

AFP PHOTOGRAPHER CHRISTINA ASSI CARRIES THE OLYMPIC FLAME IN HONOUR OF JOURNALISTS KILLED ON DUTY

AFP photographer Christina Assi, who was severely injured on assignment last October in Lebanon, will carry the Olympic Flame on Sunday, 21 July, in Vincennes, France, "to pay tribute to those who have fallen" while doing their job as journalists, she explained.

Christina Assi, 29, was struck by a tank shell on October 13, 2023 while reporting on cross-border clashes between the Israeli army and armed groups in southern Lebanon, alongside six other colleagues.

The shell, fired by an Israeli tank according to a thorough AFP investigation, killed Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah and injured the six other journalists present, including Christina, who has since had her right leg amputated. Her AFP colleague, Dylan Collins, who will be by her side on Sunday in Vincennes, was also injured that day.

"When AFP was asked to carry the Olympic Flame, we thought of Christina, whose courage and tenacity are admired by everyone at the Agency. Having her carry this symbol of peace sends a powerful message for her and for all journalists affected in the line of duty," Pierre Galy, AFP's Head of Sport.

"Carrying the Olympic Flame is an emotional experience, particularly after surviving a targeted attack while I was on assignment. My story is just one among many others in a year that has claimed the lives of over a hundred journalists," said Christina Assi.

"By bearing this torch, we honour the sacrifice of those who have fallen and draw attention to the urgent need to protect those who continue to report despite the mental and physical toll," added the Lebanese photographer.

"It is an honour to carry the Olympic Flame alongside my colleague Christina Assi, nearly a year after we were targeted by the Israeli army at the Lebanese border. It's a miracle that we are still alive," commented videographer Dylan Collins, who was already injured in July 2023 during a drone attack near Bakhmut in Ukraine.

"We are carrying the Flame to pay tribute to all the friends and colleagues we have lost this past year, to all the journalists killed or wounded while simply doing their job," the 36-year-old American journalist added.

Among the journalists we lost last year, one is particularly fondly remembered by the AFP staff: video journalist Arman Soldin, killed at the age of 32 in a Russian bombardment near Bakhmut on May 9, 2023.

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