THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

Palestinian Media Sector
Assessment of Needs, Challenges, and Pluralism

December 2021

A report by

With the support of

SK eyes
Samir Kassir eyes

UNESCO
unesco

THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

The **Samir Kassir Foundation** (SKF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, working to spread democratic culture in Lebanon and the Arab world and encourage new talents of free press. SKF hosts the SKeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom, which has become the largest operation to monitor and denounce violations of freedom of expression (FoE) in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. SKF provides high-level capacity building for journalists to improve their coverage of sensitive issues, with support from local and international trainers, and world-class media development institutions. SKF also provides financial, legal, safety, and relocation support to journalists in distress and advocates for the reform of legislations and practices that curtail FoE. SKF has developed an expertise in media analysis and qualitative research around media consumption patterns and media content. After the August 4, 2020 blast in the Beirut port, SKF launched the largest ever Media Recovery Fund to support journalists' emergency and livelihood, independent media sustainability, and investigative journalism. SKF employs a team of 24 in Beirut, Amman, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Gaza, Paris, and Amsterdam.

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Its mission is to build peace through international cooperation in education, science and culture.

The UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector also strives to foster freedom of expression, media development, and access to information and knowledge in line with UNESCO's mandate to "promote the free flow of ideas by word and image." UNESCO's various programs contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, particularly in the area of public access to information.

Researchers

Sleiman Bisharat is a lecturer and researcher specialized in media, political, social issues, and entrepreneurship. He has produced a number of research papers and studies published by local and international institutions. He is a consultant for several Palestinian organizations, a project evaluator, and a strategic planning expert. He is the director and co-founder of the Ramallah-based Yabous Foundation for Consulting and Strategic Studies. He co-authored the third chapter of this report.

Mohamed Hussein Abuarqoub is a media expert and trainer. He holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Palestine and two master's degrees, the first in media from Jordan and the second in international relations and economics from the United States. Abuarqoub has more than 15 years of professional experience in the Arab media sphere, specializing in digital media and radio. A former media instructor at schools of media and journalism in Palestine, Abuarqoub has conducted several media studies in cooperation with international and regional institutions. He authored the second chapter of this report.

Mohamed Othman is a journalist and a researcher. He has been the correspondent of the Samir Kassir Foundation in the Gaza Strip since 2015. He graduated from the Media Faculty, radio and television department at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza and worked as correspondent for Al-Monitor. He is specialized in investigative journalism and has won several prizes, including the Arab Journalism Award in Dubai for the young journalists' category in 2011, and the first prize in investigative journalism at the media freedom competition organized by the Palestinian government in 2011 in the West Bank. He has contributed to the first and second chapters of this report.

Mohamed Zaid Al-Kilany is an entrepreneur and the founder of several start-ups. He is a mentor and an influencer in the field of entrepreneurship and has won several Arab and international innovation awards: Ashoka fellowship, Youth Action Net Award, Arab Social Innovator by Synnergoz. He is a TEDx speaker and has delivered motivational speeches around the region, focusing on innovation and creativity to overcome sufferings. He co-authored the third chapter of this report.

Widad Jarbouh is the freedom of expression research coordinator at the Samir Kassir Foundation's SKeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom, which she joined in October 2010). She is in charge of the Lebanese and Palestinian folders and conducts media monitoring research around sensitive social and political issues. Widad was the lead researcher for the Foundation's Media Ownership Monitor in partnership with Reporters Without Borders. She is also a focus group facilitator specialized in citizens' media consumption patterns. She holds a B.A. in journalism and a capacity-building for non-profits certificate from the Lebanese American University.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

In Palestine, small and medium-sized media organizations can hardly keep up with the changing industry environment. Therefore, it is difficult to quickly adapt revenue streams. Given that advertising revenue continues to decline, many organizations have had to find additional sources of income to increase revenues and strengthen their bottom line, which requires them to focus on strategies that improve their reach and help them make money.

In the era of digital media and social networks, traditional media organizations in Palestine are struggling to take advantage of new opportunities. As a result, they must look for more tools, content, and strategies to produce content that matches what followers are looking for. In turn, this has a direct impact on advertising possibilities and investments in the content industry.

This study aims to identify the ability of Palestinian media institutions to grow, generate, and attract revenues, despite the challenges they are facing. It is built upon a sophisticated methodology that combines desk research, economic analysis, electronic surveys, in-depth key informant interviews, and focus group discussions.

The study reviews several themes and challenges. In its first chapter, it provides an overview of the media landscape in Palestine, some of the stages it went through as well as the Palestinian digital situation and its specificities. It then examines the content produced by the Palestinian media to assess its quality and diversity, before exploring areas of improvement and an identification of needs expressed by representatives of the Palestinian media sector.

The second chapter focuses on UNESCO's Media Development Indicators applied to the Palestinian media landscape. It explores the challenges faced by the Palestinian media, especially at the level of the legal environment, journalism training, the education system, and the digital transition. The third chapter is one of the first comprehensive market studies of the Palestinian media market, studying their current revenue streams and the areas of improvement and diversification.

It is worth mentioning that the preliminary findings of the report have been discussed with representatives of the media sector, but also with scholars, researchers, media trainers, legal experts, journalists, and media educators, during a study mission organized by the Samir Kassir Foundation in the West Bank, from November 28 to December 10, 2021. These discussions contributed to the final list of recommendations presented throughout the report.

Introduction

The features of the Palestinian media map are intertwined with the history of the Palestinian cause. The first roots of the media in Palestine go back to the Ottoman era with the launch of Al-Quds newspaper in 1876. Then, in 1911, the first newspaper owned by the Palestinians was issued and entitled Felesteen. It was closed, first by the Ottomans, and then by the British Mandate. In 1936, the British Mandate established the first radio station in Arabic, broadcasting from Jerusalem, then newspaper publishing became active in the fifties with the release of four newspapers in the West Bank, which was under Jordanian rule, Felesteen, Al-Manar, Al-Wafa, and Al-Jihad; the last two were merged into Al-Quds that has continued to publish to this date. In the Gaza Strip, which was administered from Egypt, a number of newspapers emerged, most notably "Al-Tahrir" newspaper in 1958[1].

When Israel occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem in 1967, it closed the Palestinian newspapers operating in those territories. However, the Al-Quds daily resumed publishing in 1968 after it was issued a permit by Israeli authorities. Later, many Palestinian daily and weekly newspapers in occupied East Jerusalem obtained Israeli permits to publish.

Following the expulsion of thousands of Palestinians from Palestine by displacement campaigns carried out by the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) launched Palestine Radio from Cairo in 1972 to address the Palestinian people. The most significant transformation in the Palestinian media landscape occurred after the signing of the Oslo accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993. The accords resulted in the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which was tasked with establishing governing laws and institutions. The PA passed a media law in 1995 that facilitated the emergence of dozens of media institutions, including newspapers, radio stations, and television stations

On the other hand, the digital media sector in Palestine was faster and more extensive than the traditional media compared to the time of its beginning, despite the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation on the telecommunications sector prior to the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, as Israel was the party controlling the sector and did not develop the communication grid in the Palestinian territories. In 1995, Israel handed control over the landline telecommunication sector to the Palestinian Authority. Following that, the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization issued Law No. 3 of 1996 regarding telecommunications. The year 1997 marked the effective inception of the first private Palestinian telecommunications company, which was authorized to start building the infrastructure and developing a digital network that would enable Palestine to communicate with the world and lay the foundations for modern and digital media[2] .

---

[1] - Yassin, Abdel Qader, The Press and Political Life in Palestine (1907-1948), Dar Al Sharq, Cairo.

[2] -Telecommunications Sector in Palestine, a paper presented to the Information Summit held in Tunis 2005.

In 1999, Israel gave the first frequencies to the work of a subsidiary of the Palestinian telecommunications company Paltel, called "Jawwal", to work in the telecommunications sector, and set a condition, which is to share the frequencies with commercial companies. In 2007, the Palestinian Authority granted the necessary licenses to operate Wataniya Mobile (which became Ooredoo Palestine in 2018). In 2009, Israel gave Wataniya the frequencies to operate only in the West Bank. In 2015, Israel agreed to provide 3G frequencies and in 2021 Israel gave the Palestinian Telecommunications Ministry 4G frequencies, but it has not yet activated this network[3].

[3]- *Ibid*.

Chapter One: Needs Assessment and Content Analysis

Media Landscape

Television

In Palestine, television is the predominant source of information for the population. There are 17 local and satellite TV channels in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to a survey conducted by the research, polling, and informatics company Alpha International, 82 percent of Palestinians watch local channels while 67 percent watch both Palestinian and Arab satellite channels.

The TV channels chosen for this study are Al-Aqsa, Kolalnas, Palestine TV, Alkofiya, Alquds Today, Wattan, Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed, and Maan.

Several TV channels included in this study are affiliated with political parties, which are an important source of their funding: Al-Aqsa is considered to be the official channel of the Hamas movement; Alkofia is affiliated with Palestinian leader Mohammad Dahlan's Democratic Reform Bloc (Fatah); Alquds Today is close to the Islamic Jihad Movement; and Palestine TV is the official channel of the Palestinian Authority.

******

Kolalnas is a local TV channel established in 2013 as part of a media group affiliated with the Al-Blaide Advertising and Media Company. It broadcasts in the Tulkarm governorate in the West Bank as well as in some areas of the West Bank outside of Tulkarm and in the 1948 territories bordering Tulkarm. The channel's programs stream online through its website. Its YouTube channel has 129,000 subscribers and 40,690,092 video views, and it also has a Facebook account, which is relatively new by Facebook community standards.

Wattan TV was founded on February 15, 1996. The channel has a subsidiary advertising company called Safad Advertising, which is based in Ramallah. Wattan TV is a private, independent company managed by Muammar Orabi, and it includes the Wattan Media Center, Wattan TV Production, and the Wattan Agency.

Palestine TV is the main television channel managed by the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation in Ramallah. It is the official channel of the Palestinian Authority, which is led by the Fatah movement, and started operating in 1996. Palestine TV broadcasts a combination of news and entertainment programming, and its programs generally promote a positive view of the Palestinian Authority. In 1999, the Palestinian Authority expanded the channel to the Gaza Strip. The satellite channel broadcasts via local terrestrial television in the West Bank, where around 11 towers strengthen the ground wave in Palestinian cities.

Al-Awda is a pro-Fatah Palestinian satellite television channel. It began broadcasting from the Jordanian capital, Amman. After the Reach Media group purchased it in November 2010, the channel moved its operations to Ramallah in the West Bank. The channel is called Al-Awda ("The Return") in recognition of the Palestinian people's commitment to their right to return to their land. The channel is committed to the Palestinian cause and sheds light on Palestinian suffering under Israeli occupation. Al-Awda hosts both serious and entertaining programs, news bulletins, news shows, and cultural events.

Salam TV was established in 1993 as the first local channel in Palestine after the signing of the Oslo Accords and is an active and distinguished member of the Maan TV Network. Salam TV broadcasts in all areas of the Tulkarm governorate as well as the Triangle inside the 1948 Territories and large parts of the Qalqilya, Salfit, Jenin, and Nablus governorates. It hosts various programs in numerous fields, including: politics; society; culture; religion; sports; arts; news; game shows; and entertainment

El-Bilad TV is a local Palestinian television channel owned by El-Bilad Radio and Television Company. It was founded in the West Bank city of Tulkarm in 1994, where its headquarters are still located. The channel broadcasts in all areas of the Tulkarm governorate, the 1948 Territories that are adjacent to the city, and in the neighboring West Bank governorates of Jenin, Nablus, and Qalqilya.

Musawa Satellite Channel is a Palestinian TV channel dedicated to Arabs in the 1948 Territories. It broadcasts from the city of Ramallah, where it is headquartered. The channel is supervized by the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, which is affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Musawa began broadcasting on June 1, 2015, following a launch party at the Golden Crown Hotel in the city of Nazareth. The channel also has a base in Nazareth and focuses on news about the 1948 territories.

Al-Mahed Nativity TV was founded in Bethlehem in 1996. It is owned by Al-Mahed Radio and Television Company and provides a wide variety of political, social, and religious shows.

Bethlehem TV is a local channel that broadcasts from the city of Bethlehem. It is owned by the Mir TV Production and Broadcasting Company and provides a wide variety of political, social, and religious shows.

Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed TV or *Al-Fajr TV* is an independent Palestinian media channel established in 1996 as a private joint-stock company in the city of Tulkarm in the West Bank. It broadcasts globally online and primarily focuses on local Palestinian issues through a series of news reports and programs. However, it also broadcasts games, movies, and TV series.

Maan Satellite Channel was founded in 2005 and is an integral part of the Maan TV Network, a non-profit media organization established in 2002 to promote independent media in Palestine. Maan Satellite Channel broadcasts local news through a network of correspondents who are located in several regions of Palestine. It hosts a wide variety of programs including: Al Hasad; Maan 24; Intibaha; Hebrew Press Tour; Falasteen Al-Kheir; and Sawt Al-Nass.

Al-Aqsa TV was founded by Fathi Hamad in 2006 in Gaza as Hamas' official television channel. It broadcasts news coverage along with entertainment and religious shows. Al-Aqsa TV's programming specifically presents Hamas' political point of view. Its operations and the movement of its staff have been severely hampered by the conflict in Gaza. In 2019, the Israeli authorities classified Al-Aqsa TV as a "terrorist organisation" because of its affiliation with Hamas. The channel started as a radio station which then evolved into a terrestrial television station before it became a satellite channel. On May 12, 2021, Israeli warplanes bombed the tower housing the channel's offices in Gaza, causing considerable damage.

Alquds Today is a satellite channel affiliated with Islamic Jihad. It provides a wide variety of news, religious, cultural, and intellectual shows. On May 12, 2021, Israeli warplanes bombed its offices, which were in the same building is Al-Aqsa TV's, also causing considerable damage.

Palestine Today TV is a satellite TV channel established in 2009. It is affiliated with Islamic Jihad and broadcasts in Arabic 24 hours a day. The channel has offices in both Gaza and Beirut. The Gaza office director is Amer Amer, and the Beirut office director is Saif Mawed. Israeli warplanes bombed the Channel's headquarters in Gaza on May 16, 2021, causing considerable damage.

Amwaj Sport TV has been broadcasting football and sport-related news in the Gaza Strip for nearly 10 years.

Alkofiya TV is a Palestinian satellite channel affiliated with the Palestinian leader Mohammad Dahlan's Democratic Reform Bloc (Fatah), which is opposed to the Palestinian Authority. The channel was established nine years ago and hosts various political programs. It has two headquarters: one in Cairo and another in the Gaza Strip. On May 12, 2021 Israeli warplanes bombed the tower housing the channel's offices in Gaza, causing considerable damage.

UNRWA TV is an educational satellite channel operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

Radio

There are 60 radio stations in Palestine (18 in Gaza, and 42 in the West Bank). According to a survey conducted by the research, polling, and informatics company Alpha International, 94 percent of Palestinians listen to local stations, and 6 percent of Palestinians listen to international stations.

Representatives of eight radio stations were selected to participate in the focus group in this study: Radio Alam, Quds Radio, Nisaa FM, Raya FM, Ajyal Radio, Voice of Palestine, Radio Bethlehem 2000, and Sawt Al-Shaab (Voice of the People).

Of those, Voice of Palestine is owned by the Palestinian Authority while Quds Radio is affiliated with the Islamic Jihad and Al-Shaab is affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

***

Almoasher FM is the premier business radio station in Palestine. Supported by Almoasher Finance agency, it was launched by local Palestinian journalists and is self-financed. Almoasher FM is dedicated to economic-related topics and also explores issues of interest and concern to youth. Its coverage areas include: the job market and openings; the banking sector and its importance; investment, its volume and hubs; farmers and their outlooks; craftspeople and their skills; trade, imports, and exports; and public transportation and its challenges.

24FM: Established in 2014, this channel is part of the privately-held Afkar Production Company in the city of Ramallah in the West Bank. It is managed by a team of media and radio professionals. 24FM is based in the heart of Ramallah and enjoys a network of friends and volunteers who offer their various media and radio-related services. The station aims to forge a new path for local radio broadcasting work in Palestine and has adopted community media as a strategy. It strives to present direct, interactive media that links the community to decision-makers through interactive talk shows and educational programs. 24FM broadcasts in the north of the West Bank on 94.8 FM and in the central West Bank on 97.9FM. You can also listen to its programs around the world, 24/7 at www.24fm.ps.

Jerusalem24: Established in June 2021 in Ramallah and owned by the Ehab al-Jariri-run Afkar Company, Jerusalem24 received a three-year grant from the EU. The station offers a range of multi-interest and news-related programs and is directed by May Abu Assab.

Nisaa FM: The first women's radio station in Palestine, Niaa FM is an independent station that broadcasts from Ramallah and is owned by Nisaa Broadcasting Corporation. The station seeks to stimulate communication and the sharing of information between women separated by the wall and checkpoints, and to engage men in debates about women's rights using a thoughtful approach that aims to educate rather than provoke. Nisaa FM advocates for women's issues through a mix of programming, including news, entertainment, and call-in programs, targeted public service announcements about women, and training programs for women working in the media. The station maintains relationships with NGOs, community groups, women's committees, and public figures in all sectors of society through call-in programs and local interviews.

Alhorya Radio: Established by a group of media professionals and journalists and headed by journalist Magdi Arabid, Alhorya is a private station owned by Moheet Media. Alhorya Radio first started broadcasting on February 27, 2002 and can be found on 104.5 FM. It is registered as a joint-stock company with the relevant Palestinian public authorities and is an independent organization committed to national values. The station offers a variety of programs that cater to the different tastes and interests of its listenership. Through its offerings, it strives to inform, educate, and entertain its listeners. Its schedule consists of news analysis, talk, entertainment, cultural, social, economic, educational, family-oriented, women's issues, and sports shows.

Al Rabia FM: Broadcasting from Hebron, Al-Rabia FM caters to the interests of most segments of society due to a policy of valuing diversity in its programming. Its team of journalists consists of a group of talented men and women with extensive experience in local

radio work as well as professionals from the fields of science, medicine, law, and theology who are trained to host specialized programs with the assistance of radio staff. The station broadcasts on 88.7 FM and online, 24/7, at www.r4fm.ps, and is always at the listeners' fingertips to offer a range of service-related, scientific, social, political, and business shows

Radio Mawtiny: An affiliate of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement's (Fatah) Media, Culture and Intellectual Advancement Commission, the station is owned by Sky Advertising.

Cool FM Radio 104 FM: COOL started broadcasting on July 1, 2010, and covers all of Bethlehem, parts of Ramallah and Jerusalem, parts of Hebron, and also parts of Jordan. COOL is the only Palestinian radio station that provides world news in English and a wide variety of world music. COOL broadcasts 24/7, and its stream is available online at www.coolfm.ps.

An-Najah FM: Started in July 2003, the station has programming for all groups and ages. An-Najah FM broadcasts from the campus of An-Najah National University in Nablus on 88.5 FM accross all of Nablus and Tulkarm. Coverage also reaches the cities of Qalqilya and Jenin as well as the Palestinian coast and the Triangle in the 1948 territories. An-Najah FM's programs air live on its website for listeners around the world. The station has numerous joint media agreements with international media outlets such as Radio France Internationale (RFI), Germany's Deutsche Welle (DW), and Belgium's RM, among others. These agreements enable the sharing of programs and expertise and open up possibilities for staff to participate in training courses relevant to the station's activity.

Sawt al-Shabab is a local, non-profit Palestinian radio station that broadcasts from the city of Al-Dhahiriya in the southern West Bank. The station contributes to amplifying and addressing the concerns of Palestinian society. Its aim is to build a media partnership with both individuals and organizations in Palestinian society to benefit the community in the areas of development and democracy. It is known for its objective broadcasting, nonpartisan and fact-based transmission of the news, and as a platform for the Palestinian youth to express their views, interests, and contributions.

El-Ghad Media Network: Established in 2004 and owned by Majdi Taha, El-Ghad Media is an independent radio network. The network's production studios use the highest quality standards and are staffed by professional technicians and distinctive voice talents to help companies and organizations secure the best country-wide broadcast advertising production.

Radio Seba FM is privately held by Al-Sanabel Broadcasting Company. It was established in April 2009 and is based in the town of Zababdeh in Jenin governorate in the north of the West Bank. The station broadcasts its programs locally on 94.8 FM, covering cities and villages in the governorates of Jenin and Tubas. It also broadcasts on its website www.sebafm.net where listeners can tune into the station's programs worldwide. Seba FM is directed by Mohammad Al-Azmoti.

Radio Rehan FM for Tourism: The Rehan company was established in mid-2015 to begin experimental radio broadcasts. The radio station started broadcasting on-air in early 2016 using the latest high-tech devices and equipment to offer a variety of community development and

entertainment shows with an Arab twist and a Palestinian identity. The station is owned by Rehan Broadcasting Company Ltd. It is the first Palestinian station devoted to documenting Palestinian and Levantine heritage and promoting and fostering religious and recreational tourism across the Holy Land of Palestine and the Levant.

Radio Hayat is a project of Arttech Artistic Co. for Advertising, a limited private joint-stock company based in the city of Nablus and operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The company has been registered with the Palestinian Authority's Companies Controller Department since 2006 and offers many services, including advertising, publicity, and marketing solutions. Arttech aims to push forward the advertising, promotion, and publicity industry in Palestine. In 2009, the company founded Radio Hayat, which broadcasts on 100.8 FM.

Hawa Nablus FM: A media station established in 2014 in the city of Nablus, Hawa Nablus FM offers a diverse range of programming.

Shabab FM: An independent Palestinian station, Shabab FM is a subsidiary of Panorama Co. for Media & Press – Panorama TV and broadcasts from the heart of the city of Nablus on 101.4 FM. It is directed by Muharram AlBarghouti.

Reef FM broadcasts on two frequencies – 103.2 FM and 104.2 FM – across all the governorates in the West Bank and the 1948 territories. Reef FM is the only Palestinian station broadcasting locally across the 1948 territories, including the Negev/Al-Naqab and the Southern Triangle. It is not affiliated with any political party or other factions or groups. It collaborates on numerous creative, media, and advertising points of interest with many local and Arab newspapers and channels as well as some Arab and Palestinian news agencies, including Akhbar Al-Naqab newspaper, FM Satellite Channel, Palestine News Network , Shfa new website, and Rotana Radio.

Raya FM: Part of Raya Media & Publishing Company, this station was established in Ramallah in 2007 and is based in the district of Al-Balouh, Al-Bireh, Ramallah. It is staffed by a professional and expert team of outstanding administrative staff, journalists, and creatives. It offers news, social, cultural, and business programming.

Radio Farah: Established in 2002, this station is a subsidiary of Farah Network, an independent Palestinian network created by media professional Fathi Natour at the start of his career in journalism in 1989. Farah Network was launched as a television production company under the name the Palestinian Corporation for Television Production in 1993.

Radio Mada: Established in the city of Jericho, Radio Mada is owned by the Arab Company for Radio Broadcasting.

Hebron Radio: Established in 1997, Hebron Radio is part of Al-Wad Broadcasting & TV Company. Broadcasting on 90.4 FM, it covers the south of Palestine, the entirety of Gaza, and parts of Jordan and the northern West Bank. It also broadcasts online. The station faced Israeli harassment on a number of occasions, most significantly in 2015 when its equipment was seized, and it was forced to close for six months over allegations that it was inciting violence.

Radio Tariq Al-Mahabbeh: A Hadisoft Group company, this station was established by businessman Amer Ibrahim Abdulhadi as part of a vision for developing local media activity in Palestine. Abdulhadi first founded Vision Broadcasting, Creative Production, and Advertising, Radio Tariq Al-Mahabbeh's parent company. The company obtained a license to operate a radio station and launched Radio Tariq Al-Mahabbeh on June 18, 1997. At the time, radio broadcasting was still a fledgling field in Palestine.

Radio Bethlehem 2000 was established in July 1996 in the city of Bethlehem and broadcasts on 106.3 FM. It can also be found online at www.rb2000.ps. It airs a range of diverse media programs with sponsorship from multiple Palestinian companies and covers the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, and the 1948 territories. The station has a team of 25 staff members and is directed by journalist George Kanawati.

Ajyal Radio Network (ARN): The network consists of eight stations all broadcasting from Palestine. Ajyal Radio, Radio Ramallah FM, and Radio Angham broadcast over 22 FM frequencies spread across the various governorates of the country. The five other stations are specialized and broadcast exclusively online: Ajyal Quran Radio Ramallah, Ajyal Radio Classic, Ajyal Radio Tarab, Ajyal Radio Music, and Ajyal Radio 101 for international hits. The network of stations is directed by Walid Nassar and was created in 1999. It is a subsidiary of Al-Bakri Broadcasting Co., and has built the largest broadcasting network in Palestine, consisting of 11 frequencies for Ajyal Radio that cover all of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 1948 territories, and parts of Jordan. The network uses the latest electronic technology to reach audiences around the world on its official website www.arn.ps, its social media account www.facebook.com/ajyal.fm, and the first mobile and tablet app in Palestine for Android and iOS. Through these various platforms, it seamlessly reaches the four corners of the globe, allowing listeners to enjoy any of the network's stations with one tap. The network's distinctive stations are:

- Ajyal Radio: established in Ramallah in 2001, Ajyal Radio hosts cultural, news, and community programs that focus on local Palestinian stories through hourly news bulletins and political, economic, sports, social, and Palestinian heritage shows.

- Radio Ramallah FM: established in 2001 and youth-focused.

-Radio Angham: is the number one music station in Palestine for Arab and international hits. The station also offers instrumental music without vocals and has gained a large following among young listeners in Palestine and online.

Voice of Palestine: Established in 1995, Voice of Palestine is the official radio station of the Palestinian authority and a media subsidiary of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC). It broadcasts in Arabic and offers hourly news bulletins as well as programs about social, cultural, and local issues. The station also features national and popular music. Voice of Palestine is based in Ramallah and broadcasts over different frequencies across the West Bank and Gaza. Voice of Palestine the Second Program is a PBC-affiliated radio station that was created in the Gaza Strip and officially came on air on March 30, 2000, on the occasion of Palestinian Land Day. It broadcasts for 17 hours a day.

Maan Radio Network consists of several radio stations in different parts of the West Bank: Radio Alqamar on 98.4 FM in Jericho; Kolalnas Radio on 95.6 FM in Salfit; Albalad FM on 95.6 FM in Jenin; Panorama FM on 103.2 FM in Nablus; Radio Baladna on 95.7 FM in Bethlehem; Radio Nagham 99.7 FM in Qalqilya; Radio Nablus on 93.5 FM in Nablus; and Marah FM on 100.6 FM in Hebron. The radio stations are a subsidiary of Maan Network, a nonprofit media corporation established in 2002 to promote independent media in Palestine.

***Wattan FM*:** Established in March 2019, Wattan FM broadcasts on FM frequency 99.2. It is part of the Wattan Media Network, which includes Wattan TV, Wattan News Agency, and Wattan for Media Training.

***Fajr Radio*:** A local station known as Fajr FM, Fajr Radio was established in 2014. It covers the northern areas of Palestine through its FM broadcast, and its live feed is available world-wide online. The station is part of Fajer TV in the West Bank.

Alshabab Radio is a Palestinian community radio station broadcasting on 98.2 FM from Gaza City. The station stopped broadcasting in 2007 because of Palestinian infighting that year due to its affiliation with Palestinian leader Mohammad Dahlan. It resumed broadcasting on January 19, 2021, and launched its website and social media pages, where it offers video broadcasts of its programs.

Sawt Alquds is a Palestinian media organization established in the Gaza City in late 2004. It started broadcasting on January 1, 2005. It operates as part of Al-Quds Media Network, which is a full-service media production network. Al-Quds Media Network is affiliated with the Islamic Jihad Movement.

***Asra Voice*:** Created in Gaza City, Asra Voice is affiliated with the Islamic Jihad Movement and is part of Al-Quds Media Network. It is an Islamic station specifically focusing on prisoner issues. It was established on April 17, 2009, which is Palestinian Prisoners' Day. The station's mission is to voice the concerns and cause of incarcerated prisoners and to inform, report, and transmit the experiences of Palestinian prisoners to the public. Asra Voice broadcasts throughout the Gaza Strip and in parts of the West Bank. It is also available in parts of Egypt, including the outskirts of Arish and Egypt's Rafah. Israeli warplanes bombed the tower where the station was headquartered on May 15, 2021, causing considerable damage to its offices.

***Alwan Sport Radio*:** Based in Gaza City, Alwan Sport Radio is the first Palestinian radio station devoted to sports. It is directed and owned by Wael Al-Awour, and broadcasts sports programming 18 hours per day. It covers various topics, including local sports news, women's sports, Arab and European sporting events, sports federation and club news, and parasports.

Alwan Radio is a multi-interest, private station that broadcasts from the Gaza Strip. Alwan Radio is directed and owned by Engineer Wael Al-Awour.

Sawt al-Boraq and ***Al-Boraq Radio*** are part of Boraq Press which was founded in Gaza City and is a Palestinian news and media network that covers political issues and daily topics, 24/7. Boraq Press is affiliated with the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC).

Radio Gaza FM 100.9 was established in Gaza City and offers a diverse range of programs, mostly relating to entertainment.

Iman Radio: Established on February 20, 2004, Iman Radio broadcasts on 96 FM. The station has offered different cycles of varied programs aimed at all segments of society and has managed to make great strides in ira news coverage, developing its shows and news programs, and delving behind the news, by hosting political experts and analysts.

Sawt El Shaeb Radio: Owned by Nabaa Creative and Media Production Company, Sawt El Shaeb Radio broadcasts on 106 FM. It is a local Palestinian station affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Its programming is diverse and examines and addresses women's and youth-related issues and human and workers' rights. The station broadcasts throughout the Gaza Strip and in parts of the city of Hebron in the West Bank. It is staffed by a specialized team of nearly 20 members who work in the different departments, in addition to a crew of correspondents. The station also collaborates with many different journalists, media professionals, and entities.

Alray Radio Palestine is an official media entity speaking on behalf of the Palestinian Government in Gaza. It is affiliated with Hamas and expresses its policies and positions. The station strives to communicate directly with all segments of society to make the government's vision accessible to the Palestinian public. It aims to voice the government's opinions and to clarify its stances on all issues relating to Palestinian, Arab, and international affairs. It also seeks to build bridges with audiences, listeners, and other interested parties. The station was founded as a way for the Ministry of Interior and National Security to broadcast its message to the public. It started broadcasting under the name Radio of the Palestinians on 98 FM on December 27, 2012. During a Council of Ministers session, some ministers called for control of the station to be transferred to the government's Media Bureau in order for it to become a platform for the government as a whole, and not just one ministry. The Ministry of Interior subsequently handed over the station's headquarters and equipment to the Media Bureau.

Israa Radio: Broadcasting on 105.6 FM, Israa Radio has a variety of programs on offer that reflect life at Israa University in Gaza. It joined the National Broadcasting Union in 2014.

Alaqsa Voice: Launched by Hamas in 2003, Alaqsa Voice is a subsidiary of Al-Aqsa Media Network. It started broadcasting online in 2004 in an attempt to reach the Palestinian diaspora and became a launching point for Hamas media in the region. The station is an Islamic radio station offering religious, news, social, educational, and cultural programs. It broadcasts on 106.7 FM and is on air throughout the Gaza Strip and in parts of the West Bank, including Hebron, the outskirts of Ramallah, Jenin, and other areas. It also reaches parts of Egypt, including the outskirts of Arish and Rafah.

Zaman FM: Created in 2018, Zaman FM hosts various economic, social, cultural, mental health, entertainment, and women-oriented programs with a focus on heritage. To offer a range of services, the station's staff consists of media and radio professionals, including Ahmed Said, Mahmoud Zuaiter, and Madeleine Shaqalih. It broadcasts in Gaza City on 90.6 FM and can also be enjoyed on its website around the world.

