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Advocacy dossier

Omar Al-Zayood

عمر الزيود

Detained (pretrial) **Jordan**

Omar Al-Zayood, publisher of the independent Jordanian news outlet Al-Hashmiyah, was arrested in March 2025 after former Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh filed a complaint alleging inaccuracy and insult in reporting.

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The case at a glance

Omar Al-Zayood, publisher of the independent Jordanian news outlet Al-Hashmiyah, was arrested in March 2025 after former Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh filed a complaint alleging inaccuracy and insult in reporting.

Status **Detained (pretrial)**	Arrested **17 Mar 2025**	Country **Jordan**
Charges Publishing allegedly inaccurate information Insulting the dignity of individuals		

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Omar Al-Zayood immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

02

Documented violations

Each violation and the international standard it breaks.

Arbitrary detention International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9

Judicial harassment UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Articles 9, 12

Press freedom violation International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19

03

How the case unfolded

March 2025

Pretrial detention renewed

Bail refused and detention extended

His request for release on bail was reportedly refused and his detention was extended. The exact date was not reported.

17 March 2025

Arrest

Arrested under Cybercrime Law after ex-PM complaint

On 17 March 2025, Omar Al-Zayood, publisher and owner of the website Al-Hashmiyah News, was arrested by order of the Amman Public Prosecutor after questioning. The arrest followed a complaint by former Prime Minister Bisher al-Khasawneh that Al-Hashmiyah News had published an inaccurate report about him. Al-Zayood was charged with "inaccuracy and insulting the dignity of individuals" under Jordan's 2023 Cybercrime Law. The Committee to Protect Journalists expressed deep concern and called for his immediate and unconditional release.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: the record was checked again. Omar Al-Zayood was arrested on 17 March 2025; a Jordanian news site reported that the Amman public prosecutor released him on bail on 27 March 2025 after the complainant, former Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh, agreed, but no international press-freedom or rights organisation has confirmed his release, and no trial or verdict has been reported.

Background and Work

Omar Al-Zayood is the publisher of Al-Hashmiyah News, an independent Jordanian news outlet that reports on public affairs, government accountability, and issues affecting communities across Jordan. Independent media in Jordan operate under significant pressure, navigating laws that criminalise journalistic expression and allow public officials to initiate criminal complaints against reporters and publishers.

Al-Hashmiyah News has covered sensitive topics and held public officials to account, work that places its editorial team at risk of legal retaliation. Al-Zayood's role as publisher makes him directly liable under Jordanian law for content published by the outlet.

The Arrest

Al-Zayood was arrested on 17 March 2025 following a complaint filed by former Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh. The complaint triggered criminal charges under provisions that penalise alleged inaccuracies in reporting and statements deemed insulting to the dignity of individuals.

The public prosecutor in Amman ordered his arrest after questioning him on these charges. Under the applicable legal framework, Al-Zayood faces imprisonment of three months to three years and fines ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 Jordanian dinars, approximately 7,000 to 28,000 US dollars. The charges relate to reporting published by Al-Hashmiyah News, though the specific article or content that prompted the complaint has not been publicly detailed.

Legal Proceedings

Rights groups last reported, in March 2025, that Al-Zayood was held in detention pending trial. A Jordanian news site reported on 27 March 2025 that the Amman public prosecutor released him on bail after the complainant agreed; this has not been confirmed by an international press-freedom or rights organisation, and no trial or verdict has been reported. The legal framework under which he is charged allows public officials to file complaints that trigger criminal proceedings, creating a mechanism for retaliation against critical journalism. These provisions treat editorial judgments as potential crimes and place the burden of proof on publishers to demonstrate the accuracy and legitimacy of their reporting.

The penalties Al-Zayood faces are disproportionate to the alleged conduct. Imprisonment and substantial fines for journalistic work contravene international standards protecting freedom of expression and the press, including Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Jordan is a state party.

Press Freedom Context in Jordan

Jordan's legal framework imposes severe restrictions on journalistic expression. Laws criminalising inaccuracy, insult, and defamation are regularly invoked against reporters, editors, and publishers who cover government officials, security matters, or politically sensitive topics. The ability of public officials to initiate criminal complaints directly transforms editorial criticism into a legal liability.

Pre-trial detention is commonly used in cases involving journalists, prolonging the period of incarceration before any verdict is reached and exerting pressure on defendants and their media outlets. The combination of criminal penalties, heavy fines, and the threat of closure creates a chilling effect that discourages investigative reporting and critical coverage.

Human Rights Concerns

Al-Zayood's arrest and detention raise serious violations of international human rights standards. His detention is arbitrary, initiated through a complaint mechanism that enables retaliation against independent media. The charges against him criminalise legitimate journalistic activity, contravening the right to freedom of expression.

The use of pre-trial detention in his case, combined with the potential for lengthy imprisonment and substantial fines, constitutes judicial harassment designed to silence critical voices. The legal proceedings undermine due process and fair trial rights, instrumentalising the judiciary to suppress dissent and independent reporting.

Al-Zayood's case exemplifies the broader pattern of press freedom violations in Jordan, where independent journalists face systematic legal and administrative pressure, and where the space for public accountability reporting continues to narrow.

Latest updates on this case Scan the code or visit: https://humena.org/defenders/omar-al-zayood/

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