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# **Palestinian Freelance Journalists**

**- self-censorship, customers and role in society**

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*“Inside of every local journalist there is a freelance journalist waiting to get out”*

*-Ibrahim*

*“People have the right to know the truth, and through my picture, I want to put the truth in front of the people.”*

*-Gadi*

## **Thank you...**

...to all respondents, interpreters and friends in Palestine. A special thanks to Tarneem Zughaier at Filatiniyat, the Amireh family in Ni'lin, Abdul Karim Dalbah and Neta Golan of the International Solidarity Movement, Abed Omar Qusini, Kholod Shaban and all who kept us well fed and safe during our stay in Palestine.

# Abstract

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**Purpose/ Aim:** The aim of the study is to map and analyse the working conditions, possibilities and limitations of Palestinian freelance journalists..

**Main results:** By analysing the answers of our respondents we have concluded that the main possibility with the working conditions of Palestinian freelance journalists is their flexibility. As long as they are financially safe (for example from working another job) they can be more straightforward and uncompromising in their journalism. Freelance journalists are however limited by the financial scarcity of the Palestinian media that don't pay them enough and offer lacking support. Feeling excluded from the union is also something that specifically affects the freelance journalists and might make them feel more vulnerable. There is therefore a slight paradox inherent in the situation of the Palestinian freelancer: they have the opportunity to do good and critical journalism, but only if they can support themselves financially in some other way.

Another finding of this study is that freelance journalists may alter their implications of professional ideals such as objectivity and neutrality when they work with foreign news desks. Working with this kind of customers also provides a way of expressing oneself with less fear of repercussions from differing factors in Palestinian society that might want to silence dissent.

**Keywords:** Palestine, journalism, freelance journalism, journalistic ideals, the West Bank, Palestinian Authority, objectivity, independence, autonomy, self-censorship, Palestinian media landscape, Arab press systems.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The democratic situation in Palestine is under constant pressure from a number of directions. As if the ongoing conflict<sup>1</sup> with Israel wasn't enough there is a division between Fatah and Hamas splitting the Palestinian community in two and there has not been an election since the painful division almost ten years ago. One important aspect of building sustainable democracy lies in ensuring freedom of speech and freedom of the press.<sup>2</sup> When it comes to freedom of the press, Palestine has been notoriously lacking according to a number of indexes. Reporters Without Borders rank Palestine on number 140 out of 180, below countries such as Indonesia and Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> Freedom House deems the situation of the press in Palestine to be "Not free" and gives the area a score of 82 on a scale where 0 is the best imaginable press freedom and 100 the worst.<sup>4</sup>

Palestinian journalists are subject to harassment from the Israeli occupation forces as well as their own government according to groups surveying the rights of journalists in the region, such as Reporters Without Borders<sup>5</sup> and Palestinian Center for Development & Media Freedom - MADA.<sup>6</sup> Under this pressure a culture of self-censorship and disguised bias has flourished in the Palestinian media. According to Reporters Without Borders, West Bank journalists refrain from topics such as religion, honour violence and the shortcomings of high ranking politicians for fear of repercussions.<sup>7</sup> Mats Tiborn, in a previous study of Palestinian journalists, concludes that self-censorship is an issue in Palestinian media. He writes that almost all of his respondents bring up the fact that they sometimes choose not to report on certain issues, because they fear what might happen to them if they do. Though an embrace of universal journalistic ideals such as objectivity and neutrality are present in the minds of Tiborn's respondents the complexity of their situation has led to a practice that diverges from these ideals.<sup>8</sup> Most Palestinian news desks are in one way or another connected to political organizations and the loyalty of their reporters are therefore often aligned to this political organization.<sup>9</sup> Many of the journalists in Tiborn's study think that it should be the role of the press to scrutinize politicians and other wielders of power in Palestinian society

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<sup>1</sup> The word "conflict" is problematic to many Palestinians since it implies two parties that are fighting on equal terms and that a word like occupation or colonization is closer to the truth of what is going on in Palestine. In this essay we will however refer to the situation as a conflict in order not to confuse the reader.

<sup>2</sup> Färdigh, M. *What's the use of a free media?*, 2013, passim

<sup>3</sup> World Press Freedom index, [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>4</sup> West Bank and Gaza Strip, Freedom House, [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>5</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides*, 2014-06 [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>6</sup> Media freedom violations in Palestine in January 2015 [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>7</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides*, 2014-06 [Retrieved: 2015-04-17]

<sup>8</sup> Tiborn, M. *The democratic ideals among the Palestinian journalists*, 2011 p. 60-63

<sup>9</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides* 2014-06 [Retrieved: 2015-04-17]

but in practice many hesitate to investigate politicians, and especially the president. This is in some cases due to fear of harassment or arrest and in other cases caused by feelings of loyalty to the Palestinian cause.<sup>10</sup>

The objective of this study is to map the possibilities and limitations of Palestinian freelance journalists. We want to examine the working conditions of Palestinian freelance journalists since journalism is important to building democracy<sup>11</sup> and since freelance journalists are in a very special position due to their flexible nature of the profession. The professional life of the freelance journalist is full of both possibilities and limitations and we will in this essay map these possibilities and limitations within the context of Palestine. We have chosen Palestine since professional journalism there still is a fairly new phenomenon and since the situation of Palestine is a fairly unique one politically due to the ongoing conflict and the political turmoil inside Palestinian society. Drawing on a study by Amal Jamal, we could see that the political situation had an important role in the media landscape<sup>12</sup>.

Previous research by Mats Tiborn has mapped a lot of difficulties for Palestinian journalists but there is still a need to look more closely at the freelance journalists who are economically vulnerable but also might possess an opportunity to greater freedom than regular journalists. Examining the working conditions of Palestinian freelance journalists might therefore give us knowledge about one of the most vulnerable groups within international journalism and a greater understanding of the workings of journalism under pressure.

## 1.1 Background

In this section we will give a brief introduction of the Palestinian media landscape in order to offer an understanding of the structural conditions under which Palestinian freelance journalists are active. To understand the Palestinian media landscape we must however also have some basic knowledge of the geopolitical reality that it exists within as well as the restrictions to freedom of the press and democracy that are currently in place in Palestine. For a brief timeline of important political events in Palestine, we refer you to appendix 1.

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<sup>10</sup> Tiborn, M. *The democratic ideals among the palestinian journalists*, 2011 p. 31-35

<sup>11</sup> Färdig, M. *What's the use of a free media?*, 2013, passim

<sup>12</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001, passim

### 1.1.1 The Palestinian media landscape - structural conditions

Palestine is divided into two geographically separated areas: Gaza and the West bank. Since the latest Palestinian election in January of 2006, in which the Islamic movement Hamas came out as the winner, there has been a schism within Palestinian society. The outcome of the election was not recognized by parts of the international community as Hamas is considered by some actors to be a terrorist organization. In the end, this schism led to Gaza being controlled by Hamas and the West Bank by Fatah (the second biggest party in the 2006 election and traditionally the biggest power factor within the PLO).<sup>13</sup> Thus freedom of the press also varies between the two regions. In the West Bank freedom of the press is granted in article 27 of the Palestinian Basic Law<sup>14</sup>, but many organizations such as Reporters Without Borders state that the reality is something quite different. The Hamas regime in Gaza is more authoritarian and harsher to journalists according to Freedom House.<sup>15</sup> Another law regulating freedom of the press in Palestine is the Palestinian Press Law. This law is also very liberally phrased but contains a few exceptions from the freedom of expression. Most notable of these are paragraphs 8 and 37A which can be interpreted in a number of ways in order to restrict the freedom of journalists. Paragraph 37A for example prohibits journalists from publishing anything that might “cause harm to the national unity”.<sup>16</sup> In general the study of law in Palestine is difficult since there are so many different sets of laws that might apply in different situations. During our research we have come in contact with rather contradictory information concerning laws and we have not deemed it the topic of this study to go too deep into what laws actually apply.

The West Bank is also in part controlled by the Israeli military since the Six-days war of 1967 which affects journalists active in the area in a number of ways. Reporters Without Borders list three categories of problems with the military occupation that impede the freedom of the press in the West Bank: (1) the press becoming military targets, (2) threats to the physical well-being of journalists and (3) restrictions to freedom of movement.<sup>17</sup> The construction of barriers and checkpoints in the West Bank by the Israeli army has become a serious problem to the Palestinian economy as it restricts freedom of movement<sup>18</sup> and this is something that hinders journalists in doing their job.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, *Conflicts in the Middle East Since 1945*, 2008 p.35

<sup>14</sup> The Palestinian basic law, Ramallah, 2003-03-18, [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>15</sup> West Bank and Gaza Strip, Freedom House, [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>16</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001 p. 273-274

<sup>17</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides*, 2014-06 [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>18</sup> Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, *Conflicts in the Middle East Since 1945*, 2008 p.35

<sup>19</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides*, 2014-06 [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]



The situation in Palestine has been given a lot of attention by the international press. But the area is not only flooded with international reporters. In a relatively small area with 4,4 million Palestinian inhabitants there are also an estimated 2.000 Palestinian journalists.<sup>20</sup> According to the European Neighbourhood Journalism Network there are about 30 radio stations in the West Bank<sup>21</sup> but Reporters Without Borders claim that the number is closer to 60. In addition there are a dozen television channels and about 30 newspapers and online news agencies.<sup>22</sup>

The Journalist Syndicate is the union for journalists in Palestine, but is not open for everyone. The syndicate have several conditions for their membership, among them a certificate from your education and also a minimum of five years experience within the profession. This, according the the union is to make sure that only professional journalists get to be a part of the union. Establishing a norm for professionalism seems important to them.<sup>23</sup> If you get to be a member there are rules of ethics formed by the union. The rules, called *Code of professional conduct*, include, among other things, general principles about freedom of the press and democracy. There are also rules about how to review all the material you find and never manipulate or hide any information. Under the title *Obligations to society* there's also information about the importance of privacy against the source regarding names, pictures and guidance how to treat a source.<sup>24</sup>

## 1.2 In this study...

We seek to go deeper into the world of Palestinian freelance journalists working conditions and examine their possibilities and limitations closer than has been previously done. We wish to see if they are more vulnerable or free than regular journalists. The Palestinian context is interesting even to the external reader because it gives a good example of journalism working under pressure. Palestinian journalism is also a relatively new phenomenon still under development and the journalists are navigating a conflict zone while under occupation.

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<sup>20</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides*, 2014-06 p. 4 [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>21</sup> Tiborn, M. *The democratic ideals among the palestinian journalists*, 2011 p. 16-17

<sup>22</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides*, 2014-06 [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Hessam Ezzedine, Palestinian Journalists Syndicate

<sup>24</sup> Journalism syndicate, Palestine. *Rules of conduct*, [Retrieved 2015-04-17]

## 2.0 Previous research and theoretical framework

In this chapter we will outline the previous research and theories that we are leaning on in our study of Palestinian freelance journalists working conditions and see how these lead up to our objective and research questions which all will be presented in chapter 3.

### 2.1. Previous research

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a very well guarded political hotbed and a constant source of news for the international media community. However the state of Palestinian journalism, and journalism outside the Western world, is not a sufficiently investigated subject. During our initial research we had a hard time finding any studies in English about the professional lives of journalists in Palestine whatsoever. Our first impulse was to explore the democratic ideals among Palestinian journalists and we were gladly surprised when we finally found Mats Tiborn's essay "*The democratic ideals among the Palestinian journalists*" (2011). Tiborn's qualitative study was a good starting point that helped us to understand the working condition of Palestinian journalists in general but we will in this essay focus on the freelance journalists of Palestine as we believe their situation to be unique and not previously studied. Freelance journalists feature in Tiborn's essay but are not handled specifically as a separate entity.

In this essay we hope to dig deeper into the Palestinian media landscape by focusing on the freelance journalists. We believe that studying freelance journalists working conditions will provide new knowledge since it zooms in on the most vulnerable group within journalism. New trends and challenges to the media system therefore show more clearly among the freelance journalists.

