



study on:

Assessing the Space available for the Palesinian Civic Space To Participation in Public Policymaking and Implementaiton Accountability "Post-evaluation"

Report No. 320



2026

AMAN
Transparency Palestine



study on:

**Assessing the Space available
for the Palesinian Civic Space To
Participation in Public Policymaking
and Implementaiton Accountability
"Post-evaluation"**

2026

AMAN
Transparency Palestine



The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN) expresses its deep gratitude to researcher Jihad Harb for the preparation of this study, and thanks Dr. Azmi Shuaibi and the AMAN Coalition team for their supervision, review, and editing.

© Copyrights reserved to the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN)

To cite, please refer to the publication as follows: Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). 2025. Assessing the Space Available to the Palestinian Civic Space for Participation in the Public Policymaking and Implementation Accountability (“Post-Assessment”). Ramallah-Palestine

The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN) has diligently verified the information used in this paper and does not bear any liability for the use of such information for purposes outside the context of the paper’s objectives after its publication.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Objective of the Study	5
Methodology for Developing the Indicators	5
Study Population	6
Definition of Key Terms	7
I. The General Environment of the Palestinian Political System and Its Impact on Civil Society	8
II. The Palestinian Constitutional and Legal Framework Governing the Right to Participate in Public Policymaking and Accountability for Its Implementation.	10
1. International Declarations and Conventions	10
2. The Basic Law and Other Palestinian Legislation	12
III. Government Public Policy	13
1. The Policy of the Seventeenth Government as Presented in the National Policy Agenda 2017–2022	13
2. The Policy of the Eighteenth Government as Presented in The Palestinian Government Public Policy Document 2021–2023	13
3. The Policy of the Nineteenth Government as Presented in Its Government Program and Strategic Documents 2025–2026	14
IV. The Reality of Community Participation in Public Policymaking	16
1- Access to Information	16
2- Institutionalization of Participation	18
3- Active Participation Through Dialogue	21
4- Implementation of Public Policies and Evaluation of Their Outcomes	25
V. The Reality of Societal Accountability for the Implementation of Public Policies	27
1- Information Transparency	27
2- Participation and Responsiveness	28
3- Oversight, Monitoring, and Evaluation	29
Findings	31
Recommendations	34

Introduction

The civic sphere is the environment that enables citizens to participate actively in decision-making, policy development, and the evaluation of how those policies are implemented. It empowers individuals to influence the social, economic, political, and cultural life of their communities, ensuring that citizens can freely and fearlessly express their opinions, assemble peacefully, and engage in decisions that shape their lives¹. Moreover, the concept of civil society extends beyond physical space. It now includes the digital realm, where its presence has grown more prominent. The widespread use of the internet and social media has strengthened civic engagement online, giving rise to a vibrant virtual civil society that operates within cyberspace².

Citizens' participation, as well as the engagement of organizations that represent them, in public life is a fundamental principle of human rights. Such participation enhances the effectiveness of political systems and contributes to the development of governance structures. For this reason, civic space is essential not only for human rights but also for broader development, peace, and security. Meaningful engagement by civil society plays a vital role in making policy-making more informed, effective, and sustainable. It also strengthens efforts to prevent conflicts, combat impunity, and address corruption³.

In the same context, the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), particularly Article 13, emphasizes the importance of strengthening partnerships between governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) in combating corruption. It stipulates that States Parties shall take appropriate measures to encourage civil society organizations to participate actively in the prevention of and the fight against corruption. Such participation includes measures such as: (a) enhancing transparency in decision-making processes and enabling and encouraging the public to participate in, contribute to, and critique those processes; (b) ensuring that the public has effective access to information; ... (d) respecting, promoting, protecting, receiving, publishing, and disseminating the freedom to seek information related to corruption.

Palestinian civil society organizations possess unique experience and expertise in combining their national and resistance-driven objectives with efforts to confront the occupation and its practices, while simultaneously pursuing democratic, developmental, and social-progress goals. These organizations have consistently worked to strengthen the resilience of Palestinians on their land, expose the practices of the occupation and its ongoing violations, and develop mechanisms that have enabled them to contribute to the implementation of social solidarity and food security policies. Following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Palestinian CSOs continued to support the emerging governmental structures. They have shared experiences and helped sustain the delivery of key public services, while continuing to serve as complementary partners to official institutions, particularly in the areas of education, health, and social services.

1 See Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (n.d.), The Role of the United Nations in Protecting and Promoting Civic Space | OHCHR

2 See Maharat. Shrinking Civic Space – Solidarity and Networking as the Solution (2019), available at <https://maharat-news.com/shrinkingcivicspaces>

And also: An Introduction to Civic Space and Its Challenges in the Arab Region (2022), Available at: <https://n9.cl/kq9f5>

3 See the Official United Nations Page: Promoting Participation and Protecting Civic Space.

<https://www.ohchr.org/ar/about-us/what-we-do/our-roadmap/enhancing-participation-and-protecting-civic-space>

In addition to the continued efforts to expose the occupation's human rights violations in international forums and the resulting Israeli repression targeting civil society activists and organizations, Palestinian civil society work in both the West Bank and Gaza has faced multifaceted challenges. These challenges arise from the increasingly declining protection of civil liberties and human rights within the political system, the internal political division, the absence of presidential and legislative elections, the dissolution of the Legislative Council, and the restrictions imposed on most components of civic space.

The absence of the Legislative Council has further weakened civil society organizations' ability to influence public policy, an area in which they previously played an active role through PLC committees. As a result, governing authorities have increasingly monopolized policy formulation, allowing some officials to unilaterally design and implement policies that do not necessarily serve the public interest.

To promote CSOs' role and ensure their participation in shaping public policies, monitoring their implementation, and holding officials accountable, it is essential to identify the general gaps and challenges facing the components of civic space in order to address them. To this end, the AMAN Coalition conducts systematic assessments of civic space and examines its evolving relationship with the state. Accordingly, it prepared a study describing civil society's participation in formulating public policies and holding officials accountable for their implementation. This was done by developing a set of relevant indicators that measure the extent to which citizens and their representatives engage in public policymaking and the practice of social accountability toward their governments. The study began in 2024 as a baseline assessment, while the current study serves as a post-assessment of the Palestinian civic space.

Objective of the Study:

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a post assessment of the extent to which civil society organizations have been able to participate in public policymaking, and to monitor and hold the government accountable—through public accountability mechanisms—for the implementation of those policies, with the aim of strengthening governance integrity in Palestine. This assessment takes into account the unique circumstances of the Palestinian territories, resulting from the ongoing occupation, political division, and the conditions surrounding the formation of associations, peaceful assembly, and freedom of expression, as well as the government's role in halting violations of rights and freedoms and its level of commitment to relevant legislation. It also draws on the findings of reports issued by human rights institutions in these areas, such as the Independent Commission for Human Rights, the Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA), the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center (Shams), the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), the Center for the Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights (Hurriyat), the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (Miftah), and other relevant institutions.

Indicators Preparation Methodology:

- Drawing on the indicators used in international and local reports issued by relevant local, regional, and international civil society organizations, with a focus on qualitative evaluation indicators rather than quantitative measures.
- Developing a set of indicators related to community participation in public policymaking and accountability for its implementation, prepared by the Research Unit at AMAN Coalition.
- Forming a brainstorming group composed of several experts and civil society activists to review and refine the proposed indicators.
- Holding a series of brainstorming meetings with expert groups to arrive at a final form of indicators.

Study Population:

Given that this study serves as a post-assessment following the initial assessment conducted at the beginning of 2024, after the Israeli war against the Gaza Strip, and for methodological reasons, its implementation was limited to the West Bank. This is because the sample of the first study was restricted to civil society organizations in the West Bank, and the same purposively selected sample was used again. It included a group of civil society organizations working in various fields (public freedoms, human rights, persons with disabilities, women, etc.). The sample also took into account geographic representation across the northern, central, and southern West Bank, and included key institutions as well as organizations engaged in networking with grassroots institutions. A sample of the relevant official bodies was also selected, taking into account representation from central government (“the Council of Ministers”) and sectoral institutions (“ministries”). Finally, the sample included state institutions: the Independent Commission for Human Rights (as a state institution whose work spans all sectors, both official and non official) and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs.

Study Sample from civil society organizations

Institution Name	Represented by	Scope of Work	Headquarters
Palestinian Consultative Commission for the Development of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (PCC/PCSDNGOS)	Ahmed Al-Hijawi, Director General	Development of grassroots civil organizations	Jenin
Al-Haq Institute	Ashraf Al-Hayyeh, Legal Advisor/ Counsel	Rule of law and human rights	Ramallah
Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)	Ajad Al-Shawwa, PNGO Coordinator	An independent civil society coalition comprising 145 civil society organizations working in various humanitarian, social, and development fields	Ramallah
Human Rights and Democracy Media Center – Shams	Omar Rahhal, Director General	Promotion of a culture of human rights, tolerance, and dialogue, as well as the principles of democracy and the rule of law.	Ramallah
The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy – MIFTAH	Tahreer Al-A’raj, Executive Director	Promotion of the principles of democracy and good governance within Palestinian society and its various institutions.	Ramallah
Roles for Social Change Association – ADWAR	Sahar Al-Qawasmeh, Executive Director	Women Empowerment	Hebron
QADER for Community Development	Lana Al-Bandak, Director General	Works with people with disabilities	Bethlehem
Center for the Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights – Hurryyat	Hilmi Al-A’raj, Director General	Human rights and political and civil liberties	Ramallah

Study Sample from Government Institutions

Institution Name	Representative
Council of Ministers	The meeting was not held
Ministry of Women’s Affairs	Sami Suhweil and Ayyat Al-Faqeeh

Study Sample from State Institutions

Institution Name	Representative	Scope of Work
Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission	Dr. Jamal Qash, Deputy Head of PACC, in a written response	To lead national anti-corruption efforts; to protect Palestinian society and public funds from the risks of corruption, and to prosecute those who commit such acts.
Independent Commission for Human Rights	Ammar Dweik, Director General of ICHR	To monitor and ensure that human rights requirements are met and upheld in various Palestinian laws, legislation, and regulations, as well as in the operations of various departments, agencies, and institutions within the State of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Definition of Key Terminology:

Civil Society: Refers to all sorts of voluntary activities organized by groups around shared interests, values, and goals. These civil society activities can be very diverse and may include providing services, supporting independent education, or affecting public policy. In the last example, citizens may come together outside of government and inform, bring pressure to bear on, or reinforce policies (punish or reward policymakers)⁴.

Public Policies of Governments: A set of activities chosen by governments to manage societies, such as laws, regulations, decrees, plans, actions, behaviors, and the decisions required to implement programs aimed at achieving political, economic, or social objectives⁵.

Integrity of Governance: This means officials responsible for running institutions (i.e., managing public funds) make their decisions in favor of public interest, and not for the benefit of any other party (segment, a ruling group, or a ruling party). Integrity of governance encompasses various areas of the state's work and institutions and is based on the principle of separation of powers, in theory and practice, and stemming from the principle that (an absolute authority is a corrupt authority). Integrity of governance must also include independent and effective oversight bodies to which all public employees are accountable, without granting any official immunity from scrutiny or review of their actions. It also means having a civil society that is empowered and able to exercise community accountability, enjoys free media and investigative means, and is able to expose corruption cases. It also means having official media that express the opinions of all citizens and reflect the state of diversity in society⁶.

