

Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms "MADA"

Summary of Narrative/Administrative Report for the year 2016

The year 2016 had coincided the 10th anniversary of MADA establishment. Through the ten years, MADA had many accomplishments with special focus on those of the year 2016:

- MADA was granted a special consultative status at the ECOSOC.
- MADA granted ED certificate last year from the NGO source which considered MADA equivalent to a U.S. public organization.
- MADA won the golden prize for the best digital rights campaign in the Middle East within the competition organized by WAN-IFRA.
- MADA played a leading role in stopping the Higher Council of Media law this year, in collaboration with its partners from media institutions, rights-based organizations, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, and a group of journalists, where president Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Mr. Rami Hamdallah approved to stop the law.

- MADA General Director Mousa El Rimawi was:

Elected for the steering committee of the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) at the end of the GFMD general assembly convening in Jakarta.

Selected by Oxford University as a member of the Advisory Group for the 2017 publication of the UNESCO report entitled: "World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development".

MADA achievements of the year 2016 are summarized below:

First: Regarding Monitoring and Documentation of Violations against Media Freedoms:

MADA continued to monitor violations against media freedoms in Palestine during the last year on a daily basis, in addition to issuing numerous press releases in Arabic and in English, 12 monthly reports, besides its annual and semi-annual reports. Reports could be accessed through MADA

website <http://www.madacenter.org>. MADA held a press conference to announce its annual report¹ on violations against media freedoms in Palestine in participation of Dr. Ammar Dwaik the General Director of the Independent Commission of Human Rights (ICHR).

In 2016, MADA continued to enhance its role as a credible main source of data/ information in regard to media freedom in Palestine as many international organizations had referred to MADA reports and integrated paragraphs from it in its annual reports. International media outlets was interested in MADA produced materials and reports, in return, MADA persisted on cooperation with many international organizations and networks working on freedom of expression including participation in campaigns supporting media freedom in cooperation with IFEX members particularly the social media campaign for releasing the journalist Mohamad El Qeek when he went through following to his long hunger strike.

Second: Regarding Developing Legal Environment in Palestine:

2016 did not witness any tangible progress in terms of media laws in Palestine; actually it was a step back when the Higher Council of Media (HCM) law was passed as a decree by President Mahmoud Abbas in 29-12-2015. The HCM law enhances the executive authority's control on media due to the included clauses that restricts and contradicts with the core objective of establishing a council for media, passing the law was a sudden step for all Palestinian media institutions and civil society. Stop publishing the law was a result of efforts exerted by MADA in cooperation with other Palestinian civil society & media organizations and Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, the head of culture and media department at PLO. Later, a secretariat of several media and rights-based organizations was formed including MADA, Media Development Center-Birzeit University, Al Haq, Palestinian Journalists' syndicate, human rights council and Jihad Harb, Nour Odah as independent figures. The secretariat role was to follow up with the Ministers' Council on the issue, a meeting was held with Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Ziad Abu Amro where a new draft of the HCM law was submitted. The draft of the law was developed by an experts' committee formed by the secretariat and an open discussion was arranged to discuss the draft at Media Development Center where the participants agreed on sending it to UNESCO for translation to English and to consult international relevant experts.

In the same context, and regardless a promise by Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Al- Hamdallah to pass the law of the right to access information before the end of 2016; the law is still stuck at the Ministers' Council since the end of 2013 despite that it past all phases of deliberations where MADA played a pioneer role and exerted tremendous efforts for the last six years along with several governmental and civic institutions to promote the importance of its enactment to decision makers as well as to public in addition to holding training courses for multi sectors educating them on the issue. The draft of the audiovisual law is still stuck at the Ministers' Council same as the draft of the law of the right to access information

¹ More details are given in the attached narrative/ administrative report 2016.

Third: Regarding Media Development and Advocacy:

A-MADA issued a special report² entitled (Social media, another address to pursue/ prosecute journalists).The report indicated that social media supposed to be effective tool and space for citizens and journalists to freely express their opinions. Nevertheless; during last years, it was subjected to systematic censorship by the Israeli Occupation authorities and also by Palestinian formal& informal sides in West Bank and Gaza Strip.