#### 2.1.1 The democratic ideals and self-censorship amongst Palestinian journalism

In Tiborn's essay he explores the democratic values of Palestinian journalists. Through twelve in-depth interviews he tries to sort out what is important to his respondents when it comes to journalistic ideals and democracy. Among his most interesting findings is that all of his respondents feel that journalists play a key role in the shaping of a democratic society, that journalists should be scrutinizing politicians and that objectivity is an important ideal. What differs between respondents is how they practically implore these ideals.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Tiborn, M. *The democratic ideals among the Palestinian journalists*, 2011 p. 60-63

The journalists interviewed by Tiborn are well aware that there are invisible lines that they are not allowed to cross. Many of the respondents in Tiborn's essay have been subject to harassment and imprisonment while doing their jobs. To avoid incarceration many of the journalists adapt to a culture of self-censorship even though they state in the interviews that it should be their job to keep checks on Palestinian politicians. Self-censorship is a big problem in Palestinian media, which Tiborn concludes in his study. He concludes that almost all of his respondents use self-censorship and choose not to report on certain issues. This is because they fear what might happen to them if they do. However, his conclusion from the whole study is that the line between fear and bias for the Palestinian community is very thin. Tiborn writes;

*"...one of the respondents has been shot 28 times while working as a journalist, he says. Another respondent was imprisoned by Israel for four years for expressing his opinion in workshops with other students. Most of the respondents have had relatives killed in the conflict. This inspires many of them, but it demands mental strength to keep on following their journalistic ideals."*<sup>26</sup>

The subject of loyalty also becomes an issue when it comes to how Palestinian journalists view objectivity and neutrality. Many of the interviewees have chosen a career in journalism because of their strong feelings for the Palestinian cause. They are therefore often more interested in aiming critique towards the Israeli occupation than towards their own political leaders.<sup>27</sup>

Amal Jamal confirms this picture of self-censorship and claims that it stems from the divide between what is stated in the Palestinian Press Law and the actual practice of the PA. The fact that there are no clear rules leads to journalists taking a safe route by not reporting on certain issues, for example anything that could be deemed harmful to "national unity". Jamal lists a few subjects that she claims Palestinian journalists in general try to stay away from. These subjects include anything that might put the president or his family in a bad light, critique of nepotism or corruption within the Palestinian Authority, the lack of accountability within the Palestinian Authority or issues concerning clan relationships, religious conflicts or gender issues.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Tiborn, M. *The democratic ideals among the Palestinian journalists*, 2011 p. 6

<sup>27</sup> Tiborn, M. *The democratic ideals among the Palestinian journalists*, 2011 p. 60-63

<sup>28</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001 p. 278-279

## 2.1.2 Infrastructure and history of the Palestinian media landscape

The Palestinian press is a relatively new phenomenon. It is only since the Oslo Accords in 1993 that there has really been a Palestinian media except for the Jerusalem based newspaper Al-Quds<sup>29</sup> and some other PLO-owned, Jordanian or Israeli publications.<sup>30</sup> Amal Jamal writes in her article *State building and Media Regime* (2001) about the emergence and challenges of the Palestinian media in the 1990's. This article has been of great value for us when it comes to understanding the history, practicalities and culture of the Palestinian media landscape and is therefore referenced here to give the reader the same knowledge of the Palestinian situation.

Prior to 1993 media in the West Bank was limited to Israeli, Jordanian and PLO print publications and according to Nossek and Rinnawi self-censorship concerning non-political issues were prevalent even in these times. Internal critique amongst Palestinians had to take the back seat to critique of the occupier - Israel. They quote a study by Orayb Najjar from 1993:

*“Internal divisions that weakened the Palestinian community under British and Jordanian rule still divide journalists today. Even the dangers of the Israeli long-term occupation have not scared journalists into unity. The daily scramble for performance under bad economic and professional conditions occasionally threatens the morale of journalists and impedes their performing their jobs to the best of their abilities.”*<sup>31</sup>

An authoritarian standard was set for the Palestinian media system quite early. While Al-Quds remained faithful to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) newspaper Al-Nahar, with loyalties towards the Jordanian regime and critical towards the policies of the PLO soon found themselves banned in areas controlled by the newly formed and PLO-controlled Palestinian Authority.<sup>32</sup>

With the Oslo accords new media technologies that previously had been forbidden was introduced and Palestinian TV and radio could be established.<sup>33</sup> The PLO, at this time run by president Yasser Arafat, proceeded with forming new channels of media communication via newspapers such as Al-Hayat al-Jadida and Al-Ayam and the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) and their radio channel Voice of Palestine. In all of these cases connections between the media outlets and the president was kept very

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<sup>29</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides* p.3-4 [Retrieved: 2015-03-12]

<sup>30</sup> Nossek, Hillel & Rinnawi, Khalil, *Censorship and Freedom of the Press Under Changing Political regimes, 2003*, p. 188-189

<sup>31</sup> Nossek, Hillel & Rinnawi, Khalil, *Censorship and Freedom of the Press Under Changing Political regimes, 2003*, p.187-189

<sup>32</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media*, 2001, p. 264-266

<sup>33</sup> Nossek, Hillel & Rinnawi, Khalil, *Censorship and Freedom of the Press Under Changing Political regimes, 2003*, p.188-189

tight which in effect meant that the Palestinian Authority controlled the main media outlets in the Palestinian Territories. Jamal claims that this was part of a general culture of nepotism and favouritism present within the PLO. Non-governmental news outlets such as Hamas-affiliated Al-Watan was allowed but faced repercussions whenever they overstepped unspoken boundaries. Repercussions could for example be getting ones licence revoked by the Ministry of Information but could also be more severe and could lead to imprisonment.<sup>34</sup>

Even loyal newspapers like Al-Quds could get in trouble for not following the clear directions of the Palestinian Authority. In 1995 editor Maher Al-Alami refused to publish a flattering story about Yasser Arafat and as a result he was kept in detention for five days. A few weeks later the newspapers license was temporarily revoked which led to Al-Quds assuming a much more submissive role towards the Palestinian Authority in general and the president in particular.<sup>35</sup>

According to Jamal the three Palestinian Authority-affiliated newspapers shared some similar traits at the time of writing her article. There was a lack of coverage on issues concerning human rights violations by the Palestinian Authority, a lack of general criticism of the Palestinian Authority's policies and the corruption within the organization. The three newspapers were also reluctant to report from meetings of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and in general utilized the same sources, often news agencies connected to the Palestinian Authority.<sup>36</sup>

Jamal also describes how Palestinian news outlets are in an economically stressed situation and how this leads to them being dependent on government subsidies. Also individual journalists are economically pressured and might fall to the temptation of accepting gifts or other forms of economic manipulation from politicians.<sup>37</sup>

In this study we will see if these issues mentioned above still are difficult to write about. We also want to see how the economical situation of the Palestinian press effects Palestinian freelance journalists.

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<sup>34</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001, p. 266-269 and Nossek, Hillel & Rinnawi, Khalil, *Censorship and Freedom of the Press Under Changing Political regimes*, 2003, p.189

<sup>35</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001, p. 271

<sup>36</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001, p. 275-276

<sup>37</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001, p. 272-273

## 2.2. Theoretical framework

In this part of the chapter we will look at the main theories which we will use to make sense of our findings in this study.

### 2.2.1 Self-censorship

Philip Cook and Conrad Heilmann write about self-censorship as well as the general debate about censorship, pointing out that there is both governmental and non-governmental restrictions to speech. An example of non-governmental censorship is the stigma of social problems and taboos. They quote Jytte Klausen regarding the Prophet Mohammed cartoons in a Danish newspaper;

*“[S]elf-censorship may be caused by a credible fear of retaliation and bodily harm, but it may also follow out of respect for other people’s religious beliefs or from a desire not to hurt people’s feelings”<sup>38</sup>*

### 2.2.2 Democracies and the press

Michael Schudson writes that there is a connection between democracy and journalism because democracy supports journalism and vice versa.<sup>39</sup> He points out seven ways this occurs in his book *“Why democracies need an unlovable press”* (2008):

1. To inform citizens about what’s happening in the society is one of the democratic roles of journalism. Schudson means that it’s up to the journalists to inform the citizens so they can form a correct picture of society and vote in elections with confidence and knowledge.
2. To investigate the ones in power is another way to reach democracy through journalism. This means that the community learns if the elected politicians are using their power the right way. This also makes the one in power fear the media while showing that they are being investigated.
3. Journalists also have an analytic role. It’s their job to explain difficult social processes that can be hard to understand for the community.
4. A journalist should also show social empathy. They should stand with those who have no power and those who normally does not get to make their voices heard in society.
5. Media should be a open place for debate. Journalists should make sure that all citizens can be part of the social debate and make sure that everyone freely can speak their minds.
6. Schudson also mean that it’s a democratic function to mobilize people through partisan media. This type of journalism motivate citizens to take part of politics and societal debate.

<sup>38</sup> Cook, P and Heilmann, C. *Censorship and Two Types of Self-Censorship*, 2010, p.2 [Received: 2015-05-05]

<sup>39</sup> Schudson, M. *Why democracies need an unlovable press*, 2008

7. The seventh role is about how journalists can highlight opinions from minorities and not just automatically follow the majority.

We can connect this theory to our study to see to what extent these seven points presented above are relevant for the situation in Palestine. But there are also other theories about the relationship between journalism and democracy that we will be looking at in this study.

Another theory about systems of media and politics comes from Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini who in their book *Comparing Media Systems - Three Models of Media and Politics* (2004) suggest a division into three kinds of systems: the liberal model, the democratically corporatist model and the polarised pluralist model, also sometimes referred to as the mediterranean model. Of these three systems Palestine shows many similarities with the last category, which is characterized by low development of mass media, a low level of professionalism and a high degree of government intervention in the media.<sup>40</sup>

Dankwart Rustow's theory of transition argues that democracy is built up through conflicts and political work. According to this theory democracy is vulnerable at an early state when going through conflict and this might give rise to traction within society. As a result of this schisms within society might appear and in the end the road to democratization might have caused more ill than good. Real democracy can only be achieved once the phase of conflict is overcome.<sup>41</sup> As Palestine has been a society in constant conflict with Israel since as long as the two contingents have existed this process would, according to the theory of transition, still be going on. The schism between Fatah and Hamas after the election of 2006 is a perfect example of the kind of traction that Rustow talks about.

Mats Tiborn discusses the difference between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes when it comes to controlling the media. He draws upon the work of J.J. Linz and forms the central conclusion that a totalitarian regime is much more ideological than the authoritarian one, which mainly just seeks to hinder any opposition to the ruling elite.<sup>42</sup> Going back to Jamal we can clearly see totalitarian streaks in the policies of the Palestinian Authority in the mid 90's when the main goal of government media was to explain the PLO's policies of peace talks with Israel to the Palestinian public. Media outlets affiliated with Hamas was banned from PLO-controlled areas since they argued against these policies.<sup>43</sup> However

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<sup>40</sup> Nord, L & Strömbäck, J. *Medierna och demokratin*, 2012, p. 77-78

<sup>41</sup> Potter, D et.al. *Democratization*, 1997, p.14

<sup>42</sup> Tiborn, M. *The democratic ideals among the palestinian journalists*, 2011 p. 12

<sup>43</sup> Jamal, A. *State Building and Media Regime*, 2001, passim

the goals of the Palestinian Authority are not as utopian as Linz describes the totalitarian rulers to be, they do not seek to start a social-revolution, they merely hope to stay in power.

These theories are interesting when we seek to understand the role of journalists working within Palestinian society and their relationship to powerful politicians and other wielders of power within society.

### 2.2.3 Objectivity and professionalism

We would like to see how Palestinian freelance journalists reason about objectivity and whether they can achieve this under their current working condition. To get a background on the subject of objectivity we consult Paul Hodkinson who refers to a university study from Great Britain that speaks of *class bias*. This study shows different approaches to objectivity among journalists with different backgrounds. Hodkinson writes that according to this study, middle class journalists had none or little understanding for working class interview subjects, while politicians and people with the same background as themselves had a much easier time getting their favor. Hodkinson also writes that another issue raised by the study is that a journalist with a middle class background didn't express any empathy which led to the negative attitude towards working class subjects. Class as well as ethnic and other subjects are affecting objectivity within the profession of journalism.<sup>44</sup>

Hodkinson's theory is interesting to us as it looks at how objectivity is far from a simple matter to internalize. In the Palestinian context ethnic and political bias is constantly brought to the surface which makes Hodkinson relevant to this study.

Schudson and Anderson gives an introduction to the study of objectivity in connection to professionalism in a chapter of *Handbook of Journalism Studies*. They start in what they call the trait approach to professionalism where the concept is connected to a number of traits such as formal education, self-governance, codes of ethics and licensing among other things. Schudson and Anderson then goes on to depict a journey from the analysing of traits to the analysis of the struggle, the actual process of becoming a profession. They also describe how Walter Lippman felt that objectivity was an important part of the journalists claim to professionalism. Objectivity has however not necessarily been a fundamental part of journalism outside of the Western context. Hallin and Mancini further wanted to sever the connections between objectivity and professionalism to instead focus on professionalism as a way to gain control over

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<sup>44</sup> Hodkinson, P. *Media, culture and society - an introduction*, 2011, p.141-142



one's own work. Professionalism as a way of determining who is “in” and who is “out” have become even more important with the advent of blogging, cellphone cameras and social media.<sup>45</sup>

Professionalism and objectivity is interesting when we look at how Palestinian journalists are perceived by their own society as well as how they see themselves in relation to the rest of society.

#### **2.2.4 How free is freelance journalism?**

Peta Van Den Bergh writes that a freelance journalist must be willing to carry out different types of jobs for a multitude of customers. The freelance should possess skills in different types of media such as daily newspapers, magazines, radio and television and strive to stay up-to-date with the changes in the media landscape. To succeed with this it is necessary to stay in constant contact with different editors, organizations and persons of interest.<sup>46</sup>

He also writes that the choice to become a freelance journalist used to be voluntary but that it increasingly has become less of a choice, as more and more news desks lay off their employees.<sup>47</sup> We therefore ask ourselves whether the Palestinian freelance journalists ever had a choice of their own. Did they choose this career out of some idea of independence or were they simply pushed into it due to lack of regular employments? Is freelance journalism in Palestine a freedom or a necessity according to the theory of Peta van den Bergh? These questions will be answered by looking at the prime customers of Palestinian freelance journalists.

