



Study on:

# Assessing the Readiness and Effectiveness of Civil Society Organizations in Participating in Public Policymaking and Holding Authorities Accountable for Their Implementation: A Post-Assessment

Report No. 319



**AMAN**  
Transparency Palestine



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## Key Concepts of the Study

Concept	Definition
<p><b>Measurement Indicator</b></p>	<p>In the context of this study, a measurement indicator refers to the extraction of specific information about a condition, event, or activity that can be observed and monitored, or information that reflects a perception, opinion, or evaluation. Such information enables establishing a connection with the intended objective of this study, namely, measuring the role of civil society in participating in public policymaking, influencing it, and holding authorities accountable for its implementation.</p> <p>Source: United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation”, 2012.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Human_rights_indicators_ar.pdf">www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Human_rights_indicators_ar.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Civil Society</b></p>	<p>Civil society refers to individuals and groups who voluntarily engage in forms of participation and public action concerning shared interests, objectives, or values. They work to influence public policies, national strategies, and legislation, and engage in advocacy for accountability.</p> <p>The term civil society includes, but is not limited to: non-governmental organizations and institutions, unions and syndicates, alliances and networks, political and social organizations, student movements, professionals, universities, and human rights defenders.</p> <p>Civil society occupies a space in representing society and its various groups, supporting and defending their interests locally, nationally, and internationally.</p> <p>Source: United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Guidelines for States on the Effective Implementation of the Right to Participate in Public Affairs”.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web_AR.pdf">www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web_AR.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Participation</b></p>	<p>Participation occurs at various levels of decision-making and takes multiple forms, particularly through the provision of information, consultation, dialogue, and partnership in drafting decisions, public policies, and legislation.</p> <p>It relates to the extent of rights-holders’ participation at different stages of the decision-making process, beginning with agenda-setting, drafting and policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and follow-up, and review and revision.</p> <p>Participation is a continuous practice that requires open and genuine interaction between public authorities and all segments of society. It plays a vital role in strengthening democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion, and development. It also helps balance conflicting interests, making public institutions more effective, transparent, and accountable, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of their decisions.</p> <p>Sources: United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Guidelines for States on the Effective Implementation of the Right to Participate in Public Affairs”.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web_AR.pdf">www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web_AR.pdf</a></p> <p>Source: Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations of the Council of Europe, “Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process”, adopted in 2009, Ref: CONF/PLE(2009)CODE1.</p> <p><a href="https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016802eed59">https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016802eed59</a></p> <p>Source: United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Commissions of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-and-responsibility-individuals-groups-and">https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-and-responsibility-individuals-groups-and</a></p>

<p><b>Public Policies</b></p>	<p>The process of public policymaking is an inherent competence of the state's formal public authorities, aimed at advancing the public interest.</p> <p>James Anderson defined public policy as: "a purposive course of action followed by an individual or group in addressing a problem, confronting a specific issue, or dealing with a defined subject."</p> <p>Abraham Kaplan similarly defined it as: "a program of action designed to achieve objectives, values, and practices through specific applications."</p> <p>Ahmad Rashid provided a more detailed definition, describing public policy as: "a governmental program of action for a specified future period, consisting of a set of decisions adopted by official institutions, possessing an authoritative and binding character for all citizens, and aimed at achieving defined objectives."</p> <p>Source: Hussein, Maha. "Public Policy Analysis: Development and Methodology," Journal of the Faculty of Commerce for Scientific Research, Alexandria University, Issue 1, Vol. 55, 2018.</p>
<p><b>Accountability</b></p>	<p>Accountability is a system of rules that governs the relationship between those entrusted with authority and responsibilities and the rights-holders affected by their actions.</p> <p>It refers to the obligation of those in positions of authority to assume responsibility for their actions, to justify them to those affected, and to be subject to enforceable sanctions.</p> <p>Accountability requires that those in authority perform clearly defined tasks in accordance with established performance standards, enabling their conduct to be evaluated transparently and objectively.</p> <p>Source: United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Center for Economic and Social Rights, "Who Will Be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda".</p> <p><a href="http://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/WhoWillBeAccountableSummary_ar.pdf">www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/WhoWillBeAccountableSummary_ar.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Social Accountability</b></p>	<p>Social accountability refers to the subjection of entities responsible for managing public affairs to societal oversight. These entities are required to report on the performance of their duties, justify their decisions, and clarify their actions, in accordance with the implicit social contract between citizens and authorities within a democratic framework.</p> <p>It is grounded in the fundamental democratic principle that citizens are the original rights-holders entitled to demand accountability, and that public authorities are obligated to be accountable.</p> <p>Its main requirements include transparency, the ability to request clarification and justification, and the capacity to impose sanctions. Social accountability is considered a core pillar of good governance, as it strengthens citizens' participation in decision-making processes.</p> <p>Source: Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), "Integrity, Transparency and Accountability in Confronting Corruption", 6th edition, 2023.</p> <p><a href="https://www.aman-palestine.org/reports-and-studies/23572.html">https://www.aman-palestine.org/reports-and-studies/23572.html</a></p>

## Introduction:

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Civil society organizations have been keen to strengthen the resilience of Palestinian citizens on their land and to expose the practices and ongoing violations of the occupation. For this reason, and due to the specificity of the Palestinian experience, Palestinian civil society is distinguished by its extensive expertise and long history, which has set it apart from civil society organizations in the region and globally.

Following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), civil society organizations continued to support emerging public institutions, share their experiences with them, and assist in delivering certain services to citizens; a role they continue to play today. Civil society institutions also acted as partners to official institutions in the state-building process, grounded in democratic principles that respect freedoms and safeguard rights. Accordingly, the foundational phase was characterized by participatory approaches to drafting regulations and laws, a process further strengthened by the presence of the Legislative Council, which enhanced participation.

At the same time, new responsibilities were added to civil society organizations, focusing on raising citizens' awareness of their rights and equipping them with the tools to protect them. This included promoting the concepts of integrity, transparency, accountability, and combating corruption; contributing to the identification of national priorities and the formulation of public policies; strengthening oversight of state institutions in terms of respect for human rights and sound management of public funds and public affairs; activating social accountability mechanisms; combating corruption; and holding corrupt actors accountable.

Civil society in Palestine faces multifaceted challenges. Some are related to the Israeli occupation, while others stem from the Palestinian political system, including political division, the absence of presidential and legislative elections, and restrictions imposed by the ruling authority on components of the civic space. This reality constitutes an obstacle for Palestinian civil society organizations seeking to operate freely and effectively. Despite these challenges, civil society continues to demonstrate resilience and persist in advocacy and pressure efforts aimed at strengthening governance, monitoring, and addressing human rights violations in their various dimensions, including the rights to education, healthcare, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and enhancing participation in public policymaking and the activation of social accountability tools to hold officials within the political system accountable.

Civil society functions as a fundamental pillar, filling gaps caused by the absence or weakness of formal oversight institutions, defending the rights of marginalized communities, and contributing to public policymaking to elevate citizens' voices and participation. Therefore, assessing Palestinian civic space is essential to understanding and strengthening civil society freedoms.

Recent developments in the field of integrity and combating corruption in the Palestinian context reveal numerous indicators of the rise of political corruption, due to the misuse of entrusted authority not for the public interest. This not only constitutes a direct violation of the rule of law and an abuse of legally granted powers but may also extend to the point where the law itself becomes an instrument for protecting and legitimizing corrupt practices and enabling impunity. This is reinforced by the ruling authority's monopoly over decision-making within governance institutions, including those responsible for prosecution and criminalization, through weakening their independence or failing to empower them to perform their roles effectively.

The contribution of civil society organizations representing citizens becomes increasingly important, particularly in light of the absence of the Legislative Council, in shaping public policies and advancing social accountability. The aim is to improve these policies and methods of public administration (“government”) by ensuring that decision-makers adopt public policies through inclusive participation in their formulation and adoption for the public good.

The process of civil society participation in policymaking and accountability can be divided into two main dimensions. The first relates to the space available to civil society; namely, the enabling environment provided by the government for participation in policymaking, including the realities of freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and freedom of expression, as well as the government’s role in preventing violations of these freedoms and its compliance with relevant legislation. The second dimension concerns the role of civil society itself, specifically, its readiness to participate in policymaking, and the effectiveness of its role and contribution to both shaping policies and holding authorities accountable for their implementation.

## **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to measure developments in the civil sector's capacity to contribute to the formulation and implementation of public policies and to hold authorities accountable for their implementation.

