

(Special Report)

The Israeli Attacks against Media Freedoms in Jerusalem

Throughout history, the city of Jerusalem has been considered one of the most prominent scientific, cultural and media centers. Since the beginning of the last century, it has sponsored publishing many newspapers and magazines not to mention that it has served as the headquarters of many media organizations. This has relatively continued until it was occupied in 1967.

On 27 June 1976, Israel has announced the annexation of East Jerusalem and the enforcement of the Israeli Law thereof. On 30 July 1980, it has announced Jerusalem, with both of its parts, as the “united and eternal capital” for Israel, which is an express violation of the UN resolutions, the International Law and the international conventions. The international and political consensus insists that West Jerusalem is the capital of Israel while East Jerusalem is the Capital of Palestine, if a peace agreement is reached.

Since the first day of its occupation, the occupation authorities have carried out a series of measures and policies to Judaize the Holy City and to shut down Palestinian institutions, especially media and cultural institutions, directly and indirectly. This has intensified in the recent years to make it more difficult even to the media institutions and journalists to continue in their work.

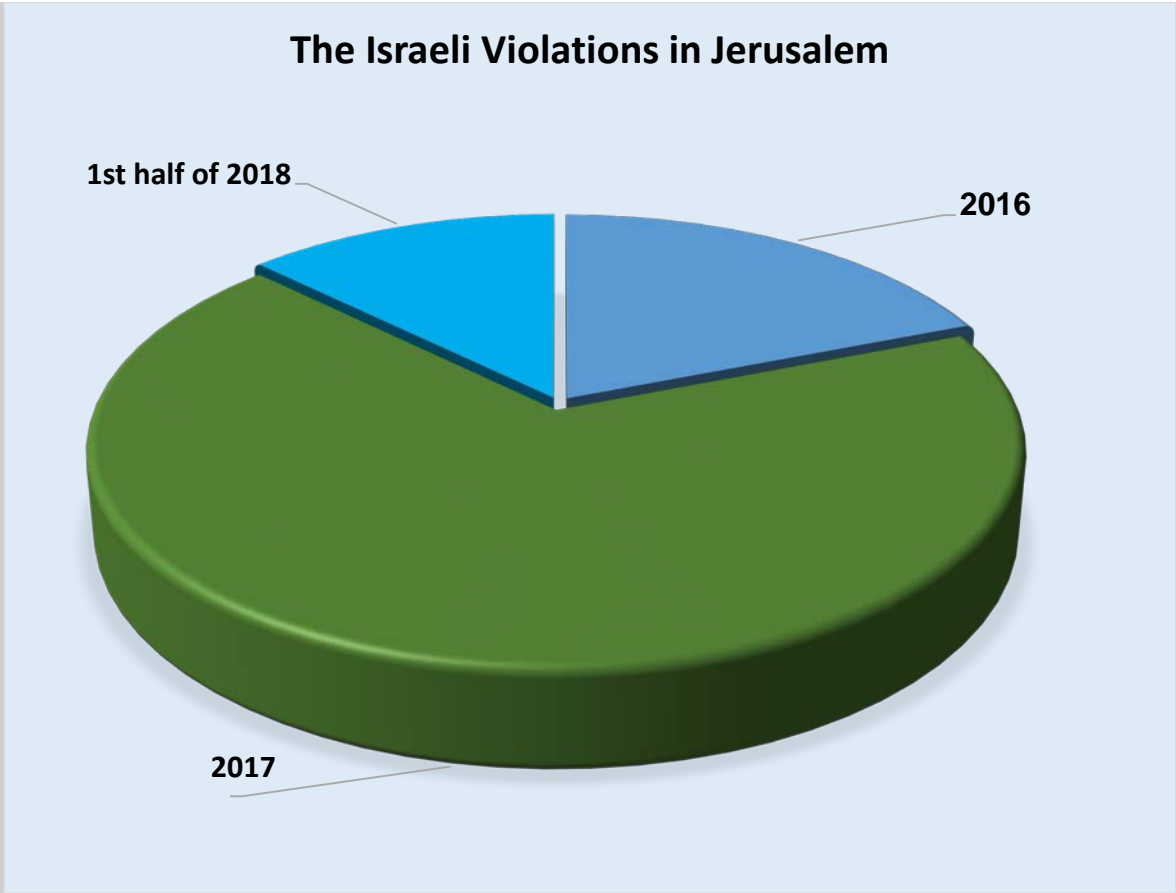
The Israeli policy on handling the media and journalists in Palestine, especially in the occupied city of Jerusalem, is mainly driven by the key objective of permitting and allowing the use of various means to prevent publishing any image, information or narrative other than the Israeli version to be visible by the local or international public opinion regarding the policies and measures it imposes and implements, in Jerusalem in particular, and the occupied Palestinian territories, in general.

