

Annual Administrative Report of 2017

For the consecutive eleven year, the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms “MADA” continued its relentless work throughout 2017 in defending media freedoms, promoting freedom of expression, contributing to media development, and improving legal environment for media through the following three financed programs:

- Monitoring and Documentation Program.
- Support and Advocacy Program.
- Media Development Program.

1. Monitoring and Documentation Program:

MADA Center continued to monitor, on a daily basis, the violations committed against media freedoms in Palestine during the past year of 2017 through issuing dozens of press releases and 12 monthly reports as well as the annual and semi-annual two reports released in an official press conference. It is also noteworthy to indicate that the Center has issued a special report on Israeli administrative arrests against journalists in Palestine.

The year 2017 has witnessed a significant rise of violations against media freedoms in Palestine with 38% increase compared to the preceding year, where a total of 530 violations were monitored and documented by MADA. The proportion of Israeli occupation was 71%, amounting to 375 cases, while 29% of the total violations were committed by different Palestinian sides, amounting to 154 cases.

The main reason for the rise of a number of violations recorded in 2017 is attributed to the significant increase of the Israeli attacks, which escalated 51% over the preceding year, amounting to 127 violations; noting that the Palestinian violations have also escalated, but at a much lower rate, with an increase average of 15%, amounting to 20 violations.

New types of Israeli attacks emerged during 2017, which took shape as introduction to a new approach of suppressing press and media freedoms in Palestine based substantially on preventing the transfer of what is realistically happening on the ground of incidents and practices. These types are summarized in four coercive practices, as follows: home confinement for some journalists, prevention of covering types of events, particularly demonstrations, for long period of time reaching to three months, coercively exclusion of some journalists from places of hot spots for long period of time, and collectively detaining sets of journalists from accessing a particular place for press coverage, where they are released after the incident's end or fading.

Besides, the Israeli physical attacks committed against journalists witnessed a great leap in 2017, where a total of 139 assaults and injuries were monitored. It is also noted that the range of Israeli attacks was extended to include media institutions, where a total of 17 institutions were shut down compared to 4 in 2016.

On the other hand, a total of violations committed by both Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has risen in 2017, but at a lower pace, where an average of 15% increase was monitored over the preceding year, amounting to 20 violations. However, a total of such violations altogether accounted only for 29% of the entire violations.

The rise of Palestinian violations is basically attributed to the prevailing tension over the Palestinian arena following the agreement or understandings between Hamas and Fatah dismissed-leader Mohammad Dahlan, where 29 news sites were blocked. The Palestinian authorities committed a total of 119 violations of media freedoms in the West Bank, while a total of 35 Palestinian violations were committed in Gaza Strip.

No tangible or substantial change towards positive transformation in connection to official Palestinian will in both West Bank and Gaza Strip to respect and maintain media freedoms and to end the violations committed against media freedoms was perceived during 2017. On the contrary, the year 2017 witnessed a major setback in the legal environment of the freedom of opinion, expression, and press in Palestine due to the adoption of the Electronic Crimes Law, which was preceded by the blocking of 29 news websites at a time the Palestinian government continued procrastination to pass the law on the right to access information, and the law of the Supreme Council of Information has not seen any development for endorsement.

The number of journalists arrested or detained by Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose from 21 in 2016 to 32 cases, with at least 7 journalists were subjected to physical and psychological torture, some of which were severe and cruel.

2. Support and Advocacy + Media Development:

In 2017, MADA launched four media campaigns, the first lasts for one month and aimed at raising awareness among journalists and reducing self-censorship. This will help improve the performance of the Palestinian press and enable it to do its role to the fullest. This was accompanied by organizing five training workshops for journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on self-censorship and its hazards on freedom of expression and press professionalism. The second and third campaigns dealt with the issue of digital rights, while the fourth campaign was carried out after the adoption of Electronic Crimes Law in July 2017. These campaigns were carried out through a series of efforts exerted by MADA in an attempt of repeal or freezing or amendment of the law for its implications over the freedom of expression and privacy.

In this context, MADA Center called for a meeting at the headquarters of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in cooperation with the Department of Information and Culture in which the conditions of media freedoms and the Electronic Crimes Law were discussed. MADA was also a member of a committee consisting of 13 governmental and local bodies, which was established to review the Electronic Crimes Law, particularly the Articles that affect freedom of opinion and expression and individual privacy, and to raise recommendations in form of petition to President Mahmoud Abbas for an amendment request. The amendment of Electronic Crimes Law has been an axial issue for MADA through numerous activities,

including participation in several meetings, where efforts were exerted in an attempt to put pressure on the government for amending the law.

