

PALESTINIAN MEDIA NEEDS ASSESSMENT

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2021
JERUSALEM UPRISING
AND THE GAZA WAR



THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION



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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 rising talents within free and independent 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 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 freedom of expression.

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 for Lebanese media and journalists, which raised USD 780,000 to support journalists' emergency and livelihood, independent media sustainability, and investigative journalism.

SKF employs a team of 21 in Beirut, Amman, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Gaza, Paris, and Amsterdam.

Disclaimer

The boundaries, colors, denominations, and other information shown on any figures in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of the Samir Kassir Foundation concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

This report summarizes the findings of a survey conducted from July 1 to August 1, 2021. Although all efforts have been made to verify the accuracy of the information that was collected and analyzed, the assessment was produced in a short timeframe to ensure relevance of the estimation of damages and needs. The assessment provides an overall picture of the damages sustained to media professionals, physical assets, and infrastructure. This assessment aims to summarize sustained damage and is not meant to replace in-depth sector-specific assessments.

Objectives

The methodology proposed hereunder will allow international and regional stakeholders to:

- Assess the impact of the conflict on journalists and media in Palestine;
- Evaluate the impact of the conflict on media diversity and sustainability in Palestine;
- Establish a rapid response mechanism to address emergency needs of journalists and media in Palestine;
- Establish a road map to encourage pluralism in the media sector in Palestine.

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Executive Summary

Palestinian Media Amid Israeli Aggression

In April 2021, tensions between Palestinian citizens of Israel and Israeli forces escalated significantly in Jerusalem. The conflict arose over the eviction of Arab citizens from their properties and the ownership claim by Israeli settlers over lands and houses in Arab-majority neighborhoods, notably Sheikh Jarrah. On May 10, the conflict took a sharp, violent turn with an uninterrupted 11-day Israeli military campaign on the Gaza Strip.

As a result of the violence, at least 256 Palestinians, including 66 children, were killed. In Israel, 13 people were killed. The Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that more than 1,900 Palestinians were also injured. As of May 19, at least 72,000 Palestinians were displaced. Around 4,360 rockets were fired towards Israel from Gaza, of which 680 landed within the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, 90 percent of rockets bound towards populated Israeli areas were intercepted by the Iron Dome. Israel conducted 1,500 air, land, and sea strikes on the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian and Palestine-based journalists and media organizations paid a very heavy price. The most striking development was the Israeli air raid on towers hosting several media organizations in Gaza, including AP, Al-Jazeera and others. In addition, two Palestinian journalists were killed when their houses were targeted by Israeli shelling, and dozens more injured either during the coverage of developments, or by Israeli riot policy in Jerusalem.

Journalists stand on the rubble of Al Jala tower, which housed several media outlets including AP, after it was targeted by Israeli airstrikes and collapsed, in Gaza City on May 14, 2021.

Photo: Mohammed Talatene



Between Violence and Violations

Two journalists were killed and six others wounded during the Israeli military attack on the Gaza Strip in May 2021. The military jets also shelled 20 media offices, four publishing houses, four bookshops, a printing company, 16 homes, and three cars belonging to media professionals.

In the West Bank, the Israeli forces attacked journalists with live ammunition, rubber-coated bullets, teargas and stun grenades, injuring 21 media professionals. They also beat two other members of the media and arrested a third. In the 1948 Territories, the police attacked 21 media professionals, beat 17 others and arrested seven artists, and a filmmaker. Moreover, a journalist was prevented from covering the events and the filmmaker was interrogated by the Intelligence Service.

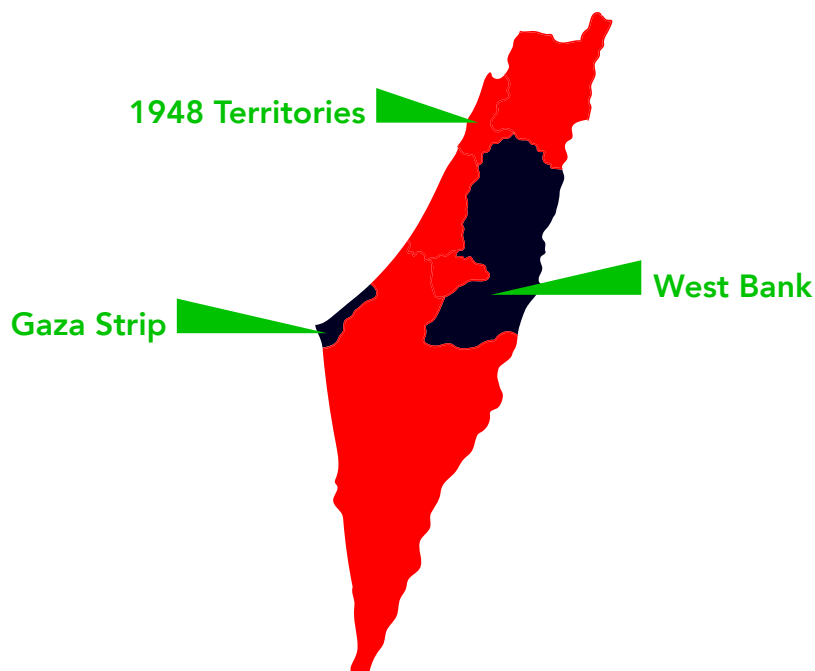
The Palestinian Preventive Security in the West Bank banned a photographer from documenting developments and interrogated a filmmaker. Meanwhile, WhatsApp blocked the accounts of dozens of journalists and photographers under the pretext of violating the company's policies or even without giving any reason. YouTube added age restriction to Al-Jazeera and Al-Ghad channels for several hours. The Hamas-affiliated Ministry of the Interior issued a decision to ban cooperation with Al-Arabiya channel; and unknown people claimed to work for Al-Mayadeen TV to gather information about Gaza residents.