As a direct result of this, the rate of the Israeli violations against media freedoms is growing and intensifying in Jerusalem, including various types of attacks and measures aimed at excluding journalists and the media, and undermining their professional work opportunities compared to that being carried out in the Palestinian governorates.

Thus, the total number of Israeli attacks recorded in Jerusalem during the period between the beginning of 2016 and the end of mid-2018, that is, in two and a half years, amounted to about 21% of the total Israeli attacks monitored and documented by the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms “MADA” throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In other words, more than one in five attacks committed by the Israeli occupation against media freedoms in the West Bank and Gaza Strip takes place in the occupied city of Jerusalem. This is without counting dozens of other attacks against journalists from Jerusalem during their coverage of events in the West Bank governorates.

It should be noted here that the violations against media freedoms committed in Jerusalem, are limited to the Israeli violations only, given the fact that Israel has the “exclusive power” there. It prevents any existence of the Palestine authority in Jerusalem, even though the rate of Palestinian violations out of the total rate of attacks against media freedoms in Palestine is about 30% while the rate of the Israeli attacks constitutes the largest proportion (about 70%). Not to mention that the Israeli attacks are the most serious and dangerous in terms of the types of attacks committed against media freedoms and journalists.



Between the beginning of 2016 and the mid-2018 (during the period covered by this report), a total of 1,190 violations against media freedoms throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including Jerusalem, were registered, 833 of which committed by the Israeli occupation. A total of 173 attacks out of the Israeli attacks were committed in Jerusalem only, that is a rate of 21% out of the total Israeli attacks. The intensity of the attacks in Jerusalem and other Palestinian areas is directly proportional to the intensity of the events, activities and protests which attract the media coverage. This is evident in the total attacks against media freedoms committed in Jerusalem in 2017, the year that has witnessed more than one immense event in Jerusalem¹ which led to greater Palestinian popular protests which have attracted local and foreign media coverage. This was marked by a noticeable increase in the number and gravity of Israeli attacks against female and male journalists and the media in Jerusalem, where more than one-third of the Israeli attacks registered in that year were committed (more than 31%). That is, one out of three attacks committed by the Israeli occupation throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip in that year, as shown in the below table.

(The proportion of the Israeli Attacks in Jerusalem out of the total violations)

Year	Total Violations (Israeli & Palestinian) in the West Bank & Gaza Strip	Israeli Violations	No. of Israeli Violations in Jerusalem	Percentage of Israeli attacks
2016	383	249	33	%13.25
2017	530	376	118	%31.38
1 st half of 2018	277	208	22	%10.57
Total	1190	833	173	%20.76

¹ Most notable among these events and Israeli procedures is the placement of metal gates at the entrances of Al-Aqsa Mosque which led to the eruption of wide range of popular protests in Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Most of the Israeli violations committed against media freedoms in Jerusalem fall under the serious and severe attacks threatening the life and ability of journalists and the media to carry out their work. Most notably, the physical attacks and injuries, the arrests and detentions, the demolition of houses and institutions, the confiscation and damage of equipment, and the exclusion of journalists from some of the events areas for very long periods of time (for example, the exclusion in one of the cases lasted for three months).