Radio Alam: Broadcasting from Hebron University, Radio Alam hosts a range of social, political, science, sports, and cultural programs in addition to news updates and university-related events. The station has a team of experts and academics who participate in hosting programs related to their professional fields, in addition to extensive research, fact checking, and current events. The staff consists of 17 professionals and specialists who are supported by dozens of interns.

AAUP Radio: Broadcasting from the Arab American University (AAUP) and directed by Mohammad Al-Azmoti, AAUP Radio is an educational, youth-oriented, social and general culture university station that tackles general social issues as well as community topics that do not receive due media attention. It endeavors to promote and strengthen Palestinian national identity by reporting on and analysing national issues. It broadcasts on 97.1 FM with a live online feed on the AAUP's website and the station's Facebook page.

Radio Alaqsa Voice Live is part of the Hamas-affiliated Al-Aqsa Media Network.

Holy Quran Radio from Gaza is devoted to the Holy Quran and is affiliated with the Islamic University.

Sawt Al-Watan Radio: Broadcasting from Gaza City on 105 FM, Sawt Al-Watan Radio is a diverse political station affiliated with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Namaa Radio: Established in July 2021 in the north of the Gaza Strip, Namaa Radio is affiliated with Namaa Charity Association and Namaa Sport Club and offers a variety of programming.

Manar FM: A private station owned by journalist and cameraman Talal Abu Rahma, Manar FM broadcasts from the Gaza Strip on 92 FM. The station has diverse programs and was founded in 2003.

Tayif FM: Founded by a group of freed prisoners in the Gaza Strip, Tayif FM is concerned with prisoner affairs. The station's headquarters in Al-Shorouk Tower was destroyed during the most recent Israeli war on the Gaza Strip in May 2021.

Young Journalist Radio Station: Established in 2012, Young Journalist Radio Station is an affiliate of the Young Journalist Club, which was founded in 1997 and strives to encourage children to publish articles and writing in the different media outlets in Palestine and abroad to nurture their talents and help them share their ideas and aspirations with society. The radio station's headquarters in Al-Shorouk Tower was destroyed during the most recent Israeli war on the Gaza Strip in May 2021.

Print Publications

In 1995, the Palestinian Authority (PA) approved the Palestinian Press and Publication Law – one of the first laws issued after its establishment. From 1995 until 2016, 309 licenses were granted to various individuals, political parties, and non-governmental organizations for daily,

weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, and quarterly newspapers and magazines. However, not all of these licenses are active. In fact, most have remained unused by their recipients.

There are currently 12 newspapers (five in the West Bank, and seven in the Gaza Strip) and six magazines (three in the West Bank, and three in the Gaza Strip) being published in the West Bank and Gaza. These include weekly, semi-monthly, and monthly newspapers and magazines. Some publications have ended the distribution of their print editions and moved online due to financial difficulties.

According to a survey conducted by the research, polling, and informatics company Alpha International in 2019, 79 percent of Palestinians read print newspapers, and 31 percent read daily newspapers online. When it comes to magazines, 54 percent of Palestinians read printed magazines, and 56 percent read magazines online.

The newspapers that were selected as this study's sample are: Felesteen, Al-Istiqlal, Al-Ayyam, Al-Hadath, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida newspaper, Al-Resala, and Al-Ra'i.

***

Al-Quds was founded in 1951 in East Jerusalem by Mahmoud Abu Al-Zalf after the merger of two smaller newspapers. Considered to be one of the oldest family-owned Palestinian publications, it has been active for a long time. Due to the location of its headquarters, it is subject to Israeli censorship. However, the paper is also published in the West Bank and is the most widely distributed and read publication in the Palestinian Territories and the least influenced by the partisanism of Palestine's media landscape. On July 23, 2019, its publication was interrupted for the first time since its establishment after its employees went on strike for not receiving their salaries for four months. Publication later resumed and is ongoing.

Al-Ayyam was launched in 1995 as the West Bank's first Palestinian newspaper after the signing of the Oslo Accords. Its editor-in-chief, Akram Haniyeh, was a long-time advisor to the late Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. The paper's headquarters are located in the West Bank, and it has a branch in Gaza.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida is a comprehensive daily political publication founded in 1995 as the official newspaper of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. It was started by Nabil Amr and Hafez Al-Barghouti – the latter acted as its editor-in-chief from its inception until 2012. Despite being owned by the Palestinian Authority, the newspaper has criticized domestic policies and published reports on cases of corruption. However, it is considered the mouthpiece of the PA. Mahmoud Abu Al-Hija is the current editor-in-chief, following in the footsteps of Yahya Khalaf and Aref Hijjawi. The newspaper's headquarters are located in the West Bank, and it also has a branch in the Gaza Strip, which was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike on the Al-Shorouk Tower during the most recent Israeli war on Gaza in May 2021.

Felesteen is a comprehensive political daily newspaper that has been published in the Gaza Strip since May 3, 2007. It obtained its operating license from the Ministry of Information on September 16, 2006. Owned by Al-Wasat Media and Publishing Company, the newspaper describes itself as an independent publication. However, it has strong ties with Hamas through

its affiliation with businessmen and investors who are close to the movement. Its current editor-in-chief is journalist Mufid Abu Shamalah, who heads a staff composed of specialized media, technical, and administrative experts. The paper publishes 32 pages per day as well as a total of six semi-monthly social, economic, and sports supplements each month. Its website is updated regularly, and it has its own training center where specialized courses relating to a wide range of media arts are offered by top trainers. The paper's headquarters are located in Gaza and were destroyed by an Israeli airstrike on the Jawhara Tower during the most recent Israeli war on Gaza in May 2021.

Al-Resala was launched in 1996 as a daily newspaper in the Gaza Strip and has been published twice a week since 2006. It went digital over a year ago. Considered to be the mouthpiece of the Hamas movement, it was named after the Salvation Party – the political arm of the Hamas movement during the 1990s. It often publishes official statements by the movement's senior officials and went through several developments before launching its online version, Al-Resala Net, in 2004 and its English version. It also has a breaking news service delivered via SMS and an online radio station that fall under the umbrella of parent company Al-Resala Media Foundation.

Al-Istiqlal is a comprehensive political newspaper published online on a daily basis in the Gaza Strip and affiliated with the Islamic Jihad movement. Previously, the paper published a print edition twice a week, with its first issue hitting shelves on October 21, 1994. But print publication has been suspended since 2019 due to Gaza's financial crisis. The paper focuses on conducting political interviews on strategic issues raised in Palestine and the Arab and Islamic worlds. It also pays close attention to the living conditions of the Palestinian people. Its current editor-in-chief is Khaled Sadiq, and its headquarters are in Gaza.

Al-Ra'i is a comprehensive daily newspaper that was launched in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas government's Ministry of Information in 2009. Originally, a print edition of the paper was published on Mondays and Thursdays, but it is now only published online because of the financial crisis affecting the Gaza Strip. The paper is managed by the Head of the Government Information Office in Gaza, Salama Maarouf, and its editor-in-chief is Ismail Thawabteh.

Al-Sabah is a daily political newspaper published in the Gaza Strip. Founded by Sri Muhammad Al-Kidwa in 1995, a print edition was originally published on a weekly basis, but it is now only available online after developing a website a few years ago. The paper covers the most important Arab and local political, social, and cultural news.

Al-Hadath Al-Felestini is a socio-cultural and economic newspaper published by Al-Hadath – a media, printing, and publishing company in Ramallah in the West Bank. Sami Sarhan heads its board of directors. In addition to its print version, *Al-Hadath* publishes the most important political, economic, and social news and articles, as well as the most important opinion pieces and culture-related articles online.

Al-Eqtisadia was launched in the Gaza Strip in 2012 by several journalists. It was published on a semi-monthly basis before discontinuing its print version in recent years due to Gaza's

financial crisis. It is now exclusively available online. Its owner, general manager, and editor-in-chief is journalist Muhammad Khaled Abu Jiyab.

Al-Riyadia is a weekly newspaper that was first published in the Gaza Strip in October 2013. Its publication is supervised by the Pro-Event Media Production Company, and the paper's editor-in-chief is Ahed Awni Farwana. Due to Gaza's financial crisis, it's print edition has been discontinued. The paper is now exclusively available online.

Sawt Al-Nisa' is Published twice a month in the West Bank by the Women's Affairs Center and is distributed as a supplement of the *Al-Ayyam* newspaper. Funded by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Foundation since 1997, its mission is to "promote justice and equality for women and encourage them to fully and effectively participate in society". The publication has been able to establish itself as a serious source of news, reports, and research on women's affairs in Palestine.

Al-Saada is published on a monthly basis in the Gaza Strip. It is geared towards different age groups and deals with various social, familial, and cultural issues. Launched in November 2003, it is considered to be one of the first social magazines in Palestine to focus on families. It is published by the Thuraya Foundation for Media and Communication, which is affiliated with Hamas. The foundation strives to advance media, culture, and research at the local level in addition to keeping pace with developments in the media field and training young professionals to harness the potential of new technologies and the use of social media. The magazine's editor-in-chief is currently journalist Marihan Abu Lin. In 2020, it discontinued the distribution of its print version for eight months due to the financial crisis in Gaza, but publication has since resumed.

Sawt Al-Mar'a is an digital magazine that offers Palestinian women a platform to voice their issues, advance their rights, and combat discrimination and gender-based violence. Women share their opinions and ideas in the online magazine. The magazine is one the main projects of the I Can Initiative, which supports human rights and gender equality, and is implemented in cooperation with the Independent Living Center for Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip. The magazine is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented by the British NGO EducAid in partnership with the Palestinian NGO Social Development Forum, the Gaza Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Al-Amal Association for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in Rafah, and Italian partners: the Italian Network on Disability and Development RIDS; and the Social Cooperative Center for Self-Reliance Michele Iconuntino CPA.

Balsam Magazine was founded in 1974 as the *Palestine Red Crescent Magazine* and adopted its current name in 1982 when it was moved to the Cypriot capital after PLO officials left Beirut. Back then, its editor-in-chief was writer Abdel Rahman Bseisu. However, after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the magazine started being published in Ramallah on a monthly basis. It deals with health, social, and cultural issues and includes contributions from specialists related to medical topics and health guidelines.

Felestin Al-Chabab magazine is a Palestinian magazine founded in 2007. It aims to showcase Palestinian innovations inside the Palestinian Territories and around the world. The magazine publishes literature and also provides youth with an opportunity to write about their experiences and share critical insights. The publication's pages include a collection of photography and artwork. Over the years, the magazine turned into a cultural project by adopting a number of cultural and artistic activities. The transformation was facilitated through the formation of an advisory board that is composed of young people who work and are active in various cultural and artistic fields in Palestine and abroad.

Al-Araby Journal for Media Studies is an electronic, scientific journal issued by the Arab Center for Research and Media Studies in Palestine. Its editor-in-chief is Dr. Ahmed Daher.

Al-Ghaida magazine was founded in 1997 and is a quarterly magazine focusing on women and families. It is published in the Gaza Strip by the Women's Affairs Center, an independent, feminist, non-profit civil society organisation that aims to empower women and promote women's rights and gender equality through programs, research, and advocacy. Its current editor-in-chief is Reem Al-Buhaisi.

Online Journalism

In June 2017, President Mahmoud Abbas approved Cybercrime Law no. (16) by presidential decree. The law was passed in secret and came into force immediately, without a period of consultation with civil society organizations.

The law posed a threat to freedom of expression because it said free speech could be curtailed for reasons of "public order", "national security", "public morality", or "national unity", but did not include clear definitions of these terms. As a result, the law sparked fear among political activists that it could be applied to repress and silence political opposition.

Pressure from civil society led to the introduction of amended cybercrime legislation – Law no. (10) – which was approved by Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas in May 2018 to replace Law no. (16). Two years later, President Abbas decided to amend Law no. (10), placing it with Law no. 28. Despite the amendments, civil society and human rights organizations argue that individuals exercising their freedom of opinion and expression are still at risk of legal prosecution.

In terms of accessing news online, according to a survey conducted by the research, polling, and informatics company Alpha International, 93 percent of Palestinians use Facebook, making it the most widely used social media platform in Palestine. After Facebook, 87 percent of Palestinian use WhatsApp, 84 percent use YouTube, and 83 percent use Instagram.

As for news websites, several are affiliated with the same political parties that own traditional media outlets in the country. The websites are also used to promote party's political agendas in the same way as traditional media outlets.

The news websites chosen for this study are Alwatan Voice, Shehab Agency, Quds News Network, Metras, Wafa, Watania Agency, Al-Bawaba 24, and Maan.

******

Ultra Palestine is a diverse news website that serves as a platform for Arab youth issues. A large group of young people living in different parts of the Arab World contribute to the content, along with several journalists – both women and men – and young professionals. Ultra Palestine is a sub-site of Ultra Sawt, which was established in 2015 and has launched several sub-sites covering Arab countries, including Palestinian.

Metras is a digital media platform that produces journalism and knowledge-related materials about Palestine, its surroundings, and other topics that intersect with Palestine on a regional level. It publishes articles for people who work in the fields of politics and society. The content is presented in a way that combines journalism and research. Professional sobriety and contemporary digital style characterize the website.

Shams News is a Palestinian media organisation affiliated with the Islamic Jihad movement. It was launched in 2014 in the Gaza Strip. It covers various topics to promote the concept of comprehensive media work with impartiality. The outlet focuses on Palestinian national concerns and deals with regional and local issues with transparency and professionalism. It is a non-profit organisation.

Khabar Press Palestine was established on February 1, 2015 and defines itself as the heartbeat of the street. The website covers all events and topics on the Palestinian, Arab, and international scenes through a network of correspondents and media professionals inside and outside the country. It values credibility, speed, accuracy, and objectivity in covering the news and has offices in Ramallah and Gaza City.

SAWA is an independent news agency established in 2014. It is affiliated with the NGO Press House in Gaza and covers daily issues and events in Palestine. Its editor-in-chief is Hikmat Abu Zekri.

Palestine Today is a news agency established in late 2003 in the Gaza Strip with the aim of improving Palestinian media and is part of Islamic Jihad's media ecosystem. The platform was developed to integrate social media, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. It gained considerable momentum in the Arab, Islamic, and international media communities and became one of the most important Palestinian websites. The agency relies mainly on the desk editors based in Gaza. They monitor events in cooperation with the correspondents in the Palestinian territories and the Arab world. They receive on a daily basis news and special reports from 12 correspondents in Gaza and the West Bank as well as from three others in other Arab countries.

Wattan is an independent news website based in the West Bank city of Ramallah. It aims to be a national, democratic source of information. The website is part of a media network that includes: Wattan TV; Wattan Media Center; Wattan TV Production; and Watan FM Radio. The website covers topics related to the Palestinian cause and political, economic, human rights, cultural, and sports developments. It also focuses on news related to refugees, the right

of return, prisoners, Jerusalem, and resistance against the wall. These topics are covered through Wattan TV in addition to image-supported news and analysis sections.

Wafa was established by the Palestinian National Council during an extraordinary session held in Cairo in April 1972. The Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) Executive Committee issued a decision to launch the Palestinian News & Information Agency, Wafa, on June 5, 1972. Wafa was launched as an independent body structurally, politically and administratively linked to the PLO Executive Committee with a mandate to confront dominant Israeli propaganda at the time and serve as an independent platform to report events from the official Palestinian perspective. This mission still governs the agency's work. Since its establishment, the Wafa agency has focused on producing Palestinian news, especially military communications issued by the General Command of the Palestinian Revolution Forces. However, its work has expanded to include diverse national events, news related to the Palestinian diaspora, and other topics pretaining to the Palestinian cause. The Agency's work was modest at the beginning, focusing on a daily news bulletin in Arabic. It then started publishing daily bulletins in English and French. After that, Wafa added a bulletin to monitor and translate Israeli radio reports, a second for Arab and international press statements, and a third for monitoring the Israeli press. The aim of these bulletins was first to provide the local, Arab, and international press with the Palestinian position and decision makers with the latest news related to the Palestinian cause from various capitals through monitoring and analysis.

Amad is a Palestinian news website founded in the Gaza Strip by Palestinian politician Hassan Asfour, who wanted it to be a daily newspaper that would be printed in Gaza. Asfour's dream has yet to become a reality, but the website covers daily Palestinian news and issues.

Paltimes.net is a Palestinian news agency affiliated with Hamas. It consists of a digital network that includes a news website and a news alert service on mobile phones in cooperation with Jawwal and Al-Watania Mobile. It is one of the 100 most visited websites in Palestine. The agency – with its Islamist political leanings and pro-Palestinian resistance orientation – provides round-the-clock coverage of all events and topics across Palestine in addition to the most important Arab and international developments. It is based in Gaza City, and its staff consists of dozens of editors and reporters deployed throughout the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and several areas of the 1948 territories. Since it was launched, the website has been targeted in several attacks aimed at disrupting its work or silencing it.

Sama is an independent news agency based in Gaza City. It provides news, production, and technical services to meet the needs of media organizations in all forms and orientations. Sohaib Abu Hasna is the Director General, and Hoda bin Said is the editor-in-chief.

Watania was launched in the second half of 2007 as a company and production office in Gaza. Since its launch, the organization worked hard to become a Palestinian media agency. It seeks to provide the best technical, archival, and knowledge-related capabilities for anyone who wants to carry out television work in Palestine. In recent years, the agency has opened a news website that publishes daily video news reports.

Shehab is a Palestinian news agency launched in the Gaza Strip on January 1, 2007. It is affiliated with the Hamas movement and works on a 24-hour basis to cover rapidly moving developments in Palestine.

Safa Press Agency was established in the Gaza Strip and is affiliated with the Hamas movement. It is one of the most developed and well-established news agencies in Palestine.

Alwatan Voice was established on April 15, 2003 and is based in the Gaza Strip. Its Editor-in-chief is Abdullah Issa.

Palestine News Network was established and began publishing online in 2003. Shortly after its launch, the outlet added English and French versions. It also broadcasts news bulletins on several radio stations in the West.

Maan News Agency was founded in 2005 and is managed by Raed Othman. It runs a television channel and a radio station. It was first launched with the support of the Danish and Dutch diplomatic missions in Palestine. Maan News Agency covers political, economic, sports, and cultural news in the governorates of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the 1948 territories, in addition to the latest developments in Israeli affairs. It also translates excerpts from the Hebrew press into Arabic for its readers while providing literary articles and investigative reports tackling various topics ranging from prisoner's affairs to economic development projects. Its two main offices are in Bethlehem and Gaza City, and it also has two branch offices in Hebron and Nablus. Maan publishes news in three languages – Arabic, Hebrew, and English – 24 hours per day. It also publishes stories, analyses, and opinion articles. Its programs are broadcast by various TV stations in the West Bank and sometimes by the Palestine Satellite TV. It also launched an e-commerce website called Maan Souk, and it is funded by advertising revenue and foreign donors.

Al-Hadaf News is the website of Al-Hadaf magazine, which was founded by Ghassan Kanafani in 1969. The print edition of the magazine is no longer published, and all content is now only available online. Based in Gaza, it is affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and covers daily Palestinian news and issues.

National Press Agency Naba' is an independent non-profit organisation based in Gaza. It covers various fields on the Palestinian scene.

Nawa Network is a feminist electronic media network established by the Filastiniyat organisation in December 2012. The network launched a new version of its website in 2018 on the World Day of Social Justice (20 February). It covers political, economic, social, and cultural events through original, in-depth reports, photos, videos, and infographics. It has two headquarters, one in Ramallah in the West Bank, and the other in the Gaza Strip. The latter was severely damaged by Israeli air strikes between during the most recent Israeli war on Gaza in May 2021.

Al-Bawaba 24 is an independent Palestinian news website founded in 2020. It aims to show what is really happening on a local, Arab, and international level while distancing itself from

local and regional tensions and conflicts. Its offices were destroyed when Israel bombed the Al-Jawhara Tower during the latest war on Gaza in May 2021.

Quds News Network is an independent Palestinian media outlet that provides round-the-clock coverage of Palestinian news and uses new media as a tool for free expression to convey the real image of Palestine. Most of its correspondents work on a voluntary basis to free themselves from conditions placed on freedom of expression by funders and political parties. It is based in Ramallah in the West Bank.

Ekhbareeat is an independent news network founded in 2003. It is headed by its editor-in-chief, journalist Romel Al-Swete, and based in the city of Nablus in the West Bank.

Al-Iqtisadi is a specialized website created by parent company Digital Plus for media and advertising services. It is based in Ramallah and publishes modern and in-depth information related to all economic sectors through distinctive written and illustrated reports that provide readers with modern technical means to navigate in an easy way. It focuses on visual and interactive effects. The editorial material attempts to simplify statistics and economic and facilitate interaction between the needs of citizens and the aspirations of their leaders. Its editor is Mohamed Abdullah.

Shasha News is an independent Palestinian and Arab news and entertainment website, based in Ramallah in the West Bank. It seeks to provide Palestinian and Arab citizens around the world with news and entertainment services. It adopts a patriotic, liberal, humanistic approach, adheres to Arab laws and universally recognized human rights principles, and supports freedom of thought and speech and women's freedom.

Douz: A news website specialized in the local press in the Nablus, offering a wide range of news, political, social, economic, sports and services. The Dose project for local journalism is supported by the German Cooperation and Development Agency (GIZ) and implemented by the German Academy for Media. General Manager Abdul Rahman Othman.

The Needs of Media Organizations in Palestine: Funding, Support, Protection, and New Regulations

This report attempts to identify and assess the needs of media organizations in Palestine and to discuss reforms needed in both legal and regulatory frameworks. The aim is to develop a roadmap to determine priorities for international support programs striving to meet those needs. The report is part of a larger project, entitled "Assessing Progress, Media Pluralism, and Diversity in Palestine", that seeks to review the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's impact on journalists and media outlets in Palestine, establish a rapid response mechanism to meet their urgent needs, and flesh out a road map to encourage pluralism across the Palestinian media landscape.

Methodology

Over four consecutive days, the Samir Kassir Foundation conducted four virtual roundtable discussions from Beirut via Zoom with representatives of media organizations in Palestine. The sessions were titled "What Are the Urgent Needs of Media Organizations in Palestine?". The discussions involved television, radio, print, and digital media outlets in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Six to eight organizations were selected as a sample for each media category, taking into account geographical distribution between the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as whether the outlets were official, partisan, or privately owned/independent.

Representatives from television, radio, print, and digital media outlets were asked the same questions, including the following: What are the problems and challenges they face? What are their urgent needs as media organizations and those of the journalists working for them? What are the training programs and workshops provided by these institutions to develop the capabilities of their journalists? Are the training programs sufficient to meet their identified needs? What courses and workshops are requested by journalists? What legal reforms are needed to support journalists' freedom of speech and ability to work? And what reforms are needed within media organizations themselves to help improve the situation of journalists in Palestine?

Participating Organizations

The discussion dedicated to TV stations was attended by: Al-Aqsa Media Network's General Manager, Wissam Afifa (Gaza Strip); Kul El-Nas TV's Editor-in-Chief, Lama Abu Zima (West Bank); Al-Kofiya TV's General Manager, Ahmed Harb (Gaza Strip); Wattan TV's General Manager, Muammar Orabi (West Bank); Maan Media Network's General Manager, Raed Othman (West Bank); and Al-Quds Al-Yawm TV's Head of Programming, Muhammad Abu Shawish (Gaza Strip).

The representative of radio stations' session who were brought together were: Alam Radio's Head of Programming, Salaheddin Abu Hassan (West Bank); Raya FM's Editor-in-Chief, Shadi Zama'ra (West Bank); Sawt Al-Chaab's Director, Bassem Wishah (Gaza Strip); Zaman FM's Director, Rami Al-Sharafi (Gaza Strip); Ajyal Radio's Director, Walid Nassar (West Bank); Sawt Al-Quds' Head of Broadcasters, Abdel Nasser Abu Aoun (Gaza Strip); Bethlehem 2000 Radio's Director, George Kanawati (West Bank); and Nisaa FM's Director, Maysoon Audi (West Bank).

For newspapers, we were joined by: Sa'ed Abou Farha, Economy and Local Correspondent for *Al-Ayyam* newspaper (West Bank), who also participates in the newspaper's investigative team; Head of Al-Resalah Media Institution and Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Resalah* newspaper, Rami Mahmoud Khreis (Gaza Strip); *Al-Istiqlal* newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Khaled Sadiq (Gaza Strip); *Felesteen* newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Mufeed Ahmed Abu Shamala (Gaza Strip); *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*'s Head of Bureau, Tahseen Al-Astal (Gaza Strip); *Al-Hadath*

newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Rola Sarhan (West Bank); and Bassam Al-Attar who represented Gaza's government newspaper, *Al-Rai* (Gaza Strip).

The digital media session included: Director of Production at the Quds News Network, Omar Zeineddin (Gaza Strip); Metras' Director of Operations, Salwa Hussein (West Bank); the Palestine News Network's (PNN) Editor-in-Chief, Munjed Jado (West Bank); Executive Director of Gaza's National Media Agency, Samer Tarazi (Gaza Strip); Al-Bawaba 24's General Manager, Maysoon Kahil (Gaza Strip); Hanin Hamdouna from the Editorial Department of Dunia Al-Watan; Director of the Shehab Media Foundation, Ramah Mubarak (Gaza); and Director of the official Wafa news agency, Kholoud Assaf.

Challenges and Pressing Needs

Participants from all four sessions agreed that media organizations operating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are in urgent need of funding – regardless of whether they are television, radio, print, or electronic outlets – to cover operating expenses and hire new staff. When it comes to hiring, media organizations are looking for journalists who can perform multiple roles (from presenting and producing content to filming videos and other activities). The desire to hire people who can fulfill more than one role stems from the current inability of organizations to employ full teams to individually carry out all of these tasks.

The urgent need for funding and financial support was underscored by the fact that numerous media organizations had to close down in recent years – a situation that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since COVID-19 began to spread in Palestine in March 2020, its economic effects have had a significant impact on ad revenues, especially for traditional television, radio, and print media outlets. Many companies migrated to online news platforms, websites, and social media platforms to publish. To address the funding issue, the participants discussed the need to explore possibilities to receive funding from other Arab countries who might be interested in supporting Palestinian media outlets – especially television stations – before they collapse.

The majority of participants noted that TV and radio stations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are in need of recording equipment, cameras, computers, and other tools. However, the security situation in Gaza makes the situation in the territory more dire compared to the West Bank. TV and radio stations located inside Gaza are in need of complete sets of equipment, including cameras, TV recording equipment, and transmission equipment for radio broadcasting. Many also need new headquarters after their offices were bombed and either completely or partially destroyed during Israel's war on Gaza in May 2021. During the conflict, a lot of media organizations lost their photo and written archives. The impact of the war has led to a high level of financial need for some of these media institutions, especially those starting over from scratch.

Participants also raised the need to provide protection and safety equipment for journalists – such as helmets and body armor – especially in the Gaza Strip, given the unstable security situation. There is a severe shortage of this type of safety equipment because Israeli authorities prevent it from entering Gaza through Israeli border checkpoints (such as the Beit Hanoun

crossing). It is also difficult to transport this type of safety equipment into Gaza through the Rafah border crossing from Egypt. When safety equipment from outside is available in Gaza, it is very expensive. Locally produced safety equipment is more readily available, but it is poor quality compared to equipment manufactured internationally. Having to rely on sub-standard safety equipment exposes journalists and photographers to an increased risk of serious injury and even death.

More broadly, across all four categories, representatives of media organizations in the Gaza Strip said it was imperative to seek international protection guarantees to prevent Israeli forces from targeting their headquarters and staff – this need became especially apparent after the latest round of violence in May 2021.

Another pressing issue in Gaza is the 15-year electricity crisis that has been plaguing the territory and forcing media organizations to secure electricity through generators, which are expensive. Even for organizations that have their own generators, finding replacement parts can be challenging due to supply shortages. In addition to better electricity supply, participants said media organizations in Gaza need better Internet connections. Currently, 2G is the best connection available while other parts of the world are already using 5G.

To address their needs, Palestinian media organizations need to liaise with international organizations that that work to support and protect journalists, according to the participants. This would help secure funding for the medical treatment of journalists who have been seriously injured while reporting in Gaza. Participants also said there is a need to raise awareness about the importance of mental health support and underlined the urgency of providing psychological support sessions and activities for members of the press – especially those working in Gaza – to mitigate the psychological effects of the difficult events they cover.

Participants also highlighted the importance of journalistic impartiality and the need for authorities to remove barriers to journalists' ability to work. The Palestinian Authorities in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza both impede the ability of journalists from outlets affiliated with opposing political movements to carry out their work. For example, some partisan media outlets have a hard time filming material for television in the West Bank or finding special correspondents because of obstacles erected by the Palestinian Authority. The same is true for journalists working in the Gaza Strip when they are not aligned with the Hamas government.

Training and Capacity-building

Representatives from some of the participating media organizations, such as the West Bank's Wattan TV, said they own centers and academies that train journalists and help them find job opportunities. During the Israeli war on Gaza that took place in May 2021, the Israeli air force destroyed Felesteen newspaper's training center, which offered hundreds of courses. According to the roundtable participants, courses held by the participants' organizations over the past years encompassed TV presenting, editing, photography, occupational safety, sound engineering, mobile journalism, radio presenting, voiceover recording, fact-checking, design, storytelling, and marketing. However, most of the courses were suspended more than a year

ago due to the coronavirus pandemic, financial crises, and the high cost of running these courses.

The participants requested training opportunities, courses, and workshops inside and outside of Palestine covering topics such as first aid, occupational safety, support, and psychological treatment – especially for journalists in the Gaza Strip working in dangerous environments. Participants also expressed an interest in courses outside of Palestine that help them become familiar with work environments in Arab and other foreign countries. These programs could include partnering with media organizations in order to share knowledge. The participants also said it was important for international trainers to be involved in providing high level courses and workshops, specifically in areas such as investigative journalism and specialized topics, such as covering economics.

With the every-growing role and importance of digital media, participants said it was necessary to provide courses focusing on online media and social media platforms. Courses of this type would help journalists develop skills in marketing and cyber security to help them make sure they are safe from electronic threats, hacking, piracy, extortion, data theft, and infringement of privacy. As such, participants agreed there is a need for training opportunities to help sustain the work of their media organizations in light of the existing obstacles and financial crises.

Necessary Legal Reforms

Participants from all four media categories highlighted the need for Palestinian media outlets to push for reforms to the legal framework governing journalistic work in Palestine, especially given the fact that different laws are applied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For example, across the four sessions, representatives of media organizations headquartered in the West Bank highlighted the need to amend the cybercrime law enacted by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank in 2017 and for the legislation to be brought in line with the Palestinian Authority's legal and international obligations. In its current form, the law limits freedom of publication and speech. Participants also raised the need to pressure the Palestinian Authority to lift the ban it imposed on some websites in the West Bank and Gaza Strip more than two years ago.

Similarly, in all four sessions, participants from the Gaza stressed the need to put an end to the "misuse of technology" law, which is being used by the Hamas government to restrict freedom of expression and persecute journalists in the Gaza Strip.

Participants underscored the need to hold joint workshops to gather journalists, lawyers, human rights institutions, and representatives from the judiciary to amend these laws to be in accordance with international standards when it comes to freedom of opinion and freedom of the press. The participants also unanimously agreed on the need to pressure the Palestinian Authority to pass a law on the right to access information in Palestine.

The first step needed to reach the goal of greater journalistic freedom is for security services to stop interfering with the work of journalists and media organizations in both the West Bank and Gaza. This includes lifting the security conditions set by the security services and the

Ministry of Information and Communications to grant media organizations their licenses. Participants urged local and international NGOs to support the Palestinian Syndicate of Journalists and protect it from political conflict so that it can play an effective role in protecting media professionals.