Media Personnel as Targets and Victims

In the Gaza Strip, freelance journalist Rima Saad and Sawt Al-Aqsa radio host Youssef Abu Hussein were killed after Israeli warplanes raided their homes, on May 11 and 19, respectively. The Israeli forces also destroyed 20 local, Arab, and foreign media outlets, including Al-Jazeera channel, the Associated Press, Felesteen newspaper, Alkofiya TV, and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida daily.

In the West Bank, several reporters were injured on the job. Ali Smoudi and Alaa Badarneh were beaten on May 7 while covering the clashes between Israeli soldiers and young Palestinian demonstrators. Photographer Hazem Nasser was also arrested at the Annab military checkpoint on May 12.

In the 1948 Territories, the Israeli forces attacked Palestinian journalists and photographers, especially those covering the protests in Sheikh Jarrah, Umm Al-Fahm, and Al-Aqsa Mosque with teargas, stun grenades, and rubber-coated bullets.



Media Organizations in Need

Following the May 2021 conflict and the ensuing cessation of hostilities, the Samir Kassir Foundation (SKF) conducted a damage and needs assessment of the Palestinian media organizations within the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The selected media outlets (TV, print, online, and radio) reflect the diversity of the landscape, taking into account the political, societal, and sectoral distribution existing in Palestine. A total of 19 different media organizations have responded to SKF's assessment request.

Gazan photojournalist Momen Faiz Quraiqea sits in front of the remains of his media agency's office that was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City on May 14, 2021.
Photo: Mohammed Quraiqea/Idea Media

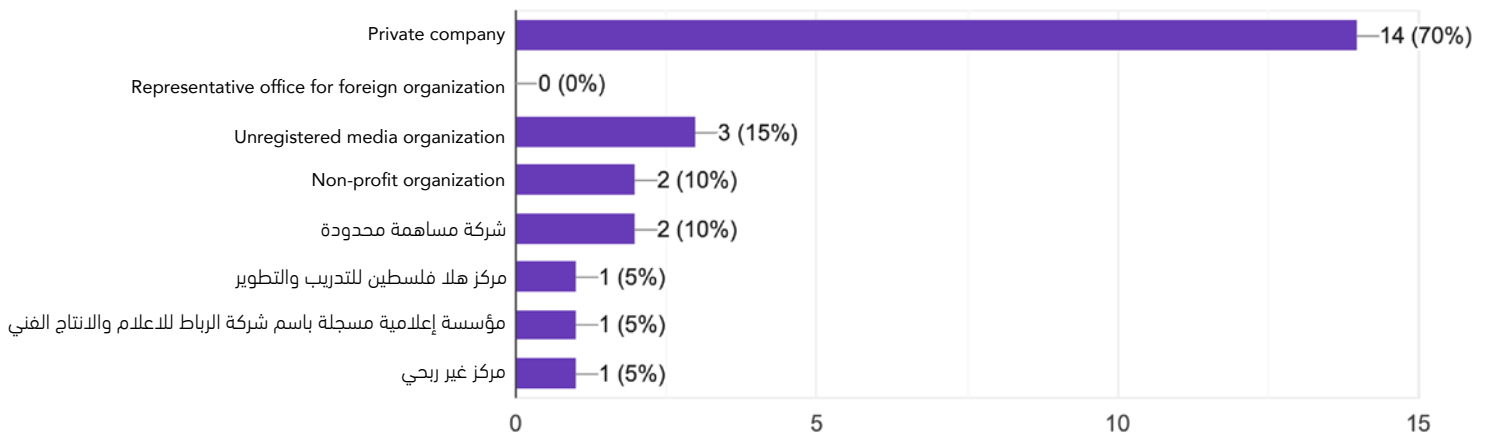


Palestinian Media Landscape

While major airstrikes destroyed the office of some international media organizations such as that of Al Jazeera, local media organizations have been severely impacted. Unlike their international counterparts, local journalists do not have privileged access to protection provided by external entities. Furthermore, local journalists largely do not have the right to freedom of movement, thereby impeding their ability to flee from danger or persecution. The following figures identify the different local media organizations that responded to the Palestinian media needs assessment led by SKF.

