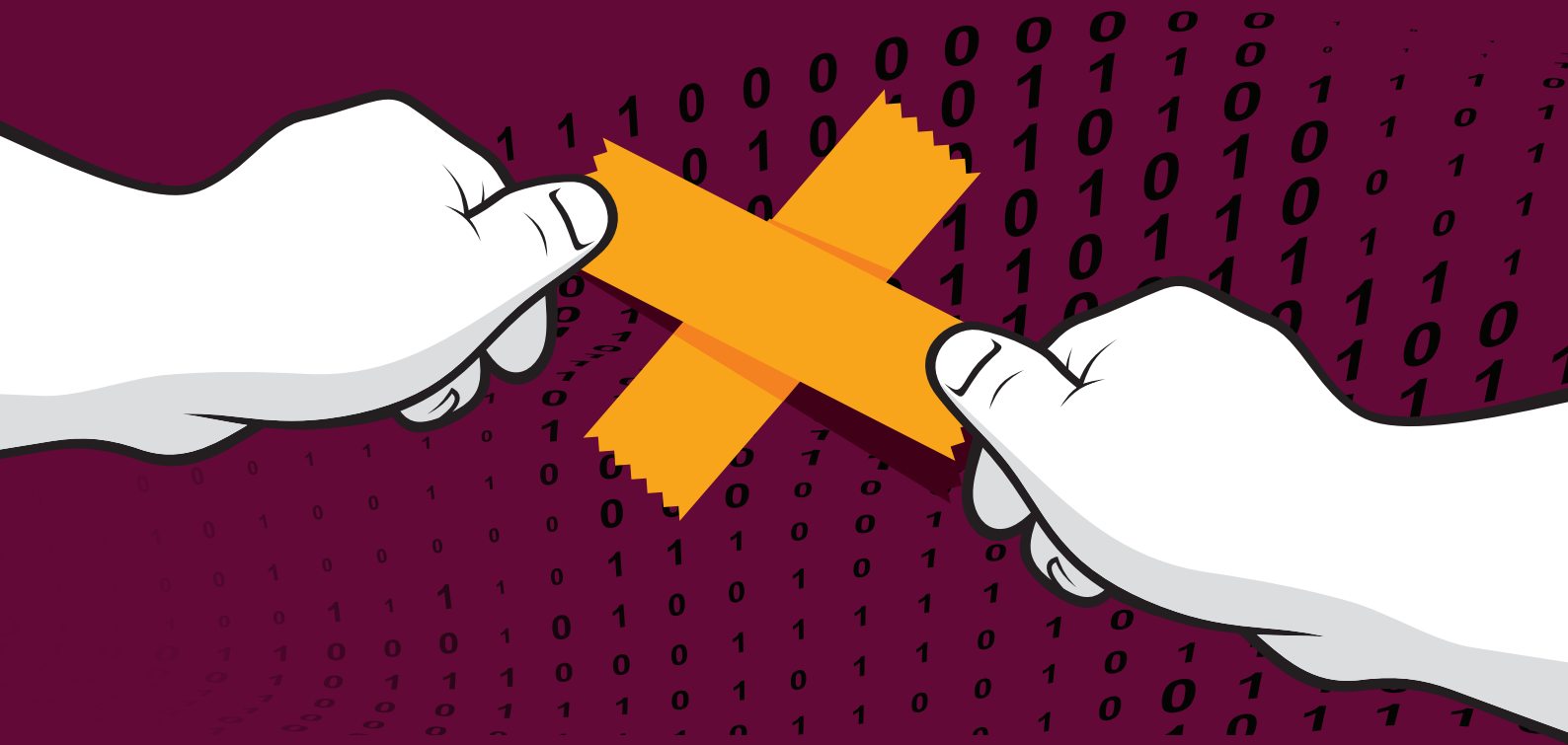


7amleh - Arab Center for
Social Media Advancement



Silenced Networks

The Chilling Effect among
Palestinian Youth in Social Media



October 2019

Silenced Networks: The Chilling Effect among Palestinian Youth in Social Media

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The project of civic and democratic participation of Palestinian youth funded by the Danish International Development Agency through ActionAid Denmark and implemented by ActionAid - Palestine, in partnership with the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies -Masarat, Alternative Information Center and Arab Center for Community Media Development.
The purpose of the project is to insure that Palestinian youth, especially women, have access to democratic decision-making spaces to realize that their rights are in line with international human rights law. This overarching goal will be achieved through the successful achievement of three interrelated goals.
(1) Increased participation and representation of young people, especially young women, in municipal and governorate systems / processes / institutions in Bethlehem and Hebron;
(2) Strengthening the organization of Palestinian youth, especially young women, on a collective vision of a promising future that can fulfill their social and political aspirations
(3) promote youth learning and communication and influence decisions that matter to their lives, including exchanges, networking and joint political action with young activists globally.



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Executive Summary

Rationale

Youth have been at the heart of many of the recent movements for political change in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Social media networks are seen as critical tools for political participation in Palestine and the region and can support political reform and human rights. At the same time, online political participation has become increasingly dangerous as governments, regimes and technology companies are utilizing social networks for surveillance and to spread misinformation. Specific positive outcomes associated with youth's political participation online include:

- Greater civic engagement
- Increased political participation and voice;

Researchers, advocates, civil society organizations and policy makers are lacking reliable evidence on which to base strategies for promoting political participation among Palestinian youth online. 7amleh undertook this research to fill this gap and help answer questions about Palestinian youth's political participation in the online space.

Methodology

This report aims to present the findings from field research and a survey about Palestinian youth's political participation online. For this study, 6 focus group discussions (FGDs) were held, involving 81 young people ages 15-25 years from Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem, and the Galilee. In parallel, 7amleh conducted a survey of 1200 youth from the same age group and compared the focus group results with the results of the survey in order to analyse the results. Additionally, 7amleh conducted a desk review and a literature review to strengthen the analysis. The main themes of the report include: Internet usage and assessing its safety; the concept of political participation through social media; the experiences of political participation or non-participation through social media.

Key Findings

- The effectiveness of political participation online is questioned by youth who feel that their political participation does not make a difference when it comes to creating change.
- Youth see a need to be selective in their political participation online and described the process of selection both in regards to the way that they participate online (i.e. posting, sharing, commenting, liking) and the issues or topics that they engage with online. They are more likely to share political content when there is a "trending topic" or a campaign that they participate in.
- The existing legal and political environment has a large effect on Palestinian youth's political activism online. Many Palestinians have experienced their content being taken down, online harassment, interrogations and arrests for exercising their right to freedom

of expression on the internet. Overall, this is contributing to a "chilling effect" in which youth are afraid to exercise their rights and begin practicing self-censorship and self-deterrence, minimizing their activism online and contributing to an overall shrinking of space for political participation.

- Due to the general atmosphere of repression, a secondary chilling effect is also taking place, in which the repression of journalists and influencers, as well as friends and family, is leading to further self-censorship and political disengagement online.

Recommendations

In this period when the Palestinian people continue to face serious and ongoing violations of their basic human rights and their rights as a people, and where they are still under occupation, facing blockade, suffering from fragmentation, and instability in the region, there is a great significance for protecting the right of expression in the digital sphere.

Advocacy

- Governments to protect the rights of young people to express themselves online and to be engaged for democratic political participation in social media.
- Actively encourage greater youth participation in digital activism and political participation; through campaigning or initiatives that will enable them to safely participate in political discourse.
- Encourage political participation online as a form of volunteerism and civic engagement that can encourage youth to be active citizens and drivers of change.
- Encourage youth to advocate for human rights, including digital rights.

Research

- Encourage further research on youth political participation online and in social media.

Capacity Building

- Support youth led campaigning efforts, citizen journalism and activism as a check on their governing bodies' way to demand their rights.
- Provide youth with the digital security skills needed to engage online in a safer way.
- Provide subsidized grants for youth to develop campaigns and be politically engaged online.
- Provide workshops to young people educating them on their digital human rights under international and national law, and appropriate means of ensuring their rights are met.

Introduction

Rationale

When young men and women understand their rights, they can become empowered to engage in civil society, public service and political participation. To this end, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2250 was passed in 2015, to support an increase in the representation of youth in decision-making at all levels. In particular for youth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), channels to access decision makers and to participate politically is particularly important, as this area has some of the highest numbers of young people on earth. In particular in Palestine youth (aged 15-29) comprise 30%¹ of the total Palestinian population, and all children and youth under the age of 29 comprise over 50%² of the population.

