

Media freedoms violations in the Palestinian territories during April 2012

MADA: Significant decline in violations against journalists in April

The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) has welcomed a significant decrease in media freedoms violations in the Palestinian territories during April 2012, compared to the previous few months.

Key Israeli violations against media freedoms:

Israeli occupation forces raided the headquarters of Hona Al-Quds network in Jerusalem, confiscating equipment and arresting two employees. They also arrested a reporter from the Quds Press News Agency, Mohamad Anwar Mona, in Nablus. In addition, freelance photographer, Ahmad Daghlas, was severely injured in the head by Israeli forces while covering the Al Nabi Saleh weekly march against the Wall.

Israeli authorities extended the administrative detention of Al-Quds TV program coordinator, Nawaf Al Amer, for three more months and postponed the trial of journalist Ra'd Al Shareif, presenter of Marah Radio in Hebron. They also attacked a photographer for the popular resistance media office, Hilmi Al-Tamimi, in Al Nabi Saleh village while he was covering the village's weekly march against the Wall. On the same day, Israeli forces also detained freelance photographer Bilal Al-Tamimi for four days.

Key Palestinian violations against media freedoms:

The Palestinian Preventive Security Service arrested Zaman Media Group correspondent Tariq Kamis from his workplace in Al Beira city near Ramallah. They also arrested blogger Jamal Abu Rehan, who is an activist against corruption on Facebook, in Al Jeftlik village in Jericho Governorate. He has been accused of defaming a public employer through the Facebook page, "People want to end corruption."

Recommendations:

While MADA welcomes the decrease in violations and assaults against journalists, it hopes this progress will continue in the coming months and years. MADA condemns all violations against media freedoms and freedom of speech—rights which are guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Palestinian Basic Law. MADA calls for an end to all violations against journalists and Palestinian media outlets in the Palestinian territories, so that journalists can work as professionals and without fear.

Full details of violations

(1 April) The Palestinian Preventive Security Service arrested blogger Jamal Abu Rehan after he was summoned for creating a Facebook page entitled, "People want to stop corruption." Abu Rehan was accused of defaming a public employer. He was repeatedly put on trial, most recently on Thursday 26 April. The public prosecutor intervened and opposed his release due to on-going investigations but his lawyer argued that this was unacceptable as there is no Internet law in Palestine and because writing on a personal blog is considered to be freedom of opinion and expression.

(1 April) The Palestinian Preventive Security Service arrested Zaman Media Group correspondent Tariq Kamis from his workplace in Al Beira city. He was released after three-and-a-half hours on Sunday, 1 April 2012. Khamis told MADA Center that at 5:30pm that day, Preventive Security Service forces had come to the Arab Education Forum located in Al Bira city. They took him to the Palestinian Preventive Security Service building in Al Balou' district. Kamis added "I was questioned for approximately three-and-a-half hours. The questioning was about the nature of my work as a journalist, and with whom I work. After the interrogation was finished they asked me to sign a pledge, which I signed, and I was released at 9pm. What bothered me most was the way they arrested me, which was like a kidnapping."

(2 April) Israeli occupation forces raided the Hona Al-Quds network office for societal media, in the Al-Kalidiya neighbourhood in Jerusalem's Old City which is affiliated with the Al-Quds University Institute for Modern Media. They prevented the opening of the network, which was scheduled to take place simultaneously via Skype between offices in Jerusalem and Ramallah. Al-Quds Al-Tarbawi TV manager Haron Abu Ora said Israeli forces broke into the Hona Al-Quds network, which consists of Al Quds Al Tarbawe TV, Hona Al-Quds network and Hona Al-Quds Radio, and confiscated the network devices, which disrupted transmission. They also confiscated the identity cards of all those present and only returned them after delivering an eviction order and demanding that staff not return to work without permission. Abu Ora also reported that Israeli forces arrested two other employees from Al-Quds University who were in the office of the network - Adel Rowaished and Mohammed Suleiman - and took them to an unknown location. He added that the Israeli forces justified the arrests by saying the network is affiliated to the Palestinian Authority."