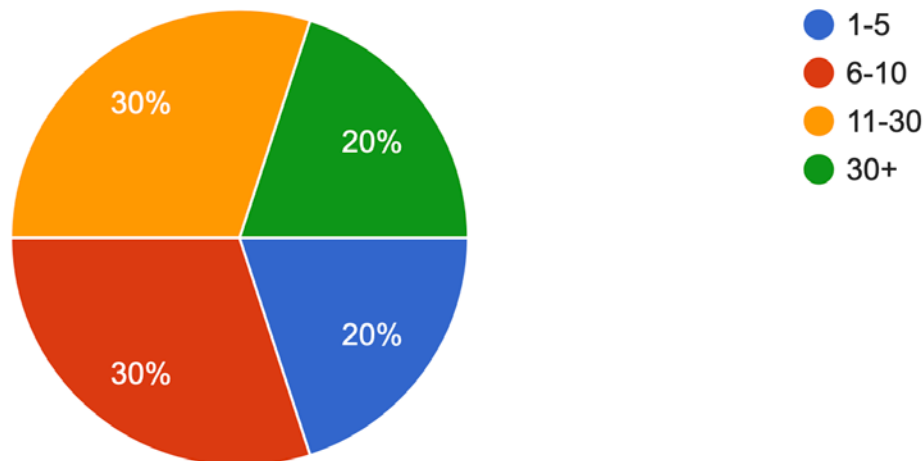
The 19 local media outlets include a variety of institutions ranging from non-profit organizations to limited joint-stock companies, and media development centers. Private companies remain the main target of this study.

Type of organization

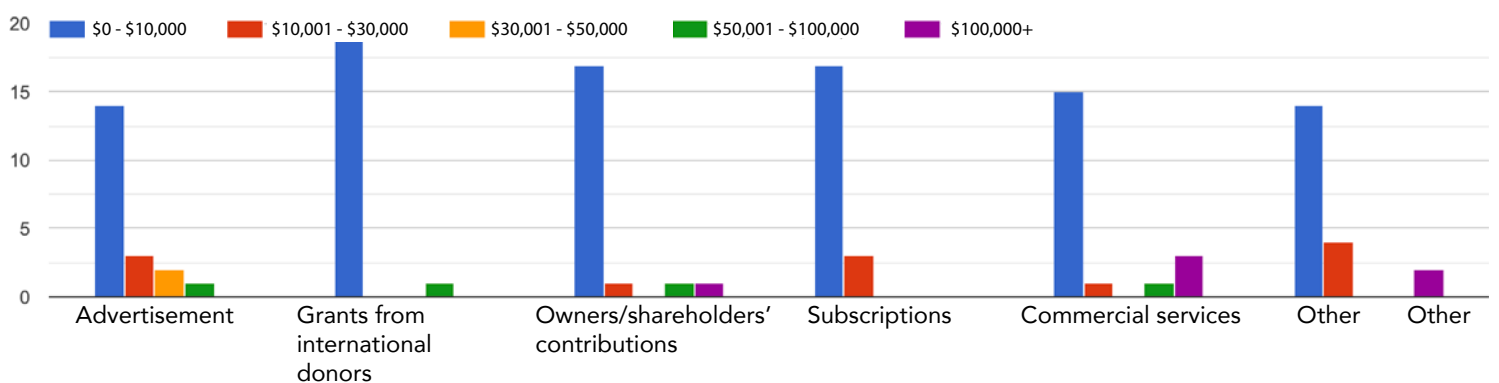


The distribution of the number of staff is spread evenly across the following ranges: 1-5, 6-10, 11-30, and 30+. On the other hand, the annual budget of the different institutions greatly varies from USD 4,000 to USD 2,500,000. The difference in the number of staff and the gap of budget between the local media organizations can explain the wide revenue range. A large amount of revenue sources (above USD 30,000) is obtained through advertisement, commercial services, or other means. While a small amount of revenue (less than USD 30,000) is mainly gathered through the grants of international donors, shareholders' contribution, or subscription.