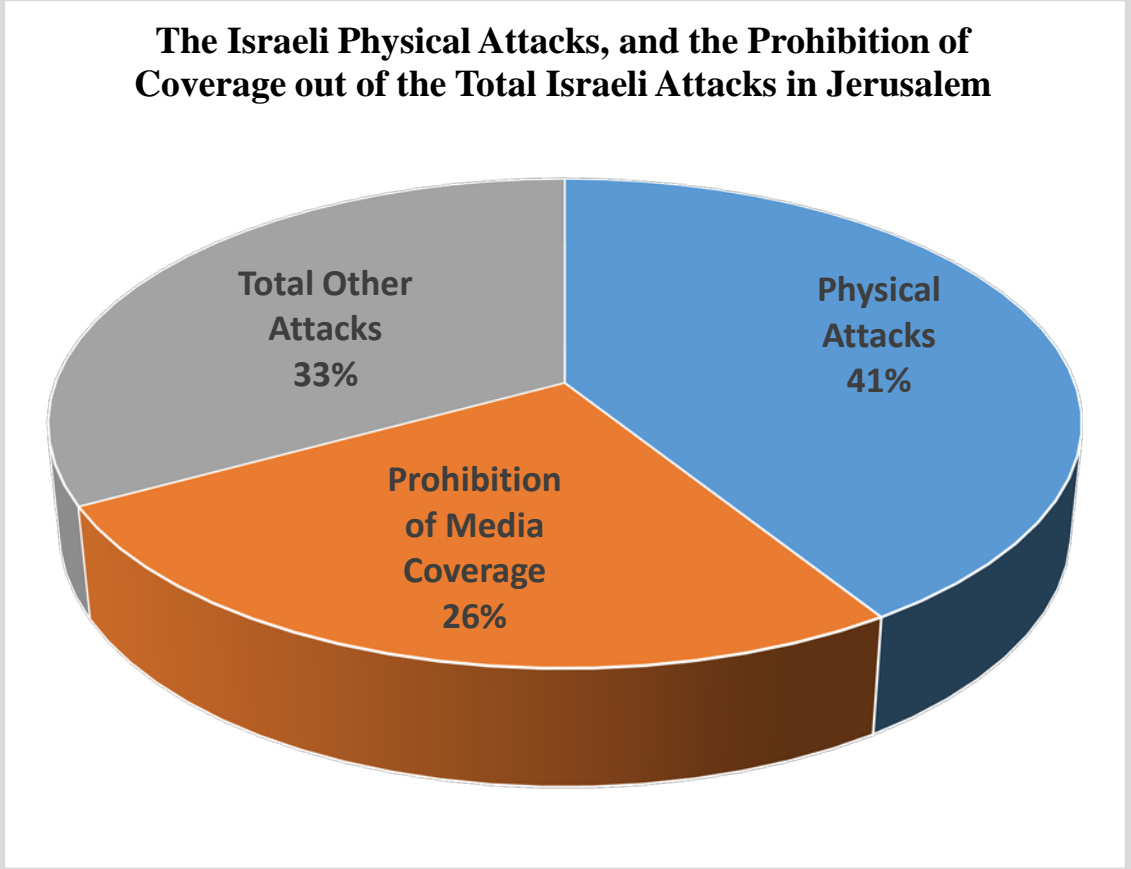
Israeli Attacks against Media Freedoms in Jerusalem since the beginning of 2016 until the mid-2018 in terms of the type

	Type of Violation	No.
1	Injuries – physical attacks	71
2	Prohibition of coverage	45
3	Arrest	14
4	Seize/damage equipment	9
5	Detention (mostly including interrogation)	6
6	Demolition of institutions/houses	6
7	Exclusion from the events areas for long periods	5
8	Summoning	4
9	House arrest	1
10	Delete material	1
11	Travel ban	1
12	Other violations	10
	Total	173

The total number of the most serious five violations of the mentioned above amounted to 105, out of the total number of Israeli attacks which amounted to 173, constituting about 61% out of the grand total violations.

