Palestinian National Plan 2011-13

Information Sector Strategy

Executive Summary

Sector Profile

Media is not only a means of communication and public outreach. In light of the singular peculiarity imposed by the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian context, the media is also a tool of struggle and path towards promoting the Palestinian version, including all relevant humanitarian, political and legal details. More importantly, the media is a vehicle of rebuilding social cohesion and moral system as well as of reshaping the national identity remotely from sectarian, tribal and partisan concepts and terminology. At the same time, the media entrenches social awareness and safeguards the right to criticism, protest and accountability. According to such a definition, the Palestinian media sector should be relieved from political domination, but not from politicisation. Without prejudice to media representatives' right to access and analyse information as well as adopt different opinions, the media should not be dominated to journalists with previously oriented opinions.

The media can be divided into official and nonofficial outlets. The latter comprise independent, partisan and civil society media agencies. The media can also grouped in line with specialisation, including written, audiovisual, electronic and multimedia means. For a better situation analysis, the first categorisation (official and nonofficial media) will be addressed. Later sections of this paper will shed light of various types of the media.

Components of the Palestinian Media

(i) Official Media

Oftentimes, official and governmental media outlets are confused. As a way out, official media sector involves outlets that are under full control of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). With a limited government control, however, official media agencies report immediately to the Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee. Still, these agencies are primarily funded by the government, which covers staff salaries and current expenses. Since 2004, the Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, in his capacity as the President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), has been in charge of appointing a political official to manage official media institutions. The official media sector comprises the Palestinian Radio and Television Corporation and Palestine News and Information Agency (WAFA). Official media may also include any other media means, which report to PLO. Under presidency of a member on the PLO Executive Committee, these are supervised by the PLO Media Department.

The government media sector consists of the Ministry of Information (MoInf), Government Media Office, media units at ministries, and Palestine National Archive.

(ii) Nonofficial Media

Representing the broader media sector in Palestine, the nonofficial media sector entails newspapers, TV and radio stations, and news agencies.

- **Newspapers:** *Al Quds* and *Al Ayyam* are private, independent daily newspapers. *Al Hayat al Jadida* is a semi-official newspaper that receives partial support from the PNA. In addition to the *Ar Risalah* partisan weekly, *Falastin* is a daily newspaper affiliated with Hamas. *Al Istiqlal* is a weekly newspaper of the Islamic Jihad Movement. Other newspapers and magazines are Issued by civil society organisations and distributed with daily newspapers or separately. These include *Al Hal*, *Sawt an Nisa'*, *Yanabi'*, and *Falastiniyat*.
- **Satellite TV stations:** *Ufuq* and *Al Falastiniya* are the only two satellite TV stations with official licences. However, some satellite stations operate and broadcast under the current internal division in the Palestinian territory and in the absence of the rule of law and public order. These include the Hamas-affiliated *Al Aqsa* Satellite Station and *Al Falastiniya*, a Fatah's station that was suspended upon an internal decision. Other satellite TV stations, including *Watan* and *Falastin al Ghad*, are under construction.
- **Local TV and radio stations:** According to 2009 MoInf statistics, 29 private TV stations were in operation in the West Bank governorates. Of these, three station do not function for internal reasons. 29 radio stations also operate in the West Bank. In Gaza, 12 private radio stations are in place.
- **News agencies:** With a varying nature of duties, many nonofficial news agencies operate throughout the Palestinian territory. Most famous news agencies are *Ma'an* and *Ramattan*. The latter was suspended for internal causes, however. Functioning as correspondent offices, satellite TV stations and media service centres, other news agencies of variant sizes, roles and influence also work in Palestine.
- **Websites:** These include independent, partisan and oriented news, entertainment, educational sites and blogs. Civil society organisations also launch websites to present their programmes and activities. Most importantly, these websites are not subjected to control or oversight. A list of these sites and navigators is not available. Laws and regulations are not in place to regulate their functions.
- **Union of Journalists:** As a popular union, the Union of Journalists reports to the PLO. 800 members are registered on the Union. However, a law has not been promulgated to regulate its functions. The Union's dysfunction has promoted some journalists to establish alternative frameworks, including Hamas' Palestinian Journalists Bloc in Gaza. Under various names, media forums attempt to play a role, which the current Union of Journalists has been reluctant to fulfil.
- **Local media organisations:** These are NGOs that work towards developing and building capacities of the media sector. Some organisations monitor violations committed against media representatives; document incitement and gender-based bias; provide media courses to new graduates and the public on the media activity; contribute to debates on respective laws and policies on the right to access information; and conduct media research.
- **Cinema clubs and publication houses:** Cinema houses and theatres are limited. These include *Al Kasaba* Cinema and Theatre, *Al Hakawati* Theatre, City Cinema, and Rashad ash Shawwa Centre. MoInf has issued eight licences for operation of cinema houses.

