



An Analysis of the Reality of the Palestinian Press During Its Field Coverage. Sherine Abu Aqleh's Assassination: A Case Study

Tahani R. K. Bsharat * 

*Faculty of Major Language Studies, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia,
Bandar Baru Nilai, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan*

Baraa A.A. Abed

*College of Graduate Studies, Department of Media and Communication, Arab American University, Ramallah,
West Bank, Palestine*

Manal Mohammed Hamarsha

Faculty of Education and Teachers' Training, Methods of Teaching English, An-Najab National University, Palestine

Imad. A.A. Salama

Faculty of Education and Teachers' Training, An-Najab National University, Palestine

Jandal Ahmad Mohammed Salah

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Bandar Baru Nilai, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia,

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* Corresponding author:

Tahani R. K. Bsharat,
e-mail: tahanibsharat9@gmail.com

Abstract:

The aim of this research paper is to clarify the challenges Palestinian media professionals face as a result of their work. It uses the assassination of Sherine Abu Aqleh, an Al-Jazeera correspondent, as a model, and discusses the legal repercussions of the scene where she was assassinated by an Israeli sniper while covering the Jenin camp invasion on Monday, May 11, 2022, and her martyrdom. Qualitative research and semi structured interviews will be used to collect information for this scientific paper. The interview will include open and closed questions that can be analyzed by the journalists accompanied by Sherine Abu Aqleh when she was assassinated. They are Ali Smoudi, Shatha Hanaysha, and Mujahid Al-Saadi. Interviewers' consent will be obtained before recording and analyzing their answers. In addition, the researchers conducted a number of interviews with lawyers and activists from human rights institutions as well as journalists who testified at the United Nations

headquarters in Geneva last month.

Keywords: *Palestinian media, Sherine Abu Aqleh, Qualitative research, human rights, United Nations.*

Introduction

The Palestinian press in Palestine is under great pressure because of the occupation and its practices against them, such as arrest, captivity,

and killing, particularly the city of Jenin, which has the largest share because of the events it is exposed to, including closures and incursions, especially the number of martyrs. furthermore, during their work in conflict zones, journalists



face many difficulties and dangers. In order to convey the reality on the ground, where most of them are at risk of being killed, injured, politically arrested, physically attacked, or their equipment destroyed. Although the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 guarantee protection for journalists as civilians, and guarantee their protection during armed conflict, as outlined in the First Additional Protocol of 1977, articles (79) and (52) of which provide protection for journalists during military conflicts and civilian objects as a whole. According to Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute (the statute of the Court of Justice), what journalists are subjected to in terms of gross violations of international humanitarian law and international criminal law - which are identifiable by what they wear in the field - constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity). International) for the year 1998 (Al Rashaq & Deqmaq, 2020).

The murder of Sherine Abu Aqleh on May 11, while she was covering his storming of Jenin in the occupied West Bank, is a clear indication of the violations against Palestinian journalists in the occupied West Bank, which sparked outrage in Arab and international human rights circles (Al Jazeera site, 2022).

Shireen's Abu Aqleh body was draped in the Palestinian flag and covered with a press flak jacket after it was carried through Jenin. Reporters and photographers surrounded the procession, covering the death of a family member. Shireen was an experienced journalist in the region, always a familiar face at events. Generations of Palestinians watched her on TV screens as she covered the conflict (Bsharat,2022).

Israel's global reputation and perhaps even its domestic politics may be altered forever by Shireen Abu Akleh's death. It has been widely condemned regionally and internationally that the Palestinian-American journalist, who worked for Al-Jazeera and covered Israel and the occupied West Bank, was killed.

As a consequence of her death last Wednesday in Jenin, the Palestinian Authority (PA) demands that the circumstances of her death be investigated by the International Criminal Court

(ICC), which is already investigating possible Israeli war crimes (Şafak,2023).