Hadenius and Weibull talk about the industrial process of the media, how the media landscape has changed and how editorial staff have increasingly less space to work with. They mention that the professional identities of journalists have loosened up and that the newsdesks are in change. Since 20 years back, the most important thing for Swedish journalists, according to a study, has been to investigate the ones in power. This is not as easy as it might seem today according to Hadenius and Weibull. Because of the small and pre-set time and space that a journalist on a newsdesk gets to work with, there is no space for following their wishes and investigating the ones in power.<sup>48</sup> We will look at this theory and see if the same problem is relevant for the Palestinian freelance journalists.

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<sup>45</sup> Schudson, M and Andersson, C. *Objectivity, Professionalism, and Truth Seeking in Journalism*, 2008, p.88-99

<sup>46</sup> Frankly, B & Murphy, D, *Local journalism in context*, 1998 p.196

<sup>47</sup> Frankly, B & Murphy, D, *Local journalism in context*, 1998 p.196

<sup>48</sup> Hadenius, S et.al. *Massmedier. Press, radio och tv i den digitala tidsåldern*, 2011, p. 330-331

### 3.0 Objective and research formulation

Previous research by Tiborn and Jamal has mapped the difficulties of journalism in Palestine. There has however not been any studies in English that has focused on the working conditions of Palestinian freelance journalists or that have looked sufficiently at how they are affected by the lacking freedom of speech and the difficult economical situation of the press in Palestine. This is the focus of the essay you are currently reading.

#### **Objective: Map the possibilities and limitations of Palestinian freelance journalists**

The aim of the study is to map and analyse the possibilities and limitations of Palestinian freelance journalists. We seek to find out what the differences are between freelancers and regular journalists and if they see themselves as an important part of society. We will try to reach our objective with the help of these three research questions:

#### *1. How are Palestinian freelance journalists affected by self-censorship?*

Are freelance journalists bolder as free agents in the Palestinian media landscape or do they feel more limited than regular journalists? We will look at this by comparing the attitudes towards and experience of self-censorship among our respondents to the findings of Amal Jamal and Mats Tiborn. We will also look at theories related to censorship and democratic processes by Rustow and Schudson to answer this question.

#### *2. How do the freelance journalists see themselves as political agents?*

Are the freelance journalists ideologically driven or just out to get paid? We will look at professionalism and attitudes towards neutrality and objectivity and compare our findings to Tiborn's. Hallin & Mancini will here give us input about how to categorize different media systems and how this affects freelance journalists. We will also use Schudson's theory about the connection between democracy and journalism to see what this means for Palestine. We will also look at Hodgkinson's theory about how to interpret objectivity.

#### *3. How are Palestinian freelance journalists affected by working with different kinds of customers?*

How do the economical difficulties of the Palestinian media affect freelance journalists? Have they chosen this line of work or been forced into it? We will look at the answers regarding customers and economy among our respondents to find out what it's like for Palestinian freelance journalists regarding these issues. Are they as flexible as they should be according to Peta van den Bergh?

## 4.0 Method and material

This study aim to describe and analyse the working conditions of Palestinian freelance journalists and to connect the work they do to the larger issue of freedom of the press and self-censorship in Palestine. To do this we wanted to meet the actual journalists that we will be writing about.

### 4.1 Choosing our method and subjects

We wanted to focus on Palestinian freelance journalists specifically since the Palestinian media landscape is very unique. Since the Oslo accords of 1993 Palestinian society has been in a phase of reconstruction. According to Rustow, democratization is driven by conflict but it is only after the conflict has recided that democracy truly can flourish. Since the conflict with Israel is still ongoing this puts Palestinian society in a strenuous situation leading to conflicts within society.<sup>49</sup>

We want to examine Palestinian freelance journalists for a number of reasons. For one freelance journalists are extra vulnerable since they are working without the backing of a bigger organization. We want to know if this choice of career is voluntary or sprung out of necessity among Palestinian freelance journalists. In the study by Peta Van Den Bergh, he writes that a freelance journalist needs to be flexible in his or her choice of customers but is this possible within the Palestinian context where so many news desks are connected to political organizations?

We further want to know how our research subjects position themselves within this complex political situation and will therefore strive to map their relationships to politicians, their views on objectivity and the value of journalism to society. Mats Tiborn has examined similar values among Palestinian journalists at large and we will build on his research as we examine if the values of freelance journalists are affected by their vulnerable situation. We will also try to find out if they are more prone to self-censorship.

Through this study we hope to fill a gap in previous research about journalism and democratization and produce new knowledge about the role of freelance journalists within an ongoing democratization.

### 4.2 Interviewing the interviewers

To get to the bottom of our research questions, we decided to conduct semi-structured in-depth respondent interviews with Palestinian freelance journalists.

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<sup>49</sup> Potter, D et. al. *Democratization*, 1997, p. 14

We interviewed twelve journalists for this essay, seven men and five women with experience of freelance work in Palestine. We found them with the help of mutual contacts and their own webpages. The selection is therefore far from random and might be said to have more of a snowball character.<sup>50</sup> Considering the time given for this essay we felt we should be satisfied if we could get hold of five respondents and that this still could be enough to achieve some degree of theoretical saturation. In the end we came home with eleven face to face interviews with respondents and one interview answered via e-mail.

This means that we will apply similar methods as Mats Tiborn did when he examined the democratic ideals of Palestinian journalists in 2011. From Tiborns text we gathered that the method was relevant and it therefore felt reasonable for us to apply a similar method. This also opened up the possibility of relating our findings to Tiborns and to draw upon the thorough work that he had already done on the subject of Palestinian journalists.

When we presented the idea of an essay on Palestinian freelance journalists to our teachers at the faculty we were recommended not to go to Palestine for security reasons. Our teachers felt that the study could just as well be conducted via the internet. We preferred however to conduct as many interviews as possible face to face since the issues we wanted to discuss with our subjects could be considered sensitive and that some questions might be complex and need rephrasing. We remained open to conducting some interviews via e-mail due to lack of time or logistic difficulties. In the end we only conducted one such interview with a journalist based in Jerusalem. A sad misunderstanding led us to miss our appointment with this particular journalist. When comparing the answers from this one interview conducted via e-mail with the interviews we conducted face to face we feel that we can see that there are differences in the answers and depth of information provided by the respondent. The answers in the e-mail interview are not as exhaustive and it required a lot of correspondence back and forth to get answers to our sometimes complex questions. We feel that the choice to actually visit Palestine and conduct our interviews face to face may raises our internal validity significantly.<sup>51</sup> Maybe telephone interviews would have been an option but we believe that the language barrier still could have created a problem for us, especially in the cases where interpretation was necessary. Working via phone therefore might have excluded an important segment of journalists. It also proved easier than expected to book interviews on site as compared to booking via e-mail. Our respondent Ibrahim explained to us that in Palestine the best way to get an interview is not to send an e-mail but rather to simply walk in the door.

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<sup>50</sup> Esaiasson, P et .al. *Metodpraktikan*. 2012, p.189

<sup>51</sup> Esaiasson, P et .al. *Metodpraktikan*. 2012, p. 57

### 4.2.1 Preparing the interviews

To rephrase our research questions into a comprehensible interview we in part borrowed questions from Tiborns interview guide and in part came up with our own. The questions were grouped into four categories responding to the three main questions stated in the previous chapter and the general objective of the study. In this manner we formed an interview guide. When we started conducting the interviews we realized that some questions had to be rephrased again and the interview guide became more of a living document and subject to constant change. The final version can be seen in appendix 2.

After opening up with some background questions about the respondent we proceeded with questions about the main customers of Palestinian freelance journalists, trying to gauge what the practical work of Palestinian freelance journalists is like. In this segment, which corresponds to research question 3, we wanted to see if our respondents possessed the flexibility expressed by Peta van den Bergh, if they could move between different kinds of customers in an autonomous manner.

Our second section was more general, catching a width of issues related to the objective of our study. Here we asked questions aiming to figure out how our respondents differed from regular Palestinian journalists. In this way we could more easily relate our study to that of Mats Tiborn.

In the next section we moved on to the subject of self-censorship, asking questions corresponding to research question 1. This section was in large part inspired by Mats Tiborns interview guide and tried to shed a light on internalized limitations, off-limit topics and other issues concerning freedom of the press. We here wanted to see if the Palestinian media could live up to the seven points presented by Michael Schudson in chapter 2 of this essay. We also wanted to gauge the fears of our respondents and hear what kind of risks they would be taking if they would step out of line and write about sensitive issues.

The last section of the interview corresponded to research question 2 and was in many ways the most difficult part of the interview, since it dealt with a lot of complex terms and ideals that sometimes was hard to communicate across the language barrier. Here we wanted to know how our respondents see themselves in relation to Palestinian society and politicians. All questions in this segment were inspired by questions från Mats Tiborns 2011 study of democratic ideals among Palestinian freelance journalists. Here concepts like neutrality, objectivity and professionalism was the focus of our attention.

We finished up the interview by asking the respondents if there was anything that they would like to add in order to help us understand life as a freelance journalist in Palestine.

### **4.2.2 The actual interviews**

Planning the study in Sweden was quite different from actually carrying out the interviews in Palestine during two and a half weeks in March and April of 2015. A lot of interviews were cancelled or moved last minute and sometimes the interviews could not be conducted in the ideal conditions that we had imagined beforehand. In some cases our translators also became respondents and vice versa. Who translated for whom can be seen in appendix 3 where we introduce our respondents. During some interviews friends of the respondent or our translator sat in to listen. We tried to avoid these situation as much as we could but in the few cases that other people listened in to the interviews it was our impression that the respondents felt comfortable with the situation. We were very quick to point out to the respondents that they would remain anonymous but in most cases this apparently did not concern them.

Tiborn describes that his interviews took up to two and a half hours. Though we did as many interviews as Tiborn ours were considerably shorter, the longest one being around 63 minutes. Since our interviews focused on a wider range of issues than just attitudes to democracy it could be reasoned that our interviews might be a bit too shallow. We were however happy that our interviews were not even longer when it came to transcribing the interviews. Each of the eleven face to face interviews had to be transcribed into a text document for preservation and analysis. We later used these documents to analyse and categorize the answers of our respondents.

### **4.2.3 Who's a Palestinian freelance journalist?**

There are plenty of Palestinians living and working inside Israeli (sometimes referred to as Israeli Arabs). Doubtlessly some of them are working as journalists and surely some are even freelancing. The conditions of these journalists are sure to be problematical given the status of Palestinians within Israeli society. We will however not be concerned with these journalists in this study. We will only be talking to and about Palestinian journalists living, and working in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. This is simply because we are primarily interested in the workings of the Palestinian media and its relationship to the Palestinian Authority. The working conditions and assumed discrimination of Palestinian journalists in Israel falls outside the bounds of this limited study.

Gaza journalists had to be excluded from this study due to the difficulties of setting up interviews on site in Gaza. We were in contact with Gaza journalists hoping to set up interviews via e-mail but didn't receive their answers in time to include them into the essay. We have indications that the situation for journalists in Gaza are considerably worse than for those active in the West Bank and it would have been

interesting to include their voices in this text. Alas, the journalists of Gaza will have to wait for another essay.

### **4.3 Informant interview**

We also conducted an interview with a representative of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate. This interview was meant as a complement to literature studies<sup>52</sup> as literature on Palestinian media proved hard to find in English.

### **4.4 Internal validity**

We are very pleased with the number of interviews we managed to carry out in the short time we spent in Palestine. We also think that the respondents have an acceptable spread in age, even if we wished to have been able to get hold of women above the age of 35. Our respondents are between the ages of 24 and 56 which is neat but there are a bit too many young respondents in the group, especially among the women. It is possible that younger journalists with less experience of working in the field have a different perception of life as a freelance journalist than would an older journalist. However we are happy that at least five out of twelve respondents are female, even though a 50/50 relationship would have been better.

The language was sometimes a barrier during the interviews, which might have given rise to some misunderstandings. As discussed above we have utilized interpreters at some interviews but there might still be a possibility that we interpret the answers wrong. We have therefore tried to study the answers carefully within their context and chose not to include any answers when we did not feel sure about the sentiment of the respondent. In our result we have “trimmed” the answers slightly, cleaning up some grammar, repetitions etc.

We also feel like we have representatives from different geographical areas. Three of the respondents are from the Ramallah area known to be the most liberal part of the West Bank. The others are from smaller cities like Tulkarem and Jenin. Some parts of the West Bank are considered to be more conservative than others which means that an uneven spread could mean that not all attitudes are caught up by the study. We are however lacking in journalists from towns in the southern parts of the West Bank such as Hebron and Bethlehem which is unfortunate. The situation in Hebron, where Israeli settlers have occupied parts of the inner city while closely guarded by the Israeli army, is quite unique and it would have been interesting to speak to journalists working under those conditions.

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<sup>52</sup> Esaiasson, P et .al. *Metodpraktikan*. 2012, p.252-256

Even though it might be hard to draw any kind of generalization from 12 interviews we still believe that we achieved a certain level of theoretical saturation which gives credit to our findings.



## 5.0 Meet the Palestinian freelance journalists

In this chapter we present the results of our respondent interviews. We will do this sorted by topic, in the same order as the research questions presented in chapter 3.0. In the next chapter, 6.0, we will then analyze our results.