Publication houses are also limited in number. These are mostly print shops that reprint publications produced outside Palestine or print posters and other materials. In spite of its solid start, *Dar ash Shurouq* Publishers might not maintain progress in light of the difficult financial situation.

Most publication houses face problems in importing and exporting books and publications through crossing points because of the occupation and lacking controls or laws on intellectual property in the PNA.

2. Situation Analysis

Opportunities

• **Legal framework:** The Law on Printed Materials and Publication is in place. Drafts have been developed of the Audiovisual Law, Law of the Union of Journalists, and Law on Official Media Institutions. These can be further developed and approved.[*]
• **Political framework:** The 13th Government Programme *Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State* paves the way towards a new culture. Still, the new discourse needs be unified.
• **Economic situation:** Facilitating competition in a most important economic sector – i.e. telecommunications – will provide an opportunity that must be grabbed.
• **Professional rehabilitation of media specialists:** With a large volume of funds, donors pay a special attention to developing the private and public media sectors. UNESCO has launched an initiative to review relevant educational curricula. Curricula that are already in place in a number of countries such as India, can be borrowed and adapted to the Palestinian context. In our opinion, these provide an invaluable opportunity. We do not need to start where others already did. The same applies to the rehabilitation of media and academic cadres in the media field.
• **Union of Journalists:** Available opportunities must be invested in order to reform the Union of Journalists. Elections should be held and the old Board changed. It should be noted that the International Union of Journalists, Arab Union of Journalists and many other international and local organisations are making effort to render the new Palestinian Union of Journalists successful.
• **Prevalent culture:** A weak trend of political Islam, especially in this sector, provides an opportunity to the media institution to present an alternative discourse and vision that is capable of influencing the public opinion.
• **Outward-oriented media discourse:** The question of Palestine, which has regained international interest, as well as global campaigns that support the Palestinian people's struggle provide opportunities to be duly invested.
• **Organisational structures:** The 13th Government Programme and strategic plans, which are being developed, furnish an opportunity to overcome the impasse of functional stagnation.
• **Functional role:** In addition to the internal fragmentation and weird division of labour within the Palestinian political institution, the deteriorating political situation, which is generated by the occupation, poses a problem and threat, but an opportunity as well. To put an end to the internal division and hold elections will provide an opportunity to examine and rearrange

---

[*] This is an opportunity because available laws need not be amended. However, it is more difficult to develop a new law that adheres to applicable international standards and protects rights and freedoms.

functional roles of media agencies.

Threats

- **Political environment:** The media sector is impaired by the occupation; inadequate working relationship between political and media institutions; absent political will to reform the status of the media; intervention by security agencies in the media activity; and internal division and reflections on the local government and administration.

- **Economic environment:** The Palestinian media sector has not yet developed into an industry. The general economic situation negatively impacts media and advertising activities. In addition to lacking a government priority to support it, the media sector is unable to persevere in light of the weak advertising market.

