

Global Communications

EDITED BY CAROLA RICHTER AND CLAUDIA KOZMAN

Arab Media Systems





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3. Palestine: Resilient Media Practices for National Liberation

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This chapter provides an overview of Palestinian media practices in historic Palestine and in the diaspora. Since the printing press arrived in the region, the Palestinian people have used media for national liberation and self-determination. However, the Israeli regime's ongoing occupation and displacement of the Palestinian people produces major challenges for the development and sustainability of the media system in Palestine.

Background

Historic Palestine is geographically situated between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Before 1922, when the League of Nations imposed the British Mandate that enshrined the Balfour Declaration's Zionist intentions, the region of historic Palestine had been organized under the Ottoman administration for four centuries. Under Ottoman rule and throughout the British Mandate period, Palestinians organized for independence and self-determination. However, in 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a non-binding vote proposing a partition plan for historic Palestine under UN Resolution 181 (II). The resolution, opposed by the Palestinians, suggested that Jews, who were one-third of the population and only occupied 6% of land, could carve out a "Jewish state" on nearly 60% of the land. Immediately after

1 With research assistance from Ghiwa Haidar Ahmad, Ayman Lezzeik, and Fatima Takash.

the British withdrawal, Zionist militias attacked the largely unarmed Palestinians. In 1948 and after ethnically purging more than 700,000 Palestinians, or half the indigenous population of the land, Israel declared itself in control of 78% of historic Palestine. These events are known as the Palestinian *nakba* (or catastrophe). Later, the remainder of historic Palestine was divided into the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, annexed by Egypt and Jordan, respectively, until occupied by the Israeli military in 1967 after the Six-Day War (Alshaer, 2012, p. 237).

Today, Palestinians make up the world's largest refugee population, despite their right to return to their land in Palestine being officially declared by the UN since 1948 (Resolution 194). Approximately 13 million Palestinians are spread throughout the world with the largest population outside of Palestine residing in Jordan and outside of the Arab region in Chile (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). There are 1.5 million Palestinians residing in the territory of what was declared as Israel in 1948, who are also known as the '48 Palestinians. Additionally, there are 5.4 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (or UNRWA), approximately one-third of whom reside in refugee camps located inside of Palestine and neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Due to war, occupation, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and social and economic exclusion, a majority of Palestinian refugees live in poverty (UNRWA, 2019).

The state of Palestine, recognized by the UN in 1988 (Resolution 43/177), comprises the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including Jerusalem, with a population of nearly five million (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The official language in Palestine is Arabic. The state of Palestine is characterized by its majority Muslim population (only 1% are Christian), high youth population (nearly 40% are under fifteen years of age), high population density in the Gaza Strip (826 people per square kilometer), high birth rate (the average family has four or more children), high unemployment (more than one-third of the labor force), low illiteracy rate (less than 3%), high smart phone use (almost 90% of households own one or more), and increasing Internet access at home (nearly 75% in West Bank homes and over 50% in Gaza) (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Since the declaration of the independent state of Palestine followed by the designation of the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian Legislative Council, the occupation by Israel has become further entrenched. The Israeli regime perpetuates the ongoing forced displacement of Palestinians through continuous wars and attacks waged by the Israeli military that target civilians and infrastructure. This includes Israeli airstrikes that leveled the Gaza Strip's only power plant in 2014, disrupting power and cutting off drinking water for millions of people. Additionally, the Israeli military closed the Gaza Strip for nearly a year in 1996 and today maintains an air, land, and sea blockade that makes the area, according to some, the world's largest "open-air prison." In the West Bank, Israel illegally built an eight-meter-high concrete wall around the territory, and the Israeli military maintains hundreds of checkpoints and obstacles that prevent Palestinians from accessing school, work, healthcare, each other, and the rest of the world. This history of colonialism and the worsening occupation of Palestine led the UN's Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UN-ESCWA) to declare that Israel maintains and imposes an "apartheid regime" (UN-ESCWA, 2017).