Staff for the institutions

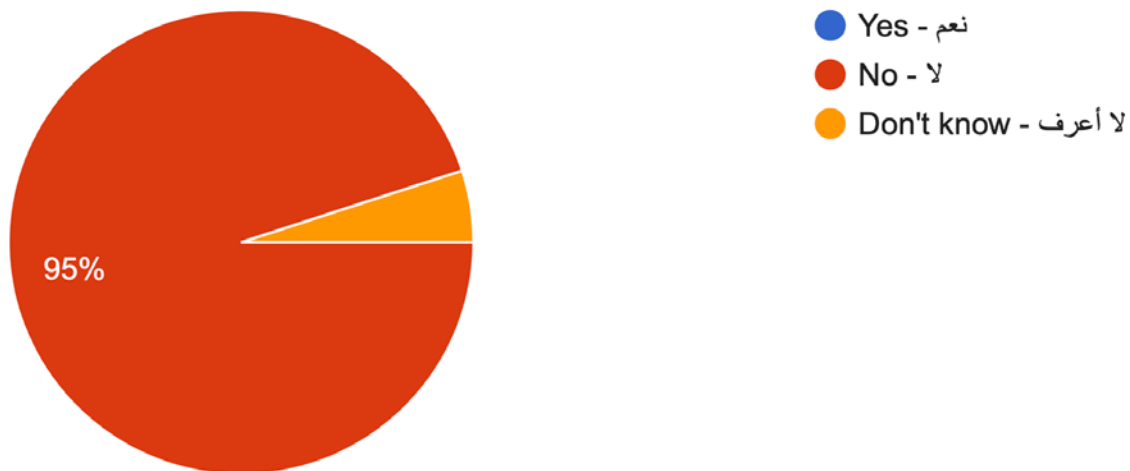


Source of Revenue

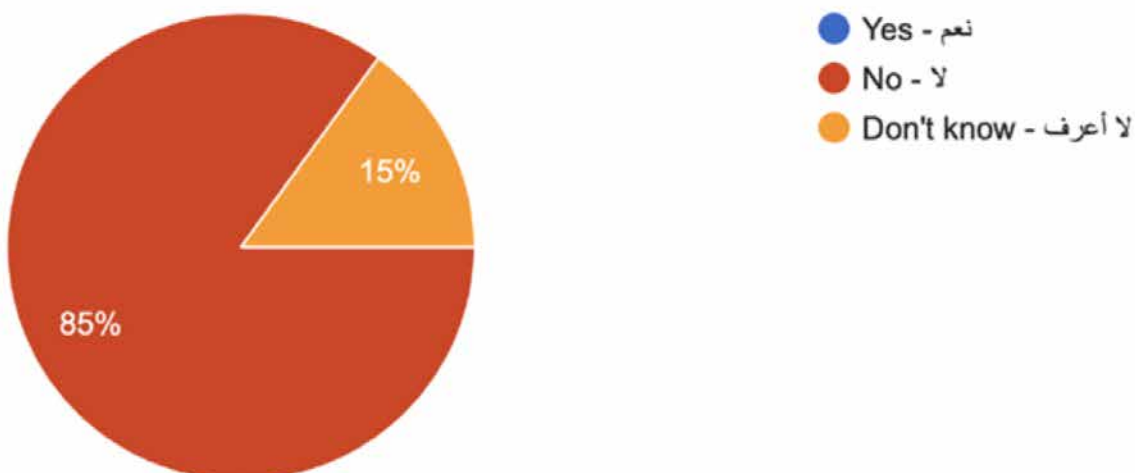


The survey conducted by SKF found that the media institutions were either not insured or unsure of their status, thereby rendering emergency support more pressing. Providing basic equipment and psycho-social support to journalists most affected by the recent conflict would be the first step in responding to the needs of the different media institutions and journalists. A study conduct by the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) found that disagreement surrounding the legitimacy of representation with regard to Palestinian journalists impedes the role played by local syndicates in providing different services, such as insurance.

Are the offices insured?



Are the equipment and furniture insured?



The Multifaceted Damages

The **Gaza 2021 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment** made by the World Bank estimated the cost of the overall damages between **USD 290 to 380 million**. While it is difficult to specify the extent to which the media is a part of this first estimation, assessing and mapping the damages of the media outlets in Gaza (offices, equipment, cameras, laptops, cars, journalists' houses) is much needed to ensure the persistence of journalists' work. Through a survey and key informant interviews, SKF was able to identify which media institutions were affected most and their different needs on the ground.