Participation: The right of all individuals to vote and express opinions, either directly or through elected councils. Participation requires the availability of laws guaranteeing freedom of association for forming organizations and political parties, freedom of expression, and freedom of elections. Public freedoms in general are essential to ensuring effective citizen participation and reinforcing political legitimacy⁷.

Social Accountability: A form of accountability which emerges from actions by citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) aimed at holding the state to account, as well as efforts by government and other actors (media, private sector, donors) to support these actions⁸.

4 National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. (2009). Civic participation terminology. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/CivicParticipationTerminology_2009May.pdf

5 Bouriche, R. (2013). Public policies from a governmental perspective. *Mediterranean Dialogue*. <https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/17139>

6 Coalition for Integrity and Accountability-AMAN. (2019). 12th Annual Report: The State of Integrity and Combating Corruption in Palestine 2019.

7 Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2010). *Guidebook of Terms and Concepts of Good Governance* [Arabic].

8 United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2010). *Fostering Social Accountability: From Principle to Practice*

I. How the general environment of the Palestinian political system is reflected in the civic space in which civil society operates

The protracted Israeli occupation remains the most significant barrier to an effective civil society, as many CSOs encounter harassment and punitive measures, such as closure and detention of their directors, because of their work in exposing occupatin's practices and crimes, on the one hand, and in strengthening citizens' steadfastness by providing of services in areas threatened by confiscation or settlers attacks on the other. They are also targeted because of their community role in promoting a culture of citizenship, freedom, and equity as universal human values. Several military orders have been issued to shut down a number of these organizations and detain their activists. In addition, campaigns have been launched to cast doubt on their work and pressure donor countries to suspend funding to these CSOs.

Civil society organizations have also faced international pressure, particularly in the area of funding, after some donor countries cut or suspended their support following the events of October 7th. These organizations have additionally been subjected to various forms of harassment, including digital violence carried out by social media platform owners, aimed at preventing them from continuing their work in defending the rights of the Palestinian people and exposing Israeli occupation practices. Since the Palestinian political division in 2007, the Palestinian political system has suffered from the consequences and complexities of this split at all levels—most notably the paralysis and dissolution of the Legislative Council. This led to the executive authority dominating the other branches of government and monopolizing decision making without oversight or accountability. The executive branch effectively assumed the role of the Legislative Council, took control of the legislative process, and extensively relied on the President's authority granted under Article 43 of the amended Basic Law of 2003, without meeting the necessary conditions for exercising this authority—namely, cases of urgent necessity that cannot tolerate delay in issuing decree laws. Under this provision, hundreds of laws were issued, and some legislation was enacted or amended in ways that undermined the independence of oversight bodies, as these laws provide for the appointment of their heads by the President without Legislative Council approval. Amendments have also targeted laws governing the judiciary, constituting an infringement on constitutional principles that safeguard the separation of powers and respect for the rule of law⁹. Moreover, repeated attempts were made to amend the Law on Charitable Associations and Community Organizations in ways that would weaken the independence of civic activity, restrict its freedom, and limit its oversight role over the executive authority¹⁰.

Civil society organizations have faced various difficulties under the Palestinian National Authority since the political division of 2007. In both the West Bank and Gaza, the authorities exerted pressure on these organizations to adopt positions aligned with the ruling authority and intervened in their internal affairs, to the extent of appointing administrative boards for some organizations in violation of the law¹¹.

At times, authorities in both the West Bank and Gaza imposed security vetting (“security clearance”) on civil society organizations as a precondition for obtaining prior approval from security agencies before registering an association. This measure constitutes a violation of the Law on Charitable

9 Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2021). Annual Report <https://www.aman-palestine.org/activities/15877.html>

10 Position Paper issued by Civil Society Organizations regarding the Draft Decree-Law Amending the Law on Associations. (March 3rd, 2021). Retrieved from <https://mezan.org/ar/post/31484>

11 Costantini, G. F., et al. (2011, May). Mapping Study of Civil Society Organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Final Report). Project implemented with funding from the European Union. p. 23

Associations and Community Organizations¹². The annual report of the Independent Commission for Human Rights documented numerous violations related to the right to form associations and to their operations, including restrictions on the registration of associations and the freezing of their bank accounts without any legal justification, while denying affected associations access to the reasons behind such measures¹³.

The Independent Commission for Human Rights' 2024 annual report highlighted actions taken by the executive authority that restrict certain public freedoms, particularly the shrinking civic space available to civil society organizations, the media, and community activists in exercising their right to accountability and criticism. Restrictions were imposed on the rights to assembly and organization, as well as on freedom of the press, media, and expression¹⁴—measures that weaken the system of social accountability over public performance.

The Public Budget Performance Report for the first half of 2025 showed improvement in publishing the 2025 draft budget law on the Ministry of Justice's Legislative Platform. The Ministry of Finance presented and discussed the draft with representatives of civil society organizations, and space was provided for submitting comments through the platform; however, only one week was allocated for submitting feedback¹⁵. Despite these steps, the level of publication remains partial and insufficient and does not meet the required standards of disclosure and participation, which continues to hinder civil society's ability to perform its oversight role¹⁶. The Civil Society Team for Enhancing Budget Transparency also noted that, in many cases, the Palestinian government excluded civil society from participating in public policymaking or in drafting legislation (including decree-laws and executive regulations). The government did not demonstrate openness toward civil society during the preparation of legislation, especially those related to civic work.

The key change in this study, compared to the initial assessment conducted at the beginning of 2024, lies in the government's publication of the draft 2025 General Budget Law on the Ministry of Justice's legislation platform. This step allowed citizens to review the draft budget law and submit their feedback. Regarding the restrictive measures imposed on civil society organizations, their intensity has increased on the part of the Israeli occupation. Meanwhile, some donors reversed earlier decisions to suspend or reconsider funding for civil society institutions. As for restrictions on the right to assembly, they continued to be enforced by official authorities, though the severity and frequency of such restrictions have decreased.

12 MAS Institute. (2016). Impact Assessment Report of the Charitable Associations and Community Organizations Law No. (1) of 2000 and its Executive Regulations on the Performance of Associations. Retrieved from <https://n9.cl/ty9km9>, And AMAN Coalition, Legitimizing the requirement of Security Clearance through Secondary Legislation: A Deepening Violation of the Basic Law and Democratic Values. Retrieved from <https://n9.cl/dzr8ap>

13 Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR). (2025). Twenty-Eighth Annual Report 2024, p. 81. Ramallah, Palestine.

14 Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR). (2025). Thirtieth Annual Report 2024. Ramallah, Palestine. ICHR

15 See, Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2025). Public Budget Performance Report for the First Half of 2025 (p. 5). Ramallah, Palestine, Semi-Annual Public Budget Report 2025. (https://www.aman-palestine.org/cached_uploads/download/2025/11/20/simiannual2025-1763634467.pdf)

16 Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2025). Public Budget Performance Report for the First Half of 2025 (p. 19). Ramallah, Palestine, Semi-Annual Public Budget Report 2025. (https://www.aman-palestine.org/cached_uploads/download/2025/11/20/simiannual2025-1763634467.pdf)

II. Palestinian constitutional and legal framework governing the right to participate in making public policies and accountability for their implementation¹⁷:

1. The Amended Palestinian Basic Law of 2003 and other Palestinian legislations

The foundations of civil society's participation in public policymaking and accountability for its implementation are enshrined at several legal levels: foremost among these are the general provisions of the Constitution, which guarantees the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly the right to freedom of expression, the right of association, the right to access information, freedom of the press and publication, the existence of foundations and standards for holding officials accountable, and the existence of mechanisms for citizen participation in public policy-making. The Palestinian legislature has addressed these as follows:

- **Article 26 of the amended Basic Law of 2003** guarantees Palestinians, both as individuals and as groups, the right to participate in political life. In particular, they have the right to form and join political parties in accordance with the law, as well as to form trade unions, associations, federations, societies, clubs, and popular institutions in accordance with the law. They have the right to vote and stand for election to choose their representatives, who are elected by universal suffrage in accordance with the law. They may hold private meetings without the presence of police officers, and hold public meetings, processions, and gatherings within the limits of the law. Collectively, these principles constitute the foundations of citizens' participation in public life.

Furthermore, Article 69 of the Basic Law grants the government the authority to formulate general policy within the limits of its jurisdiction; however, it does not set limits that prevent civil society institutions from participating in this process.

- **Article 1 of the Charitable Associations and Civil Society Organizations Law No. (1) of 2000** affirmed the right to freely engage in social, cultural, and professional activities, including the formation and management of civil society and charitable associations¹⁸. However, it did not include explicit provisions regarding civil society's right to effectively participate in the preparation of national or sectoral development plans, its right to criticize public policies and exercise societal oversight over public institutions, or the duty of competent official authorities to respond to civil society's inquiries; nor did it prevent it from doing so.

- **Freedom of Expression and the Media:** The legal framework governing freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the registration and regulation of the media, comprises a number of laws that establish regulatory mechanisms. Article 19 of the Palestinian Basic Law states: "Freedom of opinion shall not be infringed upon, and every person has the right to express their opinion and disseminate it through speech, writing, or other means of expression."

The provision prohibiting censorship of the media is considered an indication of granting the media freedom of expression and accountability.

Article 39 of Decree-Law No. 10 of 2018 on Cybercrimes and its amendments contains restrictions on the civil sphere, as some of its provisions include vague language allowing for the blocking of

¹⁷ Since there were no developments in the legal and legislative framework governing the right to participate in public policymaking and accountability for its implementation in 2024 and 2025, the findings of the report in the link here were relied upon (Assessment of the Palestinian Civic Space: Participation in Shaping Public Policy and Implementation Accountability Pre-Assessment)

¹⁸ Article (1) of the Law on Charitable Associations and Community Organizations No. 1 of 2000.

websites, such as: (national security, public order, and public morals), in the event that websites hosted within or outside the country are found to contain any phrases, numbers, images, videos, or any promotional materials, or the like, that violate the aforementioned parameters. This type of vague language, along with other provisions in the decree-law, encourages self-censorship in the media, restricts freedom of expression, and undermines public accountability for officials' actions, particularly given the penalties stipulated in the decree-law.

- **The Right to Peaceful Assembly: Permitted by Law, Restricted by Regulation:** The Public Meetings Law No. (12) of 1998 regulates all matters related to the right to peaceful assembly. It requires assembly organizers to submit a notification to the governor or the police director specifying the location, time, and purpose of the assembly. The law allows the governor or the police director to set parameters regarding the duration and route of the assembly, provided that such measures do not infringe upon the right to peaceful assembly and peaceful meetings. In contrast to the law, the Executive Regulations of the Public Assemblies Law, issued by the Minister of Interior in 2000, impose numerous restrictions on the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly, particularly with respect to notification procedures and requirements, as well as the determination of the assembly's duration, timing, location, purpose, length, and route. The Executive Regulations further impose an additional restriction requiring marches to avoid areas of tension and that the purpose of the assembly does not conflict with the law or public order. They also grant the police director the authority to respond to an assembly or march notification by requesting a meeting with the organizers to discuss the purpose and subject of the assembly or march, as well as its location, timing, duration, route, and the requirement to comply with the Presidential Decree on consolidating national unity and preventing incitement. The expansive scope of restrictions imposed by the Executive Regulations constitutes a violation of the freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression, hence creating a significant barrier to the formation of civic movements and the realization of social accountability.

