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**SHAMS Center****Condemns Israeli Occupation Army's Closure of Al Jazeera Satellite Channels as a Desperate Attempt to Conceal the Truth and Hide Occupation's Crimes**

**Human Rights and Democracy Center- SHAMS**, emphasizes that closing Al Jazeera Satellite Channel office in Ramallah, this early morning is no more than a desperate attempt from the Israeli government to conceal its crimes against Palestinians. Through these practices, the Israeli government seeks to silence the voices that contribute to publicizing the Israeli occupation in front of the international public opinion. The Center added that within the escalation of the attacks against Palestinian and international media outlets, the Israeli forces invaded the offices of Al Jazeera Satellite Channel in Ramallah City and ordered closing it after confiscating some of the documents and equipment. The journalists and the employees working for Al Jazeera were banned from accessing the office or working in the field. The invasion was accompanied by military forces that spread around the office and the nearby streets. Invading Al Jazeera Offices is within the series of procedures recently committed by the occupation to shrink the space and restrict the freedom of media work in the OPT. SHAMS Center asserts that the attacks of the Israeli army are an interpretation of the instructions of the political and security leadership in the occupation state to attack media agencies and journalists. The attack is part of the violations committed by the occupying power (Israel) against journalists and media outlets in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Israeli attacks are within the policies to restrict the work of media and limit media coverage of the crimes committed by the Israeli occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

**The Center** asserts that closing the offices of Al Jazeera is within the policy of persuading the media agencies that contribute to uncovering the crimes and violations committed by the Israeli occupation against Palestinians. SHAMS Center added that closing Al Jazeera Offices is an escalation of the attacks against media and freedom of expression. Al Jazeera Channel was subject to several attacks and targeting by the Israeli occupation in the past while covering the news and events in the field. Among these attacks was assassinating journalist Martyr Shireen Abu



Akleh and some other journalists in the Gaza Strip, alongside shelling of the offices and headquarters of the Channel.

**SHAMS Center** affirms that closing Al Jazeera Offices is a clear violation of the fundamental rights protected by international law including the right to freedom of opinion and freedom of press. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". Additionally, the Occupation violates the Geneva Fourth Convention, which protects civilians, including journalists and media personnel, during times of war and armed conflicts. Journalists and media personnel are entitled to special protection per international humanitarian law and should be allowed to perform their work without fear of being arrested or harassed.

**SHAMS Center** asserts that the Israeli violations against journalists ranged from physical attacks including assault, targeted intentionally by shooting, or shooting them with rubber bullets and teargas while working in the field. Moreover, journalists are subject to arbitrary and arrogant detention with no charge. The offices of media agencies and outlets are often closed and the equipment is usually confiscated. In addition to that, there is legislation issued to restrict freedom of opinion and media where the Israeli authorities issued a bunch of laws and military orders to restrict freedom of the press and shrink the space of the work of journalists. On a related level, the Israeli troops target the headquarters of the media agencies as in the case of Al Jalaa Tower, which was shelled in the year 2021. The mentioned Tower included the offices of several international media agencies including Associated Press and Al Jazeera. Additionally, the Israeli authorities tend to jam the broadcasting of the various media agencies. The Israeli attacks not only are utilized to oppress the Palestinian media but also to silence any voice that contributes to revealing the violations committed by the Israeli occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The International Community is responsible for protecting journalists and media agencies in the armed conflicted areas and should interfere to halt the Israeli violations against freedom of the press in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.



**SHAMS Center** stresses that Al Jazeera Satellite Channel is among the major international channels that report the suffering of Palestinians and uncover the crimes they face. Al Jazeera played a role in reporting about the violations committed by the Israeli authorities and settlers against the Islamic and Christian holy places alongside the daily violations of Palestinians' human rights. The work of Al Jazeera contributed to affecting international public opinion and contributed to creating an international lobby supportive of Palestinians' rights and pressing the occupation state to end its crimes. As a result of these efforts, Al Jazeera contributed to reflecting the real image of the bloody Israeli Occupation. The Center added that Al Jazeera reflects the Palestinian narration to the world and defeated the Israeli narration that is based on lies and falsifying truths. SHAMS Center affirmed that challenging the Israeli dominating media by Al Jazeera, made it a target for the Israeli attacks where during the previous decades, the occupation managed to dominate some media agencies and impose control on them. These media agencies adopt the Israeli narration and avoid criticizing the Israeli government. On the contrary, Al Jazeera was an independent media podium that rejected the domination of the Israeli authorities and maintained its credibility.

**SHAMS Center** calls for the necessity to obligate the Israeli occupation state to respect media agencies and ensure freedom of the press and freedom of journalists by the related international standards. The Occupation should adhere to international law and international human rights that ensure the protection of the rights of journalists and media agencies to work freely. Israel must stop targeting journalists and media agencies and stop ordering closure of the media agencies. The Center urges related international organizations to account Israeli officers and soldiers involved in targeting journalists and destroying the premises of media agencies or destroying journalist equipment. Moreover, Israel should stop incitement against Palestinian media agencies and the agencies that report the facts from the ground.