



Subject: Invitation to Join the “Witness for Gaza” initiative — A Joint International Press Mission and Floating Newsroom

In light of the numerous official petitions, open letters and joint statements issued or endorsed by leading media organisations, agencies and journalists calling for independent, free and unhindered press access to Gaza, we are reaching out to offer a concrete and professional way to turn these commitments into action. Palestine Witness is an association led by international journalists and multidisciplinary humanitarian experts whose mission is to ensure free, independent, and unhindered access to information. Guided by the universal standards of journalism – truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, independence, humanity, and accountability –, it works to create conditions for credible, impartial reporting that is protected from any form of instrumentalization. This initiative affirms a commitment to press freedom and the fundamental right to both inform and be informed. The systematic targeting of journalists, coupled with the blockade on access to Gaza, constitutes a deliberate attack on these rights and on the very principle of independent journalism.

Through the “Witness for Gaza” initiative, we will launch a civilian vessel configured as a fully equipped floating newsroom, embarking 15 international journalists from mainstream and independent outlets. This mission is intended to uphold the right to witness, document, and report freely from Gaza, while crucially enhancing the protection of Palestinian journalists through side-by-side presence of their international colleagues. The initiative directly answers the dozens of professional calls (in annex to this invitation) by securing independent, safe and unhindered access in full respect of professional standards, source protection, and security requirements.

Capabilities and governance: The mission is led by professionals with 20+ years’ experience in humanitarian crises and conflict zones, advised by recognised operational security experts with track records supporting journalists in war zones, collaborating with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and conducting complex operations, including maritime rescue in hostile environments. We are backed by specialists in humanitarian logistics and field management, senior consultants in strategy and international coordination, and experts active with or close to the United Nations and the European Union for advocacy and diplomatic engagement.

Legal, maritime and safety architecture: The vessel will navigate exclusively in international waters (12+ nautical miles) under a European Union member state flag, in strict compliance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and with full adherence to international maritime safety protocols (SOLAS, evacuation and emergency procedures). The presence of internationally renowned journalists and high-profile public support functions as a “media shield”, making any interference highly visible and politically costly.

Timing and purpose: The mission is scheduled to depart in September, to coincide with the United Nations General Assembly, with a dual, practical and symbolic objective: to obtain safe passage for the press under international law, and to break – through strictly peaceful civil disobedience – the normalisation of media blackouts in conflict zones.

Institutional traction: We are in the process of formalising partnerships with leading international syndicates of journalists as well as federations, to consolidate credibility, strengthen operational capacity and ensure effective protection for reporters based on shared principles of independence, ethics and professional solidarity. In France, the Institute du Monde Arabe (IMA) has already expressed its support.

Purpose of this letter

1. Identify committed media: We seek to identify international media agencies and outlets that stand for independent, free and unhindered access to information in conflict zones, consistent with universal deontological principles (truth and accuracy; independence; impartiality and fairness; humanity – do no harm; accountability and transparency; protection of sources) and who are prepared to enact those values in practice.
2. Translate principles into presence: We invite outlets willing to take a clear, public stand on an unprecedented situation for the profession by assigning a senior journalist to embark on the Witness for Gaza vessel and work shoulder-to-shoulder with Palestinian colleagues, thereby reinforcing protection and ensuring continuous, independent scrutiny.
3. Limited berths on a historic joint press mission: Berths are strictly limited (15). This is a collective newsroom at sea, uniting international journalists in the name of truth: to document violations, report independently, support and help protect Palestinian colleagues, and preserve probative evidence for accountability.
4. Public-interest imperative: Amid a catastrophic humanitarian context – with renowned international bodies bearing witness and collecting evidence, including on famine and starvation used as a weapon of war – international media have a duty to bear witness, amplify the exceptional work of Palestinian journalists despite extreme danger, and preserve proof.
5. Departure window: The mission is planned to depart in the second half of September (UNGA session).

6. Confirmation deadline: Given short lead-times and significant operational demands, we ask interested outlets to confirm participation (nominate one senior journalist) **no later than 12 September 2025**. For transparency, Palestine Witness will log and review all responses – including non-responses – and issue a post-mission assessment.

What we ask from interested outlets

Please reply to press@palestinewitness.org with the following (bullet points or short letter format is sufficient):

- Outlet name and editorial contact;
- Nominated senior journalist (name, role, travel-document readiness);
- Safety/insurance focal point and legal liaison;
- Any equipment, connectivity or production needs;
- Confirmation of adherence to the professional standards listed above;
- Any specific requirements or constraints we should factor into planning.