- **Legislation on the Right of Access to Information:** Although the Basic Law guarantees a range of fundamental freedoms, it does not provide for the regulation of the right of access to information and the right to seek and receive information, as enshrined in international treaties and instruments, notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. While the First Legislative Council incorporated the right of access to information into certain laws—such as the General Statistics Law and the Criminal Procedures Law, among others—it failed to enact a dedicated law governing access to information. Following the paralysis of the Second Legislative Council as a result of political division, and despite sustained demands from civil society to the government to adopt a decree-law on access to information, these efforts likewise proved unsuccessful. The absence of transparency and effective access to information hampers the ability of civil society organizations and other stakeholders to engage and participate meaningfully in the formulation of public policies and fails to create an enabling environment for the exercise of social accountability over the actions of public authorities and public officials.

The previous explanation indicates that Palestinian legislation contains no provisions prohibiting the government from engaging civil society in the formulation of public policies.

2. International Declarations and Covenants Ratified by the Palestinian National Authority

Since its establishment, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has adhered to several international declarations and covenants that guarantee citizens' right to participate in policy making and implementation accountability, most notably:

- Article 25 (a) of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** provides that every citizen shall have the right and opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions, to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives¹⁹.
- Article 7 (b) of the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** provides that women have the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policies²⁰.
- Article 29 (b) of the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** provides that State Parties shall actively promote an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and shall encourage their participation in public affairs²¹.
- Article 5 (1) of the **United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)** provides that each State Party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system, develop and implement or maintain effective coordinated and anti-corruption policies that promote the participation of society and reflect the principles of the rule of law, proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency, and accountability²².

19 United Nations. (1966). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

20 United Nations. (1979). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

21 United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities#29>

22 United Nations. (2003). United Nations Convention against Corruption. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50024_A.pdf

III. Public Government Policies Regulating the Right to Participate in Making Public Policies and Accountability for Their Implementation

In theory, the Palestinian government states in its official documents that it will engage civil society in the formulation of public policies. A review of the reference documents of the last three governments concerning the foundations of the relationship with citizens and civil society organizations, particularly with regard to partnership in policymaking and social accountability, shows the following:

1- The policy of the Seventeenth Government, as set in the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022²³, articulated the national vision of “an open government with effective institutions that are responsive to the needs of its citizens”: The Agenda included the fourth national priority “Citizen-Responsive Government”, which refers to the establishment of public institutions whose structure and implementation of public policies are centered on citizens and focused on delivering the best services to them. It also includes the fifth national priority, “Effective Government,” which emphasizes enhancing accountability and transparency and implementing effective and efficient procedures in the management of public funds.

The ninth national policy, “Enhancing Accountability and Transparency,” further clarified that accountability entails the obligation of the executive authority to be subject to oversight by the legislative and judicial authorities, as well as the obligation of public officials to be accountable to citizens for their performance in implementing policies and delivering services that respond to the needs of society as a whole. Transparency, in turn, means that government decisions and actions are not taken behind closed doors, and that citizens’ ability to access information is facilitated, without unjustified restrictions on their right to obtain it.

Within the context of government policies, the Palestinian Ministry of Justice issued the Public Consultations Guide in June 2018, which was intended to lay the foundation for a process of community participation in the formulation of public policies.

2. The policy of the Eighteenth Government, as set in the Public Policy Document of the Palestinian Government 2021-2023²⁴

The document indicated that the government’s approach is based on partnership. In the introduction to the document, the Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, stated that the “Government of All Palestinians” continues its commitment to strengthening trust between the government and citizens on the basis of partnership, consultation, and the integration of responsibilities.

The document additionally noted that, over the three years of the plan, the government seeks to strengthen partnerships with all non governmental partners in order to enhance and develop the services it provides to citizens in all places where they are present, including the civil society sector, universities, and the private sector.

The document also indicated, under the eighth policy, that improving the level of public services provided to citizens would be achieved through strengthening partnerships and integration in service delivery with non governmental organizations and the private sector. In Public Policy No. 21, on Youth Empowerment, the document referred to a set of youth-related

²³ The Seventeenth Government. December 2016. Public Policy Agenda: “Citizen First”. National Policy Agenda .pdf

²⁴ Office of the Prime Minister. (2021). Public policies 2021–2023. <https://n9.cl/zecg3>

policies, including enhancing youth participation in public life and decision making. The document further stipulated policy interventions aimed at removing all barriers that hinder the full participation of women in social and economic development and public life.

As for the Reform Agenda issued by the Council of Ministers on 15 April 2022²⁵, it likewise emphasized that the role of civil society organizations should be viewed through a complementary and partnership based lens in achieving development. These organizations should not be regarded as competitors; rather, efforts should focus on ensuring their sustainability, avoiding their weakening or restriction, unleashing their potential, activating systems of transparency and disclosure, and affirming the government's role in objective evaluation and oversight to ensure complementarity and coordination with them, benefit from their expertise in policy making and government initiatives, and mobilize societal support for these initiatives. The agenda further indicated that, in order to move beyond differing views regarding the role of civil society organizations, the government's principal challenge lies in establishing an institutionalized consultation process with this sector. This process aims to complete the development of the legal framework regulating its work in all its components, create enabling conditions for these organizations to fulfill their role in an environment characterized by openness, partnership, complementarity, and oversight, and empower them to operate in a democratic environment that allows for regular elections and the submission of administrative and financial reports as a requirement for understanding the nature of their programs, activities, sustainability, and licensing. The agenda also emphasized that the government's oversight role is intrinsically linked to the reciprocal role of civil society organizations in monitoring and evaluating government performance and the effectiveness of its policies, in pursuit of the national interest, without regard to any other considerations whatsoever. Accordingly, the government set out, within this Reform Agenda, a number of commitments to achieve the above, including: ensuring alignment and complementarity between the programs of non governmental and civil society organizations and government action plans; establishing a sustainable framework for dialogue with civil society organizations that enables the updating of legislation governing their work; and ensuring that each government entity maintains dialogue with representatives of the sector it oversees, among other measures²⁶.

3. The policy of the Nineteenth Government, as set out in its government program and strategic documents

The Prime Minister of the Nineteenth Government indicated, in the government program submitted to President Mahmoud Abbas, positive orientations toward partnership with civil society. He noted that, in light of the difficult conditions and the significant challenges under which the government is carrying out its work, the government will implement its program in partnership with the private sector, civil society, and local authorities. He further referred to the principle of partnership with civil society organizations across more than one sector, including institutional reform, combating corruption, strengthening citizens' resilience, and supporting their presence in marginalized areas²⁷.

The National Program for Development and Reform 2025–2026²⁸ states, under Pillar Two: Governance and the Rule of Law, specifically Section 1–2: Promoting a Culture of Transparency, Accountability, and Integrity, the adoption of an action plan to implement the National Strategy for Enhancing Governance and Combating Corruption 2025–2030. This action plan is intended to provide a framework for coordinating sectoral policies, strengthening cooperation among sectors of society, including the public and private sectors, and civil society. It also focuses on enforcing anti-corruption

25 Palestinian Council of Ministers. (2022, April 15). Reform Agenda. Retrieved from <https://n9.cl/mg5bn>

26 Palestinian Council of Ministers. (2022). Reform Agenda

27 Palestinian News and Information Agency (Wafa). (2024, March 28). (President Abbas Approves lineup of new government chaired by Mohammad Mustafa)The Prime Minister designate presents the government's work program and lineup to the President to obtain confidence. <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/142819>

28 Unpublished document.

laws, ensuring adequate resources, establishing robust monitoring mechanisms, and enhancing institutional capacities, with the aim of ensuring the effective implementation of the national strategy's objectives and promoting a culture of transparency, accountability, and integrity.

The document **Palestine Unified: Institutional and Economic Transformation – Laying the Foundations for the Realization of the Independent Palestinian State**²⁹ also stated, under Pillar Two – Institutional Reform and Transformation, that institutional reform is essential to ensure an effective and efficient government, to improve the services provided to citizens, create a business environment focused on growth, and enhance citizens' trust in public institutions. The reform process also aims to create greater space for civil society organizations and empower them to engage and partner with the government in identifying key reform priorities and monitoring their implementation. Accordingly, the document emphasized that there would be full consultation and participation with civil society, noting that the ministerial task force has already met with civil society organizations and agreed that these organizations, collectively, would prepare their vision for reforms to be discussed with the ministerial task force. In the core areas of reform, the document indicated that:

- **Enhancing governance, transparency, accountability, and combating corruption at all levels of government:** The objective is to adopt a zero tolerance approach to corruption and to commit to strengthening governance across all levels of government. Key reforms will include empowering and guaranteeing the full independence of the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau and the Anti Corruption Commission, strengthening the legal framework, enhancing transparency and accountability in public procurement, ensuring that public officials adhere to the highest ethical standards, and strengthening partnerships with civil society, the media, and the private sector to expose and combat corruption at all levels.
- **Public financial management reform:** The overarching objective of public financial management reform is to ensure accountability for public resources, effective oversight, efficiency, and legitimacy in the collection and use of public funds. To this end, the government will work to rationalize the public sector wage bill to increase efficiency and reduce budgetary pressures, including through the streamlining of the civil service and public institutions. Full transparency of government financial operations will also be ensured, including the comprehensive publication of budget allocations and public expenditures.

The policy documents issued by the Nineteenth Government indicate a discursive shift at the level of policy language in the understanding of partnership with civil society organizations. This shift reflects a move away from a framework that viewed civil society primarily as an instrument for delivering government services and, at times, questioned its integrity, as reflected in the policy document of the Eighteenth Government. Indeed, this document emphasized “strengthening partnerships with all non-governmental partners to enhance and develop the services provided to citizens wherever they are,” and in the 2022 Reform Document, which stressed “affirming the government’s role in objective evaluation and oversight of civil society organizations to ensure complementarity and coordination to benefit from their expertise.” This approach has evolved toward explicit recognition and openness to partnership with civil society organizations, as articulated in the document **Palestine Unified: Institutional and Economic Transformation – Laying the Foundations for the Realization of the Independent Palestinian State**, which states that “the reform process also aims to create greater space for civil society organizations and empower them to engage and partner with the government in identifying key reform priorities and monitoring their implementation. Accordingly, there will be full consultation and partnership with civil society.”

