2003

On January 5, IFJ reported that **Saifeddin Shahin**, the Gaza correspondent for *Al-Jazeera,* was detained and questioned by the Palestinian security services about his sources, after he had interviewed a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade concerning a recent suicide bombing that took place in Tel Aviv for which the group claimed responsibility. Shahin was released the following day.

On January 21, *AP*'s **Nasser Ishtayeh** and **Jaafar Ishtayeh** of *Agence France-Presse* were preparing to photograph an Israeli jeep that was manned by Israeli border police. (The two journalists are related.) Nasser said that he and Jaafar were attempting to photograph two Palestinian youths, who were on the hood of the moving jeep and who the journalists believed were being used as human shields as the troops advanced on Palestinians throwing stones. Before the journalists could begin taking photos, the jeep sped toward them and three of the four soldiers in the jeep got out and approached them. Nasser told CPJ that the soldiers immediately began punching and verbally insulting them. Nasser and Jaafar said that their clothing and camera equipment were clearly marked "press." After the incident, they were dragged a few metres by their camera straps to the driver of the jeep, who had remained in the car when the beating occurred. The driver inspected the cameras, which because they were digital allowed him to view recent images to ensure that no photographs had been taken of the jeep and the border police. He then threatened the journalists and told them that if he saw any of their pictures in the newspaper that he would kill them. Nasser suffered light wounds on his face and Jaafar was injured slightly on his hand.

On January 28, *Reuters* reported that a Palestinian photographer working with *Agence France Presse* was shot in the leg during an incident that took place in the West Bank city of Jenin, when a Palestinian teenager was running to the aid of a Palestinian gunman amidst fierce battles with Israeli troops.

On January 30, CPJ reported that 25 Israeli troops entered the building housing *Al Nawras TV* and *Al Marah Radio* in Hebron, and informed the employees that they were closing the two stations. The employees were allowed to take their personal belongings before the building was sealed off. In a later incident on the same day Israeli troops made a heavy handed search of the private TV station *Al Majd*, damaging a scanner and a computer screen, as well as breaking a glass tabletop. Eventually Israeli soldiers sealed the building off and left with disks and CD ROMs from the office. Two employees were handcuffed and blindfolded and asked if they had any ties to Islamic Jihad or Hamas.

On February 23, **Ahmad al-Khatib**, 34, a cameraman on mission for *Reuters,* was detained after filming fierce clashes between Palestinian gunmen and Israeli troops in the town of Beit Hannun in northern Gaza. He was detained after Israeli troops had a look at his identity papers, and questioned him on suspicion that he was involved in terrorist activities. He was freed without charges the following day.

CPJ reported that cameraman **Shams Odeh** and photographer **Ahmad Jadallah** on mission for *Reuters* on March 6 were both injured by shrapnel caused by an explosion in the Jabalya refugee camp. The events surrounding the explosion, which killed eight Palestinians, are in dispute. According to press reports citing Palestinian witnesses, Israeli troops were leaving the camp at the end of an army raid when two rounds were fired from an Israeli tank. The first round set a building on fire, and crowds of people poured into the streets to watch fire fighters douse the blaze. The journalists, who were among the people in the street, were covering the aftermath of the raid. Witnesses claim that the second round was fired at the group who had gathered, injuring the two journalists. The Israeli army said that soldiers had seen someone preparing to launch a rocket at the tank, and that they fired in self-defence. Both of Jadallah's legs were broken, and one artery in his leg was severed after being hit by shrapnel. He underwent surgery in a Gaza hospital before being moved to an Israeli hospital in Jerusalem. Odeh suffered moderate injuries to his foot after being hit by shrapnel. He underwent surgery

in Gaza.

A mission of the Vienna-based International Press Institute (IPI), mandated to look into the dispute between the Foreign Press in Israel and the Government Press Office (GPO), paid a visit to Israel from March 30 to April 1. The mission met with the parties to the dispute – representatives of the Foreign Press led by the chairman of their Association, *AP* bureau chief Dan Perry, and the Director of the GPO, Daniel Seaman. The mission also met with the Speaker of the Knesset, Reuven Rivlin, with the Minister of the Interior, Avraham Poraz, with the Director of the Prime Minister's Bureau, Dov Weisglass, and with the President of the Press Council, Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer. The mission studied two key problems that have cast a pall these past two years over relations between the Foreign Press and Israel government agencies. One problem concerns the frequent denial of work permits to employees of the foreign media. The source of this problem is that the GPO has changed its previous policy and has begun sending foreign correspondents and foreign media personnel applying for work permits to the Employment Service to obtain that service's consent to their employment. In the past, the GPO would convey directly to the Interior Ministry its own consent to the issuance of the appropriate work and residency permits. This change of policy means that all applicants are now subject to the rules and practices applying in the general labour market - so that, at the request of an Israeli labour union, some foreign media personnel are having their applications denied. This impairs the ability of the foreign television networks to cover events in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. The second problem concerns the denial - other than in security-related circumstances - of press cards to Palestinians working for the foreign media in the Palestinian Territories. This seriously prejudices their ability to perform their professional duties and thus impairs the ability of these media to function properly. After the mission, on 11 April, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz Daily* reported that the Employment Service had accepted that the issue of work permits was not a labour matter and will now issue work permits to correspondents. The issue of press cards for Palestinian journalists working in the Palestinian Territories, however, has yet to be resolved.

