

KILL THE PRESS: ISRAEL'S TARGETING OF PALESTINIAN JOURNALISTS

Case 1: The Assassination of Fatma Hassouna

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Forensic Architecture
Goldsmiths, University of London
London SE14 6NW
United Kingdom
T+44 (0) 20 7078 5387
www.forensic-architecture.org

This report is the first of a series of investigative studies by Forensic Architecture. 'Kill the Press' documents and analyses the extrajudicial execution and assassination of Palestinian journalists by Israeli forces in the occupied Gaza Strip since October 2023.

Some of these journalists were our friends and collaborators, with whom we conducted investigations into Israeli settler-colonial violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

This series seeks to honour their work, memory, and courage.

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1. Scope of Analysis

Forensic Architecture (FA) has analysed open-source imagery, social media posts, and witness testimonies to investigate the killing of Palestinian photojournalist Fatma R. M. Hassouna in her family home in Gaza City on 16 April 2025.

The aim of the study was to determine whether the attack on the Hassouna family home was targeted.

2. Definitions

Extrajudicial execution refers to the deliberate killing of an individual without any legal authority or judicial process.

Assassination, while often also extrajudicial and lacking due process, carries an added dimension: it involves the deliberate killing of an individual, typically by a sudden attack, driven by political, military, or other strategic motivations.

The Palestinian journalists whose cases we examine have been killed by the Israeli military without legal process, in actions that we believe are politically and militarily motivated to target their coverage of Israel's genocidal military campaign in Gaza.

Therefore, both terms apply to the cases of Palestinian journalists killed by the Israeli military in Gaza that we examine in the 'Kill the Press' series.

3. Background

Fatma Hassouna was a 25-year-old Palestinian photojournalist and filmmaker. Her work since October 2023 documented the daily life of Palestinians during Israel's genocidal military campaign in Gaza. She gained global recognition for her documentation of the catastrophic impact of the military campaign, including the impact of forced displacement orders on Palestinian life, particularly children. Her compelling visual narratives earned her international acclaim and made her the central figure in the documentary *Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk*, set to premiere on 15 May 2025 in the ACID (Association for the Distribution of Independent Cinema) section, running parallel to the 78th Cannes Film Festival.¹

On 16 April 2025, two munitions fired by Israeli forces struck the building in which the Hassouna family's apartment was located, in the al-Tuffah neighbourhood of Gaza

¹ <https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/press/press-releases/tribute-to-fatma-hassouna/>

City. The strikes occurred at around 1:00am, while the family was asleep. The munitions struck the roof of the five-storey building, penetrating to the lower floors.

Fatma was killed alongside five of her family members: Walaa Hassouna, Yazan Hassouna, Muhannad Hassouna, Mohammed Hassouna, and Alaa Hassouna. Alaa Hassouna was five months pregnant at the time of her death. Fatma's parents were hospitalised by the attacks. Her father, Raed Mohammed Hassouna, later died, leaving Fatma's mother, Lubna, the family's only survivor from the strike.

Israeli military sources claimed that the attack had targeted 'a Hamas member' allegedly involved 'in attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians'.² The army further claimed that 'precautions were taken to avoid civilian casualties'.³ At the time of writing, no evidence has been made public to support these claims.

4. Methodology

4.1. Open-source investigation

Open-source investigation (OSI) is information collected from publicly available sources. Common OSI sources include social media networks, online forums, governmental websites, blogs, witness videos, news reports, and publicly available satellite images.

4.2 Satellite image analysis

We analysed satellite imagery collected by Planet Labs to identify evidence of the attack on the Hassouna family home, including evidence of craters from explosive munitions.

4.3 Testimony

Given ongoing military activity in Gaza, interviewing civilian witnesses and publishing their testimony could expose those individuals to the risk of retributive violence. As such, where FA or its partners have conducted interviews with witnesses who remain in Gaza, those individuals' testimonies have been anonymised.