29 Unpublished document.

IV. The Reality of Community Participation in Public Policymaking

1- Access to Information and the Extent of Transparency in the Publication of Data and Information

Access to information in the Palestinian Context remains, in practice, one of the major challenges facing civil society actors. This is primarily due to the absence of a law regulating the right to access information and the lack of an adopted policy within the Palestinian government and official institutions governing information disclosure. Assessing access to information in relation to participation in public policy making, therefore, requires examining whether the relevant official bodies provide adequate safeguards to enable meaningful participation. Such safeguards include the disclosure of plans and policy documents intended for adoption through easily accessible means, the guarantee of the public's right to access information at all stages of the public policy making process, (including drafts, justifications, comments, and plans, etc.), and the publication of draft public policy plans and agendas accompanied by clear, concise, and comprehensive information.

Many civil society representatives have indicated that access to information remains one of the most significant challenges they face in their work, primarily due to the absence of a law regulating the right of access to information. Dr. Omar Rahhal, Director General of the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center "SHAMS," explained that, to date, no law on the right to access information has been enacted in Palestine, and that the information received by civil society organizations often depends on personal relationships or limited sources, making it partial and sporadic. He noted that while there is sometimes discussion and a degree of openness regarding laws, draft laws, or decree-laws, comprehensive information on plans is generally not provided, and where information exists, it is often fragmented. However, an integrated and transparent process that engages civil society from the initial idea, through discussion, to feedback, and final drafting, does not exist³⁰.

Dr. Ammar Al-Dweik, Director General of the Independent Commission for Human Rights, explained that there is no constant and approved disclosure policy across all official institutions. However, when it comes to the disclosure of information, draft laws or bills, some ministries are more open than others. This usually depends on the ministers, as some are more open than others, and on the nature of the topic under discussion. Some issues are shared with civil society, while others are not disclosed. For example, a draft of the local authorities' election law was published on the Ministry of Justice Platform, but the approved draft included additional provisions that had not been shared. In general, I can say that 'Dr. Mohammad Mustapha's government has a generally positive view of civil society and more acceptance of its role. It takes more initiative to engage and partner with civil society, but these efforts have not produced any core change in the public administration approach.'³¹

The inconsistency in making documents available or disclosing them is not limited to the type of document alone; it is also linked to the government in office and the officials leading it. Some governments have demonstrated relatively greater openness than others in publishing and providing information

30 Omar Rahhal, Director General of the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center (SHAMS), personal interview by the author, November 29, 2025.

31 Ammar Al-Dweik, Director General of the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), personal interview by the author, December 15, 2025

Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayyeh, Legal Advisor at Al Haq-Law in the Service of Man, confirmed that there has been no substantive change in the reality of access to information over the past two years. He noted that the main development in this area has been the launch of a “legislation platform” on the Ministry of Justice’s website; however, some legislation is issued without being published on the platform. He also explained that certain perspectives within the political system attempt to address reform through different tools and acknowledge that transparency with society and citizens should have a place. These issues, therefore, remain policy orientations rather than components of a comprehensive political system, reflecting attempts to create limited space to suggest that reform of the existing reality is possible. By contrast, access to all information remains unavailable, although some institutions publish information on their websites and share certain plans with civil society. For example, the protection sector linked to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development shares the national plan as well as sectoral and cross sectoral plans, and the Ministry of Justice occasionally engages civil society on specific issues.

He was also asked whether civil society’s participation in these plans is genuinely available, whether in terms of access to information sources, the methodology used to generate information, or involvement in developing the plans and the indicators on which they are based. In his view, there are attempts in this direction within the broader context, but they remain incomplete, and access to information remains non systematic. He noted that a law on the right of access to information has not yet been enacted; however, discussions have resumed regarding the submission of comments on a draft law after it was placed on the legislation platform. He emphasized the principle of proactive disclosure, which requires official bodies to publish information that affects the public interest without waiting for public requests. Overall, access to information remains partial and incomplete and does not follow a clear methodology. For example, recent decree laws related to the judiciary, which concern amendments to the Judicial Authority Law regarding the powers of judges investigating other judges and referrals to the disciplinary council, were not subject to public consultation and were not published on the legislation platform³².

Mr. Ahmad Al Heijawi, Director of the Advisory Body for the Development of Non Governmental Organizations, indicated that publication and disclosure have not seen any real improvement compared to previous years. However, there are certain forms of participation with civil society in some policies and decisions. In some cases, participation takes place at early stages, in others at near final stages, and sometimes only after a draft has already been completed and is presented for feedback. This practice varies from one ministry to another and from one institution to another, and at times depends on individuals. The government tends to publish what it chooses to include in its plans, but the level of full and integrated participation that could lead to genuine partnership remains significantly lacking. At times, certain laws, procedures, or policies are issued without prior knowledge. Overall, it can be said that disclosure does not meet the level required to support a partnership between official institutions and civil society. For example, although consultations were held with civil society on the Local Authorities Elections Law and several key inputs were incorporated, new provisions were introduced at the final stage by unidentified actors for unclear purposes, undermining the integrity of the participation and disclosure process³³.

32 Ashraf Abu Hayyeh, Legal Advisor at Al Haq-Law in the Service of Man, personal interview by the author, November 29, 2025.

33 Ahmad Al Heijawi, Director of the Palestinian Consultative Commission (PCC) for the Development of Non Governmental Organizations, personal interview conducted by the author via Zoom, December 6, 2025.

Although limited access to information related to policymaking remains a widespread practice, there are some exceptions among certain ministries and institutions, such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Anti Corruption Commission. Each of these bodies shares draft strategic plans with relevant sectors and, in some cases, publishes them for public input, as is done by the Anti Corruption Commission to allow citizens to enrich the content. This is carried out either through the Commission's official website or by circulating the drafts via email. In addition, the Commission demonstrates a commitment to disclosure by publishing its annual and monthly reports, the national cross sectoral strategic plan, as well as studies and fact sheets, through its official website³⁴.

Despite the Ministry of Justice launching the "Electronic Platform for Public Consultations" in late 2024 as a tool for community consultations that enables citizens and civil society organizations to participate in the process of drafting and formulating legislation and policies prior to their adoption, the platform does not cover legislation issued directly by the President's Office without being prepared or submitted by the government³⁵. For example, in 2025, the Palestinian President issued 25 decree laws, five of which related to granting confidence to ministers and ratifying bilateral and international agreements. Of the remaining twenty decree laws, public discussion and societal consultation took place, through various means, for only three: the decree laws on the election of local authorities, electronic commerce, and competition. The remaining seventeen decree laws were issued without public discussion and without being published on the legislation platform or being subjected to previous consultation mechanisms³⁶.

The challenges related to the publication of information, the lack of its institutionalization, and its dependence on the individual convictions and orientations of officials cannot be resolved in the absence of a binding legal framework regulating information or an adopted government policy that obliges all public-sector officials to comply with uniform standards of disclosure.

2- Institutionalization of Partnership

The institutionalization of participation between official bodies and civil society is usually achieved when the government's willingness to involve civil society organizations evolves into genuine political will. This occurs when the orientations reflected in government documents, such as the government program and strategic plans, are translated into sustainable mechanisms that transcend individual governments, whether through the adoption of a partnership document or white paper that clarifies the foundations and mechanisms of partnership, or through the activation of clear and permanent channels of communication³⁷.

Translating political will into the institutionalization of this partnership requires the establishment of a permanent central structure, whether at the national or sectoral level, tasked with ensuring the continuity of the relationship between civil society and official bodies. This can also be achieved by official institutions forming boards of directors or advisory councils for public institutions or authorities that include government officials and representatives of civil society, with a mandate to monitor the implementation of public policies. Alternatively, temporary or permanent committees

34 Palestinian Anti Corruption Commission, response to inquiries, December 28, 2025.

35 Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN). (2024). Seventeenth annual report on the state of integrity and combating corruption in Palestine. Ramallah, Palestine, p. 39.

36 Palestinian Official Gazette (Al Waqa'i' Al Filastiniyya). (2025). Issues No. 222-232, issued between February 10, 2025 and November 27, 2025.

37 International Center for Not for Profit Law. (2009). Models to promote cooperation between civil society and public authorities (pp. 4-5). Retrieved from: https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/cfr_Models-to-Promote-Cooperation-Working-Paper.pdf

may be established, including civil society representatives, as part of public policy implementation, as needed. To facilitate this institutionalization, the relevant official bodies allocate financial resources to meet the requirements of civil society participation in public policymaking, including meetings, open consultations, and the preparation of joint studies.

It is worth noting that there are numerous international models for institutionalizing civil society participation within official bodies. These include, for example, the arrangements adopted in economic and social councils, which represent various professional groups, as well as the establishment of national media councils, election oversight committees, and the participation of representatives of professional groups in certain courts and judicial or administrative committees. In addition, there are forms of civil society participation in the establishment of advisory committees within some ministries, the formation of anti corruption committees, or the appointment of an ombudsperson³⁸.

The Nineteenth Government attached particular importance to the role of civil society as a partner in policy making. In its first session, held on April 2, 2024, the Council of Ministers decided to task heads of government departments, each within their respective mandate, with holding regular meetings with civil society organizations to discuss shared issues, in a manner that serves government programs and objectives and the public interest, and to establish effective and sustainable mechanisms for communication with them³⁹.

The National Program for Development and Advancement 2025–2026⁴⁰ introduced the term strengthening cooperation among sectors of society (the public sector, the private sector, and civil society). The document Palestine Unified: Institutional and Economic Transformation – Laying the Foundations for the Realization of the Independent Palestinian State⁴¹ stated that “the reform process also aims to create greater space for civil society organizations and to empower them to engage and partner with the government in identifying key reform priorities and monitoring their implementation. Accordingly, there will be full consultation and participation with civil society, as the ministerial task force has already met with civil society organizations and agreed that civil society organizations, collectively, would prepare their vision for reforms to be discussed with the ministerial task force.” Within the framework of improving governance, transparency, accountability, and combating corruption at all levels of government, the document also referred to “strengthening partnerships with civil society, the media, and the private sector to expose and confront corruption at all levels.” But in practice,

“The General Directorate of Gender Mainstreaming Networks at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs is divided into four departments, one of which is responsible for communication with civil society. The role of this department is to invite civil society organizations to participate whenever we organize workshops, studies, meetings, consultations, plans, or similar activities. We consider civil society organizations to be our partners. All of our strategic plans are developed with them, through consultation and engagement across all sectors.”

Sami Suhweil, Director General of Planning and Policies, and Ayat Al Faqih, Director of the Gender Equality Department at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, personal interview by the author, December 8, 2025.

38 Atteyyat, I. (2009). Legal frameworks regulating civil society participation in decision making (Background paper). Expert Group Meeting convened by ESCWA to discuss the guide on enhancing participation between governments and civil society organizations in public policy processes, Beirut.
39 See: Decisions of the Council of Ministers.

40 Unpublished document

41 Unpublished document

It is evident from the foregoing that there are no permanent mechanisms, centralized administrative units, or official sector level structures in place to facilitate civil society participation in the policy making process, despite the establishment of some temporary advisory committees or a dedicated unit within the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

On the other hand, the Executive Director of MIFTAH indicated that the relationship between official bodies and civil society is driven by international obligations rather than by a national vision or locally grounded Palestinian political will. She described this relationship as seasonal and dependent on the prevailing general attitude toward civil society, as well as on the personality and background of the minister in office. When a minister has experience working in the civil society field, the relationship tends to be strengthened, and vice versa. As such, the relationship remains far from being institutionalized⁴².