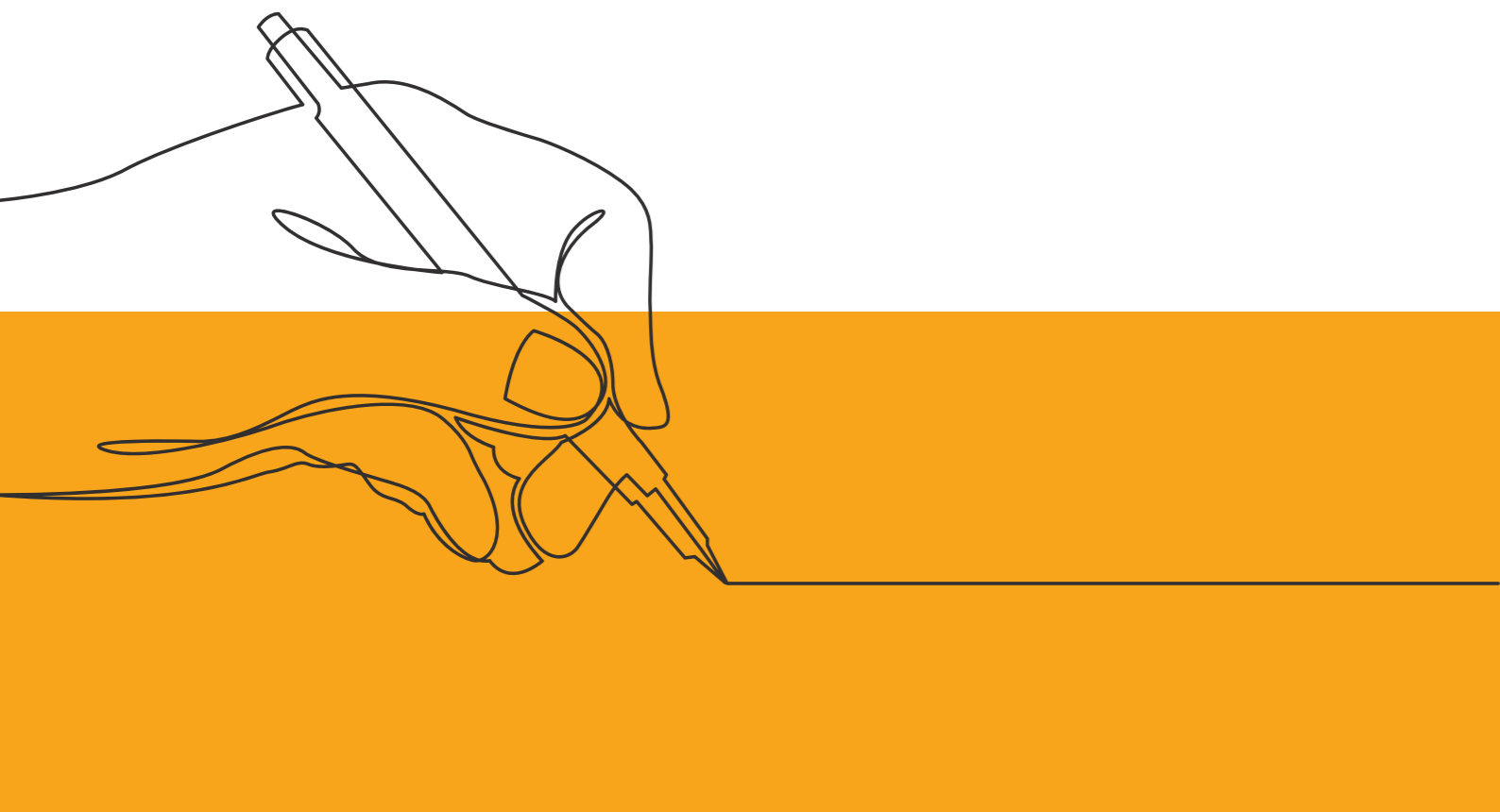
MENA youth have been at the heart of many of the recent movements for political change in places like Egypt and Tunisia, as well as less visible yet significant calls for reform in countries like Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine. Data about Arab youth in general show that they are as active in a range of civic engagement activities as those from other regions and are more active politically, with Arab youth having nearly twice the average rates of involvement in protesting or demonstrating (28.9%) than the world average (15.2%). However when it comes to more formal channels of participation, like civic groups (19% of Arab youth compared to 32% of youth in Africa) and elections (48% of Arab youth compared to a 59% globally) they tend to participate less³.

In our ever-connected world, online platforms are essential to communicate people's conditions, rights, and demands to those in decision-making positions. Equally, they help to breach the boundaries of oppression and segregation and unite communities together in collective struggle. Throughout Palestine, social media networks are seen as critical tools for political participation in Palestine and the region and can support political reform and human rights. In the absence of official channels for civic engagement, social media provides a crucial platform for young people to access information, organize themselves and express their opinions.

Purpose and Scope

To date, there is very little research about how Palestinian youth use social media, what understanding they have about their right to freedom of expression, and what knowledge and skills they have to navigate social media in a safe, effective way. Existing research and consultation confirms that many young people and youth supporting organizations lack

1 PCBS. On the Eve of International Youth Day 12 August 2015. 12 August 2016. <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1721&mid=3172&wversion=Staging>
2 Ibid.
3 Mercy Corps. "MENA Youth Civic Engagement Study" (2012). Available at: https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/mena_youth_civic_engagement_study_-_final.pdf



specific skills about cyber security and digital influencing, as identified through research and consultations⁴. Very few young people in the West Bank use or even know of basic security measures such as VPN or incognito browsers⁵. These skills will be increasingly important as governments expand their surveillance and policing of the digital space and consequently there will be an increased need to know how to safely use social media and contribute to protecting freedom of expression. 7amleh undertook this research to help better understand youth's political participation utilizing social media. The three primary questions were:

- How do youth use the internet and social networks?
- What are the factors affecting online political participation and non-participation of Palestinian youth?
- What are youth's perspectives about freedom of expression online?

Conceptual Framework

Throughout this study the following definitions were adopted to better understand the political participation of Palestinian youth online.

Civic Engagement is the broadest sense of individual and collective actions designed to address issues of public concern. We have chosen to use the definition of civic engagement from the Pew Center. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation⁶. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Engaged citizens should have the ability, agency and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts.

Political participation is more narrowly defined than civic engagement. For this study we define political participation as expressing a specific opinion on policies, practices, current events, political processes or the interpretation of those events or processes.

Political expression is a political behavior. It requires communication competence and the ability to understand the way in which people achieve their relational goals.

Communication competence is defined as an individual's disposition for effective and appropriate interaction given a particular interpersonal relational context⁷. Communication competence has been previously found to be positively related with activism⁸.

7amleh has conducted research on Palestinian digital rights and freedom of expression relevant to this study including:

“Hashtag Palestine” (2016, 2017, 2018):

The report details Palestinian digital rights violations perpetrated by governments, authorities, international technology companies and the Palestinian society. Over the course of the three years that 7amleh has been conducting this research, a sharp rise in violations has occurred, as documented in this series of reports.

“The Index of Racism and Incitement” (2016, 2017, 2018):

An annual review of hate speech online in Hebrew directed towards Palestinians and Arabs. The report shows a staggering rise in the hate speech online directed towards Palestinians and Arabs.

“Internet Freedoms in Palestine: A Survey of Digital Rights Violations and Threats” (2018):

The report analyses freedoms in the Palestinian virtual sphere, especially in the context of violations that have recently been perpetrated against Palestinian activists on social media platforms and the restrictions on freedom of speech online committed by the Israeli occupation, legislations from the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, as well as technology companies.

“Survey of Digital Activism of Palestinian civil society organisations” (2018):

The survey aimed at supporting planning ahead for future trainings on the basis of actual needs and requirements of NGOs in the region with the participation of a total of 108 organisations from all Palestinian communities, including Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem and Palestinian organisations in Israel.

“Mapping Digital Rights and Threats” (2018):

The report addresses the challenges facing the telecommunication infrastructure in Palestine, analysing the violations from the Israeli authorities, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, and in addition, the violations that private corporations such as Facebook, Google, and PayPal, amongst others are complicit in. This report relies on international legislations and conventions which state that digital rights are an extension of human rights on the internet and are considered a fundamental human right. These rights include freedom of speech on the net, the right to privacy, and protection from surveillance of governments and companies.

“A Violent Network: Gender-based violence on the Internet” (2018):

This report found that three out of four Palestinian women experienced gender based violence online and that the virtual space mirrors the experience of women offline. Palestinian girls and women are exposed to various types of gender based violence on social media and subject to surveillance by authorities, social media companies and their families, referred to by female participants as the “watchtower.”

4 7amleh (2018). Digital Activism Survey on Palestinian Civil Society Organizations;

5 7amleh (2017). Understanding of Digital Security Among Palestinian Youth.

6 Michael Delli Carpini, Director, Public Policy, The Pew Charitable Trusts.

7 Spitzberg, B. H. (1983). Communication competence as knowledge, skill, and impression. *Communication Education*, 32, 323–329. doi:10.1080/03634528309378550

8 Shah, D. V., McLeod, J. M., Lee, N. (2009). Communication competence as a foundation for civic competence: Processes of socialization into citizenship. *Political Communication*, 26, 102–117. doi:10.1080/10584600802710384

“Connection Interrupted” (2018):

This report details the Israeli control over the Palestinian ICT infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza and its impact on the digital rights of the Palestinian people. Israel’s digital occupation has resulted in the creation of a severe ICT gap between Palestinians and the rest of the world, violating several human rights including their right to access economic markets. Additionally, Israel’s continuous control over the ICT infrastructure has enabled Israel to monitor all Palestinian online activity, violating their right to privacy and in many cases cooperating with social media companies to censor Palestinians online, a violation of their right to freedom of expression.

7amleh Center also has activities designed to enhance youth political participation online that fall under advocacy and capacity building programming. This work includes building the capacity of youth and youth serving organizations to conduct effective digital campaigns and to learn and utilize digital safety skills to enable them to more safely access the internet.

The conceptual framework of this study attempted to capture the relationship between youth political participation and the online space, and to investigate the main assumptions believed to connect 7amleh Center’s research and program interventions to the long term outcomes of 7amleh Center’s work.

Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on primary and secondary data collected through a survey, focus group discussions (FGDs), and literature review. The decision to carry out both quantitative and qualitative research was based on:

- The lack of available data on Palestinian youth’s political participation online
- The perceived chilling effect taking place and decreases in youth political participation online

Research Tools

The study relied on the following main data collection and analysis methods:

Literature Review: The first step was to explore current literature on the key concepts and theories being examined, as well as evidence from recent studies regarding the predictors and outcomes of youth political participation. In addition to external sources, the literature review included relevant reports, research and studies published by 7amleh Center. These

sources were initially limited to studies and programs conducted within Palestine, but later broadened to include the MENA region and other countries for which relevant sources were available.

Identification of Theories to Test: 7amleh Center’s work with youth in the online space has been developed based off of our monitoring, evaluation and learning of our existing programs with youth. This report was designed with an understanding of the reality that has been reflected in these programs and to test some of our assumptions. Based on this model, we have also derived theories of change that have informed the recommendations of this study.

Focus Groups: Focus groups examined youth’s political participation/non-participation and their ability to exercise their right to freedom of expression and the right to political association and peaceful assembly in social media. It includes the experiences of Palestinian young men and women from several areas in Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza and the Galilee. Focus groups were conducted with the participants at their venues; organizations and youth centers where the later are active. Focus groups duration ranged 45-60 minutes. All participants agreed to the audio recording, and later on the collected data was transcribed and documented.

Survey: The survey included 1,200 young women and men ages 16 - 30 (400 in the West Bank, 400 in Gaza and 400 from the Palestinian Citizens of Israel). 51.8% of the respondents were males and 48.2% were females. 31.9% of respondents were in the age group 16 - 19, 35.2% were in the age group 20 - 24 years, and 32.9% were in the age group 25 - 30 years.

Data Collection Method: The focus groups were conducted by facilitators in Gaza, the West Bank and the Galilee. The data collected were sent for analysis to internal experts in Palestinian youth and digital rights.

Interpretation and Contextualization of Findings: An external consultant reviewed the transcripts and developed a report based on the focus groups that identified the most plausible explanations for the results. 7amleh staff were also engaged in determining the implications of the findings for its programs and advocacy strategies, and recommendations for it and other agencies working on youth development, human rights and digital rights in Palestine and the MENA region.

Limitations: Data to measure several of the main components of Palestinian internet and social media usage was not available. Information about Palestinian youth’s civic engagement was more readily available with studies published by the United Nations and several local and international non-governmental organizations. There is very limited data and information about Palestinian’s digital life, including youth, and potentially no data about their political participation online. A strength of the report was that it includes data about Palestinian youth from a wide range of geographic areas.

Target Groups

As part of the research, we conducted six focus groups with 81 youth ages 15-25 years old. The focus groups were held in Jerusalem, Gaza (North and South), the West Bank and the Galilee. In the Galilee we met with university and high school students. In the West Bank we met with a youth group from Jerusalem and Ramallah, in Bethlehem we met with a group from Hebron and Bethlehem. In Gaza we met with two groups, one in the north and the other in the south. The names of participants were not mentioned to protect their privacy. Focus group participants were recruited from existing active civic groups.

Table 1: Number and age of participants

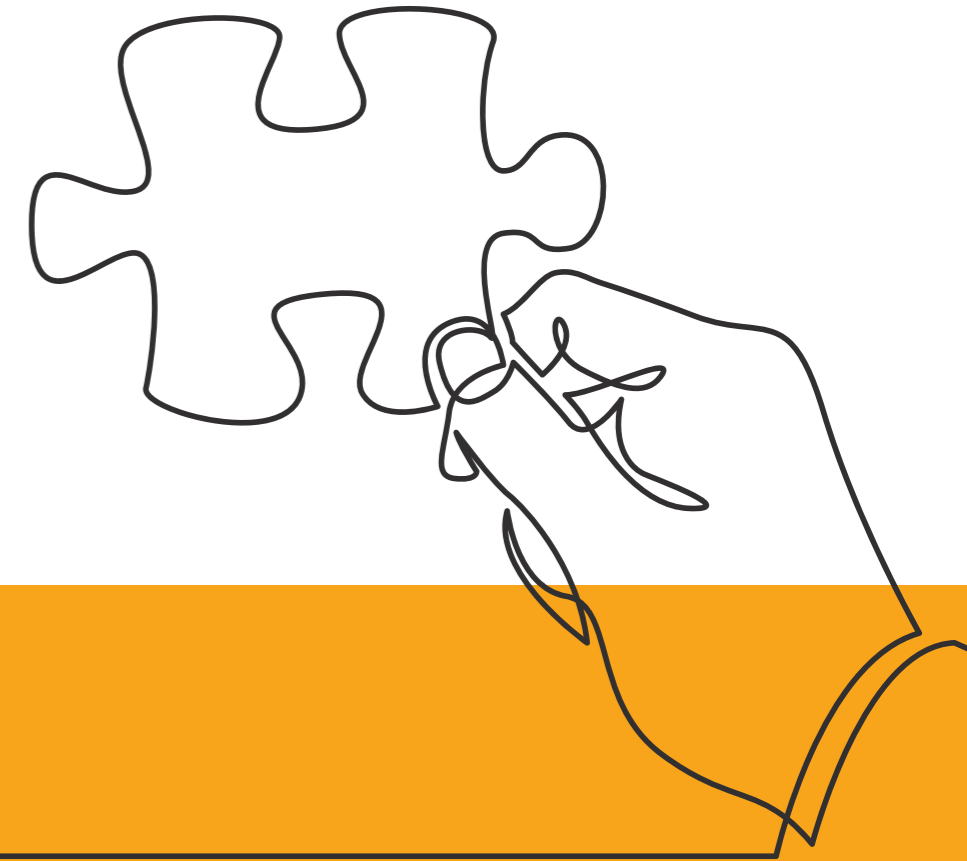
Age	15-18	19-22	23-25
Number of participants	31	36	14

Table 2: Areas and number of participants

Area	Gaza	West Bank and Jerusalem	Galilee
Number of male participants	13	14	12
Number of female participants	10	17	14

Table 3: Position and number of participants

Position	School student	University student	Graduate
Number of participants	26	40	15

