

## United Nations in Palestine marks 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of World Press Freedom Day

Today the United Nations in Palestine marks World Press Freedom Day, 30 years since it was first proclaimed by the UN General Assembly. While we celebrate the principles of a free press, it is important to highlight restrictions to press freedom, including attacks on journalists, and advocate for enhanced press freedom and a diverse, pluralistic and independent media landscape.

The 2023 theme is [Shaping a Future of Rights - Freedom of expression as a driver for all other human rights](#). This three-decade anniversary also coincides with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.”<sup>1</sup> However, this fundamental right is increasingly under attack globally, with both state and non-state actors playing a role in media suppression, and the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, especially in the online sphere.

Attacks on the media have serious consequences for democracy, peace, the rule of law and human rights. Without freedom of expression, and in the absence of legislative frameworks on access to information, citizens risk losing access to reliable, accurate and up to date information and governing systems can fail.

Restrictions to press freedom and violence against media personnel come in a myriad of forms across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and include censorship, confiscation of equipment, arrest and detention and physical attacks. In 2022 alone, the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) documented a total of 605 violations against media freedom<sup>2</sup> by the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the de-facto authorities in Gaza. 129 of these cases included physical assault, two of which were fatal shootings, and 64 were of detention and arrest. Women journalists can face additional societal barriers to their work and are particularly at risk of gender-based violence, including online threats and smear campaigns.

Protecting and promoting press freedom is a core aim of the UN in Palestine. For instance, in 2022 UNESCO held psychosocial support sessions with journalists in Gaza in the aftermath of escalations. The UN Human Rights Office has been at the forefront in documenting and raising its concerns to all duty bearers on violations of [shrinking civic space](#).

The UN in Palestine will continue to work with all relevant entities in pursuit of enhancing press freedom and journalist safety.

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<sup>1</sup>Article 19 of [the UDHR](#) states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The limitations of freedom of speech, however, under International Law, seek to [strike a balance](#) between the fundamental right of freedom of expression and the right to equality and non-discrimination.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.madacenter.org/files/flash/Annual%20Report%202020%20E%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.madacenter.org/files/flash/Annual%20Report%202020%20E%20(2).pdf) (MADA’s definition of physical assault includes firing of live ammunition, rubber bullets, stun grenades and teargas injuries.)