minutes in Bir Hassan, following the attack against Iran's embassy (11/19) and the airport security held and questioned US journalist Michael Downey at the airport, for bringing two helmets and two bulletproof vests into the country without an authorization (11/17).

On the judiciary front, *Al-Akhabar* daily journalist Mohammad Nazzal was questioned at the Beirut courthouse, for defaming the judiciary (11/27) and the military court sentenced journalist Rami Aysha to six months in prison in absentia, for smuggling weapons (11/25). Aysha appealed the judgment and a new hearing session was scheduled on December 8. Also, Facebook management shut down the pages of "*Enta Al-Khabar*" (11/24), "*Lebanon Debate*" (11/27) and "*Al-Jadeed Online*" (11/28) news websites, for publishing Hezbollah news and photos. On November 16, a sit-in was held at the Samir Kassir square, in downtown Beirut, to ask for the immediate release of Lebanese cameraman Samir Kassab and his Mauritanian colleague Isaac Moctar, a month after their abduction in Syria.

In **Syria**, murders, arrests and abductions continued; thirteen journalists, citizen journalists and artists were killed in October and fourteen in November.

Members of the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) killed *Al-Arabiya* correspondent, Mohammad Said, in the Aleppo province (10/29), journalist Abdul-Hadi Qachit died under torture in the air force intelligence prison in Aleppo (10/08), and citizen journalist Hassan Qassem in Rif Dimashq (10/30). Also, several citizen journalists were killed while covering the clashes between the regime's army and



the armed opposition: Mou'men Al-Dalati (1e 02/10), Maher Ahmad Hamzeh and Moaz Al-Chami (10/07), Ayham Al-Dimashqi in Rif Dimashq (10/09), Abdul-Nasser Al-Shanburi (10/01), Waadi Al-Burdan (10/01), Usama Al-Sueidani (10/12) in Daraa, Muhanad Habayibna in Raqqa (10/21), Hassan Al-Osman in Aleppo (10/28) and Mohammad Sharifeh, succumbing to his injuries in Damascus (10/06).

The *Al-Farah* choirmaster, Shadi Shalhub, was killed in a bomb explosion, on his way to the Notre-Dame church in the Damascus region of Al-Qassah (10/23). *Shahba* Press agency correspondent, Husam Al-Halabi was injured in Aleppo (10/09) and the Sham News Network correspondent, Nidal Al-Harbi, in Deir Ez-Zor (10/16). Sky News Arabia team members, Lebanese cameraman Samir Kassab and Mauritanian reporter Isaac Moctar, were kidnapped near Aleppo (10/15) and ISIS abducted cameraman Ziad Homsy at the Syrian-Turkish border (10/28), citizen journalist Rami Al-Razzouk, who works for ANA New Media agency in the Raqqa governorate (10/01), while the Tawhid Brigade kidnapped Russian blogger and photographer Konstantin Zhuravlev (10/12). The Syrian security arrested Jean-Pierre Duthion, a French contributor to the Paris Match magazine, for a period of four days in Damascus (10/27) before expelling him out of Syria. Additionally, ISIS raided the building of Radio ANA in Raqqa, before confiscating the broadcasting and communication equipment (10/15). The only good news was the release of Polish photographer, Marcin Suder, who was abducted in Saraqeb last July (10/31).

Thirteen citizen journalists and activists and one human rights defender were killed in November, including seven in the Rif Dimashq governorate alone. Five of them were killed on the same day in the shelling of Jarba, Eastern Ghouta: Mohammad Ammar Tabajo, Hassan Haroun, Akram Al-Sallik, Yassine Haroun and Ammar Khaiti (11/23), as well as Abdul-Rahman Shawlah (11/23) and Ahmad Al-Shayeb (11/25). Abdallah Al-Ghazzawi (11/08), Abdallah Al-Akhrass (11/21), Mudar Abdallah Handawi Al-Musalima (11/19) and human rights activist Al-Mu'tassem Billah Abu Dabbus (11/05) were killed in the Daraa governorate. Also, Diab Al-Batran (11/06) and Yamen Naddaf (11/24) died in Aleppo, and Kassem Al-Hazuri in Homs (11/05).