The physical attacks of the Israeli occupation aimed at female and male journalists within the City of Jerusalem, during the period covered by this report, constitutes a rate of 41% out of the total Israeli violations in Jerusalem. This reflects the Israeli policy that is based on severe violence and suppression when it comes to handling journalists and the media, as a means of intimidating and preventing them from covering the events. This is coupled with other types of violations mainly aimed at preventing the media from covering the procedures and measures carried out by the occupation forces and authorities on the ground.

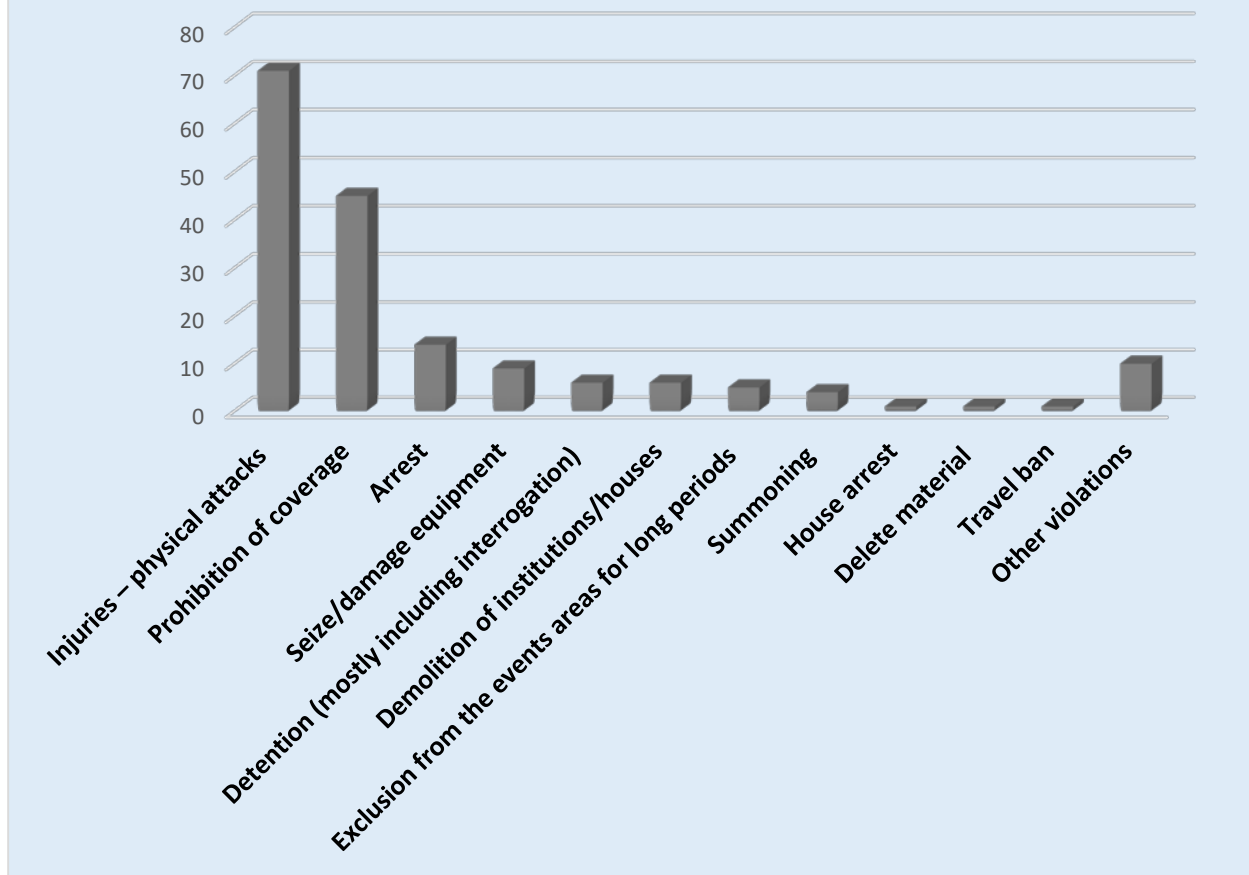
The dimensions of the physical attacks against female and male journalists are not limited to intimidating them only; rather, they are aimed primarily at keeping them away from the fields of events and preventing them from coverage for long or short periods. This is clearly evident when there is an extended series of events that Israel is trying to cover up. For example, a series of protests and demonstrations has erupted in Jerusalem following the placement of iron gates at the entrances to Al-Aqsa Mosque in the summer of 2017.