For her part, Ms. Lana Al Bunduq from QADER for Community Development affirmed the existence of some partnerships. She noted that the Ministry of Social Development formed a thematic working group on the issue of persons with disabilities, which held three meetings over the past two years, with increased attention involving not only Palestinian civil society organizations but also United Nations institutions. She also referred to the establishment of a national committee formed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs concerning the referral system, the unified procedures system, and high risk cases. She explained that, within government institutions, participation is often driven by their need for civil society organizations, given that much of the developmental work takes place within civil society. However, she observed that there has been some progress under the Nineteenth Government. For example, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been active in organizing consultations with civil society on women's issues, including plans and draft laws. Nevertheless, these partnerships continue to occur largely in a formalistic and symbolic manner, rather than in a genuinely developmental way that is meaningfully taken into account by officials and decision-makers⁴³.

Ms. Sahar Al Qawasmeh, Director of Adwar for Social Change, added: "I do not see any institutionalization of the relationship, nor a political framework or background governing the relationship between the governing authorities and civil society organizations. In general, it depends on the personal dispositions of individuals and on personal assessments and trust, rather than on clear foundations, references, or policies that oblige the Palestinian government to engage with civil society."⁴⁴

Dr. Ammar Al Dweik observes an improvement in the area of openness toward civil society and its inclusion in meetings, policies, and committees, as well as a clear commitment on the part of the nineteenth government to engaging civil society. There is also a greater awareness of the importance of civil society and its representation in the formulation of policies, plans, and other matters compared with previous governments. However, this does not rise to the level of full institutionalization of the process. In addition, the core problem of the political system lies in the multiplicity of authorities that control decision making while the government takes a certain action, other bodies intervene to change or amend it,⁴⁵ as occurred with the decree-law on the election of local authorities' councils.

42 Tahrir Al A'raj, Executive Director of MIFTAH (the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy), personal interview by the author, December 2, 2025.

43 Lana Al Bandak, Director General of QADER for Community Development, personal interview conducted by the author via Zoom, November 29, 2025.

44 Personal interview with Sahar Al Qawasmeh, Executive Director of Adwar for Social Change, conducted by the author via Zoom on December 4, 2025.

45 Personal interview with Dr. Ammar Al-Dweik, previously cited communication.

Mr. Ahmad Al Hijjawi stresses that the relationship between the government and civil society exists only partially and on an as needed basis. Ministries such as the Ministry of Social Development maintain ongoing relations with the associations they license, whereas the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education engage selectively. The Ministry of Local Government engages only partially, and primarily with institutions affiliated with municipalities. The government and ministries do not allocate budgetary resources for conducting studies; such studies are therefore carried out either by civil society organizations (CSOs) or through external donor funding, such as UNDP and other institutions. Moreover, some ministries view CSOs through a utilitarian lens: organizations that provide service delivery rather than entities with which the government can form partnerships or engage more frequently in policy formulation and advocacy⁴⁶.

Several successful partnership models have emerged, although they do not necessarily aim at policy development but rather at participation or seeking input on specific issues or events. Examples include the advisory councils established at the governorate level, which include representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs). However, their effectiveness in consultation and planning depends on the governor's personal conviction: they are activated when the official is open to civil society engagement, and the opposite holds true otherwise. The same applies to the Advisory Board of the Anti-Corruption Commission⁴⁷, as well as participation in the boards of directors of public institutions that include civil society representatives, such as professional associations or federations, including those in the food industries and chambers of commerce, among others.

3- Active Participation Through Dialogue

Active participation requires political will that includes a positive view of civil society on the part of official authorities, recognizing it as an integral part of the state and a voice for citizens, particularly in the absence of a legislative body such as a "parliament." It also means considering civil society a partner in sustainable development, contributing to the formulation of public policies at all stages of the decision-making process, from setting the agenda and determining priorities, through the formulation of public policy, to decisions related to implementation and evaluation. This requires the presence of a set of prerequisites as follows: (1) A commitment by the relevant official authorities in cases where the participatory process cannot be fully completed—such as during disasters, conflicts, and wars—to ensure a minimum level of participation, including announcing policy directions, publishing related drafts for public review, and setting a timeframe for providing feedback and comments. (2) Demonstrating cooperation with civil society to participate in all stages of the public policy-making process, including agenda-setting, issue identification, drafting, decision-making, and implementation. (3) Allowing civil society actors to form advocacy and lobbying groups while participating in public policymaking. (4) Responding to civil society's feedback and observations regarding draft public policies or proposed policy documents; and finally, (5) Official bodies providing feedback on the final version of public policies following consultations and dialogues with civil society.

Regarding relevant authorities' call for civil society, in all its forms, to submit their views and comments on documents related to public policy, many representatives of civil society organizations interviewed during the preparation of this study noted that the government does not invite them to submit their views, specifically when the subject pertains to policies with judicial implications, the security apparatus, state institutions, or those related to freedoms, such as decree-laws concerning publications. Mr. Helmi Al-Araj, Director of the Center for the Defense of Freedoms and Civil Rights⁴⁸,

46 Personal interview with Mr. Ahmad Al-Hijawi, Previously cited communication

47 Anti-Corruption Commission. December 28, 2025. Response to inquiries

48 Personal interview with Mr. Helmi Al Araj, Director of the Center for the Defense of Freedoms and Civil Rights, conducted by the researcher on November 30, 2025.

confirmed that consultations are few and far between. For instance, regarding the presidential decree repealing the Law on Prisoners and Released Prisoners and treating prisoners, martyrs, and the wounded as social cases, as well as changes to school curricula, civil society organizations were not consulted. In this context, Mr. Ahmed Al-Hijawi⁴⁹ noted that a distinction must be made between certain service ministries, which are open government agencies, and many other agencies—such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Office of the President—which are effectively difficult to engage with, as they are not open to civil society or are largely closed off to it.

Dr. Tahrir Al Araj,⁵⁰ for her part, argues that the issuance of “sudden” presidential decrees in the absence of consultation often sparks public controversy and deprives society of opportunities for participation or consultation in the formulation of Palestinian policies and legislation. She attributes this to the absence of a parliament, noting that “this does not build policy; rather, it produces reactions. It does not build partnership, nor does it establish genuine consultation. Instead, it runs counter to our role as civil society and undermines the democratic way of life that should exist.”

Mr. Amjad Al Shawa adds that some draft decree-laws are circulated in preliminary form and become the subject of public debate aimed at rejecting them; because stakeholders are concerned with opposing them, they are leaked. In other cases, a limited timeframe is granted for discussion, while in still other instances, a decree-law is issued without any consultation at all. At times, as occurred, for example, with the decision by law on the election of local authorities’ councils, discussion does take place, but the law is issued with added political commitments that generate confusion after its promulgation and prompt calls for its repeal⁵¹.

The General Budget Law for fiscal year 2025 was issued on March 31, 2025 – three months into the new year – and in a bridged form, without the inclusion of any detailed line items. This significantly weakened the ability of civil society organizations to analyze and scrutinize the data and undermined the accountability mechanisms they rely upon⁵². However, it is worth noting that, for the first time, the draft General Budget Law for 2025 was published on the Ministry of Justice’s legislation platform. The Ministry of Finance also presented and discussed the draft law with a number of representatives of civil society organizations, and the opportunity was provided to submit comments on the draft through the platform; nevertheless, only one week was allotted for the submission of such comments⁵³.

49 Ahmad Al-Hijawi. Personal Interview. Previously cited communication.

50 Dr. Tahreer Al-Araj. Persona Interview. Previously cited communication.

51 An interview conducted by the researcher with Mr. Amjad Al-Shawa, Coordinator of the NGO Network, on 4/12/2025.

52 See General Budget Law for Fiscal Year 2025 (Decree Law No. 8 of 2025, State of Palestine), available at <https://mjr.ogb.gov.ps/Decrees/Download/?p=9f9427fa-9da6-4229-9939-a137ec9e1e18.pdf>

53 See Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2025). General budget performance report for the first half of 2025 (p. 5). Ramallah, Palestine. Available at: [simiannual2025ar-1763634467.pdf](https://www.aman.org.ps/simiannual2025ar-1763634467.pdf)

Role Model

It is worth noting certain exceptional models, such as the participation of women's organizations at all stages of the Ministry of Women's Affairs' Strategic Plan for 2025–2027. In this process, the Ministry of Women's Affairs conducted an analysis of priorities and gaps in accordance with a three phase methodology: (1) public discussion workshops; (2) focus group sessions; and (3) requesting partner institutions to submit their feedback within a period of 10–15 days in order to carry out the analysis using multiple methods, including statistical tables and thematic classifications. On one occasion only, selection by voting was used within the focus groups. Following the preparation of the first draft, it was then circulated back to the organizations to solicit their responses⁵⁴.

The interviews revealed that official bodies tend to demonstrate greater openness at the level of sectoral policies. The Director of Adwar for Social Change affirmed that the Ministry of Women's Affairs involves the organization in providing input on most relevant official documents and allows adequate time for review. This was similarly confirmed by the Director of the Hurriyat Center and the Director of SHAMS Center regarding the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and the Anti Corruption Commission. The Director of QADER Organization also noted that the Ministry of Women's Affairs shows a good level of cooperation with the organization in the development of certain public policies, by sharing draft policies for comment and subsequently providing feedback on which of the organization's proposals were taken into account. In the same vein, Ms. Sahar Al Qawasmeh indicated that official bodies have increasingly begun to approach Adwar directly, inviting it to participate in policymaking processes within its area of expertise, based on the organization's demonstrated capacity to engage and communicate with grassroots institutions that are distant from the center of decision making⁵⁵.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has an advisory board with membership from civil society representatives. ACC also applies a participatory approach and invites civil society organizations to participate in the preparation of its successive strategies, law amendments, and studies. The Board also benefits from membership of the Transparency Committee derived from the National Team for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16⁵⁶.

As for the readiness of official bodies to cooperate with civil society in engaging across all stages of public policymaking, the views expressed by interviewees clearly indicate that such a partnership is largely limited to discussing policy documents after the competent authority has already prepared an initial draft. This occurs without meaningful partnership during the agenda setting phase, the identification of priorities, or the development of indicators, among other stages. On the contrary, civil society organizations are often taken by surprise by the issuance of decisions by law without prior consultation or participation, as occurred with the amendment of the Public Debt Law, the Law of the Office of the Presidency, the Law of the Tamkeen Foundation, the State Lands Law, and the Publications and Publishing Law, in addition to the issuance of a special law governing the Arab Project Association.

⁵⁴ Personal interview with Mr. Sami Sahweil, Director General of Planning and Policies, and Ms. Ayat Al Faqih, Head of the Gender Equality Unit at the Ministry of Women's Affairs, conducted by the author on December 8, 2025.

⁵⁵ Dr. Sahal Al-Qawasmeh. Personal interview with the author. Previously cited reference.