Four citizen journalists were injured, when a regime aircraft shelled the Aleppo Media Center. Also, Mohammad Al-Zuhuri, a reporter for Orient News (11/06), and activist Hadi Al-Abdallah (11/05) were injured while covering the around Homs, while citizen journalist Abul-Fahed Al-Halabi had his legs cut off, following a mine blast in Aleppo (11/06).

Arbitrary arrests and abductions targeted fourteen activists, including seven in Aleppo: Mou'ayid Salloum (11/01), Abdul-Wahab Al-Mulla (11/07), Jomaa Moussa (11/12), Ahmad Brimo (11/16), Yasser Al-Sattuf (11/20), Maan Mohammad (11/23) and Muhaymen Al-Halabi (11/26). Also, Swedish journalists Magnus Falkhed and Niclas Hammarström were abducted, while getting ready to leave the Syrian territories close to the Lebanese borders (11/25), and ISIS fighters kidnapped citizen journalist Tarek Sheikho in Latakia (11/10). Citizen journalist Mohammad Al-Idlibi was abducted in Idlib (11/01) and citizen journalists Louay Abou Al-Joud (11/28) and Omar Al-Hassan (11/30) have also



gone missing. The Kurdish police kidnapped the public news channel's crew in Rass Al-Ayn, the Syrian authorities arrested journalist Omar Al-Shaar in Rif Dimashq (11/01) and the intelligence services raided the house of writer Abdallah Amin Hallak in Salamiya (11/05).

In **Jordan**, the police beat the [Jo24](#) correspondent, Ahmad Al-Harasis, who was covering the protests in Amman's Al-Tafayleh neighborhood (10/14). Unknown gunmen tried to kill Islam Al-Mushabaka, an *Al-Ghad* correspondent, near his house in Al-Mafraq governorate, but he managed to get away (10/23), Syrian refugees attacked *Al-Arabiya* team members in Al-Zaatari camp, and tried to break their camera to prevent them from filming (10/28). On the judiciary front, news anchor Issam Al-Omari was transferred to the criminal court of Amman for "violating the audiovisual media law" (10/31) after he criticized Prime Minister Abdallah Al-Nsour, and the High Court of Justice rejected the complaints filed by the blocked news websites and the [Ziber](#) (Ink) blog against the Press and Publications Department (10/03).

In November, the police broke into the *Al-Ra'i* daily building (11/06), while employees were protesting the government's interference in its editorial policy. *Al-Ra'i's* new Board of Directors finally decided to meet the requirements of journalists and employees.

Amman's Attorney General accused both the director of [Saraya News](#) director and the website's editor-in-chief of "distorting facts, publishing false information and causing harm to others" (11/04) and the State Security Court refused to release the director of [Jafra News](#) website director, Nidal Faraaneh, and its editor-in-chief Amjad Maala on bail for the fifth time (11/05), after they posted a video offending Qatari royals.

In the **Gaza Strip**, the Hamas police arrested the Nur Photo agency correspondent, Ahmad Dib, while filming prisoners after their release by the Israeli authorities at the Beit Hanun (Erez) crossing. They beat him and trampled him underfoot, causing him injuries and muscle tears (10/30).

In the November, unknown gunmen assaulted *Al-Arabiya* assistant cameraman, Shaaban Maymeh, before stealing the channel's car (11/13). Hamas security services arrested several journalists and photographers who were interviewing students in commemoration of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's death: Yehya Mohammad Hassuneh, Abdul-Aziz Al-Afifi, Alaa Al-Maghribi, Sameh Ramadan, Hussam Salem, Imad Awad and Nidal Al-Hajj Ahmad were questioned then eventually released (11/11). Also, the government's press office (11/17) and the Attorney General's office (11/27) summoned the *Lu'lu'a* channel journalists following the broadcasting of a report on the anti-Hamas *Tamarrod* movement.