5. Findings

Our analysis suggests that two aerial bombs or missiles led to the deaths of Fatma and her family members. The lethal force of the blasts generated was not contained

² https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/04/17/gaza-photojournalist-fatima-hassouna-killed-in-a-strike-with-10-of-her-relatives_6740338_4.html

³ *ibid.*

to specific rooms, but caused damage throughout the Hassouna family's apartment, also causing serious damage to adjacent floors, and nearby buildings.

While the actual target of the strike could not be conclusively verified before the opening of military records, several factors support claims made by journalists and human rights groups that suggest Fatma might have been the target of the attack.

These include:

1. The Israeli military has a track record of employing precision-guided munitions;
2. The Israeli military has demonstrated significant surveillance capabilities in Gaza, especially in tracking civilian presence within buildings.
3. The location of Fatma's home was publicly known due to her posts on social media;⁴ and
4. The attack occurred around 1:00am, when most civilians are not at work, and would have returned home.

⁴ https://www.instagram.com/fatma_hassona2/?hl=en

6. Analysis

The Hassouna family home was located on the second floor of a five-storey building⁵ near al-Nafaq Street, in the al-Tuffah neighbourhood of Gaza City.

Satellite imagery from 15 April 2025 shows the building where the apartment was located standing largely intact and hence habitable. The building and its surrounding neighbourhood had not been under an evacuation order at this time.



Figure 1. Annotated satellite image showing the location of the Hassouna family home in Gaza City.

At around 1:00am on 16 April, two Israeli missiles hit the building in which the Hassouna family's apartment was located.

⁵ For the purposes of this analysis, the ground floor will be referred to as Floor 0. The Hassouna family apartment was on the third floor above the ground, here referred to as Floor 2, to correspond with references made in witness testimonies.

In satellite images from after the attack, the apartment building appears undamaged. This is because the munitions used in this strike (likely precision-guided munitions; see below) create very small holes upon impact.

The below satellite images have a resolution of 50cm – meaning each pixel represents 50cm. This means that any damage to the roof resulting in impact marks of 50cm or less in width would not be visible in the image.

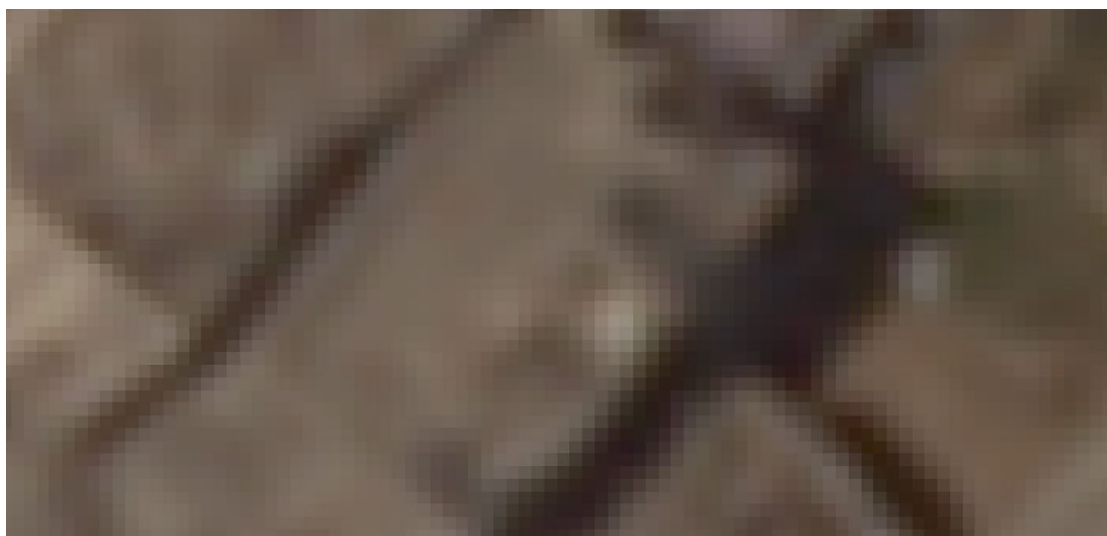


Figure 2. Available satellite image from Planet Labs after the strike on 25 April shows the Hassouna family's apartment building at a pixel resolution of 50cm.

