Journalism in **October 7, 2023**Palestine: An Israeli War on Truth

 (Fact Sheet)

**Introduction**

Freedom of the press is a cornerstone of democracy and a civilizational measure of cultures, providing citizens with access to information. In the specific case of Palestine, under the context of Israeli occupation and the apartheid apparatus, Palestinian journalists, media workers, and professional press institutions face numerous and unprecedented serious challenges. These challenges threaten their ability to work efficiently and freely and to perform their vital role in society. This fact sheet aims to shed light on the severity of these Israeli crimes, assaults, and violations and their profound impact on the Palestinian media sector.

**Legal Background**

- European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR): Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights explicitly protects freedom of expression, including freedom of the press. The article states that "everyone has the right to receive and impart information," and this right extends to journalists and media institutions. The media plays a crucial role in defending freedom of expression within a democratic society.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information through any media, regardless of borders. This global standard underscores the importance of press freedom in fostering informed societies.

As a party to various international agreements and treaties, the occupying state of Israel bears obligations to protect freedom of the press, and these obligations extend to all individuals under its authority (as an occupying power), including Palestinians living in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip, as well as Arab citizens within the 1948 territories. However, the reality on the ground does not reflect these commitments.

Israel is obligated under international law to respect and uphold freedom of the press as a fundamental human right. This includes ensuring that journalists, media workers, and press institutions can operate independently and without undue interference. Palestinian press freedom faces significant challenges in multiple forms across different geographical locations.

Palestinian journalists and media workers face systematic repression and violations by the Israeli apartheid apparatus, in blatant defiance of the occupying state's obligations under international law to ensure full freedom of the press for all individuals, regardless of their nationality or geographic location.

**On-the-Ground Reality**

In the West Bank and Jerusalem, repeated attacks by the Israeli occupation forces and settlers create a hostile environment for journalists. They often risk their lives covering peaceful protests or even Israeli incursions into Palestinian cities, villages, and camps, facing threats of arrest, injury, or even death.

**Statistics Since October 7, 2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Journalist martyrs** | **Prisoners** | **Destroyed and closed institutions** |
| **165 martyrs** | **99journalists** | **87 institutions** |
| 164 in Gaza and one journalist in the West Bank | 52 are under arrest | 76 in Gaza 11 in the West Bank |

In Gaza, prior to October 7, 2023, the blockade imposed on the sector had already created a hostile environment for journalists. Media outlets continued their struggle to operate under the harsh conditions imposed by Israeli authorities, with journalists in Gaza facing constant threats to their safety, including frequent incidents of threats and violence. Since October 7, 2023, the occupying Israeli state has carried out the largest campaign of assassinations against journalists in the history of global journalism. Israeli missiles and aircraft have destroyed all the headquarters of media institutions, and the majority of Palestinian journalists in the sector have become displaced after their homes were destroyed, with hundreds of their family members killed.

In the 1948 territories, Palestinians living there face significant challenges to press freedom from various contexts. The Israeli authorities rely on a mix of tactics and discriminatory laws that violate the fundamentals of media freedom, creating a system of censorship and intimidation that stifles the voices of Palestinian Arabs and restricts their ability to express themselves freely through the media.

All these systematic violations against press freedom are supported by the highest levels of the political system in the Israeli state, facilitated and covered up by the Israeli occupation army and its government. The vast majority of media outlets and human rights and freedom organizations suffer from these violations.

**Summary of Contexts by Geographic Location**

West Bank and Jerusalem:

Journalists working in the West Bank and Jerusalem face significant risks while covering confrontations with the occupation and Israeli incursions into Palestinian areas, leading to casualties among journalists and media workers. The Israeli occupation authorities impose restrictions on access and movement to the areas targeted by the occupation, hindering the ability of journalists to report accurately and independently on events in Jerusalem and many areas of the West Bank, or during military raids and settler attacks on Palestinian villages and towns.