We are available to brief editors and legal/safety teams on risk management, duty of care, maritime compliance, data/security protocols and the on-ground facilitation plan.

Thank you for considering this invitation to turn words into action. For questions – or to schedule a confidential briefing – please contact Mrs. Ashwini PRABHA at press@palestinewitness.org.

We look forward to your response by **12 September 2025**.

Yours faithfully,

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Attachments:

- 1) Previous international petitions and campaigns requesting access to Gaza for international media.
- 2) Draft operational outline (logistics, production, support and timelines)

Attachment 1 – Previous international petitions and campaigns requesting access to Gaza for international media

This document provides a year-by-year record of formal initiatives, petitions, open letters, diplomatic statements, and court actions since 2023 that explicitly called on the Israeli government to allow independent access for international journalists and media to Gaza. All sources are hyperlinked for reference.

2025

- 1) Media Freedom Coalition (27 governments): Joint diplomatic statement urging Israel to allow immediate independent foreign media access to Gaza. – Link: (<https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/joint-statement/2025/mfc-statement-media-access-to-gaza/>).
- 2) RSF + CPJ global open letter (140+ orgs): Calls for immediate, independent, and unrestricted foreign press access. – Link: (<https://rsf.org/en/gaza-rsf-cpj-and-over-130-media-outlets-call-opening-strip-foreign-journalists-and-protecting>).
- 3) ARTICLE 19: Endorsed the 5 June appeal, reiterated demand to immediately allow unrestricted access for international media. -Link: (<https://www.article19.org/resources/israel-and-palestine-allow-international-media-access-to-gaza/>).
- 4) European Broadcasting Union (EBU): Reiterated demand to unblock access to Gaza for foreign journalists. – Link: (<https://www.ebu.ch/news/2025/05/ebu-urges-unrestricted-access-to-gaza-for-foreign-journalists>).
- 5) CPJ + INSI coalition: Letter urging Israel to allow journalists' free movement in and out of Gaza. -Link: (<https://cpj.org/2025/07/cpj-35-others-urge-israel-to-allow-free-movement-of-journalists-in-and-out-of-gaza/>).
- 6) Foreign Press Association (FPA) Second High Court petition: Filed renewed petition after 2023 case; state filings confirm continued ban. – Link: (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/high-court-delays-gaza-press-access-hearing-for-sixth-time-amid-escalating-offensive/>).

- 7) Freedom to Report (journalists' petition): Over 1,000 journalists demanded immediate and unsupervised foreign press access. -Link: (<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2025/aug/21/uk-among-26-countries-to-demand-press-given-immediate-access-to-gaza>).
- 8) RSF + Avaaz 'international media operation: Coordinated newsroom action demanding independent access and protection for journalists. -Link: (<https://rsf.org/en/rsf-and-avaaz-launch-international-media-operation-rate-journalists-are-being-killed-gaza-israeli>).
- 9) Newsroom appeals (AFP, AP, BBC, Reuters, NPR): Joint calls to allow access and ensure safe passage for foreign reporters. -Link: (<https://www.npr.org/2025/09/01/nx-s1-5521944/news-outlets-call-for-safety-of-journalists-covering-the-war-in-gaza>).
- 10) UK Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee report: Recorded FPA petition and criticized Israel's refusal to allow media access. -Link: (<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/49045/documents/257724/default/>).

2024

- 1) Open letter (70+ media & civil society orgs): Urged Israel to give journalists independent access to Gaza. -Link: (<https://cpj.org/2024/07/media-organizations-urge-israel-to-open-access-to-gaza/>).
- 2) French journalists' associations: Open letter demanding Israel open Gaza to the international press. -Link: (<https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1430426/des-societes-de-journalistes-francais-reclament-lacces-a-gaza.html>).
- 3) U.S. House letters (Pingree + colleagues): Urged Israel to allow independent access for U.S. and international journalists. -Link: (https://pingree.house.gov/uploadedfiles/israel-gaza_-_to_biden-blinken_-_allow_unimpeded_press_access_to_gaza_17oct24.pdf).
- 4) U.S. House letter (McGovern + 64 Democrats): Pressed Israel to provide unhindered media access. -Link: (<https://mcgovern.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=400123>).
- 5) European Broadcasting Union (EBU): Backed calls for free and unhindered access for foreign media. -Link: (<https://www.ebu.ch/news/2024/03/call-to-allow-foreign-journalists-into-gaza>).
- 6) ARTICLE 19: Formal statement urging Israel to allow international media access and protect journalists. -Link: (<https://www.article19.org/resources/israel-and-palestine-allow-international-media-access-to-gaza/>).