The representatives of civil society to the committee entitled to review and amend the Legislative Decree No. 16 of 2017 on Electronic Crimes formed by civil and official institutions following the meeting organized by the Information and Culture Department of the PLO and MADA, came into conclusion that the law does not constitute a valid basis for legislation able to deal with electronic crimes that affect security and safety of society and interests of public and institutions, and that the purpose of its speedy enforcement is aimed at legitimizing the violation of freedom of opinion and expression and press work, the right to access information, and personal privacy, which is substantially inconsistent with existing legislation, particularly the amended Palestinian Basic Law, and with the obligations of the State of Palestine under international conventions to which it acceded without reservation, which by all means puts the system of rights, freedoms, and civil peace at serious risk.

On behalf of the committee, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, head of the PLO's Culture and Information Department, handed in the petition to President Mahmoud Abbas and presented its content to the meeting of the parliamentary blocs and lists.

Regarding development of legal environment, MADA launched a meeting of "Khabirni" coalition that was formed as initiative of the Center, to discuss the reasons that prevent the implementation of Prime Minister Dr. Rami Hamdallah's promise to MADA on the adoption of the right to information law by the end of 2016 that was already reiterated over media outlets more than once, and the means of movement and pressure to achieve so, after noting that there is procrastination and official evasion by the government, particularly the Ministry of Justice, in dealing with some articles and provisions that prevent the adoption of the draft law, despite MADA's insistence and endeavor over several months on calling for a meeting of representatives of both government and civil society to address them.

Furthermore, MADA has focused its attention on the issues of female journalists, where in addition to the submitted paper on the situation of Palestinian women under occupation, the Center held a conference on the challenges and obstacles faced by female journalists in Palestine with broad participation of female journalists, civil society institutions, Ministry of Information, and Finnish Representative, where the issue was broadly discussed during the conference's sessions. In this context, two workshops were held in the West Bank for the legal empowerment of women journalists, noting that other several workshops were held this year in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in addition to a conference in Gaza within the project of legal empowerment of women journalists.

As part of its efforts of contribution to the development of media work in Palestine, MADA also organized a three-day digital security training course with specific target of media professionals specializing in digital media in Palestine and NGOs staff.

MADA Center issued dozens of press releases, most of which focused on the attacks on media freedoms and journalists as one of the means of pressure to stop them, while other press releases dealt with events related to media freedoms, campaigns and activities carried out by the Center, and regular and special monthly and annual reports.

Relationships and Participations:

MADA participated in several conferences and workshops and presented interventions in some of them. It also participated in several meetings organized by several local institutions and networks to discuss the means of encountering deterioration in the situation of freedoms, especially after the adoption of the Electronic Crimes Law and the subsequent arrests of many journalists and activists.

Over the past year, MADA has advanced many steps to enhance its presence and impact internationally, allowing for media freedoms and general human rights in Palestine be invulnerable or at least under observing eyes. In this regard, Razan Al-Nimri, human rights coordinator of the Center, participated in the Session of Human Rights Council in June and presented an intervention on violence against women journalists under occupation, which included in essence the attacks against women journalists. The Director General of the Center Mousa Rimawi participated in the 36th regular Session of Human Rights Council, which was held in Geneva under agenda item 7 (VII) on the Palestinian territories in September, where he spoke about the policy of arbitrary administrative detention practiced by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian journalists. He referred to the coercive transfer of Palestinian detainees, including journalists, outside the occupied Palestinian territories, which constitutes an explicit violation of the rules of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In parallel, MADA has released a special report entitled "Administrative Detention of Palestinian Journalists" dealing with administrative detention cases against Palestinian journalists during the last three and half years. The Center also participated in several Arab and international conferences and meetings related to defending media freedoms and freedom of expression. The most prominent of these was the participation in a meeting of Arab institutions concerned with freedom of expression, which was held in Beirut in late February, to discuss the challenges facing freedom of expression and the best ways to coordinate and cooperate for encountering them, where the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, David Kay was present. It was agreed to work on the establishment of an Arab mechanism for freedom of expression and on a follow-up committee comprised of 6 institutions, including MADA Center.

The Director-General presented the keynote address at a wide-range meeting of Arab organizations on freedom of expression in the Arab world organized by BBC in the Med-Media project in Rome. He also actively contributed to the discussion within the framework of "White Paper", which will include themes and priorities of development programs and freedom of expression in the Arab world to be presented to donors and stakeholders.

The Director-General also participated in the Stockholm Internet Forum, where he made his interventions on the reality of the Internet in Palestine and the obstacles facing its freedom as well as the violations committed against journalists and activists on the basis of their writings and comments on Facebook. He also spoke about the negative impact of the agreement or understandings between the Government of Israel and Facebook on freedom of expression in Palestine and the world.