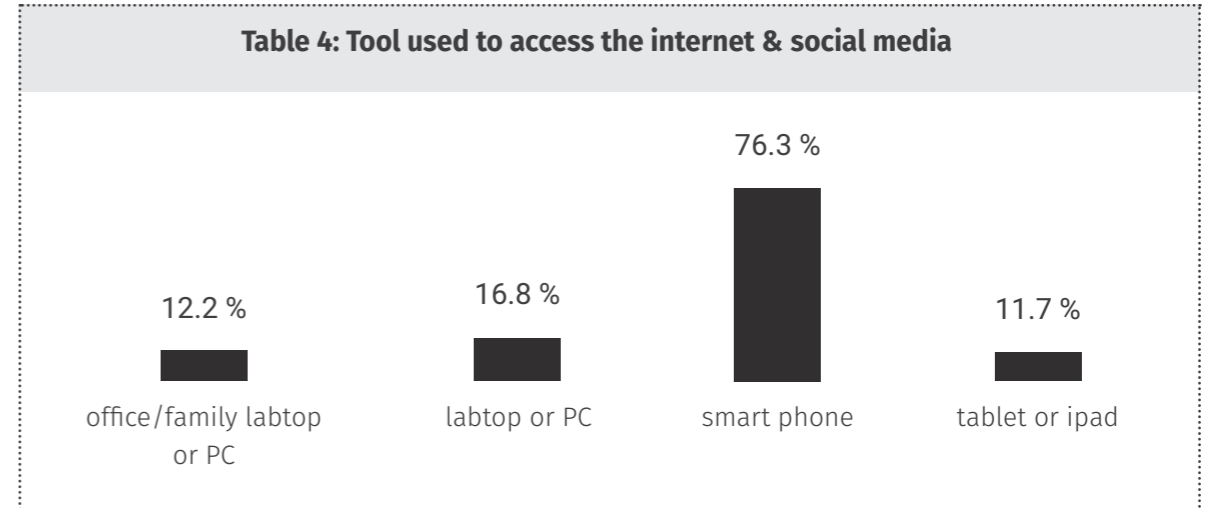


Findings and Discussion

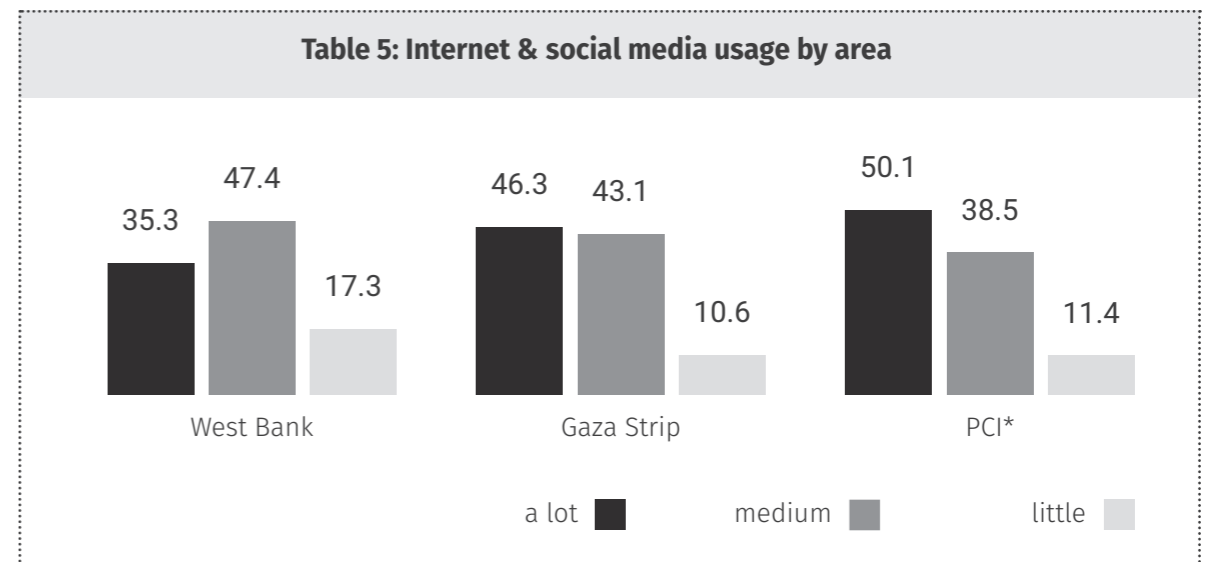
Internet and Social Media Usage

The MENA region has one of the largest youth populations worldwide with over 50% of people under 30 years old⁹. According to a recent study, over 90% of 18 to 24 year-olds and 85% of 25 to 34 year-olds in the MENA region use the internet¹⁰. Palestinian youth (aged 15-29) comprise 30%¹¹ of the total Palestinian population, and all children and youth under the age of 29 comprise over 50%¹² of the population. According to the Social Media Report in Palestine for 2017, 73% of the 1.5 million Palestinians living in Israel have access to the internet¹³. Internet penetration in the West Bank and Gaza reached 63.2% by mid-2014 with a total number of 3 million Palestinian internet users¹⁴. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics there are approximately 456,000 Palestinian households connected to the internet via landlines. As for mobile access, statistics are not yet clear as Israel blocked Palestinian 3G mobile internet access until 2018, and then only allowed for mobile internet to be available to Palestinians in the West Bank, excluding Gaza.

Palestinians, and in particular Palestinian youth, are avid social media users with 1 in 3 Palestinians is present on social media¹⁵. Facebook is the most widely used social media platform with a total of 1.6 million Palestinian users (constituting 33% of total internet users in the West Bank and Gaza). Twitter, on the other hand, has a share of only 11% of Palestinian internet users. 55% of Palestinians access Facebook through their smartphones in comparison to only 10% who access the platform from a computer or a laptop. Amongst Palestinians, 73% of youth use social media four or more hours a day. Facebook (71.3%) Whatsapp (66%) and YouTube (51%) are the most popular platforms¹⁶. This is in line with Lebanese and Jordanian youth, who are some of the most active on social media in the world. Additionally, statistics rank Facebook and Whatsapp as the most popular platforms regionally¹⁷.



Source: 7amleh (2019). Survey: The Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

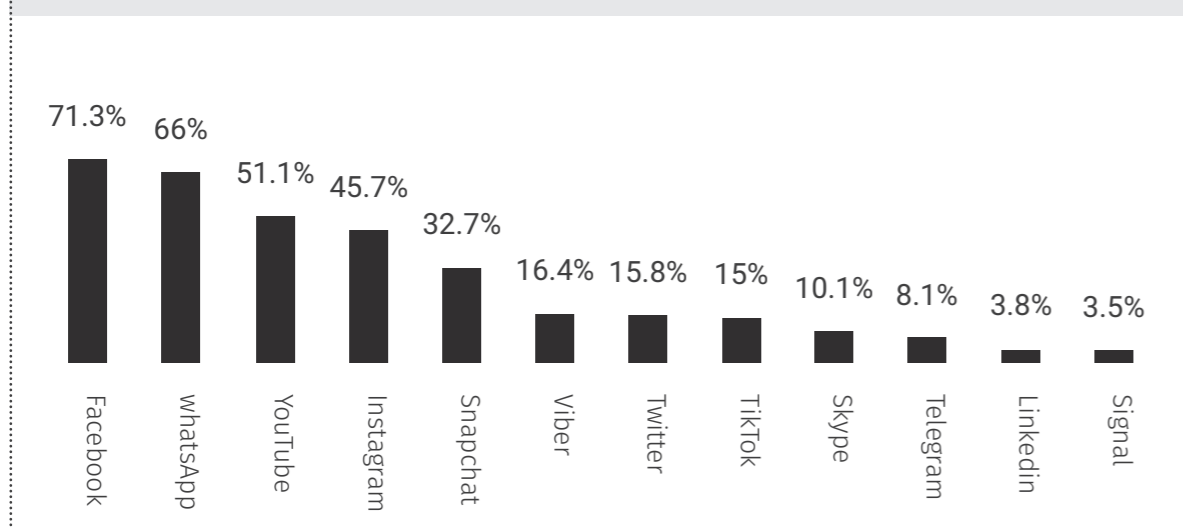


Source: 7amleh (2019). Survey: The Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

*PCI- Palestinian citizens in Israel

9 Het Grote Midden Oosten Platform (2018). Youth Employment & Participation in the Middle East & North America.
 10 Northwestern University in Qatar (2016). Media Use in the Middle East 2016. Available at: http://www.mideastmedia.org/survey/2016/uploads/file/NUQ_Media_Use_2016_Final_Full_Demo.pdf
 11 PCBS. On the Eve of International Youth Day 12/8/2015. 12 August 2016. <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1721&mid=3172&wversion=Staging>
 12 Ibid.
 13 Social Studio, "Social Media Report in Palestine 2016." Available at: <https://socialstudio.me/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/SMRP2016-Eng.pdf>
 14 Rikaz Center, "Social Economic Survey of the Palestinian in the 1948 Lands", 2014.
 15 Social Studio, "Social Media Report in Palestine 2016." Available at: <https://socialstudio.me/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/SMRP2016-Eng.pdf>
 16 7amleh (2019). Survey: The Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.
 17 Northwestern University of Qatar (2018). Social Media Sharing Information and Connecting Online Nearly Universal. Pew Research Center (2018). Global Social Media Tech Usage. Available at: www.pewglobal.org/2018/06/19/3-social-network-adoption-varies-widely-by-country/

Table 6: Palestinian youth's use of online platforms



Source: 7amleh (2019). Survey: The Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

Political Participation Online

No significant change to the political situation in a decade, fragmentation and fighting between political factions has led many Palestinian youth to withdraw from political participation and many youth are disengaged from politics. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics found that only 40% of young people reported interest in participating in an election event, 29% in the West Bank compared to 57% in the Gaza Strip¹⁸. For many young people, "Whether we participate or not, it is the same result in the country." Additionally, as a participant from a focus group from the West Bank said, political participation doesn't create a change, "There is no benefit at the end, I'll get sick and tired and the situation will stay the same." As has been noted in other studies, one of the main challenges for youth is to access channels of influence to duty bearers and power holders. In Palestine, 65% of Palestinian youth believe that political participation online can affect the decision makers¹⁹. However, only 37.2% of Palestinian youth surveyed say that they participate in political discussions online. Although Palestinian youth are very competent in utilizing social media for communications, this low participation rate may be a result of many factors including youth's views about the effectiveness of political participation online, their sense of safety online and their ability to communicate effectively.

Political participation depends on communications competence and youth's ability to create relationships with people about public issues. When it comes to utilizing social

media networks, Palestinian youth know how to effectively use social media and make strategic decisions about which platform to use based on their intended audience and the content that they are creating or interacting with. As one female Palestinian Citizen of Israel stated, "Each of these tools has different use from the other, Facebook is for the big issues and the rest of the tools are for issue of less importance... I post on Facebook when I want to express my opinion on an issue, personal or family issues are more on WhatsApp or Instagram". In line with regional studies, which states that social media has become the dominant source of news for youth²⁰, Facebook was often the preferred platform for reaching a wide audience and sharing news or political information. That being said, Palestinians who wanted to politically engage with Palestinians in the diaspora, found that Twitter was a better platform. As a female participant from the group said, "I believe Twitter is wider and includes more news, I follow it daily, following without posting, I follow international issues more because Twitter is not sufficiently popular among Palestinian Citizens of Israel... Palestinian participation is more from the diaspora."

Youth also choose what platform they use for political participation and make risks assessments. In particular, many cited Facebook as particularly risky and are choosing to engage politically in other platforms. As one young man said, "I participate in Palestinian and international issues, but in my opinion, Instagram is the most secure site to express opinion, because I share directly from the source, and Facebook is more monitored which prevents me from using it." Some participants based their decisions on which platform to utilize for political participation because it enabled them to participate in "trends" and to keep their more personal lives for Facebook which is more general and has a broader audience. A participant from Gaza said, "I use Twitter, because there is a great interaction of people, or maybe because I feel Twitter is the tool I focus on in political participation because they take into consideration the tweets and hashtags, and I feel [the latter] are specialized in it [political participation] and maybe not Facebook because my friends may not be too interested or I could face criticism and they may not respect my perspective, and this happened to me before, so personal stuff I post on Facebook, and general stuff on Twitter." Facebook offers users the possibility of building a profile and representing themselves online, as well as creating networks with other users²¹. Twitter is more reflective of a microblogging platform that is less a site for making or maintaining social connections, and more for building less formal relationships and weak connections with others and sharing political information; therefore, it is more suitable for expressing and learning what others have to say about different issues of interest to the follower²². This shows that political participation can be enabled if it is perceived as appropriate and the norms of the network support political participation.