Historical Developments

Media development in Palestine has been distinguished by several phases, beginning with the period of the Ottoman administration, followed by the British Mandate period, the period after 1948 that saw the occupation of Palestine by Israel, and the most recent period that included two intifadas, the introduction of a Palestinian state and media governance systems, and the ongoing Israeli wars (Omer, 2015). By the 1850s, multiple printing presses were operating in Palestine, and in 1876, the Ottoman representative in Jerusalem began publishing the newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Sharif* in Turkish and Arabic. When constitutional reforms were introduced after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, the first privately-owned newspaper, *Al-Quds*, was published in Arabic. During this time, dozens of newspapers began to circulate, and, in spite of censorship and penalties, the press covered politics and criticized the Zionist movement as well as Ottoman rule. This included *Falastin*, a newspaper founded in 1911 that was eventually shut down

by the Ottomans and later re-opened, continuing today as one of the oldest publications in Palestine (Omer, 2015, p. 111). Scholars have documented how the first phase of media development in Palestine during the Ottoman period contributed to the linking of Palestinian journalism with the struggle for national liberation (Najjar, 2005).

Before the end of the First World War, Britain and France divided the territories of the defeated Ottoman empire under the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. The agreement was kept secret from the Palestinians, in part because no newspapers were permitted to be published during the war (Omer, 2015). During the British Mandate period in which Britain occupied and colonized Palestine, newspaper publishing was renewed and increased. While the Ottoman laws concerning printing and publications were still in effect under British rule, newspapers in Palestine began to connect to and disseminate news from around the globe through telegraph systems that crisscrossed the British Empire. The launch of even more newspapers during the 1920s and 1930s, swelling to over 40 publications by 1939 (Najjar, 2005), coincided with the growth of the Palestinian National Movement and the direct involvement of newspaper editors and journalists in the struggle to liberate Palestine, regardless of Britain's attempts to silence them through shutdowns, arrests, or exile (Omer, 2015).

To better compete with the politicized printed press, British authorities initiated the *Palestine Broadcasting Service (PBS)* as the first radio station serving the region. The station went on-air in 1936 through studios maintained in Jerusalem with a transmitter and tower located in Ramallah. The *PBS* aired broadcasts in English, Arabic, and Hebrew, including programming from the *BBC's Empire Service* (Boyd, 1999). Soon after, small-scale broadcasting also took to the airwaves as early as 1938 with radio stations operated by Zionist organizations, such as the *Irgun*, and Palestinians broadcasting on *Sawt Al-Falestin* (King, 2017).

During the war of 1948, Zionist forces took over the *PBS* studios in Jerusalem while the Jordanian military claimed the transmitter and tower in Ramallah. Subsequently, a studio was added to the equipment acquired by Jordan to relaunch *PBS* as the *Hashemite Broadcasting System (HBS)*. The *HBS* operated from the West Bank under the Jordanian Ministry of Information until 1967 when Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (Boyd, 1999). All broadcasting was banned by the

Israeli government in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Somiry-Batrawi, 2004), leaving Palestinians without a national radio or television station until the 1990s.

Jamal (2009) described the period after the *nakba* of 1948 as a “communication vacuum” (p. 40) in which all media came under Israeli military censors (p. 62). The vibrant Palestinian newspaper industry was displaced and destroyed, with owners and journalists expelled along with many Palestinian women who lost their jobs in radio (Somiry-Batrawi, 2004). The first Palestinian newspaper to continue publishing after 1948 was *Al-Ittihad*, but the publication was closed several times by Israeli forces (Jamal, 2009). After the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in 1967, Palestinians attempted to establish new or reopen publications, but Israeli forces continued to censor all press and forced multiple Palestinian publications to close (Jamal, 2009). However, by 1990, more than 40 newspapers were circulating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Nossek & Rinnawi, 2003).

Beginning in the 1950s, audiences in historic Palestine had access to state radio from the Arab region, and later, Arab state television broadcasts began in the 1970s. In addition, Palestinians in exile “assembled their media world” (Bishara, 2009, p. 15) by broadcasting on other states’ media systems. During this period, Palestinian-produced broadcast media moved into the transnational sphere. Palestinian programming was initially aired from studios provided by state-owned radio broadcasters in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, and Algeria (Boyd, 1999; Browne, 1975). Later, in 1965, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) acquired its own transmitter and began broadcasting programming across the region of Palestine from Syria (Browne, 1975). Another station was set up in 1988 in Lebanon, and although initially destroyed by Lebanese militias and, later, by Israeli airstrikes, the station was rebuilt to broadcast in support of the First Intifada (Bookmiller & Bookmiller, 1990).