### 5.1. Self-censorship

We start by looking at answers related to how the interviewed freelance journalists think about self-censorship in the Palestinian context. In section 5.1.2 we examine what self-censorship means to freelance journalists specifically and their relation to the union. In each section we will also devote certain sub-sections to discussing certain topics that have been prevalent in our interviews.

#### 5.1.1 A culture of self-censorship?

All our respondents think that journalists should investigate people in power but they also admit that it is common for freelance journalists to not write about powerful politicians due to fear for themselves and their families. The reality of their situation is forcing them to abandon certain journalistic ideals for the sake of safety. In our interviews, our respondents expressed that there exists a culture of self-censorship among Palestinian journalists in one way or another. Faridah, a 28 year old press journalist from Jenin expressed her thoughts about how she and other journalists choose not to write about certain subjects because of the fear of something happening to them:

*“In general yes, all the journalist has [...] internal limitation, he know what he could talk or not talk about. [...] I avoid myself talking about something, because I don't need any kind of harm or dangerous happen to myself. You write sometimes things you really don't believe, but in the end, you want to be safe. Sure it existing this thing.”*

Eisa, a 35 year old TV journalist from Tulkarem, gives an example of the fear of repercussions when he talks about how a high ranking local politician recently assaulted an employee so badly that the employee had to be sent to a hospital but that no one in the local press dared to write about this issue.

*“You care about your family, your income, being arrested, so there are some things that you can not touch. [...] If you want to write about this issue, you need the support, at least verbal support, that people will stand with you if you [get] involved in this. If you find that you self alone, you prefer to not to write.”*

Fears for one's family and future financial situation might also play a part in self-censorship. When asked about if he ever has been assaulted or harassed while doing his job Eisa says:

*“Daily. It is daily. Maybe this is our difficulty, and the politician, it seems like daily or every time. And also I have some difficulty living, from my family, from [my] wife because if [I] was arrested and punished a lot people will care. ‘Please Eisa, be quiet.’ So this is a kind of personal problem.”*

The fear of being arrested or having your career ruined in one way or another stifles the free speech of the respondents. But fear of repercussions from the Palestinian Authorities is not the only factor that plays into self-censorship.

### **Different Palestinian authorities**

All respondents agree that there exists a great divide between the written Palestinian Press Law and reality for journalists in the field. Working as a journalist in Palestine means navigating a landscape of unwritten rules and different authorities. Hasna, a 24 year old press journalist from Tulkarem, says that the laws and what’s going on “on the ground”, is two different things:

*“What is written in the law, in papers, is very different than what is in reality. What's the security and the public law and what's going on on the ground. The rules come from those, community powerful and also Palestinian Authority powerful.”*

The confusion concerning the legal state of freedom of speech Palestine is below expressed by Eisa, who brings up the problems about the Palestinian Authority using old laws. These are hard to argue against because of the old and un-modern method.

*“When [the Palestinian Authorities] arrest a journalist, it is not treated well. They accuse this journalist as a troublemaker between families or communities which is not treated in our law, the Palestinian law, but they return it to the old Jordanian law and they will make this issue against you while it is not in the Palestinian law, it's from an old law, which is disgusting.”*

Some topics can get you into trouble with the Palestinian Authorities while others can raise the anger of the Palestinian community, NGOs or powerful corporations. Karima, a 31 year old producer from

Jerusalem talks about how she perceives that the most overlooked issues within the Palestinian media not necessarily are the political but rather the social ones:

*“It's more about the social issues that they should speak about; violence against women, the low wages in the West Bank, the poverty in the West Bank, the unemployment in the West Bank. They don't really speak about it.”*

The fear of repercussions from civil society is especially true for a journalist that voices opinions that could be interpreted as sympathy for Israel, such as Dabir, a 26 year old press journalist from Nablus. His fear is that he will get in trouble with both the Palestinian Authority and the society at large since taking the Israeli point of view is both a question of security and something that goes against the mindset of most Palestinians..

*“Maybe the society [will] tell you [that] you are [a] Mossad<sup>53</sup> agent. So I fear from both the Palestinian Authority as a security and also the Palestinian society as their conscious. That [is] because I see that there is no importance for the Palestinian Authority now. They don't have money, if Israel want to cut them they don't have money. They don't have power on the ground. So why we should have Palestinian Authority? Let Israel control all this land.”*

Eisa from Tulkarem confirms this difficulty by speaking of a friend of his who was banned from Palestinian media after after being perceived as biased with Israel in his work:

*“He worked with Ma'an [news agency] and he like took the point of view with other Israeli agencies and now he's work with [...] Israeli news agencies, and he was boycotted by Palestinians.”*

Ibrahim, a 56 year old press journalist from Tulkarem has written a lot about women's rights and has experienced some backlash from the Palestinian community since this is not a common subject within Palestinian media:

*“It is not troubles making me like hurt or assault or threatened. But like opposite opinions. Like feel like targeting you – ‘You are not muslim [...] you seem like communist or pro-europeans or something like this. You are bringing us different culture.’ [...] But you feel that from others enjoy or support your*

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<sup>53</sup> Israeli secret service

*writing, so you keep writing about this issue.”*

### **Power in contacts and polite phrasing**

Having a well developed network of contacts to back you up doesn't hurt as a Palestinian journalist.

Ibrahim tells us about how he was threatened and called to interrogations for writing about the Palestinian security forces fifteen years ago:

*“I face threats, I face they will put fire on my office, they will arrest me and do whatever they want. And I wrote in that newspaper [...] that they threatened me and they asked me not to publish. And when they called me, to come for interrogation [they said:] ‘didn't we told you not to write?’ I told him: ‘look at the newspaper, I wrote that you told me not to write!’ Yeah, and because of the power, I didn't think it was power at that time, the editor responsible of what I published, he phoned. He was a powerful man also, very close to Yasser Arafat at that time and he told the security ‘don't touch our representative Ibrahim’.”*

So by the help of an editor, who was a close friend of PLO leader Yasser Arafat, Ibrahim managed to get away with criticizing the security forces, a good example of the power of personal contacts in Palestine. Dabir from Nablus feels quite free to criticize Palestinian politicians but points to the importance of how criticism is phrased and that it also is of great importance who pens the critical text. Dabir says that it for example makes a big difference if you are Hamas and writes a critical text about the Palestinian

Authority:

*“I have good connections with the Palestinian Authorities. So when I [...] criticize something within the Palestinian Authorities I know how they are, their mentality. So I can choose good words and don't harm them a lot [...] because I'm focusing not on the person but on the issue. [...] If one of my colleagues who belong to Hamas wrote this article, I think he will face the jail.”*

Any confrontation which might be taken personally could be a source of trouble for the journalist. Hasna, press journalist from Tulkarem talks about when she wrote a piece on the prime minister and it would not be published because of the personal touch of the text. Her answer through an interpreter:

*“She wrote a report about an issue, concerning the prime minister in general, about him using his power in a wrong way. For like, take it personally, which is not good. She wrote the report and she took pictures*

*and everything, and this report [was] discussed many times with the newspaper, with other agencies and they said that we couldn't be in touch with this issue. We will not publish this issue.”*

### **Off-limits**

Topics like sex, religion, racism and the division between Fatah and Hamas are mentioned throughout as sensitive issues by the respondents. Faridah, from Jenin gives an example of what she thinks is the most sensitive issue within Palestinian media via an interpreter:

*“The most important issue is the political arresting, the Palestinian. The time when they arrest [someone] without any accusation that he did something, just to bring him [to] jail. Yeah that's the most dangerous thing to write about. That could bring her to kind of arresting.”*

Ibrahim from Tulkarem says that he wants to write about religious issues, even though, so far he has not felt able to do so. He brings up the incident with the newspaper Charlie Hebdo in France, as an example:

*“I hope to try to touch the religious issues that I believe people are afraid to touch. Because it touch both Fatah and Hamas and the whole community itself, that you cannot say that what happened in France [referring to Charlie Hebdo] about media, about the prophet, about some issues, it can be right.”*

When asked about what could happen if he were to touch these issues he says that getting hurt or killed is the main fear:

*“You can be hurt or killed from unknown person. Because, this is the main issue, you are not afraid for me, you are not afraid from the governor or the security call you and arrest you, because people will know about this. You will be known where you are taken. But when it comes like a bullet from outdoors or someone beat you, you care about this. And also maybe rumors is the most important thing that affect journalists and also other who has different opinion. Like if they call you a collaborator, they can.”*

The sanctity of personal life, of both politicians and people in general, is often also brought up, such as here by Cantara, a 28 year old radio journalism from Ramallah. She speaks of how the culture makes it a sensitive issue:

*“You can't for example criticize how people dress, how people go, how people live in personal life. Because this is what they believe - every culture has it's own thing.”*

And Hasna from Tulkarem agrees through an interpreter:

*“About personal issues she feel that she don't want to write about persons. But according to his work, to his level in the work that he should do she can do anything about them. But if there is something personal in his family or anything that she knows she will not involve in this side.”*

Hasna comments on the freedom of speech in Palestine in relation to the division between Hamas and Fatah. Given that Fatah controls the West Bank, as a journalist, you can't criticize Fatah there and the same goes for Hamas in Gaza:

*“We cannot say that we have free of speech because of the political situation for example if you are a freelance journalist in Gaza and you speak against Hamas you may be arrested, maybe punished, maybe... a kind of limitation happen. And the same in the West Bank if you say you real opinion about what is going on, whatever the reality, you may face troubles.”*

### **5.1.2 The freelancer, self-censorship and the union**

A majority of our respondents feel that freelance journalists has a greater freedom to write about their own interests, including issues that might be sensitive as they don't have a monthly salary to worry about losing. The two photojournalists Gadi and Jabbar explain that they don't feel more free but they think that this is due to that they are working with photographing and no other media. The big problem for the freelance is to find an editor willing to publish controversial material. But there is also a vulnerability in being freelance that mean you need to be extra careful, says Dabir, the press journalist from Nablus:

*“The freelance has to be more careful about how to write and how to analyse the situation because he is not a regular journalist and there is no journalists union to help him. So he has to be more careful, more conscious of what he is talking about.”*

During our research we heard many people claim that the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate doesn't offer sufficient help for freelance journalists which might put them in an even more precarious situation and make it harder for them to write freely. Ibrahim however claims that there are many freelance journalists within the union, even though he says that freelancers who are working for international media often aren't members of the union:

*“There is a lot of freelancers in the union. Not too much because most of the freelancers, maybe 50 percent, didn't respect or trust the union. Especially the ones who are working with international agencies, they are not part of the union.”*

Hasna from Tulkarem states that she feels she will receive no help from the union simply because they don't have the power or the resources:

*“It is not because they don't want to help, it is because they cannot. They haven't... they could not because there is a lot of journalists here.”*

Eisa, TV journalist from Tulkarem agrees that he has not found much help from the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate when he has been in trouble with the Palestinian Authorities. He says he got more help from other freelance journalists:

*“The union are mostly controlled by the Palestinian Authorities, but they obliged to stand by me [because of the pressure] from other journalists.”*

Ibrahim, the 56 year old former press journalist from Tulkarem confirms this statement about getting the help you need from the union. He says that the help you get also depend on what political view you have:

*“ If you are Fatah maybe you will be supported even if you are wrong, if you are from [the opposition] they will [...] support you if you have other journalists supporting you.”*

### **5.1.3 Insecurity and self-censorship**

We will in this section look closer at the financial insecurity of Palestinian freelance journalists and what implications this might have on self-censorship.