Young people prefer to politically participate when a political issue or topic becomes a trend. This includes local, Arab or international issues. One participant from Gaza said, "I participate depending on the issue, of course local issues because they are of concern to our society, any issue that I find consensus among the people I participate, if everyone share their opinion so do I." Another participant from the West Bank said, "I participate in

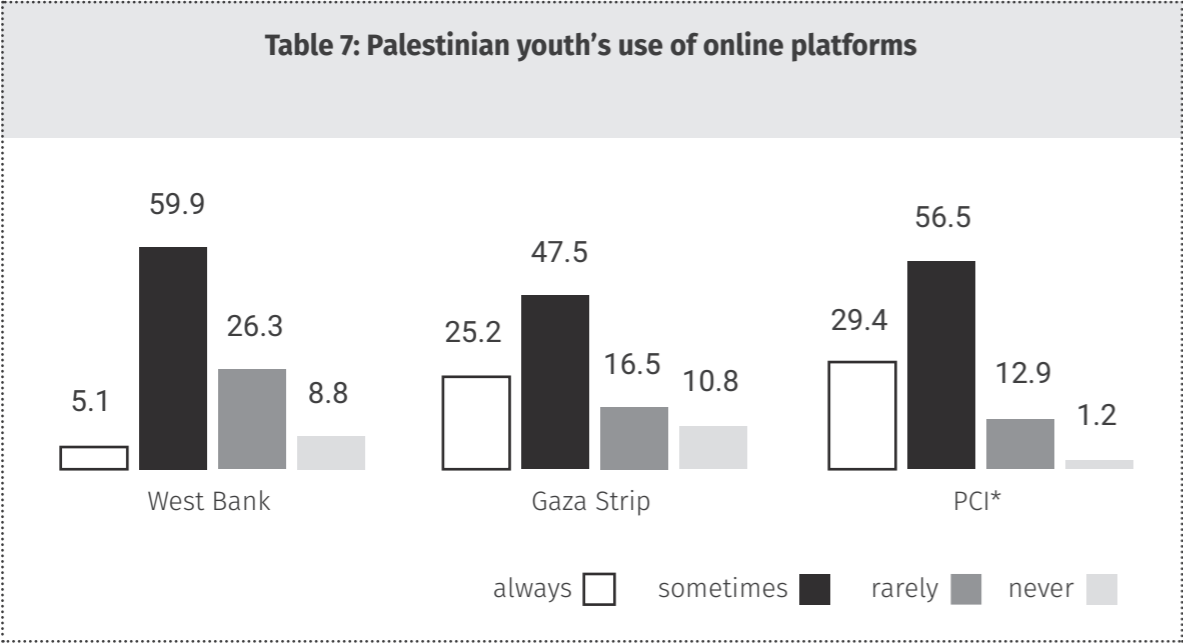
18 PCBS. International Youth Day (2016). Available at: <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1721&mid=3172&wversion=Staging>
19 7amleh (2019). Survey: The Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

21 Velascquez, A. and Rojas, H. "Political Expression on Social Media: The Role of Communication Competence and Expected Outcomes" (2017). Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2056305117696521#>
22 Chen, G. M. (2011). Tweet this: A uses and gratifications perspective on how active Twitter use gratifies a need to connect with others. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27, 755-762. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2010.10.023

an important topic that all people talk about and I can influence the people". The pressure to participate in online campaigns comes from both online and offline. As a young man from Gaza said, "The prisoners were on [hunger] strike and the hashtag water and salt appeared... my uncle is a prisoner and he was on strike... Youth [friends] called me saying your uncle is on strike and everyone is in solidarity, so why aren't you in solidarity? So I drank water and salt and posted the video on twitter and on my channel on YouTube and Facebook." Both local and international initiatives can inspire youth to take action, as a young woman from Gaza said, "There was a campaign for building a hospital in Rafah, a popular demand. We participated in it and it made a lot of noise and it became a trend." As a young woman from the Galilee stated, "When the hashtag "#BlueForSudan" was tweeted, I changed my Facebook profile photo and made stories on Instagram Stories, it was a very strong campaign, had a lot of interaction."

The Chilling Effect

Regionally, many internet users express concerns about government surveillance of their online activities and one-third of respondents who use the internet (35%) worry about governments checking their online activities. The majority of Palestinian youth only sometimes feel safe to engage in political participation online and approximately 20% of Palestinian youth never feel safe to express themselves online. Confidence in using the internet to express political opinions was highest in Gaza (25%) and lowest in the West Bank (29.4%).



*PCI- Palestinian citizens in Israel



Results are consistent with the chilling effects theory and are suggesting some chilling effect of the online speech and expression of respondents. Basing our definition on Schauer's work, a "chilling effect" is, at its core an "act of deterrence" and the fear, risk, and uncertainty built into laws, regulations, and the legal system more generally, can deter people from exercising their rights²³. Solove, drawing on the insights of surveillance studies²⁴, builds on Schauer's account to encompass concerns about how "modern" privacy problems associated with such information practices as state surveillance and data gathering can create an atmosphere of "risk" and self-censorship, a kind of society-wide chilling effect comparable to "environmental harms" or "pollution."²⁵

Fear Caused By the Policies and Practices of Authorities

Palestinians have been arrested for political participation for decades, and the repression continues until today. Authorities routinely arrest Palestinians posting on social media networks and use interrogation, detention and legal persecution as a tool to deter them and others from sharing content online. Each year, approximately 500-700 Palestinian children, some as young as 12 years, are detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system. In 2018, Israel arrested 350 Palestinians in the West Bank, including Eastern Jerusalem²⁶, on charges of "incitement", including arrests for posting on social media²⁷. This was an increase of arrests from 2017, when Israel arrested some 300 Palestinians in the West Bank, including Eastern Jerusalem²⁸. Additionally, 42% of Palestinian youth have been interrogated for their political participation online either by the Israeli authorities (15% Palestinian Citizens of Israel and 25% Palestinians in the West Bank), Palestinian Authority (13.2%) or Hamas (13%)²⁹.

In Israeli law, the right to freedom of expression is not protected under the Israeli Basic Laws. In fact, the right to freedom of expression is only safeguarded by the Israeli Supreme court decision in 1954 in the case of "the people's voice"³⁰ and Israel's obligation as a state party³¹ under Article (2) of the ICCPR³². As 7amleh Center's survey shows, 15% of youth Palestinian Citizens of Israel were interrogated by Israeli authorities for their political participation online³³. The laws are unclear, and as one focus group participant said, "The State [Israel] can interpret it as they wish, so they trap us in this." This "trapping" the participant described can be seen when looking at the double standard that Israel applies to hate speech. Vague definitions of "incitement" have enabled Israeli authorities to arrest, interrogate, prosecute and detain Palestinians for their political participation, while at the same time allowing radical Israeli racist figures the freedom to "incite" violence against Arabs and Palestinians.

One Palestinian Citizen of Israel said:

The state translates what we post the way they wish, and we witnessed many examples. At the same time, "death to the Arabs" and anything that is against every Arab living here is allowed, and when you write a poem expressing your opinion, they interpret it and here more freedom of expression for Jews, and they are not really afraid that it will impact their work or studies, or that something might happen to them in the street. The small sentence you write would have more than one explanation.

Another participant added:

"There is a page full with hundreds of thousands of likes for someone named Hatzel; a Jewish rapper instigating the killing of Arabs, and not once a complaint filed against him."

This reaffirms 7amleh's findings from "The Index of Racism and Incitement in Israeli Social Media 2018" which revealed that the number of posts calling for violence, racial generalization, and insults against Palestinians has increased since 2017 (474,250 in 2018 and 445,000 in 2017). This includes one post every 66 seconds and 1 out of 10 posts about Arabs including insults or calls for violence against Palestinians.

Israel has also been working to develop new legislation that threatens the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. This includes the "Facebook Bill" (2018) which was set to pass into a law and intended to allow the Israeli police to ask a court to remove content online, without the person who shared the content being able to respond to the Israeli court³⁴. The bill also granted power to the Israeli administrative courts to order international tech corporations, such as Facebook, Twitter and Google, to block Internet content that "incites violence" and "if it harmed the human safety, public, economic, state or vital infrastructure safety" at the request of the Israeli government. These vague terms would easily grant the Israeli government and authorities the ability to infringe on people's right to freedom of expression.

The Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation also recently proposed the "Prohibition Against Photographing and Documenting IDF Soldiers Bill" in May 2018. The purpose of the bill was to criminalize the filming and photographing of the Israeli Army in the course of their duties and prohibit dissemination of the photos or video content on social media networks and mainstream media. The bill set a sentence of up to five years in prison for anyone who films or publishes military activities harming "soldiers' morale." However, the Israeli Attorney General, deemed the proposed bill to be constitutionally problematic and demanded significant changes to the wording. The bill was then changed to focus on increasing the sentence for those who obstruct the work of Israeli soldiers, and will continue to be reviewed by the Israeli Knesset³⁵. Though this bill has not been put into legislation, several Palestinians have been arrested for posting photographs of soldiers

23 Schauer, F. (1978). Fear, Risk, and the First Amendment: Unraveling the 'Chilling Effect'. Boston University Law Review, 58, 685-732.

24 Lyon, D. (2001). Surveillance society: Monitoring everyday life. Buckingham: Open University Press.

25 Lyon, D. (2006). Theorizing surveillance: The panopticon and beyond. Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing.

