

UK Demands Israel Allow Journalists Into Gaza

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The United Kingdom has joined international calls for Israel to lift restrictions on foreign journalists entering Gaza, as Tel Aviv prepares to intensify military operations in the territory.

In a joint statement with 25 other members of the Media Freedom Coalition, the UK urged Israel to grant “immediate independent foreign media access” and ensure the safety of journalists working in the conflict zone.

The coalition’s message stated: “Journalists and media workers play an essential role in putting the spotlight on the devastating reality of war. Access to conflict zones is vital to carrying out this role effectively. We oppose all attempts to restrict press freedom and block entry to journalists during conflicts.”

The statement also condemned the high number of fatalities among reporters. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 184 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza since hostilities escalated in October 2023. The CPJ has described the situation as the “deadliest and most deliberate effort to silence journalists” it has ever recorded.

Israel denies deliberately targeting media workers and has accused some of those killed of having links to terrorist groups. Foreign journalists have only been permitted into Gaza on tightly controlled trips escorted by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

The coalition called for full investigations into attacks on journalists, prosecution of those responsible, an immediate ceasefire, the release of Israeli hostages, and an “unhindered flow of humanitarian aid” into Gaza. Other signatories included Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Ukraine.

The UK’s call came as Israel approved the mobilisation of 60,000 reservists ahead of a wider military operation in Gaza City. Britain also joined international criticism of Israel’s decision to authorise the E1 settlement plan in the occupied West Bank. The project, which would see 3,500 homes built between Jerusalem and Ma’ale Adumim, could effectively divide the West Bank into two.

A Foreign Office spokesperson described the plan as a “flagrant breach of international law” that would “critically undermine the two-state solution.” Alongside counterparts from Europe, Australia, Canada, and Japan, the UK urged Israel to halt the development, warning it risked fuelling instability. “This brings no benefits to the Israeli people,” the joint statement added.

In a separate move, the UK imposed sanctions on Iranian businessman Hossein Shamkhani, the son of a senior adviser to Iran’s Supreme Leader. He is accused of using a global shipping network to trade Iranian and Russian oil illicitly, generating billions in profits.

The sanctions target Mr Shamkhani and four associated companies. The United States has already blacklisted him, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent accusing Iranian elites of using oil sales to “fund the regime’s dangerous behaviour.”

The UK’s latest measures highlight London’s continuing focus on both Middle East security and the protection of press freedoms, as international scrutiny of Israel’s war in Gaza intensifies.