Self-Regulation Reform

During all four sessions, participants insisted on the need to reform salary laws and regulations within organizations (especially in the Gaza Strip) as well as the need to improve employees' rights. For example, certain institutions currently do not provide recruits with employment contracts or do not apply the terms of contracts in the event of arbitrary dismissal. Participants also raised the importance of stating clear end-of-service and pension amounts.

Participants highlighted the importance of changing perceptions and rapports between directors/supervisors and journalists. For example, directors/supervisors tend to prevent journalists from attending external courses because this would require them to miss work. The fact that these courses benefit both the journalist and media organization is often overlooked. Some media organizations are reluctant to contribute to developing the capabilities of the journalists working for them out of the fear that they would then leave their job and find better professional and financial opportunities, according to the participants.

Finally, some participants mentioned the need for health insurance services to be provided at reduced rates to journalists and the overall need for better insurance coverage and standards in the event of injury or work accidents, especially for freelance journalists or journalists who are not working for an official media organization.

Traditional Media Content Analysis

The first section of this study focuses on 30 Palestinian media outlets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip representing four types of media: television, radio, print, and electronic. The section examines the articles, reports, investigations, and interviews published by the media outlets and quantitatively and qualitatively identifies the sources these outlets rely on.

Methodology

This study monitored the front page of the surveyed outlets twice a day between September 26 and 30, 2021 to analyze the main news item in their print editions or websites. For television and radio channels, the study monitored the main news bulletins and the content of the main daily talk shows.

The seven television programs monitored were: "Hona Felesteen" (Al-Aqsa); "Malaf Al-Yawm" (Palestine); "Hewar Al-Laila" (Alkofiya); "Haza Al-Masa'" (Alquds Today); "Shed Haylak Ya Watan" (Wattan); "Kadaya Monawwaʿa" (Maʿan); "Nour El-Melh" (Kolalnas). And the eight radio programs were: "Haki Al-Nas" (Alam); "Panorama Al-Quds" (Alquds);

"Montasaf An-Nahar" (Nisaa FM); "Maʿ Al-Nas" (Raya); "Likaʾ Khas" (Ajyal); "Saʿat Zaman" (Zaman); "Jawlat Al-Zahira" (Bethlehem 2000); and "Nabad Al-Balad" (Al-Shaab).

List of Media Outlets Included in the Study

The following media outlets were included in the study were:

Television

- Al-Aqsa
- Kolalnas
- Palestine
- AlKofiya
- Alquds Today
- Wattan
- Maan

Radio

- Alam
- Sawt Al-Quds
- Nisaa FM
- Al-Raya
- Ajyal
- Zaman FM
- Bethlehem 2000
- Al-Shaab

Print and Electronic Edition Newspapers

- Felesteen
- Al-Istiqlal
- Al-Ayyam
- Al-Hadath
- Al-Hayat Al-Jadida
- Al-Resalah
- Al-Rai

Websites

- Dunia Al-Watan
- Shehab
- Al-Quds News Network
- Metras
- Wafa
- National News Agency
- Al-Bawaba 24

- Palestine News Network

A total of 1,014 items were produced during the study period and logged into the research database. Each entry included:

- Name of the media organization
- Department: main talk shows or news bulletin
- Title
- Publication date
- URL
- Type of material: news; news report; opinion article; investigative report; interview
- Medium used: text; video; photo
- Number of photos
- Number of videos
- Total duration of videos
- Main themes: local politics; regional politics; international politics; military; cultural; economic; social; environmental; educational; human rights; sports; gender; science/technology; education; religion; health; law; other topics
- Number of sources
- Type of sources: military/security; political; academic; activist; expert; official; governmental; NGO; international; citizen; professional

It should be noted that this study is not a comprehensive assessment of the entire Palestinian media sector as it does not include an external audit of the information contained in the above-mentioned content. It also does not vet sources nor does it include interviews with editors of the selected outlets to obtain more details about their respective editorial policies. However, this study is intended to function as the basis for normative comparisons, a starting point for future research, and for comparisons with international media outlets. It is also a tool to assist the Palestinian media sector in its efforts to diversify and develop its content, enhance its editorial capacity, and address the shortcomings it faces in formulating effective media content strategies.

Data Analysis

During the monitoring period, a total of 1,014 items were monitored: 466 from television; (466); 411 from radio; 65 from newspapers; and 72 from websites: television accounted for the largest amount of material, at 46 percent, due to the number of reports and topics presented in news bulletins; followed by Radio at 41 percent of the total items; then websites, which were monitored twice-a-day, at 7 percent; followed by newspapers, with the least items, at 6 percent. The monitoring process utilized a set of quantitative and qualitative measures that are based on essential journalistic criteria such as the type of material, the channel used, and the sources consulted in the articles and reports, in addition to their number and nature.
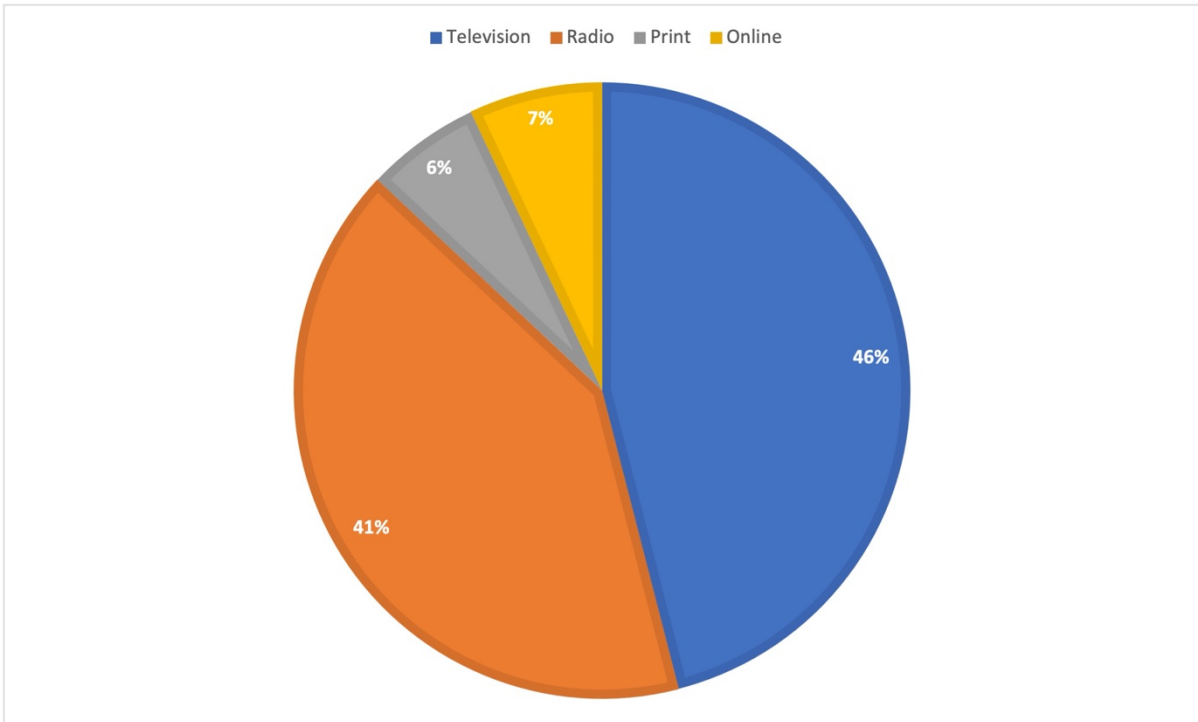
Figure 1: Breakdown of content per media sector

Radio

The 411 items reported on the radio were distributed between: Radio Bethlehem 2000, with 19 percent of the data as shown in Figure 2; followed by a lesser percentage for: Sawt Al-Quds at 17 percent; Al-Shaab at 16 percent; Al-Raya and Nisaa FM at 13 percent, respectively; Alam at 10 percent; Ajyal at 8 percent; and Zaman radio, which had the lowest percentage of data because it focused on talk shows instead of broadcasting news bulletins, at 4 percent.
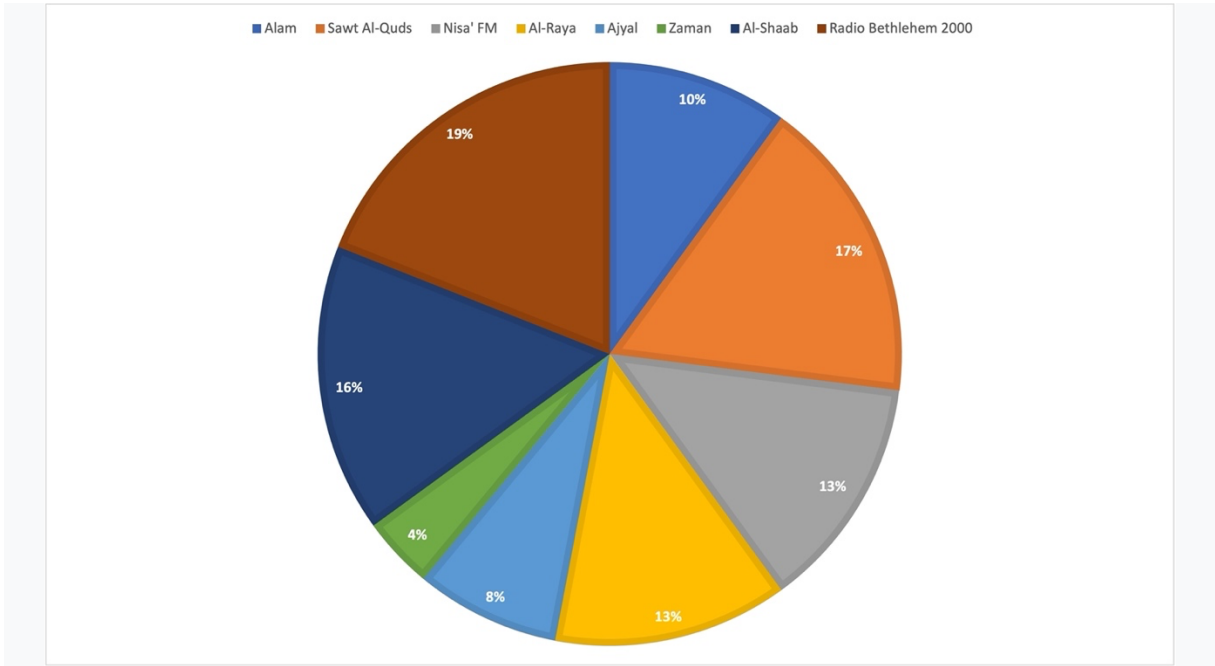
Figure 2: Volume of data in the radio sector

News bulletins constituted the largest percentage of the monitored material (64 percent), as shown in Figure 3, while talk shows accounted for 36 percent of programming in Palestinian radio stations.
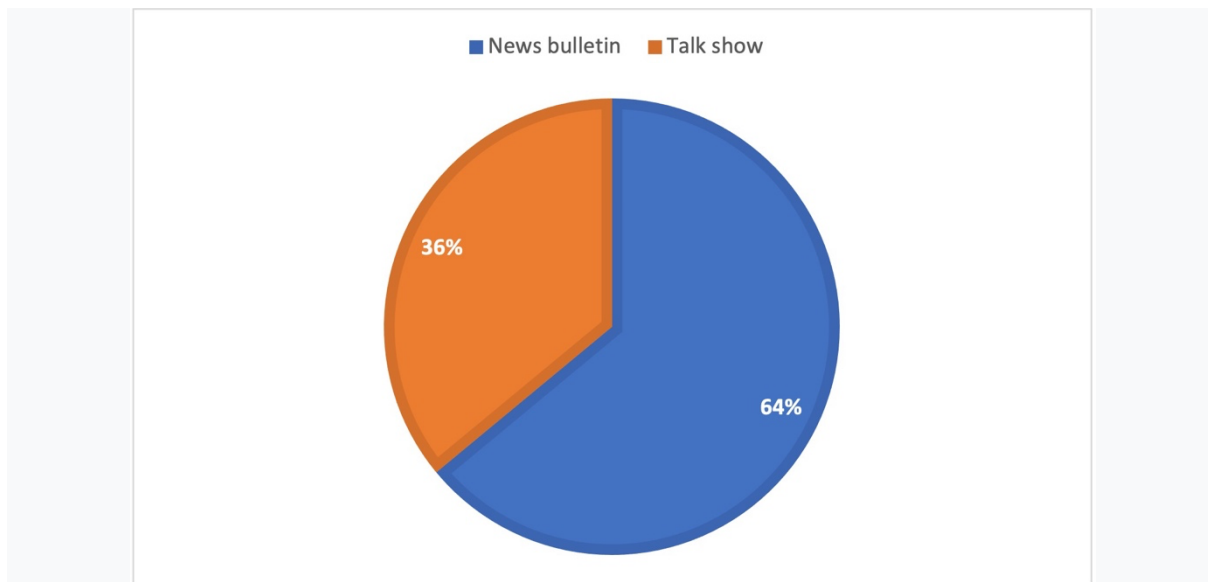
Figure 3: Type of programs on radio

Of the 411 items, 59 percent were news bulletins covering current local and international events; interviews made up 36 percent of the total content, according to Figure 4; and news reports accounted for 5 percent.
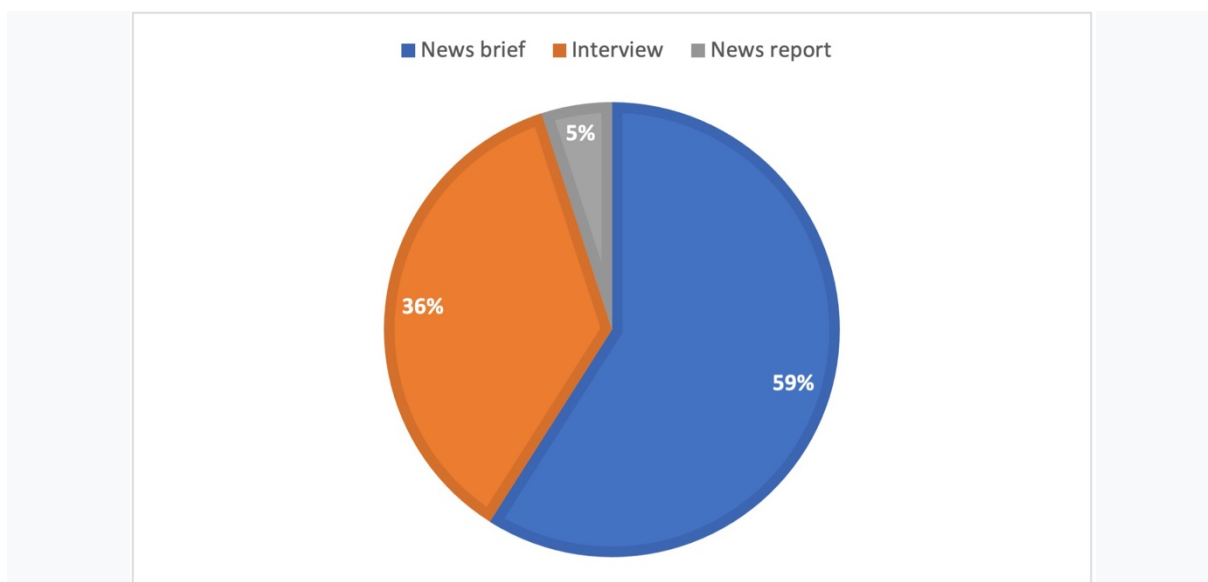
Figure 4: Type of content on radio

News bulletins represented the largest proportion of the content of most of the monitored radio stations, as shown in Figure 5. Specifically, it accounted for 93 percent of content at Radio Bethlehem 2000, 62 percent at Al-Shaab radio, while at Zaman radio it represented the lower percentage (7 percent) due to a focus on talk shows instead of news bulletins.

Interviews also constituted a high percentage of the broadcast content and were contained specifically in news bulletins and talk shows. Alam radio recorded the highest rate of interviews at 73 percent, followed by Al-Shaab radio at 38 percent, while Bethlehem 2000 had the lowest rate, at 7 percent of its content.

As for news reports, Sawt Al-Quds scored the highest 20 percent of its content, while Bethlehem 2000, Al-Shaab radio, and Zaman did not broadcast any news reports.

Meanwhile, no investigative reports or articles were detected among the monitored material.
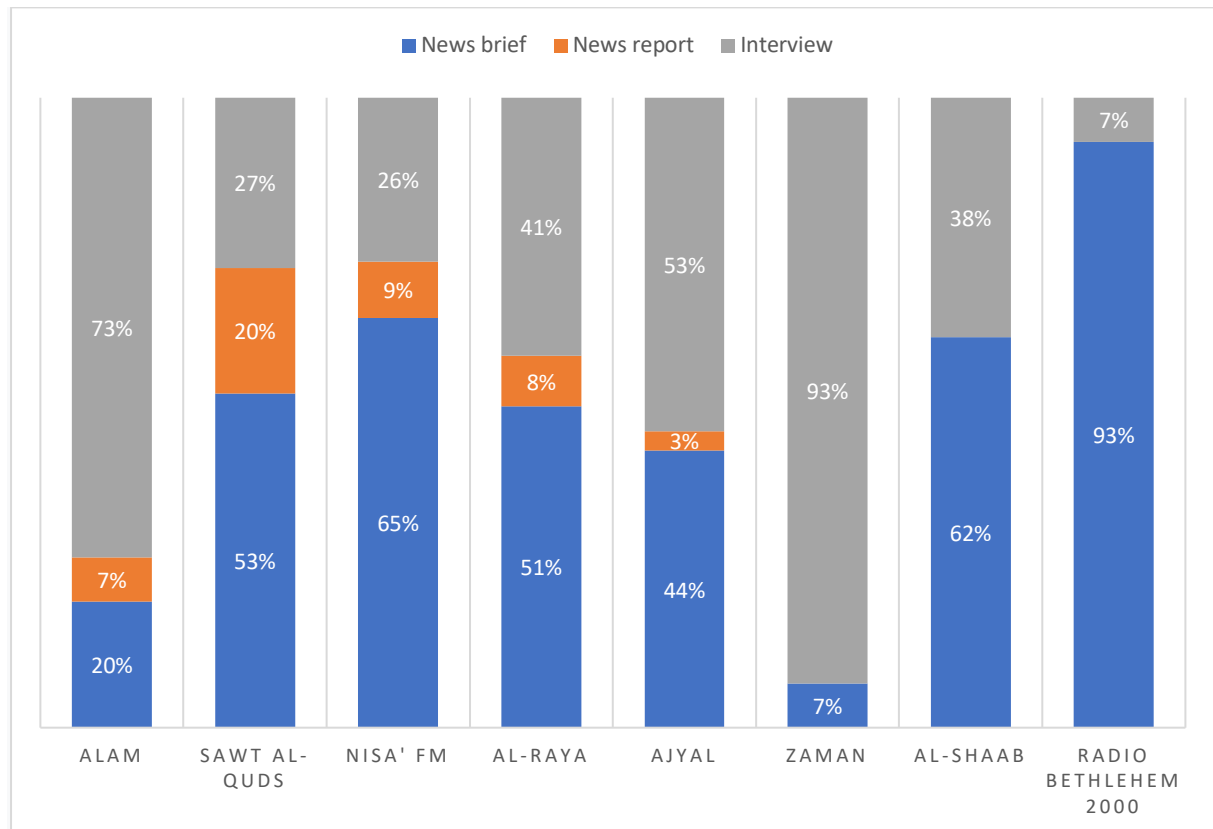
Figure 5: Type of content per radio station

Radio stations used video to live broadcast their shows on their social media pages from inside the stations' studios, as shown in Figure 6. Video comprised 51 percent of coverage whereas audio made up 49 percent. The average video duration was two minutes (37 video, 36.6 percent).
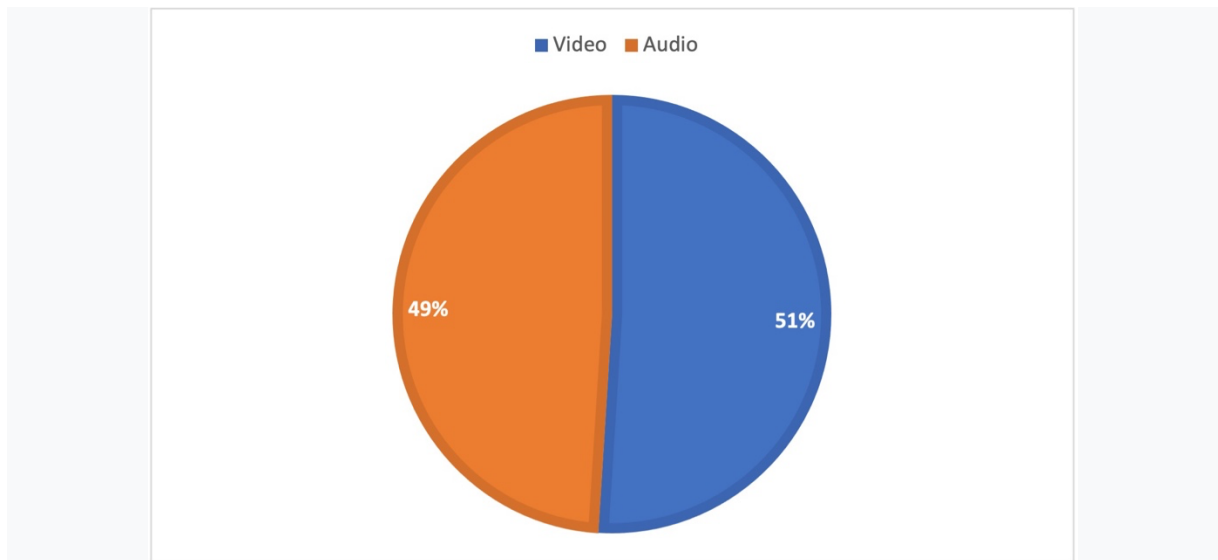
Figure 6: Medium used by radio stations

Local news was the most frequent topic among the material studied from the eight radio stations, as shown in Figure 7. It constituted 209 out of 411 items (or 51 percent of the published material). This was followed by: human rights (55 items, or 13 percent of the content); economics (28 items, or 7 percent); regional policies (23 items, or 6 percent); law (20 items, or 5 percent); and health (18 items, or 4 percent), which focused on the COVID-19 pandemic.

International and military news recorded equal percentages (14 items, or 3 percent each), followed by: social news (11 items, or 3 percent); gender issues (7 items, or 2 percent); and cultural and environmental news with an equal percentage (4 items, or 1 percent for each). Education and teaching (1 item, 0.2 percent), and religion (2 items, or 0.4 percent) were the least covered topics and sports was not covered at all.

Topics considered to be youth-oriented, such as science and technology, were rarely covered on the eight radio stations in the study, with only one item on science and technology recorded during the monitoring period (0.2 percent of the content).
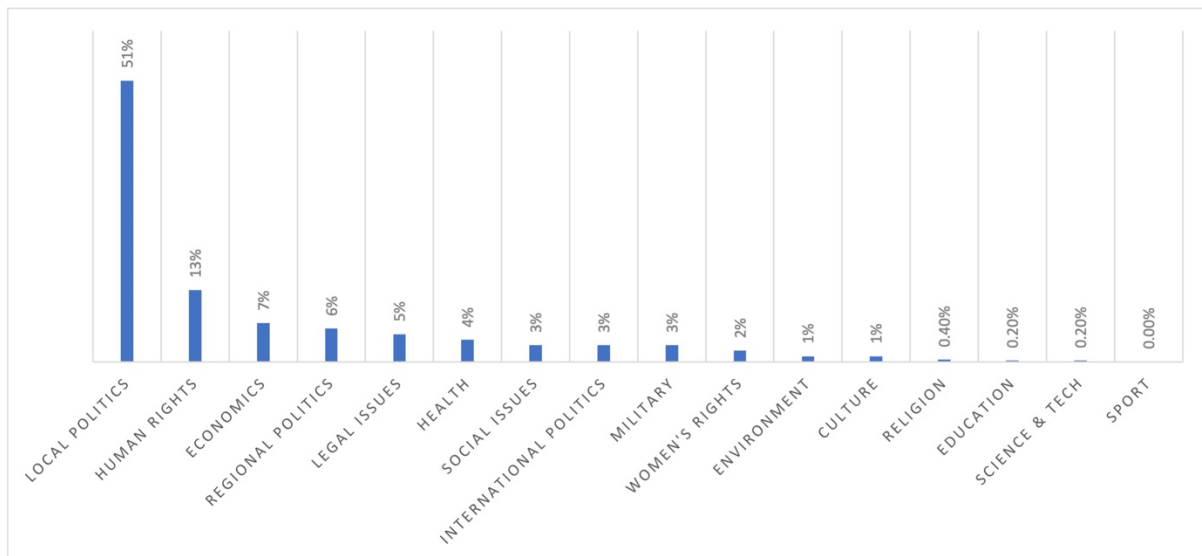

Figure 7: Topics covered by radio stations

Local news topped the list of topics for all radio stations monitored during the study (Figure 8). In Ajyal radio, it accounted for 52 percent of content, followed by international news (six items, or 18 percent of the content), then economic and health news (two items, or 6 percent each).

Local news also topped the topics on Alam radio (21 items, or 51.2 percent of content), followed by: human rights (seven items, or 17 percent); economics (six items, or 14.6 percent); and law (four items, or 9.7 percent).

As for Radio Bethlehem 2000, local news also topped the list of the topics it covered (70 items, or 88 percent of the total content), followed by: regional news (three items, or 4 percent); health and military news (3 percent each); and news related to human rights (one item, or 1 percent).

Local news also made up the highest percentage of coverage on Raya Radio (20 items, or 39 percent of content), followed by: legal news (10 items, or 19 percent); and economic and human rights issues (eight items, or 15 percent each).

While the topics covered by Nisaa FM radio varied, issues related to human rights and local news made up the same percentage of coverage (10 items, or 19 percent each), followed by issues related to women and the law with similar percentages (six items, or 11 percent each).

Local news topped the list of Sawt Al-Quds' coverage topics (30 items, or 43 percent of its content), followed by: issues related to human rights (24 items, or 34 percent); and military news (seven items, or 10 percent).

As for Sawt Al-Shaab, local news also accounted for the highest percentage (38 items, or 58 percent of its content), followed by: regional news (17 percent); and news related to health and the economy (8 percent each).

Finally, on Zaman Radio, which accounted for the fewest items due to the fact that it did not broadcast news bulletins, economic issues accounted for the greatest percentage of its content (five items, or 33 percent), followed by human rights issues (27 percent).
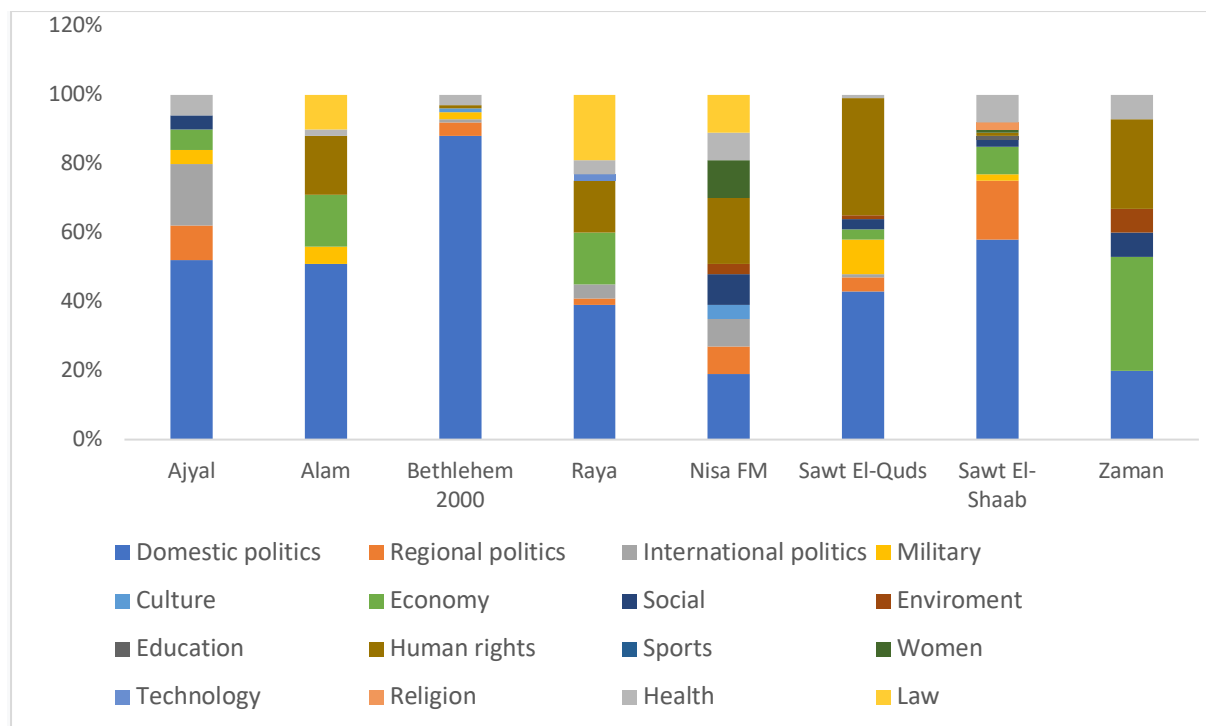
Figure 8: Topics covered by each radio station

The radio stations that were monitored cited professional/expert sources most frequently, as shown in Figure 9, followed by political and governmental sources. Out of a total of 402 items, the research found: 116 items that included professional sources (29 percent); 81 items that included political sources (20 percent); and 69 items that included a governmental/official source (17 percent). In addition, 10 percent of items used activists as a source, 9 percent used citizens, and 7 percent used military or security sources. Academics, NGOs, and international organizations accounted for 4, 3, and 1 percent respectively.
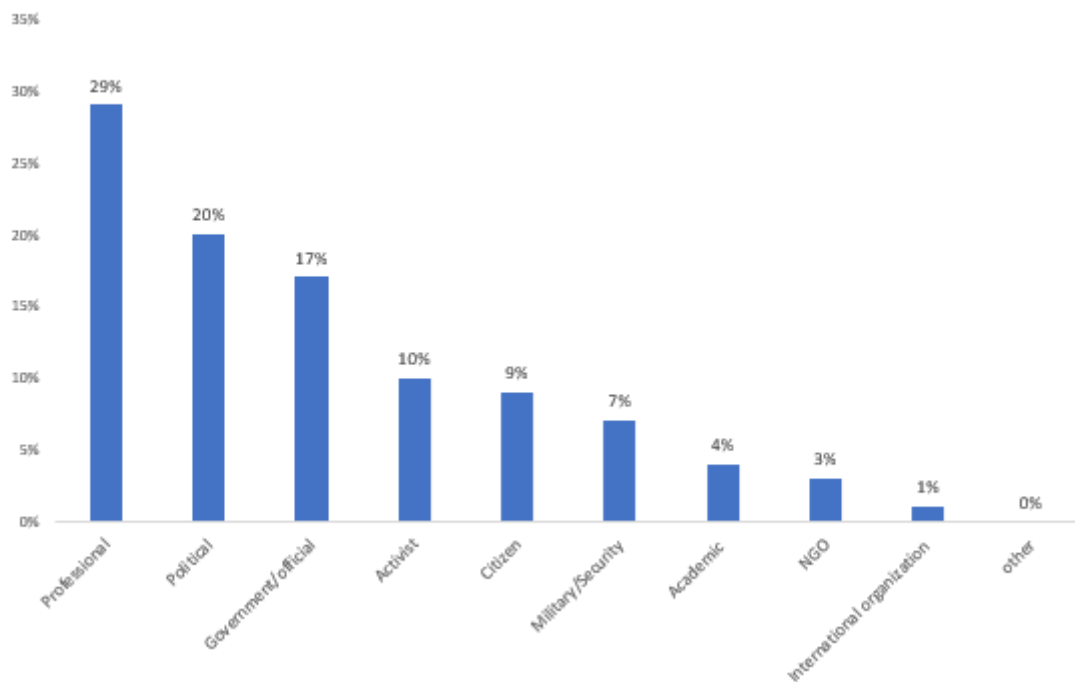
Figure 9: Type of sources used by radio stations

Some radio stations provided a platform for citizens, professionals, and activists on select issues, as shown in Figure 10. For example, Radio Bethlehem 2000 gave ordinary citizens a voice in 19 items, constituting 18 percent of its content – the highest percentage among radio stations by a clear margin. Also, it had the highest percentage of items provided by activists (16 percent) and professionals (25 percent).