26 Defense for Children International - Palestine (2019). Available at:

https://www.dci-palestine.org/children_in_israeli_detention

27 7amleh (2019). "Hashtag Palestine 2018" Available at:

https://7amleh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Hashtag_Palestine_English_digital_pages.pdf

28 7amleh (2018). "Hashtag Palestine 2017". Available at:

<http://7amleh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Palestine-2017-English-final.pdf>

29 7amleh (2019). Survey of the Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

30 The people's voice v. Ministry of Interior, 73/53 (SC 1953).

31 OHCHR, UN Treaty Body Database, available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=84&Lang=EN

32 UN General Assembly, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999, p. 171.

33 7amleh (2019). Survey of the Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

34 Israeli Knesset, Constitution Committee approved the "Facebook Law" for second and third readings; in urgent cases judge's ruling to be issued within 48 hours, 16 June at 2018 available at:

https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/Pages/Pr13970_pg.aspx

35 7amleh. "Hashtag Palestine 2018", March 2019. Available at: https://7amleh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Hashtag_Palestine_English_digital_pages.pdf

online. This includes the high profile arrest, prosecution and imprisonment of Nariman Tamimi, who posted a video of her daughter's confrontation with a soldier after her cousin was near fatally injured in a viral Facebook video³⁶.

According to Freedom House's 2015 Freedom in the World Report, the West Bank and Gaza are 'not free'³⁷. Where 1 is best and 7 is worst, the 'freedom' rating stands at 5.5, civil liberties at 5 and political rights at 6. Civic space is 'repressed' in the West Bank and Gaza³⁸ including online space with a sharp rise in attacks on the freedom of expression of Palestinians in relation to their engagement online³⁹. As a male participant from the West Bank stated "All ruling authorities do not allow free expression of political views and suppress anyone writing opposing position, influential [position] not just words". Additionally, the Palestinian Authority's Press and Publications Law No. (9) of 2005 contains provisions that impose many restrictions on freedom of expression. This includes granting the Minister of press the power to refuse the issuance of a license for any media organization or institution, allowing journalists, editors and writers to be personally prosecuted for their work. The law also contains broad and vague terms that can be easily misinterpreted for the benefit of the authorities; for instance; banning materials that "violate Palestinian values and morals" and "inciting violence."

Restrictions to freedom of expression in Palestinian legislations can also be found in the digital space. For example, the newly adopted Cybercrimes Law by Decree No. (16) of 2018 (first published in July 2017 and later amended in May 2018). The law drew widespread criticism from human rights organizations and other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders for the potential violations to the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. In fact, the provisions of the law are written in broad language, as it contains loose, and vague terms and provisions which could lead to possible misinterpretation and misuse by the authorities. Also, the broad terminology may easily allow for the institutionalization of violating basic and fundamental rights such as, inter alia, the right to privacy and the right to freedom of expression. Furthermore, the Law by Decree contains a contravention to Palestine's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified by President Abbas in 2014). In fact, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression sent a communication to the State of Palestine stating that "[T]he Law gives rise to concerns about freedom of expression and privacy online."⁴⁰

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas authorities have the duty of applying and acting in line with International Human Rights Law given their exercise of government-like functions and territorial control.⁴¹ The de facto government of Hamas has restricted freedom of expression by making an amendment to the Penal Code No. (3) 2009 of the Penal Code No. (74) 1936. Under Article (262) (C) the "misuse of technology" is criminalized. The terms "inciting immorality and debauchery," "profanity," "disruptive" were used to describe the materials that if published may be considered a "misuse of technology." The Penal Code No. (3) 2009 of the Penal Code No. (74) 1936 law is in violation of the text and spirit of Article (17) of the ICCPR. Hence, the adoption of this amendment by Hamas' government is in contradiction with its duty under International Human Rights Law, as Hamas is restricting the right to Freedom of Expression depending on a domestic legislation containing vague terminology that potentially criminalizes its exercise in the online space. In Gaza 19% of youth surveyed were interrogated by Israeli military and 13.2% by Hamas⁴². While not all participants had personal stories, many participants had friends or family members who had been interrogated. As a female participant from Gaza shared, "I did not try to write something and I heard stories that prevented me from writing... what happened recently in the town, my friend posted on the internet and they were called by the Internal [Hamas] Security and were asked to delete their posts."

Fear Caused by Family Pressure and Family Control

Pressure and control from family members also contributes to repression of political participation. According to 7amleh Center's survey, 35% of people who were surveyed were punished by family members for their political participation online and 18% experienced verbal abuse. This can be a result of pressure from parents, immediate family members or the wider extended family. As a participant from the West Bank shared "One time a person called my uncle because my uncle has connections. The person told him tell your nephew to delete his posts... my uncle called me and humiliated me then he called my father and told him the details and asked him to prevent me from posting." As a participant from Gaza stated, "When I post, my father [starts with] delete, do this, that son of X was arrested... also some friends were arrested in the recent campaign, and we heard extremely awful stories, from torture and I do not know what else... this made me more cautious." This pressure from family members results in a kind of repression of political participation and freedom of speech online.

36 The Atlantic. "Who is Ahed Tamimi?" Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/internet-famous-in-the-west-bank/549557/>

37 Freedom House. Freedom in the World: West Bank. Washington D.C.: Freedom House, 2016.

38 CIVICUS (2018). State of Civil Society Report. Available at: <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2018>

39 7amleh. "Hashtag Palestine 2018", March 2019. Available at: https://7amleh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Hashtag_Palestine_English_digital_pages.pdf

40 Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, OL PSE 2/2017, 16 August 2017. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/Legislation/OL_PSE_16.08.17_2.2017.pdf.

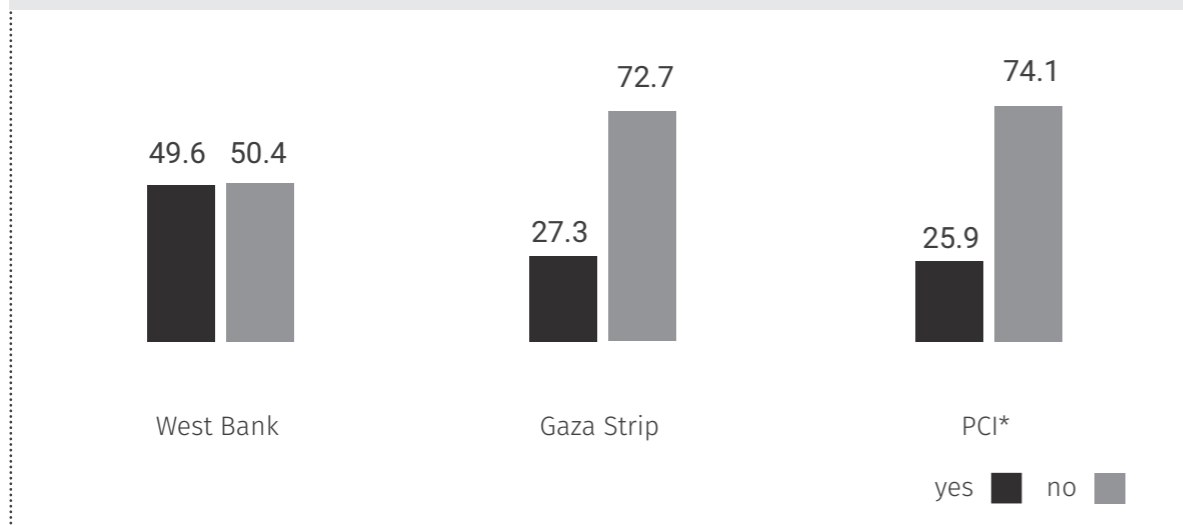
See Also Al Haq comments criticizing the law at: <http://www.alhaq.org/images/thumbnails/images/stories/images/1151.pdf> and <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/palestinian-violations/1237-al-haq-failure-to-ensure-civil-societys-access-to-the-draft-law-by-decree-amending-the-law-by-decree-on-cybercrimes->

41 A/HRC/34/38. Paragraph 5. Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/34/38>

42 7amleh (2019). The Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

43 Ibid

Table 8: Youth that feared being held accountable for expressing their political opinions online ⁴³



*PCI- Palestinian citizens in Israel

Secondary Chilling Effect

The repression of others, as a result of political participation, intimidates young people and pushes them not to express their opinions online. In digital rights literature, this is called “the secondary chilling” effect where users’ online activities are chilled even when not they themselves, but others in their social networks experience repression. This report found that Palestinians named specific types of chilling effects. This included fear of repression from seeing journalists and writers arrested or persecuted for their political participation online, fear from the experiences of arrest from family and friends, and fear of potentially losing a job or educational opportunity.

Fear Caused By Repression of Journalists and Writers

Worldwide journalists are experiencing increasing repression⁴⁴. In Palestine, journalists experience many types of repression, including arrests, interrogations and online harassment⁴⁵. This creates fear among Palestinian youth, especially because they understand that journalists are not being protected as they should be under the law. The case of Darine Tatour, a poet from Al-Rinah village, who was arrested and prosecuted for a poem titled “Resist my people” that she wrote and posted on her Facebook page at the end of 2015 was often cited as an example. She was arrested by the Israeli authorities and the trial went on for three years, which she spent between prison, home detention, and exile. Tatour was accused of inciting violence and terrorism, and supporting a terrorist organization. Although she received international support and her case turned into a public opinion issue on freedom of expression and political prosecution of artists, writers and poets, the case has intimidated youth and which contributed to silencing their protest. “We

saw what happened with Darine Tatour, she was hassled for years in the courts because she published a poem online. If she published it in a book no one would talk to her, but because it was on Facebook and so many people could read it, it became a big story,” said one participant the Galilee. The risk of publishing something online, instead of in a book, is also perceived as more risky by Palestinian youth, hence leading to further silencing of freedom of expression in the online space.

