How does the Palestinian media construct the conflict and how it is affected it?

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May be the best subject for a Palestinian journalist to specialize on during this critical period of our lives is covering the Palestinian – Israeli conflict. Through which many benefits would be acheived such as the available continuous news material as well as the freedom of publishing and transmitting stories.

The day of the Palestinian journalist nowadays is fully occupied with events deals with the palestian presence, concequently, the Palestinian media focuses strongly on every event related to this until it, grew to occupy nearly 90 percent of its rooms.

Of course this is not strange in a land like palestine ,and with two people like Palestinians and Israelis where a grind war is between them. Many hot meals can be served every moment to the media: breaching human rights at the checkpoints, ruining properties, in short they managed to change the lands to a big jail, where no one can move from one place to another, not even for human purposes, or work purposes, as a result economy was damaged, our cultural and social life was ruined.

Even the sport activity news are published according to the Israeli occupation measures like preventing a Palestinian player from traveling abroad or postponing soccer match because of the imposed curfew.

when a Palestinian Boxer won the bronze medal in South Korea recently all of the foreign media and also the Israeli media wrote about him, saying that: despite the hard circumstances he lived, he managed to win and to raise the palestinian flag high in Korea: his training took place in a small place near his house due to the curfew, his personal dreams were pure national dreams.

And because the struggle is with the Israeli occupation, not the Israeli people, is a consensus issue among the Palestinians, the media has a wide freedom in following and publishing the daily history of this conflict, so the journalist or writer does not hesitate to write in this issue because he is sure that his material will be published freely, not like some Palestinian internal issues where many Censors will follow it, and secondly he will have guarantee that his reports about the occupation will take the priority in the newspaper, radio or TV.

I am not telling a secret when I say that the Palestinian media is under more than one Censorship, from one side the political Censorship, Social Censorship and from the other side is the personal Censorship related to the opinions and interests of the owners or the managers of the mass media and press.

And because there are no limits for writing about the daily events of the occupation and other issues concerning this everlasting conflict, the covering and reporting about it reflects the opinion of deferent political spectrums of the Palestinian society.

sometimes that includes some exaggerations not only in the news, but also in the beliefs.

The severe attacks and inhuman policies occupation practices against Palestinians gave a good chance for some journalists to prove themselves in doing stories which are more fundamentalist, this appears more clear in the local T.V. stations which is, by the way, a lot …. in the city of Nablus, for example, there are nine Local T.V. stations and two Radio stations.

If you ask the workers in local TV's about that they will say: as long as we are talking about who are occupying our land, and since decades, they are practicing different kinds of persecution and oppression against our people, so where is the problem if we exaggerated their aggressive deeds and incite to resist them.

For example, last Ramadan, I have seen a contest program on a local T.V. station in which they asked about a Palestinian martyr who carried out an attack near Haifa.

The question was: mention the date of the attack, and how many Israeli were killed.

Of course the question seems disgusting -from my point of view-, so I called the manager expressing my surprise, he replied that he didn't notice, he confessed that it was a mistake, but not so big to be mentioned. he added: the Jewish people are killing our people everyday especially here in the city of Nablus and this is the least we can do for our people to cool them down, but he promised that this will not happen again.

I would like to say here that the press in the Palestinian territories, like many other things, goes on Parallel with the Israeli actions, when the Palestinians don't see but occupation, settlements, destruction and blood, their press mostly would talk about that. The same when they notice hope glittering on the horizon, their press would harry to catch the subject, discuss it, and raise a debate about it.

Let us take the suicide attacks, which you have so many questions about it in your minds, when these attacks started in the middle of nineties at the time when the agreements were signed and the israelis withdrew from the occupied cities, the Palestinian mass media did not show any kind of sympathy or justification towards those attacks, not only that but it went against its orchestraters and doers . For example, I published a story in my newspaper Al-ayyam in 97 about an Islamic Jihad member who carried out a suicide attack in Jerusalem, describing him as desperate and full of hatred man.

On the next day, as the story appeared, I got no objections except from his family and group.

I brought this example to explain the changes that happened and reflected on how Palestinian journalism deals with the conflict issues.

When the occupation is back to the lands ,the attitude of the press will differ and move 180 perecnt to the opposite side.

