

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	187
Land:	Gaza
Kilde:	Freedom House
Titel:	Freedom of the Press 2012 - West Bank and Gaza Strip.
Udgivet:	21. november 2012
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	13. marts 2013

Title	Freedom of the Press 2012 - West Bank and Gaza Strip
Publisher	Freedom House
Country	Israel Occupied Palestinian Territory
Publication Date	21 November 2012
Cite as	Freedom House, <i>Freedom of the Press 2012 - West Bank and Gaza Strip</i> , 21 November 2012, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/50af4d101a.html [accessed 13 March 2013]
Disclaimer	This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

Freedom of the Press 2012 - West Bank and Gaza Strip

2012 Scores

Press Status: Not Free

Press Freedom Score: 83

Legal Environment: 28

Political Environment: 33

Economic Environment: 22

Press freedom in the Palestinian territories is restricted by ongoing violence, as well as abuses at the hands of three different governing authorities: the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank; the Hamas-led government in the Gaza Strip; and the Israeli military, which occupies parts of the West Bank and is at war with Hamas. Journalists faced harassment, detentions, assaults, and restrictions on their freedom to report throughout 2011.

The Palestinian basic law and the 1995 Press and Publication Law provide for freedom of the press and freedom to establish media outlets, and state that there should be no censorship. However, restrictions are allowed if press activity threatens "national unity" and "Palestinian values." This vague terminology gives authorities ample leeway to impede journalistic activity via legal means, including by bringing criminal libel charges. In the West Bank, the PA Ministry of Information regulates all television and radio station licenses. Although no official measures have been taken, West Bank authorities often treat Hamas-affiliated outlets – most prominently Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa TV – as "illegal" and thus subject to persistent harassment. Following its 2007 takeover of Gaza, the Hamas government introduced a new system of accreditation under which all outlets and journalists are required to register with the authorities. West Bank and Gaza authorities have banned broadcast outlets and newspapers associated with Hamas and Fatah, respectively.

According to a 2011 report by the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA), physical attacks, arrests, detentions, and confiscation of equipment by both Palestinian security forces increased by over 45 percent between 2009 and 2010, a trend that continued in 2011. The cumulative pressure has driven many journalists to practice self-censorship. In addition, security services from both authorities cracked down on journalists covering popular demonstrations during 2011, though the situation was worse in Gaza than in the West Bank. In the West Bank, at least two journalists were attacked while covering a February demonstration. The previous month, Al-Jazeera's release of the so-called "Palestine Papers" prompted extensive official condemnation of the Qatar-based television network and attacks by Palestinian youths on the Jazeera-linked Pali Media Agency and Al-Jazeera's offices in the West Bank – though Palestinian

police intercepted the attackers. Also in January, PA president Mahmoud Abbas ordered the closure of a local television station affiliated with his intra-Fatah rival – and rumored coup conspirator – Mohammed Dahlan. In September, a Hebron court acquitted journalist Alaa al-Titi of "breaching the peace" and "inciting sectarian violence" because of his work at Al-Aqsa TV. Al-Titi had been charged in October 2008.

In March, MADA reported several instances of journalists in Gaza being beaten, threatened, and detained during Hamas crackdowns on demonstrations in support of Egyptian antigovernment protesters and Palestinian national unity. Most detained journalists were formally asked to pledge not to cover any more unauthorized demonstrations. Following one such protest, security personnel raided the bureaus of Reuters, Cable News Network (CNN), and Japan's NHK, attacking journalists and destroying equipment, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused Hamas of torturing bloggers and other social-media activists who were involved in planning the demonstrations. In unrelated events in Gaza, Italian journalist Vittorio Arrigoni was killed in April by a terrorist group that is a rival of Hamas, Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, while in October a group of Hamas-affiliated journalists forcibly took over the Gaza offices of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate, a professional union linked to the International Federation of Journalists.

Israeli security policies and military activities also continued to restrict Palestinian media freedom in 2011. Israeli forces harassed and detained reporters during the year, and were repeatedly accused by local and international press freedom organizations of targeting journalists with assaults and arbitrary detentions. Soldiers routinely fired tear gas, rubber bullets, and stun grenades at journalists covering events throughout the West Bank, and occasionally fired live ammunition as well. In October, MADA reported a significant increase in settler attacks on journalists and accused the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) of willfully failing to intervene. Soldiers also confiscated journalists' equipment on a number of occasions in 2011. In August, Israel arrested Al-Jazeera Afghanistan channel director Samer Allawi at the Allenby crossing between the West Bank and Jordan, and detained him for over a month without formal charges. Allawi was freed in September after confessing to membership in Hamas's military wing and striking a plea deal with the Israeli prosecutor. In August, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) accused Israeli troops of arbitrarily arresting journalists and reported that five journalists, including Allawi, were in Israeli jails. As with the PA in the West Bank, Israeli troops often target Hamas-affiliated press outlets and journalists. In June, troops arrested Al-Quds TV program director Nawaf al-Amer and placed him in administrative detention for four months.

Freedom of movement for journalists is restricted by the Israeli checkpoint system, which requires military permission for passage into Israeli territory and often hinders travel within the West Bank. In addition, the IDF has increasingly restricted coverage of regular protests near the Israeli security barrier in the West Bank by declaring such areas "closed military zones." In November 2011, five foreign journalists were detained and had their equipment confiscated after Israeli forces boarded two ships headed for the blockaded Gaza Strip. Even though all five were soon deported, London-based Hassan Ghani of Iran's Press TV was held for longer than the others. While Israel dropped its earlier threat to ban journalists on Gaza-bound ships from Israel for 10 years, RSF reported that the deported journalists were pressured to sign documents agreeing to such restrictions.

There are three daily West Bank Palestinian newspapers: *Al-Hayat al-Jadidah*, which is completely funded by the Fatah-controlled PA; *Al-Ayyam*, which is partially funded by the PA; and *Al-Quds*, a privately owned paper based in Jerusalem that is subject to Israeli military censorship. Distribution of these papers in Gaza was banned by the Hamas government in July 2008, and although the bans on all but *Al-Hayat al-Jadidah* were subsequently lifted, Israel began blocking their distribution in Gaza in the same year as part of its broader sanctions on Hamas. In 2010, Israel lifted its ban on shipments of the papers, but according to CPJ, Gaza authorities again prevented their distribution, allegedly demanding that the editors agree not to criticize Hamas. Meanwhile, a June 2007 ban on the Hamas-affiliated newspapers *Felesteen* and *Al-Resaleh* in the West Bank remains in place.

There are approximately 45 privately owned television stations, and the PA funds the official Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), which is under the direct control of Abbas. The PA has closed down Al-Aqsa TV offices in the West Bank towns of Ramallah, Jenin, and Tulkarm. PBC transmissions have been blocked in Gaza since the Hamas takeover in 2007, while the Voice of the People radio station, run by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, is generally allowed to operate but occasionally blocked. The Israeli military has utilized coercive tactics to restrict broadcasting by stations deemed to be advocating terrorism or affiliated with Hamas. Foreign broadcasts are generally available.

About 55 percent of the population in the Palestinian territories used the internet in 2011, and its use is generally not subject to restriction. There were some reported instances of the PA, Hamas, and Israeli authorities monitoring e-mail activity and internet chat rooms. In August, the Palestinian Telecommunications Company blocked the website of the electronic newspaper *Alshu'la* for one week due to a disagreement between the PA and Mohammed Dahlan, who financially supports the website.

Copyright notice: © Freedom House, Inc. · All Rights Reserved
