

Abstract

This study addresses the impact that Palestinian media has on the civil peace within Palestinian society through the identification of a series of controversial national issues.

The study specifically examines the media coverage of various events that contributed to the internal division of Palestinian society as well as incidences that required the security forces to intervene to maintain peace, such as peaceful assembly, political arrests, local elections, as well as other events in some Palestinian camps.

The study concludes that the media coverage of the internal events in the Palestinian arena contributed to undermining the state of civil peace in the Palestinian territories, due to the following factors:

1. The failure of the official bodies to regulate the media in general, as the development of the media was not addressed in the National Policy Agenda for the years 2017–2022. This includes the absence of a legal system that governs the media, public freedoms and the right to access information. In addition, the substantive problems mentioned above caused the weakness of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate.
2. The political parties almost completely control the media and use it as a tool to create fragmentation within the Palestinian society. In addition, many media agencies lack thorough understanding of civil peace and the awareness of its importance thereof; this caused damage to the civil peace by neglecting the national interest and spreading the division amongst Palestinian people.
3. The growing number of social networking sites and lack of professionalism and social responsibility among its users, as well as their inability to differentiate between the freedom of expression and defamation, creates and inflames public disputes on specific issues and causes resentment between different social groups.
4. Many media agencies lack the notion of social responsibility, which results in the formulation of detrimental concepts within the Palestinian society, such as division, racism, exclusion, treachery, atonement and conspiracy. Specifically, the following:
 - Most of Palestinian media dealt with the internal Palestinian controversial events in a non-professional manner, by using inappropriate and irrelevant concepts.

- The media is considered to be the fourth authority that holds a supervisory role; however, the majority of media has abandoned this primary role and has instead engaged in many controversial events that have negatively impacted Palestinian society, such as the political division issues within refugee camps.
- Several media agencies lost the historical national role they have previously played in combating the occupation and its policies, and instead began to focus on fueling the internal conflict by addressing controversial issues within the Palestinian society. Thus, instead of playing a role in promoting national unity and civil peace, media agencies have become part of the reason for the internal division.

As a contribution to solve the problems mentioned above, the study presented a set of recommendations:

- To conduct a national conference that gathers all official and non-official parties related to the media in order to discuss mechanisms of developing professional media and the role of the Palestinian media in promoting national unity and civil peace. The aim of the conference will be to produce an honor code signed by all parties that affirms the commitment of the media to its national role and its role in achieving civil peace.
- To urge the government to make stronger efforts in regulating the media sector by including it in the policy agenda and enacting relevant legislations, especially with regards to public freedoms and the right to access information.
- To call upon all parties to demonstrate patriotism and social responsibility, as well as to promote civil peace by ceasing the use of media to exclude each other and instigate disputes among Palestinians.
- To urge the Journalists' Syndicate to uphold their responsibility in monitoring media and to launch a public awareness campaign, targeting both journalists and citizens, on the importance of maintaining civil peace by eliminating passiveness and using appropriate media terminology when publishing news on social networking sites and during live media coverage of events.
- To urge civil society organizations to lobby and influence decision makers, political parties and media agencies to adopt anti-violence strategies that support civil peace.