⁵⁶ Palestinian Anti Corruption Commission. (2025). National cross sectoral strategy for promoting governance and combating corruption, 2025–2030. Available at

The limited approach to participation in public policy formulation is not confined to ordinary circumstances but also extends to the development of plans in emergencies, natural disasters, or war. Many interviewees confirmed that such policies are developed without the participation of civil society, despite the critical importance of civil society organizations as relief, service delivery, and specialized actors. In this context, Mr. Amjad Al Shawa explained that civil society in Gaza raised questions

Government directions are not reflected at the level of decision-making, although executive bodies genuinely believe that partnership with civil society constitutes a national interest.

Personal interview with Asharf Abu Hayyeh, Legal Counsel at Al-Haq -Law in the Service of Man, conducted by the author. November 29, 2025

with the Minister of Planning prior to his resignation regarding reconstruction plans for the Gaza Strip, particularly the participation of Gaza, with its various sectors, institutions, and orientations, in shaping a plan that directly affects Gaza and that should, in principle, originate there. Although the minister described the idea as positive, sustained pressure resulted only in a one-hour session that brought together all sectors and presented broad outlines that did not reflect genuine consultation, followed by a prolonged interruption, after which the government plan was sent to Egypt, developed into an Egyptian plan, and later transformed into an Arab plan. Al Shawa further noted that, only a week earlier, the United Nations Development Programme conducted consultations with civil society on a Gaza recovery plan, bringing together civil society organizations and the private sector separately, forming working groups, presenting general directions, and holding an evaluation session, but he described this process as largely procedural, resembling a checklist rather than substantive consultation. He emphasized that the core problem lies in the government's philosophy toward sectoral planning, namely whether a plan is conceived as a ministry plan or as a sector wide plan, since the latter should reflect collective expression and broad participation, and he added that ministries seek to exercise oversight and supervision over civil society organizations without a corresponding understanding of the legitimate oversight role that civil society should play vis à vis the ministries⁵⁷.

In general, despite the developments witnessed over the past two years, civil society organizations continue to hold an experience based perception that the participation promoted by the competent authorities remains largely formal and lacking real impact. This stands in contrast to sectoral policies, where some ministries have demonstrated a degree of openness to incorporating civil society input, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and the Anti Corruption Commission. Representatives of civil society organizations attributed this openness primarily to the individual officials leading these ministries, who demonstrate an understanding of the role of civil society.

Mr. Ahmad Al Hijawi pointed to an improvement in the relationship between some human rights organizations and the Ministry of Interior in recent years, including the streamlining of certain procedures, as evidenced by institutions such as the Hurriyat Center and the Independent Commission for Human Rights. All civil society interviewees indicated that participation at the level of the central government remains limited to the stage following the drafting of policy documents, with most engagement ending at that point. Official bodies do not provide participants with meeting minutes or feedback indicating which of their proposals were adopted and which were rejected. In this regard, Ashraf Abu Hayyeh stated that⁵⁸,

57 Personal Interview with Mr. Amjad Al-Shawwa. Previously cited source

58 Personal interview with Mr. Asharf Abu Hayyeh. Previously cited source

for example, in the case of the Law on the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture, the Ministry of Interior launched national consultations attended by most civil society organizations, and the Ministry adopted the recommendations of the Anti Torture Committee to work on them. A draft decision by law on the National Preventive Mechanism was developed through the involvement of all parties; however, when the law was issued, it differed from what had been agreed upon. He added that there is a significant gap between the higher levels of governance and the executive level, linked to two main factors. First, there is a political level concerned with advancing the state, institutions, and international obligations enshrined in conventions, yet this vision and orientation have not been reflected at the executive level, which remains traditionally entrenched in narrow conceptions of the role and authority of the public servant. Second, many public servants hold preconceived views of civil society, reinforcing a defensive and dismissive stance toward anything originating from civil society organizations. This perception continues to be reinforced and is evident in many committees, where civil society actors are often viewed as having external agendas or as political opponents of the system. To date, government orientations at the level of decision-makers have not been translated into executive mechanisms that recognize partnership with civil society as a national interest.

Regarding cases in which the government may respond to civil society priorities, the Director of ADWAR for Social Change indicated that official bodies usually show greater responsiveness when organizations maintain connections with grassroots institutions classified as operating in Area C, where access is difficult for government entities. In other instances, civil society representatives noted that the government sometimes responds when an issue evolves into a matter of public opinion or when pressure groups are formed by civil society organizations, as occurred in the case of the decision by law concerning the granting of ministerial pensions to those holding the rank of minister, albeit without implementing civil society organizations' demands to repeal the law.

4- Public Policies' Implementation and Assessment of their Outcomes:

Civil society assumes a partnership role with the competent authorities not only in public policy formulation and priority setting, but also in implementation and in evaluating outcomes, as a basis for holding official bodies accountable for performance and compliance. Effective participation in policymaking, therefore, requires that official institutions enable civil society organizations to act as partners in implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and, where necessary, the revision of plans. This, in turn, requires several enabling conditions, including the joint implementation of public policies with civil society, particularly in areas that fall within its mandate and capacity, especially in development, humanitarian relief, service delivery such as education, health, social services, anti corruption, and awareness raising. It also entails developing periodic follow up plans in partnership to ensure implementation and achievement of objectives based on public policy documents, while allowing civil society to monitor public activities through accountability mechanisms such as media engagement and public hearings. In addition, competent authorities should respond to civil society feedback during the implementation phase, introduce regular adjustments to their plans, and engage with shadow reports submitted by civil society assessing public policies across different sectors.

Through the interviews conducted with civil society representatives in the context of this study, it became evident that official bodies involve some civil society organizations in the implementation of certain public policies, particularly service oriented policies that entail financial implications, such as those related to persons with disabilities, marginalized groups, or capacity building sectors. Beyond these areas, however, there are no genuine partnerships in implementation. Mr. Ahmad Al Hijawi noted that there is a form of partial responsiveness, in the sense that when a report, observations, or a complaint are submitted, follow up may occur and a response may be provided, but without any guarantee that this will lead to sustained change or binding commitment. He added that this

responsiveness is selective and personal, as it depends on the individual official and the extent of their openness to civil society, which in turn strengthens the relationship and increases responsiveness. Regarding service provision, he explained that the government perceives a need for civil society organizations to deliver services, which leads to greater openness in engaging with them in this domain⁵⁹.

As for follow up, there are no agreed upon plans between official bodies and civil society organizations to monitor policy implementation on the one hand, and there is weak transparency of official information and limited effectiveness of formal oversight institutions with mandates for accountability on the other. With the exception of a small number of institutions that demonstrate openness toward civil society and respond to its follow up efforts, such as the Anti Corruption Commission, which together with its civil society partners adopted an executive program for 2025–2030 to implement the National Cross Sectoral Strategy for Promoting Integrity and Combating Corruption and carried it out jointly, civil society is generally excluded from monitoring and evaluation processes. By way of example, Mr. Ashraf Abu Hayya noted, “As Al Haq, we are actively involved in the components of the justice sector plan, yet we were not invited to conduct a systematic evaluation of its implementation.”⁶⁰

With regard to shadow reports submitted by civil society on the implementation of public policies by the competent authorities—an international obligation that involves reporting to international mechanisms—there is near unanimity among the organizations submitting these reports that official bodies formally acknowledge the recommendations and express receptiveness to their implementation. This is particularly evident with respect to recommendations aimed at reforming certain policies. However, as a general rule, official authorities are far less receptive to recommendations that entail financial implications or that touch upon socially sensitive, religious, or security related obligations, and they often demonstrate reluctance to implement such recommendations⁶¹.

Based on the interviews with civil society organizations, government practice appears to have largely remained unchanged, with limited developments confined mainly to greater openness in discussing documents such as strategic plans and draft legislation after they have been prepared in preliminary form by the competent authorities, as well as reliance on partnerships in the implementation of plans, particularly those related to social services. This is most evident in sectors such as education, health, and services provided to survivors of violence against women, where implementation depends heavily on programs delivered by civil society organizations. However, the involvement of civil society organizations in the evaluation of plans remains limited, as reflected, for example, in the baseline assessment conducted by the AMAN Coalition at the beginning of 2024. At the same time, the government and the Presidency have continued to issue decisions by law without the participation of civil society organizations in their discussion, as occurred with the amendment of the Public Debt Law, the Law of the Office of the Presidency, the Law of the Tamkeen Foundation, the State Lands Law, and the Publications and Publishing Law, in addition to the issuance of a special law governing the Arab Project Association. In other cases, new conditions have been introduced into decisions by law after consultations with civil society had already been concluded, as was the case with Decree-Law No. 23 of 2025 concerning the election of local authorities' councils.

59 Personal interview with Mr. Ahmad Al-Hijawi. Previously cited source.

60 Personal Interview with Mr. Asharf Abu Hayyeh. Previously cited source

61 Personal interviews with Mr. Amjad Al-Shawwa, Dr. Omar Rahha, Dr. sahar Al-Qawasmi, Ms. Lana Al-Bondok, and Dr. Tahreer Al-Araj. Previously cited sources

V. Reality of Community Accountability for the Implementation of Public Policies

Social accountability constitutes a fundamental pillar for subjecting officials responsible for service delivery and the management of public resources to oversight and accountability for their actions. Its significance lies in its role as a key instrument for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness within public institutions, improving the quality of public services, contributing to oversight of the sound management of public funds, informing public policymaking, strengthening good governance, and advancing development. It is also of particular value given the principles it embodies, including participation, collective action, and transparency⁶².

1- Information Transparency (Availability of Data and Information)

Ensuring easy access to data and information is a core prerequisite for enabling citizens and civil society organizations to exercise social accountability. This depends on the extent to which the competent official bodies disclose information and formal procedures related to public policy formulation and decision making, as well as on their proactive provision of periodic reports on public policy implementation to civil society representatives.

In the Palestinian context, and across successive governments, official bodies and public officials do not proactively provide information nor disclose formal procedures related to policy formulation or implementation. While the government does, in most cases, respond to requests for information related to public policy, the information provided is generally broad and non detailed. For example, the government has not published the documents underpinning sectoral and cross sectoral strategic plans, such as the National Development and Reform Programme 2025–2026 and the document Unified Palestine: Institutional and Economic Transformation – Laying the Foundations for Realizing the Independent Palestinian State, on the Council of Ministers' website, nor has it published the strategic plans adopted by Cabinet decisions⁶³. Moreover, a review of the websites of a sample of 13 ministries revealed that only four ministries published their respective or sectoral strategic plans for the period 2025–2027, namely the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Telecommunications and Digital Economy, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of National Economy. In contrast, the Ministries of Public Works and Housing, Agriculture, Interior, Social Development, Industry, Finance, Labour, Higher Education, and Transport and Communications did not publish their strategic plans.

On the other hand, some civil society representatives pointed out that certain officials refrain from providing civil society organizations with information, even when such information is already publicly available, a practice attributed to a prevailing sense of apprehension toward civil society actors⁶⁴. Mr. Ahmad Al Hijawi noted that transparency has yet to be achieved, explaining that the transparent presentation of a ministry's performance report is closely linked to decision making mechanisms and to the availability of detailed data on all related issues and files, a level of disclosure that is currently absent. This is further compounded by the lack of a Freedom of Information Law and the absence of clear disclosure policies within ministries themselves⁶⁵.

62 Musleh, A., et al. (2021). Study of the legal and procedural reality of social accountability in the Arab world. Arab Network for Social Accountability (ANSA).