- **Legal environment:** The media sector lacks regulatory laws, including an Audiovisual Law, Law on the Regulation of the Activity of the Union of Journalists, Law on the Right to Access Information, and Law on the Protection of Intellectual Property. Additionally, freedom of the press is violated by the enforcement of certain laws, including the Penal Law. The sector is marred by an inadequate interpretation of the Law on Printed Materials and Publication.

- **Professional rehabilitation of media practitioners:** Training programmes are developed and provided in disregard of assessing journalists' needs or the Palestinian case (i.e. as a hot conflict area). Academic cadres and courses offered by media colleges are weak and do not meet the media market needs.

- **Union of Journalists:** Ineffective operation of the former Union of Journalists has exerted negative impacts on the Palestinian media activity. It has not played its assigned role in protecting journalists, building journalists' capacities, and curbing partisan influence and interference in the Union's activity. The newly established Union is now making effort to reform the old legacy, which it has received from the former Union Board.

- **Prevalent culture:** Weak liberal social traditions and emerging political Islam within a patriarchal, tribal structure are sensitive to contentious and controversial issues presented by the media, such as sex, religion and prioritised political issues at the expense of social problems. Self-oversight exercised by journalists is inadequate. With the rise of new economic powers, censorship has favoured the private sector and capital. Local politicians prefer foreign media outlets to local ones. Information is inaccessible due to the prevalent culture of secrecy and conservatism.

- **Professional media institution:** Editorial boards lack a culture of setting editing policies. An editor-in-chief leads each media outlet and defines its own policy separately from other agencies.

- **Outward-oriented media discourse:** The Palestinian media sector lacks professional spokespersons, who are capable of confronting and responding to Israeli and Zionist fallacies. Palestinian experts, who are fluent in languages other than Arabic and capable of transmitting the Palestinian version, resign from national media outlets and migrate abroad in light of an enormous discrepancy in financial returns. The Palestinian media does not employ appropriate techniques to address different cultures; it only believes that the just cause of the Palestinian question will be sufficient to lobby an international public opinion and provide support to Palestinians. Documentation and cultural production is absent. Media activity implemented by Palestinian embassies is inadequate due to lacking a clear national information strategy, which ensures delegation of media attaches to embassies abroad. A media strategy to address both the West and the Arabs is not in place. The Palestinian media establishment adopts a reaction

technique as a strategy.	

- **Organisational structures:** In particular, the Palestinian official media sector has been a container of the unemployed and government proponents, resulting in a further burden of assimilating unspecialised employees. At the same time, the official media sector is incapable of recruiting experts or retaining available ones due to low salaries and difficult working conditions. Experts also abandon their positions in the official media sector and join foreign and Arab media outlets.

- **Functional role:** Though it is entitled to define its functional role and political and social activity, the official media sector does not identify its working relationship with public sector bodies and other agencies. MoInf has been stripped of its functions; it does not control the Radio and Television Corporation, nor does it set forth a clear working relationship with journalists, Government Media Office, PLO media offices or media units at ministries and government bodies. Functional roles as well as working relationships with political bodies and the public should be revisited.

- **Inadequate budgets:** Insufficient budgets allocated to media institutions restricts production of an integrated Palestinian version and renders implementation of assigned missions inefficient at the official and governmental levels. Therefore, adequate budgets should be provided to help media outlets play their prescribed role. Without funds, the official media sector cannot be expected to deliver a more effective function.

3. Vision

The Palestinian media is a strong, objective, unbiased and professional sector. It is capable of presenting the Palestinian version to the world and serve national goals of freedom and independence. It is able to build a national, democratic society, which respects pluralism, diversity, different opinions and public right and access to knowledge. The Palestinian media sector protects the national identity and heritage against distortion and blackout. In its daily discourse, the Palestinian media disregards regionalism, tribalism and other fragmentation-oriented terminologies and concepts as well as extremist and nihilistic opinions.

4. Strategic Objectives, Policies and Interventions

The tables below summarise strategic objectives as well as major policies and intervention to be implemented in the media sector. The full Media Sector Strategy includes detailed policies and interventions.