Meanwhile, Al-Shaab radio recorded the highest percentage of items based on political sources (25 items, or 30 percent), followed by: professionals (23 percent); governmental/official (17 items, or 20 percent); and activists (12 percent).

On the other hand, Sawt Al-Quds primarily utilized political sources (19 items, or 46 percent), followed by professional (29 percent) and military (12 percent) sources. Items that used citizens, academics, and activists as sources accounted for 3 percent of its content.

In comparison, Nisaa FM radio relied more heavily on professionals (38 percent) and governmental sources (19 percent). This was followed by NGOs (16 percent), which is the highest percentage relative to the total when compared with the other radio stations. Meanwhile, political sources were completely absent from its content.

As for Raya: 30 percent of its sources were professional; 26 percent were governmental; 14 percent were political; and 9 percent were political. Zaman Radio relied exclusively on governmental sources. Other types of sources were absent from its monitored materials.

As for Alam, people who work in their field of expertise, or professionals, accounted for the highest percentage of sources (34 percent). Political sources were second, at 20 percent, followed by governmental sources (15 percent), and then citizens (10 percent). Finally, Ajyal

Radio collected content from varied sources, including professional (37 percent); governmental (15 percent); and political (14 percent).
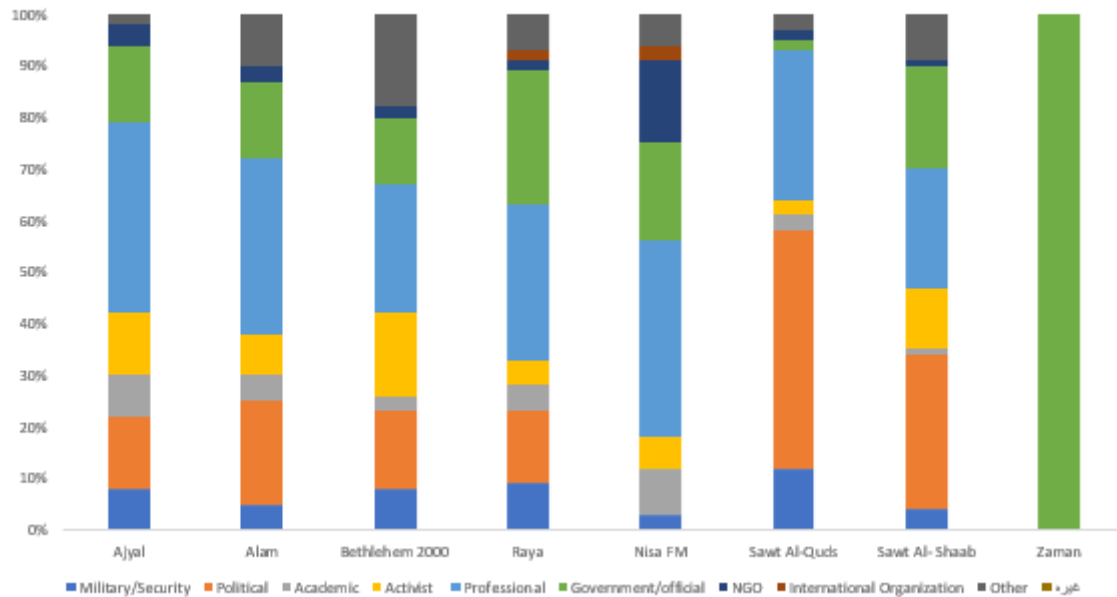

Figure 10: Type of sources used by each radio station

In this study, sources are defined as individuals or entities that provide information in interviews or through reports. In total, 402 sources were cited in the 411 monitored items. On average, that means there were 0.9 sources per item. As a result, it can be concluded that the number of sources per item was lower than the industry recognized standard to be considered quality journalism.

Websites

The number of items monitored on news websites was roughly equal across outlets, likely due to the data collection methodology. Each website was visited twice a day during the monitoring period, and the lead story was selected for review each time. As a result, 10 items were reviewed from each website, except for Metras, which only had two articles reviewed for this study because it did not update its site with new material. A total of 72 items were reviewed across all of the websites during the monitoring period.
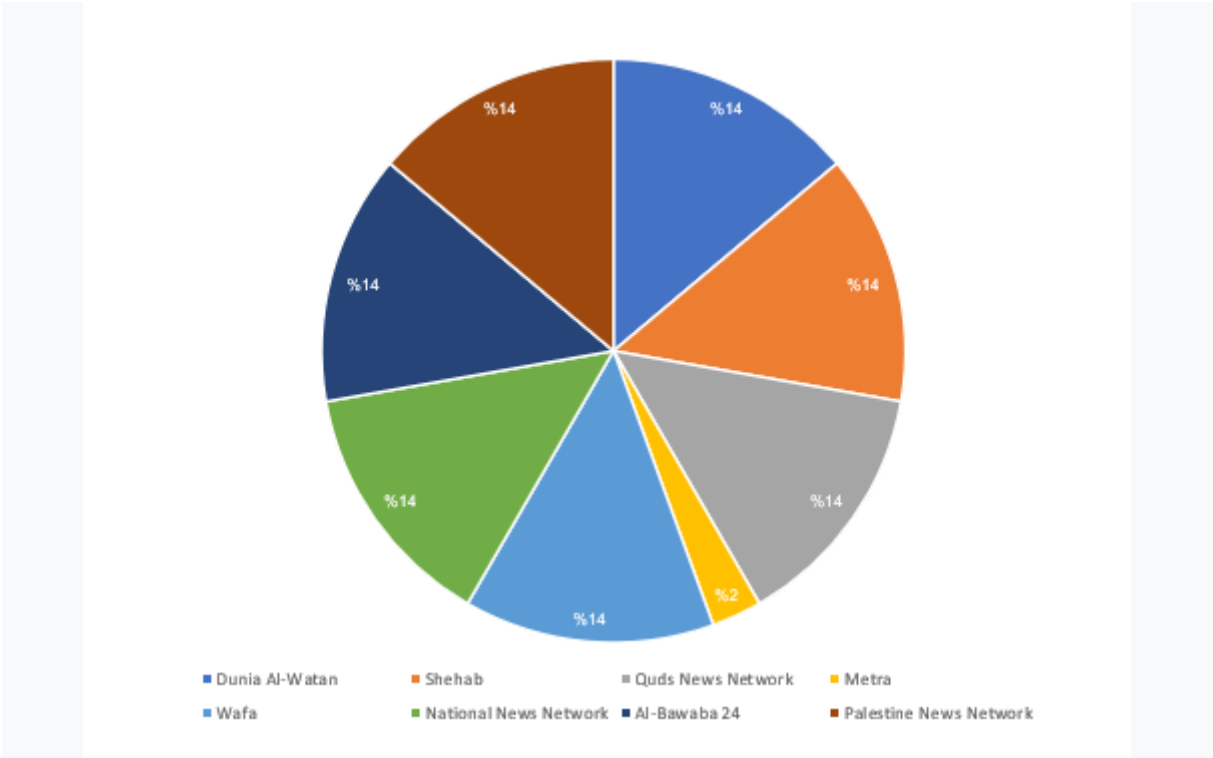
Figure 11: Volume of data in the digital media sector

The 72 items were divided according to type of content: 37 items were news reports (51 percent of the total content); 33 were news (46 percent); and there were two opinion pieces (3 percent), as shown in Figure 12.
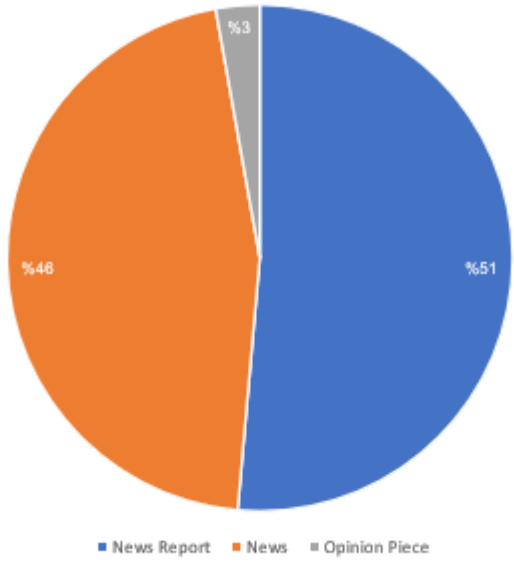

Figure 12: Type of content in the digital media sector

It is noteworthy that news websites that focused on publishing news reports published a small percentage of breaking news articles, and vice versa, as shown in Figure 13. For example, features constituted 80 percent of the content monitored on Quds News Network while news

was only 20 percent. In Wafa, features accounted for 70 percent of the monitored content while news constituted 30 percent. Palestine News Network and Shehab both had 60 percent features and 40 percent news articles.

Meanwhile, 40 percent of the items monitored on the National News Agency website were features while 60 percent were news articles. Dunia Al-Watan and Al-Bawaba 24 both had 30 percent features and 70 percent news article.

This was also true in Dunia Al-Watan and Al-Bawaba 24 with similar percentages of 30% in news reports whereas the news constituted the highest percentage of their content (70% each).

As for Metras, essays accounted for 100 percent of its monitored content. Meanwhile, there were no investigative reports or interviews among the monitored content.
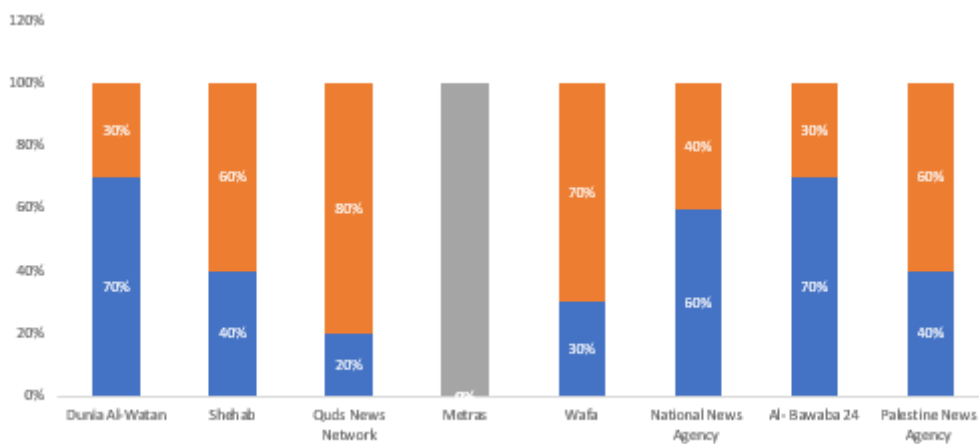

Figure 13: Type of content per website

All the monitored websites used a mix of text and images in their content. On average, the websites used 1.1 images per item and a total of 84 images overall. There were no other types of media used in the monitored material.

Local political news was the most frequent topic among the monitored content, as shown in Figure 4. It accounted for 26 of the 72 monitored items (36 percent of the total), followed by: human rights (11 items, or 15 percent); the economy (nine items, or 13 percent); and the military (eight items, or 11 percent). Regional, health, and legal news accounted for six items each, or 8 percent of the total coverage for each topic.

It is worth noting the absence of lead articles on the monitored sites related to women, science and technology, the environment, education, and cultural and sports.
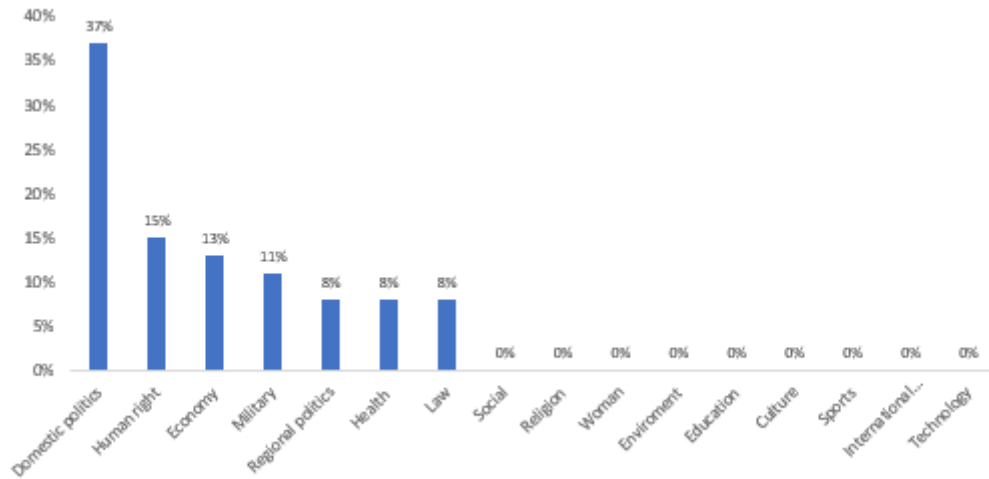
Figure 14: Topics covered in the digital media sector

Local political news was the most frequently covered topic on Dunia Al-Watan, accounting for five items out of 10 (50 percent). This was followed by health at two items (20 percent). Human rights, law, and military each accounted for one item (10 percent, respectively).

Local political news also accounted for the highest percentage of coverage on Shehab Agency as five items out of 10 (50 percent). The remaining items were about the law, military, and the economy, at 10 percent each.

Al-Quds News Network also had five out of 10 items of monitored content related to local political news (50 percent). Military and legal news each accounted for two items (20 percent, respectively). There was also one article about human rights (10 percent).

For Metras, one of the two monitored items dealt with local political affairs while the other was about military affairs.

Human rights were the highest recorded topic among the monitored material from Wafa, accounting for four items (40 percent of total coverage). Local political news came in second at three items (30 percent). Finally, there was one article each related to the economy, law, and regional news (10 percent of content, respectively).

As for the National News Agency, local political and economic news were the most covered topics at three items each (30 percent of content, respectively), followed by: health with two items (20 percent); military issues with one item (10% percent); and human rights with one item (10 percent).

Economic, health, military, and regional issues constituted 20% of the content each, followed by local news and law with one item each (10% of the total content).

Finally, human rights were the most covered topic in Palestine News Network's monitored material, accounting for four items (40 percent). This was followed by: local politics with three items (30 percent); the economy at two items (20 percent); and one item of regional news (10 percent), as shown in Figure 15.
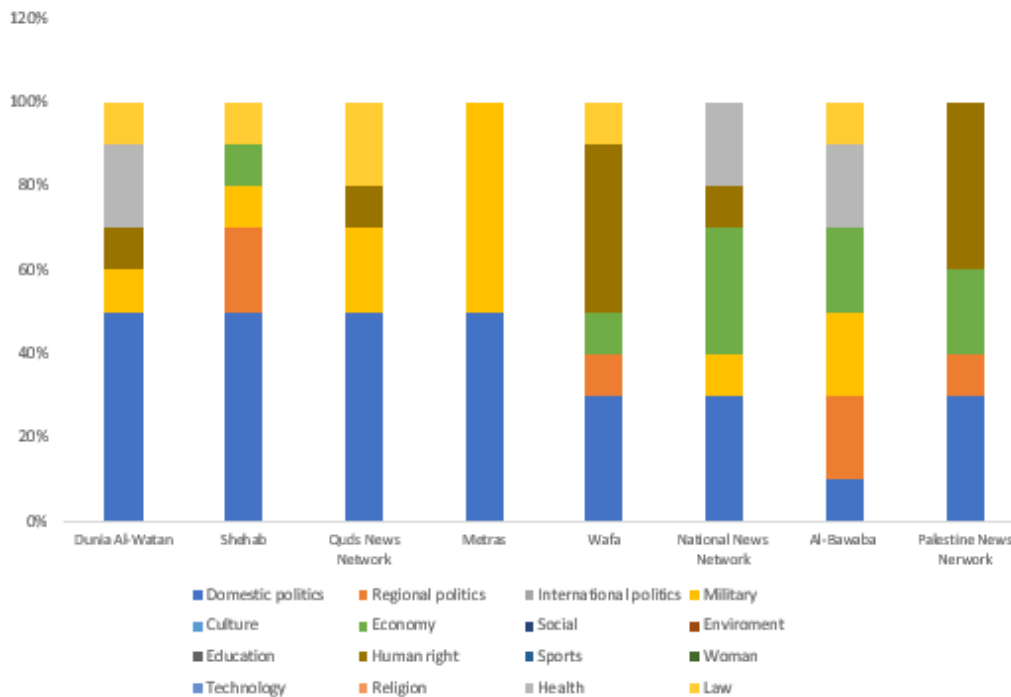
Figure 15: Topics covered by each website

In the monitored content, news websites depended most heavily on government/official sources, as shown in Figure 16. Out of 64 total sources cited in the 72 articles, 30 were government/official sources (47 percent of the total), followed by: 18 political sources (28 percent); 11 military/security sources (17 percent); four activist sources (6 percent); and one citizen source (2 percent).

The distribution of sources shows that news websites rely heavily on politicians and government sources – offering them a platform – while neglecting to consult academics and experts and giving only minimal space to activists and citizens.
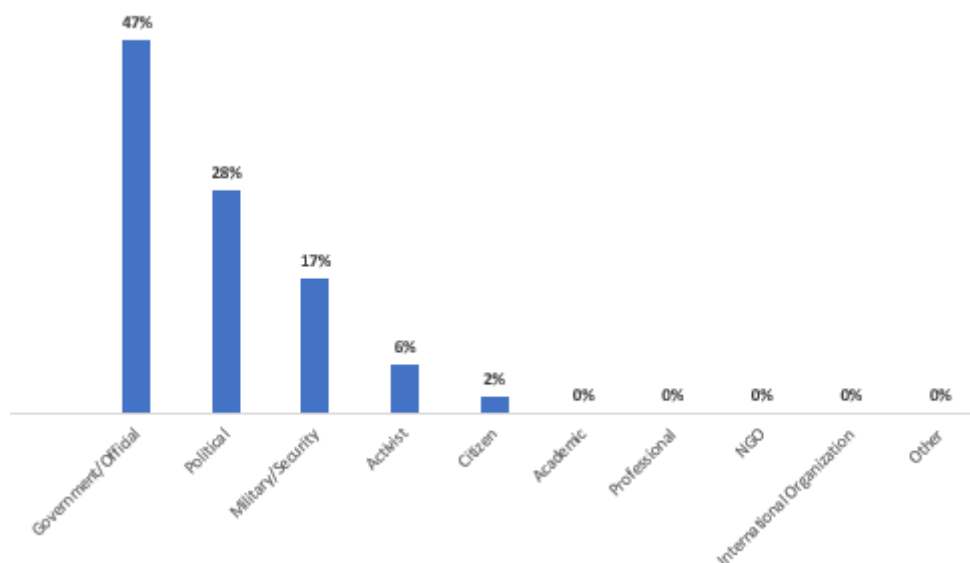

Figure 16: Type of sources used by the digital media sector

Government sources were the most frequently cited sources in Wafa's monitored content, accounting for six of 11 cited sources (55 percent). Military sources were the second most frequently cited at three (27 percent), and two military sources (18 percent) were also cited in the monitored content. There were no activists, citizens, academics, or other groups cited as sources in Wafa's content.

The National Media Agency also primarily depended on official government sources, accounting for six out of 10 sources in the monitored content (60 percent). Political sources were the second most cited, at four (40 percent) while the rest of the categories were absent from the agency's content.

Palestine News Network also relied heavily on government sources, accounting for six out of seven sources cited in the monitored content (86 percent). One political source was also cited (14 percent). Other categories of sources were completely absent from its monitored coverage.

Military sources were the most frequently cited in Dunia Al-Watan's monitored content, accounting for four of nine sources (44 percent). Governmental sources were the second most frequently cited at three out of nine (34 percent). There were also two political sources (22 percent). Other categories of sources were absent from the monitored coverage.

Shehab's monitored content cited a more varied array of sources. Political sources accounted for four out of eight sources cited in monitored content (50 percent). Two government sources were also cited (24 percent), and one military source and one citizen were also cited (13 percent, respectively).

Four out of 10 sources cited in the monitored content from Al-Bawaba 24 were governmental sources (40 percent); three were political (30 percent); two were activists (20 percent); and one was military (10 percent).

For Al-Quds News Network, government sources made up 34%, followed by activist, political and military sources with an equal rate of 22% for each.

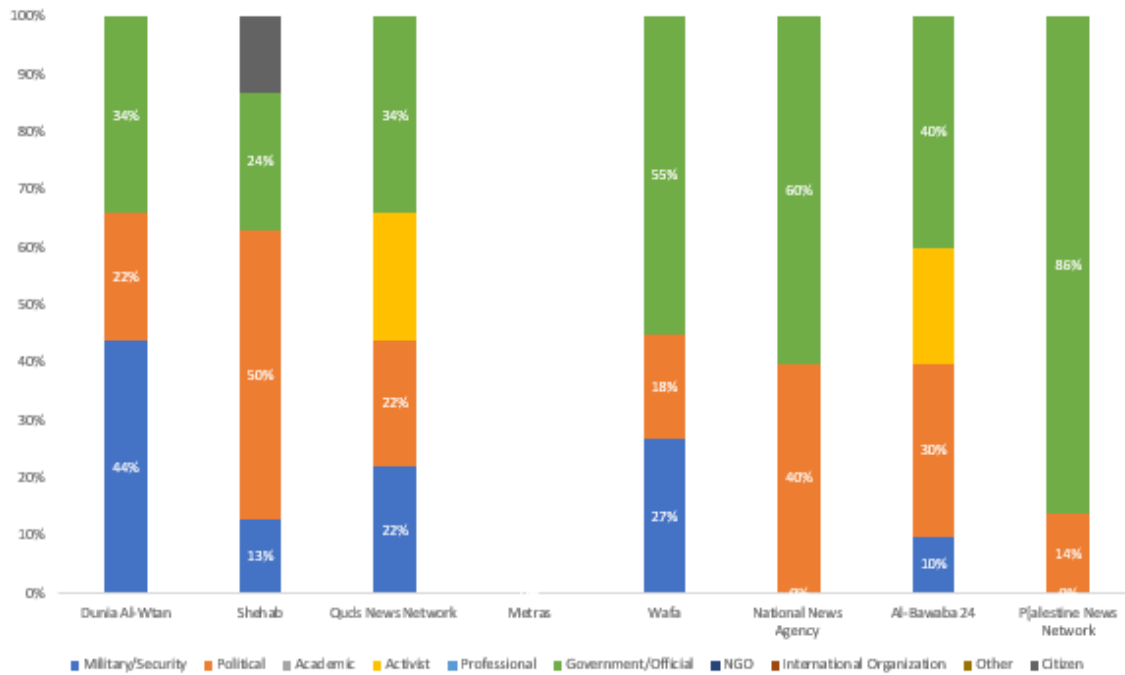There were no sources cited the monitored content from Metras.

Figure 17: Type of sources per website

For the purpose of this study, sources are defined as the individuals who provide the information that appears in interviews or reports. The 72 monitored articles cited 64 sources, or an average of 0.8 sources per article. That is lower than the three sources per article recognized as the minimum standard for quality journalism.

Print publications

To survey the content of Palestinian newspapers and print publications, their daily editions were monitored either in print or as PDF copies during the study period and their websites were monitored twice daily. Several of the newspapers only published content from their print editions and did not publish exclusive online content on their websites. Other newspapers continually updated their websites with news, features, and opinion pieces throughout the day. As a result, the amount of content surveyed per newspaper varied, as shown in Figure 18, depending on the paper's approach to publishing.
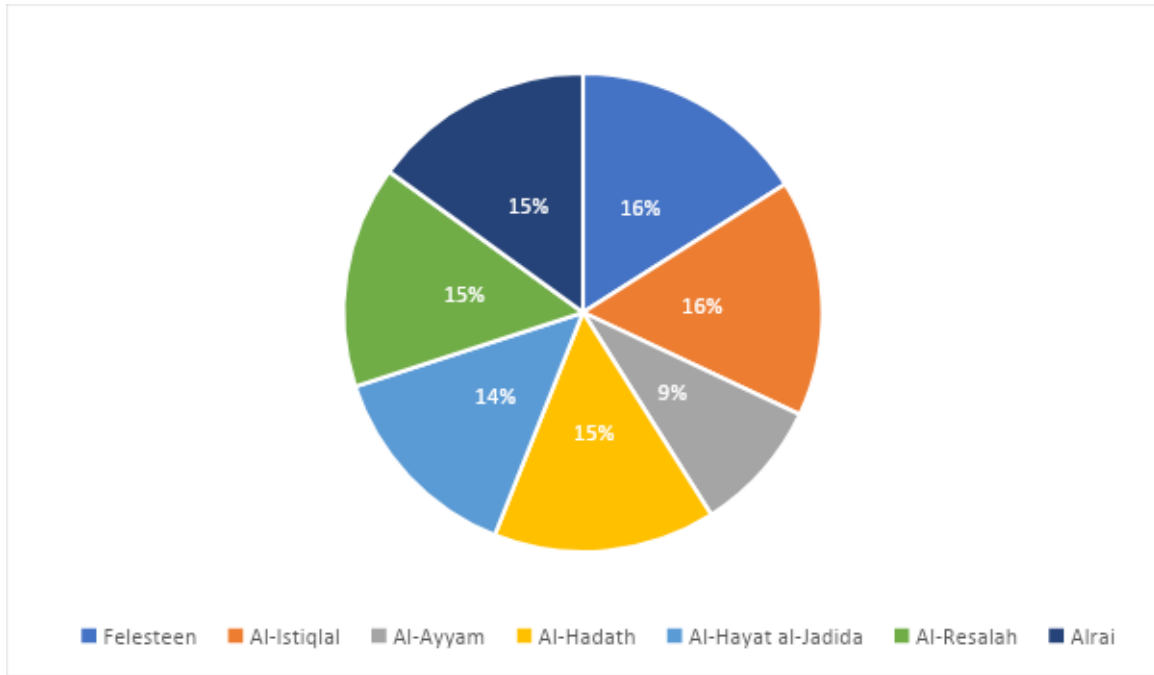
Figure 18: Volume of data in the digital media sector

A total of 65 items were monitored during the study period. They included: 43 news stories (66 percent); 10 interviews (15 percent); eight features (12 percent); three opinion pieces (5 percent); and one investigation (2 percent), as shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Type of content in the print sector

News accounted for the highest percentage of content in the newspapers that were monitored, as shown in Figure 20. In Al-Rai, news accounted for 100 percent of monitored content; in Al-Hadath it accounted for 80 percent; and in both Felesteen and Al-Istiqlal, it accounted for 70 percent.

Interviews accounted for 33 percent of Al-Hayat al-Jadida's content and 20 percent of the content of Felesteen, Al-Istiqlal, and Al-Resalah.
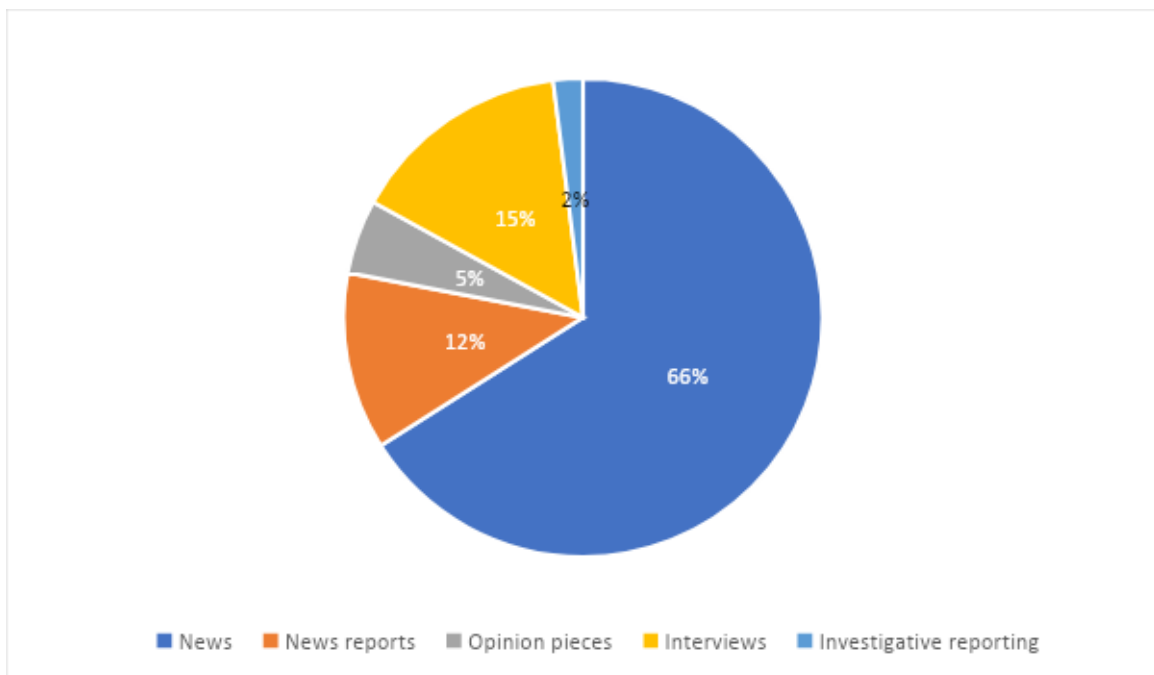
Only Al-Hayat al-Jadida and Al-Resalah published opinion pieces among the monitored material, and they accounted for 11 percent of 20 percent of the newspapers' content respectively.

Al-Hayat al-Jadida was also the only newspaper to publish investigative reporting during the monitoring period. The paper published one item, which accounted for 11 percent of its monitored content.
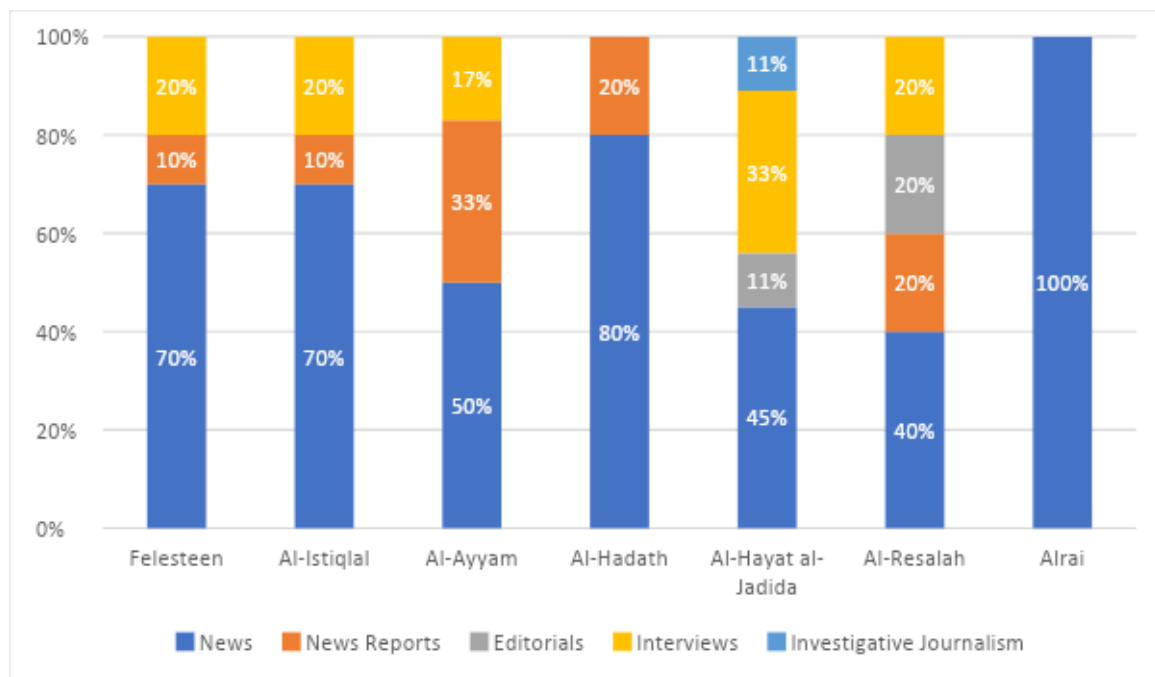
Figure 20: Type of content per newspaper

All of the newspapers used a combination of text and images. Overall, there were a total of 55 images, or an average of 0.8 images per monitored item.