B-MADA had released a study³ entitled ” Feminist journalism and freedom of expression in Palestine” aiming at shedding light on the feminist journalism produced by organizations specialized in the field of women issues in Palestine and the contribution of the feminist journalists in prevalence and promotion of freedom of expression, its challenges and obstacles. The way and methodology by which women issues are handled by selected number of specialized media organizations had been deeply studied and presented in the released study.

C- Training courses:

MADA held several training courses:

- 1- A training course on the Right to Access Information for 3 days in Jericho.
- 2- A training course on the Right to Access Information- Lobbying and advocacy through social media for 3 days in Jericho in participation of 32 journalists(males and females).
- 3- A training course on the Right to Access Information in support of the Representative office of Finland in Ramallah. The training course was held in Gaza at the hall(Level Up) for 3 days(18 training hours) in participation of 20 journalists(males and females)
- 4- Holding a 2-days training course(15 training hours) in Hebron(Hebron Tourist Hotel) on the right to access information in support of the Representative office of Finland in Ramallah. No. of participants reached 22 students(males and females)
- 5- Holding a 3-days training course in Gaza Strip on the right to access information -lobbying and advocacy through social media in support of the Representative office of Finland in Ramallah. No. of participants reached 20 journalists(males and females)
- 6- Holding a 3-days training course in Jericho for public sector employees on the right to access information. Participants NO. reached 16(males and females).
- 7- Holding a 3-days training course in Gaza Strip on the right to access information in participation of 15 lawyers(females and males) and in support of the Rep. Office of Finland.

² More details are given in the attached narrative/ administrative report 2016 and the full special report could be accessed through <http://www.madacenter.org>.

³ More details are given in the attached narrative/ administrative report 2016 and the full study could be accessed through <http://www.madacenter.org>.

- 8- Holding a 2-days training course in Jericho on the right to access information in cooperation with Culture and Media department in PLO in participation of 20 cadre(males and females).the training course held in support of the Rep. Office of Finland.

D: Meetings:

1-An open meeting held at the beginning of the year in participation of law & media professionals and the representative of media& culture department Mrs Samiah Wazwaz. The meeting discussed the law of the Higher Media Council (HMC)which was enacted all of a sudden at the end of the year 2015.The participants insisted on not publishing the law in the formal newspaper and urged withdrawal of the law by a presidential decree before it enters into force according to its shortcomings ,gaps and imperfection that undermine the entire idea of establishing the HMC as the enacted law inherently contradicts the Palestinian basic law in addition to inclusion of articles threaten media freedoms .The participants assured start lobbying involving all CSOs concerned about the issue particularly media and legal institutions to aiming at withdrawing the law considering that it was substantially different than the copy drafted after years of joint efforts.

2-In the same previous context, the participants(including journalists, media experts, academics, bloggers, representatives of CSOs working in media) in another conducted session emphasized developing a strategy of the Palestinian media discourse, prioritizing requirements of enhancing media freedom and respect of human rights, increasing awareness of moral and legal dimensions of citizen journalism in Palestine.

As a result of the aforementioned efforts, the President and the Prime Minister agreed to not publishing the law. MADA highly appreciated the vital role tackled by Dr. Hanaan Ashrawi, the Director of culture& media at PLO in addition to the efforts exerted by MADA partners.

3-An open meeting held in cooperation with Arabic Media Internet Network(AMIN) discussing the mechanisms of protecting journalists at AMIN premises in Al Beirah city in participation of media& legal institutions and journalists. The participants recommended issuing a presidential decree to prevent arresting journalists due to their work as such could clearly considered a punitive action. In many cases, journalists were arrested/detained for different periods of time without being convicted by the Palestinian courts after their detention/ arrest which was the case with the journalist Ihab El Jariri when the General Prosecution decided to take him into custody(the GP retracted his decision in the same day).The participants also discussed the increased violations against media freedoms committed by Palestinian authorities and the necessity to work towards establishing a rights- based media coalition to handle and follow up media freedoms in Palestine taking into account 3 pillars: legislations, polices and its reality in Palestine.