Literature Review

Based on observations regarding the crisis in Palestine, the media can sometimes be the only source of information for society. As a result, the crucial subject of how the Palestinian state media develops public awareness of societal concerns like citizens' patriotism—a sense of loyalty to one's country—becomes more pressing. The Shbair and Hasfi study looked at whether or not the state-run TV in Palestine promotes existing patriotism because such a contribution merits distinct investigation. They did an initial analysis of Palestine TV's news delivery methods from 2020 to 2021 for this aim. Second, they looked at how well the content presented in the official media promoted Palestinian nationalism among the intended audience. The findings showed that Palestinian patriotism was heightened by the news presented on Palestine TV. The conclusion suggested that the media could influence how patriotic people feel. The study sheds light on upcoming research on the function of the media during times of crisis, particularly in relation to Israel's occupation of Palestine and how that occupation affects Palestinians (Shbair, Hasfi,2022).

A Brave, Christian Jerusalemite was killed

During a firefight between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen, Abu Akleh was shot in the head. The military reported that Israeli forces were searching for "terror suspects" in the Jenin refugee camp and other parts of the West Bank. According to the IDF, during the raid, terrorists fired shots and threw explosives against Israeli forces before the latter responded by firing back.

Abu Akleh, a 51-year-old Christian resident of Jerusalem, was well-qualified to report on one of the most poisonous and polarizing confrontations in history. She became one of Al-initial Jazeera's field correspondents in 1997, the year the network was established, and quickly developed a reputation for daring, professionalism, and a strict dedication to the

truth. Colleagues described her voice as powerful and comforting.

Al-Jazeera, located in Doha, has long made reporting on the Israeli occupation, which is currently in its 55th year, a priority. Al-Jazeera has an English-language channel as well, which increases its global reach in contrast to many other Arabic TV broadcasters (Şafak,2023).

Is independent investigation possible?

The United States, the European Union, the United Nations, Turkey, and Qatar all denounced Shireen's death. All parties have called for an impartial probe, but Israel obviously favors a joint investigation with the PA. Furthermore, Israel requested the bullet's removal from Abu Akleh's body from the PA in order to undertake forensic analyses and identify the gun that killed her. Israel's official representative in the West Bank, the office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, proposed to have observers from the US and the PA present for the examination. However, the PA conducted a memorial service for her at its Ramallah headquarters the day after she died, and President Mahmoud Abbas made a public appeal for the ICC to open an investigation. ""How can the truth be hidden? Shireen was a voice of truth, a voice of the country, transmitting the anguish of the mothers of martyrs and captives, of Jerusalem, and of refugee camps," he remarked. We are unwilling to assist the Israeli probe. We have no faith in them." (Şafak, 2023).

Relevance to Internal Politics

It is obvious that Abu Akleh's US citizenship contributed to Washington's censure. According to Gideon Levy, a commentator for the liberal Haaretz daily, "it's tempting to write that if innocent Palestinians must be killed by Israeli forces, better for them to be well-known and own US passports." At least then, the US State Department will express some displeasure over the senseless death of one of its nationals by the forces of one of its allies, but not too much (Şafak, 2023). Furthermore, Israeli police targeted mourners at Shireen's funeral on Friday in East Jerusalem with stun grenades and batons,

inciting more international indignation against the Israeli government. The Biden administration criticized Israel in public with its sharpest criticism to date. Every family deserves to bury their loved ones in a dignified and unhindered manner, according to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who added that Washington was "deeply troubled by the images of Israeli police intruding into the funeral procession of Palestinian American Shireen Abu Akleh (Şafak, 2023).

This might put Israel's clumsy coalition government in a difficult situation. It is dedicated to "shrinking the dispute" with the Palestinians rather than taking any action to address it, under the leadership of center-right Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. A Muslim coalition member expressed anxiety about continuing to support Bennett even before Shireen's passing (Şafak, 2023).

Mansour Abbas' Ra'am party were uneasy about holding onto power following the administration's response to the recent wave of terrorist assaults, which resulted in the deaths of 19 people. Abbas is taking a big risk in the face of mounting criticism from the Israeli-Arab movement, which accuses him daily of being a collaborator in Bennett's administration. However, his plan is to work toward long-term objectives for Israel's 21% of Palestinian residents and ultimately reap rewards (Şafak, 2023).