However, videos⁶ taken after the attack in early May from the street outside the building reveal that, while the upper floors as well as the ground floor remained largely intact, floors 1 and 2 of the building⁷ suffered extensive damage, with most of

⁶ Video source: Monitor/WDR. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caAut2xIL7U&t=1s>

⁷ As above: in this analysis, these floors are referred to as Floor 0, 1, and 2.

their internal and external walls destroyed. The Hassouna family apartment was located on Floor 2.



Figure 3. Still from video shows damage to the internal and external walls of the building's first and second floors. The Hassouna family's apartment is on Floor 2 of the building. Video source: Monitor/WDR.

Videos documenting the inside of the apartment at this time show two entry points, where two munitions entered the apartment (Figure 4, Figure 5).

The entry holes are approximately 4m apart and the diameter of each is less than 50cm. Two points of entry close to one another suggest that the attack was targeted. The size of the entry holes is consistent with the signature of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) fired by Israeli jets or drones.⁸

The entry hole on the ceiling suggests a 'delay fuse' detonation, in which a munition penetrates layers of a building before detonating. A number of munitions known to be used by the Israeli military, including the AGM-114 Hellfire missile, can be fitted with a 'delay fuse', and are commonly used for targeted strikes.

Such munitions cause intense fragmentation or localised burns which in this case is visible on the ceiling. One of the holes (Entry A) is near to a load-bearing column, causing greater destruction in that area.

⁸ See for example: <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/drone-strike-in-miranshah>



Figure 4. Annotated still image from video documenting the apartment shows the location of the two entry holes. Video source: Monitor/WDR.

Four of the load-bearing columns in the apartment, as well as the floor, show signs of being pushed 'outwards', likely the result of explosive force from inside the apartment.



Figure 5. Annotated still image from video documenting the apartment shows burn marks on the ceiling as well as the way the columns and the floor are pushed outward. Video source: Monitor/WDR.

Additional images from inside the building (Figure 6, Figure 7) show a hole in the floor of the apartment, and a larger hole in the floor below (Floor 1), suggesting that one of the missiles passed through the Hassouna family's apartment, and the floor below, before detonating at ground level.



Figure 6. Annotated still image from video taken from Floor 1 showing the entry and downward exit of one of the missiles. Video source: Monitor/WDR.



Figure 7. The hole from the 1st floor to the ground level of the building. Video source: Monitor/WDR.

An anonymous source with experience of the Hassouna family's apartment provided details of the layout of the apartment, and how each room was used. According to the sketch, the missiles entered and detonated in the family's living room and a bedroom in which the boys in the family (Yazan Hassouna, Muhannad Hassouna and Mohammed Hassouna) were sleeping. The sketch also suggests where Fatma is likely to have been sleeping at the time of her death.