**Gaza:**

Journalists working in the Gaza Strip face severe humanitarian challenges due to the ongoing blockade and repeated Israeli military offensives on the sector, including limited access to basic services and infrastructure. Despite these obstacles, Palestinian journalists in Gaza risk their lives to deliver their message amid Israeli airstrikes, military incursions, and the siege on Palestinian civilians. Despite these challenges, Palestinian media in Gaza continues to play a vital role in documenting Israeli human rights violations and international law breaches and in conveying the suffering of Palestinian citizens to the world.

**Palestinian Journalism in the 1948 Territories:**

Palestinian journalists in the 1948 territories confront systematic Israeli policies of discrimination and the imposition of Israeli laws and regulations that undermine the fundamentals of press freedoms, particularly for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Palestinian journalists must navigate sensitive and precise language when discussing issues affecting the Arab community in Israel and broader Arab societal concerns, to avoid potential retribution from Israeli authorities.

**Palestinian Diaspora:**

Palestinian journalists living in the diaspora face unique challenges, including censorship, exile, and limited access to information from their homeland. Many journalists in the diaspora operate under restrictive legal frameworks and face pressure from host governments or pro-Israel lobby groups. Despite these obstacles, Palestinian journalists in the diaspora play a vital role in raising awareness about Israeli apartheid and occupation and advocating for support for Palestinians worldwide.

**164 Martyrs Among Journalists and Media Workers**

**Statistics Since October 7, 2023**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of martyrs | Martyred female journalists |
| 165 martyrs | 21 female journalists |

Since October 7, 2023, Palestinian journalists in Gaza have become the primary target of the Israeli occupation forces. The occupation has assassinated 165 journalists and media workers, including 21 female journalists. Most of these journalists were killed in their homes along with members of their families. Remarkably, journalists have been targeted more than any other sector of Palestinian society in Gaza, with 12% of the Palestinian journalists working in Gaza having been martyred.

Many of the journalists killed during the early weeks of Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza had received direct and deliberate threats. Some were subjected to incitement campaigns and threats from Israeli media, such as the martyred journalists Hassouna Islim and Sari Mansour, who both received direct threats before being targeted. Journalist Anas Sharif was also threatened with harm due to his work in northern Gaza before the Israeli occupation targeted his family, resulting in the death of his father and several relatives. Following these incidents, the Israeli government, along with Israeli political leaders, media outlets, and international lobby groups, collectively incited against all Palestinian journalists.

Journalists represent a beacon of hope for the people of Gaza, and targeting them is part of a calculated Israeli attack on the social infrastructure of Gaza. Notable journalists, such as Professor Adham Hassouna (a journalist and media academic), journalist and international organization activist Roshdi Sarraj, and journalist and writer Salim Al-Naffar, all chose journalism as a way to tell the Palestinian story in their own unique manner. Despite the ongoing threats to their lives, journalists in Gaza continue to keep the Palestinian narrative alive, ensuring that future generations can build a better reality. Their courage and professionalism light a path that many will follow.

Despite these clear and direct Israeli crimes against Palestinian journalists by Israeli forces or settlers, there have been no serious consequences, leading to a culture of impunity. This has paved the way for the Israeli assassination campaign against journalists in Gaza over the past seven months and for the broader genocide

**Arrests and enforced disappearances**

Statistics since October 7, 2023

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of Journalists Imprisoned Before October 7** | **Number of Imprisoned Journalists After October 7** | **Number of Cases of Forced Disappearance** |
| **9 journalists** | **99 journalists were arrested** **50 journalists remain detained by the occupation** | **16 journalists** |

The Israeli authorities frequently use arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances as tools to silence dissent and suppress freedom of expression. Journalists are often detained without trial or legal representation, particularly since October 7, 2023, violating their basic rights under international law. Arbitrary detention represents a blatant and severe violation of press freedom.

Since October 7, 2023, Israeli occupation forces have detained 97 Palestinian journalists, of whom 50 remain imprisoned. This group includes 12 female journalists, 5 of whom are still in custody. Additionally, 9 journalists were already imprisoned before the onset of the genocidal war on Gaza, with most being held under unjust administrative detention laws, while others await military trials.