Local political news was the most frequently covered topic among the monitored content, as shown in Figure 21, accounting for 78 percent of the total. Other topics lagged far behind. Health and military topics accounted for 5 percent of the coverage, followed by economics at 3 percent; law, women, and culture at 2 percent, respectively; and finally political, regional, and human rights news at 1 percent each.

There were zero items related to science and technology, the environment, education, social issues, or sports featured as main topics in the print editions of the newspapers or their websites.

Figure 21: Topics covered in the print sector

All of the monitored outlets prioritized domestic political news, as shown in Figure 22, which was the topic of 100 percent of the items in both Al-Resalah and Al-Ayyam. Domestic political news also made up 90 percent of Al-Istiqlal's content while military topics accounted for the remaining 10 percent.
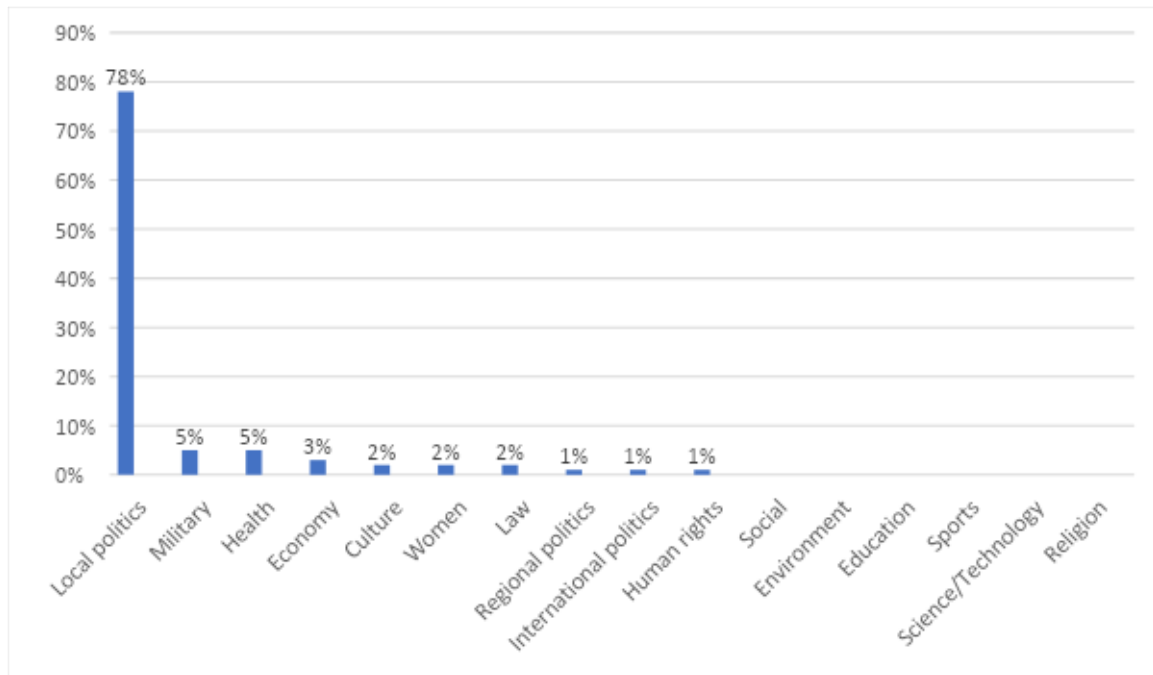
Domestic political news was also the most covered topic in Felesteen's monitored content, accounting for the topic of eight articles out of 10 (80 percent). Health and military topics garnered one article each (10 percent, respectively).

Similarly, seven of the 10 items monitored on Al-Rai were related to domestic political news (70 percent). Health, with two items (20 percent), and human rights, with one item (10 percent), accounted for the remaining coverage.

As for Al-Hayat al-Jadida, domestic political news recorded the highest percentage at 67%, followed by issues regional, economic, and cultural at 11% respectively.

Al-Hadath's monitored content featured a more diverse range of topics. Five of ten articles were related to domestic political news (50 percent) while international, military, economic, gender-related, and legal news each accounted for one item (10 percent respectively).
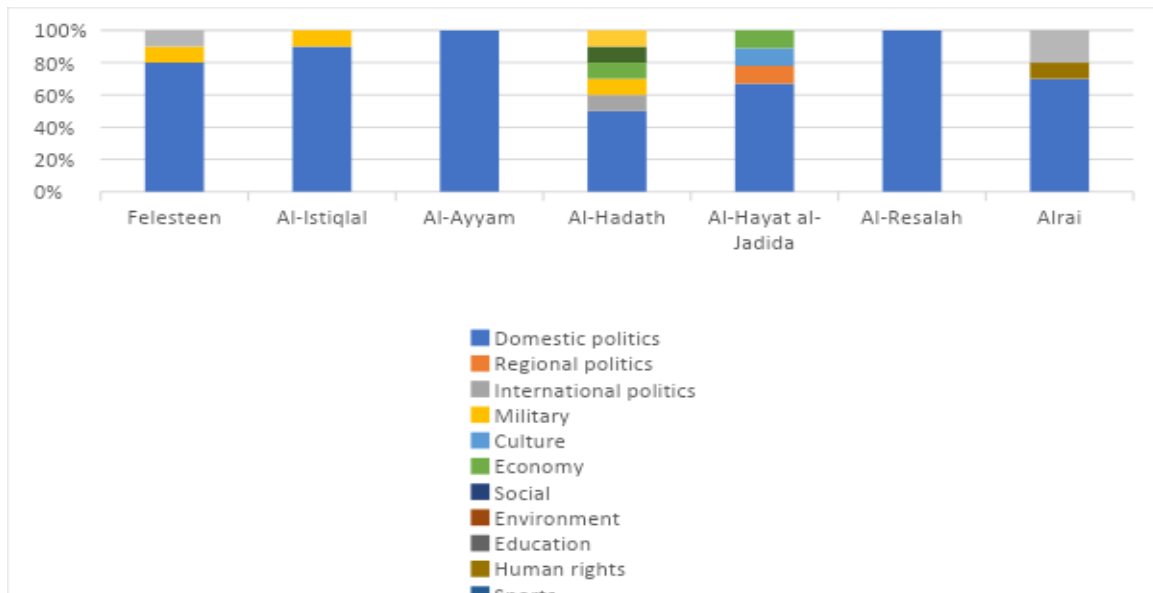
Figure 22: Topics per newspaper

The monitored content from the newspapers primarily relied on political sources, as shown in Figure 23. Out of a total of 62 sources cited, 19 were political (31 percent), followed by: 14 government sources (23 percent); 10 citizens (16 percent); six activists (10 percent); five military/security sources (8 percent); three academic and three professional sources (5 percent, each); and one source from a non-governmental or international organisation (1 percent).
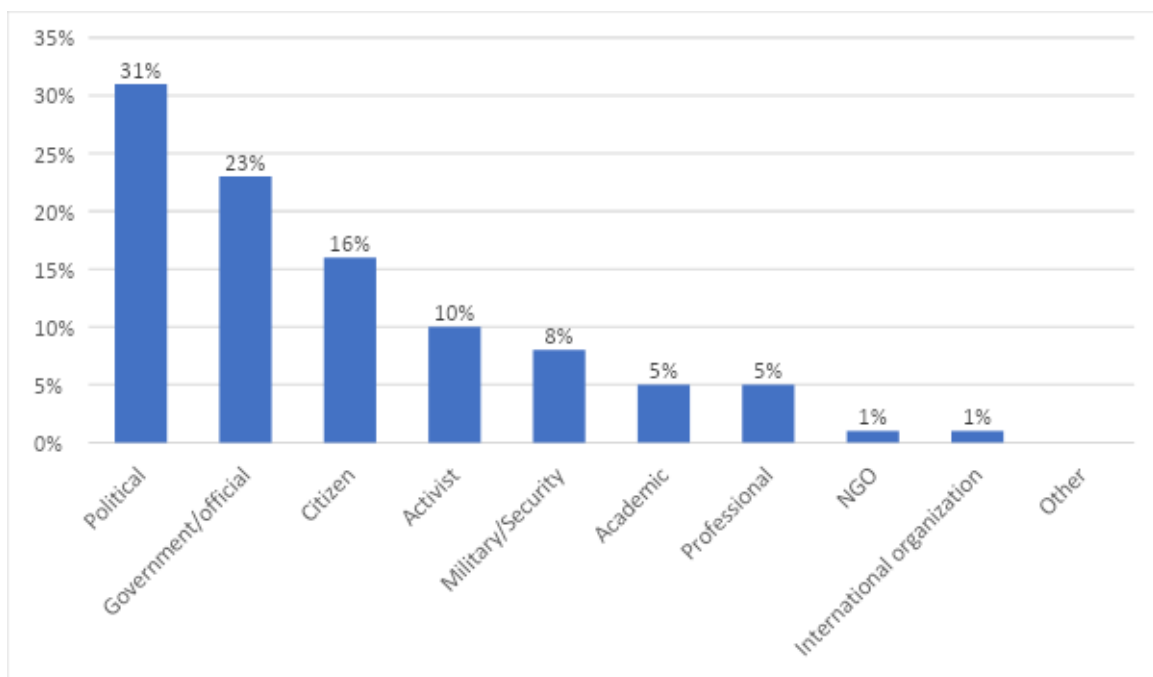
Figure 23: Type of sources in the print sector

Outlets gave the most space in their publications to political and government sources, as shown in Figure 24. Compared to the other newspapers, political sources accounted for the highest percentage of sources used in Al-Resalah's monitored content, at 45 percent. Citizens, at 22 percent, came in second, and military and activist sources each accounted for 12 percent.

In Al-Istiqlal: 40 percent of sources were political; 20 percent were governmental; and citizens, non-governmental organizations, military, and professional sources each accounted for 10 percent of the total sources.

Al-Ayyam's monitored content cited a variety of sources. Political sources account for 32 percent while activists, professionals, international organizations, and citizens each accounted for 17 percent. Unlike other publications, Al-Ayyam did not cite any official governmental sources.

Al-Hayat al-Jadida also had a diverse selection of source: 37 percent political; 25 percent academic and citizen, respectively; and 13 percent governmental.

Government sources accounted for 45 percent of Al-Rai's total, followed by activists and political sources at 22 percent each, and citizens at 11 percent.

Al-Hadath had 30 percent governmental sources; 20 percent each of citizen and political; and 10 percent each for professional, military, and academic.

In Felesteen's monitored content: 30 percent of the sources were governmental; 20 percent each were political and activist; and 10 percent were citizens.
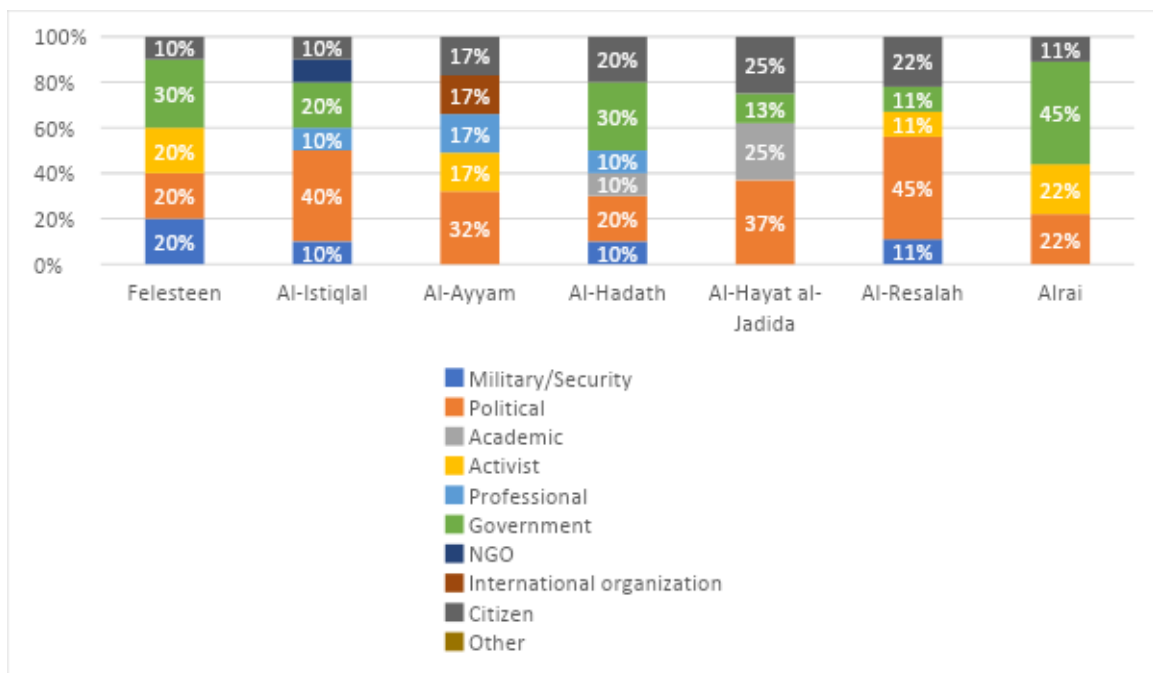
Figure 24: Type of sources per newspaper

In this study, sources are defined as the individuals who provide the information that appears in interviews or articles. The 65 monitored articles cited 61 sources, or an average of 0.9 sources per article. That is lower than the three sources per article recognized as the minimum standard for quality journalism.

Television

A total of 466 items were monitored on the selected television news outlets during the study period: 128 were from Palestine TV, accounting for 28 percent of the total monitored content; 90 were from Alquds Today (19 percent); 72 were from Al-Aqsa TV (16 percent); 61 were from Alkofiya TV (13 percent); 46 were from Wattan TV (10 percent); 44 were from Maan Network (9 percent); and 25 were from Kolalnas TV (5 percent).
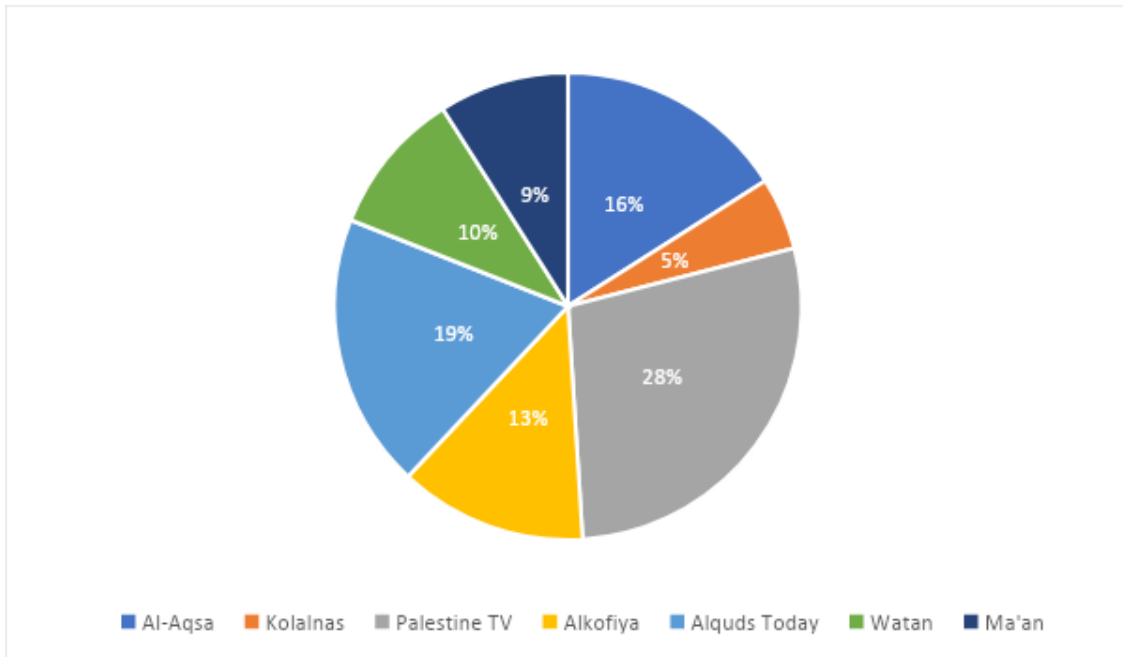
Figure 25: Volume of data by television station

Newscasts made up the highest percentage (80 percent) of monitored content on the stations, as shown in Figure 26, while talk shows accounted for 20 percent.
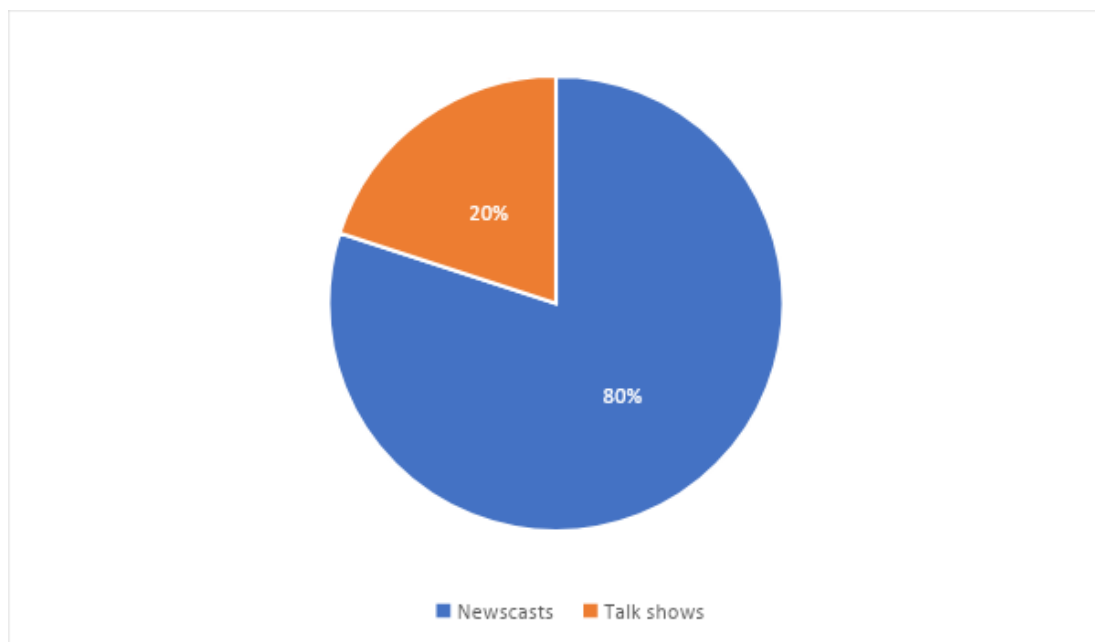
Figure 26: Type of programs in the television sector

Of the 466 monitored items: 39 percent were news coverage of local and international current events; 31 percent were news reports; and 30 percent were interviews.
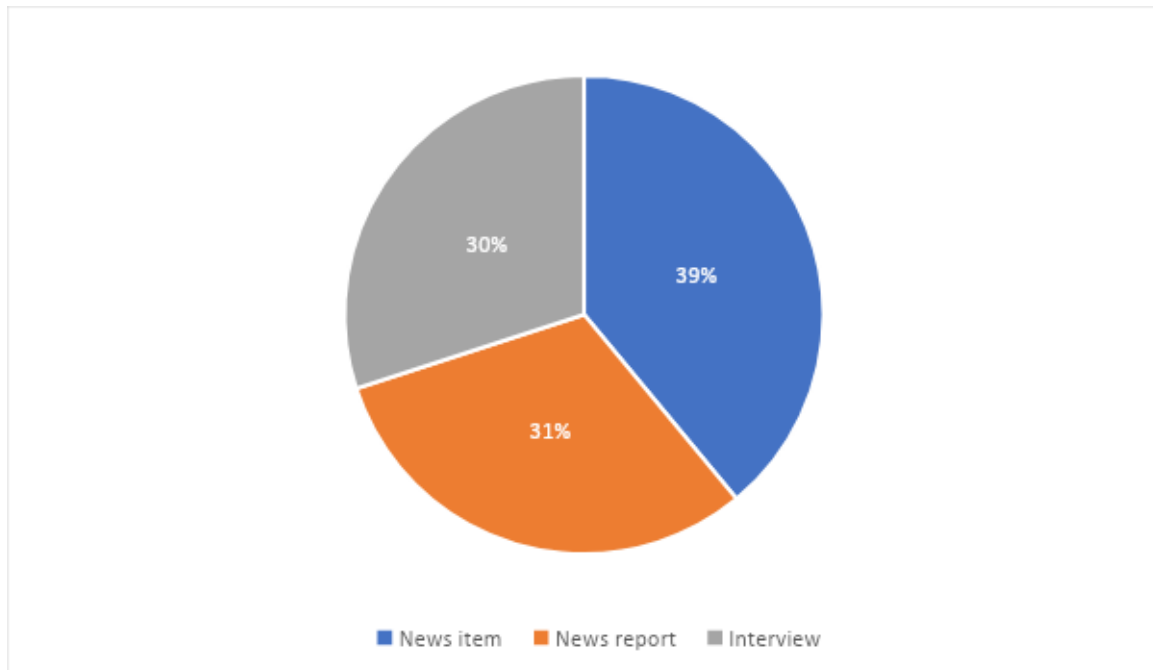
Figure 27: Type of content on television

News accounted for the highest percentage of monitored content at Alquds Today (67 percent) and Wattan TV (63 percent). At Kolalnas and Maan interviews were the main content, at 76 percent and 52 percent respectively. And news reports were most prominent at Alkofiya (56 percent) and Al-Aqsa (47 percent).
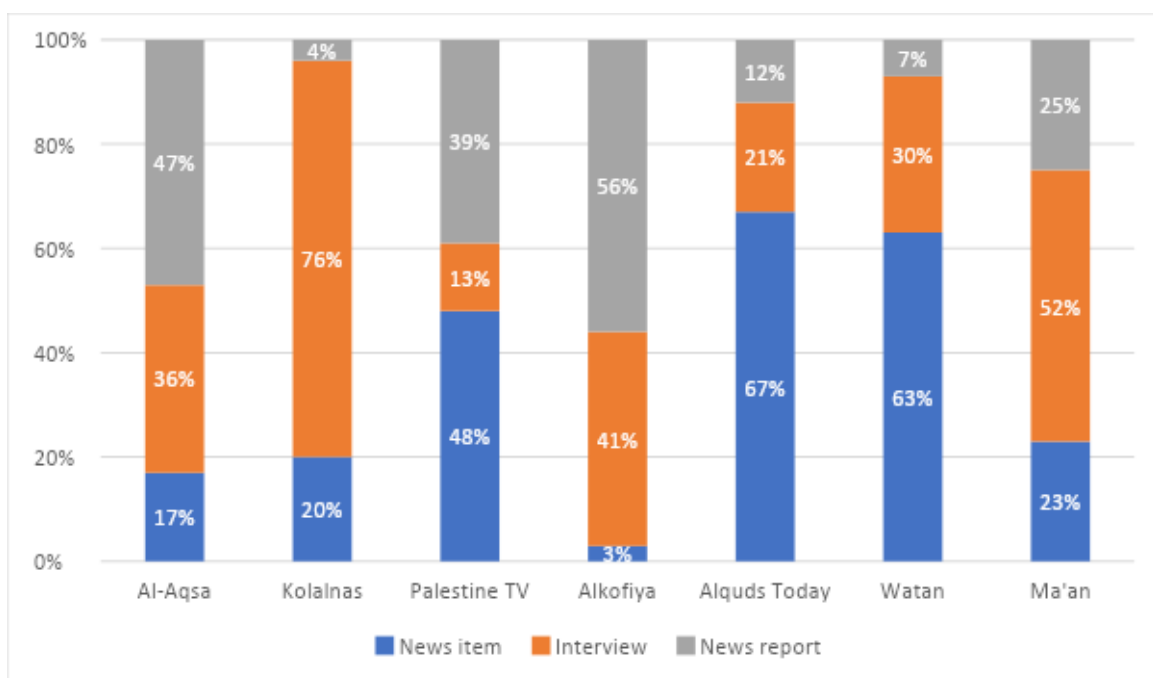
Figure 28: Type of content per television station

The media used by the television stations were strictly limited to video. Overall, we recorded 466 videos for the monitored outlets at an average length of 2.5 minutes per video.

Domestic political news was the most widely covered topic, as shown in Figure 29. Of the 466 items:243 were domestic political news (52 percent); 72 were related to human rights (15 percent); 25 were related to economics (5.3 percent); regional politics tied at 22 (4.7 percent); international politics, health, and law each accounted for 19 (4 percent, respectively); 12 were about social topics (3.7 percent); military and environmental topics were each 11 (2.3 percent, respectively); science and technology 7 topics (1.5 percent), and women's rights and cultural topics accounted for 3 items each (0.6 percent).
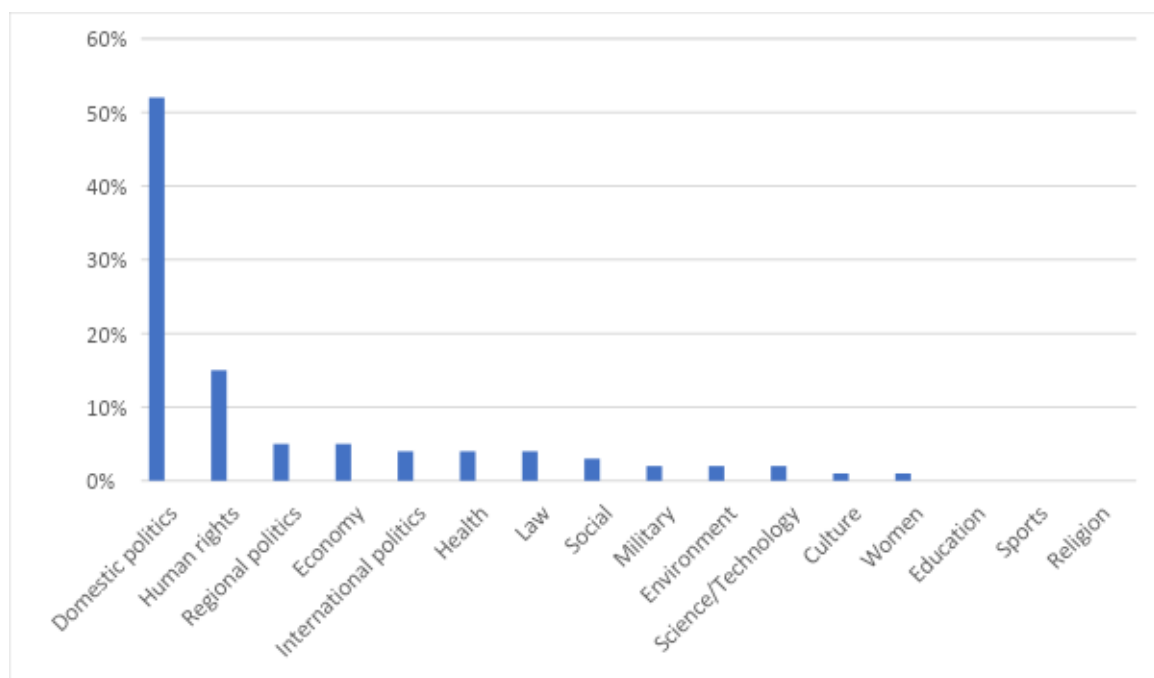
Figure 29: Topics covered on television

Most outlets prioritized domestic political news in their coverage, as shown in Figure 30. Domestic politics accounted for 86 percent of Al-Aqsa TV's content. Science and technology were a distant second as the next most covered topic at 8 percent. But this was also the highest percentage of coverage dedicated to science and technology by any of the monitored stations. Health and environment each accounted for 3 percent of Al-Aqsa TV's monitored programming, and regional politics and military each made up 1 percent.

Human rights were the most covered topic in Maan's monitored content, accounting for 34 percent of the total. This was the highest percentage of coverage dedicated to the topic by any of the monitored stations. Domestic politics was the next most covered topic by Maan, at 20 percent of its monitored programming, followed by law, at 9 percent; science and technology, and the economy, at 8 percent each; gender-related, culture, and the environment, at 5 percent each; and regional politics and international politics, at 3 percent each.

Domestic political news was the most covered topic by Wattan, at 66 percent, followed by: the economy, at 10 percent; law, health, the environment, and social and human rights topics, each at 4 percent; and gender and regional politics, each at 2 percent.

Domestic political news dominated Wattan's monitored coverage, at 66 percent, followed by the economy, at 10 percent; legal, health, the environment, social and human rights topics, each at 4 percent; and gender-related and regional politics, each at 2 percent.

Domestic political news accounted for 60 percent of Alkofiya's monitored coverage, followed by international politics and human rights, each at 8 percent; regional, military, social, the environment, and health, each at 3 percent; and law and culture, each at 2 percent.

As for Kolalnas, domestic political news accounted for 54 percent of its monitored coverage, followed by the economy at 18 percent; legal topics, at 13 percent; and human rights, at 8 percent.

Domestic political news was also the most covered topic in Palestine TV's monitored covered, at 47 percent, followed by: human rights, at 18 percent; international politics, at 8 percent; legal, health, and social topics, each at 6 percent; regional politics, at 3 percent; and the environment, at 1 percent.