The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN) previously conducted a Baseline Assessment on the role of civil society organizations in public policymaking and in holding authorities accountable for implementation, in terms of both readiness and effectiveness. This assessment was based on a set of indicators specifically developed for this purpose.

The Baseline Assessment revealed several gaps that civil society needed to address. Following a series of interventions, particularly awareness-raising and capacity-building programs implemented during the past period, there is now a need to conduct a Post-Assessment to measure the changes achieved compared to the results of the Baseline Assessment.

Accordingly, this study aims to monitor developments in the readiness and effectiveness of civil society organizations to participate in public policymaking and to hold policymakers accountable for their implementation, and to analyze the extent of improvement or regression. It also seeks to draw lessons learned and provide practical recommendations to enable these organizations to effectively contribute to shaping public policy, overseeing its implementation, and protecting civic space in Palestine.

## **Methodology of the Study**

The report adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, involving a review of civil society literature and an examination of the reality of its contributions, analyzed based on pre-developed measurement indicators. It also includes interviews conducted with officials from these organizations through a purposive sample, taking into consideration both sectoral specialization and geographic distribution.

For this report, the scope of research is limited to non-governmental organizations and their coalitions, excluding other components of civil society such as unions, syndicates, and representative institutions of the private sector.

## The study is based on the following steps:

1. Collecting relevant information from various sources, including reports issued by the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN).
2. Examining the pre-developed set of indicators through interviews conducted with representatives of civil society organizations included in the study sample.
3. Analyzing the collected information, data, and indicator results.
4. Presenting findings outlining the challenges and issues identified.
5. Developing actionable recommendations and proposing advocacy and pressure mechanisms to support their adoption and implementation.

## Study Indicators

The post-assessment is based on the same indicators used in the Baseline Assessment, which were developed by the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN) in collaboration with a group of experts in the field of civic space. These indicators are organized into three main groups that collectively examine and assess the readiness and effectiveness of civil society organizations in participating in public policymaking, influencing it, and holding authorities accountable for its implementation. The purpose is to identify gaps and achievements in this area.

The three groups of indicators are as follows:

- **Structural Indicators:** These seek to examine, assess, and collect information related to the institutional (organizational) structures of civil society organizations and their programs. In this context, they evaluate the organization's readiness.
- **Operational Indicators:** These seek to examine, assess, and collect information related to the professional work of the organization's programs, including both ongoing and ad hoc roles. Part of these indicators complement the assessment of organizational readiness, while the other part evaluates effectiveness.
- **Outcome Indicators:** These seek to examine, assess, and collect information related to the results achieved by the organization through the implementation of its ongoing and ad hoc programs. These indicators are specifically designed to evaluate and monitor organizational effectiveness.

## Preface: General Background

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This study constitutes the post-assessment of the role of civil society organizations in participating in public policymaking and holding authorities accountable for their implementation, in terms of readiness and effectiveness. It aims to monitor developments in this field following the Baseline Assessment conducted by the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN) in 2024.

Following the Baseline Assessment, the Coalition implemented a series of interventions in partnership with several civil society organizations that formed the study sample. These interventions included capacity-building programs aimed at strengthening the role of civil society organizations in combating corruption, particularly political corruption, and enhancing their participation in public policymaking.

The post-assessment also takes into account significant developments that occurred in the period following the Baseline Assessment, whether at the internal level or in relation to occupation policies and measures.

The same methodology was applied in both the baseline and post-assessments. Both studies relied on the same sample and the same set of previously developed indicators designed to examine the readiness of civil society to participate in public policymaking and the effectiveness of its role.

### **The Baseline Assessment reached several conclusions that can be summarized as follows:**

There is variation in the level of attention civil society organizations give to public policies. Some organizations focus on comprehensive, macro-level public policies, while others concentrate on partial (local) or sectoral policies, where the possibility of influence is often greater.

Some organizations do not adopt strategic plans for advocacy and influencing public policies. Internal documentation within many organizations is weak, negatively affecting their ability to conduct follow-up, evaluation, and lessons-learned processes and limiting their interventions to seasonal, non-cumulative efforts.

In the field of influencing public policies, organizations primarily rely on mobilization and advocacy as a strategic tool for influence. In contrast, accountability processes rely on various tools, including public hearings, media coverage, and social media platforms. Most organizations face limited financial resources and shortages of expertise and human resources, which restrict their ability to undertake sustainable professional interventions to influence public policies and hold authorities accountable. Organizations influence public policies and ensure accountability through their membership in various civil society coalitions. At the same time, they influence sub-policies or partial policies through organized institutional work. While most surveyed organizations agreed on the effectiveness of coalitions and their ability to influence public policies, some organizations criticized attempts to control or unduly influence coalition work.

There is weak participation by members of the General Assembly and the Board of Directors in processes aimed at influencing public policies and holding authorities accountable. Most surveyed organizations demonstrate a high level of sensitivity toward international intervention in local issues. There is a clear gap in the use of United Nations human rights mechanisms, whether treaty-based or non-treaty-based. Several key legislative frameworks that would guarantee broader civic space and participation are absent, such as a law on access to information.

Finally, there is a lack of political will among successive governments, combined with difficulty in accepting criticism and change, and resistance to openness and participation. This has negatively affected the effectiveness of civil society organizations in influencing public policies.

**The Baseline Assessment also presented a set of recommendations, including the need to establish a specialized coalition dedicated to influencing public policies and holding authorities accountable, to unify institutional efforts and strengthen impact. Establishing a permanent communication channel between civil society and the government to facilitate influence over public policies. Organized and sustained advocacy toward official bodies to enact a Law on the Right of Access to Information, as a fundamental pillar in shaping public policy directions. Strengthening institutional capacity to engage effectively with United Nations mechanisms. Building capacities in documentation practices and internal follow-up mechanisms related to public policy issues. Systematically integrating members of the General Assembly and Boards of Directors, within their respective mandates, into processes related to influencing public policies and ensuring accountability.**

**On the other hand, the period between the Baseline Assessment and the Post-Assessment (mid-2024 to the end of 2025) witnessed numerous changes affecting the environment surrounding civic space.**

During this period, the Nineteenth Palestinian Government was formed under the leadership of Dr. Mohammad Mustafa. In his ministerial statement, he presented several commitments, including<sup>1</sup> partnership with all components of society and strengthening transparency and accountability, including the submission of regular reports to the public based on principles of partnership and dialogue with all social groups. The government also committed to developing an institutional reform plan in cooperation and partnership with all stakeholders and sectors, including civil society organizations.

Furthermore, within the framework of the National Development and Reform Program 2025-2026<sup>2</sup>, and specifically under Pillar Two (Governance and the Rule of Law), the government committed to consulting on proposed policies and legislation before their adoption, including consultation with civil society organizations. It also pledged to strengthen the work of civil society institutions, review the Law on Access to Information to ensure its alignment with international standards, and enhance transparency and accountability in public institutions.

In addition, the Ministry of Justice launched an electronic legislative platform to allow citizens to submit comments on draft legislation before its adoption. The Council of Ministers also issued a decision assigning heads of government departments, each within their respective mandates, to hold periodic meetings with civil society organizations to discuss shared issues, serve the public interest, and establish effective and sustainable communication mechanisms<sup>3</sup>.

At the same time, the same period (mid-2024 to the end of 2025) witnessed an escalation of Israeli occupation measures targeting Palestinian civil society organizations, to limit their activities. As part of these policies, the occupation adopted a strategy designed to undermine the work of these institutions by delegitimizing them internationally and locally, portraying them as terrorist or anti-Semitic organizations, restricting their operational space, and damaging their reputations.

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1 Letter of acceptance of the mandate from the Prime Minister-designate to His Excellency the President, published by the Palestinian News and Information Agency (WAFA). For more information, see: <https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/91917>

2 Council of Ministers Decision No. (32) issued at its session held on 13/11/2024.

3 Report on the Most Important Reform Decisions of the Nineteenth Palestinian Government, issued on 13/1/2025 and published on the official website of the Palestinian Council of Ministers.

These efforts were carried out through what is known as the “Monitor” campaign, led by right-wing Israeli organizations, aimed at weakening the ability of Palestinian civil society organizations to hold Israel accountable and to pursue its human rights violations at international and local forums<sup>4</sup>.