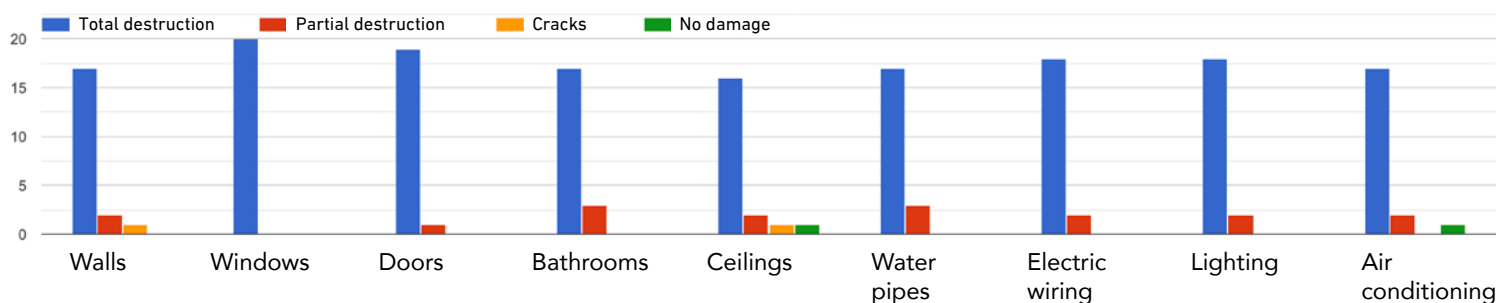
Israeli missile strikes destroyed the buildings that housed many media outlets on 12 May.
Photo: Ashraf Amra/APA Images



The Destruction of Buildings and Equipment

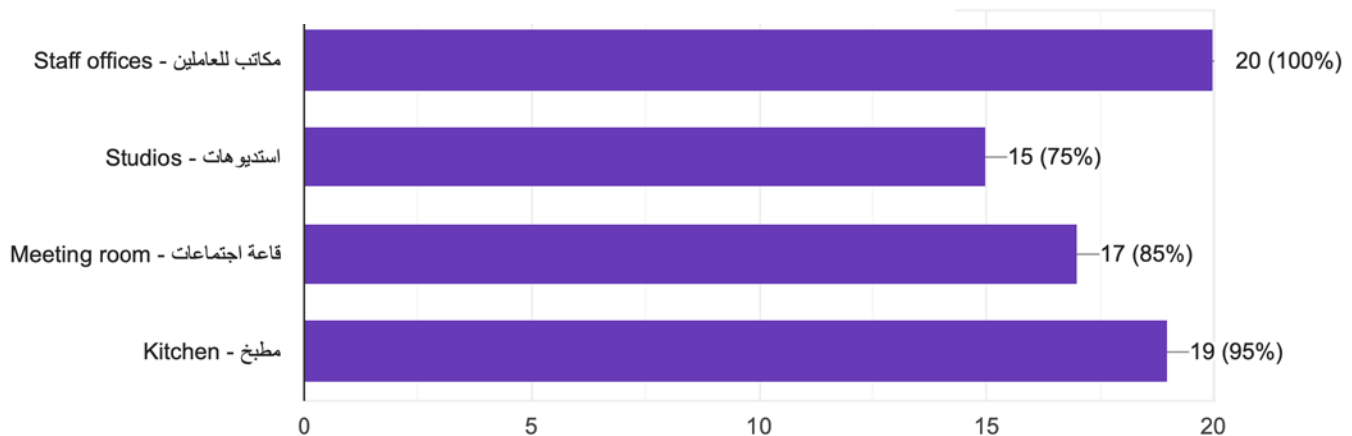
The damages caused by the Israeli repression of the Jerusalem uprising and the war on Gaza are broad and substantial. Apart from the various psychological and physical trauma that the journalists endured, their workplaces have also been significantly damaged. The media institutions reported total destruction of walls, windows, doors, air conditioning as well as many other equipment and infrastructure items, as reported in the figure below.