The Center also participated in a conference held by International Freedom of Expression Network (IFEX) in Montreal, Canada in June, where a number of interventions were made in a number of sessions of the conference on the Center's activities and the situation of freedom of expression in Palestine.

Razan Al-Nimri, human rights coordinator, also participated in a conference on digital safety and governance on Internet sites in Berlin, where she engaged in a discussion on topics related to the reality of Internet and digital rights in Palestine.

Along with several international experts, the Director-General also participated in a panel discussion on UNESCO's draft report entitled "Global Trends of Freedom of Expression and Media Development", in particular the part dealing with the Middle East and North Africa, as a member of the Advisory Committee of the report.

MADA also visited many international delegations and representatives of consulates and diplomatic missions, and has been holding many meetings with international institutions on the sidelines of regional meetings and conferences. The Center applied for an official partnership with UNESCO to strengthen cooperation prospects, which already exist since its establishment.

The Center also continued contribution to defending journalists around the world through its membership and participation in the signing of letters and statements and through participation in the submission of proposals during its engagement in meetings and conferences locally, regionally and internationally.

Challenges and Obstacles:

Violations against media freedoms and journalists have continued and increased, where part of them hold new forms with serious impact. In light of this existing challenge, MADA Center along with other Palestinian human rights institutions are required to intensify their efforts in cooperation with relevant international institutions to limit such violations, particularly those committed by the Israeli occupying power as still deemed the largest number and most serious ones, noting that two-thirds of violations are committed by Israel.

At the local Palestinian level, one of the major challenges faced by MADA Center is the increase in the number of Palestinian violations, where part of them are serious, the reform of legal environment related to the media, and the continuation of efforts with the various Palestinian institutions and communities concerned to address the setback of last year embodied in the adoption of Electronic Crimes Law, which constitutes an additional legal base

for furthering violations against freedom of expression and press in Palestine. The adoption of this Law was made away from societal decision inputs and apart of civil society institutions' decision sharing, resulting in the speedy use of its texts in terms of chasing and prosecuting dozens of citizens in connection with the freedom of expression, which is per se guaranteed by the Palestinian Constitution and international treaties signed by Palestine.

Among the most significant challenges facing MADA during the year 2017 was the decline in international support for civil and human rights institutions, including the Center. Although this was not negatively reflected on its entrusted role, the Center with a limited number of staff continued to play a leading role in defending media freedoms in Palestine through a variety of participations at Arab and international levels that per se left positive image and status of the Center.

Finally, we extend our thanks to the international institutions that supported the programs and activities of the MADA Center in 2017, especially Open Society Foundations (OSF), Representatives of Finland in Ramallah, European Endowment for Democracy, IFEX, Deutsche Welle, and all institutions that supported the Center over the previous years. We thank all our local and international partners and all defenders of freedom of expression.

Highlights of activities during 2017

#	Date	Activity	Donor
1	06.01.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for December 2016.	OSF
2	16.01.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for December 2016.	OSF
3	06.02.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for January 2017.	OSF
4	06.02.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for January 2017.	OSF
5	08.02.17	A press conference was held at the Center's headquarter to announce the annual report on the state of media freedoms throughout the year 2016.	OSF
6	23.02.17	The participation of MADA Center in the National Initiative for Media Development, which was held at the Center for Media Development at Birzeit University.	-
7		Participation in the meeting of Arab institutions that was held in Beirut to discuss the Arab mechanism for freedom of expression.	
8	05.03.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for February 2017.	OSF
9	15.03.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for February 2017.	OSF
10	17.03.17	MADA's General Director participated in the seventh conference of the Public Prosecution in Jericho, where he made an intervention entitled "Public Prosecution and Freedom of Expression".	-
11	20.03.17	Khabirni coalition holds a meeting to discuss the reasons that prevent the implementation of the Prime Minister's promise regarding adoption of law on the right to access information by the end of 2016.	Self-effort
12	28.03.17	British Political Consul Laurie Hunter and Political Advisor at the Consulate Shatha Abdul Samad made a visit to the Center's headquarter in Ramallah, where the situation of freedom of expression in Palestine was discussed.	
13	05.04.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for March 2017.	OSF
14	05.04.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for March 2017.	OSF
15	15.04.17	Participation in the meeting of Arab and International Foundation on the freedom of expression in the Arab world and discussion of the "White Paper".	
16	19.04.17	Convening of the annual meeting for the general commission of the Center and endorsing the administrative and financial reports for 2016.	Self-effort
17	03.05.17	Issuance of statement on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day	Self-effort
18	08.05.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for April 2017.	OSF
19	09.05.17	The Swedish Consulate celebrates the Swedish National Day and MADA participates.	-
20	13.05.17	A delegation from the Open Society Foundation made a visit to the Center, where a discussion was held on the situation of freedom of opinion and expression in Palestine.	-
21	15.05.17	Participation in the Stockholm Internet Forum.	