In this context, the Israeli occupation designated several Palestinian civil society organizations as terrorist organizations and proceeded to close a number of them. On 29/08/2025, occupation forces prevented the Palestinian Medical Association from exercising its right to hold its periodic elections in occupied East Jerusalem. They obstructed the conduct of elections for the Palestinian Bar Association. On 29/07/2025, the occupation authorities also banned the Palestinian Bar Association from operating in occupied Jerusalem<sup>5</sup>.

According to a study conducted by the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), 78% of surveyed civil society organizations indicated that the Israeli occupation negatively affects the role and work of Palestinian NGOs<sup>6</sup>.

## **Examination of Indicators of Civil Society Readiness and Effectiveness in Participating in Public Policymaking, Influencing It, and Holding Authorities Accountable for Its Implementation**

### **Study Sample**

The research sample was purposively selected by the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). It included various sectors of civil society organizations and their coalitions (human rights, youth, development, women, and relief organizations). The sample also took into consideration geographic representation across the southern, central, and northern areas of the West Bank.

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4 “NGO Monitor”: A Zionist organization specialized in targeting Palestinian civil society organizations. Available at: <https://www.alquds.co.uk>

5 Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR):

<https://pchrgaza.org/ar/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%AD-11/>

6 Lubna Al-Ashqar and Issam Abed, *Surviving Marginalization and Challenge: An Analytical Study on the Shrinking Civil Space and Its Impact on Youth and Women Organizations*, Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), 2024, p. 17.

The sample was as follows:

No.	Name of Institution	Representative	Field of Work	Governorate
1)	Human Rights and Democracy Media Center - SHAMS	Dr. Omar Rahhal	Human Rights	Ramallah
2)	Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women	Ms. Sabah Salameh	Coordinating - Women	Ramallah - All Governorates
3)	Palestinian Medical Relief Society	Dr. Suhail Aqabneh	Health	Ramallah - All Governorates
4)	Palestinian Center for Media and Youth Development - PYALARA	Ms. Hania Al-Bitar Mr. Helmi Abu Atoun	Youth	Ramallah
5)	Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs	Mr. Ahmad Hijjawi	Capacity Building	Jenin
6)	Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)	Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa	Coordinating	Ramallah - All Governorates
7)	Center for the Defense of Civil Rights	Mr. Helmi Al-Araj	Human Rights	Ramallah
8)	QADER for Community Development	Ms. Lana Al-Bandak	Disability	Bethlehem - Hebron - Jenin - Gaza
9)	Adwar for Social Change	Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh	Women	Hebron
10)	Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy - MIFTAH	Ms. Reham Al-Faqih	Policy - Human Rights	Ramallah
11)	Social and Economic Policy Monitor - Al-Marsad	Mr. Firas Jaber	Policy	Ramallah
12)	Palestinian Hydrology Group	Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi	Water and Environment	Ramallah - All Governorates
13)	Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center	Mr. Issam Arouri	Human Rights	Jerusalem - Ramallah - Nablus - Salfit
14)	Al-Haq Foundation	Mr. Shawan Jabarin Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayyeh	Human Rights	Ramallah

## **First: Institutionalization of Participation in Public Policymaking and Accountability within Civil Society Organizations**

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This section of the study examines developments related to the institutionalization of participation by Palestinian civil society organizations in public policymaking, influencing such policies, and holding authorities accountable for their implementation during the period from mid-2024 to the end of 2025. The examination focuses on objectives, strategies, plans, programs, and organizational structures.

**The review of the above-mentioned indicators led to the following conclusions:**

**1. Participation in public policymaking, influencing policies, and ensuring accountability is considered one of the core objectives for several civil society organizations included in the study sample, whether at the sectoral or general level. These objectives are reflected in their strategies and administrative structures. However, most organizations regard this objective as secondary within the framework of broader institutional goals.**

Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of the Social and Economic Policy Monitor (Al-Marsad), indicated that the institution's core objectives, strategy, and administrative structure are focused on influencing public policies and advocacy.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih, representative of the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy - MIFTAH, noted that influencing public policies constitutes the institution's primary strategic objective, alongside its human rights work. This is reflected in its programs and organizational structure through the establishment of a dedicated Policy Dialogue Unit.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, representative of QADER for Community Development, stated that influencing public policies, particularly at the sectoral level, and participating in matters related to public affairs constitute fundamental objectives in the institution's strategy and are also reflected in its organizational structure.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj, representative of the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights ("Hurriyat"), explained that the center is among the core civil society organizations engaged in monitoring public affairs and plays an active role in public policy issues.

Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi, representative of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, emphasized the clarity of the association's vision, mission, and strategic objectives regarding influencing public policies, particularly in the water and environment sectors.

Mr. Shawan Jabarin, representative of Al-Haq, indicated that influencing public policies, especially in the field of rights and freedoms, constitutes a central dimension of the institution's strategic plan and is reflected in its structure through its Research and Advocacy Department.

Ms. Sabah Salameh, representative of the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women, noted that influencing public policies and legislation forms the core mission of the Forum, as its primary purpose as a coordinating body is to exert pressure regarding policies related to women's rights.

Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa, representative of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), confirmed that influencing public policies has been one of the Network's main objectives since its establishment. It is embedded in its strategy and reflected in its structure through its Policy Department.

Dr. Omar Rahhal, representative of the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center - SHAMS, indicated that advocacy and pressure constitute a principal activity of the Center's programs and serve as key tools for influencing public policies.

In contrast, Mr. Issam Aroui, representative of the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, explained that influencing public policies falls within broader institutional objectives related to the Center's specialized legal aid work, which consumes most of its time and resources. Participation in influencing public policies and accountability processes is carried out through assignments given by the administration to staff members.

Dr. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, representative of Adwar for Social Change, stated that influencing public policies and ensuring accountability are integrated across all the institution's programs, through interventions that serve the sub-objectives of each main objective.

Dr. Suhail Aqabneh, representative of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, noted that influencing public policies and ensuring accountability primarily takes a specialized form within the health sector, particularly in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, where the association participates in matters related to health policies and protocols. As for broader public policy issues, these are often addressed by members of the Board of Directors.

2. Participation in public policymaking, influencing policies, and exercising oversight over their implementation is often institutionalized within large civil society organizations and networks that encompass a significant number of member organizations. This institutionalization is reflected in their objectives, strategies, programs, and administrative structures, which frequently include specialized units or departments dedicated to monitoring and influencing public policies. This is largely attributable to the availability of financial and human resources. In contrast, in smaller and grassroots organizations, these responsibilities are typically assigned to designated staff members due to the absence of adequate funding.

3. Specialized civil society organizations tend to focus their participation and influence on public policies that fall within their respective areas of expertise, as reflected in their objectives, strategies, and organizational structures. Their contribution to other public policy areas is generally undertaken through collective action and coalition work. This is the case for institutions such as Al-Haq, the Palestinian Hydrology Group, the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, Adwar for Social Change, the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, QADER for Community Development, and the Palestinian Center for Media and Youth Development - PYALARA.

4. Most civil society organizations included in the study sample did not introduce fundamental changes to their objectives, strategies, or administrative structures related to enhancing participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability during the period covered by the study. This includes the absence of newly added objectives, new strategies, or the establishment of new units or departments in this area. However, a number of these organizations made certain internal adjustments to their strategies and programs to adapt to the new realities imposed by the genocide waged by the occupation against the Gaza Strip, as well as the occupation's measures and repeated incursions into West Bank governorates.

Dr. Omar Rahhal, representative of SHAMS, indicated that no changes occurred in institutional objectives or strategy during the past period. However, activities and programs saw a noticeable increase, particularly in monitoring legislation and engaging with several ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office, and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of Al-Marsad, explained that due to the war of extermination in Gaza, certain adjustments were made to the institution's activities. Relations with some donors were terminated due to attempts to impose new conditions. Activities in the West Bank declined, and part of the programs and activities were redirected toward issues related to the needs of the Gaza Strip, such as matters concerning children with disabilities and the production of knowledge related to the genocide.

Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, representative of Adwar for Social Change, noted that certain administrative aspects were developed, including the establishment of an oversight committee emanating from the General Assembly. She also indicated that the institution's strategy will be further developed in the coming year.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj, representative of the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights ("Hurriyat"), stated that the center, through its staff, sought to update its strategy to align with the current context.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, representative of QADER for Community Development, indicated that the organization conducts an annual internal review of its strategy and incorporates any necessary amendments, including identifying which policies will be prioritized or adopted.

Finally, Ms. Hania Al-Bitar, representative of PYALARA, explained that the organization is working to build youth capacity for international advocacy, including within United Nations institutions.