**Administrative Detention**

Sixteen journalists, including 3 female journalists, are currently serving administrative (illegal) detention sentences among those detained since October 2023.

"Incitement": A Charge to Terrorize Journalists

Since October 2023, the Israeli occupation has used the charge of "incitement" as a new means of terrorizing journalists and activists. Over 32 journalists have been arrested in the past 10 months on charges of "incitement," with 24 still in custody.

**Enforced Disappearance**

Enforced disappearance constitutes a war crime under international law. According to the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 133/47 on December 18, 1992, enforced disappearance occurs when individuals are arrested, detained, or abducted by government officials or organized groups, either directly or indirectly, with the government's approval or consent, and their fate or whereabouts are not disclosed, thus depriving them of legal protection.

Since October 7, 2023, the Israeli occupation has abducted 16 journalists from Gaza and refuses to disclose their fate or any information about their well-being. Notable cases include journalists Nidal Al-Wahidi and Haitham Abdel-Wahed, who were abducted by the occupation on October 7 while covering field events. The occupation has not provided any information about their fate to date.

Following the October 7 events, Nidal Al-Wahidi’s family reported his disappearance while covering events near the Erez checkpoint. It was later discovered that he was detained by the Israeli military, but the authorities have refused to provide any information about his fate or detention conditions.

Most journalists have been subjected to severe beatings during their detention, and despite some suffering from medical conditions, they have not received any medical treatment or care, jeopardizing their lives, especially under the harsh conditions faced by prisoners in detention centers where they experience abuse, humiliation, threats, and deprivation of basic rights such as family visits and legal representation. The Red Cross has also been prevented from visiting them, in clear violation of Geneva Conventions and international norms.

Incitement, Threats, and Targeting of Journalists' Families

Journalists and their families regularly face threats, intimidation, and aggression from occupation authorities and settlers. Journalists' homes in the West Bank and Jerusalem are frequently raided, while in Gaza, Israeli airstrikes target and demolish journalists' homes. A stark example of this targeting is the case of journalist Wael Al-Dahdouh (Al Jazeera’s bureau chief in Gaza), who lost his wife, several children, and grandchildren due to an intentional Israeli airstrike on his home.

Since October 7, 2023, hundreds of journalists in Gaza have lost family members due to Israeli airstrikes on their homes, and many journalists have been martyred while being targeted themselves, such as journalist Mohamed Abu Hatab, a Palestine TV correspondent in Gaza, who was killed along with several family members in their home

**Destruction of Media Institutions**

**Statistics Since**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **‏Number of Destroyed Media Institutions** | **‏Number of Closed Media Institutions** | **‏Types of Destroyed Media Institutions** |
| **86 institutions** | **One local radio station in the West Bank** | **- 22 local radio stations****- 15 news agencies****- 15 television channels****- 6 local newspapers****- 8 printing presses****- 13 press service institutions****- 3 broadcast towers** |

**Destruction of Media Institutions**

Since October 7, 2023, Israeli forces have destroyed all media institutions in the Gaza Strip. Airstrikes have demolished 73 media facilities, including 21 local radio stations, 15 local and international news agencies, 15 TV stations, 6 local newspapers, 3 broadcasting towers, 8 printing presses, and 13 journalistic service institutions. On October 29, 2023, the Israeli authorities also closed Dream Radio, which broadcasts from Hebron, and seized and shut down 8 printing presses in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

In the early days of the genocidal war on Gaza, the Israeli military targeted most of the high-rise buildings in Gaza that housed both local and international media offices. For example, the Al-Shawa and Al-Haseeri towers in Gaza City, which contained 15 floors of media offices, were completely destroyed by an Israeli airstrike on December 18, 2023, causing extensive damage to the surrounding area.

