

The Role of Palestinian Media in Resisting the Occupation

Mohammed Awni Abu Oun

Introduction

The Israeli occupation utilized its entire influential tools in achieving its objectives, building its entity, and making itself a reality in the center of the Arab and Islamic region. In addition, it used all forms of soft, harsh and military methods to finalize its project through controlling the mind and culture of the occupied, and trying to change the Arabs' rejection of its existence through affecting the perspective of the Arabs towards it and its crimes.

The occupation's objectives for using media as a tool for intellectual conquest varied long before 1948. The occupation aimed to address the internal communities (i.e. the Palestinians) inside the occupied lands, the external ones (i.e. the neighboring Arab countries), and the international public opinion.

Similarly, the Palestinian media structure bore huge responsibility defending the Palestinian people and rights, and awakening the national sense within the Palestinian and Arab societies in the fight against the Israeli propaganda. The Palestinian media followed up with the developments and advancements that occurred to the Palestinian people ever since the emergence of the concept of modern media. It used all sorts of media outlets - written, visual and audible - in order to serve the cause.

This study addresses the emergence and development of Palestinian media, its role in serving the Palestinian cause and fighting the occupation's propaganda, and the occupation's efforts to silence the Palestinian voice.

Topic One: Emergence and Development of Palestinian Media

The Palestinian media outlets first emerged in the late 19th century, and developed later to follow up with key events that happened to the Palestinian people – beginning with the Jewish immigration and Balfour Declaration, all through the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate and British occupation to the 1948 Nakba and occupation. The most important stops in the development of Palestinian media are summarized into the following:

1. The Ottoman Era

Newspapers first appeared as a media tool when the first Ottoman law was enforced to regulate the work of newspapers in 1865. Al-Quds Al-Sharif and Al-Ghazal Newspapers were the very first Palestinian newspapers to be issued in 1876 after this law was enacted. Later, more laws that regulate the work of the newspapers in the Ottoman Empire were also enforced⁽¹⁾.

As the number of Jewish migrants to Palestine increased and the concept of the Zionist project was further clarified, Palestinian publications and newspapers increased as well so that in 1908 alone ten newspapers were issued in four months⁽²⁾; which marks a great rate at that time. The total number of newspapers which were issued before 1914 reached 36, but after the First World War and until the British occupation of Palestine in 1917 they stopped⁽³⁾.

2. The British Occupation

During the first few years of the British occupation, the Palestinian press sector suffered from complete shutdown. However, the work of the newspapers and magazines was reorganized by the British forces in 1919, giving the Palestinians limited freedom of press. 18 newspapers emerged in two years only; two were for the Jewish settlers and one governmental newspaper (Palestine official newspaper). The

⁽¹⁾ Talib, Musa, the Palestinian-Israeli Media Conflict, Al-Azhar University, Gaza, 2008, p.5.

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁾ Al-Astal, Mohammed and Al-Laham Atiya, IUG Students' Attitudes Towards Reading Palestine daily newspaper, Graduation research – the Islamic University, 2020, p.21.

Palestinian journalistic work at the time was based on exerting great efforts against the British occupation and the Jewish migration⁽⁴⁾.

As the Zionist threat increased in Palestine, the number of newspapers and magazines that warn against the Zionist threats and British efforts exerted to facilitate the occupation of Palestine increased as well⁽⁵⁾.

Publications and journalistic work were revolutionary in nature, reinforcing national belonging and demanding the departure of the British occupation and settlers⁽⁶⁾. The revolution reached its peak in 1929 after the revolutions had erupted in Palestine protesting against the British occupation and Jewish migration. The number of newspapers at the time reached 54 newspapers⁽⁷⁾.

At the same time, Britain worked hard to fight the Palestinian newspapers and magazines, shutting down a huge number of them under the pretext of being inciting and publishing national Palestinian content. Despite all the attempts to restrict their work, the Palestinian newspapers' work developed to a certain extent. Palestine newspaper became a daily publication in 1929; then, other more specialized newspapers appeared. For examples, newspapers specialized in politics, economy, cinema, agriculture and others emerged in 1933⁽⁸⁾.

Although the work in the newspapers was well-organized, the British restrictions limited the capability of the Palestinian press which was prevented from development and expansion. The British issued laws and amendments that criminalized any publications that fought the British and Zionist presence in Palestine, whether directly stated or indirectly. The economic crisis from which the national movement suffered

⁽⁴⁾ Thaher, Ahmed, the Role of Palestinian Media in Supporting the Diplomatic Efforts in Recognizing the State from the Perspective of Palestinian Media Elite, MA thesis – Al-Aqsa University, 2017, p. 62.