## **Second: Nature of Participation and Intervention by Civil Society Organizations in Public Policies**

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This section of the study examines changes in the effectiveness of civil society organizations in participating in public policymaking, influencing policies, and holding authorities accountable during the period covered by the study. The analysis is based on indicators related to the nature of institutional participation and interventions, financial and human resources, capacity-building efforts, the level of engagement of governing bodies and staff in influencing processes, and the extent of institutional intervention at the international level, whether through international partners and influencers or through United Nations mechanisms.

The review of the above-mentioned indicators led to the following conclusions:

### **1. Nature of Participation and Intervention:**

- Most civil society organizations included in the study sample confirmed that they balance individual institutional work and collective action within networks, forums, and coalitions; often established specifically to achieve policy influence and accountability objectives. Civil society organizations continue to agree that collective action through networks and coalitions constitutes a successful strategy and has a greater impact on public policies, particularly those that require coordinated efforts.

In this regard, Dr. Omar Rahhal, representative of SHAMS, indicated that the Center participates in influencing public policies both independently and in partnership with other institutions such as the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), MIFTAH, and the Independent Commission for Human Rights. It also engages through membership in several networks and coalitions, including the Civil Team for Oversight of the Security Sector and the Civil Coalition for Elections.

Mr. Issam Arouri confirmed that the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center works independently within its area of specialization and participates in influencing public policies through coalitions such as the Coalition to Support the Judiciary, the Coalition Against Torture, and the Civil Coalition for Elections. He described this as a successful strategy due to the greater collective impact of coalitions, the prevention of overlapping efforts, and the benefit of diverse expertise.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, representative of QADER for Community Development, stated that the organization focuses on development, education, and health policies to protect women and children with disabilities and to ensure service provision within its specialization. It also participates in broader public policy issues related to public affairs through engagement in numerous local and regional coalitions.

Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of Al-Marsad, indicated that the organization balances between individual institutional work and collective coalition-based work, particularly since certain issues require collective action and cannot achieve meaningful impact through individual institutional efforts alone.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih, representative of MIFTAH, emphasized the importance of coalitions and networks in shaping and influencing public policies, especially on sensitive issues.

Ms. Hania Al-Bitar, representative of PYALARA, noted that the institution operates independently within the framework of its specialized objectives while also contributing to coalitions and collective efforts on public policies.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj, representative of the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights (“Hurriyat”), stressed the need to encourage civil society coalitions as a framework for public policy engagement and added that the center is a member of approximately seven (7) coalitions.

- Civil society organizations continue to believe that, despite the importance of collective action within coalitions in the field of public policies, there is a need to review the experience of coalitions, their formation mechanisms, and their tools.

In this regard, Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayyeh from Al-Haq highlighted the need to reassess the coalition experience. He noted that establishing any coalition of civil society organizations requires equal commitment from all its members toward the objective or issue for which it was formed. Responsibility should be borne collectively, not only by the initiating organization or by a limited number of members directly concerned with the issue. He further emphasized the importance of allocating the necessary financial resources and human capacities for the coalition’s work by all participating institutions.

Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, representative of Adwar for Social Change, pointed out that coalitions suffer from a centralization of leadership, which is often concentrated within civil society organizations based in Ramallah, with little change in leadership structures. She stressed the need to form coalitions that include and are led by grassroots organizations.

- Most representatives of the civil society organizations included in the study did not encourage the idea of establishing a single specialized coalition dedicated to influencing public policies and ensuring accountability; one of the recommendations of the Baseline Assessment. Instead, they favored forming a coalition or task force for each specific issue or public policy area.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj, representative of the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights (“Hurriyat”), stated that the experience of the Coordinating Council for Civil Action, as a unified coalition of civil society organizations, was unsuccessful due to the dominance of a single active actor. At the same time, the role of other parties declined.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih, a representative of MIFTAH, explained that public policies are often complex and highly specialized, making it difficult to establish a single civil coalition across all policy areas. She suggested that it would be preferable to form a coalition or team for each sector or specific public policy, with the possibility of establishing a technical body to support civil society organizations in the field of public policy.

Ms. Sabah Salameh, representative of the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women, noted that the idea of establishing a general civil coalition for public policies remains underdeveloped and requires further clarification and elaboration on objectives and tools to be made applicable. She explained that the Forum has maintained its existence for 26 years due to the clarity of its mission, whereas many other coalitions were formed but did not endure or succeed.

Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa, representative of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), stated that the issue is not about creating new bodies, but rather about ensuring the availability of political will and a clear vision for engagement in public policy work. He added that

the Coordinating Council for Civil Action is an existing framework that could potentially serve as the proposed coalition and is currently undergoing review.

- Most representatives of the civil society organizations included in the study confirmed that their institutions' participation in public policymaking, influencing policies, and ensuring accountability combines desk-based work, such as preparing studies, research papers, position papers, legal memoranda, and correspondence addressed to relevant authorities, with field-based work centered on advocacy, public mobilization, participation in government-convened meetings on public policy issues, and the organization of public hearings to hold officials accountable.

In this context, Dr. Omar Rahhal, representative of SHAMS, indicated that the Center influences public policies through various tools, including statements, studies, lectures, position papers, open public meetings, protest activities, and public hearings.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, the representative of QADER for Community Development, emphasized the organization's focus on developing its internal working tools. The institution issues papers and statements, prepares various types of reports, and addresses official correspondence to decision-makers. At the same time, it maintains field teams in Hebron, Jenin, and Gaza, responsible for follow-up and documentation of field violations.

Mr. Issam Arouri, representative of the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, explained that the Center engages in public policy processes through the reports it produces, participation in meetings, and submission of comments and feedback.

Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of Al-Marsad, stated that the organization's participation in public policies is carried out through research and knowledge production, advocacy and pressure efforts, networking, and coalition-building.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih of MIFTAH indicated that work on public policies is conducted through research, the preparation of policy papers, public engagement through the Policy Dialogue Unit, and the empowerment of youth and women in public policy engagement.

Dr. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, representative of Adwar for Social Change, highlighted the organization's grassroots nature, noting that approximately 70% of its work is field-based. Nonetheless, the institution also prepares policy papers, advocacy documents, and field reports. It prioritizes participation in meetings with government representatives, submitting feedback, and monitoring national plans while providing comments on them.

Mr. Shawan Jabarin, representative of Al-Haq, confirmed that the organization monitors legislation through its Legislative Monitoring Department and follows up on rights and freedoms practices through correspondence with competent authorities and field monitoring.

Ms. Sabah Salameh, representative of the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women, noted that the Forum's work is primarily field-based, with coordinators maintaining communication with relevant institutions.

Ms. Hania Al-Bitar, representative of PYALARA, observed that public mobilization remains a weak point in institutional work, particularly because the government often does not respond to civil society interventions; when it does respond, it tends to present the outcome as its own initiative.

Finally, Dr. Ahmad Hijawi, representative of the Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs, indicated that the organization balances desk-based and field-based work and is active in the digital sphere to support its field engagement efforts.

## **2. Allocation of Financial and Human Resources**

- It is evident that larger institutions, which enjoy relatively stable funding and possess sizable and specialized administrative staff, allocate portions of their budgets and personnel to implement programs related to public policies. They also engage external experts on a contractual basis when needed.

In contrast, the participation of smaller organizations remains limited. Their engagement in public policy processes is often partially funded through specific projects or remains unfunded, with work carried out through staff assignments or voluntary efforts by administrative personnel and board members.

At the same time, developments in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have clearly affected funding levels for civil society organizations, which, in turn, have impacted their ability to participate in and influence public policies.

In this context, Ms. Reham Al-Faqih, representative of MIFTAH, indicated that the organization allocates dedicated budgets for implementing programs related to public policies. These programs typically begin with the preparation of studies, research papers, and public opinion surveys, followed by community engagement and then the identification of required policy interventions.

Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of Al-Marsad, confirmed that the organization allocates budgets to its specialized programs in social and economic policies and that its administrative structure is specifically designed to address policy issues. However, he noted the negative impact of the genocide on the organization's human and financial resources, as funding declined by approximately 25% during the previous period, and the administrative staff was reduced from 11 to 9 employees.

Similarly, Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi, representative of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, indicated that the association employs approximately 35 engineers across its areas of specialization to monitor relevant sectoral policies.

