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# FLAME HOTLINE

Facts & Logic About the Middle East

December 6, 2022



## Israel's enemies demand FBI investigation for journalist Akleh shooting: "A slap in the face"

Dear Friend of Israel, Friend of FLAME:

You've no doubt heard that the FBI just announced it is beginning an investigation of Israel for Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh's death during a firefight between Palestinian fighters resisting arrest and Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) last May.

That's strange, since in investigations already completed by both Palestinian and Israeli forensic experts (with U.S. oversight), neither was able positively to determine the source of the bullet that killed Akleh. Furthermore, zero evidence has been offered that Akleh's death was intentional.

The move signals clearly either that the U.S. does not trust the results of examiners who evaluated the incident—or that enemies of Israel in the government simply want to malign the Jewish state.

Israel's Prime Minister, Yair Lapid, has called the investigation a "grave mistake." A *Jerusalem Post* house op-ed called it "a slap in the face for Israel."

The superfluous FBI investigation appears to be at the behest of letters sent to the FBI by 57 Democratic Representatives and to President Biden by 22 Democratic Senators (plus two independents, including Bernie Sanders).

In response to the insult, Israel has indicated it will not cooperate with the investigation. Many in Israel consider the U.S. action an attempt to demonize the Jewish state with no evidence and a clear application of double standards—both markers of antisemitism.

In any case, the FBI probe seems a clear attempt to discredit the Jewish state in the absence of any hard facts—and the impossibility of ever *acquiring* dispositive evidence.

Shortly after the incident, Akleh's employer, Al Jazeera accused IDF soldiers of

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### Democracy Thrives in Israel

**A new report ranks the Jewish state as one of the world's strongest, most equitable democracies—despite baseless falsehoods about its oppression of Palestinians**

While enemies accuse Israel of apartheid, genocide, and rights violations, they cite their country's evidence. In the country's Israel has a superior record of civil liberties, elections, rule of law, and other opportunities for its Jewish citizens, ranking it the world's 24th most successful democracy.

**What are the facts?**  
Israel's record of democratic performance for its Jewish citizens, as well as Palestinians, ranks among the world's top democracies. In fact, Israel ranks 24th in the 2022 Freedom in the World report, ahead of the United States, Spain, Italy, and more than 100 other nations. The index ranks countries according to 15 criteria, covering each country's performance according to its 1) electoral process and pluralism; 2) functioning of government; 3) political participation; 4) political culture and 5) civil liberties.

**Israel's 2022 ranking shows consistent improvement in its democratic processes**  
compared with the first report in 2008, when the Jewish state ranked only 47. In the current report, Israel was ranked for its consistent and high quality in its democratic processes.

No surprise, since Israel's robust democracy has a vibrant electoral tradition, stable governing institutions, high political participation among its citizens, a vigorous, even bipartisan political culture, and broad, equal civil liberties for all its citizens.

Unfortunately, even as Israel's democracy improved in the past year, the EU's record for democracy globally steadily deteriorated. This was due to the EU's policies, ranging from an unprecedented withdrawal of civil liberties, including a high tolerance for hate speech, to a high level of public and political intolerance.

**In contrast to Israel, new Middle Eastern regimes, the highest ranking of which was Tunisia, ranking only 70th, have not met the test of a democracy, but a "quasi-regime." The territory of Palestine was ranked as an "authoritarian" regime in 2022, down.**

The EU countries in the index, Israel's performance in the EU's countries was based on the health and performance of democratic institutions among its citizens.

While critics often unfairly blame Israel for a lack of democratic freedoms in India and Somalia ("The Free World" and more), they ignore the fact that the Sikh Republic's governance responsibilities of Palestinians in those territories are directly in their respective charge—the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

Unfortunately, neither of these Palestinian governments holds legitimate elections, supports human civil liberties, or holds free and fair elections.

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having killed Akleh. However, neither Al Jazeera nor any other news outlet has produced definitive proof that Israel's troops killed her.

Al Jazeera is funded by the government of the small Arab state of Qatar, which opposes diplomatic relations with Israel. Qatar is also suspected of funding Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

When the independent investigation of the journalist's death was carried out by the IDF, in cooperation with the U.S., the Palestinians refused to cooperate. In fact, for several months the PA refused to hand over the bullet that killed Akleh to investigators, until American pressure persuaded them to hand it over to experts from the U.S. Justice Department.