4- A discussion meeting held in Gaza to discuss the study” Citizen and Freedom of Expression in Palestine-Gaza as a model” issued by MADA at the end of the year 2015. Media professionals and academics participated in the meeting recommended persistence on creating a health legal environment that supports media freedoms and to pay more attention to new media approaches.

5-A festive meeting held celebrating 250 years since issuing the 1st law on the right to access information in the Swedish kingdom. The meeting arranged in Ramallah city in cooperation of the Swedish consulate in Jerusalem as well as the representative office of Finland (ROF) in Ramallah.

Fourth: Regarding Partnership and Networking:

4.1 Liaison with Local authorities and governmental actors:

1-A meeting arranged with the Prime Minister Rami El Hamdallah in September discussing issues related to freedom of expression and relevant laws. The most important outcome of the meeting is the Prime Minister's promise to issue the law of the right to access information before the end of 2016. Following to that, a meeting held with the minister of Justice Ali Abu Diak in participation of members in the coalition "Khabirni" where all agreed on holding 2 sessions to work on building a consensus on the disputed articles.

2- A previous meeting with the minister of Justice was held in April discussing mutual cooperation between the governmental sector and the civil society organizations to strengthen opportunities for their partnership. Additionally, the improvements regarding a number of laws related to media were discussed especially the law of the Media Higher Council and the draft of the law on the right to access information in addition to intellectual property and the role of Ministry of Justice in this regard as well as the relevant exerted efforts by MADA and its partners.

3- In April, MADA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Morad El Sodany, the Secretary-General of the Palestinian national committee for education, culture and science to enhance the opportunities for mutual cooperation in regard to media freedoms and freedom of expression in general. The MOU emphasized combating discrimination on any bases contradicting local and international human rights' treaties and conventions especially that fall within the concept of freedom of expression which considered a violation of dignity. The MOU included organizing several meetings and workshops to discuss issues in common.

4- Holding a meeting with Ministry of Information and another meeting with the Office of Governmental Media discussing the updates in regard to freedom of expression and relevant laws.

5- Holding an important meeting in July with the Attorney General Ahmad Barrak where he responded to MADA request to assign prosecutor to handle the cases of media freedoms and freedom of expression. The Attorney General assured that the general prosecution will integrate MADA request within its next plan in Palestine. The aforementioned special prosecutor will be selected amongst prosecutors participated in the training course held by MADA at the end of 2014 in cooperation with the general prosecution within the project "A turning point: Defending Freedom of Expression and opinion through a healthy legal environment" in support of EU/EIDHR Program.

As a matter of fact, the Attorney General kept his promise and assigned 12 prosecutors.

4.2 International engagement and distinctive accomplishments:

1-MADA won the golden prize for the best digital rights campaign in the Middle East within the competition (Prizes of Digital Media in the Middle East) organized by WAN-IFRA. The digital rights campaign was the 1st of its kind in Palestine which was launched in support of IFEX aiming at increasing public awareness on their digital rights as accessing internet becomes a human right that all should enjoy. Such achievement attributed to the exerted efforts by MADA distinguished staff, a group of professional trainers, journalists and media students participated in the training course held by MADA. Through the training course, the participants produced some of the campaign's materials and promoted it through media outlets they worked for and through face book and "bloggers' bus".

2-Oxford University, one of the most ancient and inveterate universities in the world had selected Mousa Rimawi—MADA General Director as a member of the Advisory Group for the 2017 publication of the UNESCO report entitled: "World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development". The Advisory Group comprises of academics, decision makers and experts from all over the world. It is worth to mention that UNESCO had assigned the universities of Oxford (UK), Pennsylvania (USA) and Witwatersr (South Africa) to prepare this report which considered one of the most important reports UNESCO going to issue in the year 2017.