Israel Murdered Numerous Journalists

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) claims that since 2000, Israel has killed at least 46 Palestinian journalists without anybody being held accountable. Even when conducted by judges and public personalities, Israeli inquiries have historically struggled to gain the confidence of either the Palestinians or the rest of the world. Furthermore, according to Mufaz Jaba, who was present at the mourning procession last Thursday in Ramallah, "Shireen's death was a message to the Palestinian people to try and crush our spirit." "Instead, the opposite is true. Her passing has strengthened Palestinian society and brought attention to the importance of the Palestinian cause worldwide. Also, an impartial

and global inquiry into Shireen's death must be conducted in order to provide a just and fair resolution to this tragic narrative, which is tragically frequently repeated despite the fact that the typical victims are far less well-known. The UN security council also demanded a quick, thorough, transparent, and impartial investigation into her killing in a remarkably unanimous statement. The same must be demanded by Western governments, journalist groups, and international organizations. Such a probe poses no threat to Israel if, as it has alleged, Abu Akleh was murdered by Palestinian gunfire (Şafak, 2023).

Who Gave the Order for Shireen Abu Akleh's Murder?

It was expected that Israel will decide against conducting an investigation into the murder of renowned Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. Little difference is made by the exact justifications it provided for the choice. But one thing is certain: It is extremely unlikely that a soldier or a commander on the ground made the choice to kill a journalist like Shireen Abu Akleh (Peled, 2022).

Interpretation of Audio Forensic Evidence From the Shooting of Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

Due to the widespread use of handheld cameras, smartphones, and other portable field recording devices, user-generated recordings are increasingly being presented as evidence in forensic investigations. Shireen Abu Akleh, a well-known Al Jazeera television correspondent, was shot and killed on May 11, 2022. During a clash between armed Palestinian militants and the Israeli Defense Forces, Ms. Abu Akleh was killed by a gunshot while reporting from Jenin, in the West Bank. Multiple gunshots were recorded by the microphones of at least two cameras at the scene, but the fatal gunshot was not captured on video. In this paper, we describe the acoustic evidence from the incident, including the estimates of various geometric and physical parameters and the likely range of uncertainty of those measurements, and provide a forensic estimate of the distance between the

firearm and the recording microphones (Maher, 2022).

In addition, User Generated Recordings (UGRs) are audiovisual materials recorded by bystanders using their smartphones. residential and commercial surveillance systems, and from electronic news-gathering teams. It seems inevitable that UGRs will become part of an audio forensic investigation due to the ubiquity of handheld recording devices (Maher, 2022).

In a video recording, UGRs are composed of sequences of video frames (still images) typically encoded using MPEG video frame-to-frame correlation and a corresponding digital audio recording. While some recordings may use uncompressed PCM, most audio recordings use a lossy perceptual audio coder. Block-based processing may cause spectral changes and temporal pre-echo effects if lossy coding is used, which may muddle the exact timing of waveform components (Maher, 2022). Furthermore, the shooting event happened in front of witnesses from the neighborhood and news media personnel. There is at least one recorded by a professional videographer and one by a cell phone (Maher, 2022).

Methodology

The researchers used a qualitative method using the semi-structured interviews.

The first main theme:

1. Exposure to gunfire:
 - "I was shot and wounded several times and suffered tear gas inhalation," Samoudi said.
 - On April 24, 2004, the occupation soldiers fired at us, journalists who were there to cover, and I was shot in the face from the side, while my colleague was shot in the foot.
 - Samoudi said: "Moments later, a bullet exploded in front of us. I considered it a warning from the army to us after standing in this area. Immediately, my fellow journalists and I all turned to leave the place. I was shot from behind, and the bullet exploded inside my flak jacket".

- Samoudi said: "My injury did not deter the occupation soldiers, but they continued to fire a barrage of bullets. I did not look at my colleagues behind me. My main concern was to find someone with a car who would help me".

- Samoudi said: "I think there are superior orders to shoot anyone who moves, regardless of their identity".