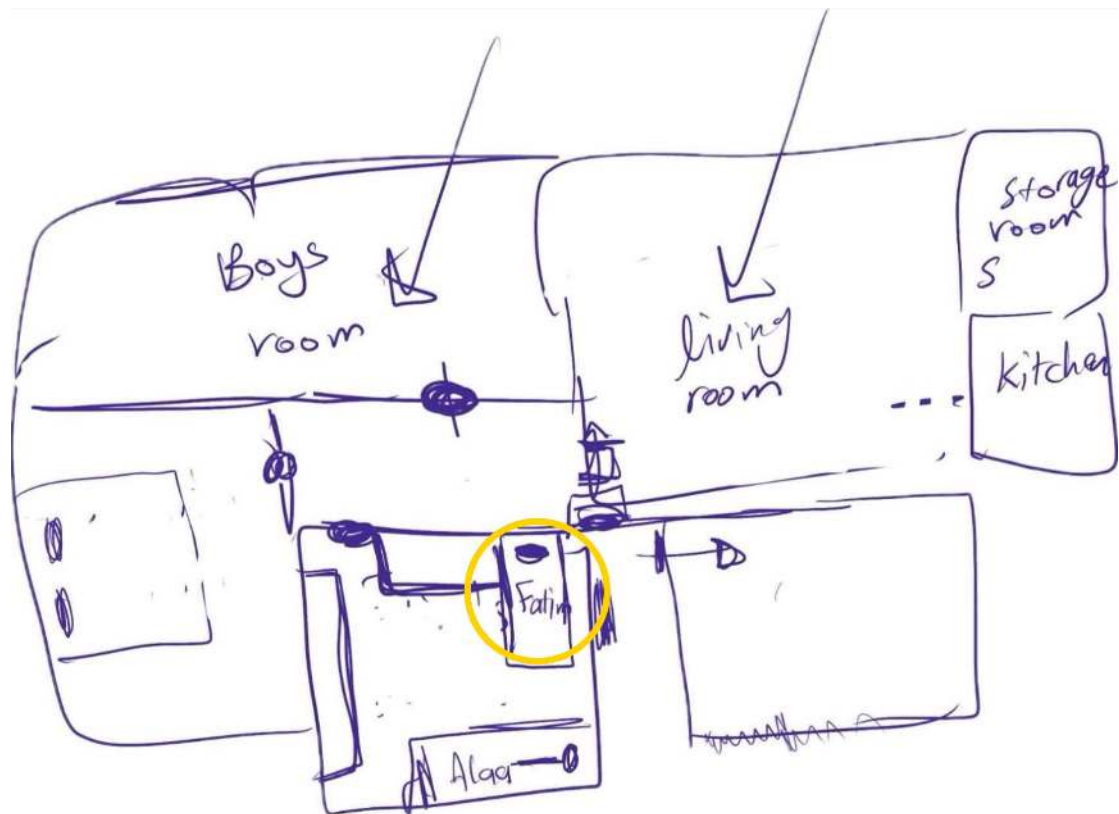


Figure 8. Sketch provided by a witness indicated that the missiles entered on the west side of the building, where the living room and a bedroom were located. Fatma's location is marked in yellow.

Hamza Hassouna, Fatma's cousin, who was elsewhere in the building at the time of the attack, described the airstrike: 'I was sitting when suddenly two rockets fell, one next to me and one in the living room. The house fell on us and everything was a disaster.'⁹

⁹ <https://www.cnn.com/2025/04/18/middleeast/fatima-hassouna-killed-israeli-airstrike-gaza-intl-latam>

We examined videos from inside the Hassouna family's apartment in relation to the above sketch, to better analyse the impact of the explosions.