Karima from Jerusalem points out that if you want to do investigative journalism aimed towards politicians you should be ready for trouble and have some financial backup and that this could be hard for the freelance journalists who lack a monthly salary. In every interview the topic of economic insecurity for freelance journalists comes up. Like here expressed by Karima:

*“Everyday you wake up and feel "I'm not safe, I have to find another job" and that's what came to me in the last three years [so] I started to search for another job.”*

Cantara clearly states that being freelance is harder than being a regular journalist in her opinion:

*“Because if you are employee in journalism, in radio, TV or newspaper you will find a salary by the end of the month. But vice versa no.”*

Gadi from Nablus is of the opinion that freelance is something you become out of necessity. He connects this to the wide spread unemployment in Palestinian society at large:

*“Nobody wants to be freelancer for freelancing but this is no alternative, we don't have an alternative in Palestine. The chance of job is small, so if you have a chance of job like this you catch it.”*

This insecurity, expressed in the quotations above is a common answer from our respondents when asked about the biggest difficulty as a freelance journalist. Jabbar, the 46 year old photographer from Nablus, says that the job market for journalists in Palestine is simply saturated:

*“First you want to have income, to be relaxed and know that you have the money for your family. And this is a fear for the freelancer. How much he will get at the end. If you buy a house you pay like 500 dollar a month and maybe you will not get them that month. This is a trouble with freelancer. [...] We have a lot of journalism graduates, last year we had 60 graduated from Al-Najjah university. I don't think five to ten of them has got a job after one year of their graduation. We are a small society, you can count the agencies and papers, local or international. So the chance to have a job is not easy for the new graduate.”*

Faridah tells us how it comes that she in the end got a steady job instead of maintaining her freelance career, answering through her interpreter:

*“The question is, the country in general – it's insecure in everything. One of the parts of this insecurity comes from the job stability. So she started finding the right places to do her work. Then in the end for security life she decided to get a job, not freelancing.”*

Hasna says that a life of freelancing also means entering a life of trouble:



*“If you want to be a freelance journalist you will prepare yourself to be in troubles, and you will prepare that you will be not having a lot of income to feed your family so you will look for another job or to control yourself.”*

Karima and Jabbar both mention retirement as a challenge to freelance journalists. Karima who is 31 years old and lives in Jerusalem have started putting money off for retirement but says that she doesn't feel protected by the Israeli laws since she isn't an Israeli citizen:

*“We're journalists. Maybe you're in the field, something happen to you, you are lost something in your body and then you're like "what's gonna happen to me?" it's not easy work in this country.”*

### **Economical scarcity, independence and company involvement**

Our contact at the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate estimates that 95 percent of the income of your average Palestinian newspaper comes from advertisements.<sup>54</sup> This causes the newspapers to be extremely dependent on their advertisers. Ibrahim confirms and elaborates:

*“Yeah, and from the support also, from the governmental support. So, we have three daily newspaper and two of them are having support from the Palestinian Authority, and Al-Quds newspaper have from their advertisements and is also supported by Jordan. [...] We have no independent newspapers at all, even Al-Quds, because it was a company in Israel, that rises from Israel. And al-Hayyat and al-Ayyam newspaper that rise from Palestinian Authority, from Fatah. We have no independent news agencies [...] And there is no independent local TV. If local TV will not be pro-Fatah or Palestinian Authority it will not continue in Tulkarem.”*

This can cause problems such as expressed by Faridah, press journalist from Jenin answering via an interpreter:

*“In one day they got a report about the government regarding their relationship between the telecommunications companies and how they observe the money from the nation, from the people. Now the newspaper that she writes for they were against this thing to have been published. Why? Because that moment this telecommunications company will stop giving them advertisements to publish in their newspapers.”*

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Hessem Ezzedine, Palestinian Journalists Syndicate

Dabir agrees that there are no independent newspapers in Palestine and yet again points to the involvement of NGOs and financial interests:

*“There is no independent journalists in Palestine. Maybe he is independent from the Palestinian parties but not NGO authority or businessman authority. [...] The danger of the business man authority in Palestine is more dangerous than [the] Palestinian Authority, because they have the money and they have to control all of your articles or statements.”*

Later in the interview Dabir states that the focus on women's rights from Western NGOs is an example of something that also could restrict his writing, since the NGOs are the ones with the money. Writing something that goes against the policies of the NGO could cause trouble for you future career:

*“I will fear to write something against the women because it will cut the funds from the UN. So I have to be in the same line, in the same policy of the NGOs donors. [...] So Palestinian journalists have to make all these interests, authorities interests in consideration in his writing. [...] Not just [the] Palestinian Authority, we have a lot of authorities to take into our consideration.”*

## **5.2. The political freelancer**

We will now look at attitudes related to the role of the journalist in Palestinian society, including their own motivations as to why they became journalists, and see how our respondents think about their relationship to politicians, democracy and objectivity. The answers we've received while gathering material for this essay has strengthened our view that the Palestinian media system should be classified as polarised and pluralistic according to the theory of Hallin and Mancini. The stories we've been told by our respondents show a media system where professionalism is still under development and were politicians frequently interfere when journalists publish “undesirable” material.

### **5.2.1 Becoming a journalist**

The first and second intifadas made a big impression on Palestinian society and also on our respondents. Ibrahim, Karima, Jabbar and Asad all mention the intifadas when speaking about how they came to be journalists.

Karima, TV producer from Jerusalem says that lots of people became interested in journalism during the uprising, including herself:

*“I started studying 2001 when all the uprising you know in [the] West bank, Jerusalem and Gaza, and then there was like lots of TV channels and lots of people that wanted to do journalism. [...] And I was only 17 years old then and it was the moment when I have to decide where to start my job and I decided to become a journalist.”*

Jabbar, the photographer from Nablus says that during the intifada there was no chance to get a job in the profession you had chosen in the universities. Jabbar studied english which helped him onto the path of journalism:

*“I started in Intifada time [in] which [there] is no chances for graduates to work in their specialization. I studied English, so my language pushed me forward, especially in my writing and it was my choice in ‘92 to start to take video. I started with video with CBS, American television, and writing to local newspapers.”*

Others were upset by the Israeli occupation or the 2003 invasion of Iraq and sought their way to journalism as a way to reflect and report on these perceived injustices. Hasna, from Tulkarem:

*“When I was a child I was following [...] Iraq, the Gulf war. And [...] the Israelis effect against the Palestinians issue. [...] So, in solidarity and in humanity issues, I like to be journalist.”*

Faridah has a similar story, told through her interpreter:

*“Because we are in a conflict area she likes to reflect, translate, the suffering of the people. [...] listening or seeing [how] people suffer and to reflect [this] to the responsible and the people who are in charge [of taking] decisions in our country.”*

Faridah and Hasna had an ambition or wish to change or affect society in their own way when they entered the world of journalism. To Hasna however it soon became obvious that the Palestinian journalist might not be in the position of power that she at first expected. Hasna again through her interpreter:

*“After she graduated and started working she felt that the reality is different than what she [had] thought. It is not only to transfer and to reflect the reality. [...] The media here in our Palestine is a public relations she discovered and she [was] disappointed by this but she wants to change.”*

Eisa, the TV journalist from Tulkarem also felt that he was working in a kind of public relations organization for the Palestinian Authority while working with certain TV stations. He says that if he writes something that is bad according to the community or the politicians, the TV station where he works will not publish the news. He tells us more, here through his interpreter:

*“He feels like our local media or our Palestinian media is not a real media, it is just a public relations. It makes a change or control you so this is why he won't do this. For example, if Eisa writes [something] bad about Tulkarem [...] the local TV or any agency that you work [with], will tell me not to speak about this. [...] So you will lose the trust [of] people if you are not talking about what is going on.”*

### **The purpose of journalism**

Asad, a 35 year old photographer from Ramallah has a clear idea of what he perceives as the goal of Palestinian journalism; to scrutinize the occupation of Palestine rather than lashing out internal criticism.

*“Since the trouble between the Fatah movement and the Hamas movement I think both sides starts to lose their target which is [to] follow the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and even in Gaza.”*

Bahir, a 26 year old sports journalist from Ramallah also thinks that journalism is an important tool to spread knowledge about the pledge of Palestinians.

*“If we don't have journalism we don't know our suffering. We don't know what happen to us. [...] A lot of people don't read [...] and don't know what happen in Palestine”*

Faridah from Jenin even consider herself a fighter, here expressed through an interpreter:

*“There is difficulties we have here under Israeli occupation. So she's a fighter in her own way. So she's proud of course as a patriot and proud to be Palestinian journalist that bring this message to show the world how we suffer.”*

And Leila, a 27 year old journalist from Jerusalem quotes the idea of the media as the fourth estate:

*“The press is the fourth power to contribute to bring about change for the better”*

### 5.2.2 Role in society and relationships with politicians

In this section we will present answers specifically related to how our respondents see themselves as a part of Palestinian society and in relation to Palestinian politicians.

#### **Importance to society**

All respondents believe that journalism is important to society and democracy. Hasna however, says that since Palestine doesn't have a democracy, media will not make a change for itself. Karima doesn't agree fully but she thinks that many Palestinians overestimate the power of journalists:

*“They think that you get millions of dollars for writing a story and they think you are rich because you are a journalist. I don't know how they get this but I think it's because of you know Hollywood movies with these nice journalists and all this stuff. “*

Dabir from Nablus also states that the Palestinian media is not as powerful as it might be perceived by the Palestinian public. He says that people read the news but only a few takes the information into consideration:

*“There is no big impact for the Palestinian media and the freelancer in the public opinion in Palestine. [...] you can see a lot of people reading the news and maybe make like or share, and then they will forget what they read. There's just a small group of people [who] take what [the] newspapers are talking about into consideration in their practice in their life.”*

Ibrahim agrees that Palestinians don't have a “reading culture”. He claims that in his hometown of Tulkarem with 200.000 inhabitants a maximum of 1000 newspaper copies are sold daily. Hasna from Tulkarem chimes in however that the Palestinian people are convinced that the media has a potential to change the minds of politicians:

*“They feel that media have real listening from the powerful. So people feel that media is important. So as journalist we should take this role, to represent the people, to express their needs.”*

Karima, who lives in Jerusalem, doesn't agree with Ibrahim when he says that Palestinians aren't interested in news or reading. But according to Karima, the problem with the media is that people are aware that the truth content is not always very high in the news, and people wants the full truth:

*“People are really interested in social issues and health and all this stuff. And they really want to hear about it and read about it, to get lots of, you know, the radio and all that thing. But you have to give them the truth. The problem that we're facing now is that nobody know where is the truth.”*

But Karima, who has been working with an international news agency for ten years also thinks that most Palestinians don't understand the nature of journalism and it's aim for neutrality, especially when it comes to politics:

*“The problem with the Palestinian society is that they really love to have a journalist who is more political. So when you criticize for example Hamas and they are Hamas they say you are Fatah while you're not Fatah.[...] And the problem is that they don't understand that you are a journalist at the end of the day, that you can criticize and do stories about everyone.”*

All respondents feel like they play an important role in Palestinian society as journalists. The one exception is Bahir, the sports journalist from Ramallah who feels that journalists cannot take an important role in Palestine since they are constantly being countered by politicians, which primarily makes them fear for their income according to Bahir:

*“The politicians make a problem for a lot of freelance journalist cause they write their opinion. [...] We try to write without fear but there [is] only ten percent of journalists who write what they want, but the huge percent are afraid for their salary.”*

### **Relations to politicians**

A good relationship with politicians can be a good way to be able to get information and comments from them says Dabir, press journalist from Nablus. According to him, a good relation to the politicians is the only way to get truthful and honest information from them:

*“In [the] Palestinian situation I think you have to be with good connections with the Palestinian politician, public opinions, sheikhs, imams, all of kind of social or political levels. [...] If I don't have a good connection or good communication level with the Palestinian politician I will not take good information and honest and trust information from them.”*

Ibrahim points out that the more powerful a person or organization is the harder it is to go after them:

*“I think that to touch the powerful, the prime minister or the president and the parties who was in the government... it is difficult to touch them. It is not impossible, but you will face problem for sure.”*

Cantara, the radio journalist from Ramallah however is slightly more critical to having close relationships with politicians. She says that the closer journalists are to politicians, the greater are the risks that the society ends up with no freedom of expression:

*“If the relation is good it means that politicians [are] taking what they want from the journalists and [that the] journalists [are] taking the interests of the politicians. Which could also be part of killing the freedom of expression and democratical way. And most of media here is politicalized and taking part in this party or that party or this group or that group.”*

But Cantara has also experienced being told to keep silent from politicians within the Palestinian Authority, by getting threats to her work after a program was broadcasted:

*“There is a possibility that after they make the program they receive a paper, with threat or message from the Palestinian Authority or the political ones that are [being] targeted.”*

When asked what she thinks could happen if a journalist would ignore this kind of warning she says:

*“Either you are arrested or from under the table, they manage to get you fired from your job”*

Eisa explains how politicians can react to his work and how they are positive to critics of other parties but not vice versa:

*“If some things I publish is [...] against Palestinian Authority, Hamas people will say; Good Eisa! [...] and if he wrote something about what happening in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority will say like: ‘Good Eisa, you changed.’”*

They agree however that it should be possible to criticize politicians as long as this is being done in a professional manner. Eisa feels that journalists should have a professional relationship to politicians and not become too close friends with them, but still feel that the private sphere of public personalities are off-limits to journalists:

*“Sexual relation between an important person or a well known person with another known, - or not-known person [shouldn't be written about]. Because if you talk about his situation you will effect the other side, so you will be careful and not to say that because our culture make problems between families.”*

### **5.2.3 Objectivity and neutrality**

One of the most difficult questions to phrase during this study has been the question of how journalists position themselves within the conflict between Israel and Palestine. When asking if it would be possible for a Palestinian journalist to take sides with Israel in the conflict we were mostly met with confused scowls.