As an example, the photographer of the German TV Channel RTL, Rajae Mahfouth Al-Khateeb, (38 years old), was extremely assaulted and beaten by the Israeli Police. His injury resulted in a serious rupture in his knee which kept him away from the work field for a while. Al-Khateeb stated to MADA “at dawn, on 29 July 2017, I climbed a wall in Jerusalem to film the process of removing bridges and electronic gates as the surrounding area of Al-Aqsa Mosque was a closed military zone. After I finished documenting the process in pictures, and moved away from Al-Aqsa walls, I was attacked by police officers, they asked about the memory of the camera which contained the photos (I have replaced the memory I used with another empty one), and when I refused to give them the memory, they assaulted and attacked me. I was mostly beaten on my right knee, which resulted in a serious rupture of the tendon as the MRI image showed, not to mention that they smashed the microphone of the camera. I was transferred to Shaare Zedek Medical Center where my knee was placed in a device to be fixed. I started using a crutch for walking. I had to follow up with my condition at the Hospital every three days to take physical therapy sessions”.

In addition to the physical attacks aimed at intimidating the female and male journalists and excluding them from the events fields, the Occupation authorities and forces prevented them as well from covering the Israeli events and practices. The number of cases of preventing media coverage registered in Jerusalem (during the reporting period) amounted to 45 (some of which included groups of journalists and not individuals).

The Israeli Attacks in Jerusalem since the beginning of 2016 until mid-2018



The Israeli occupation authorities have not only resorted to traditional methods of suppression and prohibition of the media and journalists coverage in Jerusalem. In the past two years, they have created more than one new method to keep the media and journalists away from the events and prevent coverage indirectly. Most notable among these methods is the exclusion of journalists from the events places, which usually witness demonstrations and protests (such as the Old City of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa Mosque and Salah Al-Din Street), for long periods, which may extend to days, weeks or even months sometimes. Five such cases were registered during the reporting period. For example, the case of the Director of Elia Foundation, Ahmad Al-Safadi, who was prevented from covering any march or event or even appear in any activity for three months.

The case of Elia Foundation Director, Al-Safadi, and the following consequent and severe attacks reflect a blatant example of the Israeli policy aimed at preventing journalists and the media through various means, and completely excluding them from the media field work through a mechanism that adopts a series of interrelated measures and attacks, which gradually lead to the closure of institutions and the exclusion of journalists so they abandon their media work and move on to other jobs.

For example, a police force and intelligence services of the Israeli Occupation has raided Elia for Media Foundation, located in Salah Al-Din street, in Jerusalem, on the morning of **8 December 2016**, searched it and seized three computers, files, administrative and financial documents related to the Foundation's projects. This is in addition to arresting the photojournalist, Lama Hani Abu Ghousheh (24 years old) and detaining her at the Moscobiya Detention Center until the evening hours, noting that she was questioned, as well as her colleague, Yasmine Adeli (22 years old).

