

Genocide in Gaza: Kudos to Journalists Who Tell the Truth

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UNESCO should be congratulated for awarding the Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize for 2024 to Palestinian journalists covering Gaza. The prize this year was announced in Santiago, Chile in conjunction with World Press Day on 3rd May 2024.

The prize named in honour of a Colombian journalist murdered in 1986, Guillermo Cano Isaza, is a recognition of the courage shown by journalists who are prepared to carry out their responsibilities in the face of grave danger. Guillermo was a newspaper editor who was a vocal critic of drug barons in his country and in South and Central America.

It is an indisputable truth that journalists in Gaza have been confronting the reality of death every day of their lives in the last seven months as Israeli bombs rain their congested homeland and Israeli bullets target any child, woman or man who inhabits that narrow strip of land. Up to this point, 7th May 2024, 143 journalists have lost their lives in the Israeli assault on Gaza. This is the largest number of journalists killed in a conflict within a certain period of time in a certain demographic setting.

The number of journalists killed should be viewed in the context of the huge massacre that has taken place in Gaza since October 7th. Israel —mainly its armed forces and Zionist settlers who are allowed to kill Palestinians at random— have annihilated at least 35,000 people in the course of the last seven months. It is heart-rending to know that about 70% of those killed are children and women. Indeed, more children have died in the present conflict in Gaza and the West Bank than in any previous assault upon Palestinian territory since 1948 when the state of Israel was established.



If the story of this senseless slaughter has been told to the world, it is not simply because of the courage of the journalists associated with the conventional media. The alternative media have also played a significant role. Within the alternative media in Gaza are a large number of citizen journalists telling the truth to relatives and friends through their handphones and other channels. They too are heroes and heroines because of their indomitable courage and their willingness to take great risks, risks which place their very lives in peril.

It is because these citizen journalists had shared their stories with certain conventional media channels which in turn had scrupulously verified the news and information they had received that so much of what was, and is, happening in Gaza is now known to the world. A television station operating in both Arabic and English which helped to disseminate the actual happenings in Gaza and the West Bank far and wide was of course the Qatar-based Al Jazeera.

Al-Jazeera also has its own huge network of journalists on the ground whose courage and integrity are awe-inspiring. Through their commitment to truth and justice, they have raised journalism to a loftier level. It is a shame that such a television station should now be banned by the Israeli authorities from reporting from Occupied Palestine or Israel proper. It only confirms that the Israeli state does not want the world to know the truth about what it is doing in Gaza

But the truth will prevail in the end. That is the immutable law of life. After more than 75 years of oppression and suppression, of extermination and expulsion, millions and millions of people all over the world have come to know about what Israel really is, and what it has been doing to the Palestinians and other Arabs.

Israel is exposed as never before. The whole world now knows that it is an arrogant, cruel and inhuman state and society. It is so selfish and self-serving that it has brought about its own downfall.

At this juncture, it should also be emphasized that while Israel is perpetuating colossal injustices against Palestinians, there are also millions of Jews in North America and Europe who are against Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. They want the rights of the Palestinians restored. They are convinced that Jews, Christians and Muslims can live together in peace and harmony.

Together with Palestinians and millions of others from every continent and community, they

would applaud UNESCO's decision to award this year's World Press Freedom prize to Palestinian journalists covering the catastrophe in Gaza.

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Featured image: The funeral of two Palestinian journalists killed by Israeli forces in Gaza. (Photo: Mahmoud Ajjour, The Palestine Chronicle)

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