Finally, domestic political news made up 34 percent of Alquds Today's monitored content, followed by human rights, at 30 percent; regional news, at 14 percent; military topics, at 9 percent; the economy, at 4 percent; health and international politics, each at 3 percent; the environment at 2 percent, and law, at 1 percent.
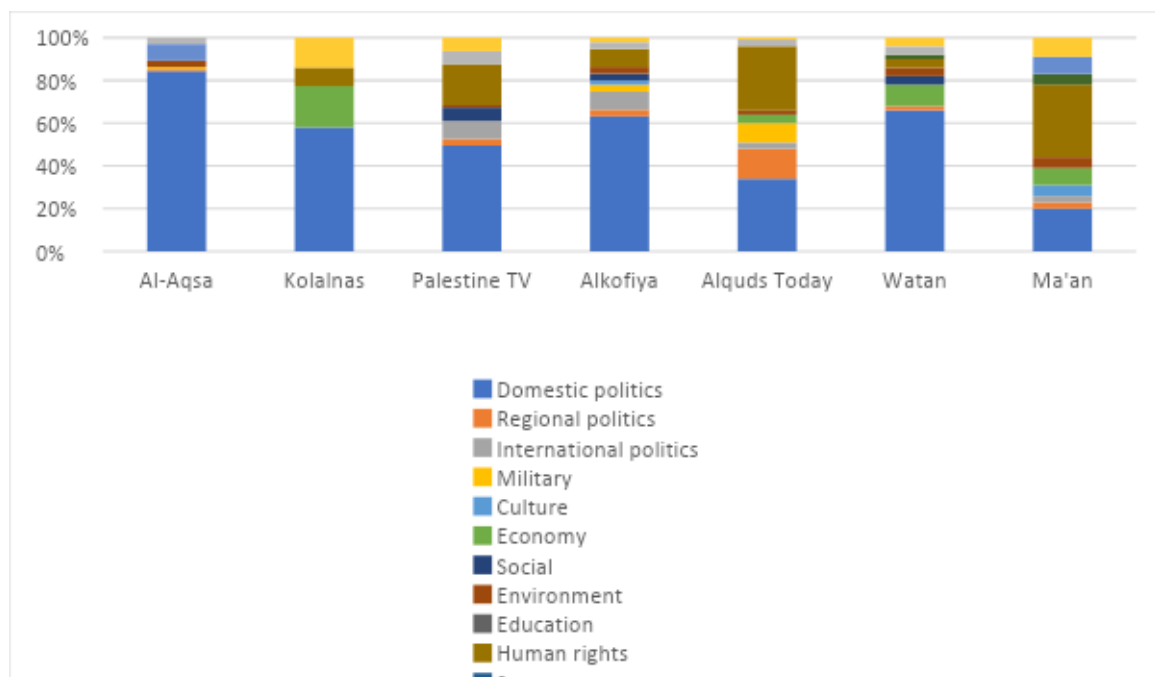
Figure 30: Topics covered per television station

Television stations primarily relied on governmental and official sources in their coverage, as shown in Figure 31. Out of 354 total sources: 99 (27 percent) were governmental; 62 were

citizens (18 percent); followed by professional or expert sources at 15%; academic sources at 12%; and activist sources at 11%. Meanwhile, political sources were lower at 7%, military at 5%, and non-governmental organizations at 5% of the content.
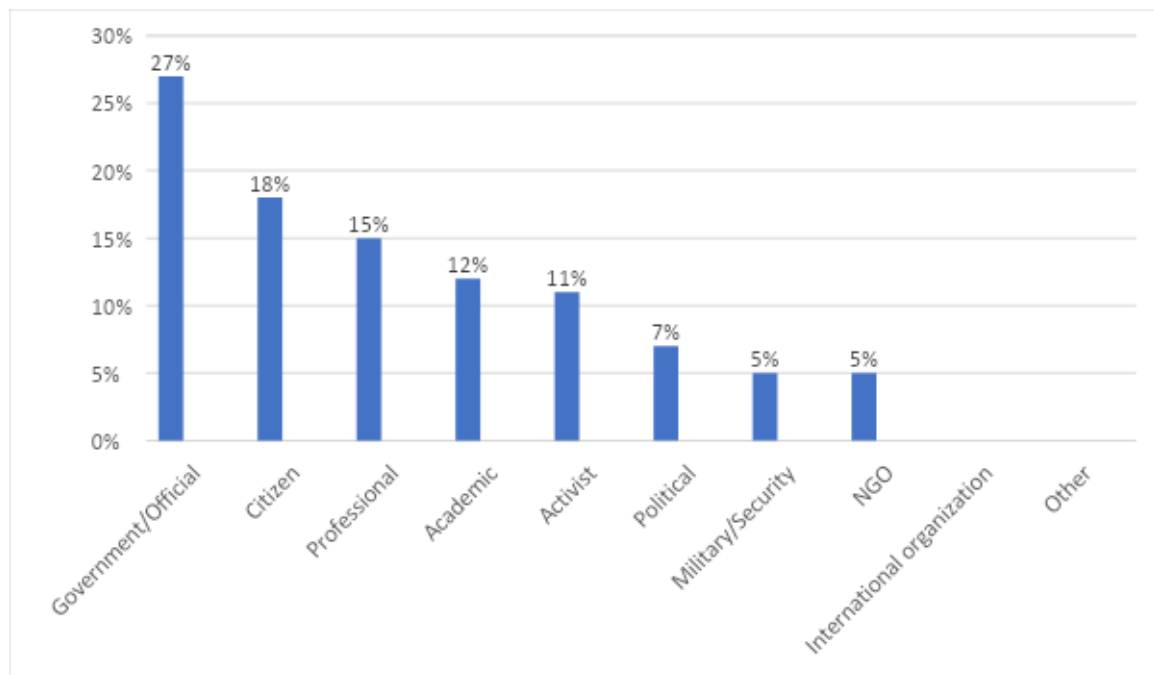
Figure 31: Sources used in the television sector

Of the stations, Al-Aqsa relied most heavily on political sources, which accounted for 41 percent of the total it used. Of the remainder: 19 percent were citizens; 16 percent were academics; and military, governmental, activist, and professional sources each accounted for 6 percent.

At Kolalnas, 32 percent of the sources used were governmental, followed by professional sources, at 24 percent; political and citizen sources, each at 16 percent; and military and NGO sources, each at 4 percent.

As for Palestine TV, political sources were the most frequently cited in its coverage, accounting for 32 percent of the total, followed by government sources at 25 percent; professional sources, at 12 percent; academic and citizen sources, each at 10 percent; military sources at 3 percent; and NGO sources, at 2 percent. The prominence of government and political sources in Palestine TV's coverage is not surprising given that it is the official television station.

Alkofiya used a variety of sources. Professionals accounted for 26 percent of the total, followed by academic and political sources, each at 21 percent; activists, at 12 percent; NGOs, at 9 percent (the highest of any of the stations); government, at 5 percent; and military and citizen, each at 3 percent.

In Alquds Today's monitored coverage, governmental sources accounted for 23 percent of the total, followed by activists, at 16 percent; citizens, at 9 percent; and NGO, military, academic, and professional sources, each at 6 percent.

Wattan used a diverse array of sources. The highest percentage were governmental, at 35 percent, followed by citizens, at 22 percent; professionals, at 19 percent; political, at 13 percent; activists, at 7 percent; and NGOs, at 2 percent.

In Maan's monitored coverage, 41 percent of sources were governmental, which was the highest of any of the television stations. It was followed by political sources, at 23 percent; citizens, at 18 percent; activists, at 9 percent; NGOs, at 5 percent; and military and academic sources, each at 2 percent, as shown in Figure 32.
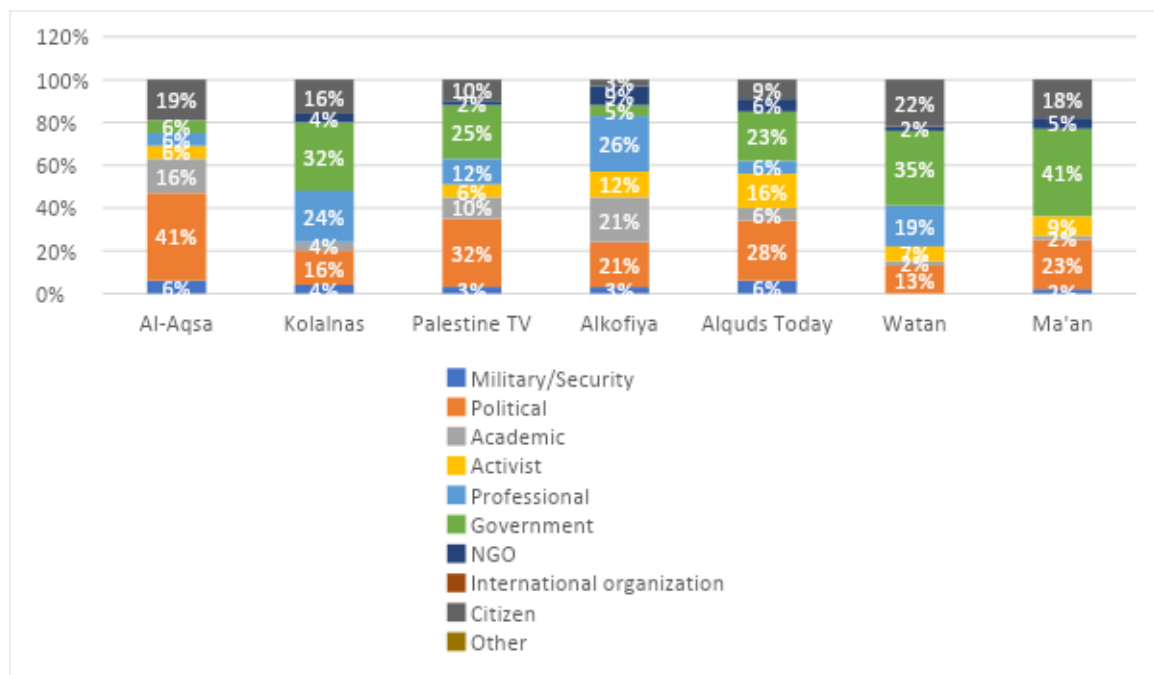
Figure 32: Sources used by each television station

In this study, sources are defined as the individuals who provide the information that appears in interviews or reports. The 466 monitored items from the television stations cited 354 sources, or an average of 0.7 sources per item. That is lower than the three sources per article recognized as the minimum standard for quality journalism.

Conclusions Drawn from Content Analysis

In this quantitative part of the report, we have closely examined the data collected by monitoring the content of 30 Palestinian media outlets that constitute a sample of the four Palestinian media categories – television, radio, print, and digital – in the West Bank and Gaza, based on several key criteria (data volume, content type, channel used, content type, and sources). Consequently, we will attempt to identify certain trends that cover the different methods and approaches that are most widely used by the media outlets monitored in this study.

1. Most of the listed outlets, especially those with party or political affiliation, adopt traditional media methods in identifying sources. They are often owned and controlled by powerful political forces and rely more heavily on their own parties and official political figures to supply them with information.

2. Moreover, the gathered data suggests that most media outlets are highly focused on local political news, while the rest of the topics fall considerably behind. But it is next followed by the topic of human rights which was prominent in most outlets, with a marked lag by social and cultural even health issues under the coronavirus pandemic, as these topics constitute controversial subjects because they revolve around gender equality and counterculture (i.e., addressing the prevailing or traditional standards that are widespread in Palestinian society). But we need further information to arrive at a conclusive result, since the monitoring period was relatively short (five days).

3. Most of the monitored media outlets avoided highlighting topics that require deep and specific research, especially the topics of science, technology, and education. There was also a remarkable absence of local environmental topics, given the environmental challenges experienced in the West Bank and Gaza as a result of Israeli practices that exacerbate desertification, control over water resources, and soil, air and other types of pollution.

4. The Palestinian media managed to expose the crimes and practices of the Israeli forces against the Palestinian people at all levels, particularly during the Israeli airstrikes on Gaza in recent years, which produced losses in the ranks of the Palestinian media corps during coverage. But the media was unable to achieve the same level of success on the home front, in terms of countering the internal Palestinian divisions. In fact, party and official media organizations played an influential part in deepening the rifts, revealing a lack of professionalism among some of those organizations. The main elements of the Palestinian media's unprofessional political discourse were:

a.   A heightened inflammatory discourse on the one hand, and manipulating terms and concepts, and using them out of their professional context, on the other, during newscasts or the daily talk shows, or even in the images and videos. For example, the Hamas-owned Al-Aqsa TV constantly showed old footage of Palestinian Authority or Fatah representatives in meetings with Israeli political and security figures, during a news item about, for instance, an arrest conducted by the authority's security agencies. Meanwhile, official media organizations owned by the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, such as Palestine TV, Al-Hayat al-Jadida newspaper and the Wafa agency, use terms like the "Ikhwani Hamas Movement" to suggest that Hamas is bending national Palestinian interests to serve the Muslim Brotherhood.

b.   Selectively choosing the news, images or media spokespeople they broadcast or published. Outlets are dominated by news, images and guest discourse that promote their own positions, and that condemn the positions of and incite against their opponents without giving them space to express themselves or respond.

c.   Political exploitation of events along the party line of each outlet in order to play on the audience's emotions. This was evident during coverage by Hamas-owned media organizations or Palestinian leader Mohammed Dahlan's Alkofiya TV of the outcomes of the death of activist Nizar Banat. The case was used to repeatedly take shots at the Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, independent media organizations covered the same case from a rights perspective.

5.   It is worth noting, in the data collected from official media organizations in the West Bank and Gaza, that these organizations do not engage in critique and monitoring of the authorities they represent. As a result, official media plays no real part in fighting corruption. Yet, we did not detect in private and independent media organizations any investigative programs or reporting that cover or raise issues of corruption. Therefore, they lack their main role of watchdog and the ability to correct the course of public-sector institutions.

6.   In their long-form programs, private and independent radio and television outlets use a panoramic angle which allows the audience to voice their opinions directly. Their government and party counterparts, meanwhile, rely on political talk shows through which they seek to convey their own political ideas and beliefs, and because of this predominance they are still far from being objective representatives of the state and society.

7. The monitored electronic newspapers and news websites do not use interactive and televised reporting which are now being adopted by most Arab and world agencies. They are non-interactive websites, except for Dunia Al-Watan electronic newspaper which until recently used to air live studio programs and other field reporting.

Recommendations to Enhance the Capacities of the Palestinian Media Sector

- Build journalists' capacity, especially in investigative reporting, to encourage them to explore issues of corruption, and to keep up with the immense developments in global newsrooms, away from the traditional and static presentation of the news.

- Allow citizens, professionals and activists affected by the issues a wider space for self-expression, in order to boost objectivity and credibility, especially in talk shows. Also, allow voices opposed to the political ruling class, whether in the West Bank or Gaza, the space to express their opinions on official or party television stations where they almost never appear.

- Media outlets need to adopt a strategy that creates a balance between the domestic, regional, and international topics they publish. Domestic politics dominated by a wide margin over the other topics. Therefore, it is important to find ways to arrange a through line across domestic and foreign affairs, so that organizations can present a clear, comprehensive, and full picture to the audience.

- It is necessary to focus on visual presentations of written stories. Today, the audience is less interested in long texts. Therefore, using images, simple text, and audio content is crucial.

- Media organizations and workers must necessarily adhere to ethical and professional rules to strengthen audience trust in them, by adopting accurate, impartial, credible, and unbiased reporting that does not present opinions as facts.

- Party and government media organizations must work on combating inflammatory discourse in their content, avoid fueling hate and strife, describe incidents impartially, and choose terminology that is not politically laden.

Chapter Two: The Palestinian Media Sector and UNESCO's Media Development Indicators

Theoretical Framework

This section explains the background, methodology, and objectives of this study.

The study assesses the current situation facing Palestinian media outlets – including problems and challenges – according to indicators put forward by UNESCO to measure media development as well as new criteria to assess the Palestinian digital ecosystem. The study concludes with a set of recommendations on how to support the development of different types of media outlets in Palestine.

General Context

The development of communication technology and the transition of human societies to the digital age has changed the environment in which the media functions and the way it works in countries around the world. Palestine has also experienced this transformation, which has expanded audiences and opened new ways to interact with content and influence the messages it contains. At the same time, traditional media outlets are facing more competition for audiences' attention from new content producers than ever before. As a result, digitization poses a serious challenge to the Palestinian media industry and those who work within it.

In 2014, the Media Development Assessment Study in Palestine highlighted the need to "continue wide-range consultations with the aim of developing a strategic plan for the digital transformation of the information and communication technology (ICT) sector in order to enhance the availability of modern ICTs and the spread of access to the Internet and electronic media throughout Palestine[4]".

The recommendations of the 2014 report anticipated the need to prepare for a new era in which the legal and professional environment for the Palestinian media sector should be further developed. Furthermore, media teaching curricula in Palestinian universities and colleges need to be developed to incorporate new media training strategies, and public freedoms need to be strengthened to protect independent and professional media outlets from censorship and outside influence.

The development of the media in Palestine, whether at the level of professional practice or academia, faces many challenges, including changing concepts of media work and new tools that are being used; the massive amount of information flowing through digital platforms; confusion caused by misinformation; and the restriction of media freedoms due to political and

---

[4] Abu Arqoub (2014), Assessment of Media Development in Palestine, UNESCO. To view the study text in Arabic: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227784_ara

security considerations. These challenges affect how outlets approach media specialization, techniques used to train and qualify journalists, the legislative and regulatory environment in which media outlets and journalists operate, and investment in the media industry and corporate ownership.

This section presents a comprehensive assessment of the media ecosystem in Palestine, its level of development, its deficiencies, and the problems it faces. The section also presents recommendation for what should be done to address imbalances in the Palestinian media sector in the future and how to support Palestinian journalists and institutions to enable them to keep pace with tremendous developments in the media industry.

Media acts as a guarantor of rights and public freedoms guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Importantly, the Palestinian Authority has ratified the most important agreements and principles support the right to information and freedom of expression contained in the declaration.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative analysis techniques designed according to indicators of media development adopted by UNESCO. The study collected the required data and information through desk and field research methods. It also carried out four focus groups with representatives of Palestinian media outlets from the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as a set of interviews with stakeholders in the Palestinian media sector.

Media Development Indicators

Category 1: Regulations Conducive to Freedom of Expression, Pluralism, and Diversity of the Media

A- Legal Framework for Media Policies

1.1 Guaranteeing Freedom of Expression in Practice

The Palestinian Basic Law contains high standards for protecting human rights and guaranteeing freedom of expression. However, its application is linked to provisions in other, pre-existing laws that prevent it from being effectively implemented. Several of these laws do not take freedoms and human rights into account.

1.2 Guaranteeing Editorial Independence and Protecting Journalistic Sources

The Palestinian Press and Publication Law guarantees media freedom and freedom of opinion. Article (2) states: "The press and printing professions shall be free. Freedom of opinion is guaranteed for each Palestinian. A Palestinian may express his opinion in speech, writing, photographs, drawings, or any other form of expression." However, Article (7) uses broad and open-ended language to place restrictions on media freedom and freedom of opinion and expression.

1.3 Guaranteeing the Right to Information and Respect for Information

Efforts to pass a law on the right to information in Palestine began in 2005. However, the split between Fatah and Hamas that divided the Palestinian authority disrupted the work of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2007. The draft law on access to information was still pending, and the president of Palestine did not sign it despite having the power to enact it into law.

B- Licensing and Broadcasting Regulations

The Palestinian Ministry of Information supervises and regulates the Palestinian press and media sector by granting licenses to print, visual, and audio outlets.

1.4 Publication Licensing

Obtaining a publication license is not complicated in Palestine. However, the process is not in line with international press freedom standards, which stipulate that relevant authorities should only have to be informed that a publication is being issued and that the publication should not have to apply for a license or have to renew it periodically.

1.5 Independent Systems Regulating Broadcasts

The Palestinian Ministry of Information supervises the process of granting radio and television licenses in coordination with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, which is responsible for broadcasting frequencies, and the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for granting security clearance. The three ministries work under the umbrella of a tripartite committee that is authorized to grant licenses to radio and television stations. This legal reality is inconsistent with international standards, which stipulate that an independent body should oversee the regulation of the audiovisual media sector.

C- Censorship in Law and Practice

In theory, the Palestinian Basic Law ensures the protection of journalists and media organizations from censorship by executive authorities. However, Palestinian journalist and media outlets often practice self-censorship because of fears stemming from the conduct of security forces in the West Bank and Gaza and the Israeli occupation authorities' repressive practices towards Palestinian journalists

1.6 Intimidation and Self-censorship

Self-censorship in Palestine results from journalists and activists being afraid of the repercussions of publishing information that upsets security authorities or powerful political parties in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Human rights organizations have recorded numerous cases of journalists being summoned and arrested by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities, which reinforces the fears that lead to self-censorship.

1.7 Legislative Protection of Internet Freedom

When Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued Decree No. (10) of 2018 related to cybercrimes, international and local organizations expressed concerns about the serious threat posed by the law and advocated for it to be abolished. The law allows websites to be blocked by security services.

D- Defamation Laws and Trials Tackling Freedom of Opinion and Expression

The Palestinian judicial system still contains laws that, in the West Bank, date back to when the territory was administered by Jordan prior to 1967, and in Gaza, that data back to the British Mandate before 1948. These laws include regulations regarding defamation that restrict freedoms and violate human rights standards.

1.8 General Restrictions on Defamation Laws

The Jordanian Penal Code[5] No. 16 of 1960 is applied in the West Bank. This law stipulates punishments for cases related to freedom of opinion and imposes strict restrictions on media freedoms.

In the Gaza Strip, the British Mandate Penal[6] Code No. (74) of 1936, which also places severe restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, is applied.

1.9 Publication Offences (Libel and Slander)

Palestinian journalists are often prosecuted for libel and slander, which threatens their role as watchdogs scrutinizing the actions of authorities to protect public interests and provide the public with information.

Category 2: A Free and Fair Digital Environment

2.1 Media Practices that are Suitable for the Digital Environment

Most Palestinian media outlets use digital platforms to reach their audiences, which tend to follow events on social media. The majority of Palestinian media outlets have come a long way in terms of creating accounts on these platforms, but they are still struggling to boost their reach and influence. This is primarily due to the poor quality of their content stemming from a lack of modern tools and practices. Traditional Palestinian media outlets are trying to adapt their content for digital platforms, but the degree of success varies.

2.2 Content Compatible with Social Media

Due to political and economic circumstances in Palestine, Palestinian media outlets are struggling to provide the public with content that allows them to access information and that is in sync with new trends in how the Palestinian public accesses media output.

2.3 A Supportive Environment for Digital Freedoms

The Palestinian digital media environment is not supportive of freedoms. Local, regional, and international human rights organizations have recorded violations of freedom of expression through digital platforms and social media in Palestine. This poses a serious challenge and impedes the ability of Palestinian media environment from meeting contemporary international standards for digital freedom and human rights.

---

[5] To access the Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 of 1960: https://maqam.najah.edu/legislation/33/
[6] A law applied by the British Mandate government in Palestine. It was issued on July 27, 1848 and its provisions are based on French legislation, which imposed stricter sanctions on publication offences at that time, and is still in force until now in the Gaza Strip. To access the law:
http://www.qanon.ps/news.php?action=view&id=16325

2.4 Initiatives to Fight Misinformation

Fake news and inaccurate and harmful information on digital platforms and social media poses a dilemma for media outlets and society in Palestine. However, there are Palestinian initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of spreading misinformation and harmful, inaccurate content.

2.5 Strengthening Media and Information Literacy

In Palestine, civil society organizations carry out initiatives and activities to promote media education. Interest in this area increased when the public started relying on social media as a source of news and information. The spread of rumors related to the COVID-19 pandemic also increased interest in media education.

2.5.1 People's Ability to Identify their Information Needs

Media education activities are limited in scope because they are not integrated into officially approved school and university curricula. This prevents a significant part of the Palestinian population from accessing the necessary training and awareness to develop their abilities in identifying their information needs.

2.5.2 People's Ability to Identify and Evaluate the Quality of Information

The ability of people in Palestinie to identify and evaluate the quality of information published on digital platforms is weak. This is indicated by the spread of misinformation and rumors among social media users and the large amount of misinformation monitored by initiatives such as "Tayqan" and "Kashif".

2.5.3 Ability to Store and Retrieve Information for Subsequent Use

Individuals in Palestinian society have access to the infrastructure and technology to be able to store information at any time and retrieve it for subsequent use. However, political and legislative constraints may constitute an obstacle.

2.5.4 Efficient and Ethical Use of Information

Media education activities in Palestine are limited and do not contribute to developing the public's attitude toward the efficient use of information for the greater good. There is insufficient data about media education in Palestine, which makes it difficult to quantify this indicator.

2.5.5 Applying Information to Create and Deliver Knowledge

There are acceptable levels of information application to create and communicate knowledge throughout Palestinian society. However, data related to media education are insufficient and unreliable when it comes to quantifying this indicator in Palestine

Category 3: Plurality and Diversity of Media, a Level Economic Playing Field, and Transparency of Ownership

Palestine was one of the first Arab countries where radio and television stations began operating in the 1930s. Palestinian newspapers and magazines existed for decades before that.

A- Media Concentration

After the Palestinian Authority was established, the Palestinian media sector started flourishing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

3.1 Adopting Positive Measures to Promote Media Pluralism

Documentation does not exist regarding whether the relevant Palestinian authorities have taken special measures to enhance media pluralism and diversity. The Palestinian government does not provide sufficient protection to media institutions – especially radio and television stations – which are frequently targetted by Israel. Violations committed against Palestinian media institutions by Israel include confiscating broadcasting equipment and preventing them from broadcasting on certain frequencies under the pretext that they are interrupting Israeli frequencies.

3.2 Commitment to Measures Promoting Media Pluralism

Palestinian law does not take the importance of protecting media pluralism and diversity into account. The absence of policies promoting media pluralism has allowed for the expansion of state and political party-run media outlets at the expense of private, independent, and community media outlets. Furthermore, there is an unequal concentration of media ownership, which compromises fair competition within the media and advertising market.

B- Diverse Mix of Public, Private, and Community Media

There are no media outlets in Palestine that qualify as public service outlets. Meanwhile, community media outlets – particularly radio states – flourished at a particular point because of support from donor institutions. However, most community media outlets have subsequently closed because they were not able to find sustainable sources of income.

3.3 Promote a Diverse Mix of Public, Private, and Community media

In Palestine, partnerships within private media outlets are often broken. Owners separate from existing institutions and tend to establish new media outlets with separate ownership. This leads to an increase in the number of media outlets – and theoretically contributes to strengthening pluralism – but it also saturates the market with media outlets that are financially and professionally weak.

3.4 Independent and Transparent Systems

The laws governing the media sector are not independent and transparent because the government is the regulating authority. Meanwhile civil society organizations are not involved in any way. Palestinian laws do not require the government to comply with transparent and independent regulations in the media sector.

3.5 Active Promotion of Community Media Development

Community media outlets are non-existent in Palestine. There is unfair competition between independent media outlets, on the one hand, and State and political party-run media outlets on the other. Initiatives associated with community media outlets have a sustainability problem because they don't have the same reliable revenue support that official and political-party affiliated media outlets receive.

C- Licenses and Spectrum Allocation

When it comes to the broadcast frequency spectrum, Palestinian media outlets suffer from Israeli violations. In particular, stations based in Israeli settlements broadcast on Palestinian frequencies, which violates the regulations of the International Telecommunication Union.

3.6 General Plans to Allocate Spectrum and Ensure Optimal Use for Public Interest

Terrestrial broadcasting of television and radio stations in Palestine will transition from analogue to digital technology in accordance with a binding decision taken by the International Telecommunication Union, according to the (GE06)[7] plan. The International Telecommunication Union gave Palestine the opportuntiy to make the transition from analogue to digital, and the government has developed a plan to implement the transformation. June 2015 was supposed to be the deadline by which all stations operating under the analogue broadcasting system would transition to digital[8]. However, several political and economic factors prevented the plan from being carried out.

3.7 Spectrum Allocation Plan to Enhance Ownership and Content

The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology developed a promising plan to transition from analogue to digital broadcasting. However, it was not implemented, despite June 2015 being set as a deadline for its completion.

3.8 Independent and Transparent Regulations

The system to obtain a broadcast license in Palestine suffers from a lack of transparency and independence. The composition of the tripartite committee that grants licenses for stations in the West Bank is not independent. In addition, the Hamas government controls broadcasting licenses in the Gaza Strip and does not respect the independence and transparency of the licensing process.

D- Tax and Other Business Regulations

Since 2007, Palestinian authorities have imposed different taxes in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip because of the split between Fatah and Hamas.

3.9 Using Tax Regulations to Encourage Media Development

There are no legal texts or tax regulations that support media development. The Palestinian government does not use this approach in its media-related policies. However, it does provide facilities to help media outlets overcome exceptional circumstances.

E- Advertisement

The advertising market in Palestine is limited – especially in the Gaza Strip – where the economy is plagued by financial crises due to the Israel blockade and successive wars that have caused considerable damage to infrastructure.

---

[7] International digital broadcasting transition details: https://www.itu.int/pub/R-QUE-SG06.132

[8] To access the digital broadcasting transition plan developed by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology in Palestine: https://www.mtit.pna.ps/Content/files/plains_and_strategies/ar/-8586172492452966119seyasat.pdf

3.10 Non-Discriminatory Government Advertising Policy

There is no non-discriminatory government advertising policy in Palestine. Advertisements are often distributed to newspapers according to internal regulations applied in government departments and are fairly rare in audiovisual media outlets.

3.11 Effective Regulations for Advertisements in the Media

In Palestine, there are no effective regulations that foster or protect advertisements in the media. Palestinian media outlets have been significantly affected by changes in advertising trends, with companies now preferring to promote their products on social media.

Category 4: The Media as a Platform for Democratic Discourse

A- Media Reflecting Diversity within Society

4.1 Public, Private, and Community Media for all Segments of Society

In Palestine, official media outlets are owned by the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, private media outlets are financed through advertising, and political movement-affiliated media outlets have exploited the economic weakness of private media outlets to expand in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. There is an absence of public service and community media outlets. However, outlets affiliated with educational institutions and universities can loosely be considered community media.

4.2 Media Organizations Reflecting social diversity through their Hiring Practices

Employment practices within Palestinian media institutions are often problematic. Some practices violate human rights and Palestinian labour law. Journalists who work for local media stations are often paid salaries that are lower than minimum wage, and several outlets refuse to give their employees contracts that guarantee their rights.

B- Public Broadcasting Service Model

There is no public broadcasting media service in Palestine as a stand-alone concept.

4.3 Public Service Broadcasters' Objectives are Defined and Legally Guaranteed

The Palestinian Public Authority for Radio and Television does not meet the standards of public service broadcasters because it is not independently funded.

4.4 Public Broadcasters do not Face Discrimination in Terms of Content

This indicator cannot be measured because no public service media match the criteria set by UNESCO for this type of independent media.

4.5 Transparent and Independent System of Governance

The local community has no decision-making power within the Palestinian Public Authority for Radio and Television. Community representatives cannot influence the administrative and editorial decision-making process, and the president of the Palestinian Authority is the only one allowed to appoint the Palestinian Public Authority for Radio and Television's board of trustees.

4.6 Public Broadcasters are Committed to People and Civil Society Organisations

The Palestinian Public Authority for Radio and Television does not reflect the political and social diversity within the Palestinian society, and there is no representation of civil society organizations in the authority.

C- Media Self-Regulation

In Palestine, there is a lot of self-censorship and very little self-regulation because of the repression of journalists by executive authorities in the West Bank and Gaza and the repressive actions of Israeli occupation authorities.

4.7 Effective Mechanisms for Media Self-Regulation

The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate has developed a code of conduct for people working in the media. It advocates for the promotion of "freedom and democracy, which requires the existence of a free and impartial press, backed with information and knowledge".

4.8 Media and the Culture of Self-Regulation

There are no indications that Palestinian media outlets have taken steps towards a self-regulatory culture. However, institutions involved in Palestinian media development are showing interest through initiatives promoting self-regulation in the journalism community.

D- Justice and Impartiality Requirements

4.9 Effective Broadcasting Law Defines Requirements for Justice and Impartiality

In Palestine, no law was passed to regulate the broadcasting sector. The Palestinian government manages frequencies, broadcasts, and licenses through a tripartite committee composed of the Ministries of Interior, Communications, and Information. This governmental committee does not take into account international standards for the independence of bodies managing this sector.

4.10 Practical Implementation of the Broadcasting Law

In Palestine, Cabinet decision No. (18) of 2018 regulates the licensing system for radio and television stations. There are separate draft laws for audiovisual media and for a Supreme Council for Media Regulation, but they are pending approval.

E- The Level of People's Trust and Dependence on the Media

4.11 Public Displays High Levels of Trust in the Media

There are no independent surveys that measure the extent to which Palestinians trust the local media. However, the media consumption habits of the public were affected by social media, which has affected how media outlets are viewed.

4.12 Media Organizations Respond to the Public's Perception of their Work

There are no quantitative studies measuring how Palestinian media outlets respond to the public's view of their work. Palestinian media outlets are, however, interested in the free feedback they get from the public's interaction with their publications through social media platforms. This is a reliable way to build interactive bridges with the audience and earn trust.