During the First Intifada, a youth- and student-led Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation that began in December 1987 and lasted until September 1993, the Israeli military imposed dangerous conditions for media workers by injuring and killing a number of reporters. As a result, international media organizations recruited local Palestinians, effectively growing the media and journalism sector in

Palestine. This resulted in increasing the number of Palestinian women working in media due to the international media relying on their gender to overcome “social restrictions” (Somiry-Batrawi, 2004, p. 111). Just before the Oslo process granted the state of Palestine the right to use broadcasting frequencies, Palestinians could tune into television news programming produced by Palestinians in Palestine for the first time. This came with the launch of experimental television news programming in early 1993 produced by the Institute of Modern Media (IMM) based at Al-Quds University. After several successful broadcasts, IMM secured a license in 1996 from the Palestinian Ministry of Information for *Al-Quds Education TV (AETV)* (Somiry-Batrawi, 2004).

After the Six-Day War that Israel waged against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967, the First Intifada by Palestinians against the Israeli occupation in 1987, and the declaration by the PLO of the independent state of Palestine in 1988, the Oslo Accords between the Israeli government and the PLO began in 1993. The negotiations immediately addressed and resulted in tangible media gains for the Palestinian people. This included the allocation of one medium wave and 10 FM frequencies granted to the Palestinian Authority (PA), as the designated government of the state of Palestine (Boyd, 1999). The PA rushed to establish a Ministry of Information to develop media policy and draft a press law. These changes allowed, for the first time, the licensing of television and radio stations broadcasting from Palestine (Boyd, 1999). Immediately following the negotiations, the Palestinian Broadcasting Company (PBC) was launched in 1993 as a publicly funded state-owned media organization, airing programming that focused on state actors and followed government agendas (Sakr, 2007). As part of the PBC, the *Voice of Palestine*, a state-owned radio station, went on-air in July 1994 and was well-received among Palestinian audiences as it aired popular programs such as *Good Morning Palestine* and a prison radio show that connected on-air the families of the detained with their loved ones listening from Israeli jails (Boyd, 1999). *Voice of Palestine* also suspended regular programming to provide live coverage of the Second Intifada, which began in 2000 and lasted until 2005 (Salama, 2006).

The launch of *Voice of Palestine* was followed by that of the newspaper *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, which was published with funding from the PA (Saraste, 2010). Beginning circulation in November 1994, *Al-Hayat*

Al-Jadida became the first daily newspaper published in Palestine that promoted the positions of the PA (Jamal, 2000). By 1996, the PBC television station was broadcasting Palestinian-produced television programming from a control room located in the PA president's compound in Gaza with the transmission facilities in Ramallah. After the death of the PA president Yasser Arafat in 2004, oversight of the station was transferred to the Ministry of Information, a move that provided mechanisms for public accountability over station budgets and appointments. Soon after that, Hamas won a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 2006, and the acting PA president Mahmoud Abbas from Fatah designated that all state media, including the PBC, would be under the authority of the president's office (Sakr, 2007).

During this time, satellite television was introduced in the state of Palestine, and by 2002, 78% of Palestinians had access to it (Rugh, 2004, p. 220). The PBC would soon establish the *Palestinian Satellite Channel*, which reached transnational audiences. With the rise of satellite and private channels after the Oslo Accords, audiences in Palestine had access to national and transnational content from privately-owned stations in Palestine that broadcast satellite content from other stations, typically without legal authorization (Somiry-Batrawi, 2004). Palestinian audiences could tune into programming from hundreds of Arabic media channels, but little content was produced by Palestinians. However, some satellite channels, such as *Al-Jazeera*, hired Palestinian journalists to work on the ground. Local journalists reporting for satellite networks played a crucial role covering the Second Intifada and the repeated wars and attacks waged by the Israeli military during that time (Saraste, 2010). This coverage not only informed Palestinian audiences in the state of Palestine, but also Palestinians in the diaspora and audiences across the Arab region.

