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Ramallah Office

United Nations Human Rights
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

PRESS RELEASE
2018/5
Ramallah, Gaza, 2 May 2018

Keeping Power in Check: *Media, Justice and Rule of Law* is the global theme for this year's celebration of UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day 2018 marking its 25th anniversary



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Ramallah, Gaza – On 2 May 2018, the Office of the United Nations Higher Commission of Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrated **World Press Freedom Day** through a debate sessions Ramallah and in Gaza held around the themes of "Protection and violations" and of "Governance and Human Rights". *In a moment in history, where people across the word are witnessing a dramatic increase in access to information and communication, fact-checking, fake news, alternative facts are issues of a critical importance* said Dr Lodovico Folin Calabi, UNESCO Representative to Palestine. He also emphasized how *Promoting the safety of journalists and combatting impunity for those who attack them are central elements within UNESCO's support for press*

freedom on all media platforms, through global awareness raising, capacity-building and a range of actions, notably through the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

The discussion among the panelists saw the participation of students from journalism schools, academics and media professionals and reiterated how media's watchdog role is crucial to hold governments and institutions accountable. It was also reiterated that freedom of expression, freedom of information, and the safety of journalists are rights that need to be fully protected by courts as well as by law enforcement officials. In particular, participants agreed on the importance of finally having a proper Right of Access to Information Law and to call for an open and transparent public debate on the revision of the "cyber-crime" Law that had been adopted in 2017.

Opening the event in Gaza, Mr. James Heenan, Head of Office of OHCHR stated that *Providing citizens with independent reporting is crucial for giving Palestinians the facts and different analyses they need to make informed decisions and participate in the national debate. The laws, policies and practices of Palestine should encourage a free press*.

Journalists shared their experiences and voiced their concerns on the alarming increase in violations to freedom of speech and attacks against media professionals.
At the issue of the Day, some policy recommendations have been discussed, aimed at promoting more accountability and rule of law and greater press freedom in Palestine.

World Press Freedom is celebrated on 3 May every year through hundreds of events all over the world and the main global event, jointly organized by UNESCO and the Government of the Republic of Ghana, takes place in Accra, Ghana, on 3 May.

More about World Press Freedom Day 2018, visit:
www.en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldpressfreedomday/2018

For more information on UNESCO's activities in Palestine, please visit www.unesco.org/ramallah and follow us on at: UNESCO National Office for Palestine

For more information on OHCHR's activities in Palestine, please visit us on Facebook: UN Human Rights - Palestine

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