Unfortunately, the bullet was damaged so badly that it was impossible to trace the gun that shot it. Thus, the head of Palestinian Forensic Medicine declared it was impossible to know who shot the bullet that killed Akleh.

The media inside PA-controlled territory were banned from talking about Akleh's death—not surprising, since credible ballistic experts indicated to legal advocate Shurat Hadin the high likelihood the deadly bullet came from a gun belonging to the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, armed henchmen of the Palestinian Fatah party .

The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade has committed hundreds of murders and other attacks on Israeli civilians, especially in recent months. IDF forces were in Jenin on the morning of Akleh's death precisely to round up terrorists responsible for recent killings.

In short, any assertion that Israeli troops intentionally killed Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is ludicrous. The Israeli military has strict rules of engagement that forbid targeting journalists. Israel has no history of intentionally killing journalists.

Furthermore, Israeli troops were 200 yards – two football fields – away from where Akleh was shot, making it highly unlikely that she could be identified as a member of the press.

Tragically, a cadre of Israel-unfriendly U.S. lawmakers has ignored all evidence and diplomatic respect, deciding instead to persecute America's most trusted ally in the Middle East and one of its strongest in the world.

Ask yourself: Why would the FBI conduct its own investigation into this matter— especially since the U.S. has never investigated any other allies when U.S. journalists have been killed? What precisely is the FBI trying to determine?

Since 1990, some 2,658 journalists have been killed—many in war zones, most murdered for their reporting. Fifteen American journalists have been killed this year in Ukraine alone. Where are the investigations?

Forty-nine Americans have been killed by Palestinian terrorists —intentionally —since August 9, 2001. No FBI investigations.

Indeed, the U.S. itself is guilty of killing journalists in combat zones. According

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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to the Committee to Protect Journalists, U.S. forces killed 13 journalists in Iraq. But of course, those were American forces, not Israelis. No FBI investigations.

One thing is clear: U.S. partisan members of Congress—and our supposedly *non-partisan* FBI—are using a double standard against Israel in the Akleh case—and that fits the definition of antisemitism like a glove.

Only Israel is singled out, because, per renowned legal scholar Alan Dershowitz, Israel is the Jew among nations.

I urge you in conversations with friends, colleagues and family—and in letters to the editor—to point out the unfair double-standard that U.S. Democratic lawmakers are applying to Israel. Explain that this double-standard is both a rude gesture to America's greatest ally in the Middle East, and a vile act of antisemitism.

Emphasize, too, that the FBI's unwarranted and unnecessary investigation only encourages the false narrative that Israel disrespects a free press—when in fact Israel is the only nation in the Middle East that has a free press.

I hope you'll also take a minute, while you have this material front and center, to forward this message to friends, visit FLAME's lively [Facebook page](#) and review the P.S. immediately below. It describes FLAME's new *hasbarah* campaign —“Democracy Thrives in Israel”—which exposes false claims that Israel deprives Arab Israeli citizens and Palestinian Arabs of their rights.

Best regards,

James Sinkinson, President  
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Despite Israel's guarantee of civil liberties and equal treatment for all its citizens—including two million Arab Israelis—Israel is still falsely accused of being an apartheid state. Despite Israel and the Palestinians agreeing that the Palestinian Authority will administer its own civil affairs, including elections, Israel is accused of violating human rights because Palestinians can't vote in Israeli elections. I think you'll agree that truth is the only antidote to this lie. FLAME's new *hasbarah* message—called “[Democracy Thrives in Israel](#)” publicizes a new, independent “Democracy Index” in which Israel is named the world's 23<sup>rd</sup> most successful democracy—ahead of the United States, Italy, Spain and 139 other nations. This new editorial message also clarifies that Palestinians' repression is due overwhelmingly to their two ruling dictatorships. (Palestinians are ranked #109 in the Democracy Index—as “authoritarian.”) I hope you'll review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which FLAME published nationwide in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, *Miami Herald*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times* and *San Jose Mercury News*. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, Vice President Harris and President Biden. If you agree that this kind of public

relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a [donation](#) now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation in 2022 to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now, more than ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Biden stay committed to fighting antisemitic, anti-Israel actions by individuals, politicians and commercial companies.

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