Strategic Objective (1)	A media sector that seeks to serve the Palestinian national project and goals in line with the Declaration of Independence and Palestinian legislation; to promote and support the vision of ending the occupation and establishing the State of Palestine on the 4 June 1967 border; confirm the territorial unity of the homeland as well as political representation of the Palestinian people; and present the Palestinian version to the world in order to help achieve national goals of freedom and independence.
Policy	**Policy Interventions**

1. Rehabilitate the Palestinian media sector so that it restores its role in the public and national mobilisation process. 2. Unify the discourse of official media outlets and subject them to an integrated terms of reference so that the media mission can be consolidated and influential. 3. Unify official media institutions, identify a political terms of reference, appoint a professional administrative authority, define missions, and develop coordination mechanisms between these institutions and the political terms of reference. 4. Consolidate political and geographical terms throughout media outlets. 5. Define the working relationship and develop various media agencies in line with a strategic framework of a national vision, which the media sector will present from difference perspectives. 6. Allow room for and support creative input throughout media institutions in order to enhance media cadres, upgrade devices and tools, and keep pace with the telecommunications revolution. 7. Promote community interplay and media accountability.	1. Establish a major, official media institution (interface) that is professional, rational and provides a reliable source of information on official positions and national news. 2. Appoint specialised media interfaces (official spokespersons) throughout ministries and government bodies as well as media attaches at Palestinian embassies. These will be responsible for presenting the official Palestinian version and providing a source of information, news and comments when necessary. 3. Provide technical and financial infrastructure to the Radio and Television Corporation and Palestine News Agency (WAFA) as well as promote them as public bodies and incubators of community interaction. 4. Provide a service delivery infrastructure throughout ministries and government bodies in order to launch the Palestinian e-government. 5. Adopt an official government media spokesperson office, which will publicise the Palestinian position to all official and nonofficial bodies, including Palestinian embassies abroad. 6. Support the private media sector by providing information and facilities. Media should be viewed as a private sector industry that generates income. 7. Collect the Palestinian national audiovisual and written archive as well as make it available to the media sector. 8. Publish media handouts and circulars of all types and forms in foreign languages to meet needs of the Palestinian society and media sector bodies. 9. Restore the official Palestinian electronic domain name (ps) as well as Palestine State's frequencies (M&FM).
Strategic Objective (2)	Protect and promote freedom of the press and media pluralism as well as protect the public right and access to information.
Policy	**Policy Interventions**
1. Develop a legal framework to regulate, protect and contribute to promoting the media sector. 2. Establish a national media council to regulate the media activity and combine official and private sectors under a single canopy without prejudice to pluralism and freedoms. 3. Rejuvenate MoInf's role as a collective – temporary – framework until the National Media Council is in place.	*First:* Approve and/or amend the following laws: 1. Approve the Audiovisual Law. 2. Amend the Law on Printed Materials and Publication of 1995 in congruence with the Audiovisual Law. 3. Develop and approve a Law on the Radio and Television Corporation. 4. Approve the Draft Law on the Palestine News Agency (WAFA). 5. Approve the Law on the Right to Access Information. 6. Develop and approve the Law on Intellectual Property Rights. 7. Approve laws concerning media unions. 8. Adopt and put to effect the Charter of Honour of Media