Nowadays no Palestinian journalist can write about the doer of the suicide bombing in that way, not only because he fears his group ,but also because he fears his society who sees the revenge and maybe freedom through these bombing operations after losing faith in any peaceful means to bring back what was taken by force.

The percent of the suicide bombing supporters among the Palestinians before the intifada was around 20% ,but after intifada it became 80% in some stages.

What happened, The Palestinians did public demonstrations against sharon's visit to AL-AQSA mosque and it is their right to, but the Israeli military and police forces replied by gun shooting killing seven people, where instead they could leave the place peacefully without any loses in lives, but they did what they had done, which gave the first spark for this explosion.
.. things were outside control, The conflict became now outside the normal basis of the political conflict, and entered a stage of what we can call it is a circle of personal revenge which is endless for both sides. Nowadays people in both sides don't think a lot in solving this political dilemma, which seems impossible to be solved, instead they care of death balance between them, some people calculate the death balance in football game terms, saying; today the result is ten to zero or four to four..and so on.

Before the intifada the Israelis and Palestinians were closer to each other, at that time the Palestinian media used to cover the events in different ways, many journalist won awards in encouraging the coexistence between nations, personally ,I won two awards in the years 98and 99, from the American Institution "Search For Common Ground", that was for my stories in AL-Ayyam newspaper which evaluated as a coexistence encouraging stories.

One issue was the economic relations between the two sides, where I explained why the Israeli market is the best for us, its importance is so

big to a degree that our economy cant live without it, as well as our market is so important for the Israeli economy.

Before the intifada there was a hope for both sides to work side by side trying to benefit from each other, journalism and mass media was good example, dozens of meetings were held between Palestinians and Israeli journalists, they were discussing one issue, which is the role that they could play in encouraging coexistance afterthey accept each other. but now, in this sea of blood, our role returned many steps back weapons clatter and death.

its worth to mention here that Palestinian media is not one type ,it is mostly like Israeli media in its variation. We have four kinds of mass media; the governmental media, like the T.V and radio and some daily, weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines as Al-Hayyat Al-Jadedah newspaper. And there is the semi-independent media like Al-Ayyam and Alquds newspapers, and there is the opposition media like some three weekly newspapers which belong to hamas ,Islamic Jihad and democratic front.

The fourth is the local media T.V,s and radios in the cities of west bank ,as they are now more than 50. Not to forget also the Arab satellite channels like Al-jazeerah and mbc and others which are nearly in every palestinian house, and the family gathers around it every night. Also the Israeli voice in Arabic, which is widely considered a good source of information especially on the Israeli political life. Voice of Israel has become more important in the Palestinian's territories after demolishing the transmission towers of Palestinian voice in Ramallah.

From the Palestinian's media ,the most influential are the independent newspapers and local T.Vs ,which most of them are open and liberal.

Most of Palestinian's mass media are closed to PA and Fateh thought, which as you know believe in political solution that believe in two states for two people as a solution.

Although in the most difficult times of the conflict, the Palestinian journalism maintained a margin in which journalists and writers kept

criticizing the way of handling the conflict issues. This is very clear in some articles which criticize -for example- the suicide bombings, or even every kind of violence.

Last year the Common Ground group have chosen many Palestinian Journalists to win its annual awards for encouraging the peaceful coexistence in this part of the world. I was one of the Judges.

The first award was given to D. Sari Nusseibeh, for an article puplished in Al-quods newspaper, while the second one was given to Tawfeeq Abu Baker for an article puplished in Al-Ayyam newaspaper. In his article Dr. nusseibeh advised the palestinians to give up the right of return and focused on establishing independent state. While Abu Baker called the palestinians to stop all kinds of violence saying that many empiers have been collapsed in the last decade without shooting a single bullet, pointing to the former Soviet union and the communist camp.

Before the intifada, the palestinian journalism played that normal and positive role in the conflict, which contained a large margin of appealing to peace and coexistence. But after the intifada, many radical changes took place, as describing what is going on the ground and re-actions took the priorities. But almost these changes are temporary and impermanent.

The journalists who believe in the peaceful solutions and coexistence, which are the majority, are still in their positions, ready to resume their role when the Mercava Tanks are out of their streets.