After the success of Hamas in the 2006 elections, *Al-Aqsa TV* was launched from Gaza as a satellite television channel that complemented Hamas's bi-weekly newspaper *Al-Risalah* and its radio station *Sawt Al-Aqsa*, which began broadcasting in 2003 (Alshaer, 2012, p. 239). With a mandate to serve the Islamic movement in Palestine, the station does not air any programming that contravenes Islamic traditions or laws. Positioned as independent of Hamas, these various media represent the views of the Islamic movement similar to how PBC's programming

represents the views of Fatah. Programming focuses on the activities of the Hamas government, criticizes the PA, Fatah, and Israel, and covers religion, culture, and politics (Alshaer, 2012, pp. 241–42). After the Israeli military destroyed the station and equipment of *Al-Aqsa* during the 2009 war on Gaza, the broadcast studios moved to a secret location, and the station is available today throughout the state of Palestine.

Internet-based media from Palestine did not exist before Oslo as there was no Internet access due to the widespread effects of the Israeli regime's occupation. In fact, Internet access was illegal until the negotiations granted the PA the right to build a telecommunications infrastructure. With the expansion of access through privatized development, Internet usage among Palestinians quickly became one of the highest per capita rates in the region (Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014). As a result, Palestinians in Palestine could more easily report on local events to a global audience through a growing number of Internet news websites based in Palestine and abroad. Both *The Palestine Chronicle*, founded in 1999, and *The Electronic Intifada*, founded in 2001, operate from the United States as non-profit, independent news and opinion multimedia websites providing Palestinian perspectives on events in Palestine and abroad. The *International Middle East Media Center* was launched from the West Bank in 2008 to provide news produced by Palestinians from across Palestine in English and in multimedia formats for an international audience. Additionally, the popular *Quds News Network* founded in 2013 provides independent news in Arabic for mostly younger Palestinians and in English for global audiences from its online and social media platforms, attracting millions of followers.

Political System and Legal Framework

Today Wafa, the official Palestinian news and information agency, reports that there are over 50 newspapers printed and published online on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis in Palestine, covering a variety of topics from politics to entertainment. Publications in Palestine today include over 150 magazines that also target children, tourists, human rights advocates, and academics. There are currently over 30 television and radio stations broadcasting in Palestine, airing a variety of entertainment and cultural programming, including sports, religion,

and music as well as news. According to a recent national survey, the majority of audiences 15 years of age or older in the state of Palestine watch television daily, followed by one-third of audiences who listen to radio and who access the Internet daily. The same survey also reported fewer than 10% of audiences surveyed in Palestine reported reading “at least one daily [newspaper] yesterday” (Ipsos, 2013, p. 17).

Today, three overlapping policy regimes regulate the media system in Palestine: Israeli military rule, various laws enacted by the PA, and policies of Hamas for Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip. In addition, the increasing use of social media by Palestinians means that censorship policies of social media companies (mostly US-based monopolies) also impact online media practices in Palestine. However, beginning in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, laws were used to incriminate Palestinian journalists for criticizing imperial figures and policies or to even shut down newspapers, as in the case of *Falastin* (Omer, 2015). With the imposition of the British Mandate in Palestine, the new imperial authorities’ practices towards media workers did not change. In fact, the British maintained the same repressive laws used by the Ottomans, adding the discriminatory legal requirement of a university degree for any newspaper editor-in-chief (Omer, 2015).