Ms. Sabah Salameh, the representative of the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women, explained that the Forum's 17-member institutions collectively finance its public policy participation activities. Each member organization also designates a coordinator to work with the Forum in this field.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, representative of QADER for Community Development, stated that the organization allocates budgets for sectoral policies and programs in areas such as community development, empowerment, and advocacy, and that it possesses the necessary human resources to implement its interventions.

Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa, representative of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), emphasized that the lack of sustained funding directly affects the allocation of staff and budgets for participation in and influencing public policies.

Dr. Ahmad Hijjawi, representative of the Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs, noted that funding allocated for public policy participation is partial and project-based. The organization generally relies on its own staff to implement policy-related interventions.

This was echoed by Dr. Omar Rahhal, representative of SHAMS, who stated that the Center's participation in public policy work is largely based on voluntary efforts by its staff.

Likewise, Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, representative of Adwar for Social Change, explained that the organization primarily depends on its internal staff to engage in and influence public policies, resorting to external expertise only in limited cases and when necessary.

Finally, Ms. Hania Al-Bitar, representative of PYALARA, indicated that the organization's funding is modest and that follow-up on public policies relies on the efforts of a limited number of individuals, as the organization lacks dedicated policy specialists.

- Many of the civil society organizations included in the study sample are keen to implement capacity-building programs aimed at enhancing the skills and competencies of their staff through specialized training courses and workshops that they organize or participate in. Some capacity-building initiatives also extend to the institutions' target groups and beneficiaries.

However, most of these programs fall within the institutions' specialized areas of work rather than being specifically focused on building capacities in the field of participation in public policymaking.

In this regard, Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of Al-Marsad, indicated that the organization has designed and implemented training programs for its staff, as well as for grassroots organizations, youth groups, and persons with disabilities.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih, representative of MIFTAH, stated that the institution conducts multiple training programs through its Empowerment Unit, targeting women and youth.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj, representative of the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights ("Hurriyat"), confirmed that the Center provides specialized human rights training, particularly for members of the security forces, while also continuously developing its internal staff capacities.

Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi, representative of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, noted that the association regularly conducts training and capacity-building courses and holds a monthly staff development meeting.

Mr. Shawan Jabarin, representative of Al-Haq, indicated that the organization provides specialized training on international humanitarian law and international conventions and collaborates with other institutions on capacity-building initiatives related to public policies.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, representative of QADER for Community Development, explained that the institution has an annual plan, part of which is dedicated to staff development. The development plan is based on the outcomes of the organization's annual performance evaluation.

- The survey of civil society organizations included in the study sample showed that only a limited number of these institutions systematically document their activities related to public policies, prepare internal reports on them, discuss their outcomes, and extract lessons learned.

Most meetings and consultations on public policy issues are not formally documented, and their outcomes effectively end with the meeting. Policy-related activities implemented within the framework of specific projects are usually documented; however, follow-up often ends with the project's completion.

Only a small number of institutions review related reports, analyze obstacles encountered, and draw lessons to inform future project interventions.

In this context, Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of the Social and Economic Policy Monitor (Al-Marsad), indicated that the organization documents its activities through minutes, reports, working papers, and studies. However, one-time meetings to which the organization is invited are generally not documented.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih, representative of MIFTAH, noted that implemented programs are documented, yet many activities conclude with the end of the meeting without systematic follow-up.

Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, representative of Adwar for Social Change, explained that documenting activities requires consistent follow-up and dedicated human resources, which can be burdensome given limited funding. In many institutions, policy-related follow-up ends with the project's conclusion, without sustained monitoring.

Ms. Sabah Salameh, representative of the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women, indicated that the Forum itself does not centrally document activities; rather, documentation is undertaken by coordinators within their respective member institutions.

In contrast, Dr. Abdel Rahman Al-Tamimi, representative of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, stated that the association has a monitoring and evaluation manual designed to extract lessons learned. Reports are prepared for each project, and annual reports are discussed to identify obstacles and inform future project interventions.

Similarly, Dr. Suhail Aqabneh, representative of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, noted that the organization documents its activities through a computerized information management system.

### **3. Level of Participation and Intervention in Public Policies**

- Representatives of the civil society organizations included in the study sample unanimously indicated that the administrative level, namely the institution's staff, is the most actively engaged in participating in and influencing public policies. This is followed by members of the Boards of Directors, who often play important roles in this field. In contrast, the participation of General Assembly members remains limited and largely ineffective.

In this context, Dr. Ahmad Hijjawi, representative of the Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs, stated that the administrative staff and some members of the Board of Directors are involved in shaping and influencing public policies. In contrast, the General Assembly is not active in this area.

Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa indicated that the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO) relies primarily on its Board of Directors for participation and influence in public policies. At the same time, the administrative staff provides them with relevant information, studies, and policy papers.

Dr. Suhail Aqabneh noted that members of the Board of Directors of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society are generally those who influence national public policies.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, representative of QADER for Community Development, stated that both Board members and General Assembly members are engaged in the organization's work. The institution also has a governance manual designed to strengthen the Board of Directors' role.

Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi, representative of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, explained that the role of Boards of Directors and General Assemblies in civil society organizations often remains largely formal, while acknowledging differences in size and scope of work among institutions. He added that Board and General Assembly members are volunteers and public figures who often lack sufficient time to engage in the day-to-day operations of institutions.

Mr. Issam Arouri, representative of the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, indicated that the Center makes efforts to encourage Board and General Assembly members to participate in its policy influence initiatives by inviting them to attend field visits and tours and by sharing written reports with them. However, the timing of these activities does not always align with their availability.

Mr. Helmi Abu Atoun of PYALARA stated that discussions are held with certain Board members on public policy issues, particularly those related to the institution's area of specialization. Some Board members, especially the Chairperson, are actively engaged in the institution's public activities and community meetings.

- Most representatives of the civil society organizations included in the study sample confirmed that they do not prefer to rely on donors to influence public policies and that they approach this issue with extreme caution. They emphasized a preference for relying on their own efforts when engaging with national public policies. Recourse to donors or external actors is generally reserved for confronting Israeli occupation policies.

At the same time, many civil society organizations make use of United Nations tools and mechanisms to participate in and influence public policies and to ensure accountability, particularly through engagement with UN committees and the submission of shadow reports to specialized UN bodies.

In this context, Dr. Omar Rahhal stated that SHAMS is opposed to seeking assistance from any foreign party regarding domestic public policies. However, the Center participates in the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, contributes to shadow reports on civil and political rights, and presents its views before the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Issam Arouri explained that the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center opposes seeking donor support or using threats of funding cuts to pressure the government for non-compliance with human rights obligations.

Mr. Firas Jaber indicated that Al-Marsad does not resort to external actors to influence public policies and has terminated relationships with certain donors due to the conditions imposed on funding. However, the organization uses UN mechanisms in specific policy-related issues, such as monitoring compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and addressing Israeli violations.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih confirmed that MIFTAH generally refrains from seeking external pressure on the government in matters related to public policies, with limited exceptions, such as advocacy to cancel political conditions imposed on participation in local elections.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj emphasized that the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights (“Hurriyat”) opposes relying on external actors or donors to pressure the government, affirming that participation and influence in public policies should primarily rely on domestic tools. International actors may be engaged to exert pressure on the occupation, and there is no objection to utilizing UN mechanisms, particularly in submitting shadow reports.

Ms. Hania Al-Bitar, representative of PYALARA, noted that the organization occasionally engages international actors whom it trusts and who advocate for Palestinian rights.

Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi, representative of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, confirmed that seeking support from donors or external actors is limited to confronting Israeli policies. The group participates in international mechanisms such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference and the World Water Forum.

Mr. Shawan Jabarin explained that external advocacy is used only within the framework of the State of Palestine’s obligations under signed international conventions, particularly through shadow reports submitted to UN bodies, such as reports on compliance with the Convention Against Torture.

Ms. Sabah Salameh stated that the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women relies primarily on its internal resources, which reduces donor influence. The Forum nonetheless utilizes UN tools and mechanisms, especially through shadow reports related to combating torture.

Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa indicated that PNGO works to influence donor priorities, particularly in the humanitarian field, so that they align with citizens’ needs, but does not rely on donors to pressure the government.

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak explained that QADER for Community Development is engaged in international advocacy and utilizes UN mechanisms through shadow reports, parallel reports, and follow-up reports related to the rights of people with disabilities, children’s rights, CEDAW, and the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Finally, Dr. Ahmad Hijjawi emphasized that engagement with international intervention or donors in national public policies is handled with great caution, except in certain developmental or procedural matters. The Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs participates in shadow reporting on education and disability within the framework of mechanisms provided by UN organizations.