⁽⁵⁾ Abu Shanab, Hussein, the Palestinian Media in Light of Political and Technological Factors: Its Reality, Challenges and Future, Zaman Press, 2014, <http://zamnpress.com/content/46934>.

⁽⁶⁾ Shahin, Ahmed, the Role of Media in Supporting the Palestinian Cause, Mechanisms of Reinforcing International Media Solidarity with the Palestinian people, Donya Al-Watan, 2015, <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2015/12/18/834281.html>

⁽⁷⁾ Ibid: Talib, the Palestinian-Israeli Media Conflict, p.6.

⁽⁸⁾ Ibid: Al-Laham, IUG Students' Attitudes Towards Reading Palestine daily newspaper, p.25.

after failing in the revolution, and the eruption of the Second World War added more pressure on and minimalized the Palestinian press work⁽⁹⁾.

The conditions of journalistic work slightly improved in Palestine from 1945-1948 as the Second World War came to an end. About 68 newspapers were issued in 3 years only. The British biased attitude was clear as they fought and closed down tens of Palestinian newspapers and magazines, giving more room for the Jewish newspapers⁽¹⁰⁾.

In addition to the work of the newspapers and magazines, one Palestinian radio broadcast was founded 'Huna Al-Quds' (This is Al-Quds) airing from Al-Quds. It was founded in 1936 and its broadcast continued until 1948. It was then bombarded by Zionist gangs, so it relocated to Ramallah. Soon after, it became part of the Jordanian government and formed the seed of what is known as the Jordanian radio⁽¹¹⁾.

3. From 1948-1967

The Palestinian Nakba in 1948 was a turning point in the work of the Palestinian media. The Palestinian people were displaced and removed from their lands, and the united work was completely broken. This did not last long as some newspapers reestablished their work and started issuing their publications from their new offices in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This period of time witnessed more national orientation that followed up with the Nakba and raised the Palestinian political awareness of the people⁽¹²⁾.

Despite the hard work and efforts to revive the Palestinian journalistic work, the Palestinian newspapers soon submitted to Egypt's policies in the Gaza Strip and the Kingdom of Jordan in the West Bank.

⁽⁹⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Ibid: Talib, the Palestinian-Israeli Media Conflict, p.8.

⁽¹¹⁾ Ibid: p.9.

⁽¹²⁾ Ibid: Thaher, Ahmed, the Role of Palestinian Media in Supporting the Diplomatic Efforts in Recognizing the State from the Perspective of Palestinian Media Elite, MA thesis – Al-Aqsa University, p.63.

4. From 1967 - 1994

In this period of time, the second Nakba (or the Naksa) took place in 1967. The rest of the Palestinian lands, including Golan and Sinai, were occupied and the Palestinian media became less capable of working well as the occupation was fierce and barbaric. The latter imposed censorship and restrictions on the Palestinian media outlets, forcing some of the institutions to work outside Palestine for more freedom⁽¹³⁾.

Media work in Palestine was divided into two main types:

A- Media inside occupied Palestine:

Journalistic work stopped for sometime after the 1967 Naksa, but it later started and spread in the occupied lands of Palestine. These institutions suffered from the occupation's control and restrictions due to the Israeli laws that fought the Palestinian national content, and set difficult conditions on the foundation and distribution of newspapers, magazines and books.

The Palestinian press answered to three Israeli censorship authorities:

- The Israeli civil administration.
- The Israeli Intelligence.
- The Israeli army.

Some of the most prominent newspapers that worked under the Israeli occupation are Al-Sha'b, Al-Fajr, and Al-Jamahir which functioned together and fed the revolutionary feelings inside the Palestinians at the same time of the launch of Fatah movement and the PLO⁽¹⁴⁾.

The Intifada Media

As the Second Intifada started in 1987, a new type of media called 'Intifada Media' appeared. It was primary and far from modern systems or periodic publication. Its main purpose was to support the resistance and the Intifada events at the time. Its most prominent tools were:

⁽¹³⁾ Ibid: Talib, the Palestinian-Israeli Media Conflict, p. 13.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Ibid: pp. 13-15.