The Israeli government enforces the 1933 Press Ordinance and the 1945 Emergency Regulations, both continued from the British Mandate period, and both are still applied today across historic Palestine, meaning that multiple generations of Palestinian media makers living in the state of Palestine have experienced sustained military censorship (7amleh, 2016). Under these measures, a license from the Israeli military is required to publish a newspaper. In occupied Jerusalem, licenses for publishing are required from Israel’s Ministry of the Interior. Additionally, all content intended for publication must be approved by Israeli military censors, who require material to be submitted twice for censorship before publication (Nossek & Rinnawi, 2003). According to some scholars, this mechanism of prior censorship has resulted in 25% of newspaper content being deleted (Najjar, 1992, as cited in Bishara, 2009). In fact, during the First Intifada, some newspapers had their licenses revoked all together by Israel for nearly two months, and some journalists were jailed and others deported (Bishara, 2009). The policies maintained by the Israeli regime provide Palestinians no “space for

freedom of expression or representation” (Jamal, 2009, p. 127). These practices impact offline and online media practices in Palestine.

Under the PA, the Basic Law was enacted and amended in 2003 along with the 1995 Press and Publications Law, both of which supplemented Israeli military laws that are still in effect. The Basic Law, under the draft constitution (revised on 4 May 2003), guarantees freedom of expression (Article 37), declares the right to own media and receive information (Articles 38 and 40), and provides for a free press (Article 39). However, the Press and Publications Law contravenes the Basic Law by relying on vague language to describe crimes of the press. The Press and Publications Law requires licensing for print media, sets conditions and capital requirements for who can own media and act as editor-in-chief, and includes vague content restrictions concerning morals and a ban on any content that may “harm the national unity” (Article 37). Finally, the law sanctions any media violations, and fines and jail time can be levied against media workers and organizations (Mendel & Khashan, 2006). Such restrictions have resulted in rampant self-censorship among Palestinian journalists, and there is no independent body to apply these regulations because the authority to apply the law is directly in the hands of the government (UNESCO, 2014). The Press and Publications Law has been used to limit freedom of expression and the press. As a result, there have been multiple incidences of the PA closing private cable television stations and arresting journalists under the provisions of the Press and Publications Law. This includes the jamming of *AETV*'s signal and detention of its director after the station broadcast sessions of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 1997 (Jamal, 2000).

It is worth noting that, after the intimidation of *AETV*, the Palestinian government under President Arafat was pressured to create a 13-member committee made up of several ministers and representatives of various ministries as well as legal and technical experts to regulate private television and radio under the 1995 Press Law. Eventually, the Ministry of Information proposed creating an independent body, whose members would be appointed based on experience, to regulate media. However, the proposed revisions to the broadcast law remained in draft form after the 2006 elections crisis, which included Israel's mass arrest of members of the Palestinian government (Sakr, 2007). A new broadcasting law has

been drafted, revising many of the concerns raised above, but it has yet to be implemented due to the ongoing governance crisis in Palestine.

In 2016, PA president Mahmoud Abbas signed the Declaration on Media Freedom in the Arab World and designated 1 August as Freedom of Opinion and Expression Day in Palestine (Melhem, 2016). However, a year later, the president also signed the Electronic Crimes Law that violated the Basic Law provisions that guarantee freedom of expression and freedom from censorship. The new law imposed fines and imprisonment, raising concerns for Palestinians publishing media or communicating online (Fatafta, 2018). Just weeks before signing the bill, dozens of popular news websites, including the *Quds News Network*, were blocked by the PA's Attorney General (Fatafta, 2018). Both journalists and activists in the West Bank have been targeted with arrests and charged under the new law for posting content online. In the Gaza Strip, a similar amendment to Law 3 was passed in 2009 which, in intentionally vague terms, criminalized the misuse of technology, which could also be used to censor online media practices (Fatafta, 2018).

Economy and Ownership Patterns

Media ownership in Palestine has a varied history of private, political party, and state ownership. While non-governmental organizations (NGOs) under the current regulations are allowed to operate broadcast media, there is no distinct category of licensing for community-owned, non-profit media. With the influence of neo-liberalization and privatization underpinning the Oslo Accords process, privately-owned media increased greatly in Palestine. Private media in Palestine are largely sustained by commercial income. However, poverty, high unemployment, and economic exclusion impact the media economy and create a small advertising market (UNESCO, 2014). State media accept commercial sponsorships, but mainly operate on funds granted by the government. In the telecommunications sector, the private company *PALTEL* maintains a near monopoly, and as a result, its revenues from subscriber fees contribute 10% of the state of Palestine's economic activity, providing 30% of the PA's annual tax revenues (Tawil-Souri, 2015).