It becomes obvious however that the interviewed journalists embrace universally acclaimed journalistic ideals such as objectivity and neutrality, but that these concepts take on a different form in the Palestinian context. There is not necessarily a conflict between the two if you embrace the idea that an objective reporting on the situation also means taking sides with the Palestinian people. Ibrahim, from Tulkarem says:

*“I feel that it's important to be a Palestinian. Yeah, it is difficult even to take side of Israelis. How you can take side with the Israeli?[...] [You need] just to tell the reality, you don't need to lie or to fake any report about Israelis.”*

Asad, the photographer from Ramallah express a similar sentiment:

*“I think you have just being in the middle because the story itself it's with the Palestinian side. [...] Just be in the middle, and you will be at the Palestinian side.”*

Karima puts a lot of heart into her answer to this question and captures the conflicting ideals that Palestinian freelance journalists might feel with the division within themselves, the desire to be a Palestinian patriot but also a neutral freelance journalist:

*“I think you will never be in between. You will be more to the Palestinian side. But what I'm trying to do is to be as balanced as I can by showing the stories and showing the two sides, showing the reality, and it's not easy. Because in the end of the day, when the reality is something more with the Israelis I feel like "shit, what am I doing" you know. This feeling of the nationalism inside me saying "this is a story of right*



*of the Israelis": But then I have to say it out, it's what I believe and I know it's very hard, it's not easy and it's really, really, really hard because in the end of the day you feel like you have mixed feelings in between the nationalism and the journalism."*

### **Foreign agencies and local media**

Faridah, from Jenin has worked a lot for a Chinese news agency and feel that working for foreign agencies changes the way she writes. In local media it's more accepted being biased while working for international agencies, there is an expectation of journalists being neutral. She expresses this through her interpreter:

*"When she wants to write about something, especially for the foreign media, she has to be very neutral and transparent, to take both sides opinions. Because the information, the data by itself it's easy to believe it or not."*

When writing for Palestinian media however different rules apply. Faridah talks about how certain words, that could be seen as charged in foreign media, are often used in Palestinian press. In the following quote she starts by talking about how Palestinians killed by Israelis should be referred to in Palestinian media. This difference between local and international customers will be discussed further in the last part of this chapter.

*"As a patriot we have to call them martyrs but of course for the other agencies like the Chinese for sure we can't say martyr. He's been killed, not martyred. [...] The settlements are illegal, we call it "mustautanat", [...] that you came to a land, confiscated it and lived in it, but [the Israeli media] call it another way; Israeli groups who lives in that area. [...] They call it the Israeli Ministry of Defence, we call it the Ministry of War."*

### **5.3. Prime customers**

The most basic condition of freelance journalism is that you should get paid by the piece. But in our interviews we hear again and again about how our respondents are underpaid or not paid at all. This leads to social media such as blogs and Facebook being utilized as a way to spread ones name and material without getting paid. In the long run this is of course not a sustainable way of making a living for most freelance journalist which in turn leads to the necessity of working other jobs to make the ends meet. In this section we will look at answers related to the customers of our respondents, the importance of getting paid and the impact of working with Israeli and international news agencies.

### 5.3.1 Part time freelance and working for free

When it comes to primary customers the answers from our respondents are rather diverse. It appears to be very hard to make it as a full time freelance journalist in Palestine. Those of our respondents who do freelance work full time often have contracts or stringer deals with one agency or another. Of the respondents, only those with contracts or steady jobs have any kind of insurance if they get arrested or injured while doing their job. Most common among our respondents is however to do journalism part time, seeing it more as a calling than a profession. Bahir, sports journalist from Ramallah works full time as an accountant and does his freelance work in his spare time, which he thinks adds to his journalistic freedom.

*“I am more free because I have another work. I have daily work.”*

Ibrahim thinks it is common for freelance journalists to have other jobs on the side:

*“Of course, most freelance journalists have other jobs or income. Or maybe they are working as business or traders, some kind of business who believe in media.”*

Hasna gives us more insight into how journalists sometimes give up their material just to be published when asked about the most important customers of Palestinian freelance journalists.

*“The electronic websites for media, they take from journalists reports and issues, but they don't pay. And the freelance journalists sometimes prefer to sometimes publish in these websites. [...] In order to build a name for yourself, in order to be known and then maybe something will happen.”*

Social media might sometimes be an outlet for freelance journalists to get circulation of their work if they don't find anyone willing to pay them. Eisa again:

*“[If] I can not, as a freelance find who can buy my reports I express my reports on my Facebook, blog and even in my blog and Facebook, what I am writing, I face problems from the security for that.”*

Ibrahim notes:

*“Most of the local agencies here need your reports for free or for less money [...] and they pay such a silly amount of money that you feel like you don't need it. You prefer to publish for free sometimes. [...] So sometimes I work for like 500 euros, sometimes one maybe pay me like, offer to pay me 50 dollars which*

*I refuse. I prefer my reports in my blog or something. That is why I also feel that I am [a] real freelance journalist I don't want to return back to have a job in media. In any organization or newspaper or even TV because they have their own policy and they cannot let you [be] free.”*

Jabbar, a 47 year old photojournalist from Nablus:

*“Now we have relations with internet and e-mail and websites. We have many websites in the world that you can send them your picture. A freelancer can send to many websites.”*

Jabbar also talks about the importance of working your way up as a freelance journalist:

*“Nobody starts with agencies as full-time, no. They will see your job, they will pay you for the story, for the assignment, for the picture. Then developed you know, if you ask the old journalists nobody applied for a job. It's not a job like a lawyer or a nurse, no. They will see your work, your product, then they decide if they can take you to cover that.”*

Karima has also experienced working for free as a Palestinian freelance:

*“I did some local freelance stuff and I wasn't getting paid, I was like a volunteer. I had five years experience in journalism which means that I should get good money at least. And I was doing it for free because there was no money.”*

Freelancers also have an opportunity to express their opinions and concerns by writing for foreign media. Faridah, the press journalist from Jenin explains what it was like to work for a Chinese agency like this through an interpreter:

*“The time that it's for foreign agencies for instance, for her it's secure because the Palestinian government media they didn't follow what's going on there, about what she write. They will not give hard time for themselves to translate and then asking her or to arrest her.”*

When asked about the best thing about being a freelance journalist all respondents bring up the term freedom in one way or another. Cantara, the radio journalist from Ramallah says that being freelance can give her the opportunity to write about sensitive issues:

*“Yeah, because I'm not under control. I have my view and can express [to] others what I want.”*

### **5.3.2 Conflicting ideals and Israeli media**

It isn't impossible to work for both Fatah and Hamas affiliated media channels during one's career, at least in theory. Our respondents are however careful to point out that most news desk will not allow you to work with other news desks within the same media which limits you to working with only one newspaper or one radio or TV station at a time. But Dabir from Nablus is giving us a hint that it does matter who you are when working with politicized media:

*“Fatah and maybe PLO parties inside Palestine want to provide offers for their members in the first level. In the second level they want to bring [those] who criticize them with polite criticism. But for sure not from Hamas.”*

Selling material to Israeli news outlets however may constitute a problem rather than an opportunity to get your material out to new audiences. Eisa, the TV journalist from Tulkarem follows a recommendation of the union not to work with Israeli media. He explains that they don't know exactly how the Israeli media uses the information:

*“We didn't sell to them because it could be abused or misused. So we found that Israeli is not a real media that you can work with. [...] It can be [seen] by the community as a kind of normalization<sup>55</sup> which is unacceptable for [...] the community.”*

Jabbar, photojournalist from Nablus, confirms that there is an agreement between Palestinian journalists not to work a lot with Israeli media. He tells us how he once used a friend's name when he sold photos to an Israeli newspaper. Being associated with that kind of deals could be problematic, but he also points out that it depends on the kind of story you are working on:

*“That will be a problem for you if you sell a story to Israel about interior problem. But for example commercial something it's not a big issue. It does not hurt the Palestinian picture as they say in outside.”*

### **5.3.3 The big time**

As a freelance you have the opportunity to strike the big time and find a very lucrative job with a foreign news agency or organization, but this remains a dream to most Palestinian freelance journalists. Two of

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<sup>55</sup> Normalization in the Palestinian context means anything that normalizes the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and often refers to any kind of cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians..

our respondents, Gadi and Faridah, have experience of working for Chinese news agencies and two others, Karima and Jabbar, have each ten years experience of working for a major Western news agency. Their stories of working with these foreign agencies differ greatly. Gadi, a 46 year old photojournalist from Nablus talks about his strict by-the-piece relationship to a Chinese agency, which never guarantees him any salary; here speaking through an interpreter:

*“You make a story and they don’t care, sometimes you suggest a story for them and they say no, and other time they say; ‘Yeah, go and we’ll see the pictures.’ [...] He pay taxi, transportation and his camera and the whole day and time and [then] they say we don’t like [the] pictures or the story is not that strong”*

However he notes that the pay from the Chinese agency is better than from the local media. Gadi also talks about the problems regarding that the agency doesn’t take any responsibility for his safety or his equipment.

*“The Chinese agency after a few years for working for them, they brought us helmets and flak<sup>56</sup> jackets. This was after years, and they saw how many times we was injured, me and others and that was pressured on them.”*

Faridah who also worked with a Chinese agency for several years confirms this picture:

*“There is no insurance from this agency to her or other freelance journalists. Usually they will choose the subject that she will write about the time she has write it – send it to them. If they accept it they will publish it. If they publish it they will [pay] her. Otherwise they’re not gonna give her anything. In case she has been injured or arrested, they have no rights, or they don’t enter to protect her.”*

On the other hand Jabbar has been working with a European agency for the past ten years and enjoys many benefits.

*“I have a guarantee of twelve days, 2000 dollars. That’s fine. In Palestine it’s very good. [...] And if I have more than twelve days it will raise. But if I have one day I will take the twelve. So this is [a] good situation that you have your salary,”*

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<sup>56</sup> A flak jacket is a protective vest that protects against flying projectiles such as rubber bullets.

Jabbar also has a car, telephone, camera and safety equipment from the agency. They even fly him to Europe to get medical treatment.

*“I go to London four times a year because I have problems in my ear. I was injured. Next month I'm going to the doctor to follow up appointment. In my situation I'm fine.”*

Karima on the other hand worked for ten years with the same news agency in hopes of getting a steady job. After seven years they offered her a deal where she was granted sixteen work shifts a month but the regular job never came and in the end she quit. During her time with the news agency she did however get social- and health insurance according to Israeli law, since she was living and working in Jerusalem.

But landing a job with a large international news agency, even a Western one, does not guarantee getting an insurance, a car, guarantees, lots of money and other benefits. Asad, the photographer from Ramallah, tells us that he presently gets no benefits from working with one of the larger international news agencies.

### **The idealistic benefits of striking the big time**

Another, less material benefit of working with foreign media is getting in touch with other journalistic cultures. Dabir and Bahir both express wonder at the level of criticism allowed in foreign media. Faridah from Jenin explains how the way she writes and what she writes about transformed when she was writing for a Chinese media agency. Here she talks about topics that she found worked well on the international market through an interpreter:

*“Children rights. The labor for children for instance, education for children. Fit for international media. Mainly also about women's situation in the country here. [...] She wrote about the economy, how it [is]influenced by the Israeli occupation. How it influenced it and how it affected our daily life.”*

Faridah also speaks about how working for different customers mean using different words, how Palestinian media often expect you to adopt a language that could be viewed as less objective than what is acceptable in foreign new agencies. Working with international news desks forces her to step up her professionalism:

*“When she's working with foreign agencies the target mean she has to be really professional to bring this news or this part or this piece that she will write about, than local for instance. Locally if she wants to*

*write something it's common here – everybody know about it, but the difference is to be professional by writing.”*

Ibrahim however sends a warning to anyone who wants to work for international agencies, it could start dangerous rumors.

*“Working with international news agencies, newspaper or agency or Reuter or other... the point of view is that it's easy to say that he is a collaborator or something, they are like service with a foreign agenda which [is] controlled by Israel [...] This rumor can happen for everyone.”*

### **5.3.4 Freedom**

Everyone except two respondents answered “freedom” to the question regarding the possibilities of Palestinian freelancers. Though it would appear common to be forced into freelance journalism due to lack of regular jobs, there are still clear benefits of working as a freelance journalist. When asked about the best aspects of freelance journalism our respondents would invariably answer that it was the freedom to pursue their own stories. Asad is worried that working a steady job would stifle his autonomy:

*“If you are working for a newsagency, you will follow their policy and they will tell you what to cover in the events in general. [...] I think it's a good thing that you will not have [any other] chance but to do it by yourself, to look for stories, look for what's going on on the ground.”*

Dabir agrees that it gives a greater freedom. He says that you can always sell to another newspaper if the first one didn't like your piece. You don't have this choice as a regular journalist:

*“If I wrote something that don't get acceptable view from the man who is head of editor I can sell it for others. So you have more freedom to make compromises, more than the regular journalist, and it's good thing to be a free journalist.”*

Eisa feels that working freelance makes him less likely to have to compromise with his personal opinion and lets him stay true to his personal views:

*“I feel independent so I can not work with a TV who have a clear policy and oblige me to do this and to be one of their agents.”*

Karima feels that she could avoid working with politicized media by working as a freelance and focus on her areas of interest, which is being a voice for the people, not the politics:

*“There's no balance in media, everybody knows [that]. But I don't like to be a voice of someone, I want to be [the] voice of human, of a nation, of people. And that's why I was choosing my work.”*

Hasna explains how she maintains her independence while working for politicized media:

*“Every agency or newspaper have their own policy and they do something and when I choose to work with them I respect their policy but it doesn't mean that I will change my opinion. But anyhow I will make my report acceptable for their policy in general. Because they have different policies.”*

She also thinks that there is a great potential for change among freelance journalists:

*“Freelance journalists can do much roles in the community, in changing, if we could change anything more than the other journalists who are working or who are like in a newspaper or in a policy. Government media and NGO media [all] have their own policies because the freelance journalist he can find the reports and the information from the community itself, reflecting the community needs more than other who are stuck in their employees or work.”*

Ibrahim from Tulkarem points out that there is a great deal of opportunity for freelancers if they only seek it out. He says that trying to work for international agencies and starting their own company is a common way of trying to succeed as a freelancer:

*“If you could stand with other people you could do your own project. That's why most of the freelance journalists either try to find foreign agencies or try to work with international organization or magazines to write outside because it's a free job and there is income come from there. Or establish their own organization or newspaper or magazine or media office to spread news or reports. You will find someone to buy your, or you keep it like a history for you, you wrote about, you publish. Nowadays there is like an electronic media that you can publish on your blog, for free or you could send it to other news agencies.”*

Even though working for Israeli news agencies might be a problematic road to take, working with individual Israeli journalists can still be an option according to Ibrahim, even though this also could start rumors:



*“We feel that we are comrade with [each]other. Freelance journalists feel comrade with other freelance journalists, Israeli journalists.”*

## 6.0 Analysis

In this chapter we will connect the results of our interviews to theories and previous research presented earlier in this essay. The sections of this chapter correspond to the sections in the previous chapter and the order of the research-questions.