- ❖ Statements: Distribution of statements was the resistance' main communicational channel to the public and was distributed by the masked or the fighters.
- ❖ Graffiti: Drawings or phrases painted on the walls that expressed the resistance' vision and decisions and were later more organized.
- ❖ Banners: Huge pieces of clothing that used to be hanged in the streets and had the same function as the graffiti.
- ❖ Flyers: They usually had the pictures of the martyrs or called for events sponsored by the resistance factions (like festivals and martyrs' farewell ceremonies)⁽¹⁵⁾.

B- Diaspora media:

The Palestinians abroad shouldered the responsibility of supporting the efforts the Palestinian media exerted inside the occupied lands. They established several magazines and periodicals that were issued and distributed in the Arab countries to give voice to the Palestinian revolution and to function as a spokesperson on behalf of the occupied Palestinian people. Some examples are Al-Hadaf, Al-Hurria, Falastin Al-Thawar, Al-Thawra Al-Falastiniya, and Samed which were issued from Beirut in Lebanon⁽¹⁶⁾.

5. From 1994-2000

After Oslo and the PA's entry to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, media work changed from revolutionary to official. The PA organized the work of the media outlets, be it written, audible or visual; and imposed its own media policy that noticeably restricted freedom of press.

Still, new outlets were introduced inside Palestine. The first TV channel was opened in 1994 along with other channels. Palestinian satellite channel was opened in 1999⁽¹⁷⁾.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibid: pp. 28-63.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ibid: pp. 18-28.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Palestine TV and Palestine Satellite Channel: Its Finances and Programs' Policies, the Independent Commission for Human Rights, special series of reports 22, May 2003, p.2.

6. Post Al-Aqsa Intifada 2000

The Palestinian media continued to follow up with the field developments which started in September 2000 under the name ‘Al-Aqsa Intifada’. The events were quickly changing and the performance of the official Palestinian media led by the PA was clearly weak⁽¹⁸⁾. The need for developing the media discourse to be revolutionary once more resurfaced; mainly to meet the aspirations of the Palestinian public and the events of the Intifada⁽¹⁹⁾.

As a result, Al-Aqsa broadcast was established in 2003 and presented a revolutionary model that works side by side with the ongoing Intifada. It also worked alongside other national radio stations and TV channels⁽²⁰⁾.

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⁽¹⁸⁾ Taha, Al-Mutawakil, Media and the Palestinian Cause, Falestinona website, 2017, <http://www.falestinona.com/flst/Art/85674#gsc.tab=0>.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Media and the Palestinian Cause: Integration and Role of the Journalist, Fatah’s media website, 2007, <https://www.fateh-gaza.com/post/146583>.

⁽²⁰⁾ Thaher, Ibrahim, Al-Aqsa Media Network, an interview the researcher conducted on June 8, 2020.

Topic Two: Types of Palestinian Media Outlets

The Palestinian media outlets have greatly developed since their establishment. However, this development was hindered by the occupation's practices to minimize and restrict the media in order to prevent it from toppling its plans or efforts to occupy Palestine.

The Palestinian media was determined to move forward with its role in serving the cause and the community. The Palestinian media worked hard in order to reach the greatest number of communities internally and internationally, and tried to introduce the Palestinian cause to them and defend the rights of the Palestinian people. The media outlets diversified into several types and developed during the years of conflict with the occupation. These outlets include:

1. Written Press:

This type encompasses newspapers, magazines and periodicals. The Palestinian media followed up with the written press ever since it first spread in the late Ottoman era. The PLO founded a research center that issued the Palestinian Affairs magazine in 1971⁽²¹⁾. The development in the written press continued until a huge number of publications was released; the most important of these publications are Al-Haya Al-Jadida, Al-Quds, Al-Ayyam, Palestine and Al-Resalah⁽²²⁾.

2. Audio Press:

Audio press includes radio stations. The first radio station was in 1936 when Huna Al-Quds radio broadcast during the British occupation⁽²³⁾. Soon after, other radio stations such as the PLO's Palestine Voice aired in Cairo and Damascus⁽²⁴⁾. The stations started covering other topics including politics, economy and art to meet the needs of

⁽²¹⁾ Mousa, Emad, the Official Palestinian Media Between the Challenges of Reality and Aspirations of the Future, the Research Center, the PLO, p.2.

⁽²²⁾ Turban, Majid, the Palestinian Press and Its Development, Dr. Majid Turban website, 2010, <https://majed1975.wordpress.com/2010/04/18/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7/>.

⁽²³⁾ Ibid: Talib, the Palestinian-Israeli Media Conflict, p.9.