22	21.05.17	A two-day training course on self-censorship and its impact on freedoms for journalists and media students in the northern West Bank with the support of the European Endowment for Democracy.	EED
23	25.05.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for April 2017.	OSF
24	25.05.17	Conclusion of a two-day training course on self-censorship and its impact on the freedoms of journalists and media students in the city of Bethlehem with the support of the European Endowment for Democracy.	EED
25	30.05.17	Signing a partnership agreement between MADA and the Finnish Representative.	-
26	05.06.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for May 2017.	OSF
27	10.06.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for May 2017.	OSF
28	12.06.17	Participation of the Center in the IFEX Conference in Canada.	IFEX
29	14.06.17	Participation of colleague Razan Nimri, human rights coordinator of the Center in a Human Rights Council's conference on violence against women, addressing "the situation of Palestinian women under occupation".	
30	04.07.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for June 2017.	OSF
31	06.07.17	Conclusion of a two-day training course on self-censorship and its impact on freedoms in Ramallah was concluded with the support of the European Foundation for Democracy.	EED
32	13.07.17	Convening a meeting in the PLO's Information and Culture Department to discuss the situation of media freedoms and Electronic Crimes Law.	Self-effort
33	19.07.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for June 2017.	OSF
34	25.07.17	Participation in the World Conference on "Risks to Freedom of Opinion, Expression and Access to Information" which was held in Doha, Qatar.	
35	10.08.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for July 2017.	OSF
36	15.08.17	Issuance of the semi-annual report on media freedoms of the first half of 2017.	OSF
37	17.08.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for July 2017.	OSF
38	27.08.17	A delegation from the Open Society Foundation made a visit to the Center and discussed the latest developments of the Center's work regarding the freedom of opinion and expression.	-
39	30.08.17	MADA participates in a meeting of the committee that consists of 13 governmental and civil society institutions to review and study the articles of Electronic Crimes Law, particularly those affect the freedom of opinion and expression and individual privacy before submitting a petition to the Palestinian president.	Self-effort
40	05.09.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for August 2017.	OSF
41	14.09.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for August 2017.	OSF
42	19.08.17	Launch of a one-month campaign to limit self-censorship.	OSF

43	25.09.17	Mousa Rimawi, Director General of MADA Center, participated in the 36 th Regular Session of Human Rights Council, which was held in Geneva under Agenda 7 on the Occupied Palestinian Territories.	IFEX
44	27.09.17	Conclusion of a two-day training workshop on the digital rights of journalists was held at the Hebron tourist hotel, Hebron.	EED
45	28.09.17	Participation in UNESCO's International Day of Knowledge, Paris.	IFEX
46	01.10.17	A two-day training course on the legal empowerment of women journalists with the participation of 16 female journalists was held at Jericho Tourist Village.	Finland
47	03.10.17	Launch of a special report on the administrative detention of journalists.	OSF
48	05.10.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for September 2017.	OSF
49	09.10.17	A delegation of PEN International visits the MADA and discusses mechanisms and prospects for joint cooperation.	
50	16.10.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for September 2017.	OSF
51	16.10.17	Conclusion of the second two-day training course on the legal empowerment of Palestinian women journalists in Nablus with participation of 19 female journalists from different media institutions.	Finland
52	18.10.17	Conclusion of a two-day training course on digital rights "right to access Internet and information" for a set of journalists in the city of Ramallah.	EED
53	24.10.17	Launch of a campaign on cybercrimes law.	DW
54	01.11.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for October 2017.	OSF
55	08.11.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for October 2017.	OSF
56	29.11.17	Organizing a conference on the challenges and obstacles faced by women journalists in Palestine.	Finland
57	04.12.17	Issuance of report on media freedoms for November 2017.	OSF
58	08.12.17	Translation of English report on media freedoms for November 2017.	OSF
59	20.12.17	Conclusion of a three-day training course on digital security held in Ramallah targeting Palestinian media professionals and civil society staff.	DW
* dozens of press releases in both Arabic and English other than mentioned above were issued and various activities were carried out as well.			

Abbreviations

OSF	Open Society Foundation
EED	European Endowment for Democracy
Finland	Finnish Representative in Ramallah
IFEX	International Freedom of Expression Network
DW	Deutsche Welle