Assessing the damage of workplaces



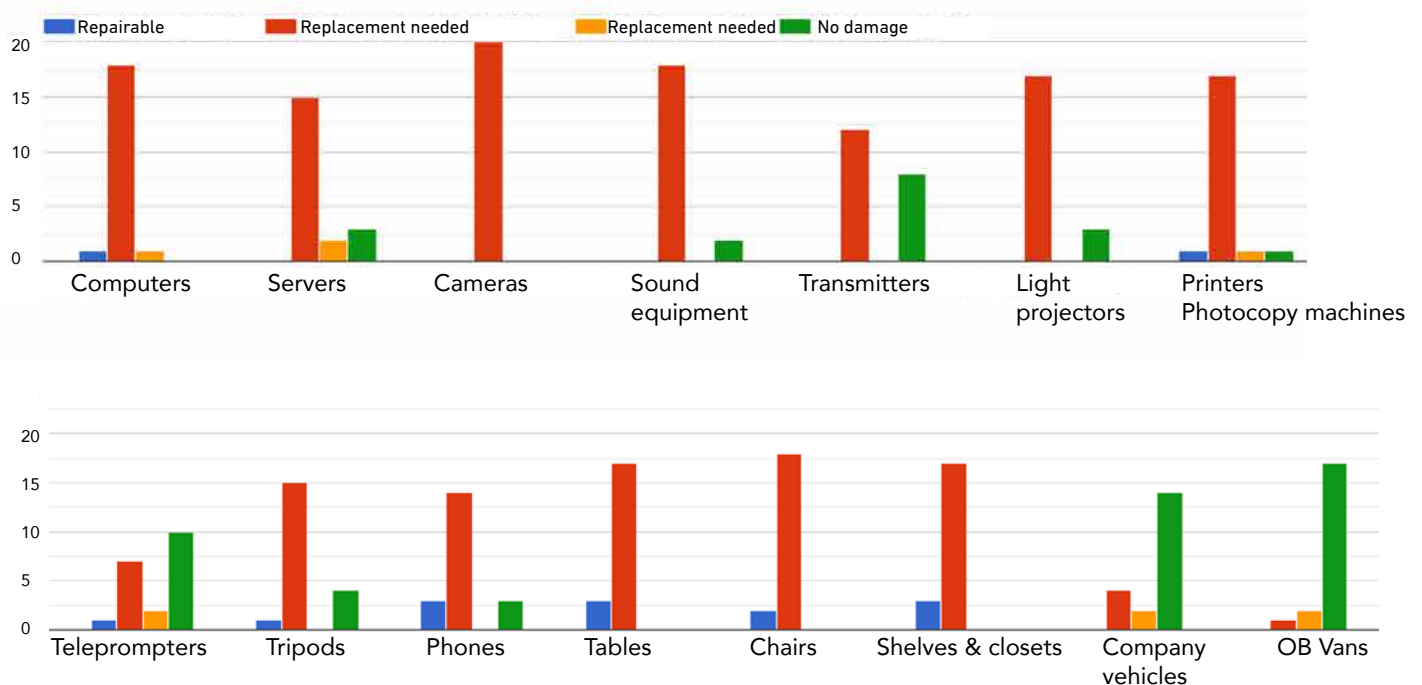
In all cases, staff offices have been damaged. Kitchens, meeting rooms as well as studios suffered from various degrees of damage. The systemic bombing of Palestinian buildings and media outlets has been [denounced](#) by Human Rights Watch. Moreover, Reporters Without Borders [called](#) on International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda to “include Israeli airstrikes on more than 20 media outlets in the Gaza Strip in her investigation into the situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.”

Function of the damaged spaces



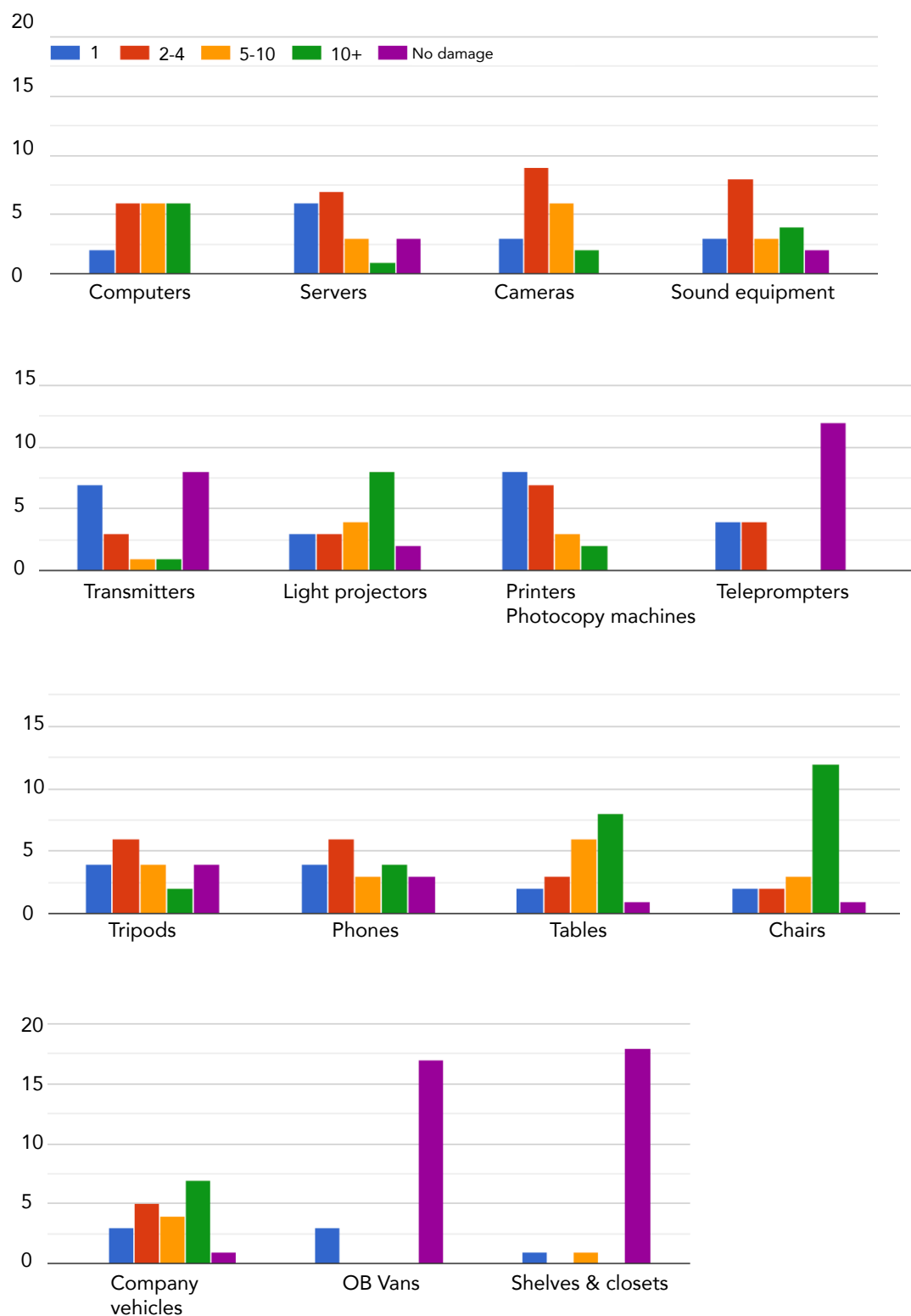
The equipment of journalists from the various media institutions were also severely damaged preventing them from reporting on the conflict. As such, SKF’s assessment found that much equipment needed replacement, such as computers, servers, cameras, and sound equipment, as well as light projectors. Furniture such as chairs, tables, and shelves were also affected, whereas OB vans and company vehicles do not seem to require any replacement, but rather small repairs.