4. Invigorate MoInf's role as an official media tribune until the National Media Council is formed and relevant regulatory law is promulgated. This important facility may not be neglected further.	Professions (a popular, but ineffective, document that was adopted by many journalists). *Second:* Establish the National Media Council to represent all segments of the society (including the Government, civil society and private sector): 1. Promulgate a law to regulate functions of the Council. 2. Halt establishment of media tribunes that lack a clear vision.
Strategic Objective (3)	Restore the status of local media in its capacity as a fourth authority that is capable of accountability, providing reliable information to the public, and supporting the media so that it becomes an independent industry.
Policy	**Policy Interventions**
Develop Palestinian media outlets so that they become a source of information, maker of public opinion and reference for decision-makers. Based on marketing, the media industry will be productive, not consumptive. Meanwhile, citizens' right to information and knowledge will be safeguarded.	1. Redraft and develop media academic curricula and training in conformity with the market needs and special status of the Palestinian context. 2. Establish a national, specialised information centre, which will act as a terms of reference for the media sector and report to MoInf. Ultimately, a National Media Council will be approved or established and the function and role of the Government Media Office revised. 3. Rely on established national centres in reference to statistics and percentages, including the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). 4. Develop media academic curricula that contribute to creating a specialised press, community media and electronic media. These will prepare graduates to deal with the media on the ground and include legal courses, which introduce media students to legal controls applicable to the media activity in Palestine. 5. Integrate technical education within wider media curricula, including direction, sound, montage, and other fields. Meantime, practical training will be highlighted. 6. Adopt a training system that enlists graduates into media outlets for a period of six months before they are granted certificates. 7. Develop government media training centres that ensure newly appointed staff are rehabilitated. These will also provide continuing training to enhance media skills of old staff. 8. Establish a coordinating council, including representatives of training institutions, to make a training policy and prevent conflicting or unregulated training effort.

6. Expected Results

Taking into account that measurement seeks to adjust and evaluate performance, quantitative and qualitative indicators can be in place to monitor and evaluate the progress made by the (public and private) media sectors. These are as follows:

(i) Quantitative indicators:

1. Increase the number of audiovisual stations in terms of registration and operation. There are currently 30 local TV stations, four satellite TV stations, and 38 radio stations in operation in the West Bank and Gaza.
2. Increase the number of newspapers, magazines and regular publications in terms of registration and operation. Currently, 298 newspapers and magazines are in place, including three daily newspapers. We believe that these should be raised to at least five newspapers.
3. Number of complaints filed to the National Media Council or MoInf until the Council is established.
4. Number of stations/newspapers closed for professional or political reasons.
5. Number/volume of locally produced programmes in the public and private media sectors (Presently, local production does not exceed 10% of the transmission volume. We aspire that local production reaches at least 40% within three years).
6. Increase the audience of local media outlets (measurement is based on public surveys). According to 2010 surveys, the audience of local media stations was 33%. We look forward to raising this percentage to at least 50% in 2011, 55% in 2012, and 60% in 2013.
7. Increase the number of media graduates by 10% over the Strategy lifecycle.
8. Increase the number of graduates in the media field by 10% in each of year of the Plan life.
9. Increase the number of trainees at government and private training centres as well as enrolment of media practitioners on extensive, professional training programmes by 20%. (Though insignificant, we cannot now present exact figures. Therefore, training is important).
10. Increase the number of locally produced, outward-oriented shows and films. We believe that the currently outward-oriented six shows should be raised to 10 over the three years of the Plan life. Also, six various documentary films will be produced.
11. Increase the number of shows/films produced jointly by the official and private media sectors (Seven joint shows are produced a year. We aspire to raise these to 15).
12. Raise the number of women hosted on local shows on hot topics by 30% as well as the number of female media practitioners by 30%.
13. Increase the number of draft laws developed and approved. Eight laws should be endorsed. However, we believe that at least four laws should be in place towards 2013.
14. Increase the number press investigations published/broadcasted about issues of corruption, maladministration and public opinion (Various media outlets do not conduct press investigations. Increasing the number of these investigation depends on the extent of the freedom of the press).
15. Highlight Israeli violations against Palestinian journalists and media agencies.
16. Extend collection of the Palestinian national archive.

17. Increase the number of journalists affiliated with the Union of Journalists (The Union currently enrols 800 journalists. Our aspiration is that the Union represents the whole media community, which comprises more than 2,000 journalists).
18. Enhance participation of the public and private sectors in establishment of the National Media Council and Radio and Television Board.
19. Improve contribution of the media industry in the GDP. Current contribution is 0%. Once laws are issued forth, training programmes provided and media policy made clear, we expect that the media industry contributes by 1-2% in the GDP.
20. Increase the number of media performance monitory reports developed by national and international bodies (Currently, only three monitoring institutions are in operation, with 4-6 reports issued a year. We look for increasing the number of such reports to 10).