F- Journalists Safety

Work safety is one of the most pressing issues facing journalists and media professionals in Palestine. The West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip are all areas where events on the ground threaten the safety of journalists. Israeli occupation authorities are the main threat to the safety of journalists, followed by Palestinian security services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

4.13 Enabling Journalists and Employees within Media Institutions to Practice their Profession Safely

Palestinian journalists work in a dangerous environment. The Israeli occupation forces attack journalists in different ways while they are covering events on the ground. So far, the Palestinian media environment does not promote democratic speech. A major reason for this is the tensions that exist between Fatah and Hamas, both of which exert influence over print and audiovisual media outlets and commit violations against journalists and media outlets.

4.14 Insecurity Doesn't Affect Media Practice

Lack of security affects the production of media in Palestine. The Palestinian Journalists Syndicate is trying to reduce the impact of violations and insecurity on media practice in Palestine, but the results are still not satisfactory.

Category 5: Professional Capacity Building and Supporting Institutions that Underpin Freedom of Expression, Pluralism, and Diversity

A- Professional Training for Media Support

5.1 Opportunities for Media Professionals to Receive Training

Training programs are available for journalists in Palestine, and there are other opportunities that allow them to upgrade their skills. Most training is free of charge and fairly distributed geographically throughout the West Bank. Programs are mainly concentrated in the city of Ramallah, which is home to most local institutions and international organizations that provide training. In the Gaza Strip, there is a lack of media training programs compared to the West Bank.

5.2 Training Opportunities for Media Managers and Directors

In the media sector, training focuses on journalistic skills, and there is an acute shortage of specialized courses when it comes to media organization management. This particular field is not taught as an academic discipline. Palestinian media institutions need to develop the skills of people in leadership positions when it comes to marketing and financial management. However, this type of training is scarce in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

5.3 Training that Enables Democratic Understanding

The impact of media training aimed at promoting democratic practice in Palestinian media remains weak. The majority of training courses tackling media and democracy use a traditional workshop approach, which often lacks the tools and capabilities to provide good outcomes.

B- Modern Approaches to Media Education

5.4 Updated Academic Courses Available to Students

The courses taught in Palestinian universities vary between educational theory, which aims to raise the level of critical and analytical skill among students, and practical courses, which enhance students' capacity to use media technology. Recently, Palestinian universities have tended to raise the percentage of practical courses compared to theoretical classes to meet the significant demand for courses in information and communication technology.

5.5 Academic Decisions Aimed at Promoting Students Skills in the Fields of Development and Democracy

Educational plans adopted in media departments and faculties in Palestinian universities show a real interest in media ethics, legislation, and regulation. However, the title of courses and their actual content might differ. Also, there are no media courses focusing on democracy, although most universities do tackle the topic in other general education courses without integrating it into professional courses in the field of media studies.

C- Syndicate Work in the Media Sector

Syndicate work in Palestine is a legal right, and the media syndicate undertakes numerous measures to provide a suitable environment to practice the profession freely.

5.6 The Right to Join a Syndicate

There is an ongoing debate about whether it should be mandatory for those working in the media sector in Palestine to join the syndicate. Some are in favor while others argue that journalism is tightly linked to freedoms, and therefore, working in the sector should not be tied to syndicate membership, which should remain voluntary.

5.7 Syndicate Work that Supports Free Media

Some journalists believe that the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate suffers from issues related to the political and syndicate situation in Palestine, which restricts its work and weakens its role in protecting the free practice of the media profession.

D- Civil Society Organizations and Media

5.8 Organizations that Systematically Monitor Media Performance

There are no organizations in Palestine that specialise in monitoring the content and performance of the Palestinian media in accordance with professional standards. The Palestinian media sector needs these kinds of reports to periodically review the performance of media outlets and reveal biases in coverage and lack of professionalism, when it occurs.

5.9 Organizations that Support Freedom of Speech

Civil society organizations advocate for freedom of speech in Palestine and contribute to media freedom through various advocacy campaigns.

5.10 Organizations that Support the Palestinians' Right to Access Information

Palestinian civil society organizations carried out an advocacy campaign for the government to approve the right to access information and launched joint projects to produce informative and educational content on the right to information.

Category 6: Infrastructural Capacity Supports the Independence and Pluralism of the Media

A- The Availability and Use of Technical Resources by Media Outlets

The Palestinian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology oversees the communication and broadcasting technology sector. One of the most important roles that the ministry has is to manage the frequency spectrum. The ministry also aspires to have regulatory oversight of the sector transferred to a national body, as is the case in many countries around the world.

6.1 Media Organizations' Access to Technical Facilities Allowing them to Collect, Produce, and Disseminate Information

Palestinian journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have had easy access to communication technology since the 1990s. However, Palestinians have been deprived of advancements in telecommunication technologies due to an Israeli ban forbidding the Palestinian market from acquiring them to make them available to Palestinian citizens.

B- Media, Broadcasting and Access in the Field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

According to available data, about 80 percent of Palestinian families have access to Internet services, and 97 percent have at least one cell phone line. This means that the majority of Palestinian families have access to media services because the majority of Palestinian media are now broadcasting and publishing their content through smart phone applications and via their accounts on social media networks.

6.2 Access of Marginalized Groups to Usable Forms of Communication

Opportunities for the Palestinian media outlets to reach a wide segment of the Palestinian public are substantial. Available communication and Internet technologies enable media content makers to broadcast and publish across several platforms – including social media pages and cell phone applications – and to live broadcast via digital platforms. This is in addition to publishing on websites.

6.3 The State has an ICT Policy Aimed at Meeting the Special Needs of Marginalized Groups

The power to grant licenses, bid, plan, and regulate the ICT sector rests with the government. There is still no independent body overseeing this important sector. Representatives of Palestinian media outlets[9] say that there is a need to, "raise the security conditions set by the security services and the Ministries of Information and Communications to approve granting licenses to media institutions".

---

[9] Focus group organised by the Samir Kassir Foundation for Palestinian media representatives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in October 2021

Chapter Three: Market Study and Economic Indicators for the Palestinian Media Sector

General Context

Digitization has brought about tremendous changes in the entertainment and media sectors at both a local and international level. It has allowed for a surge in available content and increased how quickly users can access it. At the same time, digital diversity has created a divide between direct and indirect marketing methods, which has enhanced the capabilities and skills of those working in the media sector to find new outlets for financial revenue.

However, competition over clients and financial sponsors has never been fiercer. Not long ago, media companies could rely on a few sources of fixed income, such as subscriptions. That was mainly because a limited number of media outlets shared the market and dictated the competition. Those days are long gone. Today, sustainable and profitable growth depends on the existence of multiple sources of income, which sometimes do not rely on traditional forms of revenue generation[10].

Some media companies have succeeded in generating significant additional income through subscriptions, micro-transactions, memberships, consumer products, live events, and digital advertising. But other companies still struggle to find new sources of income.

Strategically, both traditional and modern media outlets need to be aware of the ability to engage multiple segments of followers in their content. This will increase their viewership and lead to more brand confidence among readers, listeners, or viewers. Greater brand confidence opens the possibility to obtain funding through advertising revenue. Also, media outlets can secure development opportunities through investments, grants, or financing opportunities that enhance their share in the media industry market.

In the case of Palestine, the local media landscape reflects the unique political reality in the country, making it distinct from other countries in the region. Palestinian media outlets fall into two categories: official outlets corresponding to the Palestinian authority that emerged following the Oslo accords in 1993; and political party affiliated media outlets that carry allegiances to the organizations and political movements that support them. Political party affiliated outlets are diverse in their content and approach. Some represent the interests of the parties that back them while others stake out an independent editorial line. Regardless, they are still dependent on funders to allow them to function and be competitive in a saturated media market. Sometimes, these funders are local while other times they are international donor countries or institutions, which can influence how they work and the content they create .

---

[10] - Omer, M. (2015). Against all odds: media survive in Palestine. Global Media Journal-African Edition, 9(2).

A media organization's professionalism can be an important steppingstone to securing funding that allows it to be competitive. Professionalism can also enable outlets to access diverse and unconventional funding sources that are becoming more important in the wake of global economic setbacks stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the rearrangement of regional political agendas and international alliances influence the course of political developments in the Middle East .

In addition to traditional funding sources, there are many non-traditional sources of revenue media organizations can access with the proper set of skills. These sources are also often not politically affiliated and allow media organizations more independence in the content that they can create and how they integrate it with online publishing and social networking sites, which can create more impact and revenue potential than traditional approaches to publishing .

This research explores potential sources of income for Palestinian media outlets by taking into consideration whether they are traditional or digital, the type of content they produce, and whether they are official, politically affiliated, or private. The study looks at media outlets in the West Bank, occupied Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip to account for specificities in different geographical areas. The goal is to explore the media outlets' financial practices that enable them to secure funding in order to continue producing content in a media environment featuring intense competition .

The Impact of Covid-19 on the Media Sector

The crises facing the Palestinian media sector are not all related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic and the accompanying state of emergency and lockdowns subjected Palestinian media outlets to a financial shock[11].

 • **Direct shock**: Many representatives of media organizations believe that between 40 and 60 percent of advertisements were withdrawn directly after the declaration of the state of emergency and the accompanying lockdowns in Palestinian cities following the emergence of the first cases of COVID-19 in March 2020. This created a financial crisis that has had many repercussions.

 • **Regressive effects**: The matter was not limited to the loss of advertising as a source of income for media institutions, but also affected revenue opportunities for advertising agencies as well. Moreover, it negatively affected financing projects that were supposed to be within the annual budgets for some institutions. The beginning of the pandemic and its global extension demanded a modification and change in many plans at the regional and international levels.

A statistical overview

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of Palestinians is estimated at about 13.8 million, as of mid-year 2021. Of those, 5.23 million reside in the State of Palestine (3.12 million in the West Bank and 2.11 million in the Gaza Strip), about 1.6

---

[11] - A focus group discussion held by the two researchers for the purpose of preparing the study, in which about 10 representatives of Palestinian media organizations participated, on November 3, 2021.

million live in the 1948 occupied territories, about 6.2 million in Arab countries, and about 738,000 in foreign countries.

The percentage of individuals in the age group 0-14 years as of mid-2021 is estimated to be about 38 percent. Of individuals in this age group, 36 percent reside in the West Bank and 41 percent in the Gaza Strip. There was a noticeable decrease in the percentage of individuals aged 65 and over by about 3 percent in Palestine, 4 percent in the West Bank, and 3 percent in the Gaza Strip. The number of males is 2.66 million whereas the females are 2.57 million[12].

Media consumption patterns in Palestine

Several Palestinian media websites were among the top 50 searched for websites in Palestine, accordion to Alexa, which ranks websites in order of access and browsing rates. The order of top searches for media sites was as follows[13]:

#	Media Company Name	Link to Webpage
1	Al-Watan Voice	Alwatanvoice.com
2	Fajer TV	Alfajertv.com
3	Maan News Agency	Maannews.net
4	Sama News Agency	Samanews.ps
5	Sawa News Agency	Palsawa.com
6	Palestine Today	Paltoday.ps

Table 1: Top ranked news websites

The most prominent Palestinian media pages on Facebook are:

#	Number of Followers	Media Company Name	Link to Webpage
1	9,059,252	Al-Quds Newspaper	alqudsnewspaper/com.FB
2	7,487,845	Shehab News Agency	e.ShehabAgency/com.FB
3	6,697,878	NewsQudsAl-Network	QudsN/com.FB

Table 2: Most prominent Palestinian media outlets on Facebook[14]

[12] - Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, July 2021, at the link:
https://pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?lang=ar&ItemID=4023

[13] Ranking according to https://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/PS, entry time: 4 November 2021.
[14] - Palestinian digital reality, ipoke report for social networking sites in Palestine, fifth issue, 2020

Methodology

To conduct the study, the researchers relied on a dual methodology that combines a descriptive and quantitative approach. The first described stations in the Palestinian media institutions whereas the quantitative approach relied on reading digital variables that the researchers collected through an electronic form specifically prepared and distributed to the study sample. In addition, the researchers also used a qualitative approach to understand the reality of the research problem and devise solutions and proposals for the future. For the qualitative part of the study, the researchers conducted interviews and focus groups assessments.

The descriptive approach is characterized by its neutrality as researchers do not interfere. Therefore, the results appear objectively and are derived accurately, which may contribute to making correct suggestions related to the study by providing impartial justifications.

In the case of the qualitative approach, many contributors with experience and influence in Palestinian media institutions participated in discussion, which were followed by meetings with the heads of these media institutions to discuss various options, alternatives, and future solutions.

The study included three processes: data collection, analysis, and a discussion to derive indicators.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on four types of media in Palestine: print media, broadcast media, television media, and digital media (sometimes referred to as new media). The study aims to explore the financial situation of these media outlets and their most prominent sources of revenue. It also explains how the media in Palestine can generate new revenue and sources of income in light of evolving concepts and unstable financial environments.

Study Questions

The study explores four main questions:

1. How do media outlets generate sustainable revenue?
2. What forms of funding are available to the media in Palestine?
3. How can the Palestinian media diversify their sources of income to improve their financial situation?
4. What are options for funding the Palestinian media in the future?

The Study Sample

First sample: survey study conducted by designing an electronic form specifically prepared for the study with the aim of obtaining answers related to selected questions. Representatives of 35 Palestinian media organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip participated in answering these questions, which is illustrated by Figure 33.
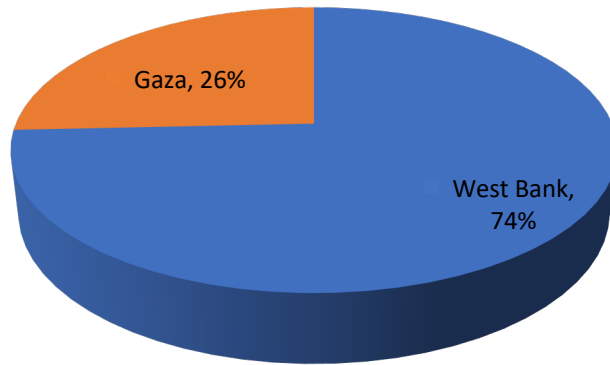
Figure 33: Geographic breakdown of the sample

During the preparation of the study and in their application of a holistic methodology that targets Palestinian media institutions, the researchers were interested in including in the sample a diverse set of institutions in terms of quality. Figure 34 shows that the research form was distributed to a variety of institutions: 33 percent were websites; 16 percent were radio stations; and 11 percent were production companies and media service providers; 5 percent, respectively, were print newspapers, satellite stations, and non-governmental news agencies; 7 percent were interactive television; 12 percent were media pages on social media; 4 percent were local TV stations; and 2 percent were government news agencies.
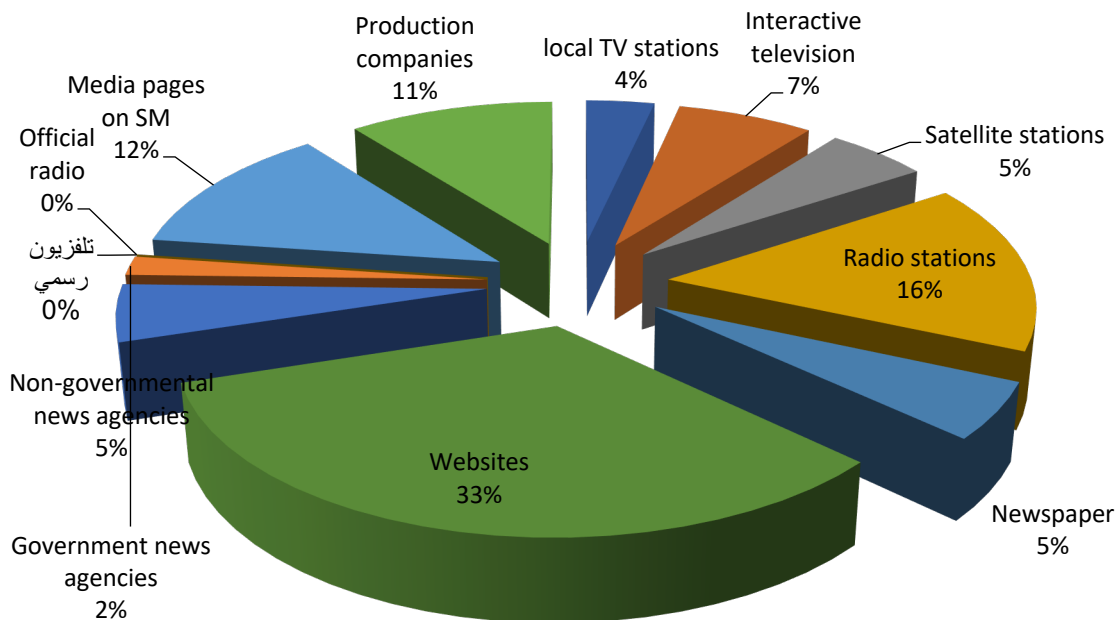
Figure 34: Breakdown of the sample per type of media outlet

Second sample: This sample consisted of personal interviews. Seven interviews were conducted with individuals with a depth of experience and knowledge related to the topic of the research. The interviews focused on three categories of people

1. Individuals who represented some of the surveyed media organizations that would be able to offer a deeper understanding of the questions in the study.
2. Economic experts who were consulted to gain insight into the Palestinian economy in order to better understand the variables impacting the media sector and its future .
3. Technical and digital experts who were consulted to understand more about the future of the media sector when it comes to digital development .

Third sample: Focus group discussion. One focus group participated in the study, which included around ten individuals representing various media organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most of them were directors of these institutions.

Challenges and Obstacles

During the study preparation period, the researchers faced a number of challenges and obstacles, and it is important to document them in the methodology. The challenges and obstacles were the following:

- The sensitive content addressed by the study: The study touches on the sensitive topic of finances and the amount of funding media institutions have. Information on this topic is not regularly disclosed in Arab culture, and especially not when it is related to the amount and sources of funding. The researchers formulated questions that indirectly asked for information about these topics and then had to derive results based on response. Several institutions refused to participate in the study, saying that the information was private and could not be disclosed.
- Official media institutions, especially the official radio and television channels, did not fill out the question form or participate in the focus group and refused to disclose information about their establishments.
- Geographical and environmental challenges: The researchers used an electronic questionnaire and conducted virtual interviews and a virtual focus group. The focus was conducted using zoom while interviews were done over the phone and by email. The study was not carried out in person because of the difficult of traveling within Palestine as well as due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to make in-person communication difficult.

The Structure of the Palestinian Media Sector

The media sector in Palestine is shaped like a tree with multiple branches:

- **Official media institutions**: Prior to the split between Fatah and Hamas in 2007, official media outlets were under the umbrella of the Palestine Radio and Television Corporation, which included numerous television channels and Voice of Palestine

Radio. After the split, the government in Gaza established Al-Ra'i Agency, which is affiliated with the Government Information Office in Gaza, in addition to the Palestinian News Agency (Wafa) .

- **Media institutions affiliated with universities**: The majority of Palestinian universities have established satellite TV stations and radio stations in order to provide opportunities to their students to develop their skills in the media. These university affiliated outlets entered a competitive media market, and many closed shortly after opening or after several years due to the high cost of operating. The most prominent university affiliated media outlets are:

  o Arab American University (Jenin): University Radio FM
  o An-Najah National University (Nablus): An-Najah Media Centre includes (satellite TV, radio, and website), but the satellite channel has been absent from satellite broadcasts and has turned into a local TV channel.
  o Al-Quds University Abu Dys (Occupied Jerusalem): Educational radio and educational TV station
  o Al-Quds Open University (governmental): Al-Quds Educational TV and radio station
  o Hebron University: Alam radio station
  o The Islamic University of Gaza: Al-Kitab TV (Closed)

- **Private media institutions**: Most are local TV or radio stations. Their financing primarily comes from owners who invest capital and collect returns from advertisements and sponsorships .

- **Media organizations affiliated with civil society organizations or NGOs**: These are licensed under laws governing NGOs and depend on their affiliation with the NGO, which implement and run the outlets media operations. The majority are funded by donors .

- **Partisan media institutions**: These are affiliated with the Palestinian political organizations and political parties. The most notable are Al-Awda TV, which is affiliated with the Fatah movement, and the Al-Aqsa Media Network, which is affiliated with the Hamas movement.

Figure 35 shows the distribution of media institutions based on responses from the questionnaire.
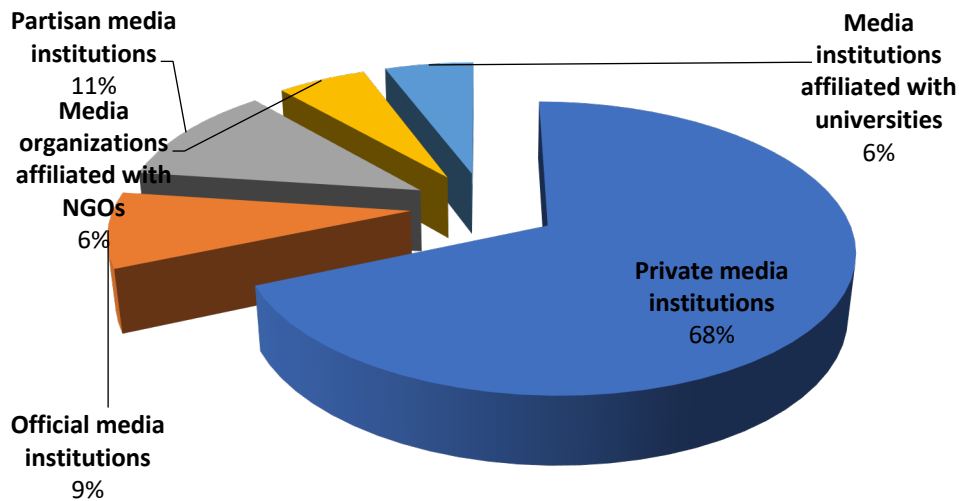
Figure 35: Ownership structure of Palestinian media outlets

The Palestinian Media Market

As shown in Figure 36, in addition to a geographical distribution, there is a wide range in the number of years the surveyed media outlets have been operating. Fifty-four percent of surveyed media organizations had been operating for more than 10 years, meaning they have gathered substantial knowledge and experience. Nine percent of media outlets had been operating for five to 10 years. And the remaining 37 percent had been operating for five years or less.
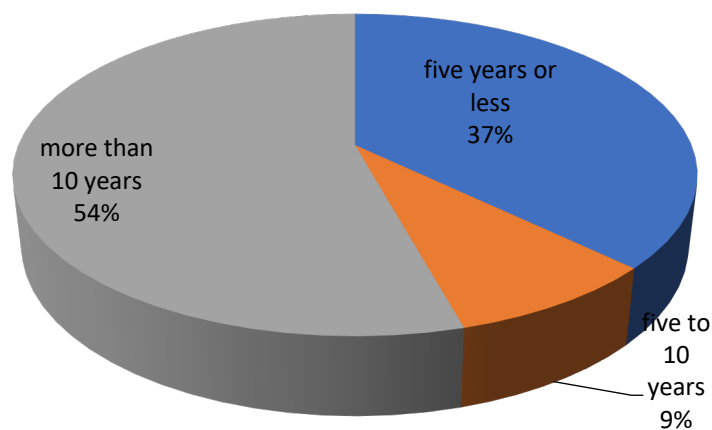
Figure 36: Years of experience of Palestinian media outlets

Specialization or Comprehensiveness

The increased ability of media outlets to reach audiences, the high rate of competition within a small geographic, and the unstable financial situation gives rise to an important question: due they aim to become increasingly specialized or remain general when it comes to the content they publish ?

Figure 37 shows that 86 percent of surveyed media outlets in Palestine provide general content while 8 percent focused specifically on the economy and 3 percent focused on politics and health.

Dr. Said Abu Mualla, professor of media at the Arab American University[15], puts forward a set of premises, linked to funding, that can explain the tendency to focus on general content:

1- Local funding and the concept of reaching the largest audience. This model is employed by the advertiser who is looking for the ability to reach the largest number of segments of society, and does not want to be limited to a specific social group that might be attracted to a specialized media outlet .

2- Attempting to benefit from international funding provided by donor institutions that usually support a system of projects and ideas. Thus, media organizations seek comprehensive content that may open up broader horizons and multiple opportunities for financing.
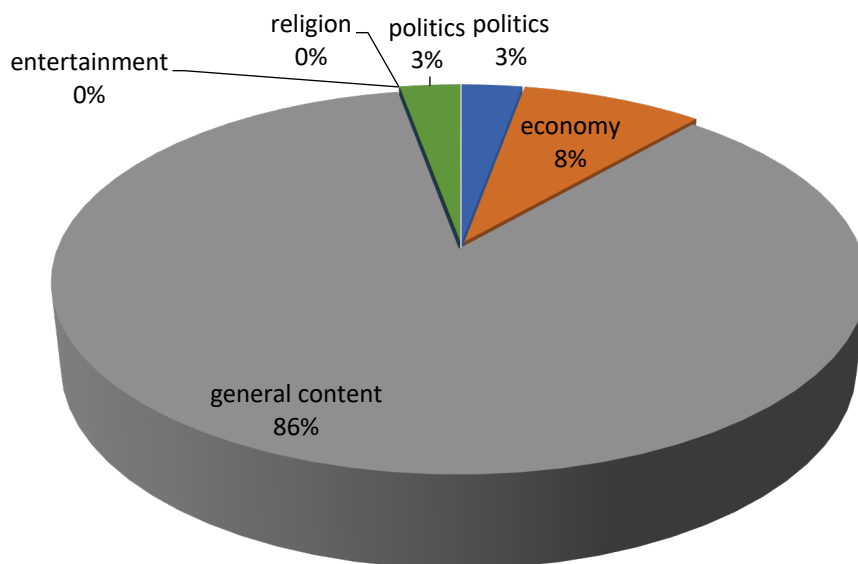
Figure 37: Area of focus of Palestinian media outlets

Main Sources of Funding

The main sources that media organizations rely on to provide their funding are diverse. Figure 38 shows that reliance on traditional advertisements is still the main source of financing, accounting for 23 percent of funding for Palestinian media outlets. Private funding from investors is also a major source for private media outlets, coming at 21 percent. Funding in return for providing media services constitutes 15 percent while the proportion of funding from selling media production is 12 percent. Funding from political parties or organizations accounts for 6 percent, and funding based on external grants or funding institutions constitutes 5 percent.

[15]- Dr. Saeed Abu Mualla, Professor of Mass Communication at the Arab American University, Ramallah, private interview, November 2, 2021.

As for government funding, it constitutes 4 percent, and 3 percent of funding comes from universities that are incubators for a number of media institutions.

According to Dr. Saleh Masharqa, professor of media at Birzeit University[16], the diverse funding sources of Palestinian media outlets are due to the different traits of the organizations, whether it is their connections or the content they produce.

The owners of the media outlets largely determine the nature and form of funding, according to Dr. Masharqa. For example, government media outlets depend on a budget approved in the yearly general budget by the Ministry of Finance and advertisement. Meanwhile, political party affiliated media outlets receive direct support from the party to finance and cover daily expenses, salaries, and other expenditures. Some private sector media outlets depend on advertising, sponsorships, and the investment capabilities of their owners whereas others depend on local or international donors.
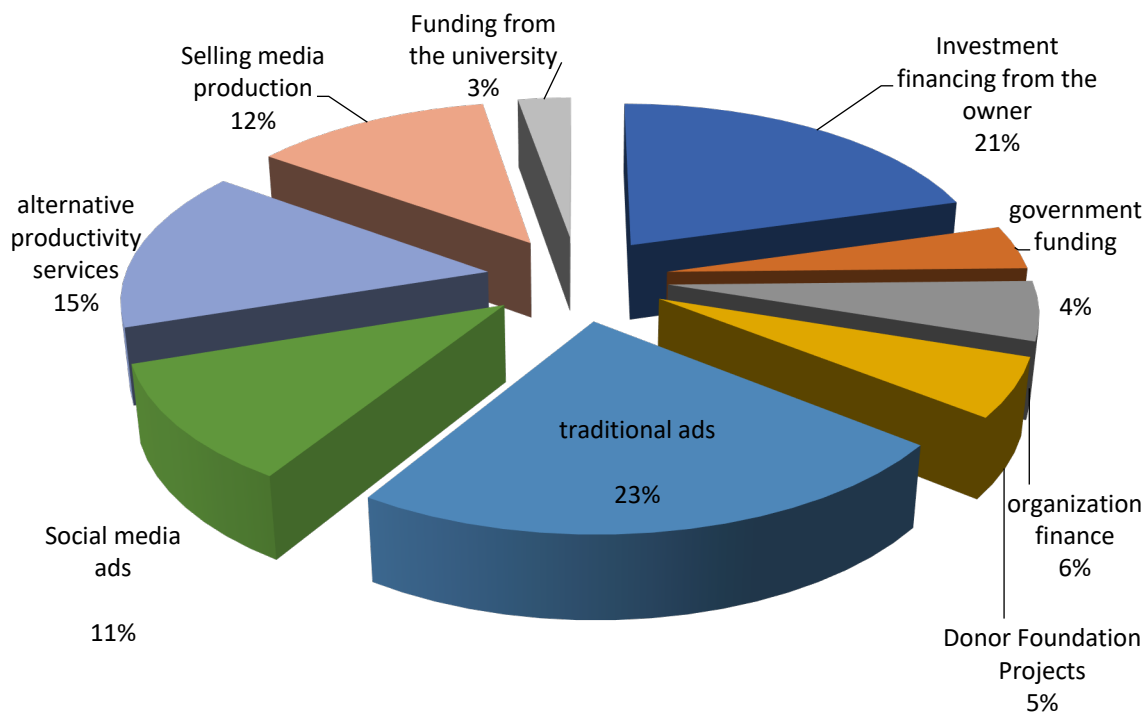
Figure 38: Main source of funding for Palestinian media outlets

Challenges to Funding

The year 2020 was a very difficult period for the Palestinian media. Eighty-six percent of media outlets suffered from a financial deficit, as shown in Figure 39. There are several factors that may have accounted for this fact[17]:

---

[16] - Dr. Saleh Masharqa, professor of media at Birzeit University, special interview, 28 October 2021.
[17] - Muhammad Abu Jiyab, editor-in-chief of Al-Iqtisadi newspaper, Gaza, special interview on October 27, 2021.

- The absence of real investments that would support private media outlets due to political fluctuations and the absence of profitability and financial returns from such investments.
- The decline in the performance of the commercial and industrial sectors in Palestine due to the decline in the general economic situation. This also affected the commercial advertising market for companies that constitute the largest financial resource for local private media.
- Commercial reluctance to use traditional forms of local media in advertisements due to the development of digital and social media. This progress negatively impacted the commercial interest in traditional media outlets due to the larger audiences and more efficient and commercially productive models that exist on digital and social media websites. As a result, revenue for traditional media organizations declined.
- Lack of technical capabilities and expertise required to keep pace with technological developments, adapt to markets, and smoothly transition to utilize newer forms of social and digital media. Therefore, it was increasingly difficult to preserve financial resources, develop methods and means of media dissemination, and ensure cash flows while media organizations work to upgrade their technology.
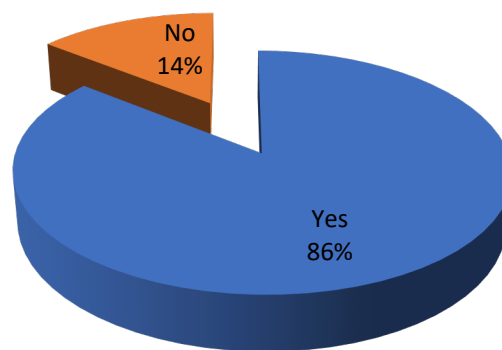
Figure 39: Did your institution suffer a deficit in 2020?