### 6.1 Self-censorship in the Palestinian media landscape

One of the biggest problems for the Palestinian media is the lack of money and maybe also readers. This makes Palestinian media rather toothless since they always have to be mindful of their financiers. Most Palestinian news desks are dependent on financial support from the government and advertisers. This puts many media channels in a weak position where they are likely to fold from pressure from those who provide them with money to continue their work.<sup>57</sup> Here we see an example of how Michael Schudson's list of necessities might have missed an important point. The media needs the financial and political independence to remain critical, credible and to produce journalism of a high quality. If this qualification is not met the media will have a hard time to contribute to sustainable democracy.

A specific point on Schudson's list is addressed throughout the interviews, namely his second point on the importance of scrutinizing the ones in power. As stated by Ibrahim and Dabir in the previous chapter, who you are and who you know is a very important question when you choose to take on difficult subjects. This dependence on informal contacts to be able to do real investigative journalism cements the image that the Palestinian media system is still lacking in professionalism. This issue is something that affects the freelance journalists specifically as they are not a part of any established media organization but free roaming agents depending on their own personal contacts. Our respondents don't even feel confidence that they will get help from the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate if they get in trouble and are therefore lacking an important line of support. Eisa from Tulkarem states that he will only get help from the union if he is being backed up by other journalists who put pressure on the union. Without this basic security it is hard for freelance journalists to go out on a limb to be the "unlovable press" that is needed for democratization according to Michael Schudson and it could make them more prone to self-censorship.

We can also see throughout our interviews that the division between Hamas and Fatah is causing many problems for journalists in general, forcing them to take sides and creating sensitive conflicts that many journalists feel that they cannot write about for fear of repression. This also interferes with several points

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<sup>57</sup> Reporters without borders, *Palestinian journalists caught between three sides*, 2014-06 [Retrieved: 2015-04-28]

made by Schudson. It is for example difficult for a journalist to voice the opinions of the Hamas opposition in the West Bank and vice versa. This kind of fractures within society are to be expected if we believe the theory of transition according to Rustow about how societies under pressure behave. The hope for a better climate for journalism therefore lies not only in the reconciliation of Hamas and Fatah but also in a more long term stability and democracy for Palestine.

We have found that the Palestinian freelance journalists say one thing but do another, more or less aware of the self-censorship that they subject themselves to. It is clear from our study that the strain on journalists come from many different directions; NGOs, financial interests and community sentiments also plays a big role in how Palestinian journalists feel they can express themselves. Cultural and religious issues as well as sexual relations often come up as topics that our respondents consider to be off-limits for safety minded journalists. See for example Eisas statement on how journalists shouldn't write about the sexual affairs of high ranking politicians. Tiborn speaks of a fine line between self-censorship and bias. In our study we have seen these two factors as separate entities that work together in restraining the Palestinian journalist.

Cook and Heilmann also speaks of self-censorship and writes that the debate is about both governmental and non-governmental restrictions on speech. They bring up a quote from a Danish reporter who says that there is a difference between the fear of being physically hurt and the respect of other people's religion, culture and other social issues. We can relate this to our respondents who speaks of the problem of writing about social subjects like religion, sexual issues and culture. The line between respect for others and self-censorship might in some situations be blurry.

Both Tiborn and Jamal states that it is the gap between the liberal laws of the Palestinian Authority and the strenuous reality of the Palestinian media landscape that leads to an internalized censorship. In this we can only agree as our results support these earlier findings. If there is a difference in our results to those of Tiborn and Jamal it's primarily connected to freelance journalists being able to be flexible with where they try to get their material published. Our findings also suggest that freelance journalists might not have internalized censorship to the same extent since their main hurdle to get over before getting published is finding an editor willing to publish their material. They are not in the same way immersed in the world of organization policies as the regular journalist.

When it comes to the threats that could lead to self-censorship we see a spectrum that reaches from social ostracization by the spreading of rumors to actual incarceration or even, in some cases being killed. The

repercussions of speaking out on sensitive issues all depend on what part of society might take offense. Writing about political arrests of, for example, Hamas sympathisers in the West Bank, could wake the anger of the Palestinian Authority, writing about womens rights or siding with Israel could put you at a collision course with the Palestinian society and writing about powerful corporations could cause funding to be cut to your newspaper from advertisers. We have therefore shown that it is not only the nepotism that Jamal speaks of that impedes Palestinian journalists, the issue is much more diverse.

## **6.2 Objectivity, the role of journalism and professionalism**

When we asked our respondents about their reasons to do journalism it was evident that most of them carried high held ideals about telling the truth of the people, or using journalism as a way to stand up against the military occupation of their land. There exists a political mindset among Palestinian journalists which in turn might clash with professional journalistic ideals like neutrality and objectivity. Karima embodies this conflict in a great way when she talks about the divide in herself between the journalist and the patriot. The british study that Hodkinson writes about addresses exactly these issues. He says that the background of journalists are important for their objectivity and their ability to report in a clear, unbiased way. Empathy is the main issue when it comes to reporting in an neutral way, according to this study. Faridha sees herself as a “fighter” whose assignment is to let the world know how much Palestinians suffer under the Israeli occupation. Because of her background as a Palestinian herself, she has understanding and compassion for other Palestinians, but the question is if she could have the understanding to do an unbiased portrait of an Israeli soldier. Objectivity is a difficult subject in Palestine since they are under military occupation from Israel. The Palestinian society doesn’t expect journalists to be fully objective and unbiased, at least not regarding issues connected to Israel and the occupation. This leads to problems for both the journalists themselves and society, that doesn’t always get the whole truth from media.

Michael Schudson thinks that media should make space for open debates. This would be problematic within Palestinian society at the moment as media is being closely monitored by ruling politicians who feel that media should work as a kind of public relations. This in accordance with the so called Mediterranean or pluralist polarised model presented by Hallin and Mancini, which we think gives a good view of the state of the Palestinian media landscape with it’s high level of government control and low professionalism. All in all, when we compare our findings to Michael Schudsons seven points on how democracy and journalism intersect and support each other we can see many difficulties on the road to a Palestinian democracy via journalism. This is especially true when it comes to scrutinizing politicians and being a open fora for political debate, something which throughout our interviews has come up as

problematic not only in relation to the Palestinian Authority but also in relation to other factors of power within Palestinian society such as NGOs, financial interests and societal sentiments.

Here we come to the issue of how journalists are perceived by Palestinian society. The problem is not only that journalists in Palestine suffer from low professionalism as mentioned above. The way they are perceived by society also plays a huge factor. Karima and Eisa are just two of several that feel they are not allowed to be neutral agents when they report on political matters. They feel that the public as well as politicians expect them to take sides and have a political agenda. Journalists are simply not allowed to cultivate a professional role dominated by neutrality and objectivity. Hopefully they can develop their professionalism not only according to traits dictated by Lippman and other Western scholars but develop a process towards greater power of their own situation which is in line with the Palestinian context.

Throughout our interviews we find expressions of strong journalistic ideals from our respondents. That they want to tell the truth of the people. Here we have not found any significant differences between our freelance journalists and Tiborn's mixed group. Maybe these graduated but unemployed journalists can become a force of change within Palestinian society, working with journalism only because of their belief in the importance of journalism, not as a profession. A new and radical type of citizen journalism could be developed in this way. This would of course mean that the professionalism of Palestinian journalism would become even more problematic and maybe also more partisan. Michael Schudson however opens up for a partisan media within a democratic society and also states that a journalist should show social empathy and give a voice to minorities, not only remain neutral and objective.

### **6.3 Putting the “free” in freelance**

Journalists who are not depending on an income from their journalistic work are more free to take risks since they have nothing to lose. It would however be paradoxical if the best way of being a good journalist would be not to be a journalist. At least not full time.

That freelance journalists feel pressured into releasing material for free on social media doesn't help their development towards a more professional form of journalism. During our interview with the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate we heard several times that the union finds it hard to organize freelance journalists since there are issues with professionalism and deciding who really is a journalist. This could constitute a negative spiral for the freelance journalists who don't find editors willing to publish their material. If you keep publishing your material for free you will not be considered a professional journalist but if you don't get published at all no one will know who you are.

The most interesting answers of the essay might be the ones that suggest that freelance journalists working with international news agencies could take a step towards professionalism, objectivity and other universal journalist ideals in their contacts with foreign news desks. Here we can truly find the flexibility that Peta van den Bergh speaks of as crucial to freelance journalists. Hints towards this can be found in several statements by Faridah. At the same time the journalists working for foreign agencies express that they have a greater freedom to write about sensitive issues when their texts are published abroad. This might be the most interesting opportunity for the Palestinian freelance journalists - getting in touch with the outside world of journalism. In the interview with Karima we see again and again her frustration of working within the Palestinian media landscape where there is no understanding for how journalism is supposed to work after having had ten years of close cooperation with a large Western agency.

Hadenius and Weibull brings up the industrial process and the workings of a media landscape in change. They write about how a regular journalist don't have the space to do what they want since their subjects are already decided for them by an editor. Hadenius and Weibull writes that a regular journalists working on a news desk today, don't have much time or room to do anything besides what fits in the daily agenda. The authors refers to a study that shows that the most important ideal for Swedish journalists is to investigate people in power. This is also something we can see in our interviews, where the respondents say that it's important to investigate and criticize politicians and powerful people in society. As a freelancer without an editor and a schedule made up for you, it seems like you have a greater freedom in this looking at the answers from our respondents.

Even though Peta van den Berg states that a freelance journalist should be prepared to work in many different fields we feel that our respondents have been doing pretty well by working within smaller niches. Most of them are working only in TV, only in radio or only in press, it's only Bashir who seem to be more of a multi-journalist, focusing on sport across many different platforms. There is however different restrictions to our respondents when it comes to working for many different customers. Palestinian media is highly politicized and the more you take sides the more risks you run of alienating future customers. Working for foreign (non-Arab) news agencies could get you labeled as a possible collaborator with Israel or, as Ibrahim puts it, a pro-European.

Our interviews lend credit to Peta van den Bergs thesis that freelance journalism used to be a profession that one chose in order to be more free but that it is increasingly becoming a choice made out of necessity.

We can also see that with the exception of Gadi our older respondents like Ibrahim, Asad and Jabbar have a more positive outlook on life as a freelance journalist than their younger peers.

## 7.0 Summary

In this final chapter we will sum up our study, give a short presentation of our findings, answer our research questions and our objective. We will also suggest what our study could be pointing to in a larger context and give suggestions for future research.

### 7.1 What we wanted to do

Why the focus on Palestinian freelance journalists? We chose Palestine since professional journalism there still is a fairly new phenomenon and since the situation of Palestine is fairly unique due to the ongoing conflict with Israel and the political turmoil inside Palestinian society. We chose freelance journalists since previous research by Mats Tiborn has mapped a lot of difficulties for Palestinian journalists but didn't look closely at the specific situation of freelance journalists. The subject of Palestinian freelance journalists has not, to the extent of our knowledge, been previously studied in English and we therefore think that we have contributed with new knowledge about one of the most vulnerable groups in international journalism.

The objective of this study has been to map the possibilities and limitations of Palestinian freelance journalists by asking questions concerning self-censorship, the role of journalists within Palestinian society and what customers they utilize.

#### 7.2.1 Answering our own questions

In this section we will examine the answers to our research questions and will then reach the conclusion of our objective.

#### 7.2.2 How are Palestinian freelance journalists affected by self-censorship?

There is nothing in our research that shows that freelance journalists would be more prone to self-censorship than regular journalists. On the contrary many express a feeling of freedom since they don't have to submit themselves to the policies of a politicized media organization and they could even be less prone to self-censorship since they are not as immersed in the culture of self-censorship within the news desks.

What could constitute a problem however is that Palestinian journalists in general depend on personal connections rather than formalized institutions. This is also true when it comes to finding support when you find yourself under pressure after having written something offensive towards high ranking politicians. That many freelance journalists feel excluded from the union is something that could keep



them from taking the risk of publishing something that could be deemed offensive. Our results confirm those of Tiborn that self-censorship still is an issue within Palestinian journalism and something that must be dealt with. We have also confirmed that the issues that are deemed sensitive amongst today's freelance journalists are pretty much the same as the ones brought up by Jamal at the turn of the millennium.

