

LA Jews for Peace Policy Statement

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Bias by U.S. State Department in Investigation of Shireen Abu Akleh killing

LA Jews for Peace notes two apparent biases in the U.S. State Department forensic investigation of the May 11, 2022 killing of Shireen Abu Akleh, an American citizen and Al Jazeera reporter.

First, the American forensic investigation of the bullet that Killed Abu Akleh was to be accomplished by an American team. That was the understanding of the Palestinian Authority (PA) when it handed the bullet to the Americans. But that understanding was violated when the American investigation allowed a concurrent Israeli investigation. That is exactly what the PA feared because the Israelis have a stake in the outcome of the investigation and their presence possibly affected the conclusions of the American investigation.

Second, the U.S. State Department report stated that although the fatal bullet was probably fired by the Israeli army, there is “no reason to believe” she was deliberately targeted. What remained unstated is that there is no reason to believe she was NOT deliberately targeted.

Since a forensic investigation of a bullet has no bearing on the intent of the shooter, a fairer report would have said nothing about intent. By speculating on intent, the State Department report biases general understanding of cause of the killing.

Both these instances of bias negate the PA position that Abu Akleh was deliberately targeted by the Israeli army, and violate the impartiality that the PA understood the U.S. would maintain in its investigation.

LA Jews for Peace notes that independent investigations by CNN, Al Jazeera, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Associated Press, and the U.N. Human Rights chief all concluded that Abu Akleh was targeted by the Israeli army. That conclusion makes sense to us. Abu Akleh was killed by a single bullet that was shot from 150-200 yards, a shot that could only have come from an army sniper, probably with a telescope sight (that should have clearly enabled seeing Abu Akleh’s PRESS markings). The State Department knows well enough that Israeli army procedures require a commander’s approval before a sniper can shoot to kill or injure.