



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

ISRAEL SEEKS TO PROHIBIT FILMING OR PHOTOGRAPHING MILITARY OCCUPIERS IN ACTION



Israeli soldier aiming his grenade launcher shouts at Palestinian journalists in Hebron, West Bank - December 15, 2017.

Israeli ministers have backed a bill making it illegal for human rights groups to film its troops' actions in the Palestinian territories in a move that paves the way for military abuses.

The ban would cover social networks as well as traditional media.

The immediate result of such a prohibition is serious harm to the possibility of protecting human rights and overseeing the army's activity.

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The bill does serious harm to freedom of the press and the public's right to know the reality.

Context

The bill comes in an atmosphere of increasing intolerance for the reporting of human rights organisations and amid prosecutions as a result of video footage

The move came less than a month after the release of Elor Azaria, Israeli soldier who has served only nine months in prison for shooting and killing a Palestinian civilian in the head as he lay immobilised on the ground in 2016.

A video filmed by Israeli rights group [B'Tselem](#) in 2016 showing him shooting dead the incapacitated Abdel Fattah al-Sharif drew international condemnation and led to the soldier's conviction for manslaughter in a highly divisive trial.

Video footage and photographs showing the actions of Israeli soldiers have often become the source of high-profile investigations into their conduct.

The proposed law, put forward by the ultranationalist Yisrael Beitenu party in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition, was approved by the ministerial committee on legislation in June 2018 and is now facing a series of parliamentary debates and votes needed for it to pass into law.

What does the bill say?

The bill makes filming or publishing footage "with intent to harm the morale of Israel's soldiers or its inhabitants" punishable by up to five years in prison.

It can go up to 10 years if the intention is to damage "national security".

Why is the bill problematic?

Video documentation of Israeli soldiers in the occupied West Bank is necessary to expose military abuses.



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This decision aims to cover up crimes committed by Israeli soldiers against the Palestinian people, and to free their hands to commit more crimes.

There are clear cases captured on film that have led to the prosecutions of Israeli soldiers. We can only imagine how often these cases happen out of the view of camera.

Without transparency getting accountability becomes much more difficult.

Five examples

Here are five times when footage has provoked condemnation or convictions on both sides of the conflict. You can watch the footage [here](#).

1. Protesters grab IDF man trying to detain boy | Nabi Saleh, West Bank, 2015

Palestinian women and children hit an IDF soldier while he tried to detain a 12-year-old boy at a protest.

The IDF said the boy threw rocks at soldiers and they decided not to detain the boy because of the violent altercation.

2. IDF soldier shoots unarmed Palestinian in the head | Hebron, West Bank, 2016

Wounded Palestinian Abdel Fattah al-Sharif was shot dead by Elor Azaria – an IDF soldier – in March 2016.

Azaria then raised his gun and shot Sharif in the head.

Elor Azaria was convicted of manslaughter and released in May 2018 after serving nine months in prison.

3. Teen killed during Nakba demonstrations | West Bank, 2014

Seventeen-year-old Nadeem Siam Nuwara was shot dead in 2014 during Nakba demonstrations. The incident was captured on CCTV.



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A former Israeli police officer in April 2018 was sentenced to nine months in prison and ordered to pay Nuwara's family 50,000 Israeli shekels (€11,865) under a plea agreement.

4. Deadly protests along Gaza-Israel border | March-June 2018

Since March, footage has captured protests along the Gaza-Israel border, where soldiers were deployed as demonstrators set tires alight and throw rocks.

One video shows the moment a Palestinian protester was shot in the leg.

5. Teen slaps IDF soldier | 2017

Teen activist Ahed Tamimi was sentenced to eight months in prison after a video went viral of her slapping and hitting an IDF soldier.

ICSFT condemns this dangerous bill whose aim is to impose a blanket ban on recording the actions of Israeli soldiers and to silence criticism of the army, and in particular to prevent human rights organisations from documenting the Israeli army's actions in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

We urge the international community to take action in order to prevent this bill to become law.

If the Israeli government finds the occupation too embarrassing to even be visibly documented, it should end the occupation— not hide behind a bill to whitewash its crimes!