In the **West Bank**, Israeli soldiers threw a stun grenade on photojournalist Amjad Shuman, who was injured in the head (10/22). Also in October, they arrested *Wattan TV* crew members for three hours at the Huwara checkpoint in Nablus (10/22), *Wafa* news agency correspondent, Mohammad Farraj, and Palestine TV crew, while covering the weekly protest in Kfar Kadum (10/11), as well as *Maa'n* agency staff, who were filming a house occupied by the Israeli forces in Yaabud (10/27). The Ofer military court approved the administrative detention of the *Quds* Press agency correspondent, Mohammad Mona, for a period of six months (10/29).

Internally, Palestinian intelligence services continued to summon and arrest journalists: *Anadolu* agency correspondent, Alaa Al-Rimawi (10/04), photojournalist Misaab Said (10/10) and researcher Ibrahim Al-Abed (10/30) were arrested. Also, photographer Hazem Nasser was summoned (10/29) and the preventive security summoned *Anadolu* correspondent, Maaz Mishaal over the phone, following a report published by the agency (10/29).

In November, Israeli authorities attacked Palestinian journalists and photographers covering the weekly protest in Bilin with teargas and rubber-coated bullets. *Ashark Al-Awsat* correspondent, Tarek Hamdi, was injured in the back after being hit by a teargas grenade (11/15). Also, Israeli authorities arrested *Al-Quds* satellite channel correspondent, MahmOud Hamamrah and *Pal Media* agency photographer, Abdul-Ghani Al-Natsheh, and prevented them from filming inside Al-Khodr village (11/21).

Israeli forces also prevented *Shahab* news agency correspondent, Amer Abu Arfeh, from filming in Al-Arub refugee camp and threatened to confiscate his camera, while masked men prevented him, on the same day, from filming in the village of Beit Ummar (11/07).

Sawt Al-Ghad station director, Majdi Taha, was arrested by the Palestinian security services (11/01) and *Radio Bethlehem 2000* director, Georges Qanawati, for “insulting a police commissioner in his weekly show”; he was severely beaten and insulted during interrogation (11/10). Also, *TransMedia* photographer, Hazem Nassar, was arrested for three days (11/07) as well as *Wattan TV* reporter, Sami Al-Sa’i, for “slander and defamation”, following comments he posted on Facebook (11/11). In addition, the presidential guard intelligence service arrested *Wattan TV* correspondent, Ibrahim Inkawi, and photographer Nael Al-Rajub for eight hours after they “entered the safety area” (11/24). Also, several intelligence service members confiscated the *Anin Al-Qayd* channel equipments (11/02), and preventing journalists from covering the French President’s visit to the presidential palace in Ramallah (11/17).

In the **1948 Territories**, Palestinian artist Shafik Kabha was killed by the bullets of unknown gunmen in Umm Al-Fahm (10/22). The Israeli police detained photojournalist Suheib Salhab for five hours, who was filming the settlers in the vicinity of Al-Aqsa mosque (10/10) and blogger Razi Nabulsi for eight days for “encouraging terrorism” (10/08). Moreover, Israeli authorities banned the National and





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Civil Action Commission from organizing a press conference at the University of Jerusalem and prevented journalists from entering the campus (10/02).

In November, Israeli authorities arrested several activists on Facebook for “inciting people to gather in Al-Aqsa mosque” (11/06). *Al-Quds* newspaper journalist Mohammad Abu Khdeir, was arrested at Ben Gourion airport, on his way back to Egypt (11/06) and the *Al-Mizan* center researcher, Adnan Al-Sanea, was arrested by policemen who beat him during a sit-in staged in the city of Rahet (11/24).

Finally, Father Gabriel Naddaf, an Orthodox priest, filed a complaint for “slander and defamation” against several Palestinian media outlets, which accused him of inciting young Christians to join the Israeli army (11/20).

The detailed monthly reports for [October 2013](#) and [November 2013](#) (in Arabic) are available on the website of the **SKeyes** Center for Media and Cultural Freedom.

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