In general, the Palestinian Ministry of Information maintains a welcoming strategy that “freely issue[s] ‘no objection’ notices or ‘temporary licenses’” (Sakr, 2007, p. 25) to broadcasting license applicants. The practice of granting most licensing requests aims to create “facts on the ground” (Sakr, 2007, p. 25) in Palestine to use in future negotiations concerning the Israeli occupation. The Ministry also believes a plethora of broadcasters are necessary, not only for promoting freedom of expression, but also to ensure Palestinian broadcasting continues regardless of any Israeli attack on the media system. This practice resulted in dozens of stations being on-air, some even operating without a license, by the late 1990s. This policy contrasted with the majority of Arab media systems at the time that were still monopolized by state broadcasters (Sakr, 2007). While the PA licensed dozens of privately-owned radio and cable television stations, much of the programming offered was related to entertainment and therefore sought to monetize audiences. Thus, stations were unstable, opening and closing regularly because they were not profitable (Jamal, 2000).

Some privately-owned media in Palestine have sustained their organizations through blending social entrepreneurship with commercial practices, such as *Radio Nisaa FM*, launched in 2009, as the only commercial radio station and multimedia website for Palestinian women that is also run by women. *Radio Nisaa* receives financial support through a mix of corporate sponsorships and advertising as well as donations and funds from international organizations, the Ministry of Women Affairs in Palestine, and the Palestinian Business Women Forum. The prioritization of women in media management and production at *Radio Nisaa* addresses a gender gap in Palestinian media. A study released by Women Media and Development (TAM) reported that media in Palestine marginalizes women in their participation as media workers as well as in their representation in media content. The study found that a stereotypical image of women is perpetuated in Palestinian media largely due to the fact that media organizations include about 10% of female employees, and very few of these are in media production or management roles (TAM, 2017).

Technology and Infrastructure

Where the Oslo Accords granted Palestinians the right to independent communication systems, the greatest restriction on the development of media technology and infrastructure in Palestine is the Israeli occupation. Israel restricts the ability of Palestinian media and telecommunications companies to import the technology needed to maintain and modernize the media system. The Israeli government also constrains access to frequencies for transmitting broadcasts (Jamal, 2000) and restricts telecommunications companies to 2G or 3G because of limits imposed on spectrum allocation (Fatafta, 2018). The PBC maintains no television broadcasting equipment or studios in the Gaza Strip. Field equipment is also limited in availability, and as a result, television programming largely consists of pre-recorded programs or footage of community events.

Repeated Israeli military aggressions have targeted Palestinian media offices, studios, and infrastructure, resulting in millions of dollars in damages and, in some cases, closures. In January 2002, during the Second Intifada, the Israeli military blew up the 5-storey building that housed the *Voice of Palestine* in Ramallah and destroyed the station's transmitters. *Voice of Palestine* continued broadcasting from a secret location and over privately-owned radio stations but was unable to rebuild its transmitters due to a lack of resources (Saraste, 2010). Other Palestinian media faced similar destruction at the hands of the Israeli military, such as in November 2018 when Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip repeatedly targeted and eventually leveled the building that housed *Al-Aqsa TV*. As a result of the unending targeting of media infrastructure by the Israeli military, Palestinian broadcasters are increasingly moving their equipment and operations to covert locations.

With regard to the Internet in Palestine, all connections to the World Wide Web flow through Israel, which conducts regular shutdowns and destruction of Palestinian-owned telecommunications infrastructure. Additionally, advocacy groups such as 7amleh have noted that Israeli regime agencies collaborate with private technology companies to censor and shut down Palestinian accounts. This includes Israel maintaining agreements with several social media companies to remove Palestinian

content, including posts on *Facebook* and content on *Google* (7amleh, 2016).