- 7) International Federation of Journalists (IFJ): Called on Israel to lift the ban after the Supreme Court ruling upheld restrictions. -Link: (<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/israel-ifj-calls-on-the-israeli-government-to-lift-ban-on-foreign-media-to-enter-gaza>).

2023

- 1) Foreign Press Association (FPA) — High Court petition: Filed petition demanding immediate access for international media. -Link: (<https://foreignpressassociation.online/statements-2023/>).
- 2) U.S. Senate letter (Schatz + colleagues): Asked White House to urge Israel to allow international media into Gaza. -Link: (<https://www.schatz.senate.gov/news/press-releases/schatz-leads-group-of-17-senators-in-pressing-trump-administration-about-killing-of-journalists-in-gaza-urging-increased-protections-access-for-press>)

Court Rulings & Follow-ups

Israeli High Court ruling (Jan 2024): Rejected FPA's petition, upholding the ban on independent foreign press entry. -Link: (https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/supreme-court-rejects-fpa-petition-demanding-foreign-press-be-allowed-freely-into-gaza/).

IFJ & NUJ reactions: Both unions condemned the decision and called for reversal. -Link: (<https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/israel-journalists-blocked-from-entering-gaza.html>).

Further 2025 procedures: Hearings repeatedly delayed; state filings reaffirmed no independent entry. -Link: (<https://www.the7eye.org.il/561552>).

Attachment 2 – Draft operational outline (logistics, production, support and timelines)

1. Context

The Gaza Strip has become one of the most restricted information environments in the world. Since October 2023, over two hundred Palestinian journalists have been killed in the course of reporting, making it the deadliest conflict for journalists in recent history. Independent international press has been systematically denied entry, creating what organisations such as RSF, CPJ, and IFJ describe as a “deliberate blackout”. The international community is thus deprived of accurate, independent accounts of events. Without external witnesses, allegations of war crimes, starvation as a weapon, or violations of international humanitarian law risk remaining unverified. This absence of documentation facilitates impunity.

The Witness for Gaza initiative arises as a response to this crisis. By launching a civilian press vessel, configured as a professional floating newsroom, the project provides a safe, independent, and symbolic means of access. Its timing coincides with the 80th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2025, leveraging diplomatic attention and maximising global visibility.

The maritime approach is not only logistically feasible but also politically resonant. Sailing under a European Union member state flag (Germany, Spain, or Ireland under consideration), the vessel operates in international waters in full compliance with UNCLOS and SOLAS conventions. Its highly visible and peaceful presence offers both symbolic protest censorship and a practical platform for global media coverage.

2. General and Specific Objectives

General Objective

To restore independent international journalistic presence on the edge of Gaza by launching a civilian press vessel as a floating newsroom, thereby breaking the blockade on information and reinforcing global press freedom.

Specific Objectives

- a) Ensure Independent Access: Facilitate the physical presence of 15 accredited international journalists at Gaza’s maritime boundary, where they can witness and report.
- b) Protect Palestinian Journalists: Reinforce their safety and legitimacy by demonstrating side-by-side solidarity with international colleagues.
- c) Provide 24/7 Real-Time Coverage: Through professional broadcast equipment, offer continuous multilingual reporting, live streaming, and distribution to global outlets.
- d) Leverage Diplomatic Momentum: Align with UNGA 80 to obtain international diplomatic support, safe passage guarantees, and high-level advocacy.
- e) Symbolically Break the Information Blockade: Challenge the normalisation of media exclusion from Gaza through strictly peaceful civil disobedience.

- f) Document for Accountability: Collect and disseminate evidence, testimonies, and high-quality reporting to support long-term historical and legal accountability.

3. Logistics

The logistics of the Witness for Gaza operation must ensure safety, continuity of reporting, and legal compliance. The plan encompasses vessel specifications, crew composition, journalist deployment, safety architecture, supplies, and contingency measures.

3.1 Vessel and Maritime Architecture

- ✓ Type: 35-metre civilian press vessel.
- ✓ Capacity: 25 persons (25–27 expected).
- ✓ Crew: 3 professional seafarers (captain + 2 crew).
- ✓ Accommodation: 6 cabins, 18 bunks.
- ✓ Autonomy: 16 days at sea without resupply.
- ✓ Range: 3,800 nautical miles (sufficient for Rotterdam–Ashdod round trip).
- ✓ Flag: Confirmed but confidential information; options include German, Spanish, or Irish registry for maximum diplomatic support.
- ✓ Compliance: SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea), VHF, radar, emergency evacuation systems.

