

IFJ Condemns Abusive Treatment of Swiss Journalist at Israeli Checkpoint

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The International Federation of Journalists today called on the Israeli authorities to investigate and deal with those responsible for a “shocking and appalling” violation of a journalist that took place as part of security measures imposed at a crossing point between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

On Friday, May 12 at around 6.30pm, the Swiss journalist Karin Wenger, who was travelling into Gaza from Israel at the Eretz crossing, was forced to dress and undress to her underwear three times.

“This is nothing less than intimidation and sexual harassment,” said Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary. “It is a shocking example of how rules that are designed to provide security become nothing more than an excuse for the shocking and appalling violation of a journalist who is only trying to do her job.”

The IFJ says that Wenger, under the instruction of a female voice from loudspeakers at the checkpoint, was forced to strip off her pants and to put them into an x-ray machine. She was told to put her hands in the air and was subject to a body check through a new x-ray machine.

She redressed, but was then forced to go through the same procedure twice, undressing and redressing each time. She asked for explanations, but none was given. At all times she was visible to everyone around her and under the gaze of a male security guard watching from above.

“There was no justification for this humiliating treatment,” said White. “It is an incident that amounts to abuse which should be investigated and dealt with.”

Wenger, who works for a number of Swiss newspapers including Neue Zürcher Zeitung, NZZ am Sonntag and the German Spiegel-online, was only released from the checkpoint after a colleague from Swiss National Television, intervened to protest to the Israeli Defence Force and the Foreign Press Association.

Wenger was refused a press card to be able to enter Gaza and was only permitted to enter for a week following official pressure from the Swiss embassy.

The IFJ is supporting its member union Impressum in calls for a thorough investigation into the matter and for unconditional access at all times to be given to journalists working in the region.

For more information contact: +32 2 235 2202

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