Fear Caused By Repression of Friends and Family

Many Palestinian youth have a friend or family member who has suffered from repression as a result of their political participation online. This repression was perpetrated by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas and led to fear among youth that encouraged them to censor themselves online. As is mentioned earlier in this report, high numbers of Palestinians are being arrested for their posts on social media⁴⁶ and 42% of Palestinian youth who responded to the survey have been interrogated for their political participation online⁴⁷. This has resulted in a secondary chilling effect, where young people are self-censoring in response to the repressive environment. As a young person from Gaza stated, “My friends participated in the internet, they were called by the Internal Hamas Security and asked to delete their posts, so I did not post at the first place”. A young man from Jerusalem shared: “One of my classmates was arrested because of his post on Facebook... he told what he went through there [in prison]... because of few words, everything we write is monitored... it is not worth being in prison just for words”. During the focus group meeting, a Palestinian Citizen of Israel said, “A young woman from my town, she was with us in the youth movement... she was arrested because of posting on Facebook... they ruined her and her future... why [I need] all this headache?” These experiences, contributed to the secondary chilling effect, and was cited by youth as one of the main reasons that they feared political participation online.

Fear of Future Harm

Particularly for Palestinian Citizens of Israel, there was a fear that their political engagement online would result in losing employment and educational opportunities. As a result, many youth decided that it was better not to express themselves online so “their future would not be harmed,” as one Palestinian Citizen of Israel said. We witnessed examples in a medical nursing school where a person was kicked out of her studies after five years of efforts and expenses.” In the same context, a Palestinian Citizen of Israel said, “A school teacher working in the Ministry of Education was fired because they expressed their opinion on social media... I see a major barrier imposed on us by the State [Israel] where I may think a lot before I publish my post, and there is no safety in expressions... I can think of 20 times, I know today that I share political things but if I apply for a job at the Ministry and they see the posts, I will not be at that place... I make some sacrifices so I can feel free in some places and I can lose many things in return, and I think this is an essential aspect that exists in each person’s life.”

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ UN news, “media facing suppression worldwide, report says, June 5 2019”. Available at: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2019-06-05/suppression-of-media-around-the-world-increasing-report-says>

⁴⁵ A/HRC/37/38. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/37/38>

⁴⁶ 7amleh (2019). “Hashtag Palestine 2018”. Available at:

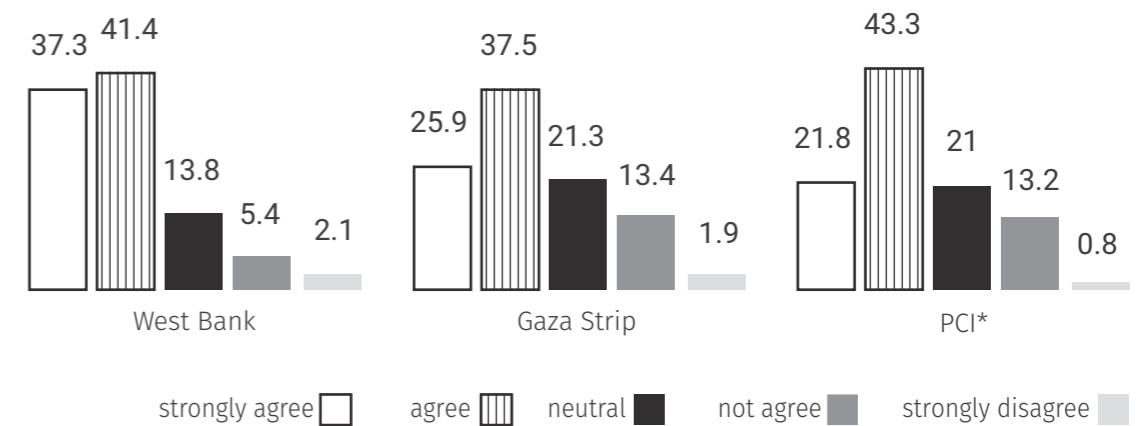
https://7amleh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Hashtag_Palestine_English_digital_pages.pdf

⁴⁷ 7amleh (2019). Survey of the Palestinian Youth Political Engagement on Social Media.

Misinformation

Worldwide, people see digital connectivity as enhancing people’s access to political information and facilitating engagement with politics. The internet, mobile phones and social media has made people more informed about current events, and the majority of people in most countries believe social media have increased ordinary people’s ability to have a meaningful voice in the political process⁴⁸. However, this increased access to information has also led to youth being increasingly exposed to misinformation online, making it more important than ever that young people know how to evaluate sources of information. According to the survey conducted by 7amleh, results show that 70% of youth do not trust online information and are concerned about the government’s ability to use the internet to manipulate public opinion as one of the disadvantages of the internet with 41% citing the issue of the spread of fake news online.

Table 9: Distribution of the sample surveyed (ages 16-30) by their assessment to trusting information displayed on the internet and social media, and by region



*PCI- Palestinian citizens in Israel

48 Pew Research Center “Publics Emerging Economies Worry Social Media Sow Division, Even as They Offer New Chances for Public Engagement.” May 13, 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.pewinternet.org/2019/05/13/publics-in-emerging-economies-worry-social-media-sow-division-even-as-they-offer-new-chances-for-political-engagement/>

Cyberbullying

Bullying among children and youth – broadly, the repeated physical, verbal or symbolic aggression intentionally expressed by one or more peers towards a less powerful victim – is understood in somewhat different ways in different cultures, and thus terminology and definitions vary⁴⁹. As cyberbullying is a newer phenomenon that is currently evolving with the evolution of technology, it is difficult to find studies that are consistent in definition and measurement across cultures⁵⁰. However, most definitions involve aggression that can either be one time or repeated. In particular, social media networks are where the majority of cyberbullying occurs. As a recent UN report found, almost three-quarters of young people said social networks, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, are the most common place for online bullying⁵¹. In the digital space, cyberbullying can easily multiply especially in social networks. While a cyberbullying post may have been written once, sharing it causes repeated harm which may reach beyond the life of the perpetrators active cyberbullying. As a Palestinian Citizen of Israel shared in the focus group discussions, “Unfortunately, there is no respect in the discussions... they insult you saying awful things, even sending private messages simply because you expressed your personal opinion.” This shows how, since communication is such a ubiquitous part of youth’s lives, cyberbullying can occur around the clock and reach into the private lives of young people. Additionally, it illuminates how perpetrators feel able to act aggressively online in ways they would not when face-to-face with potential victims, because the social norms that constrain them are weaker when they cannot be identified and because they cannot see the emotional effect on their victim.

It is evident that cyberbullying is impacting to political participation. According to a study by Pew Research Center, nearly 20% of social media users have blocked, unfriended or hidden someone because of their political posts online⁵². A participant from Gaza stated, “No one accepts the other’s different opinion... I do not like to engage in discussions that harm me verbally or emotionally so I avoid [it]”. Much of this increase in online bullying, shaming, and political bullying has to do with the ability to insult others on the Internet that is created as a result of the changing environment and access to the technology⁵³. This can lead to particularly negative psycho-social outcomes for youth, who in adolescence are in the process of developing their sense of self-esteem and their ability to communicate with others.

49 Chester, KL et al. (2015). Cross-national Time Trends in Bullying Victimization in 33 Countries among Children Aged 11, 13 and 15 from 2002 to 2010. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 25 (suppl 2): 61-64.

50 Tokunaga, RS (2010). Following You Home from School: A Critical Review and Synthesis of Research on Cyberbullying Victimization. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(3): 277-287.

51 UN news, A third of young people polled by UN, report being a victim of online bullying, 4 September 2019. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/10455>

52 Pew research center, Social networking sites and politics, March 2012. Available at: <https://www.pewinternet.org/2012/03/12/social-networking-sites-and-politics/>

53 European Institute for Gender Equality, Cyberbullying restricts young women’s voice online, 11 October 2018. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/news/cyberbullying-restricts-young-womens-voices-online>

Online Gender Based Violence

In general, there is a marked difference in male mobility online and use of Internet compared to females worldwide that should also be considered⁵⁴. This digital gap between genders is increasing, especially in the Global South, leading to the exclusion of women. Women in particular experience high levels of cyberbullying and gender based violence online⁵⁵. In Palestine, one in three women experience gender based violence online. Women are often pressured by family members to disengage from political participation online. As one of the participants from the Gaza focus groups discussions said “I was participating writing blogs, articles and posts, and I received many threats from some people on Facebook who they know someone in [Ministry of] Interior... the family sat with me and said do not write these posts, you are a girl and they will arrest you, so now I took a break due to the amount of pressure, and I heard many stories about girls receiving threats, insults and slander, so I took a break in the meantime.” In Palestine, as 7amleh Center’s earlier research showed, the gender gap is growing and an increasing number of Palestinian females are withdrawing from public spaces and political engagement online and preferring more private methods of communication.⁵⁶ This is in response to gender based violence online which includes different types of harassment and abuse.

Regulation of Freedom of Expression Online

The issue of regulating freedom of expression is highly debated on local and international levels. While this study was limited in its ability to review this issue, according to a recent poll carried out by UNICEF and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Protection of Children, some 32% of those polled believed governments should end cyberbullying, 31% put the onus on young people themselves to stop the harassment and 29% cited internet companies as bearing the chief responsibility⁵⁷. From the focus group discussion participants, nearly 70% of Palestinian youth supported some legal restrictions and regulations on freedom of expression as a way to make the online environment safer. Their discussion included a desire for regulation that would protect privacy online and limit hate speech and cyberbullying online. Focus group participants were aware of the need for monitoring of neutral parties to ensure that laws would not be used to further repress freedom of expression online. These findings can be understood to show not that youth are supportive of censorship, but that they are seeking a safe space for freedom of expression without fear of negative consequences.

