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AOHR UK co-organises memorial service for Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

Yesterday, Tuesday 28 June 2022, Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK), in cooperation with Artists for Palestine UK, organised a memorial service for the late Shireen Abu Akleh, and every Palestinian journalist killed by the Israeli occupation. The service was followed by reception.

The memorial service was held at St. Bride's Church, 'the journalist's church', in London, and was attended by many human rights activists, journalists, and politicians from across the world. Shireen's life – her dedication to reporting the truth of her homeland, even with her last breath – was celebrated.

Reverend Canon Dr. Alison Joyce, Rector of St. Bride's Church, began the memorial by praising all journalists and expressing her anger at the killing of Shireen. As Reverend Joyce said, "to all workers in this field, we carry you in our hearts, we feel your pain, we share your anger at the killing of an innocent journalist."

"More than a month has passed since Shireen's murder, and the grief and shock over her loss are still with us", she said.

"We are here today for her, to honour her and to continue her memory and the memory of every journalist who has been killed while covering what is happening in Palestine", the Reverend continued.



Lina Abu Akleh, Shireen's niece, joined the memorial via videolink from Palestine, and spoke about Shireen as a beloved aunt.

“Before she was a journalist, Shireen was a wonderful person. She gave so much. She was at one with the people, she was from and for people. Shireen saw every town and village in Palestine, covering all aspects of the Palestinian struggle.”

Lina mentioned the attacks against Shireen's funeral march, saying “Shireen continued to expose the crimes of the Israeli occupation even during her funeral, which was attacked by occupation soldiers.”

But, Lina added, “the Palestinian people carried Shireen Abu Akleh on their shoulders in the same way that she carried their voices to the whole world over the past 25 years.”

Lina added that the Abu Akleh family will continue to demand that the perpetrators of Shireen's killing be brought to justice.

Ali al-Samoudi, a producer with Al-Jazeera who survived being shot at the same time as Shireen, also joined the service via videolink. Al-Samoudi, who worked with Abu Akleh for over 20 years, said “I knew Shireen as a journalist colleague, as a wonderful sister, and as a committed Palestinian,”

“Shireen Abu Akleh was both a Palestinian and human. She had a spirit of giving, of sacrifice, of courage and heroism, in every sense of the word.”

Al-Samoudi spoke of Shireen as Palestinian citizen who loved her people and took any opportunity to do charitable work and provide psychological and material assistance to those in need.

“Shireen never stopped doing good deeds, providing aid to all those in need, becoming closer to God. Her rosary never left her”, he said.

“Shireen is gone, but the seed of goodness that she planted in Palestine and in the capital, al-Quds, is still growing, and will continue to grow.”



Videocasting from the top of a hill overlooking al-Quds – one of the places dearest to Shireen – Al Jazeera journalist and news producer Najwan al-Samri spoke about her colleague and companion.

Najwan expressed her constant sadness after the loss of Shireen and the void that had been left by her killing by Israeli occupation forces.

“The occupation did not kill just one person, it killed a mother, a sister, a friend, and a confidant – Sherine was all those for me”, said Najwan.

“When I started working for Al-Jazeera in 2003, I began to know the person, Shireen. Shireen was the person closest to my soul in this life – when the occupation killed Shireen, it killed more than one person I loved.”

“I ask for justice for Shireen, although real justice would be that Shireen was not killed in the first place. Justice would be leaving our homes without fear of being killed, or of someone dear to us being killed.”

After, Palestinian singer Reem Kilani gave a moving rendition of the ‘The Singer Said ...’ by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.

The event involved presenting an honorary shield to Shireen’s family, with the following words from Shireen inscribed: “I chose journalism to be close to people. It is not easy to change the world, but, at least, I was able to deliver their voice to the world.”

The shield was presented to Reverend Alison Joyce, amongst others.

The event was also attended by a number of British politicians, including Baroness Helena Kennedy and MPs Claudia Webbe, Jeremy Corbyn, and John McDonnell.

A number of human rights activists were present, including Mohammad Jamil, President of the AOHR UK, British lawyer Rhys Davies, and Yasmine Ahmad of Human Rights Watch.



Others present were Dr. Nadia Naser-Najjab, a Research Fellow at the European Center for Palestine Studies at the University of Exeter, Tira Shubart, Chair of the Rory Peck Fund, and journalists Peter Osborne, Mina Harbellou of Al Jazeera, and Penny Quinton.

Amongst the artists who attended were Hilary Westlake, Miranda Bennell, Farhana Sheikh, Sarah Beddington, Jenny Morgan, and Joseph Edward.

At the reception, following the service, attendees discussed the need to hold Shireen's killers to account, and the international community's responsibility to end the Israeli occupation's brutal repression of the Palestinian people, including its journalists.

Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK)