

An Al Jazeera journalist is the fifth member of his family killed by Israeli strikes on Gaza

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Online Desk: An apparent Israeli airstrike killed two Palestinian journalists in southern Gaza on Sunday, including an Al Jazeera journalist who lost four close relatives earlier in the war.

Hamza Dahdouh is the son of veteran Al Jazeera correspondent Wael Dahdouh, whose wife, two other children and a grandson were killed by a previous Israeli strike.

Dahdouh has continued to report on the fighting between Israel and Hamas even as it has taken a devastating toll on his own family, becoming a symbol for many of the perils faced by Palestinian journalists, dozens of whom have been killed while covering the conflict.

Hamza Dahdouh, who was also working for Al Jazeera, and Mustafa Tharaya, a freelance journalist, were killed when a strike hit their car while they were driving to an assignment in southern Gaza, according to Al Jazeera. A third journalist, Hazem Rajab, was seriously wounded, it said.

Amer Abu Amr, a photojournalist, said in a Facebook post that he and another journalist, Ahmed al-Bursh, survived the strike.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Wael Dahdouh, 53, has been the face of Al Jazeera's 24-hour coverage of this war and previous rounds of fighting for millions of Arabic-speaking viewers across the region, nearly always appearing on air in the blue helmet and flak jacket worn to identify journalists in the Palestinian territories.

Speaking to Al Jazeera after his son's burial, Dahdouh vowed to continue reporting on the war.

"The whole world must look at what is happening here in the Gaza Strip," he said. "What is happening is a great injustice to defenseless people, civilian people. It is also unfair for us as journalists."

In a statement, Al Jazeera accused Israel of deliberately targeting the reporters and condemned the "ongoing crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against journalists and media professionals in Gaza." It also vowed to take "all legal measures to prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes."

Dahdouh was reporting on the offensive in late October when he received word that his wife, daughter and another son had been killed in an Israeli airstrike. His grandson, wounded in the same strike, died hours later. The Qatar-based broadcaster later aired footage of him weeping over the body of his son while still wearing his blue press vest.

In December, an Israeli strike on a school in Khan Younis wounded Dahdouh and Al Jazeera cameraman Samer Abu Daqqa. Dahdouh was able to run for help, but Abu Daqqa bled to death hours later as ambulances were unable to reach him because of blocked roads, according to Al Jazeera.

Earlier in December, a strike killed the father, mother and 20 other family members of another Al Jazeera correspondent, Momen Al Sharafi.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is shuttling between Mideast countries this week, said he was "deeply, deeply sorry" for Dahdouh's loss.

“I am a parent myself, I can’t begin to imagine the horror that he has experienced, not once, but now twice. This is an unimaginable tragedy and that’s also been the case for far too many innocent Palestinian men, women, children,” Blinken said during a stop in Qatar. Blinken heads to Israel on Monday.

The Committee to Protect Journalists says at least 70 Palestinian reporters, as well as four Israeli and three Lebanese reporters, have been killed since Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack triggered the war in Gaza and an escalation in fighting along Israel’s border with Lebanon.

Over 22,800 Palestinians have been killed in the war, mostly women and minors, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. Some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed in Israel during the initial Hamas attack.

Israel denies targeting journalists and says it makes every effort to avoid harming civilians, blaming the high death toll on the fact that Hamas fights in densely populated urban areas.

Some 85% of Gaza’s population of 2.3 million have fled their homes, with most seeking shelter in Israeli-designated safe zones in southern Gaza. But Israel also regularly carries out strikes in those areas, leading many Palestinians to feel that nowhere in the besieged territory is safe.

Palestinian journalists have played an essential role in reporting on the conflict for local and international media outlets, even as many have lost loved ones and been forced to flee their own homes because of the fighting.

Israel and Egypt, which maintain a blockade on Gaza, have largely barred foreign reporters from entering Gaza since the war began.