منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

Ramallah Office

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

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UNESCO and OHCHR celebrate World Press Freedom Day 2019 through events in Ramallah and Gaza highlighting the global theme *Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation*



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Ramallah/Gaza, 2nd and 5th, May 2019 – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nation Human Rights Office(OHCHR) celebrated **World Press Freedom Day** through debate sessions in Ramallah and in Gaza on the specific theme ***Role of journalists and media in ensuring democratic participation in Palestine*****,** under the global theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day "***Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation".***

During his opening remarks, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Officer-in-Charge of UNESCO Ramallah Office stated *that Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and free media is a prerequisite for the proper functioning of democracies. These can only be achieved through access to accurate, fair and unbiased information, representing a plurality of opinions. In order to make that a reality, there must be a legal and regulatory environment that allows for an open and pluralistic media sector to emerge, political will to support laws ensuring access to information and the necessary media literacy skills among news consumers to critically analyze and synthesize the information they receive.*

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Mr. Mousa Hussein, on behalf of Mr. James Heenan, Head of OHCHR Office in occupied Palestinian territory, emphasized that *Freedom of the press should not be seen merely as a freedom for journalists to report and comment. It is closely related to the right of the public to access knowledge and information. It fulfills an essential function of holding the Government to account, particularly in cases where there is a democratic deficit, as in Palestine. He encouraged discussion on how to overcome barriers that currently prevent the full enjoyment of freedom of expression and press freedom, within the framework of Palestine's human rights obligations.*

Mr. Mousa Rimawi, Director of Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) highlighted that *the current political context in Gaza poses new concerns to journalists and constitutes a threat to press freedom.* He also stressed on the importance of the campaign launched by the British Foreign Office to protect press freedoms, complementing UNESCO's work in the field of press freedom advocacy and partnership, including this event.

During the two event, representatives from the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate, Civil Society, local institution, academics, media professionals and students from journalism schools participated in the discussions and reiterated how the government and local institutions are accountable to ensure freedom of expression, freedom of information, and the safety of journalists, particularly in light of Palestine's ratification of core human rights treaties. Furthermore, panelists discussed policy recommendations aimed at promoting broader and greater press freedom in Palestine, in addition to methods and measures to ensure such freedoms are recognized, as part of the democratic participation.

World Press Freedom is celebrated on 3 May every year and celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. At the core of UNESCO's mandate is freedom of the press and freedom of expression. UNESCO believes that these freedoms allow mutual understanding to build a sustainable peace.

More about World Press Freedom Day 2019, 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

For more information on this event, please contact: Majd Beltaji, Public Information Officer of the UNESCO Ramallah Office, at m.beltaj@unesco.org