3-MADA participated in the International festival organized in Helsinki/Finland on the occasion of 3rd of May, " World Press Freedom Day" in participation of 900 representative from all over the world as well as formal participation of Finland which topped the International Freedom of Expression Index for the seventh year in a row. Before starting this festival, MADA participated in " the International Day to End Impunity for crimes against journalists" organized by IFEX.

4-MADA participated in the meeting organized in Tunisia by the International Media Support (IMS) to discuss legislations and laws in the Arab World and its impact on media freedom and development, the relevant situation and circumstances and the best coordination mechanisms between institutions defending freedom of expression.

5-MADA participated in a meeting held in Jordan and Brussels arranged by EU within the consultative dialogue between civil society organizations-South of the Mediterranean and EU. Additionally, MADA participated in the conference organized in Jakarta/ Indonesia by GFMD where MADA was elected for GFMD steering committee.

6-MADA organized a meeting with a number of representatives of consulates and Rep. Offices in Palestine to discuss the situation of freedom of expression and encountered challenges in Palestine in addition to presenting MADA annual report of violations against media freedoms.

7-A meeting organized in Amsterdam with Free Press Unlimited discussing mutual cooperation and its best mechanisms.

8-A meeting held in Brussels with EuroMed Rights network discussing opportunities for mutual cooperation including the possibility for MADA to join the network.

9-Participation in 3 meetings with the Coordination Group of the project Medmedia- BBC Action aiming at identifying the principles and priorities of organizations working on media development in the Arab Region in cooperation with the implementing organizations in Europe and North America.

10-A delegation from the British consulate in Jerusalem had visited MADA office on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day. The delegation headed by Dr Alastair McPhail, Consul General and comprised of the political consul Lauri Hunter and the director of public relations Farah Abu Sehliah.

11-MADA participated in a meeting of the Arab Group in IFEX discussing the situation of freedom of expression in the Arab World and the cooperation opportunities and mechanisms between Arab institutions working in this field.

12-MADA proposed an initiative to form an international moot court to shed light on immunity. The Moot court supposed to convene annually at the headquarters of Human Rights Council handling 5 of the most prominent cases of murdering journalists from all continents during the year. The court's convene supposed to be accompanied by wide media coverage locally and internationally. MADA initiative was welcomed locally and internationally, so MADA had started the coordination needed for its implementation.

4.3 Coordination with local CSOs:

- a- MADA effectively contributed for the 3rd year in Media Strategic Plan led by Media Development Center(MDC)- Birzeit University.
- b- MADA continued exerting efforts within Khabirni coalition which MADA launch the initiative for its establishment since year and a half along with its partners and in cooperation of CSOs: AMAN, Al Haq, Media Development Center-Birzeit University, Journalists' Syndicate aiming at promoting the right to access information among Palestinians and urging decision makers to enact the law of the right to access information.

Fifth: Regarding institutional procedures:

MADA convened its annual meeting of its general assembly on 20 of April 2016 where both financial and administrative reports of the year 2015 were approved and a new board of directors was elected. The new BODs convened its 1st meeting directly after the end of the general assembly meeting and the positions identified as follows:

Chairman: Dr. Ghazi Hanania.

Vice Chairman: Ms. Sana Aranki.

Secretary: Mrs. Lubna Alashkar.

Treasurer: Dr. Taleb Awad.

Member: Mr. Khalid Darwish.

Member: Mr. Nihad Abu Ghoush.

Member: Ms. Amal Jum'a.

Member: Mrs. Nahid Abu Taima.

Member: Mr. Jihad Harb.

During the last year, the BOD held 7 meetings discussing MADA policies and actions taking the needed decisions. The BOD approved new members for the general assembly and continued participation in several activities implemented by MADA.

**Thanks to our partners who supported MADA during 2016:
Open Society Foundations “OSF”**

Finish Representative office in Ramallah

UNESCO office in Ramallah