

Palestine

Enhancing access to information and journalists' safety

Background

Political tensions in Palestine and the aggravation of security concerns in recent years have created an increasingly precarious working environment for journalists. The Freedoms Committee of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate recorded 838 violations of media freedoms in its 2018 annual report, which ranged from physical assault and raids on media outlets, to confiscation of equipment and arrest. UNESCO has made the safety of journalist one of its priority areas of intervention, and held several specialized training for safety officers within media organizations, focusing on reinforcing safety protocols in newsrooms in order to provide better security for journalists on all levels. Gender equality also remains a challenge, as well as addressing the norms and cultural behaviours within journalism and the media, a field that remains overwhelmingly male-dominated in Palestine.

What we are doing

- Building a safer working environment for journalists through capacity development, awareness raising, promotion of ethical guidelines within media organizations and, reinforcing dialogue between media workers and security forces.

[Learn more about our work](#) (Story on the back page)

What we could further do with your support

- Improve women's representation and participation in Palestinian media.
- Enhance the safety of female journalists.
- Reinforce policy and legislation support.
- Support the establishment of a National Safety Strategy.

Actions in Palestine fall under the following outputs of the
Multi-Donor Programme (MPD) :

Output 1:

Awareness-raising and advocacy

Output 3:

Enhancing the safety of journalists

Output 4:

Policy advice and reinforcement of duty bearers' capacities

Key Achievements

- **Launch of a National Mechanism to monitor and report on the safety of journalists**, along with the establishment of the National Committee to monitor and report violations against journalists.
- Progress on the finalization of the **Right to Information law**, with UNESCO's support and technical advice.
- **Establishment of the Safety Officers Network and developed capacities** of hundreds of Palestinian journalists on safety-related issues, including conflict-sensitive journalism, reporting in dangerous contexts, and international standards regarding freedom of expression.
- **A strengthened and open dialogue between media professionals and security officers**, improving the relationship between both sides, thus contributing to a peaceful, just, and democratic Palestine.



**DONATE NOW
THROUGH
PAYPAL**

Your contribution helps UNESCO continue its support to
policies and actions to promote freedom of expression globally.

Protect Journalists and Freedom of Expression

[Click to donate](#)

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-freedom-expression/mdp>

"Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists goes hand in hand with ethical standards, which makes journalism a call and not a job. It requires a professional and ethical government to protect journalists and allow them to lead a democratic country."

.....

Mr. Nasser Abu Baker,

Head of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate

► **Preparing journalists to the risks of reporting in dangerous areas**

Journalists from the West Bank and Gaza are working together to establish a network in order to improve their safety during emergencies and coordinate responses when journalists face attacks.

Mohammad Awad, a young journalist from Gaza, is part of a group of Palestinian journalists being trained to better respond to the risks of reporting in dangerous areas. The training, carried out throughout 2019, is part of an initiative to create a network of safety officers within news organizations in the West Bank and Gaza. The network is being developed by UNESCO and the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, and will provide emergency support for journalists, and help mainstream much-needed safety and risk awareness protocols in news organizations.

Mohammad is a reporter covering social and humanitarian issues in Palestine, particularly in Gaza. The need for more professional media content, based on fact-checking and in-depth, investigations, is important to portray the real situation on the ground, including the attacks against journalists, he explains. This was one of the reasons that prompted Mohammad to become a journalist about ten years ago.

However, reporting can turn into a matter of survival when covering high-risk areas in Gaza.

The escalation of conflict compromises the safety of journalists, who are often insufficiently prepared to react to danger. Some journalists report without any safety gear, which makes them more vulnerable. "There are many awful stories about journalists working in the field being shot, injured or even losing their lives due to the lack of safety measures or gear, such as vests, helmets and first-aid kits," Mohammad notes. Together with his co-workers, Fares, Nidal and Fadi, he is part of the first team of safety officers to be established in Gaza and the West Bank. In April 2019, Mohammad participated in a Crisis Management and Risk Analysis course organized by UNESCO.

More than 30 journalists, including 10 female journalists, from about 20 media organizations participated in two specialized training workshops held in Gaza and the West Bank. They also learned from other colleagues' life-threatening experiences. Mohammed is of the view that journalists joining the safety officers' network will greatly benefit from these exchanges.

Read more about our work, visit:

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-freedom-expression/mdp>



CONTACT

Hala Tannous

Communication and Information Focal Point
h.tannous@unesco.org

UNESCO Office in Ramallah

Website: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/home>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/unesco.ramallah/>