Five months later to this attack, more specifically, on 17 May 2017, the Israeli police and intelligence officers have battered and severely beaten the Director of Elia Foundation, Ahmad Hussein Al-Safadi, (44 years old) while he was filming events taking place in Jerusalem². He was arrested for four days, and the Israeli Government imposed on him a paid bail of an amount of 1500 NIS (about 450 Dollars), and a non-paid bail of an amount of 5000 NIS (about 1300 Dollars) as a condition of his release, in addition to the condition of imposing house arrest for another eight days (until 28 May 2017) and preventing him to participate in any march or demonstration for a period of three months or to cover any event taking place in Jerusalem for a period of three months.

Once again, after less than other seven months (on 20 December 2017), while the Director of Elia Foundation, Ahmad Hussein Al-Safadi, was filming a demonstration taking place in Salah Al-Din street, in the center of the city of occupied Jerusalem, the Israeli Police fired gas bombs at the demonstrators. He was arrested and taken to the Police Interrogation Center, located in the abovementioned street, and he was detained from 5:00PM until 11:00PM. He was released under an order under which he must stay away from Salah Al-Din Street for 10 days, and not cover any activity or event there. The headquarters of Elia Foundation in which Al-Safadi works is located

² He was covering, along with other journalist, the event of a peaceful sit-in of the families of Palestinian detainees organized in the square of the Red Crescent headquarters in Jerusalem, specifically, at the moment he was filming the assault against one of the young men by a police officer near the Red Crescent headquarters.

in Salah Al-Din Street. It is worth noting that two days earlier, on 18 December 2017, Al-Safadi was exposed to another assault by the Israeli Police in which his camera was smashed.

Around three weeks later, on 9 January 2018, the Israeli Occupation Police arrested Ahmad Hussein Al-Safadi in front of the American House near the US General Consulate in Jerusalem while he was filming a sit-in for the Jerusalemites protesting against Trump's decision of announcing Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel. He was taken to the Moscobiya Detention Center, and he was questioned claiming that "he organized the entire event". After hours, he was released under a bail of an amount of 5000 NIS (around 1400 USD) until his trial was held.

Three months later, in a more serious move, the Israeli intelligence and police forces closed the headquarters of Elia Youth Media Foundation and placed an order at its entrance to close it "until further notice". This is after they raided the headquarters located in Salah Al-Din street in Jerusalem, on 18 April 2018, two days after the Israeli Defense Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, tweeted about Elia Youth Media Foundation describing it as a "terrorist foundation", on Monday, corresponding 16 April 2018.

Two months after the closure of Elia, the occupation police arrested the Director of the Organization, Ahmad Al-Safadi, again, from his house located in the Sa'diyya neighborhood in the Old City of Jerusalem, on 5 June 2018, and took him to the Moscobiya Detention Center, to question him about his work at Elia. This has ended with a decision by an Israeli court that ordered him to pay a 1,500 NIS bail, an unpaid guarantee of 5,000 NIS, not to mention his exclusion from Al-Aqsa for a period of one month (until the 4th of July), and preventing him to participate or attend in any sit-in or demonstration or march for one month, or to cover any event for one month as well.

In other words, the Foundation and the staff were exposed to serious assaults during the period covered by the report, culminating in the closure of the Foundation which was not enough for the occupation authorities which prosecuted and arrested its director from his house and prevented him from covering any demonstration or event in Jerusalem for one month. It should be noted that he was subjected to similar procedures more than once during the period covered by this report.

This example (which reflects what the female and male journalists face in Jerusalem) illustrates an approach based on a series of extreme oppressive Israeli measures and practices to deter female and male journalists and media in the occupied city of Jerusalem, excluding them from the field to

prevent them from fulfilling and completing their journalism work or undermine any opportunity for them to continue their work. This is aimed at achieving a very essential goal which is to block any image or information of the Israeli policies, attacks and procedures undertaken in Jerusalem against any non-Israeli event which suppressed with excessive violence. Not only this, the Israeli occupation police has prevented a group working dinner for journalists (which included 18 female and male journalists), organized at one of Jerusalem hotels, on the evening of 24 February 2018, when the Israeli Police raised the restaurant of the hotel and expelled the journalists half an hour after they arrived !!

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