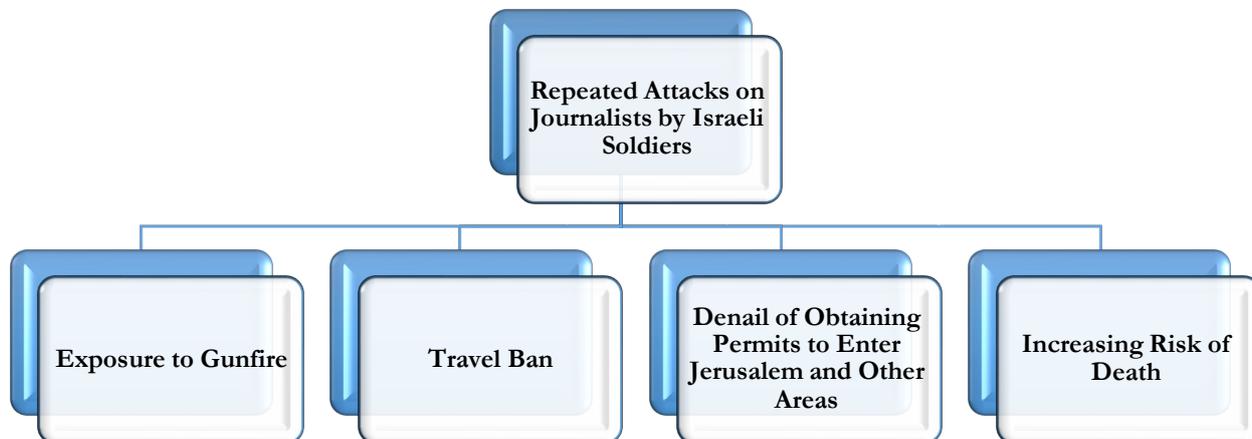


Figure 1. The First Main Theme and Sub-Themes in the Research

- Hanaysheh said: "Mujahid was standing in front, then me, then Sherine, then Ali. I heard the voice of our colleague Mujahid Al-Saadi shouting: They are firing on us, firing on us. Then he jumped to a safe area behind a wall, but the rest could not jump, and the three of us began trying to escape to a safer area".

- Hanaysheh said: "At that time, the soldiers shot my colleague, Ali, and he fell to the ground, and the last thing Sherine said while she was screaming: Ali got injured, Ali got injured. At that time, within moments, Ali was able to stand up and escape, after which the shooting was aimed back at us".

- Al-Saadi said: "I was holding a recording device and recording what was happening up the street. After a few minutes, shooting started in our direction".

- Al-Saadi said: "The first bullet was fired towards the building behind us, and it created dust as a result of hitting the building, so I told my colleagues that the bullets were targeted at us as journalists, and that we had to take cover. We

were all close together like a beehive, because the atmosphere did not allow us to be separated."

2. Travel ban:

- Samoudi said: "I was banned from traveling abroad, and I filed a case to obtain permission to travel."

3. Denial of obtaining permits to enter Jerusalem and other areas:

- Samoudi said: "Israel deliberately prevents us as journalists from obtaining permits to enter the occupied Palestinian territories or Jerusalem, because they believe that we pose a threat to their security."

4. Increasing risk of death:

- Samoudi said: "I was chased, beaten, abused, prevented from covering, and threatened. It's evident that the occupation uses all methods to suppress journalists and prevent them from performing their role in event coverage".

- Samoudi said: "On September 11, 2001, the occupation army fired a barrage of shells at me and my fellow journalists. My colleague

miraculously escaped death. As for me, a shell landed behind me, and due to the force of the explosion it caused, I rose in the air by several meters, then fell to the ground. It caused me injuries all over my body, especially on the right side, even though I was wearing my flak vest".

- "The first moments after I was injured, I thought I was dying," Samoudi explained, "especially since our fellow journalist, Imad Abu Zahra, had been killed by Israeli soldiers not long ago while covering one of the stormings".

- Smoudi said: "The soldier aimed at my chest, and he was trying to kill me, but my turn prevented him from doing so and made the bullet take a different trajectory".

- Smoudi said: "All the bullets, in the assassination of Sherine, were aimed at our chests, necks, and heads. They wanted us dead".

- Hanaysheh said: "I can say that the Israeli soldiers took advantage of the moment when it was not possible to retreat from the area in which we were standing. They could have warned us by sending warning bullets before entering to prevent us from reaching, but they did not do that. They waited for us to reach an area from which it is difficult to return, behind us was a wall and in front of us was an open area where the occupation soldiers stood, so our return was almost impossible".