On April 9, LAW reported that **Hussam Abu Alan** of *AFP* and **Nayef Al Hashlamoon** of *Reuters* were both beaten by Israeli soldiers after filming an incident in Hebron where Israeli troops forced shopkeepers to close their stores. The cameramen were later on admitted into a hospital in Hebron.

On April 17, RSF reported that two *CANAL+* journalists **Arnaud Muller** (journalist) and **Harold Bellanger** (cameraman) were put under detention for more than six hours upon their arrival at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport. The two journalists told RSF that airport security officials threatened that they would be put overnight in the interior ministry's detention centre and deported the next day.

AP Photo/Nasser Nasser

CPJ reported that **Nazih Darwazeh**, 45, a Palestinian cameraman working for the *Associated Press Television News (APTN)* was shot in the head at close range while filming clashes between Palestinian youths and Israeli troops in central Nablus in the morning of April 19, according to Palestinian journalists who witnessed the incident. Video footage of the incident, reviewed by CPJ, appeared to corroborate their accounts. The shooting occurred after clashes erupted in Nablus when Israeli forces entered the city's downtown area in tanks, searching for an alleged Palestinian suicide bomber. Clashes broke out in several locations near the city's centre, involving youths throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli troops. Some Palestinian gunmen were also observed firing guns, according to press accounts. At the time that Darwazeh was shot, he had been filming an Israeli tank stranded at the corner of an alleyway. Darwazeh and several other Palestinian journalists were standing by a door in the alleyway. A few minutes before Darwazeh was killed, *Reuters* cameraman Hassan Titi

Palestinian journalists hold posters of their killed colleague Nazih Darwazeh, during a protest in Ramallah April 20. The APTN cameraman was shot and killed on April 19, during a clash between Israeli forces and Palestinians in the West Bank city of Nablus. Darwazeh had worked for APTN for two years and leaves a wife and five children.

filmed a group of Palestinian youths running down the alley away from the stranded tank. Titi and *Reuters* photographer Abed Qusini, who were standing near Darwazeh, said that an Israeli soldier took a position near the tank and fired a single shot at the journalists from a distance of about 10 or 20 metres. The shot shattered Darwazeh's camera, entering his head above the eye. He was killed instantly. Darwazeh and his colleagues were clearly identified as members of the press, based on the testimony of those at the scene and the video footage of the events. In fact, Darwazeh was wearing a fluorescent yellow jacket, marked "Press", and before the shooting, the journalists said they shouted loudly in both English and Hebrew indicating that they were with the media. During the same incident, LAW reported that two other journalists travelling with Darwazeh were injured by Israeli gunfire. **Nasser Ishtayeh** working for the *Associated Press* was wounded, as well as **Aref Tufaha**.

On May 2, **James Miller**, a freelance journalist working on a documentary for the US premier cable station *Home Box Office (HBO)* on the Palestinian Israeli conflict, was shot dead in Rafah when a bullet from an Israeli tank hit his neck. **Tamer Zeyara**, a cameraman with the *Associated Press Television News* (*APTN*) who was previously filming with Miller in the same house, told CPJ that at about 11:30 p.m., the group had decided to leave. As they were leaving, Miller, his producer **Saira Shah**, and translator **Abdul Rahman Abdullah** attempted to identify themselves to the Israeli troops in the area, who were inside their armoured personnel carriers. Zeyara told CPJ that the Israeli troops were about 150 meters away from the house when they had been filming, but that he was unsure how close the journalists were to the troops once they left. Zeyara said all the journalists were wearing jackets marked "TV," as well as helmets, and that Abdullah waved a white flag while Miller used a flashlight to illuminate their marked jackets and the flag. As they approached the soldiers, the journalists shouted in English and Arabic that they were members of the media. The troops then fired three shots in their direction, Zeyara said, followed by a burst of gunfire. Miller was hit once in the neck. RSF reported that an autopsy conducted by the Israeli forensic institute on the killing of James Miller tended to confirm what eyewitnesses had said. James Miller was shot from the front while filming, as he was approaching Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip with a jacket marked "press" and while waving a white flag. Earlier, the deputy Israeli military commander in