Assessing the damage of the equipment



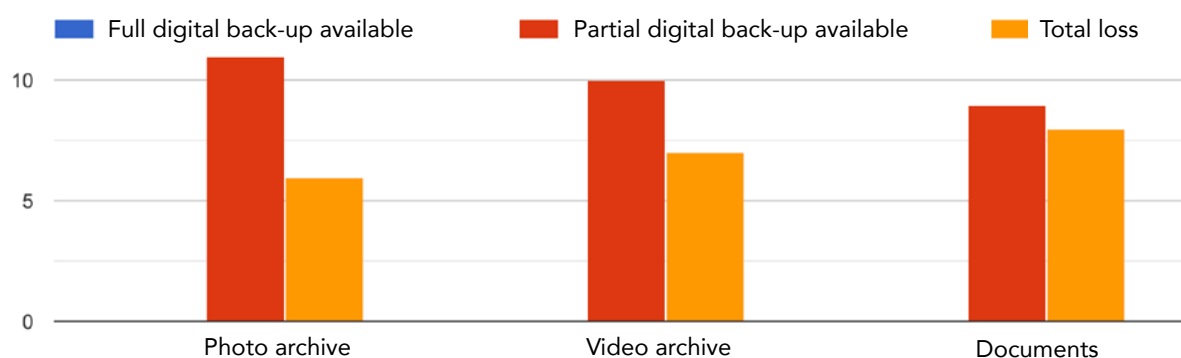
On the other hand, the quantitative assessment helps to better understand the scope of damages and the subsequent emergency support needed.

Equipment damage quantitative assessment



Other than physical damages assessed in buildings and equipment, which can be recovered in a way, it is also precious data that has been lost. In that sense, photos and video archives as well as important documents were completely destroyed, and only some of them remain available for the recovery process.

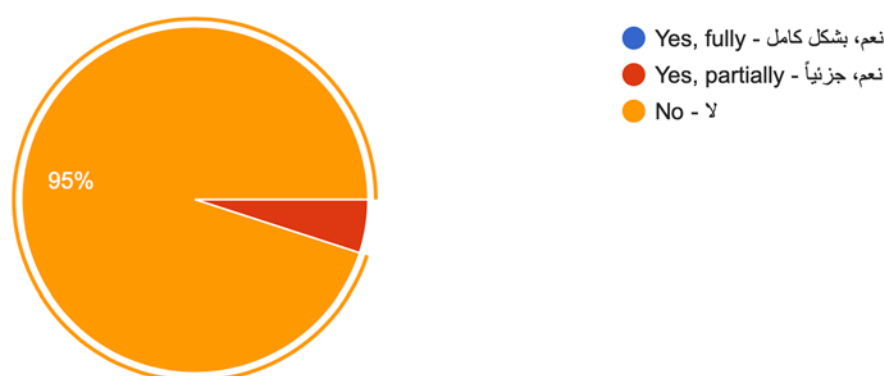
Archive damage



Emergency Support

The assessment made by SKF showed that the damages are heavy and require emergency support. The figure below shows that none of the damages have been repaired by the media outlets, by the time of survey end, due likely to a lack of resources.