- Hanaysheh said: "At that time, the soldiers shot my colleague, Ali, and he fell to the ground, and the last thing Sherine said while she was screaming: Ali got injured, Ali got injured. At that time, within moments, Ali was able to stand up and escape, after which the shooting was aimed back at us".

- Hanaysheh said: "The occupation soldiers intended to shoot us, even though they knew very well that we were journalists and we were all wearing press vests, and although we were standing in an area far away to make them notice us, they insisted on shooting, even after Sherine fell to the ground, they continued shooting, and nothing actually protected me but that tree and its leaves that obscured my vision from them".

- Al-Saadi said: "The first bullet was fired towards the building behind us, and it created

dust as a result of hitting the building, so I told my colleagues that the bullets were targeted at us as journalists, and that we had to take cover. We were all close together like a beehive, because the atmosphere did not allow us to be separated."

The second main theme:

1. The feeling of terror:

- Samoudi said: "After that, I started screaming and asking for help because there were no ambulances in the area. Sherine started screaming while saying: Ali was injured".

- Hanaysheh said: "Mujahid was standing in front, then me, then Sherine, then Ali. I heard the voice of our colleague Mujahid Al-Saadi shouting: They are firing on us, firing on us. Then he jumped to a safe area behind a wall, but the rest could not jump, and the three of us began trying to escape to a safer area".

- Hanaysheh said: "The moment Sherine fell, I was trying to save her. It was terrifying. She was lying on her face, and I was watching the movement of her back to know whether she was still breathing or not. She did not move at all, so I felt that something bad had happened to her and I started screaming for help".

- Al-Saadi said: "When the shooting started, I took refuge in this place. I collapsed to the ground and found a nearby staircase that went up to a high and safe place, protecting myself from the eyes of the sniper".

2. The harassment that Sherine Abu Aqleh was subjected to as a journalist in the field:

- Samoudi said: "In the meantime, Shireen and Shatha tried to take shelter behind a tree that was in the area."

- Hanaysheh said: "I can say that the Israeli soldiers took advantage of the moment when it was not possible to retreat from the area in which we were standing. They could have warned us by sending warning bullets before entering to prevent us from reaching, but they did not do that. They waited for us to reach an area from which it is difficult to return, behind us was a wall and in front of us was an open area where the occupation soldiers stood, so our return was almost impossible".