⁽²⁴⁾ Ibid: pp. 12-13.

all listeners. Currently, Al-Aqsa Voice, Al-Quds Voice and Al Hurria are the most common⁽²⁵⁾.

3. Visual Press:

The visual press was first introduced after the establishment of the PA in 1994. After a little while, Palestine TV was established and the first satellite channel was opened in 1999⁽²⁶⁾. Other channels were opened; examples are Al-Aqsa, Al-Quds, Al-Awda and others⁽²⁷⁾.

4. Electronic Press:

The Palestinian media was distinguished for its continuous follow-up with modern media outlets. As the internet spread, the Palestinian media embraced new outlets and platforms. A huge number of electronic pages that advocate the Palestinian cause were launched. Examples are Wafa Agency⁽²⁸⁾, the Palestinian Information Center⁽²⁹⁾, and Palestinapedia⁽³⁰⁾ which provide a detailed archive of the events and incidents that have been happening in Palestine.

Digital media became prominent as well. The outlets published their websites and live broadcast online while still working offline⁽³¹⁾ reaching the largest number of people worldwide⁽³²⁾.

⁽²⁵⁾ Al-Muqayyid, Suheil, Al-Quds Voice Radio Station, an interview the researcher conducted on June 9, 2020.

⁽²⁶⁾ Ibid: Palestine TV and Palestine Satellite Channel: Its Finances and Programs' Policies, p.2.

⁽²⁷⁾ Ibid: Thaher, Al-Aqsa Media Network, an interview the researcher conducted on June 8, 2020.

⁽²⁸⁾ Wafa Agency, <http://info.wafa.ps/>.

⁽²⁹⁾ The Palestine Information Center, <https://www.palinfo.com/>.

⁽³⁰⁾ Palestinapedia, <https://www.palestinapedia.net/>

⁽³¹⁾ Mubarak, Rimah, Shehab Network, an interview the researcher conducted on June 7, 2020.

⁽³²⁾ Hijazi, Maher, the Palestinian Resistance Media and Its Impact on the International Public Opinion, the Palestinian Information Center, 2016, <https://majed1975.wordpress.com/2010/04/18/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A9->

Topic Three: Role of Palestinian Media in Resisting the Occupation

The Palestinian media outlets were essential to the resistance against the occupation. They raised awareness among the people and encouraged confronting the Zionist media efforts. The Palestinian media worked on presenting the Palestinian vision from a Palestinian national perspective; and fighting off the Zionist narrative and lies which falsify history.

The Palestinian media duties included:

1. Introducing the cause and the Palestinian rights.
2. Documenting and exposing the occupation's crimes⁽³³⁾.
3. Encouraging people to resist the occupation and defend the land.
4. Lifting up the spirit of the Palestinians and protecting and strengthening the internal front.
5. Facing Israeli rumors and propaganda.
6. Reporting the internal status of the Palestinian issue and external relations⁽³⁴⁾.

Another type of media emerged under the name 'resistance media' which supported the resistance work through:

1. Introducing the resistance and presenting its opinion and vision.
2. Refuting the allegations and lies of the occupation and its alleged accomplishments.
3. Lifting the spirit of the internal Palestinian front through building a communication channel between the resistance and its public.
4. Misleading the occupation's forces.

⁽³³⁾ Awda, Nour, Media and Its Importance in Serving the Palestinian Cause, Basaer Online Network, 2015, <https://basaer-online.com/2015/10/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%88-%D8%A3%D9%87%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%87-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AE%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7/>.

⁽³⁴⁾ Bin Jaddu, Ghassan, Resistance as a Strategic Option for the Nation: the Media, Media and Resistance at Time of Challenges Conference, the Arab National Congress, <http://arabnc.org/details.php?id=422?cid=140&tohide=13>

5. Breaching the enemy's front and bringing down its spirit.
6. Mobilizing the Arab and Islamic public opinion that supports the Palestinian cause⁽³⁵⁾.

Israeli Restrictions:

The Palestinian media exercised pressure on the occupation throughout the years. It had become a real opponent that exposes the Zionist lying machine. The Palestinian outlets worked on correcting the national concepts and terms which were presented deceitfully by the occupation in what serves its project.