63 See, WAFA. (August 10, 2025) The Council of Ministers Ratifies Strategic Plans for Ministries and Government Bodies (in Arabic). Available at مجلس

64 Personal interview with Dr. Omar Rahhal. Previously cited source.

65 Personal interview with Mr. Ahmad Al-Hijawi. Previously cited source.

Mr. Amjad Al Shawa added that official bodies often express their willingness to provide information; however, bureaucratic procedures delay access to it, to the extent that the timeframe for obtaining the information or its relevance expires while correspondence remains unanswered, with justifications offered such as an alleged inability to understand the request or claims that the inquiry was addressed to the wrong official⁶⁶. In contrast, Dr. Ammar Al Dweik observed that a shift has occurred under the current government toward greater openness and higher levels of transparency in its engagement, alongside increased acceptance of the role of a civil society that holds authorities to account, a change he described as significant when compared to previous years and earlier governments⁶⁷.

The key changes in the present study, compared to the first assessment conducted at the beginning of 2024, include a regression in the disclosure and publication of the strategic plans approved by the government on the website of the Council of Ministers. By contrast, civil society organizations perceive a positive development in the government's acceptance of accountability, reflected in the increased engagement of public officials in the accountability sessions organized by civil society organizations.

2- Government participation and responsiveness (the official authorities responsible for the relevant sector) in discussing social accountability reports

The willingness of official bodies to respond to social accountability initiatives is reflected primarily in the readiness of public officials responsible for public policies, as demonstrated through official statements and public discourse endorsing the right of civil society organizations to practice social accountability, as well as through their responsiveness to media appearances across various outlets and their attendance at public hearings convened by civil society organizations. These forums aim to seek clarification, explain public decision making processes, and provide responses to questions and inquiries. This also includes initiatives by official bodies to promote and facilitate the use of social accountability mechanisms and tools by citizens and their representatives, as well as their readiness to respond to citizens' requests, reactions, and feedback on government decisions, and to provide explanations on public policy issues, whether in response to requests from citizens, their representatives, or their proxies, or on the initiative of officials themselves. It further encompasses the willingness of competent authorities to hold officials accountable for failing to respond to accountability processes or for not participating in social accountability sessions or activities.

Many civil society representatives interviewed for the purposes of this study indicated that, despite the absence of explicit endorsement in official statements and speeches of the right of civil society to exercise social accountability, official bodies do not object to participating in such activities, particularly at the sectoral level. However, this participation is often partial or largely formal, insofar as responses to questions tend to lack detail and do not provide clear justifications or explanations for the reasons underpinning specific decisions or public policies. In other instances, the government adopts a strategy of deliberate non engagement, whereby it neither prohibits nor actively responds, effectively allowing participation without meaningful interaction. This pattern is not uniform, as there are cases in which officials do respond to civil society's accountability efforts and acknowledge the existence of a problem, yet refrain from initiating solutions when such responses entail financial implications. Notably, there has been an observable increase in the willingness of ministers, both

66 Personal interview with Mr. Amjad Al-Shawwa. Previously cited source.

67 Personal interview with Dr. Ammar Al-Dweik. Previously cited source.

male and female, to participate in local media programs dedicated to social accountability, including platforms such as Watan Television, Ma'an Television, and local radio stations.

The Anti Corruption Commission has also undertaken efforts to promote and facilitate the use of social accountability mechanisms and tools by citizens and their representatives, having implemented awareness raising activities on integrity and social accountability in partnership with civil society organizations, including the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN)⁶⁸.

Official responsiveness to social accountability issues becomes more evident when an issue takes on the character of public opinion and gains traction in the media, particularly on social media platforms, which civil society organizations have identified as a key source of strength and influence in accountability and responsiveness tools⁶⁹. Dr. Tahrir Al Araj noted that there is cooperation on the part of ministers and senior officials in attending the sessions MIFTAH convenes, alongside a noticeable development in both the quality of responses and the scope of dialogue⁷⁰. Ms. Lana Al Bondoq, however, observed that participation is largely confined to the city of Ramallah, noting that ministers do take part, particularly in the sector in which they work, such as disability related issues, in accountability sessions⁷¹.

Conversely, official bodies refrain from responding to, or from allowing, social accountability processes in certain cases, particularly those involving internal security or politically sensitive issues, especially where such cases involve alleged human rights violations or corruption, as occurred in the cases concerning the Director of Crossings and the Minister of Transport and Communications, or the issue of prisoners' salaries.

As for the readiness of the competent official authorities to hold officials accountable for failing to respond to social accountability efforts or for not participating in accountability sessions or activities, civil society representatives interviewed for this study indicated that they have not observed such practices. No cases of this nature have been recorded under the current government, particularly as ministers tend to avoid engaging in discussions related to social or political issues, leaving such interactions to lower level representative bodies that are often not decision-makers and whose role is frequently limited to defending the ministry or official institution they represent.

3- Oversight, Monitoring, and Evaluation

To enable effective civil society oversight, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies during the implementation of public plans, a supportive enabling environment on the part of official bodies is required—one that demonstrates openness to criticism and responsiveness to civil society observations regarding the performance of any official who obstructs the right of civil society to accountability and constructive criticism. Such an environment should also give due attention to comments and recommendations related to public policies contained in periodic reports issued by civil society organizations and actively follow up on them. In addition, official bodies should provide accessible tools that allow civil society to submit timely and rapid feedback on the implementation of public policies and cooperate with civil society in introducing adjustments related to policy implementation.

68 See: Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) at: (Pacc.ps)

69 Personal interview with Dr. Omar Rahhal. Previously cited source.

70 Personal interview with Dr. Tahrir Al-Araj. Previously cited source

71 Personal interview with Mr. Lana Al-Bondoq. Previously cited source

Civil society representatives indicated that official bodies maintain a conventional complaints system; however, this mechanism is not designed to enable participation in evaluating the implementation of public policies or to provide substantive official responses. With regard to oversight reports, official bodies demonstrate a degree of interest in reading and following up on them and, in some cases, adopt and implement their recommendations, though not immediately and often without notifying the issuing organization, particularly when such recommendations carry financial implications. In this regard, Dr. Ammar Al Dweik noted that reports and correspondence issued by the Commission have received increased attention from official bodies, with the rate of responses in 2025 rising by approximately 20 percent compared to previous years. He observed tangible improvement, a degree of institutionalization, and a shift in attitudes and organizational culture within official institutions⁷².

As for the responsiveness of official bodies to civil society views or assessments concerning the performance of any official who hinders the right to accountability and constructive criticism, civil society representatives indicated that criticism acceptance is not governed by a formal public policy but rather depends on the personality of the official concerned and the manner in which criticism is articulated⁷³. Dr. Ammar Al Dweik explained that official bodies sometimes accept criticism on the condition that it is not confrontational and not directed at a specific individual, so as not to be perceived personally. Criticism framed in general terms and conveyed through diplomatic language is more likely to be accepted⁷⁴. By contrast, Mr. Ahmad Al Hijawi pointed to heightened sensitivity among some officials when criticism is made public and noted that the prolonged state of emergency over the past two years has, at times, been used to circumvent established rules governing participation, accountability, and civic space. He warned that the expansion and misuse of emergency measures to justify restrictions on public freedoms and civic engagement is a source of concern, as the emergency risks becoming normalized or permanent, necessitating heightened vigilance⁷⁵. Despite the government's efforts to engage with civil society, such engagement does not appear to stem from a firmly embedded conviction or institutionalized policy, but rather from external pressure. Conversely, other actors, most notably the Office of the President, which oversees a wide range of public policies, do not accord sufficient weight to relations with civil society or to its participation⁷⁶.

72 Personal interview with Dr. Ammar Al-Dweik. Previously cited source.

73 Personal interview with Rahhal and shawwa. previously cited source.

74 Personal interview with Dr. Ammar Al-Dweik. Previously cited source.

75 Personal interview with Mr. Ahmad Al-Hijawi. Previously cited source.

76 Personal interview with Dr. Tahrir Al-Araj. Previously cited source.

Findings and Conclusions:

First: At the level of the general environment of the Palestinian political system and its impact on civil society

The study shows that the general environment of the Palestinian political system is reflected in the reality of the space available to the civic sphere for participation in public policy making. This process takes place within a complex and unstable environment, marked by the continuation of the Israeli occupation and its control over the resources and sovereignty of the State of Palestine, the closure of some Palestinian civil society organizations, their persecution, and attempts to label them as terrorist organizations in order to dry up their external funding. It is also shaped by the persistence of polarization resulting from the Palestinian political division, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the Legislative Council, the dominance of the executive authority over the other branches of government, and its unilateral control over public policy making in all its forms, including plans, strategies, agendas, decree laws, and others. In addition, numerous violations by official authorities have been recorded, particularly with regard to the right to form and operate associations, alongside a range of challenges and obstacles related to the structure of civil society organizations themselves. With regard to the war on the Gaza Strip, this has weakened the capacities of civil society organizations on the one hand, and, on the other hand, led to a shift in the priorities of Palestinian society, especially in Gaza, toward securing humanitarian assistance necessary for survival.

Second: At the level of the constitutional, legal, and policy framework governing the work of the authority, and its impact on the right of civil society to participate and contribute to public policymaking, and to exercise its oversight (critical) role in implementation

- In more than one report issued by AMAN, it was noted that deviations in the management of public affairs, including the relationship with the civic space, do not stem from deficiencies or flaws in legislation, but rather from the lack of commitment by officials in practice in many aspects of public policy implementation.
- During the past two years, following the baseline study conducted on the same subject, no new legislation has been issued that institutionalizes the role and right of civil society in shaping public policies and exercising social accountability.
- Although the Law on Charitable Associations and Non Governmental Organizations does not explicitly stipulate the right of civil society to participate effectively in the preparation of national or sectoral development plans, nor to exercise social oversight over public institutions, it does not prohibit such participation.
- No law regulating the right of access to information, nor any adopted and publicly announced government policy on information disclosure, has been approved up to the date of this study.
- Palestinian legislation does not prohibit the government from involving civil society in shaping public policies; however, the weakness of political will and the lack of binding obligations on all officials are the reasons behind fluctuating openness.
- There is an absence of a written public policy issued by official authorities to regulate the relationship between civil society and official bodies within the framework of partnership in public policy making, despite the inclusion in official documents such as reference strategic plans guiding government action and the program of the Nineteenth Prime Minister, as set out in his response letter to the Palestinian President upon being tasked, of numerous references to involving civil society in the preparation of documents and plans, as well as in official statements by the Prime Minister and ministers.