### Third: Outputs and Results

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This section of the study reviews the outcomes achieved through civil society organizations' participation in public policymaking, policy influence, and accountability. It also examines the internal and external gaps that hinder progress in this field. The analysis is based on indicators related to the impact of participation on citizens' rights, the extent to which certain interventions remain stalled, and the internal and external challenges that hinder effective engagement in public policies.

#### **The review of the above-mentioned indicators led to the following conclusions:**

**1. Several civil society organizations have achieved tangible results in participating in and influencing public policies, particularly within their areas of specialization. Progress has also been more evident in policy areas where the government requires civil society engagement as an essential entry point for implementation, such as government policies targeting areas classified as "C," in the Gaza Strip following the genocide, or in cases where donors require civil society participation in the implementation of certain policies.**

In this context, Dr. Omar Rahhal indicated that SHAMS achieved results in influencing public policies in several areas, including contributing, through the Ministry of Local Government, comments on the Local Council Elections Law; partnering with the Ministry of Awqaf to provide a specific vision for enhancing integrity and transparency in the management of waqf funds; and participating with the Anti-Corruption Commission in reviewing the National Strategy for Enhancing Integrity and Combating Corruption.

Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh noted the government's responsiveness to Adwar and its partnership with the institution and grassroots organizations, particularly in areas classified as "C."

Ms. Lana Al-Bandak, representative of QADER for Community Development, indicated that the organization achieved positive results in influencing health policies related to the rights and services of persons with disabilities; in cooperation with the Ministry of Education in developing the inclusive education strategy; with the Ministry of Social Development through institutionalizing quality monitoring of services provided to children with disabilities; with the Ministry of Local Government in developing policies to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all ministerial policies and programs; and with the Ministry of Women's Affairs in reviewing policies related to violence against women and the referral system.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj confirmed that the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights ("Hurriyat") has influenced security policies through engagement with security institutions and through representing civil society within the security sector.

Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi noted the government's responsiveness to civil society in relief work, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Ms. Sabah Salameh referred to the Ministry of Women's Affairs' communication and responsiveness toward the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women.

Dr. Suhail Aqabneh indicated that the Ministry of Health has shown responsiveness to the Palestinian Medical Relief Society in matters related to health policies and citizens' health rights, including sharing plans and identifying needs.

Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayyeh from Al-Haq explained that the responsiveness of certain ministries and public institutions to civil society in public policy matters depends on the individual official in charge and on the institutional tradition of consultation and openness, citing the Ministry of Women's Affairs as an example.

Mr. Helmi Abu Atoun of PYALARA indicated that the organization participated in developing the National Policy for Scouts and Youth and attends meetings related to youth policies. However, he clarified that such engagement often remains within the framework of dialogue rather than genuine participation in planning and policy formulation.

Finally, Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa noted that the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO) serves as a national and sectoral reference point for the government regarding plans and committees at different levels.

**2. Despite the achievements made by civil society organizations in participating in and influencing public policies, particularly within their specialized areas of work, many of their representatives indicated that engagement in public policymaking continues to face significant obstacles that hinder the realization of desired outcomes. These obstacles are especially pronounced in national policies related to political or security matters, as well as those connected to public rights and freedoms.**

**From the perspective of civil society representatives, the primary reason for these challenges lies in the duality of decision-making centers between the government and the Presidency. The Presidency is perceived as exercising dominance over public policy decision-making and issuing decisions without allowing internal actors to influence them meaningfully.**

In this context, Mr. Issam Arouri noted that although drafts of certain legislation were presented for discussion with civil society organizations, such as the draft decree-law on Local Council Elections, and civil society provided comments and recommendations, the decree-law was ultimately issued without incorporating those inputs. Moreover, additional provisions were introduced into the final decree-law that had not appeared in the publicly circulated draft. He further added that despite civil society's efforts to work with the justice sector to protect the judiciary and ensure its independence, security forces continue not fully to respect judicial rulings.

Ms. Reham Al-Faqih, representative of MIFTAH, indicated that pressure exerted on the government regarding public policies often fails to produce results because the government itself is not the ultimate decision-maker.

Similarly, Mr. Firas Jaber, representative of the Social and Economic Policy Monitor (Al-Marsad), stated that the Presidency constitutes a primary source of public policy decision-making and exercises control over the issuance of legislation, while remaining insufficiently open to engagement with civil society organizations.

Mr. Helmi Al-Araj, representative of the Center for the Defense of Civil Rights ("Hurriyat"), also emphasized that the highest political level, represented by the President, exerts greater influence over public policies than the government, and that the limited impact of civil society organizations is therefore closely linked to this political dynamic.

**3. Representatives of civil society organizations believe that part of the responsibility for the weak participation in, influence on, and oversight of public policies lies with civil society organizations themselves. They attribute this to several key factors, most notably: the fragmentation of civil society and the politicization of societal issues; the dominance of a culture of criticizing the government within some organizations without simultaneously working to open communication channels with it; the absence of consensus on identifying priority policies to focus on and influence; the concentration of many civil society organizations on technical and specialized aspects of their work while neglecting public policy engagement within their objectives; the lack of a unified plan and vision for engaging with public policies; and weak funding in many institutions, which limits the allocation of budgets and specialized human resources for public policy work.**

In this context, Dr. Omar Rahhal, representative of SHAMS, indicated that civil society work is sometimes subject to politicization and internal divisions. Some organizations align closely with government policies, while others adopt highly oppositional positions. He added that limited funding poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of civil society organizations.

Mr. Issam Arouri, representative of the Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center, referred to divisions within civil society along political lines. Some actors call for dissolving the Palestinian Authority, while others view such calls as serving occupation objectives aimed at facilitating displacement.

Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi, representative of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, noted that part of civil society consists of nominal organizations that are largely inactive and were established within the framework of internal political competition. Another segment has lost its institutional identity by working across too many areas without focus, while a third group has maintained its identity and specialization. He emphasized that these dynamics have negatively affected civil society's overall image.

Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayyeh from Al-Haq stated that civil society organizations have fallen short in engaging effectively with public policy issues. Some institutions have adopted a culture centered solely on criticizing the government, without developing a structured plan or vision regarding priority policies to influence. He further noted the absence of a sustained program or platform through which civil society can consistently hold the government accountable. Funding constraints also affect priority-setting, program development, and the allocation of human resources, which, in turn, impact public policy engagement.

Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa, representative of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), indicated that many civil society organizations tend to rush into using tools such as issuing statements and public positions without sufficiently engaging with or deeply analyzing the issues before determining appropriate steps. He stressed the need for a clearer vision and deeper understanding among civil society organizations of the importance of sustained engagement in public policy work.

Finally, Dr. Ahmad Hijawi, representative of the Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs, pointed to the short-term approach adopted by some civil society organizations in dealing with public policy matters, which require continuity, sustained pressure, and long-term commitment to achieve meaningful results.

**4. Representatives of civil society organizations pointed to several external factors that limit the ability of civil society to influence public policies. These include: Israeli occupation policies that restrict Palestinian civil society work and subject it to monitoring; the government's formalistic openness toward civil society participation in public policies, where meetings and consultations are held without adopting their outcomes; the government's lack of openness on many public**

issues in the absence of a Law on the Right of Access to Information; the absence of the Legislative Council as the primary body for oversight and accountability; the multiplicity of power centers within public institutions; the reluctance of some officials and civil servants to cooperate with civil society organizations, often accusing them of implementing donor-driven agendas; and prevailing conservative traditions, as well as regional, clan-based, and factional considerations that generate resistance to policy change in certain areas.

In this context, Dr. Omar Rahhal, representative of SHAMS, stated that civil society organizations are not always effective in influencing public policies due to entrenched power centers and conservative actors who raise concerns that certain interventions may affect security matters or issues related to religion, customs, and traditions. At times, clan-based, regional, or factional considerations, driven by organizational or vested interests, hinder decision-makers from responding to civil society's demands. He further noted that Israeli occupation policies subject Palestinian civil society organizations to surveillance and monitoring of both their institutional activities and the personal activities of their leadership through what is known as the "Israeli Monitor," with the aim of labeling them as terrorist organizations and restricting their access to external funding.

Mr. Firas Jaber added that meetings and consultations held by ministries with civil society organizations often occur in the absence of a genuine willingness to embrace change. Additionally, certain ministry employees constitute an obstacle to openness toward civil society, and limited responsiveness sometimes stems from weak technical capacity within government entities.

Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, representative of Adwar for Social Change, pointed to the lack of genuine political will within the government to implement policies and plans, as well as its inability to consolidate and effectively utilize scattered resources.

Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayyeh from Al-Haq explained that the absence of the Legislative Council represents a major challenge to effective oversight and accountability over the government. This weakens civil society's ability to influence public policies and hold authorities accountable, thereby reinforcing a perception within the government that it is not subject to meaningful accountability. He added that some ministries remain closed to dialogue with civil society, and that only a limited number of officials or ministers take initiative to cooperate.

Ms. Sabah Salameh, representative of the Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women, stated that despite the current government's claims of openness and engagement with civil society, it has been among the least responsive in this regard. She noted that the government failed to respond to the numerous demands and communications submitted by the Forum and demonstrated a lack of political will to take key decisions, such as declaring certain areas disaster zones or allocating budgets for displaced people, despite sustained advocacy and pressure.

Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa, representative of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), indicated that many issues advocated by civil society and formally adopted do not ultimately produce the desired outcomes. While there are government initiatives, they often remain symbolic and do not entail meaningful civil society engagement in governmental efforts.

Finally, Dr. Ahmad Hijjawi, representative of the Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs, stated that the government does not fully recognize the role of civil society organizations in public policymaking. Rather, it acknowledges limited roles for certain institutions in specific sectors or issues.

## Conclusions

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The results of examining the indicators of readiness and effectiveness of civil society organizations' participation in public policies, as reached by the post-assessment, indicate that changes have occurred; however, they are not fundamental in relation to the results reached by the study, whether in terms of institutional readiness or effectiveness in participating in public policies.

The results showed some progress in certain areas and no tangible progress in others. There was a noticeable increase in the volume of civil society activities related to sectoral policies and interventions through international mechanisms, including United Nations tools. The results also indicate a willingness on the part of many ministries and public institutions to cooperate with civil society organizations in implementing public policies, and an increase in communication between the government and civil society organizations through meetings, presentations, and discussions.

In contrast, some gaps in the readiness and effectiveness of civil society participation in public policies remained due to opposition from officials or employees. There was also some regression in other aspects, including that meetings, interventions, and comments submitted by civil society are not reflected in the outcomes of issued policies and legislation.

The government remains unable to respond to civil society demands regarding public policies, particularly in policies rejected by the security forces or the Office of the President, as the highest level of decision-making in public policies, represented by the Presidency, remains closed to civil society organizations.

There has also been a significant decline in the ability of civil society organizations to obtain funding, particularly for public policy programs, due to the conditions resulting from the genocide in the Gaza Strip, occupation measures in the West Bank, and the direction of most funding toward relief requirements.

**Accordingly, the key conclusions reached by the study regarding the readiness and effectiveness of civil society organizations' participation in public policies, influencing them, and exercising oversight over their implementation can be summarized as follows:**

### **First: With Regards to the Institutionalization of Participation in Public Policymaking**

1. Participation in public policies, influencing them, and ensuring accountability is considered a secondary objective within broader institutional goals in most civil society organizations. This is reflected in their strategies and organizational structures. Institutionalized engagement in public policy work is more common among larger civil society organizations and networks that include a significant number of member organizations.

2. Specialized civil society organizations focus primarily on participating in and influencing public policies that fall within their areas of expertise, while their contribution to other public policy areas generally takes place through collective action within coalitions and networks.

3. Most civil society organizations did not introduce tangible changes to their objectives, strategies, or organizational structures related to enhancing participation in public policies, influencing them, and ensuring accountability during the period covered by the study. This includes the absence of newly added objectives, new strategies, or the establishment of new units or departments in this field.

This should be understood in light of the societal impacts resulting from the harm caused by Israeli practices in the Palestinian context and on the Palestinian Authority, which have shifted the priorities of citizens and institutions toward stability, personal security, and survival, often at the expense of prioritizing public affairs management and public policy engagement.

## **Second: With Regards to the Nature and Levels of Participation and Intervention in Public Policies**

1. Most civil society organizations balance between individual institutional work and collective action in their participation in public policies, influencing them, and ensuring accountability. Civil society organizations continue to agree that collective action through networks and coalitions constitutes a successful strategy and has a greater impact on public policies than individual efforts.

2. Although civil society organizations continue to believe in the importance of collective work in public policy engagement, most consider it necessary to review the functioning of coalitions, their formation mechanisms, and their tools. This includes ensuring that the objective for which a coalition is formed becomes a shared priority for all its members; that all partner institutions allocate financial resources and human capacities necessary for its work; that leadership is not confined to a specific geographic area; and that grassroots coalitions are established.

3. Most representatives of civil society organizations did not support the idea of forming a single specialized coalition dedicated to influencing public policies and ensuring accountability, despite this being one of the recommendations of the Baseline Assessment. Instead, they favored establishing a coalition or working group for each specific issue or public policy area. At the same time, this does not negate the shared need for a technical body to provide training and capacity-building in the field of public policies.

4. Most civil society organizations combine desk-based work, such as preparing studies, research papers, position papers, legal memoranda, and official correspondence, with field-based work centered on advocacy, public mobilization, participation in government-convened meetings, and organizing public hearings to hold officials accountable.

5. Larger institutions with relatively stable funding and sizable administrative staff allocate portions of their budgets and personnel to implement specialized programs related to public policies. In contrast, smaller organizations rely on limited participation, partially funded through projects or carried out through voluntary assignments by administrative staff and board members.

6. Many civil society organizations prioritize building the capacities of their staff within their specialized fields of work. At the same time, only a limited number of capacity-building programs focus specifically on participation in public policies.

7. Only a small number of civil society organizations document their public policy-related activities through internal reporting, discussion, and the extraction of lessons learned. Most meetings and consultations related to public policies are not formally documented, and their outcomes end with the meeting.

8. The administrative level, represented by institutional staff, is the most engaged in participating in and influencing public policies, followed by members of Boards of Directors, while the role of General Assembly members remains limited and largely ineffective.

9. Most civil society organizations continue to view reliance on donors for influencing public policies negatively and approach this issue with great caution. However, they encourage seeking support from donors and external actors in confronting Israeli occupation policies.

10. Many civil society organizations utilize United Nations tools and mechanisms in participating in and influencing public policies and ensuring accountability, particularly through engagement with UN committees and the submission of shadow reports to specialized UN bodies.

### **Third: With Regards to Outputs, Results, Internal Gaps, and External Challenges**

1. Many civil society organizations have achieved results in participating in and influencing public policies within their areas of specialization, as well as in policies where the government requires civil society engagement for implementation, such as government policies targeting areas classified as “C,” or in the Gaza Strip following the genocide, or policies that include conditions set by external donors requiring the involvement of civil society organizations.

2. Participation in and influence over public policies often encounter obstacles due to the duality in decision-making between the government on the one hand and the Presidency on the other, as the Presidency dominates decision-making in certain public policies and does not allow space for civil society organizations to influence them.

3. multiple internal gaps within civil society organizations weaken their role in participating in and influencing public policies and overseeing them. These include: fragmentation within civil society and the politicization of many societal issues; the dominance of a culture of criticizing the government without working to open communication channels with it; lack of agreement on priority policies; a focus on technical and specialized aspects with limited attention to public policies; the absence of a unified plan and vision for engaging with public policies; and weak funding in many institutions, which prevents the allocation of dedicated budgets and specialized human resources for work in this field.

4. Civil society organizations face a range of external challenges that limit their influence on public policies, including: Israeli occupation policies that restrict Palestinian civil society work and subject it to monitoring; the government’s formalistic openness toward civil society, particularly in the absence of a Law on the Right of Access to Information; the absence of the Legislative Council as the primary body for oversight and accountability; the multiplicity of power centers within public institutions and the unwillingness of some officials to cooperate with civil society organizations, often accusing them of implementing donor-driven agendas; and conservative traditions, as well as regional, clan-based, and local dynamics that frequently act to obstruct change in certain public policies.