The efforts exerted by the media concerned the Zionist security organization. As a result, the latter imposed restrictions on the work of the Palestinian media using all means available and possible. They even used murder and direct targeting as tools. Other forms include⁽³⁶⁾:

1. Closing down institutions and withdrawing permits⁽³⁷⁾.
2. Confiscating work devices and equipment.
3. Stalling the issuance of permits.
4. Bombing and targeting work locations⁽³⁸⁾.
5. Targeting and killing crewmembers⁽³⁹⁾.
6. Hacking⁽⁴⁰⁾.
7. Blocking access to social media websites⁽⁴¹⁾.

⁽³⁵⁾ Thuraya, Mohammed, Managing Resistance Media at Time of War: Al-Aqsa Channel as a Case Study, MA thesis – the Islamic University of Gaza, 2010, pp. 48-50.

⁽³⁶⁾ Abu Shumar, Tawfiq, the Palestinian Media and the Right to Return, p.1.

⁽³⁷⁾ Khrais, Rami, Al-Resalah newspaper, an interview conducted by the researcher on June 7, 2020.

⁽³⁸⁾ RASGON, ADAM, Israeli strike levels headquarters of Hamas-affiliated TV station in Gaza, The Times of Israel, 12 November 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-strike-levels-headquarters-of-hamas-affiliated-tv-station-in-gaza/>.

⁽³⁹⁾ Yasser Mortaja, Israel-Palestine Timeline, April 6, 2018, <https://israelpalestinetimeline.org/yassar-mortaja/>.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Violations Against Freedom of Speech and Press Work in the Gaza Strip from June 1, 2008 until December 31, 2008, Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, Gaza, 2008, p.26.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Abu Shammala, Mofeed, Palestine Newspaper, an interview conducted by the researcher on June 3, 2020.

Palestinian Media Efforts in Overcoming Challenges

The Israeli targeting of the Palestinian media posed a great challenge and cost the Palestinians their lives, properties and media equipment especially the past few years. For a while, the occupation has been carrying out a barbaric campaign that aims to silence the Palestinian voice which actively contributed to the exposure of the occupation's crimes and failure of limiting the Palestinian rights and attempts to manipulate the Islamic and Arab public's awareness⁽⁴²⁾.

The Palestinian media outlets have always tried to overcome any obstacles the occupation places in their way. Every journalistic institution now considers itself a soldier that takes part in the battle against the occupation. The Palestinian media even took certain measures in order to maintain the flow of its work; it:

1. Made plans for emergencies and times of war.
2. Prepared alternate locations should the workplace be targeted.
3. Doubled the work equipment and broadcasting tools in order to resume work immediately in case of any targeting.
4. Worked with the least number of crewmembers at critical times in order to reduce the losses in case of any targeting.
5. Changed the names and logos of the institutions to bypass the online blocking.
6. Employed technical crews to keep the websites and webpages protected from cyber-attacks⁽⁴³⁾.

⁽⁴²⁾ Marouf, Salama, the Government's Information Center, an interview conducted by the researcher on June 2, 2020.

⁽⁴³⁾ Ibid: Thaher, an interview carried out by the researcher on June 8, 2020.

Conclusion

The future of the Palestinian media is closely connected to its capability of developing its potentials and expertise, shouldering the national responsibility to serve the Palestinian cause and rights. Despite all the obstacles, the media successfully managed to develop its tools depending on people's exerted efforts.

This development, however, is not enough especially amidst the Israeli propaganda and the occupation's exceptional efforts to fight off the Palestinian media work.

The Palestinian media outlets seek to develop their performance and capabilities through making plans, setting budgets and qualifying young crews⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Findings

Following are the findings of the study:

1. The Palestinian media played a major role in advocating the Palestinian cause.
2. The Palestinian media outlets greatly developed and reported the conflict with the occupation throughout the years.
3. The Palestinian media had different types of tools and outlets.
4. The Palestinian media is still somewhat weak in comparison with the Israeli media machine.
5. The Israeli occupation constitutes a major role in slowing down the development and work of the Palestinian media because it restricts it and prevents its advancement.
6. The Palestinian media presents a heroic example of determination to expose the Israeli crimes despite the latter's restrictions and targeting.

Recommendations

This study recommends:

1. Developing Palestinian media outlets considering the important role they play in serving the Palestinian cause.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Ibid: Abu Shammala, an interview carried out by the researcher on June 3, 2020.

2. Making a national strategy that is based on advocating and supporting the Palestinian rights and constants.
3. Improving the Palestinian media discourse and its channels in order to become international and leave a positive impact on the Palestinian cause.
4. Filing lawsuits against the occupation's continuous violations against the freedom of press.



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