Representatives of media organizations offered almost identical explanations of the causes of the financial crisis that their institutions are facing. In addition, by also accounting for the factors mentioned by Mohammas Abu Jiyab [18](Editor in chief of Al-Eqtisadia newspaper), which is illustrated by Figure 40, it appears that 30 percent of the causes of the financial crisis are due to the decline in the proportion of traditional advertisements, while 19 percent believe that the COVID-19 pandemic was the main reason behind this. Meanwhile, 17 percent think that there are structural weaknesses among the operating bodies of the media institutions themselves leading to their inability to raise funds and attract investments. Eight percent consider that this deficit is due to an increase in the expenses of these institutions, and 7 percent

[18] - Muhammad Abu Jiyab, an exclusive interview, previous reference.

believe that the increase in competition between media institutions has led to a decline in the financial situation due to the dispersion of the same funding sources.

Furthermore, 5 percent consider that the cause of this crisis is reflective of the general economic crisis that the Palestinian Authority is suffering from as well as a failure to diversify funding sources. Finally, 4 percent believe that the financial crisis that affected political organizations and parties themselves were reflected in their affiliated media institutions.
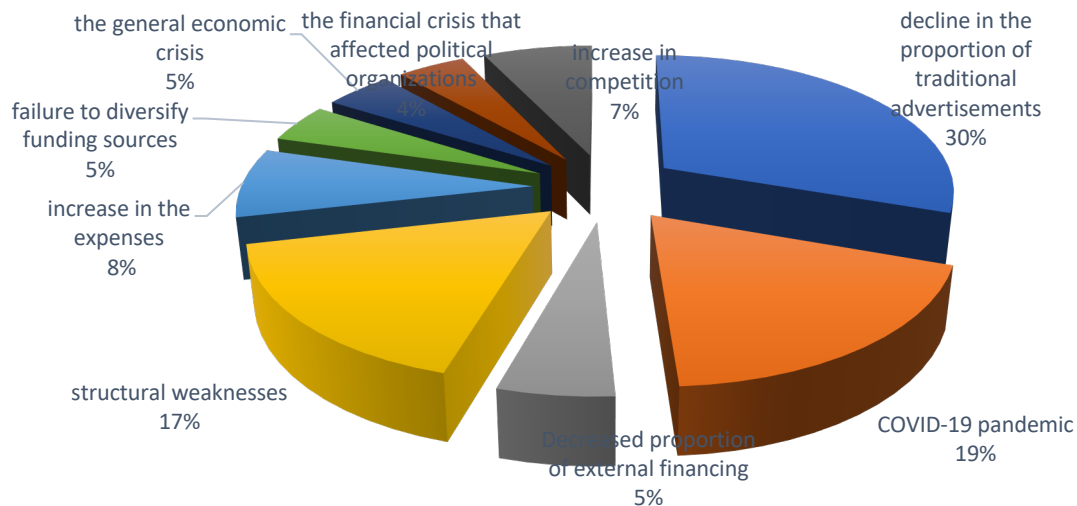
Figure 40: Reasons for the 2020 financial deficit

For the 14 percent of media outlets that did not suffer from a financial crisis in 2020, Figure 41 shows the factors that contributed to their success. Fifty percent of these institutions were not dependent on political funding and kept themselves financially independent. Twenty-eight percent worked to create modern financial and revenue streams. Eleven percent built plans to raise funds and attract funding that enabled them to weather the economic crisis. And an additional 11 percent did not make changes to their budgets.

Muhammad Abu Jiyab believes that it is difficult for Palestinian media outlets to achieve financial independence due to the absence of a culture of media investment stemming from the futility of such investments in light of political and economic instability. The decline of the Palestinian economy and reliance of major companies on advertising on social media, which provides greater financial returns than advertising in traditional outlets.
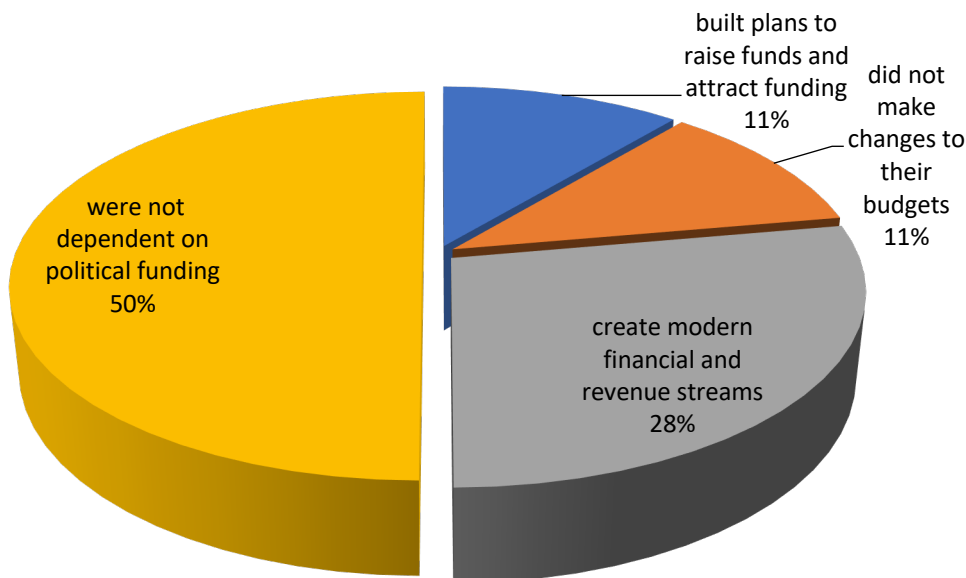
Figure 41: Factors that protected the institution from a deficit in 2020

Politics and its Influence on Funding

The internal political structure, whether directly or indirectly, constitutes an important determinant of the operations of media outlets and their access to funding. This is the result of three aspects in the situation in Palestinian:

1- The ongoing Israeli occupation and the failure to grant independence to media institutions. This is also true in areas under full Palestinian control in accordance with the Oslo Accords. In both contexts, Israel interrupts the operations of Palestinian media outlets in several ways :

- The prosecution and targeting of content produced by Palestinian media outlet through the enactment of the Facebook law[19] in December 2016, the prosecution of Palestinian journalists, and the targeting of journalist during field reporting[20].
- Closure of media institutions and the confiscation of equipment and broadcasting devices which causes huge setbacks for media institutions. These interferences disrupt the media's broadcast waves and thus restrict their audience.

---

[19] - Al-Jazeera Net, Israel approves the Facebook law to prosecute Palestinians, December 2016, link: https://www.aljazeera.net/news/presstour/2016/12/26/%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8 %B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%D8%A7%D8%A%D8%D8%A7%D8%D8%A7%D8%D8%B1 %86-%D8%B3%D8%A8%D hair extensions %82%D8%A9

[20]- Al-Jazeera Net, 652 Israeli violations against Palestinian journalists in 2021, at the link: https://www.aljazeera.net/news/humanrights/2021/9/27/%D{2%D{6%D8%B5}] D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%A%D8%A7%D8 on Instagram %B1-6523%D8%A7%D8%A%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A 7

2- The internal Palestinian political situation, which is divided into two parts:

- The political division and its consequences: The division between Palestinian political factions has caused setbacks in media, especially in the field of media freedoms. Palestinian media outlets have been subjected to continuous persecution in the West Bank and Gaza. Many outlets have been forced to close because of their political positions. Partisan affiliations also limit the ability of outlets to obtain funding. Unless the internal political situation is resolved, media institutions will continue to suffer financially as a consequence of the ongoing divisions.

- The concept of control, power, and space reduction. Rola Sarhan[21], editor-in-chief of Al-Hadath newspaper, believes that there is an attempt by the Palestinian government to link aid to media institutions struggling with the aftereffects of the pandemic with the editorial lines and content produced by various outlets. Although there is no clearly documented evidence of this claim, the situation on the ground seems to prove it is true. Sometimes, the power of the executive authority is reflected in the private sector's dealings. Finally, the situation is more complicated than described and presents obstacles to funding or risks the credibility of the institutions. This paradox is the crisis Palestinian media outlets suffer.

3- The funding crisis related to political organizations: Political organizations and parties hold media organizations hostage to their policies and involve them in political rivalries. As a result, their affiliated media organizations suffer in the areas of funding in two ways. On one hand, the media outlet is affected if the party it is affiliated with is subject to financial restrictions on the funding they can obtain obtain, from the party itself or otherwise. On the other hand, being politically affiliated deprives these institutions of any local funding and even makes advertisers afraid to promote their ads through their platforms.

4- Foreign funding and its repercussions: Media institutions that receive foreign funding encounter two problems. Within Palestinian society, they face accusations of carrying out the agendas of their outside backers[22]. Second, these outlets have an incentive to produce programs and content that is in line of the mission or interest of their outside financiers – even if they are not explicitly asked to do so – in order to maintain their funding. As a result, the Palestinian media institutions suffers from this reality, as is the case in the rest of the Arab countries, and it has cast a shadow over the ability of these institutions to either change the image or at least get out of the conflict situation to prove the opposite.

Figure 42 depicts a set of factors that can intersect with the factors discussed above to play a role in influencing the future of Palestinian media outlets and their financing. According to the

---

[15] - Rola Sarhan, editor-in-chief of Al-Hadath newspaper, special interview on November 3, 2021.

[22] - Ahmed Abu Hamad, Foreign Funding... "New Colonialism" or a Search for Lost Independence?, Al-Jazeera Magazine, December 2020, at the link: https://institute.aljazeera.net/ar/ajr/article/1324

results, different media representatives believe that each of these factors has a role in shaping the future Palestinian media .
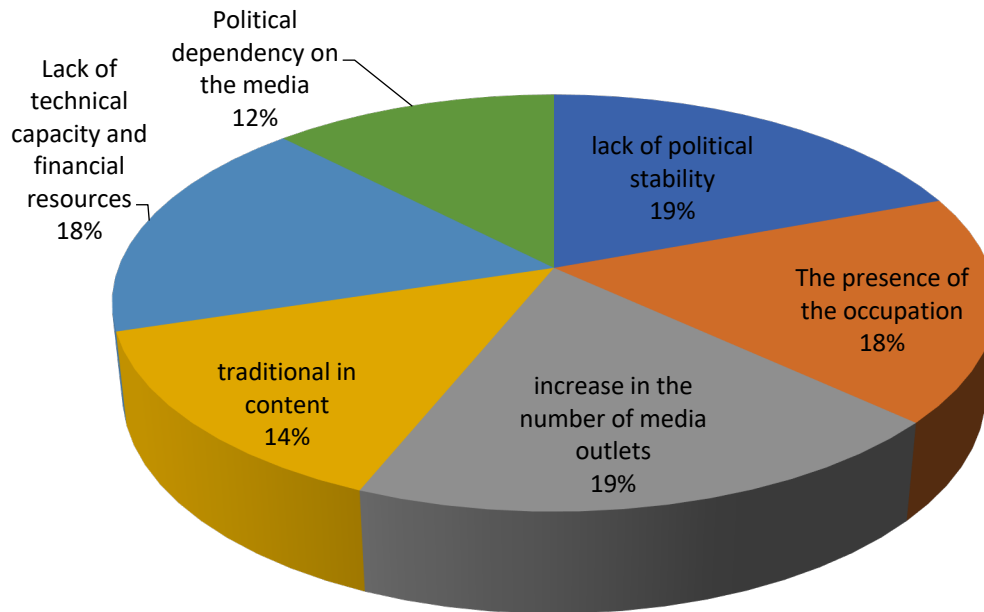
Figure 42: Factors influencing the future of the Palestinian media sector

The Ability to Attract Financing

This part of the study represents an exploratory attempt based on the central question investigated by the researchers. The goal is to try to draw a vision for the future that might allow Palestinian media organizations to take unconventional steps to attract and generate funding while overcoming challenges that arise in the Palestinian context.

Marius Dragomir Director of the Media, Data and Society Center[23], notes that governments play a major role in local media by exercising their authority to regulate broadcast frequencies and licensing requirements to shape the market. This represents the primary attempt by governments to control or benefit from restricting the financial condition of media institutions. In practical terms, this could mean the prevention of independent media from crossing the red lines set by governments or the imposition of taxes that exhaust media institutions from a financial standpoint.

In addition to the above, and in the case to Palestinian, researching the ability to generate funding by media organizations requires studying several factors, detailed below.

---

[23]- Dragomir, M., The Perils of Public Media Financing, March 2018, available at:
https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/public-media-loss-of-journalistic-integrity-by-marius-dragomir-2018-03/arabic

The Market and Media Investment Ability

There is intense competition among media outlets in the investment market due to the development of digital media and as traditional outlets accelerate their efforts to provide content that is adaptable to the new digital reality. The emergence of social networking websites as a secondary publishing platform alongside digital media websites has only accelerated this trend. As a result, conventional advertising is facing two challenges :

Investing in content

Digitization has made a leap in how the content industry operates and moved from traditional platforms to content based on videos, graphics, and other templates and presentations. Moreover, there has been a notable change in the duration of the advertisement. Instead of sitting for minutes, it is now possible and desirable to present advertising content to followers in under a minute. This has generated different approaches and comparison between those looking for investment in the media, whether commercial investment based on bringing advertisements or based on creating content and presenting it within the needs of other institutions that are in harmony with the nature of their interest and stages. As a result, investors have withdrawn substantial resources from traditional media outlets as their ability to reach consumers has fallen behind.

The problems affecting traditional media have rapidly increased and became clearer in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As an American study shows[24], the pandemic has caused an influx of followers and users to communication sites, platforms, and digital applications. This contributed to an unprecedented increase in their viewership as the number of visitors to digital platforms and applications increased from 43 billion in February 2020 to 64 billion in April and reached 80 billion later in the year

In Palestinian, the legal advisor and specialist in digital and social media, Linda Saffarini, believes that the leap in digital and the virtual spaces represents an attractive opportunity for investments for the media industry in general. However, the situation in Palestine collides with a set of obstacles related to the Palestinian media condition represented in:

- Digital curfew: a ban imposed on Palestinian content.
- Digital filters used by social media platforms that screen Palestinian content based on extensive databases.
- The inability to control energy sources – the most important being the supply of electricity. The energy sector is controlled by the Israeli authorities, and electricity is commonly disconnected for long hours, especially in the Gaza Strip.

---

[18] - Essling Ian, Weitman Bridget, Revisited: Media Consumption during the Coronavirus Pandemic. [1824] comscore,2020. https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Blog/Revisited-Media-Consumption-during-the-Coronavirus-Pandemic

- Despite the use of the 5G technology in many parts of the world, Palestine still operates on 3G technology, which has high maintenance costs of and modest performance.
- The infrastructure of the Palestinian Network is rented from the Israeli Network and is not owned by Palestine.
- The global search engine Google does not give the same results for the same word in different locations. In fact, a similar search yields different results based on whether a person is located in the West Bank, Gaza, or within Israeli settlements.
- The Palestinian Internet Service Provider is like a proxy for the Israeli main provider. As a result, Palestinians do not own the network capabilities and are completely subject to non-negotiable Israeli terms of service .

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, updated as of October 2020, Israel deploys 560 telecommunications towers in the West Bank. According to the Oslo accords, Israel's approval of any steps or agreements regarding the Palestinian telecommunications sector is required before any operations. The Accords also granted Israel the right to manage the frequency spectrum[25].

Investment in capabilities and skills

Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics show that the unemployment rate among graduates of media programs is among the highest out of all university graduates, amounting to 46.4 percent at the end of 2020. This indicates that there is either a large gap between the number of graduates and available opportunities or a gap between the skills graduates have and the basic skills needed to work in this sector, or both.

Sami Moshtaha, a program presenter, TV producer, and content creator[26], points out that there is currently a gap between the operations of modern media and the content and skills with which content creators must develop their capabilities. This is evident in the unwillingness of those leading media institutions to invest in human resources as well as their desire to operate according to traditional means of media production. This may cause the institutions to falter into financial deficits or simply lose sources of income. Meanwhile, if experienced people in digital platforms supervised all the operations of media production, from ideation to publishing and marketing, it would have been possible to provide income, distinction, and perhaps emancipation from traditional financing.

---

[25]- Turkish Anadolu Agency, the Israeli "communication" invades the West Bank and threatens the collapse of its Palestinian counterpart, February 2020, at the link: https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%A7%D AboutD8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A7%D%A7%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A9%D8%A9%D8%8%D8%A8%D8%A8%D8%About A9-D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD-D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%D8%A9-D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A9%D8%A7%D8%A7%D8%D8%A7%D8%D8%D8%A7%D8%D8%D8%D8%A7%Day to the world dress %B8%D8%B1%D8%A9%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%A9%D8%A9%D8%A9%D8%B1%D8%A9%D8%B1/2153858

[20] - Sami Mushtaha, Producer and Content Creator, Gaza. Private interview on October 29, 2021.

This point is reinforced by journalist Akram Al-Natsheh[27], who believes that digital media transformed the traditional mode of communication between a sender represented by the media organization and its recipients. Now, another form of communication has emerged whereby media organizations mediate the communication process between different recipients that can sometimes amass a larger viewership than the media platform itself. The media no longer monopolizes the communication between the public and the source of information, on the one hand, or the advertiser and his audience, on the other. Communication technology has replaced the media in this context.

In Palestinian, the amount of investment in software expertise is relatively weak, which prompts specialists in this sector to work within Arab, regional, and international companies, or even attracts them to Israeli companies.

Digitization and Possible Opportunities

A study carried out by the Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) concludes that, despite the absence of comprehensive reform efforts in the process of innovation and knowledge production, there are promising prospects for future growth in this field in Palestine. This is possible through launching individual initiatives in the form of startups, especially since Palestine has sizable "human capital" that can support the investment process in the digital economy[28].

This conclusion prompted us to ask the question: What technical obstacles exist to the Palestinian media's ability to attract money through content that is published on digital platforms ?

Expert Linda Saffarini[29] answered the following:

- There are differences in how various digital platforms are used. Not all social media platforms have the same capabilities. At the same time, each of them has its own policies to deal with content within political and geographic frameworks.
- The official hosting institutions pose obstacles to benefiting from digital skills and their potential opportunities. These are exemplified by the editorial policies that filter content, in addition to other technical obstacles.
- The filters used by digital platforms that reject Palestinian content and words classified as hate speech only because they reflect the daily Palestinian reality.

---

[21] - Akram Al-Natsheh, How did investment in the media falter?, Wattan News Agency. January 2021. Link: https://www.wattan.net/ar/news/330169.html

[28]- Innovation and the Digital Economy in Palestine: Challenges and Opportunities, Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), Ramallah, January 2019.
[29]- Linda Saffarini, legal advisor and expert in digital and social media, Gaza, special interview, 28 October 2021.

- The monitoring and tracking apparatuses of the security institutions that limit digital freedom with pervasive and intrusive scrutiny. Digital Freedom is handcuffed in our country.
- The most important digital obstacles to the Palestinian media are the same ones that impede digital financial and banking development in the Palestinian banking sector.
- Palestinian private sector companies are trying to set a precedent to solve this crisis by establishing companies called "e-wallets". These companies are limited and suppressed in their ability to expand, due to the insurmountable obstacles they face .
- There is a fierce war in the field of digital banking expansion, and there is a global campaign to open the Palestinian market to PayPal. This would overcome the crises of electronic buying and selling and open the Palestinian market for global banking business.
- The solution to the problem does not lie in the media institutions, but in the financial and banking sector. These are unique challenges, but there are unlimited digital and technical solutions.

Participatory Funding

A paper entitled "Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport Overview of Recent Dynamics in the UK Press Market" notes that, between 2007 and 2018, there was a clear decline in the sales of British daily newspapers, from 11.5 million to around 5.8 million copies per day. This prompted the newspapers to search for options to compensate for the decline in hard copy sales. Some of them chose to impose fees on access to their digital content in order to generate financial returns. However, others sought new concepts of financing, such as crowdfunding[30].

The idea of participatory financing is based on a simple contribution made by people in different places where they believe in a certain idea, have shared interests around it, or sympathize with it. People make a financial donation of their choice that may be simple and variable according to different people through social networks. This type of financing appeared nearly ten years ago in several European countries, but it is expanding. Currently, it is evolving to address many of the concerns surrounding it and is growing into a strong avenue for financing[31].

Participatory funding, in the case of the Palestinian media, can contribute to disconnecting media outlets financial situations from the unstable political reality in Palestine as well as allow them to break free from political affiliations. This is especially important since it can be part of funding projects based on companies specializing in community finance, which are closer to the concept of NGOs that focus on different issues of interest to society.

---

[30] - Muhammad Khamaiseh, Participatory Funding in the Media, Al Jazeera Magazine, June 2019. At the link: https://institute.aljazeera.net/ar/ajr/article/764

[31] - Euronews, Participatory Financing: Together to Build the Future, January 2013. Available at: https://arabic.euronews.com/next/2013/01/21/financing-for-the-future

In addition, there is sympathy and solidarity with the Palestinian cause on a global level that can help serve as a basis for participatory financing. This approach would be far better and more sustainable than traditional financing methods.

To achieving this type of financing, several requirements need to be met[32] :

- Creating informative, objective content that presents facts and shies away from superficial data.
- Enhancing trust and transparency among Palestinian media institutions. In the past, Palestinian media outlets have not disclosed their sources of funding and have used disbursement methods that have raised questions about corruption .
- Developing the skills of media workers in the fields of content generation and content delivery to match the skills and concepts used by global digitization projects.
- Having an administrative and marketing team capable of studying the experiences of media organizations at the regional and international levels in order to benefit from the experiences of other outlets.
- Signing memoranda of cooperation and possibly forging partnerships with international institutions that can enhance the experience of local Palestinian media institutions to help build their confidence and advance their performance.

Public Policies and Avenues for Effective Change

One important pillar when it comes to funding for media organizations is the ability to harmonize the legal framework. This requires work on two fronts: First, laws should be established to safeguard the freedom of media work and to protect media personnel. Second, laws should allow media organizations to benefit from financial resources, locally and internationally, generated on social networking sites. Linda Saffarini[33] offers a set of ideas:

- There is a need to develop the Palestinian financial and banking system to be able to collect funds for beneficiaries on the local or international scale.
- When starting their digital and social pages, Palestinian media institutions must build the account in a way that technically and electronically ensures the preservation of their assets. At the same time, they should document their pages using a reliable unique marker (Blue Tick).
- National laws and contract agreements with service-providing companies must provide protection for media institutions and give them special attention and protection. This is especially important because media outlets sometimes document violations against human rights and public freedoms.

---

[32]- Saeed Abu Mualla, private interview, previous reference.

[33] - Linda Saffarini, private interview, previous reference.

- Media outlets must strictly follow instructions and regulations in order to protect their accounts and to ensure users' trust, which will be positively or negatively reflected by their number of their followers.
- The financial and banking system currently has many loopholes that are exploited to control the sources of funding allowed in Palestine. These include the means to supervise the banking sector and the limitations of digital financial technologies. Therefore, the banking sector is subject to many layers of control and restrictions that limit financial movement as well as physical movement.
- Work needs to be done to generate options for pre-paid subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, setting the stage to participate in international dialogues and pre-paid seminars, and contracting national institutions and companies for exclusive advertising .

The Future of Palestinian Media Financing

A characterization and analysis of the funding challenges facing Palestinian media outlets points toward several options for generating revenue and a plan of action to achieve that goal, which is outlined in Figure 43. The plan is based on proposals by the heads of media outlets and represents options for the future of media financing in Palestine.

More than a quarter of the leaders of Palestinian media outlets highlighted the importance of developing a marketing plan that is in line with the digital age. Twenty-four percent believe that creating digital content that can bring financial returns to outlets once it is marketed. Twelve percent believe that receiving funding from international donors is an important option. Nine percent suggested the parallel options of establishing investment projects that individuals can contribute to in order to support media outlets during difficult times while also seeking foreign investment in Palestinian media. The suggestion of seeking foreign investment is one of the most groundbreaking ideas and needs to be study further, particular in light of data scrutiny and content limitations in Palestinian media.
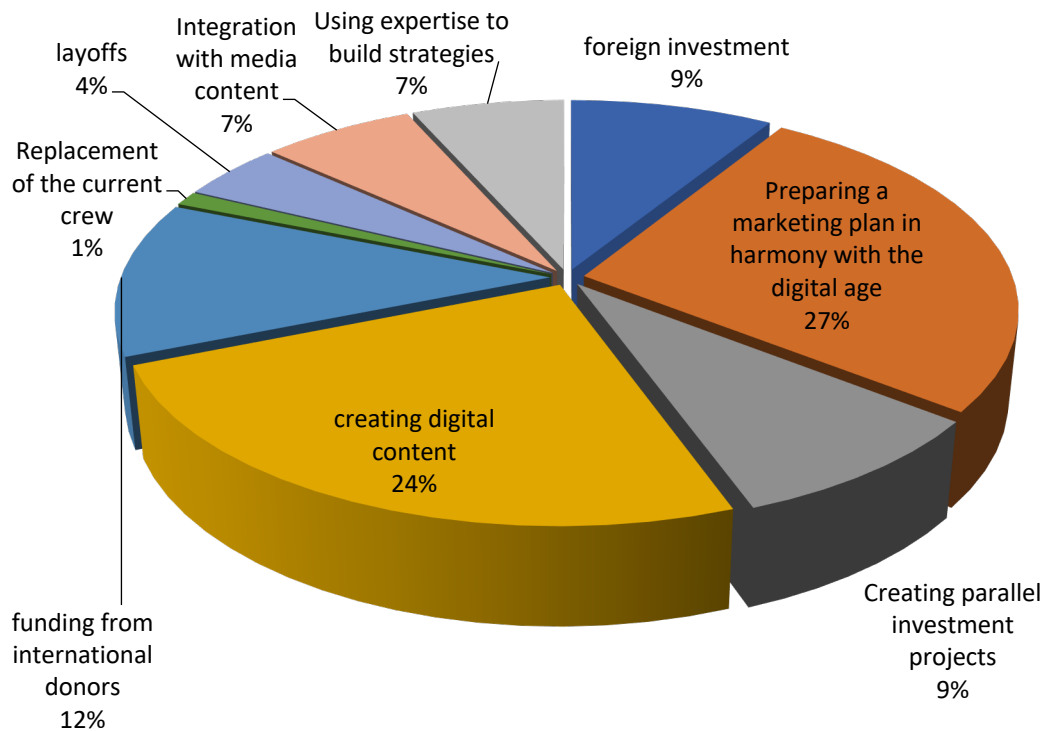
Figure 43: Avenues for future financing

Possible Options

In order to continue their work during difficult times, the leaders of Palestinian media organizations maintain that it is important to believe in the message of the outlets and their connection to reflecting the daily reality in Palestine and Palestinian national identity.

They presented the following suggestions in order to continue working during the difficult circumstance currently facing Palestinian media organizations:

- Take personal responsibility: It is important for the leaders of media organizations to resist pressure to withdraw from the media labor market or to give up in the face of obstacles that make it difficult for them to secure funding for their institutions. When faced with these pressures, it is possible to rely on personal experience or to take loans.
- Palestine is a fertile environment for events, and there is an ability to generate content even in calm situations. Therefore, this is an advantage that may not be granted to the rest of the media institutions in other countries and maintains the possibility of investing in the content possible. This requires those in charge of media institutions to have the skill, plan, and tools for a modern media industry that combines content and digital templates.
- Seek opportunities for media outlets to achieve financial independence. One potential drawback is that insisting on financial independence may adversely affect the number of staff members and the amount and comprehensiveness of the coverage the outlet is able to provide.

- Develop the relationship between civil society institutions and media outlets. Civil society institutions should not monopolize the job of defending freedoms or the human right sector. Partnering with media outlets can help create pressure to bring about effective change.
- Invest in and develop the Palestinian cultural sector and Palestinian women's rights. These topics are controversial in Palestinian society, and it might be worthwhile to develop specialized content to advance discussions about the position and rights of particular social groups. As a result, this may be a financial resource for media outlets that focus on the topic but not others with more general coverage.
- Pursue media outlet integration. This lowers the cost of renting and maintaining office spaces and can be achieved by taking a cooperative approach as opposed to looking at the market purely in terms of competition.
- Use social networking websites to generate financial revenue. Social networking websites – especially YouTube – generate strong profits for content makers in the Arab world. Facebook and other platforms do so as well. However, Palestinian media outlets have not properly invested in developing content these platforms. Production methods currently used by Palestinian outlets make it difficult for content to attract a large number of views. It is important to adopt new strategies in order to generate profits.
- Produce content that follows the same model as content that goes viral, but make sure it contains valuable, factual, and substantive information. There are millions of people around the world looking for useful content, but viewers are alienated by outdated approaches to production.
- Focus more on marketing. Palestinian media organization often spend 95 percent of their resources on production and neglect marketing. It is important to add content creators who are experienced working with digital platforms to newsrooms.

Results and Conclusions

Throughout its various sections, this study presented a number of factors and issues aimed at generating ideas for media organizations to build financial plans for their futures. The results can be summarized as follows:

1- Palestinian media organizations were already struggling financially prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the declaration of a state of emergency and lockdowns in March 2020 drastically exacerbated the issue as between 40 and 60 percent of advertisements were immediately withdrawn.
2- A considerable number of financing sponsors that media organizations were counting on for their budgets also dropped out due to the pandemic.
3- The structure of Palestinian media organizations and their dependency define their financial reality while also dictating the options available to them for funding.
4- Eighty-six percent of media institutions in Palestine produce general content because they believe that a lack of specialization will protect their funding sources. This assumption is driven by a reliance on funding from international institutions and donors.

5- Advertising still constitutes the main source of revenue for media organizations, at 23 percent. Meanwhile, private financing from investors is a main source for private media institutions, at 21 percent. Finance provided in return for media services constitutes 15 percent. Financing from the sale of media production is 12 percent. Funding from political parties or organizations constitutes 6 percent. Funding based on external grants or funding institutions constitutes 5 percent. Government funding constitutes 4 percent. And 3 percent of funding for media organization comes from universities.

6- 2020 was a very difficult year for Palestinian media outlets as 86 percent of them suffered from financial losses.

7- Fifty percent of media institutions that did not suffer from a financial crisis during the 2020 believe they were able to remain profitable due to their lack of dependence on political funding. Meanwhile, 28 percent worked to create modern revenue streams, and 11 percent built plans to attract funding .

8- In their interviews, the experts consulted for this study expressed a belief that it is difficult for Palestinian media outlets to achieve financial independence due to the absence of a culture of media investment in Palestine. Political and economic instability are also contributing factors .

9- The study shows that Palestinian media organizations can generate funding by investing in content and hiring or training staff to acquire the necessary capabilities and skills.

10- There are promising prospects for future growth in the field of digital media in Palestine when it comes to individual initiatives and startup enterprises .

11- Crowdfunding offers is a promising opportunity for Palestinian media outlets to generate revenue and break away from being dependent on political parties and organizations. This is especially true since it can be part of group funding projects which usually include companies specialized in community finance.

12- There is a need to develop the Palestinian financial and banking system to be able to generate funds for beneficiaries on the local or international level, especially through social media.

Recommendations Related to the Palestinian Media Market

- The need to pass a law regulating funding for Palestinian media organizations through general taxes that the government collects from citizens. Taxpayer money collected from the citizens should be utilized to develop the services provided to them.

- Pressure needs to be put on donors to change the conditions they impose in return for financing projects in Palestine, especially with regards to the media.

- There is a need for an official clause on government funding for both private and public media. This would prevent official media outlets from monopolizing the dedicated governmental media expenditure.

- There is a need to build marketing budgets for Palestinian media outlets.

- Content needs to be developed to fit the demands of digitization and the intense competition of the modern media market.

- Develop the Palestinian media lobby to fight and collectively reject political extortion through funding.

- Develop strategies to benefit from crowdfunding via global advocacy campaigns for the Palestinian cause on social media platforms.

- There is a need for a unified Palestinian media advocacy platform, regardless of media outlets' political affiliations. A unified advocacy platform can potentially open the way for creating real partnerships.