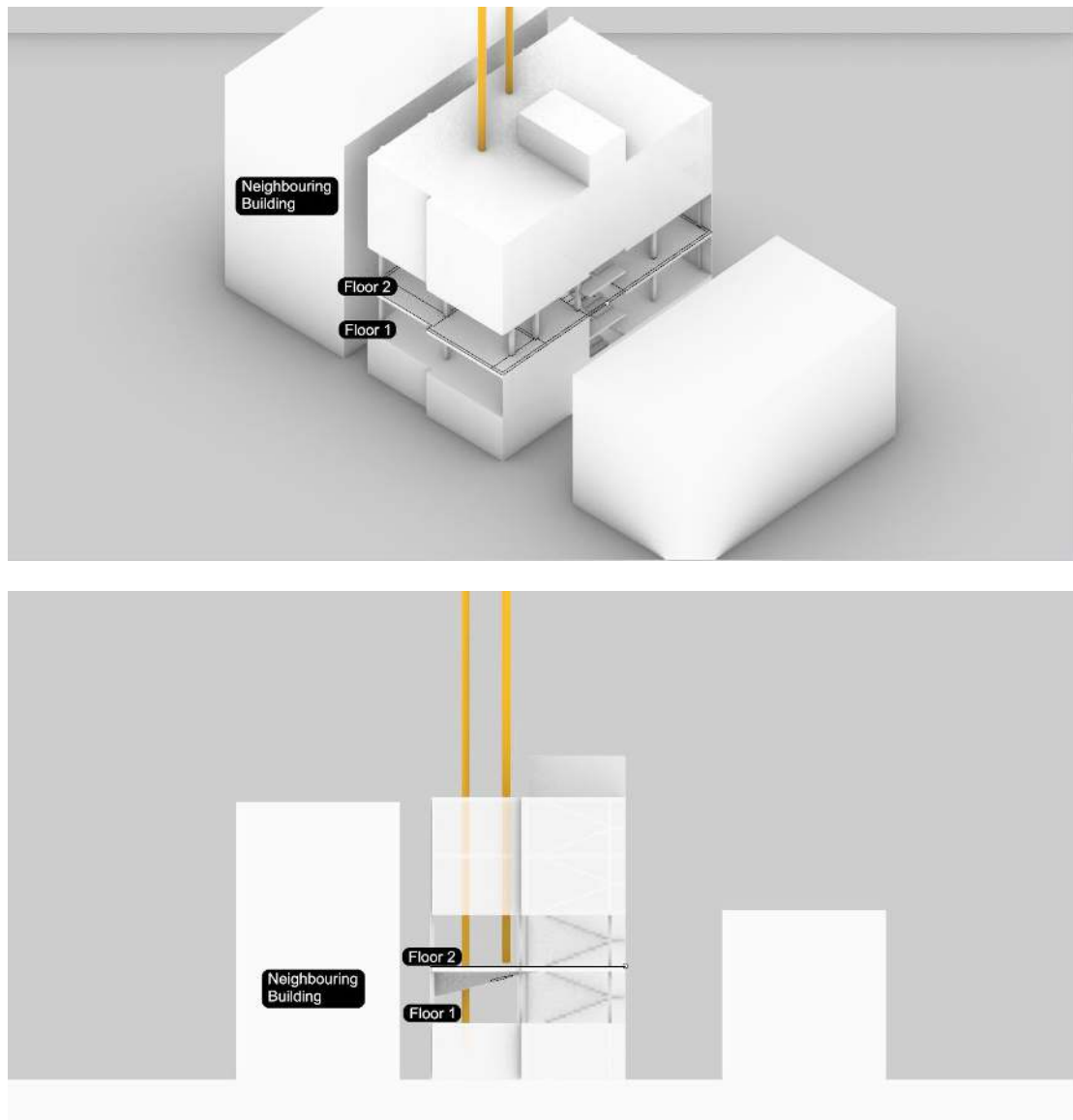


Figure 9. Architectural analysis drawn from videos taken after the incident confirm the witness's sketch. Yellow lines indicate the trajectory of the missiles through the Hassouna family's apartment.

Videos also indicate that the explosion on Floor 2 caused extensive damage in other areas of the apartment, including to the room in which Fatma and other family members were sleeping at the time.