## Recommendations

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1. Civil society organizations should adopt participation in public policymaking and influencing it as a primary objective among their institutional goals, and this should be reflected in the form of permanent programs.
2. The importance of strengthening collective action (civil society coalitions and networks) in participating in public policies should be emphasized, as it represents the most effective model for influencing them. This requires reviewing the objectives, tools, and working mechanisms of these coalitions and networks, and institutionalizing them to ensure their sustainability.
3. Leadership centralization within coalitions and networks formed for participation in and influence over public policies should be avoided, ensuring representation of member organizations from different regions, including grassroots institutions, within their leadership structures.
4. Civil society organizations should focus on advocacy, pressure tools, and public mobilization to influence public policies, and establish a permanent platform for holding public hearings with officials responsible for public policies within the scope of their mandates.
5. Civil society organizations with stable funding sources should adopt continuous capacity-building programs in the field of public policies and influence them, for their own staff as well as for staff of underfunded and grassroots institutions.
6. Civil society organizations should give due attention to documenting their public policy-related activities, preparing internal reports, discussing them, and extracting lessons learned.
7. Members of Boards of Directors and General Assemblies of civil society organizations should be more effectively engaged in activities related to participation in, influence over, and oversight of public policies. The base of participation should be expanded by engaging academics and experts to contribute to this mission.
8. Civil society organizations should not limit themselves to maintaining communication channels with the government or using advocacy and pressure tools toward it alone. They should also open communication channels with the Presidency, which dominates decision-making in many public policies, and subject non-ministerial public institutions affiliated with it to societal monitoring and oversight.
9. Civil society organizations should base their public policy interventions on a clear and, as far as possible, unified plan and vision. They should avoid resorting prematurely to certain tools, such as adopting critical positions or issuing statements, before exhausting tools of communication, dialogue, persuasion, advocacy, and public mobilization.
10. Pressure should be exerted on the government to expedite the issuance of a Law on the Right of Access to Information, as it constitutes a fundamental pillar for ensuring access to official information on public policies.
11. A technical body should be established to provide support to civil society organizations in the field of public policies.

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## Interviews

No.	Name of Institution	Representative	Governorate	Date of Interview
1)	Human Rights and Democracy Media Center - SHAMS	Dr. Omar Rahhal	Ramallah	16/12/2025
2)	Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center	Mr. Issam Arouri	Jerusalem - Ramallah - Nablus - Salfit	17/12/2025
3)	Social and Economic Policy Monitor - Al-Marsad	Mr. Firas Jaber	Ramallah	17/12/2025
4)	Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy - MIFTAH	Ms. Reham Al-Faqih	Ramallah	17/12/2025
5)	Adwar for Social Change	Ms. Sahar Al-Qawasmeh	Hebron	21/12/2025
6)	Center for the Defense of Civil Rights	Mr. Helmi Al-Araj	Ramallah	21/12/2025
7)	Palestinian Hydrology Group	Dr. Abdelrahman Al-Tamimi	Ramallah - All Governorates	22/12/2025
8)	Al-Haq Foundation	Mr. Shawan Jabarin Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayyeh	Ramallah	23/12/2025
9)	Palestinian NGOs Forum to Combat Violence Against Women	Ms. Sabah Salameh	Ramallah - All Governorates	24/12/2025
10)	Palestinian Medical Relief Society	Dr. Suhail Aqabneh	Ramallah - All Governorates	24/12/2025
11)	Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)	Dr. Amjad Al-Shawa	Ramallah - All Governorates	25/12/2024
12)	Advisory Board for the Development of NGOs	Mr. Ahmad Hijjawi	Jenin	30/12/2025
13)	Palestinian Center for Media and Youth Development - PYALARA	Ms. Hania Al-Bitar Mr. Helmi Abu Atoun	Ramallah	5/1/2026
14)	QADER for Community Development	Ms. Lana Al-Bandak	Bethlehem	5/1/2026

## Annex

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### Indicators for Assessing the Readiness and Effectiveness of Civil Society

#### Organizations Participating in Public Policymaking and Accountability for Their Implementation

Name of Entity: ..... Type of Entity: (Institution / Union / Coalition / Grassroots Organization)

Registration with the Relevant Ministry: .....

#### First: Structural Indicators (Institutional / Organizational)

##### • Institutionalization of the Entity

1. Does participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability for its implementation fall within the main or subsidiary objectives specified in the entity's bylaws? Please specify and explain.
2. Does the entity's strategic plan include participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability for its implementation among its objectives and/or interventions?
3. Does the entity's strategic plan clearly include the values of participation, willingness, and initiative in engaging in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability for its implementation?
4. Does the entity's organizational structure include a main or subsidiary program related to participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability for its implementation? Please specify and explain.

#### Second: Operational Indicators (Implementational)

1. What is the nature of the organized work undertaken to participate in public policymaking, advocate for, influence, and promote change in these policies, and ensure accountability for their implementation (individual institutional-based work/joint-based work/coalition-based work)? Please clarify with examples.

##### • Nature of Participation and Intervention

1. How does the entity carry out its role in participating in public policymaking, whether through cooperation, contribution, and partnership in policy formulation or implementation, or through advocacy, pressure, and influence to promote change and accountability (self-initiated action/joint action through an external initiative/contribution within a coalition program)? Please clarify with examples.
2. What is the nature of the entity's activities in participating in public policymaking or in applying pressure and influence to promote change and ensure accountability (desk-based / field-based / public mobilization)? Please provide examples.

3. In which types of issues does the entity engage within the framework of participating in public policymaking or influencing change and ensuring accountability (general public, economic, social, or legal issues)? Please clarify and provide examples.

#### • Operational Resources

1. Does the entity allocate financial resources specifically for implementing programs and activities related to participation in public policymaking or advocacy, influence, and accountability? Or does it require funding from official budgets to support participation in policymaking?

2. Does the entity have the necessary human resources to implement these programs and activities, or does it rely on external experts?

3. Does the entity provide regular capacity-building programs to strengthen human resources, enhance competencies, and utilize internal expertise or that of stakeholders participating in policymaking, implementation, or the evaluation of policy outcomes?

#### • Level of Participation

1. Does the entity involve one or more members of the General Assembly in programs related to participation in public policymaking, influence, advocacy, and accountability for their implementation? Please provide examples.

2. Does the entity involve the Board of Directors in programs related to participation in public policymaking, influence, and accountability? Please provide examples.

3. What is the level of participation of the executive staff of the entity in programs related to participation in public policymaking, influence, and accountability? (e.g., senior management/program manager/specialized staff member/depending on staff availability).

#### • Level of Intervention (Local / International)

1. Does the entity limit its engagement with decision-makers to the local level, or does it also leverage its relationships with international institutions or donors to intervene and apply pressure on decision-makers?

2. Has the entity, or entities, previously used United Nations mechanisms (such as treaty bodies or special procedures) and submitted reports as part of its interventions in participating in public policymaking, influencing policies, and ensuring accountability?

#### Third: Output Indicators (Outputs and Results)

1. What are the impacts of the program for participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability for its implementation on the rights and interests of citizens? Are there any interventions that remain pending without progress (within the past three years)?

2. What is the impact of individual participation or collective action (coalition-based/union-based) in contributing to influence over public policies? Please provide examples.

3. Does the entity document its activities through internal reports addressing shortcomings/ achievements, and the outcomes of participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability?
4. Does the entity hold internal meetings to evaluate results and extract lessons learned?
5. What are the internal gaps within the entity that affect its ability to effectively implement programs related to participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability?
6. What are the external challenges that affect the implementation of programs related to participation in public policymaking, influencing it, and ensuring accountability?
7. Knowledge development: strengthening institutional capacities and enhancing knowledge tools, as well as improving staff competencies in negotiation, proposing alternatives, and moving from monitoring and analysis toward advocacy, demands, and pressure aimed at development and change.
8. Representing, encouraging, motivating, and training citizens to participate in the development of policies in order to exercise their right to participation, or mobilizing them to apply pressure aimed at influence and change.

**AMAN**  
Transparency Palestine



**AMAN was established in 2000 as a civil society organization that seeks to combat corruption and promote integrity, transparency and accountability in the Palestinian society. The Coalition was first formed by an initiative from a number of civil society organizations working in the field of democracy, human rights and good governance. In 2006, the Coalition was accredited as a national chapter for Transparency International.**

**AMAN is a Palestinian think tank and a specialized body providing knowledge on corruption at the local and regional level through producing specialized reports and studies. The periodic publications include: The annual Integrity and Anti-Corruption Report, the annual Palestinian Integrity Index and the National Integrity System studies and reports, in addition to the Coalition's continued contributions to produce reports and studies on the status of corruption in the Arab region.**

**As part of the global anti-corruption movement - and of international alliances and partnerships with relevant specialized coalitions and organizations - AMAN plays a key role in the transfer and contextualization of necessary international knowledge and tools to combat corruption in all sectors.**

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