### **7.2.3 How do the freelance journalists see themselves as political agents?**

In presenting the results of our study we have shown that freelance journalists can use their freedom to avoid working with media organizations that they don't sympathize with which, to them, seem as a good thing since media in Palestine is very politicized.

Just like the respondents in Tiborn's essay many of our respondents see themselves in a political light. Our findings confirm that just as stated by Tiborn, Palestinian journalists feel like they play a key part in the democratization of Palestine. All in all our results are very similar to those of Tiborn which suggests that there is not a huge difference between freelance and regular journalists when it comes to attitudes. The differences that we find are rather concerning issues that have to do with economic stability.

Our respondents feel that their job is a way to expose the truth about the occupation of their homeland and to give a voice to the people of Palestine. These political and patriotic ambitions create a divide between their roles as partisan activists and neutral journalists. Most however don't feel that this is an issue. According to them, reporting the objective truth could never hurt the Palestinian cause since the Palestinians are in the right in the conflict with Israel.

In general the journalist is revered in Palestinian society but is also expected to be politicized and politicians expect that they can use journalists as megaphones for their opinions. Our study shows similar kinds of involvement by politicians as in Jamal's study.

### **7.2.4 How are Palestinian freelance journalists affected by working with different kinds of customers?**

Regarding the customers of freelance journalists we have shown that many of our respondents have a hard time getting their material sold for a proper price and that they therefore sometimes prefer to publish for free on social media. Many freelance journalists in this study are forced to hold day jobs while doing their journalism on the side as a kind of calling in life.

We have also shown that landing a job with a foreign news agency could be a lucrative step in your career but that it doesn't necessarily lead to all the benefits of a steady job. Getting in touch with foreign news agencies could however mean an opportunity to write about issues that would be considered taboo within the Palestinian media and getting in touch with other forms of journalism.

Specific to the Palestinian context is also the problematic relationship to Israel and Israeli media. Some journalists prefer to not work with Israeli media for ethical reasons while others fear being seen as sympathetic to Israel.

### **7.2.5 Objective: Map the possibilities and limitations of Palestinian freelance journalism**

By analysing the answers of our respondents we have concluded that the main possibility in the freelance journalist is their flexibility. As long as they are financially safe (for example by working another job) they can be more straightforward and uncompromising in their journalism than regular journalists.

Freelance journalists are however limited by the financial scarcity of the Palestinian media that don't pay them enough and offer lacking support. Feeling excluded from the union is also something that specifically affects the freelance journalists. There is therefore a slight paradox inherent in the situation of the Palestinian freelancer: they have the opportunity to do good and critical journalism, but only if they can support themselves financially in some other way.

Throughout this essay we have presented views on how Palestinian freelance journalists see themselves and their situation. We have shown that just like in the West, the primary difference between freelance and regular journalists is their economic (in)stability.

## **7.3 External validity**

The situation in Palestine is quite extreme but could still work as a kind of hyperbole for the situation in Sweden or Europe. We see in the Western world also a crisis in how journalism is to be funded, as print newspapers die out and advertisers aren't willing to pay the sums necessary to raise the funds needed for online publication. Is it possible that the future of qualitative, investigative journalism in Europe comes from idealistic people who do their journalism on the side of a day job? In Sweden we already have an example of something similar to this concept which has been given a lot of attention nationwide in the last few years; the freelance cooperative called Researchgruppen. Could it be possible that this kind of journalism becomes more prevalent in the future, taking a step away from traditional Western professionalism?

Researchgruppen, who by their critics have been labeled an extreme leftist group, also bring us to a second issue that is relevant to think about in the European or Swedish context. Could there be a resurgence in partisan media as journalism moves onto the internet where anyone easily can get published? The Swedish far right has been working hard when it comes to establishing alternative media channels to communicate biased material to the public. In the public debate in Sweden today we speak about sites such as Avpixlat and Fria Tider, partisan media outlets that show fundamentally different worldviews than the established media and that even has started to form their own, ideologically charged terminology (using “strangers” instead of “new Swedes” or “immigrants”, “pro-Swedish” instead of “xenophobic” or “racist”) and including information about the ethnic backgrounds of, for example suspected criminals, that other media deem irrelevant.

Palestinian and Israeli media report on similar issues in widely different ways, using different terminology (“settlements” or “Jewish towns”, “martyrs” or “terrorists”). Maybe we are seeing a similar divide in Swedish society where a part of the population are getting their news from a strongly biased source that uses different terms and display fundamentally different worldviews? What does this mean for the established media when they are forced to relate to media outlets with sharply pointed opinions not only in editorials but also in the actual news material? What does it mean for professionalism amongst Swedish journalists?

A third issue that springs to mind when we compare the status of freedom of the press in Palestine with our situation at home in Sweden is the way politicians see the function of, and interact with journalists. In Sweden the relationship between journalists and politicians have been fairly professional since the decline of the political party press decades ago. Yet again it is the far right and more specifically the party Sverigedemokraterna that comes to mind and that are acting in a new (or maybe we should say old) direction. This party has throughout the last couple of years been nurturing a distrust in conventional media, refusing to cooperate with journalists and banning them from certain meetings.

Sverigedemokraternas disdain for the democratic function of journalism reminds one of the authoritarian ways Palestinian politicians handle critical journalists. Due to the shady background of many of their representatives Sverigedemokraterna has been thoroughly scrutinized by the Swedish press, something that they have yet not been able to handle in an open and satisfactory manner. We can only hope that this trend is not allowed to continue and that Sverigedemokraterna is not given more power in Swedish society for the sake of democracy and freedom of the press.

## 7.4 Suggestions for further research

*Working conditions of freelance journalists in Gaza.* We have throughout our research gotten implications that the situation of journalists in Gaza is more problematic than in the West Bank. How does this manifest? Are the dangers of being seen as a collaborator greater in Hamas-controlled Gaza?

*Influence of the commercial sector on freedom of the press in Palestine.* Several of our respondent speak of how powerful businessmen are able to control the news due to the money they invest in advertisements. How does this influence journalists and are there any parallels to the economic crisis going on within Western journalism?

*Palestinian journalists working within Israeli society.* Israeli society has a large contingent of so-called Israeli-Arabs, what are their limitations when covering the conflict between Israel and Palestine? How are they perceived by Israeli and Palestinian society?

*Cooperations between Palestinian and Israeli journalists.* Is it risky? Could it lead to changes in attitudes? What can Palestinian journalists do that Israeli journalists can't and vice versa?

*Working conditions for female journalists in Palestine/the Arab world.* According to one of our respondents more than half of the students in her journalism class were women but less than half of working journalists in Palestine are women. What are the expectations on women in Palestine or other Arab societies and how does this affect women working as journalists?

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### **Informant interview**

Hessam Ezzedine at the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate, Ramallah branch

# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Timeline of events in Palestine

This document gives an extremely brief overview of the history of Palestine since the foundation of the state of Israel. For more indepths

reading on this subject we recommend “Conflicts in the Middle East

Since 1945” by Beverly MiltonEdwards

and Peter Hinchcliffe.

- 1948 : The state of Israel is formed in what since the first world war has been a Britttish mandate and are subsequently attacked by several neighbouring countries. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians flee to neighbouring countries where many of their offspring still live in refugee camps to this day. This event is among Palestinians often refered to as the Naqba which is Arabic for “catastrophe”. At the end of the 1948 war the Gaza strip falls into the hands of Egypt while Jordan administers the West Bank and the eastern parts of Jerusalem.
- 1967 : In the wake of the Sixdays war Israel occupies Gaza and the West Bank.
- 1987 : Outbreak of the first Intifada.
- 1993 : Yassir Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, signs the Oslo accords and establishes the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian territories remain under military occupation but the civilian administration is gradually transfered to the Palestinian Authority.
- 2000 : Outbreak of the second Intifada.
- 2006 : Elections are held in the Palestinian territories for control over the Palestinian Authority. The islamic movement Hamas emerges as the winners of the elections but are quickly rejected by the Israeli government who view Hamas as a terrorist organisation. A struggle for power ensues and leads to what Palestinians refer to as the Inquisam, the devision. At the end of the power struggle Hamas seizes control of Gaza and Fatah, the party of now dead Yassir Arafat, maintains control over the West Bank

## **Appendix 2: Interview guide**

The interview guide was transformed during the course of our study. Some questions were taken out or rephrased when we discovered they didn't work or didn't yield the answers we were looking for. This is what the guide looked like when we conducted our last interview. The interviews were semistructured which means that every question might not have been asked at every interview. If for example a question had been sufficiently answered by another question we skipped it. The order of the question also varied with the conversation. All interviews also included followup questions not listed here.

### **Background**

For how long have you been a journalist?

For how long have you been freelance?

Do you do this full time?

Why are you freelance and not an employee?

Why did you want to become a journalist?

### **Who are the prime customers of Palestinian freelance journalists?**

Who are your primary customers?

What kind of jobs do you usually do you?

Have you ever sold material to a foreign news agency?

Is it possible to work for newspapers/radiostation with different political agendas?

What are the possibilities and limitations of working as a Palestinian freelance journalist?

What is the biggest challenge in your line of work?

What is the biggest difference between you and regular journalists?

Do you have any insurance in case you get hurt or arrested?

Have you ever been assaulted, arrested or harassed while doing your job?

If so, by who? And why?

Are freelance journalists more or less prone to selfcensorship?

Are there any political issues that cannot be talked about within Palestinian media?

Which are they?

What could happen if you talk about these issues anyway?

What kind of subjects would you never write about?

Will Palestinian journalists avoid issues that they know will get them into trouble?

If yes: What effects does it have on the democracy in Palestine?

If no: Many outside observers say that this is the case. What do you say about that?

Do you think it's easier for you to write about sensitive subjects since you don't have an editor to answer to?

Is there a difference between what the Palestinian law says about media regulations and reality?

### **How do the freelance journalists see themselves as political agents?**

Is journalism important to society in any way? How?

Is journalism important to democracy? Describe.

What relation should you as a journalist have to politicians?

Should journalists criticize the ones in power?



Should journalists investigate the ones in power? Why/not/?

Do you feel free to investigate the ones in power?

Is there anything journalists should not be allowed to criticize?

Do you feel that you have an important role being a Palestinian journalist?

Is it important to take sides in the conflict with Israel from a journalistic point of view?

Would it be possible for a Palestinian journalist to report from an Israeli point of view?

Which problems do you see with that?

Would it be safe?

### **Finishing up**

Is there anything else that you want to tell us that could help us understand what it's like to be a freelance journalist in Palestine?

### Appendix 3: Respondents

This document gives an overview of our respondents. They have all been given other names and we have consciously chosen not to write the names of their employers. Though most respondents didn't express any wish to remain anonymous, we decided to anonymize them for the sake of safety.

Asad is a 35 year old photographer from Ramallah who mainly has worked with foreign newspapers, magazines and news agencies. He has been working as a journalist since 2000 and has been freelance the whole time. His interest in photography was raised while serving time in an Israeli prison.

Bahir is a 26 year old sports journalist active in many forms of media and based in Ramallah. He holds a full time job as an accountant and does his freelance journalism in his spare time. He has been doing journalism for four years.

Cantara is a 28 year old radio journalist based in Ramallah. She works for a commercial radio station that pays her by the piece. She has been a journalist for six years and has been at her current work for three years. Cantara used an interpreter for her interview.

Dabir is a 26 year old press journalist from Nablus. He works as media analyzer for an NGO and does freelance journalism on the side. He graduated from AlNajjah university in 2012 but had been selling freelance material two year prior to his graduation.

Eisa is a 35 year old TV journalist from Tulkarem. He has been a journalist for eleven years and has been freelance the whole time. The interview was carried out with the help of Ibrahim serving as an interpreter.

Faridah is a 28 year old press journalist from Jenin. She worked freelance up until just a few months before the interview when she got a temporary job at a firm in Ramallah. When she was a freelance her primary customer was a Chinese news agency. Faridah had interpretation help from a coworker during her interview.

Gadi is a 46 year old photographer from Nablus who has been working with a Chinese news agency for several years. He has been a journalist for ten years and freelance for seven of those years. His interview was interpreted by Jabbar.

Hasna is a 24 year old press journalist from Tulkarem. She has been working part time as a freelance journalist and just recently started doing it full time. Hasna required an interpreter and had help with this from Ibrahim.

Ibrahim is a 56 year old press journalist from Tulkarem. He presently works for an organization in Ramallah and hopes to be opening his own media office in Tulkarem shortly. He has over ten years of experience of freelance journalism. Ibrahim put us in touch with, and interpreted the interviews with, Eisa and Hasna.

Jabbar is a 47 year old photographer from Nablus working on a contract with a large international news agency. He has been a journalist for 22 years and a freelance for the last ten years. Jabbar interpreted the interview with Gadi.

Karima is a 31 year old producer from east Jerusalem. She worked for ten years as a freelancer for a large international news agency but has recently moved on to a steady job for an American corporation broadcasting from Jerusalem.

Leila is a 27 year old press journalist living in east Jerusalem. She has been a freelancer part time since 2011 but 6 months ago she quit her regular job and engaged fully to her freelancing. Due to a misunderstanding we missed our appointment with Leila and she therefore answered the interview via email.