<div style="text-align:right;">AP Photo/ APTN</div>

A frame from TV which shows a British documentary film crew filming In Rafah , Gaza Strip, May 2. The Israeli army said a freelance British journalist, Briton James Miller, seen here at left , holding camera filming youths earlier in the day, was shot and killed. Witnesses say the journalist was filming a documentary on the Israeli army's house demolitions later in the day when an Israeli tank opened fire. The army denied there were tanks in the area. Col. Avi, the forces commander in the area, said troops in an armored vehicle were searching for weapons - smuggling tunnels along the Egyptian border when the soldiers came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades. The troops returned fire, he said. When the shooting stopped, the soldiers heard cries for help in English and saw people holding a flag and the journalist lying on the ground. Other members in photo are unidentified and are reported not injured in the incident.

Gaza, Col. Avi Levy, said his men had begun shooting after anti-tank weapons were fired at them and that Miller may have been killed by Palestinian gunfire.

On May 3, World Press Freedom Day, CPJ released its list of the "World's Worst Places to Be a Journalist." The West Bank and the Gaza Strip were ranked in sixth place. In the report CPJ said, "Indiscriminate gunfire from the Israeli army made the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip a treacherous beat . . . Israeli soldiers are rarely punished when they shoot journalists.
Journalists operating near the front lines in the West Bank and Gaza continue to face a variety of other obstacles. In recent months, journalists have been wounded by Israeli military strikes; the Israeli army has closed Palestinian radio stations; and military checkpoints and a tough Israeli government policy limiting press accreditation continue to hamper reporting. Militant Jewish settlers, meanwhile, perpetrate violent attacks against journalists, and Palestinian security forces and militias have physically assaulted, threatened, and confiscated materials from journalists." According to CPJ, the places more dangerous then the West Bank and Gaza Strip were Iraq, Cuba, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Chechnya.

On May 9, LAW reported that Israeli forces raided the headquarters of *Sawt al-Watan* magazine in Al-Bireh. Israeli troops confiscated computers, hard disks, documents, hard and electronic files. The raid came on a Friday, which is the official day off for Palestinians.

In a letter of protest written by Dan Perry of the *Foreign Press Association*, concerning an incident that took place on May 13 at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, when two French journalists, **Isabelle Doret** and **Muriel Rozelier**, were harassed by airport security personnel, which subsequently caused them to miss their flights. This took place only because the two journalists refused to part with their pocket organisers. According to Perry, this was just one among many similar incidents.

On May 20, RSF reported that two Palestinian journalists, **Joseph Handal**, 27, a cameraman with the French public TV station *France 2*, and **Chaaban Qandel**, 21, a cameraman with the *Arab News Network* were beaten up by Israeli soldiers as they were driving down Bethlehem's main road. Their car was clearly marked with press stickers. Four Israeli soldiers forced them out of the car, threw them to the ground, and beat them violently. At one point the journalists tried showing them their ID cards, but the troops carried on with the beating. The two journalists were eventually taken to a Beit Jala hospital.

After both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government accepted the proposed 'Road Map' introduced by the Middle East Quartet, IFJ sent a letter on May 20, to both the Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas. In the letter IFJ called on both prime ministers to:

- Respect the safety and security of journalists and media staff working in the region

- Restore professional recognition and establish accreditation procedures for Palestinian journalists and others working in Israel and the Palestinian areas

- Remove restriction on media staff and foreigners from entering the Gaza Strip

- Establish an acceptable and independent process for investigation of all incidents of violence in which the victims are journalists or media staff

The secretary general of IFJ, Aidan White said, "The new peace talks give an opportunity for both sides to work together to end violence against media and killing of journalists, the plight of Palestinian journalists in particular can be ignored no longer. We need a fresh start and a new commitment to build media professionalism and respect for independent journalism in the region." The IFJ appeal came after the European Federation of Journalists had

condemned Israel for requiring people who entered Gaza to sign a statement absolving Israeli military of responsibility for death or injury arising from their visit. Journalists said the procedure is an "unacceptable attempt by the Israeli state to deny its responsibility under international law" and undermines further the safety of media staff.