54 Pew Research Center (2018). Global Social Media Tech Usage. Available at: www.pewglobal.org/2018/06/19/3-social-network-adoption-varies-widely-by-country/

55 7amleh (2018). “A Violent Network: Gender-Based Violence Against Palestinian Women in Virtual Space.” Available at: <https://7amleh.org/2018/11/22/one-third-of-palestinian-young-women-are-subjected-to-violence-and-harassment-on-the-internet/>

56 Ibid

57 A Third of Young People Polled by UN, Report Being Victims of Online Bullying. UN NEWS (September 2019). Accessed at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1045532>

Conclusion

The findings of the report emphasize the direct impact of the legal and political environment on Palestinian youths' political participation online. In fact, the findings strongly support a theory of online chilling effects on Palestinian internet users as well as secondary forms of chilling. To date, many Palestinians have experienced different forms of violations to their right to freedom of expression online, including, arrests, interrogations, content taken down, and online harassment. Furthermore, a secondary chilling effect is also taking place, in which the repression of journalists and influencers, as well as friends and family, is leading to further self-censorship and political disengagement online. This self-censorship for fear of consequences of political participation on personal safety and on the educational and professional future, contributes to an overall shrinking of Palestinian civic space.

Recommendations

In this period when the Palestinian people continue to face serious and ongoing violations of their basic human rights and their rights as a people, and where they are still under occupation, facing blockade, suffering from fragmentation, and instability in the region, there is a great significance for protecting the right of expression in the digital sphere.

Advocacy

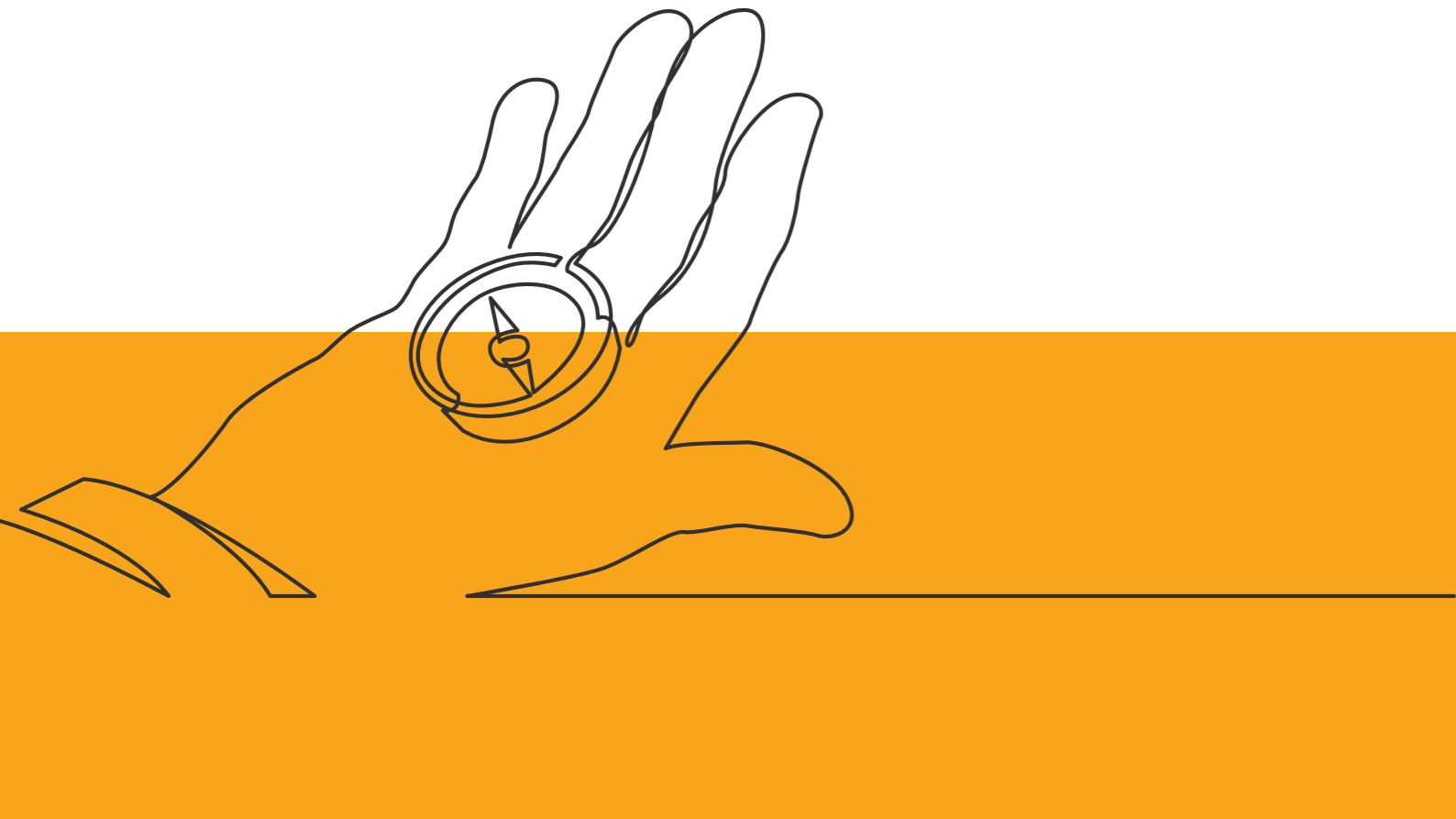
- Governments to protect the rights of young people to express themselves online and to be engaged for democratic political participation in social media.
- Actively encourage greater youth participation in digital activism and political participation; through campaigning or initiatives that will enable them to safely participate in political discourse.
- Encourage political participation online as a form of volunteerism and civic engagement that can encourage youth to be active citizens and drivers of change.
- Encourage youth to advocate for human rights, including digital rights.

Research

- Encourage further research on youth political participation online and in social media.

Capacity Building

- Support youth led campaigning efforts, citizen journalism and activism as a check on their governing bodies' way to demand their rights.
- Provide youth with the digital security skills needed to engage online in a safer way.
- Provide subsidized grants for youth to develop campaigns and be politically engaged online.
- Provide workshops to young people educating them on their digital human rights under international and national law, and appropriate means of ensuring their rights are met.



About 7amleh Center

7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media is a non-profit organization focused on protecting the human rights of Palestinians in the online space. Our programmes build the capacity of Palestinians to safely access the internet, run effective digital campaigns and advocate for digital rights. 7amleh Center's team works across Jerusalem, Gaza, the West Bank and Israel and regularly participate in international forums with local and international partners. For a summary of our work, please see our annual report.

Trainings & Workshops: Working with civil society organizations, grassroots initiatives, media professionals, human rights defenders and activists to strengthen their digital security, campaigning and digital campaigning capacity. 7amleh has trained hundreds of people in Palestine and throughout the MENA region. In 2018, 7amleh conducted a digital security training of trainers and trained more than 1,500 youth in digital security and several organizations in campaigning, digital marketing and digital storytelling. We have also produced training materials including an educational gender sensitive training package on digital security and one of the first digital security manuals in Arabic.

Campaigning: Coordinating and managing advocacy and awareness campaigns, utilizing digital resources, on various issues related to Palestinian rights. 7amleh is an expert in developing and producing campaigns that raises awareness of the public about a wide range of issues impacting marginalized and vulnerable communities. 7amleh has produced several digital campaigns that include research reports, infographics, videos and other materials. This includes Planting Seeds in Area C (Union of Agricultural Workers), Public Awareness Campaign about Digital Security (Deutsche Welle Academy), Lights On Gaza (Oxfam) among others. In particular, we have experience designing gender sensitive campaigns and media content for the Palestinian public. This included an online campaign in 2018, with 2 web episodes that reached approximately 120,000 people and contributed to raising awareness about the issue of GBV online. We have also produced a pilot web series about digital security targeting women.

Research & Advocacy: 7amleh Center and its partners research and document how the digital rights of Palestinians are impacted by governmental and private sector entities which serves as a basis for our advocacy work with local and international partners. On an annual basis we monitor and publish

Hashtag Palestine (2017, 2018), a report on Palestinian digital rights, and the Index of Racism (2017 - 2019). In 2018, we also conducted research focused on Palestinian ICT Infrastructure Under Israeli Control, Palestine and PayPal, Gender Based Violence Against Palestinian Women in Digital Space and Mapping Segregation Endangering Palestinian Human Rights (2018). We also regularly prepare mini-campaigns related to our work i.e. a recent campaign about Google Maps, policy briefs on Shrinking Palestinian Space (2018) and Content Moderation Policies (2018) and brief tech companies, diplomats, journalists and members of civil society on issues related to our work.

Palestine Digital Activism Forum: The Palestine Digital Activism Forum is an annual week-long event that brings together activists, journalists, civil society, policy makers, and tech companies for multi-stakeholder dialogue, knowledge sharing and skill building. Now approaching it's fourth year, last year the PDAF attracted an audience of around 700 people, in addition to 40 local and international experts who spoke on panels at the main event and led 20 workshops throughout the week. Topics included digital rights, security and campaigning in Palestine and global digital rights developments. It also showcased inspirational projects and case studies of successful digital activism.

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