United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

European Union

NET MED YOUTH
NETWORKS OF MEDITERRANEAN YOUTH

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

NET MED Youth and OHCHR, celebrated World Press Freedom Day 2016 in Palestine

Access to Information and Fundamental Freedoms: This Is Your Right!

World Press Freedom Day 2016 was celebrated in Palestine with events organized by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), through the Networks of Mediterranean Youth project (NET-MED Youth), funded by the European Union.

The celebrations took place in Ramallah and Gaza, with the participation of university students, young journalists, media activists, NET-MED youth working groups together with local and international partner organizations.

As the **UNESCO Representative in Palestine, Dr Lodovico Folin Calabi**, said "the theme for the celebration of the World Press Freedom Day this year – *This is your right! Access to Information and Fundamental Freedom!* – is particular relevant for all those who support freedom of press in Palestine: there is a draft law being discussed by the national authorities to ensure that right of access to information is fulfilled. Having such a law in Palestine would represent a concrete further step towards freedom of press and democratic participation. UNESCO will continue supporting media development in Palestine, in *ensuring public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements* (Sustainable Development Goal 16)*".*

The WPFD2016 celebration in Palestine started with a celebration in Gaza on 3 May, through a campaign that lasted from 1 to 3 May 2016. The celebration included a radio episode on freedom of press and short interviews with media actors from Gaza, with a special focus on journalists with disabilities.

"Without easy access to timely, accurate and unbiased information, it is almost impossible for us to make informed choices and to fully pursue our interests, at home, at work and in the political sphere. Access to information is key component of the right to freedom of expression which Palestine recognized when it acceded the ICCPR in 2014" said **James Heenan, Head of Office of OHCHR**. "This right is a foundation for our enjoyment of many other rights and, conversely without access to information, most other human rights are compromised".

An online social media campaign was also held to advocate for the right to access information by the journalists. In addition to publishing interviews with relevant media experts, students and journalists on their access information, a contest for the best tweet using the local hashtag of #WPFD2016 was launched on 1 May 2016, with the best three tweets awarded during the reception ceremony.

The WPFD2016 celebration in Ramallah, was held through a performance on the situation of the Access to Information in Palestine entitled "Welcome to a cup of coffee" on 9May 2016.

"On this day we celebrate the World Press Freedom Day. The right to freedom of opinion and expression includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information. It is a key component of democratic governance and development. People need to be fully informed to be able to form an opinion and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Freedom of information also contributes to better governance as it enhances transparency in public affairs," said **Deputy EU Representative David Geer**. "NET-MED Youth Project aims at supporting youth in advocating for their rights, including the freedom of expression. In Palestine, children and youth account for almost two thirds of the entire population. Therefore, this project offers huge potentials for them as they engage in building a democratic society, that values innovation, creativity, and fundamental freedoms."

The play was followed by an interactive discussion with the audience comprising university students and the representatives of partner institutions and NET-MED Youth working group. The audience discussed the situation of the press freedom in Palestine and the Access to Information Law that is currently being reviewed by all national stakeholders, in addition to the importance of the journalistic ethics of neutrality and professionalism, specifically in the Palestinian context.

For more information on World Press Freedom Day, please visit http://en.unesco.org/world-Press-Freedom-Day-2016

The Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) project is a regional project implemented by UNESCO and funded by the European Union. It aims to mainstream youth issues and priorities across national decision-making and policy implementation in Eastern and Western Mediterranean countries. NET-MED Youth focuses on building the capacities of youth and youth organizations and promoting their active engagement in the development and implementation of national policies and strategies on youth, by identifying workable models for improving youth access to employment and youth inclusion in different sectors. More information on NET-MED Youth Project are available www.netmedyouth.organdwww.facebook.com/netmedyouth.

For more information on UNESCO's activities in Palestine, please visitwww.unesco.org/ramallah or contact the Public and Information Officer of the UNESCO Ramallah Officeatm.beltaji@unesco.org.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory (OHCHR oPt) is a field presence of the Office of United Nations the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). OHCHR oPt is the only internationally-mandated entity to monitor and report publicly on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), and is the official United Nations voice on human rights in the oPt. The Office is based in Ramallah and has a sub-office in Gaza, and field offices in East Jerusalem and Hebron.

For more information on OHCHR-oPt, please visit http://ohchr.org/EN/Countries/MENARegion/Pages/OPT.aspx.