(3 April) Israeli occupation forces arrested Quds Press News Agency correspondent Mohamad Anwar Mona in Nablus. After his release from detention on Monday 9 April 2012, Mona told MADA Center that Israeli forces had broken into his home in Al-Sharqiya district at 2:30am, arrested him and took him to the Hawara interrogation center in Nablus. He was held there for two days and said he was mistreated. He was then moved to Majedo prison. On Sunday, 8 April 2012 he was moved again, to Salem military camp for further questioning. Mona told MADA he was asked about the nature of his journalistic work and the affiliations of the institute he works for, as well as his coverage of Israeli violations against Palestinians. He was also interrogated about political activities, which he denied. Mona said he was prevented from traveling to continue his education.

(6 April) Freelance photographer Ahmed Douglas required stitches for head injuries received while covering the weekly march against the Wall at Nabi Saleh village (Ramallah). Douglas said Israeli forces threw a gas bomb which hit him in the head. Douglas reported to MADA center that Israeli forces are increasingly targeting journalists. He said the gas bomb hit him directly, despite the fact that he was wearing a press logo. He said that his injury bled for two hours, and the Red crescent provided first aid treatment but could not transfer him to hospital for full treatment because Israeli forces had closed all access points to the village. He added that a cameraman colleague eventually transferred him to Ramallah hospital for further medical treatment.

(18 April) Israeli occupation authorities extended the administrative detention of the coordinator of Al Quds TV program, Nawaf Amer, by three months. Amer's wife told MADA Center that her husband had been expected to be released from detention on 28 April, before his detention was extended. She said it was the fourth extension of her husband's detention since his arrest on 28 June 2011. He has still not been charged by an Israeli court, under the pretext that his file is 'top secret'. She said that his lawyer went to the Supreme Court in Jerusalem twice to appeal her husband's case, but each time the court had denied the request. Amer's wife said her husband's health was poor and he suffered from high blood pressure, diabetes and back and stomach pains.

(18 April) Israeli occupation authorities postponed the trial of journalist Raid Al Sharif, presenter of Marah radio in the city of Hebron, from 18 April until 21 May. Al Sharif was arrested and detained in Israeli prisons on 13 November 2011, his father told MADA Center.

(20 April) Israeli occupation forces assaulted photographer for the popular resistance information office, Helmi Al Tamimi, in Al Nabi Saleh, near Ramallah, while he was covering the weekly march against the apartheid Wall. As Tamimi told MADA Center: "During the march, Israeli forces attacked a group of protesters with batons. The group included myself and other journalists and the soldiers tried to prevent us from covering the demonstration several times. However, we were determined to continue covering the protest, so they followed and beat us. I was beaten twice on my legs, forcibly removed from the demonstration and slightly bruised."

(20 April) Israeli occupation forces arrested freelance photographer Billal Al Tamimi and detained him for four days, while he was covering the Al Nabi Saleh weekly march near Ramallah city. As Al Tamimi told MADA Center: "I was photographing the demonstration and Israeli forces were scattered throughout the crowd. The Israeli forces mistreated the demonstrators, particularly women who were beaten on their legs with batons. My wife was among them and was also assaulted. I quickly moved towards her, to protect her, but the soldiers attacked me and threw me on the ground, breaking my personal camera. I received bruising to the head, elbow and other slight injuries. After I was severely beaten they took me to the entrance of Al Nabi Saleh village and put me in a the military tower for two hours. Then a soldier accused me of beating him, so they tied my hands and transferred me to Binyamin police station. The officer testified against me and I was asked by the Israeli prosecutor if it was true. I denied all the allegations against me and said that I was just doing my job and trying to defend my wife. I was held in the police station for three hours, then they transferred me to Ofar prison on Sunday, 22 April 2012. A trial session was held and an indictment was submitted against me. My lawyer presented a video that showed I did not beat the officer but, in fact, he had assaulted me. The court released me on bail of 2,500 NIS. I was detained until the bail was paid and I was released on Monday, 23 April 2012."