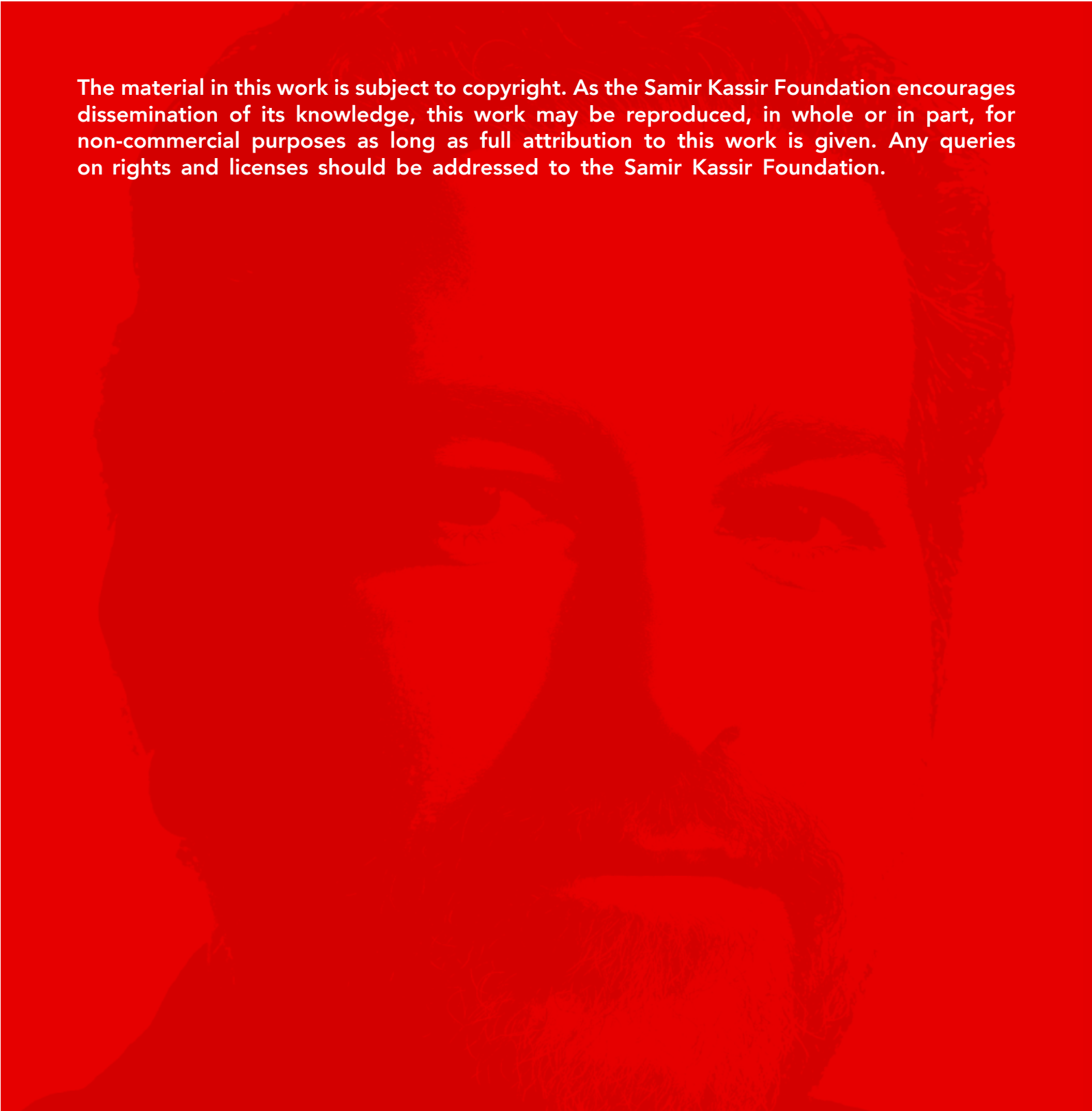
Have you repaired the damages?



According to the mapping, SKF developed an online request form that independent journalists and media organizations have been filling based on their needs. The form addressed the following needs:

- **Equipment replacement**, especially for freelance journalists who have lost their camera, laptop, and sound equipment during the latest conflict.
- **Basic repairs for media offices and workplaces.**
- **Request for medical follow-up support** for journalists injured during the latest conflict (including physiotherapy, recurring check-up, etc.) especially for those not covered by any insurance plan.
- **Psycho-social support**, covering up in-person and online therapy/counselling sessions.

SKF calls on international donors and media support organizations to dedicate budgets for equipment provision. SKF has initiated the process by dedicating USD 12,000 for that purpose. Requests would be vetted through the Journalists in Distress network to ensure lack of duplication and due diligence.



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