3.2 Human Resources

- ✓ Journalists: 15 international senior correspondents from major international outlets.
- ✓ Support Crew: 4 coordinators and operators (logistics, communications, media production). 3 maritime crew.
- ✓ Advisory Board (onshore): Legal experts, crisis management specialists, and diplomatic liaisons available remotely.

3.3 Supplies and Sustainability

- ✓ Fuel: 80–200 litres/hour consumption. Refuelling to be completed prior to departure from Rotterdam.
- ✓ Food and Water: 1 month supply for 25 persons, including emergency rations.
- ✓ Medical Provision: Trained medic on board. Evacuation plan in case of medical emergency (coordination with MSF and regional SAR facilities).
- ✓ Connectivity: Redundant VSAT/Starlink backhaul for continuous uplink.

3.4 Legal and Diplomatic Protections

- ✓ International Waters: Navigation at 12+ nautical miles from the Gaza coast.
- ✓ Legal Documentation: Journalist accreditation packs. Legal memorandum on freedom of the press in international waters.
- ✓ Diplomatic Advocacy: UN Special Rapporteurs and allied states (Ireland, Spain, South Africa, Chile, Norway) approached for protection guarantees. Public petitions (#LetThePressIn) to reinforce legitimacy.

3.2 Safety and Risk Management

- ✓ Risk Mitigation: Daily weather monitoring; route optimisation to avoid storms in Eastern Mediterranean.
- ✓ Media Shield: High-profile international journalists make interference politically costly.
- ✓ Security Protocols: Emergency drills, evacuation plan in case of interdiction, non-violent conduct training for all participants.

4. Production Means of the Floating Newsroom

4.1 Infrastructure

- ✓ Mediapro Partnership: Installation of professional broadcast systems, including multi-camera live streaming rigs, real-time editing suites, professional-grade audio mixing desks, redundant power sources (generators + batteries).

4.2 Broadcast Capabilities

- ✓ 24/7 Coverage: Morning briefings, evening situation reports, breaking news alerts triggered by unfolding events.
- ✓ Distribution Channels: Direct feeds to major international networks. Social media integration: YouTube Live, X/Twitter Spaces, TikTok Live, Instagram Stories.
- ✓ Multilingual Output: English, Arabic, French, Spanish, ensuring wide reach.

4.3 Content Strategy

- ✓ Visual Identity: Branded graphics, live interactive maps of vessel route.
- ✓ Multimedia: High-definition video, photography, and audio dispatches.
- ✓ Archival Function: Documentation stored in secure encrypted servers for use in tribunals, research, and historical records.

5. Timelines

5.1 Preparatory Phase (July-September 2025)

- ✓ 18 July – 25 Aug: Finalise journalist list, diplomatic outreach, production equipment integration.
- ✓ 26 Aug – 10 Sept: Launch communication campaign, petition, and pre-mission press briefings.
- ✓ 12 Sept: Deadline for media outlet confirmations.
- ✓ Mid-Sept: Vessel departure from Rotterdam.

5.2 Voyage Plan – CONFIDENTIAL

- ✓ Route: XXXXX XXX → Strait of Gibraltar → Mediterranean Sea → Eastern Mediterranean → off Gaza (Ashdod).
- ✓ Distance: Approx. 3,800 nautical miles.
- ✓ Speed: 15 knots (average).
- ✓ Sailing Time: ~253 hours ≈ 10.5 days.

5.3 Seasonal Adjustments – October 2025

- ✓ Weather: Eastern Mediterranean early October typically has calm to moderate seas, Beaufort scale 3–4. Some risk of early autumn storms (low pressure systems).
- ✓ Routing: Recommended stopovers in Almería (Spain) or Valletta (Malta) for fuel and crew rest to mitigate storm risk.
- ✓ Buffer Time: 2–3 days added contingency.

5.4 Mission Phase

- ✓ 30 Sept – 7 Oct 2025: Vessel stationed off Gaza's territorial waters, maintaining 12+ NM distance, providing continuous coverage.
- ✓ Engagements: Real-time reporting, live broadcasts, diplomatic advocacy.
- ✓ Symbolic Objective: Coincides with UNGA coverage in New York (9–20 Sept) and continues visibility afterwards.

5.5 Return Phase

- ✓ 8–15 Oct 2025: Return voyage to Rotterdam or safe Mediterranean port, depending on diplomatic context.
- ✓ Post-Mission: Publication of consolidated reports, documentary production, and accountability files.