




Equipment seized by Israeli officials (photo from AP/Iosphat Kasire)

MIDDLE EAST

AP Equipment Returned after Israeli Seizure

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Hours after seizing a camera and broadcasting equipment from the Associated Press (AP) and shutting down a broadcast, the Israeli Communications Minister, Shlomo Karhi, ordered the government to return the equipment.

Seizure Condemned

The AP, along with other various journalistic organizations including the Foreign Press Association, had condemned the seizure. The AP broadcast had shown live video of Gaza, shot from the town of Sderot. Israel had accused the AP of providing images to Al Jazeera, a Qatar-based media network that previously broadcast scenes from Gaza and critiqued Israel.

Before the equipment was returned, White House Press Secretary Jean-Pierre had said the move was "concerning," and worth looking into. Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid also critiqued the shutdown, saying the government "went mad," citing the Pulitzer Prizes the AP has won.

In a statement on X, Karhi claimed the equipment was returned because "the Ministry of Defense requested to re-examine the matter of broadcasts from sensitive locations and their effect on the risk of our forces."



Al Jazeera Coverage Shutdown

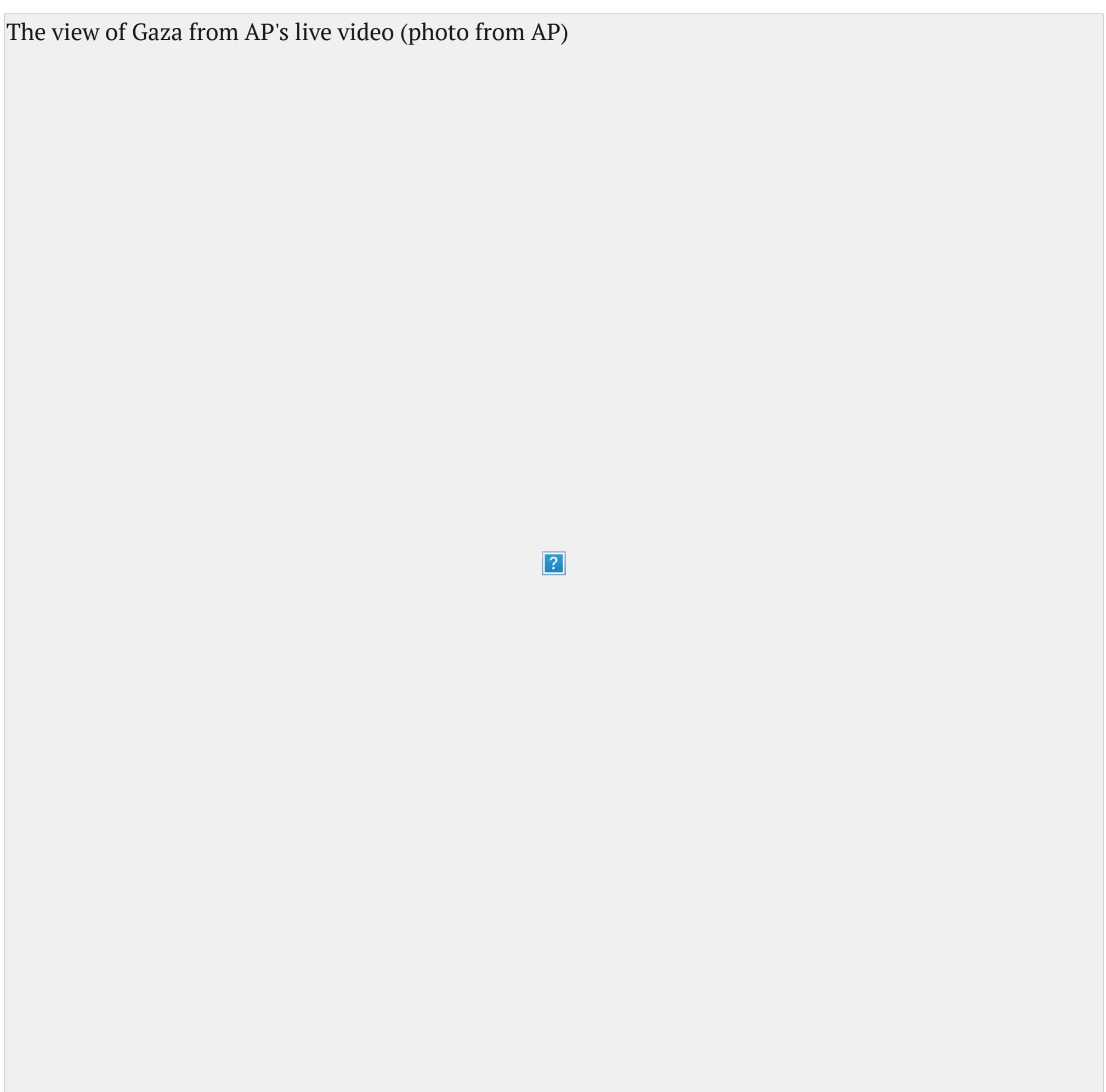
The Israeli parliament passed a bill on April 1st which allowed the government to shut down international news broadcasts deemed a threat to national security for 45 days, a period which could be renewed—Netanyahu wrote on X that same day that he intended to shut down Al Jazeera.