Yet, Internet penetration is very high in Palestine. This is also amplified in the spread of social media in Palestine, with one in three Palestinians active on various platforms (Fatafta, 2018, p. 8). Palestine maintains the largest concentration of *Facebook* users per capita in the Arab region (Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014). Newspapers, television, and radio stations in Palestine also connect with the world through the Internet. Traditional media not only use the Internet as an extension of their media practice, but also as an innovative media tactic to connect with audiences worldwide. For example, *Radio Free Palestine* is an international and collaborative 24-hour radio broadcast that commemorates the *nakba* on 15 May. The live programming is hosted and shared by stations in Palestine and beyond, which broadcast live to audiences online and on FM radio stations across five continents (King & Marouf, 2018). These practices indicate that social media and the Internet have become tools that Palestinians use to facilitate mass communication locally and transnationally.

Challenges

Throughout the occupation of Palestine, Israeli authorities have censored, detained, deported, and killed Palestinian journalists. Actions by the PA and Hamas have also shut down Palestinian stations and websites, and they have arrested Palestinian journalists who cover oppositional politics. However, since 1948 the Israeli regime has repressed media freedom in Palestine through various agencies. Regularly, the Israeli Press Office refuses to renew the press cards of Palestinian journalists, and this limits their ability to travel and work in Palestine. Beyond this, mass restrictions on the movement of all Palestinians limit the ability of Palestinian journalists to access and cover news events (Saraste, 2010). In 2018, the violent targeting of media workers in Palestine by the Israeli military continued with the murder of two Palestinian journalists while they were reporting on news events in the Gaza Strip. After an independent investigation, the United Nations and the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that Israeli military snipers deliberately shot

the two journalists, concluding that the Israeli's killing of Palestinian journalists has become "part of a pattern" (CPJ, 2019).

Recently, Palestinians have been increasingly arrested for social media activity by Israel, the PA, and Hamas. The majority of arrests have been made by Israeli police forces for "incitement through social media" (7amleh, 2016, p. 113), and Palestinians have been sentenced to a year or more in prison. For example, Palestinian poet Dareen Tatour posted her poem 'Resist, My People, Resist Them' on *Facebook* in 2015 and was afterwards confined to almost three years of house arrest before being sentenced to five months in prison for "incitement" and "support for terror" with her post (IMEMC, 2018). Notably, Israeli police have applied the charge of inciting violence online only against Palestinians (7amleh, 2016).

The danger facing Palestinian journalists and media workers, the criminalization and censorship of Palestinian political communication online, and the regular destruction of media infrastructure and the limits imposed on technology present major challenges for the development of the media system. In addition, the economic sustainability of the media system in Palestine is threatened by the PA's regulatory push towards privatization. As a result, the small and impoverished media market is saturated with commercial and for-profit interests. Further, there is no specific license or funding made available by the Palestinian Ministry of Information for non-profit or community-owned media that operate with little or no advertising and provide a complement to commercial, privately-owned, state-run, and political party-affiliated media in the system. However, where NGOs are increasingly participating in the facilitation of not-for-profit media production in Palestine, the reliance of NGOs on project funding from international sources makes such media unsustainable and often limits it to serving the foreign interests of donors.

Outlook

Palestinians in historic Palestine and in the diaspora have always used media for national liberation and self-determination. The resilience of Palestinian media is complemented by various media tactics that continue to defy and circumvent the Israeli occupation. Today, the Israeli

regime oppresses the Palestinian people politically, economically, and socially with policies that also impoverish the media system in Palestine. Therefore, the media economy in Palestine is made unsustainable by the Israeli regime's ongoing occupation of electromagnetic spectrum, destruction of infrastructure, sanctions on media technology, and attacks on Palestinian media workers and activists. Additionally, the governance crisis in Palestine since the 2006 elections has resulted in overlapping policies of the regimes that target journalists and political speech online further negatively impacting the media system. Yet, innovation in media practices, including the creative use of the Internet and social media by news websites, traditional media, and media activists, is connecting Palestinians in occupied Palestine with the world. For Palestinian and non-Palestinian media makers globally, the diaspora and transnational media projects in solidarity with the Palestinian people provide a rich opportunity to embolden the Palestinian media space. The aforementioned IMEMC and *Radio Free Palestine* are just two of many examples of the ways Palestinians in Palestine are connecting with media makers and audiences across the globe, through and beyond the Internet.

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