UN credibility on Israel, Palestinians ‘in serious doubt,’ after error about Gazan ‘journalist’

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<https://www.jns.org/un-credibility-on-israel-palestinians-in-serious-doubt-after-error-about-gazan-journalist/>

A U.N. office stands corrected after having ‘verified’ the death of someone it referred to as a Gazan journalist. But despite the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights assuring JNS that it issued a correction after the United Nations found out the person in question was still alive, the error remains on several pages on the U.N. website.

The OHCHR issued a Dec. 14 press release expressing its ‘alarm’ by ‘an unprecedented rate of journalists and media workers who have been killed in Gaza since Oct. 7.’ The U.N. agency claimed to have ‘verified the killing of 50 journalists and media workers, and has received information that 30 more may have died, amounting to approximately 6% of all those registered with the Journalists’ Syndicate in Gaza.’

In the fifth of the release’s 18 paragraphs, OHCHR noted that ‘Mr. Mustafa Ayyash, the founder and director of the *Gaza Now News Agency*, was killed along with at least eight members of his family, including children, in an apparent airstrike on his house in Al Nuseirat Camp on Nov. 22.’

That claim remains in a [document](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/killings-of-journalists-and-their-family-members-in-gaza-dec14-2023/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20International%20Federation,their%20families%20%E2%80%93%20in%20the%20world.) that appears several times on the U.N. website.

Among those whom the U.S. Treasury Department [sanctioned](https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2213) on March 27, for ‘having materially assisted, sponsored or provided financial, material or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, Hamas,’ was ‘*Gaza Now* and its founder Mustafa Ayash,’ apparently very much alive. (The United Kingdom took similar actions.)

The publican *Gaza Now* [announced](https://t.me/gazaalannet/54048) the next day that Austrian authorities had arrested Ayyash. It was not clear publicly how Austrian authorities tracked Ayyash, but Vienna gave no indication it had arrested a dead man.

The Hamas propaganda outlet *Gaza Now*, which has 1.81 million followers on its [Telegram channel](https://t.me/s/gazaalannet), has since been essentially [shut down](https://www.israelhayom.com/2024/04/09/israeli-company-helps-takes-down-hamas-propaganda-machine-online/).

Joe Truzman, a research analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, [wrote](https://x.com/JoeTruzman/status/1773510203381829955) on social media about the sanctions and arrest information.

OHCHR’s press release has since been [updated](https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/un-human-rights-office-opt-killings-journalists-and-their-family-members-gaza-enar) on ReliefWeb, a ‘humanitarian information service’ that the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs provides. The release now states that ‘Mr. Muhamad Moein Ayyash, a photojournalist, was reportedly killed along with several members of his family in an apparent airstrike on his house in Al Nuseirat Camp on Nov. 22.’

An asterisk near Ayyash’s name points readers to a correction at the bottom of the page: ‘A previous version of this statement erroneously stated journalist Mustafa Ayyash was killed. It was his cousin, Muhamad Moein Ayyash, who was, in fact, killed.’

OHCHR told JNS that it issued the correction at some point during the first week of April. (It was corrected by April 5, per an [archived version](https://web.archive.org/web/20240405215258/https:/reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/un-human-rights-office-opt-killings-journalists-and-their-family-members-gaza-enar) of the page.)

A significant number of Gazans who self-identify as journalists have either direct ties to terror groups in the Strip or support Gazan terror, according to the Israeli government and other critics of Hamas.

The U.N. agency’s ‘belated retraction’ is ‘insufficient to repair the harm already caused by their mistake,’ Truzman told JNS. ‘The error underscores the U.N.’s lack of accuracy and credibility when addressing issues related to Gaza, the West Bank and Israel.’

While OHCHR updated the release on ReliefWeb, the United Nations has apparently scrubbed any trace of the original release on the humanitarian portal and on OHCHR’s website.

The incorrect information published about Mustafa Ayyash’s death [remains active](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/killings-of-journalists-and-their-family-members-in-gaza-dec14-2023/) on the U.N.’s webpage for information about the organization’s Palestinian advocacy and on the same site’s [monthly bulletin](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/action-by-un-system-and-intergovernmental-organizations-relevant-to-the-question-of-palestine-december-2023-monthly-bulletin-31dec-2023/#_Toc155962881) from December.

‘This incident and many others indicate the urgent need for significant organizational reforms,’ Truzman told JNS. ‘At present, the U.N.’s credibility in matters concerning Israel and the Palestinians is in serious doubt.’