(ii) Qualitative indicators:

Quantitative indicators are not sufficient *per se* to measure development and solid performance of the media sector in the service of the national project. Performance of both public and private media outlets should be monitored (not overseen) in order to enhance and develop performance, particularly the content of media programme. Increased number of media institutions does not mean a plural or free press if an integrated media content is inadequate or role of the media as a responsible fourth authority is absent. Hence, quantitative indicators should be associated with qualitative ones in order to enhance measurement capacity.

1. Quality of programmes produced by relevant media outlets and relation to the 13th Government Programme Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State. This includes a highlight of content, discourse, influence and turnout.
2. Respect by the media of women's perspective and incorporation of media views.
3. Effective coordination between public and private media sectors.
4. Ability of government websites to reflect missions of ministries and government bodies as well as responses to public inquiries. These websites will deliver better public service and raise the number of navigators.
5. Speedy and clear media messages delivered by officials and media spokespersons.
6. Quality production of media outlets and capability of confronting the Israeli version and repudiating fallacies.
7. Ability to advocate a local public opinion to support the 13th Government Programme.
8. Creative thinking in the presentation of the Palestinian version.
9. Ability to monitor and respond to Israeli incitement in a systematic and regular manner. Reactions to particular incidents should be avoidl.
10. Ability to present the historical narrative to the new generation in an attractive and effective fashion.
11. Ability to dispense with external funding, so that the media is converted into an income generating industry. This particularly applies to the private media sector.
12. The private sector will interact with the media as an operational, profitable industry, not as an advertising tool.

13. National and international agencies will develop media performance monitoring reports.
14. The Union of Journalists will be capable of defending rights and protecting interests of journalists.
15. The Government Media Office will be capable of quickly publicising official positions to Palestinian embassies abroad. Also, official should able to speedily respond to and interact with media outlets in general, and with local media agencies in specific.
16. Extent of progress in the performance of civil servants, who were trained at government training centres, will be assessed.
17. Capability of media curricula to respond to the media market needs will be enhanced.

7. Development Approach

To develop a first draft, this Information Sector Strategy primarily has relied on an approach of participatory thinking, including a number of specialists. Respective literature and research papers were consulted and specialised persons and bodies contacted. The first draft of the Strategy was presented to and discussed with broader groups and segments to ensure comprehensive coverage and reflection of the reality. As such, the Strategy articulates objectives of bodies interested in the media industry and media discourse.

Endeavour to set the media vision and identify the working relationship between politicians and media representatives occupied a major portion the drafting process. To safeguard effective and efficient output, all team members engaged in defining the general framework of the plan. Each member was assigned to develop a paper on a particular theme. These were later redrafted and integrated within the first draft of Strategy.

The team will adopt an approach of contacting specialised bodies inside and outside Palestine and receive their observations. Relevant remarks will be incorporated with the draft Strategy, which will later be submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development (MoPAD). After it is further revised and developed by the team, the final Strategy will be submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval.

Budget:

Under the current situation, it will be difficult to define a specific or approximate budget for the Information Sector Strategy. Most government bodies have operating budgets. To identify a programme-based budget for each submission, current budget submissions need be examined separately. We propose that a separate media line item of 2% of the total Public Budget be developed on each ministry's budgetary allocation to help them implement their own media plans. On the other hand, budgets of media programmes run by the private sector and civil society cannot be defined as they depend on external funding. However, implementation of the Strategy-related

proposals and policies, including approval of laws and protection of freedoms, will ultimately help support the private sector and civil society in the media field.

Taking into account that the upcoming battle is one of media and politics, we recommend that media-related budgetary allocations be raised.

National Information Sector Strategy Team