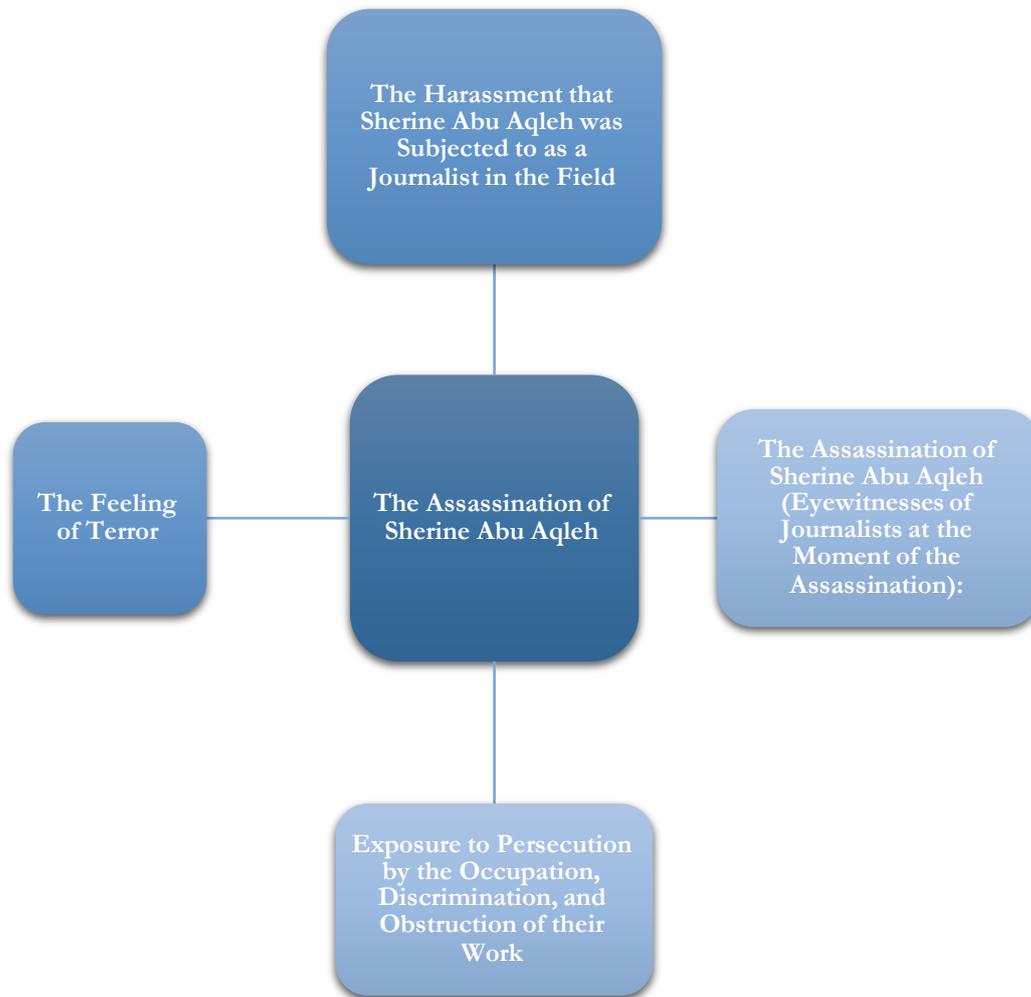


Figure 2. The Second Main Theme and Sub-Themes in the Research

3. The assassination of Sherine Abu Aqleh (eyewitnesses of journalists at the moment of the assassination):

- Samoudi said: "Sherine was injured and died as a martyr. Miraculously, Shatha was not injured, as all the bullets that targeted her entered the tree trunk".
- Hanaysheh said: "I took refuge in the tree behind us, and she tried to take refuge like me, and the bullets were coming from the front from the vehicles of the occupation forces. Meanwhile, Sherine fell to the ground. Between me and her was the trunk of the tree, and every time I tried to stretch out my hand to help her or move her, the shooting came back at us".

- Hanaysheh said: "Sherine did not move. At first, I did not realize the site of the injury because she was lying on her face, but when I pulled her out in an attempt to give her first aid, I saw blood on the ground, and I realized that the injury was in the head".
- Hanaysheh said: "The moment Sherine fell, I was trying to save her. It was terrifying. She was lying on her face, and I was watching the movement of her back to know whether she was still breathing or not. She did not move at all, so I felt that something bad had happened to her and I started screaming for help, but when she was transported by a private car to help her, the guys assured me that she was still breathing, so the hope returned, but she soon passed away".

after failing attempts to resuscitate her in the hospital".

- Al-Saadi assumed: "Sherine turned to see what happened to Ali, so she was shot in the head, then she fell to the ground. I started shouting at Shatha and Shireen from the building where I was sheltering and telling Shatha to help Sherine, and then young men came and tried to save Shatha and pulled Sherine to help her, and until that moment, the shooting was still going on".

- Al-Saadi said: "We tried to get her to the hospital as soon as possible, and we are trying to see the vital signs indicating that she is still alive."

4. Exposure to persecution by the occupation, discrimination, and obstruction of their work:

Smoudi said: "The Israeli soldiers have capabilities that make them see well who we are, especially since we wear full press uniforms and carry our press equipment. I believe that there are superior orders to shoot at anyone who moves, regardless of their identity, especially journalists, as our presence in the place affects their performance and prevents them from moving."

Conclusions

The assassination of Sherine Abu Aqleh occurred during the occupation, and eyewitnesses of journalists at the time reported that she was injured and died as a martyr. Shatha was not injured, as bullets targeted her from the front of the occupation forces. Hanaysheh, who took refuge in the tree behind her, witnessed the shooting and saw blood on the ground. Sherine fell to the ground, and the shooting continued until she was transported by a private car to help her. She was persecuted by the occupation, discrimination, and obstruction of their work, as well as the feeling of terror. The Israeli soldiers, who wore full press uniforms and carry press equipment, believed that there were special orders to shoot at anyone who moves, regardless of their identity, especially journalists, as their presence in the place affected their performance and prevented them from moving.

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