Media institutions are frequently targeted during Israeli military incursions into Palestinian areas, with offices being raided, equipment confiscated, and journalists arrested. In Jerusalem, media outlets are directly targeted by the occupation through closure orders and restrictions, such as the repeated closure of Palestine TV's office in Jerusalem, which has been renewed every six months, with ongoing restrictions on its staff's activities in the city.

These attacks on media organizations are direct assaults on press freedom and the public's right to information, revealing a deliberate and calculated targeting of journalism in Palestine. The destruction of media infrastructure poses a real threat to the future of Palestinian media in both the medium and long term.

**Destruction and Seizure of Equipment**

The Israeli military frequently targets journalists’ equipment, resulting in damage to cameras, recording devices, and broadcasting equipment, as well as live broadcast vehicles, which are often struck by missiles or gunfire. This targeting disrupts media operations, impedes the flow of information, and hinders journalists' ability to cover events under normal conditions. By targeting media equipment, the Israeli authorities aim to prevent the truth from reaching the world and to suppress the dissemination of information.

Israeli Legal Framework for Press Terrorism

Israeli authorities continuously develop a legal framework to silence journalists and suppress Palestinian media institutions. Media outlets and journalists face censorship, closure orders, and legal obstacles that restrict their ability to operate freely. Notable examples include the occupation's legislation targeting Al Jazeera and Al Mayadeen channels and the ongoing closure of media institutions in Jerusalem, such as the renewed closure of Palestine TV’s office last month (March 2024), and orders barring some journalists from working and reporting in Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque area.

These punitive measures not only restrict press freedom but also aim to terrorize and deter journalists and media organizations from reporting on sensitive issues. By imposing legal consequences on journalists and media outlets, Israeli authorities seek to undermine press independence and control the flow of information to the public.

**‏Movement Restrictions and Denial of Access to the Event**

Israeli authorities impose restrictions on access to targeted Palestinian areas, especially in Gaza, Jerusalem, and Area C of the West Bank, as well as during military incursions and settler attacks on Palestinian villages and cities. By blocking access to these areas, journalists find it difficult to report accurately and impartially, which impedes the public's right to information and fosters an environment of censorship and misinformation. Conversely, the Israeli military produces one-sided information about its attacks, aiding in justifying its actions while media coverage remains limited.

**Psychological and Physical Impact on Journalists and Their Families**

The ongoing assault on Palestinian journalists and media institutions not only threatens their lives but also inflicts severe damage on their living conditions. In addition to the physical dangers, working in such a hostile environment has profound psychological and emotional effects. The constant fear of being targeted, coupled with witnessing violence and loss, has significant impacts on the mental health of journalists, media workers, and community activists. Many struggle with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as they deal with the daily risks of their profession. This psychological impact extends to entire media institutions.

Moreover, the continuous pressure to report on traumatic events and human rights violations contributes to exhaustion and mental strain among journalists and media workers. Despite these challenges, Palestinian journalists remain committed to documenting life under occupation.

The targeting of journalists and media workers not only endangers their lives but also places their families at risk. Families live in constant fear due to the Israeli crackdown, with the trauma of losing loved ones or witnessing their suffering profoundly affecting their mental and emotional well-being.

**Future Outlook for Media and Journalism in Palestine**

The future of Palestinian media and journalism is under serious threat amid escalating violence, the killing of Palestinian journalists, and the destruction and closure of media institutions. Systematic targeting of media infrastructure threatens the foundations of free and independent journalism, leaving Palestinian voices suppressed and marginalized

Despite ongoing attacks and challenges, Palestinian journalists and media institutions remain resilient and committed to their professional mission, drawing strength from their dedication to truth, social justice, and the pursuit of freedom and dignity for their people.

In the face of these challenges, international solidarity and support are more crucial than ever. Governments, human rights organizations, and media outlets worldwide must condemn attacks on press freedom in Palestine and demand accountability for Israeli actions. Only through collective action and a steadfast commitment to justice can we protect the fundamental right to freedom of expression and ensure a better future for Palestinian media and journalism