On May 5th, Al Jazeera's Israeli offices were shut down, broadcasts banned, and equipment seized. The move was condemned by some media outlets and journalists.

Later on May 9th, a camera and other equipment were also reportedly seized from Al Jazeera's office in Nazareth.

Karhi, who is part of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, stated that any device delivering content to Al Jazeera could be seized. The AP noted that its broadcast of northern Gaza complied with military censorship rules and did not reveal any compromising information. The live video showed smoke rising over Gaza. It's currently unclear whether the live video will go back up.



The view of Gaza from AP's live video (photo from AP)

The Israeli government has long accused Al Jazeera of collaborating with Hamas and bias, accusations that the media outlet denied. Al Jazeera was one of the few media outlets that remained in Gaza after the start of the war.

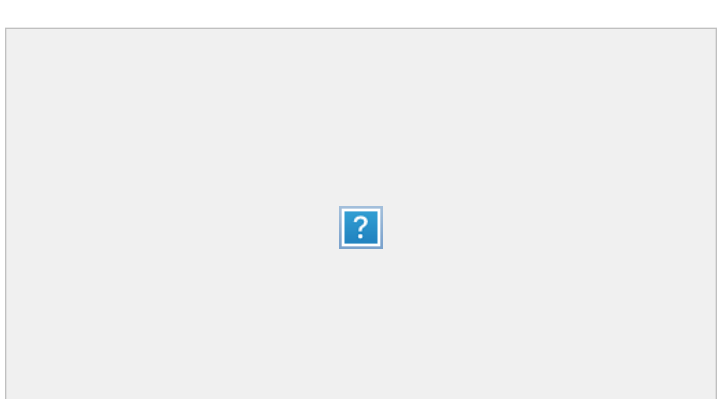
Many had taken the Al Jazeera shutdown as the start of a slippery slope of censorship.

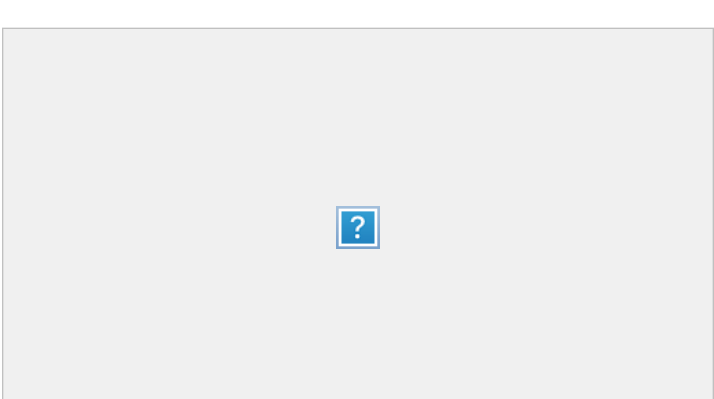
AP's Gaza Office Destroyed in the 2021 Israel-Hamas War

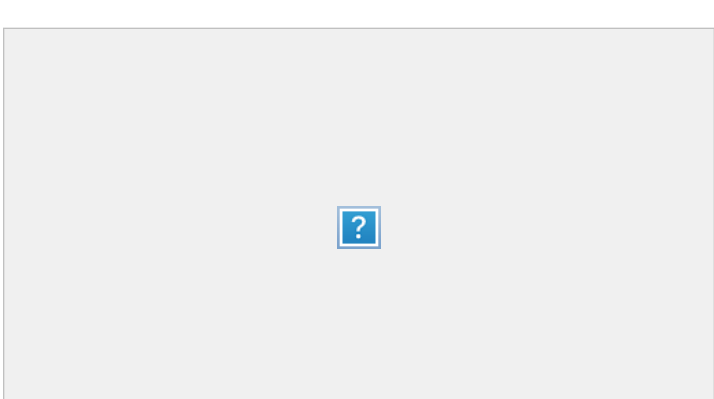
This isn't the first time the AP has had trouble with an Israeli office. In 2021, an Israeli airstrike destroyed the al-Jalaa Tower, which AP's Gaza office was in. Reportedly, Al Jazeera and other media outlets had offices in the building as well. The AP says the government claims the high-rise was used by Hamas, despite a lack of evidence.

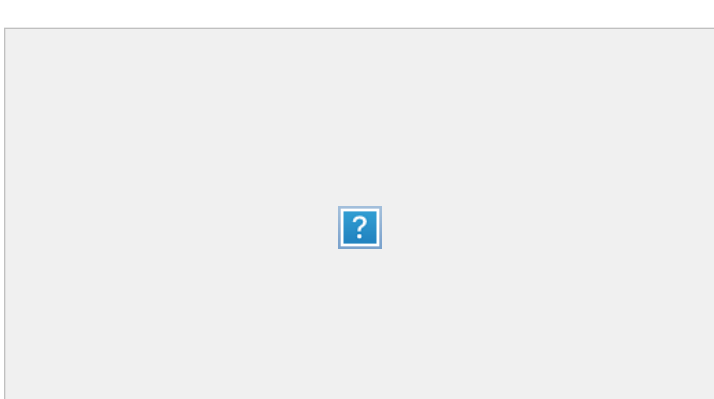
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