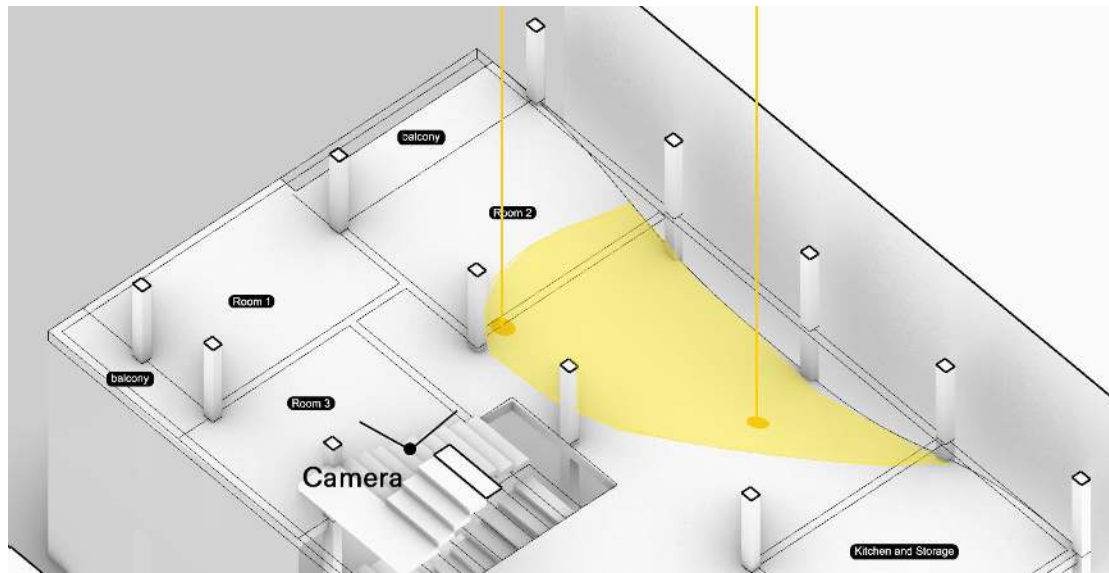


Figure 10. Architectural analysis (above) drawn from videos taken after the incident confirm extensive damage to all areas of the apartment. Annotated still image (below) from video documenting the apartment shows the rooms impacted. Video source: Monitor/WDR.

7. Summary

Our analysis indicates that Fatma Hassouna's home was targeted using precision-guided munitions (PGMs), equipped with guidance and control systems—including GPS and a delay fuse—designed to detonate at a specific coordinates and floor level.

The missiles dropped by the Israeli military specifically targeted the Hassouna family's apartment on Floor 2.

As witness statements, videos, and photographs suggest, the impact of the strike was felt across the entire apartment, as well as across other floors of the building. Six members of the Hassouna family, who had been sleeping in different rooms, were killed instantly by the strike. Two other family members were hospitalised, one of whom later died. The type of munition and the time of the attack suggests that the Israeli military had considered the lives that perished expendable.

The killing of the members of the Hassouna family, as well as the structural damage we have documented throughout the apartment, is another signifier of the Israeli military's pattern of destruction of Palestinian life. Since the start of Israel's military campaign in Gaza in October 2023, Forensic Architecture has been collecting data related to attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure by the Israeli military. The patterns we have observed concerning Israel's military conduct in Gaza indicate a systematic and organised campaign to destroy life, conditions necessary for life, and life-sustaining infrastructure.¹⁰

Fatma's death is one of many; the targeting of Palestinian journalists, with no warning, has intensified exponentially since October 2023.¹¹

At the time of writing, this targeting has been independently verified by OHCHR at 211 journalists killed in Gaza since October 2023, including 28 female journalists¹². OHCHR has further stated that 'none of the cases of journalists killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has ever been transparently investigated, nor suspected perpetrators brought to justice by Israeli authorities'¹³.

In addition to slandering the work of journalists like Fatma by framing them as 'a member of Hamas', these killings are an assault on Palestinian media freedom and stand in blatant disregard of international human rights and humanitarian law.

¹⁰ <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/a-cartography-of-genocide>

¹¹ <https://cpj.org/2025/02/journalist-casualties-in-the-israel-gaza-conflict/>

¹² <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/ohchr-there-can-be-no-talk-of-a-free-press-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-if-journalists-are-being-killed-and-threatened-for-their-work/>

¹³ *ibid.*

8. About Forensic Architecture

Forensic Architecture is a research agency, based at Goldsmiths, University of London, investigating human rights violations including environmental destruction and violence committed by states, police forces, militaries, and corporations. FA's research has been submitted as evidence in national and international legal processes around the world, including the European Court of Human Rights and the UN General Assembly.

For further information, please contact:

Project Coordinator – Dr Samaneh Moafi (sm@forensic-architecture.org)

Principle Investigator – Professor Eyal Weizman (ew@forensic-architecture.org)