Third: At the level of the reality of participation in public policymaking

- Civil society organizations continue to face obstacles in accessing information in their efforts to participate in public policymaking, as most official bodies publish public policy documents only after they are finalized and do not publish related data, such as financial information or meeting minutes.
- The disclosure of information by official bodies remains influenced by a range of factors, including the issues under discussion, personal relationships with some officials in public institutions, and the official stance toward the civil society organizations requesting the information.
- The study, through the ex-post evaluation, shows the continued absence of a permanent administrative body or institutional structure that guarantees civil society participation with official bodies and strengthens partnership in public policymaking on a sustained basis, which consequently subjects this relationship to the convictions and orientations of individual officials.
- Most committees formed by official bodies to promote partnership in public policy making with civil society representatives continue to operate in a seasonal and formalistic manner, and are sometimes established at the request of donors, in the absence of clear criteria for selecting committee members.
- Despite meetings held between the Prime Minister and civil society organizations over the past two years, these did not result in a fixed approach to institutionalizing the relationship between official bodies and civil society, nor in the issuance of a document defining the government's orientation toward working with civil society. This indicates that efforts to institutionalize the relationship with civil society remain seasonal and needs based rather than constituting a consistent approach.
- There continues to be variation in the openness of official bodies toward engaging with civil society and involving it in public policymaking, with sectoral institutions demonstrating greater openness than the central government, namely the Council of Ministers. Some successes are evident in this area within certain institutionalized ministries, such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development, as well as the Anti Corruption Commission, particularly with regard to participation and cooperation in the preparation of their strategic plans.
- Despite ongoing progress in involving civil society organizations in public policymaking, participation has not reached a level that is effective, comprehensive, and representative. Most participation begins and ends with discussions of draft public policies, and official bodies do not require, when inviting civil society networks or coalitions, that participants include representatives of all societal groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, youth, and others.
- The study clearly shows that official bodies exhibit reluctance toward involving civil society in sensitive areas of public policymaking, such as financial policies, including the state budget, or security policies. They tend to respond temporarily when an issue becomes a matter of public opinion following pressure from civil society organizations.
- Weak cooperation between official bodies and civil society predominates in the areas of policy implementation and follow up.
- Official bodies' responses to oversight reports and shadow reports issued by civil society organizations cease when these reports entail financial, social, religious, or security obligations.

Fourth: At the level of accountability for the implementation of public policies

- The study shows an improvement in the responsiveness of official bodies to social accountability activities; however, responses to requests for information related to public policymaking remain below expectations, as information is often provided in general and non detailed form.
- Despite improvements in government media reporting on information related to achievements and ministerial activities, the government still does not proactively provide information related to policy formulation, nor has it adopted written public policies that encourage information disclosure.
- The government has not adopted public policies that encourage official bodies to be open to social critique, the expression of opinions, the explanation of decisions, or engagement in public dialogue on matters of public concern.
- The study indicates improved responsiveness by ministers and officials in participating in social accountability sessions organized by civil society organizations, as well as participation in media programs produced by news agencies and local radio stations.
- The government has never announced its willingness to hold officials accountable for failing to respond to accountability demands or for not participating in accountability sessions or activities. It also shows reluctance in responding to petitions and demands related to the issuance or implementation of public policies.
- Despite improved acceptance of criticism among ministers and officials, many officials do not accept critical observations issued by civil society organizations, particularly when such criticism relates to core centers of power within the political system, the management of public funds, anti corruption policies, or the government's approach to respecting human rights and public freedoms.

Recommendations

First: To create a more stable environment within the Palestinian political system, Palestinian political parties and factions must assume a more serious role in ending political division, prioritizing the public interest over factional interests, holding general elections, and restoring legislative life in order to rebalance the separation of powers and curb the dominance of the executive authority over the other branches of government.

Second: To develop the constitutional, legal, and policy framework governing participation in public policy making and accountability for its implementation by official bodies, it is necessary to work on the following:

1. Enacting a law on the right of access to information or adopting a general openness policy to be incorporated into a Cabinet issued document that is binding on public institutions in their handling of information and citizens' right to access it.
2. Drafting a written public policy, in consultation with civil society, to regulate the relationship between civil society and official bodies within the framework of partnership in public policymaking, approving it by the Council of Ministers, and publishing it in the Official Gazette. Such a policy should guarantee the right of civil society to participate effectively and fully in the preparation of national and sectoral development plans at all stages of public policymaking, to contribute to their implementation, to critique public policies, and to exercise social oversight over public institutions, and should include binding mechanisms for official bodies.

Third: To improve the reality of participation in public policy making, official bodies must work on the following:

- Adopting an integrative approach between the governmental sector, with its various institutions, and the civil sector, each within its respective mandate and scope of authority. This approach should be practiced as an officially adopted policy across all ministries and sectors through the development of consultation and coordination mechanisms between official and civil institutions, without compromising the independence of civil society organizations.
- Cooperating effectively with civil society organizations in shaping visions for national priorities, implementing activities within each party's area of expertise, and preparing, implementing, and evaluating plans.
- Publishing public policy documents and all their annexes at all stages of public policy making in an accessible manner for all groups of citizens and civil society organizations wherever they are located, and avoiding selective disclosure of information regardless of its type, unless prohibited by law.
- Establishing a permanent mechanism for communication and coordination, such as a department, committee, or advisory council, with a clear vision of civil society as a partner in public policy making, implementation, and oversight. This mechanism should ensure the inclusion of representatives from all civil society organizations, both large and grassroots, and its mandate should be agreed upon through consultation with civil society.
- Elevating symbolic participation in public policy making to full and effective participation by forming civil society committees that represent major and grassroots organizations, according to specialization and inclusive of all societal groups, and integrating them and consulting them at all stages of public policy making, from priority setting through implementation and evaluation.

- Ensuring openness on the part of official bodies to civil society participation in the formulation of the general budget and financial issues and in determining their priorities.
- Strengthening cooperation with civil society organizations in implementing public policy plans, particularly in the provision of public services such as health, relief, education, and awareness raising, and developing follow up plans for the implementation and evaluation of public policy outcomes in partnership with civil society, while remaining open to and considering its views during monitoring and evaluation processes.

Fourth: To improve accountability for the implementation of public policies, it is essential to emphasize that official bodies must work on the following:

- Committing to the regular provision of detailed and clear information on official procedures related to policymaking or implementation.
- Adopting approaches that support the participation of officials responsible for public policy formulation in social accountability activities more effectively and openly, and moving away from turning a blind eye, symbolic participation, or participation under pressure from public opinion.
- Being more transparent and clearer with civil society and citizens regarding issues that are acknowledged but cannot be implemented and refraining from making promises or commitments that are difficult to fulfill, in order to build trust with civil society in all its components.
- Demonstrating greater openness in responding to social accountability related to decisions and procedures concerning security, human rights, and financial policies, both under normal circumstances and during states of emergency.
- Holding to account any official, regardless of his/her position, who obstructs or refuses to participate in social accountability activities.

List of References

I. International Covenants and Declarations

1. United Nations. (2003). United Nations Convention against Corruption. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
2. United Nations. (1979). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
3. United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
4. United Nations. (1966). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

II. Palestinian legislation, plans, and policies

1. Palestinian National Authority. (2005). Amended Palestinian Basic Law of 2005.
2. Palestinian National Authority. (1995). Publications and Publishing Law No. 5 of 1995.
3. Palestinian National Authority. (2000). Law No. 1 of 2000 concerning charitable associations and non governmental organizations.
4. Palestinian National Authority. (1998). Law No. 7 of 1998 on the regulation of the general budget and financial affairs.
5. Palestinian National Authority. (1998). Public Assemblies Law No. 12 of 1998.
6. Palestinian National Authority. (2018). Decree Law No. 10 of 2018 on cybercrimes, as amended.
7. Ministry of Interior. (2000). Executive regulations of the Public Assemblies Law.
8. Palestinian Council of Ministers. (2022, April 15). Reform Agenda.
9. Palestinian Council of Ministers. (2021). Public policy document of the Palestinian Government 2021–2023.
10. Palestinian Council of Ministers. (2024). Program of the Nineteenth Government.
11. Palestinian Council of Ministers. (2025). National Program for Development and Advancement 2025–2026.
12. Palestinian Council of Ministers. (n.d.). Palestine Unified: Institutional and economic transformation—Laying the foundations for the realization of the independent Palestinian State.
13. Palestinian National Authority. (2025). National cross sectoral strategy for enhancing governance and combating corruption 2025–2030.

III. Studies and Articles

1. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.). The role of the United Nations in protecting and promoting civic space. OHCHR.
2. Maharat Foundation. (2019). Shrinking civic space: Solidarity and networking as the solution.
3. (2022). An introduction to civic space and its challenges in the Arab region.
4. United Nations. (n.d.). Enhancing participation and protecting civic space.
5. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. (2009). Civic participation terminology.
6. Bourich, R. (2013). Public policies from a governmental perspective. Mediterranean Dialogue.
7. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2019). Twelfth annual report on the state of integrity and combating corruption in Palestine.
8. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2010). Guidance manual on good governance concepts and terminology.
9. United Nations Development Programme. (2010). Strengthening social accountability: From principle to practice.
10. Palestinian Civil Society Organizations. (2021, March 3). Position paper on the amended decree law to the Associations Law.

11. Costantini, G. F., et al. (2011, May). Analytical survey study of civil society organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Final report).
12. MAS Institute. (2016). Impact assessment of the Charitable Associations and Non Governmental Organizations Law No. 1 of 2000 and its executive regulations on the performance of associations. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN).
13. Independent Commission for Human Rights. (2023). Twenty eighth annual report 2022. Ramallah.
14. Independent Commission for Human Rights. (2025). Thirtieth annual report 2024. Ramallah.
15. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2025). Public budget performance report for the first half of 2025. Ramallah, Palestine.
16. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2025). Public budget performance report for the first half of 2025. Ramallah, Palestine.
17. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2024). Assessment of the civic space available for Palestinian civil society participation in public policy making and accountability for implementation. Ramallah, Palestine.
18. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2024). Seventeenth annual report on the state of integrity and combating corruption in Palestine. Ramallah, Palestine.
19. International Center for Not for Profit Law. (n.d.). Models to promote cooperation between civil society and public authorities.
20. Atteyyat, I. (2009). Legal frameworks regulating civil society participation in decision making (Background paper). Expert Group Meeting convened by ESCWA on enhancing participation between governments and civil society organizations in public policy processes, Beirut.
21. Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN). (2025). Public budget performance report for the first half of 2025. Ramallah, Palestine.
22. Musleh, A., et al. (2021). Study of the legal and procedural reality of social accountability in the Arab world. Arab Network for Social Accountability (ANSA).

IV. Interviews by date

1. Omar Rahhal, Director General of the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center (SHAMS), personal interview by the author, November 29, 2025.
2. Ashraf Abu Hayya, Legal Advisor at Al Haq, personal interview by the author, November 29, 2025.
3. Lana Al Bandak, Director General of QADER for Community Development, personal interview conducted by the author via Zoom, November 29, 2025.
4. Helmi Al A'raj, Director of the Center for the Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights, personal interview by the author, November 30, 2025.
5. Tahrir Al A'raj, Executive Director of MIFTAH (the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy), personal interview by the author, December 2, 2025.
6. Sahar Al Qawasmeh, Executive Director of Adwar for Social Change, personal interview conducted by the author via Zoom, December 4, 2025.
7. Amjad Al Shawa, Coordinator of the Palestinian Non Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), personal interview by the author, December 4, 2025.
8. Ahmad Al Heijawi, Director of the Advisory Body for the Development of Non Governmental Organizations, personal interview conducted by the author via Zoom, December 6, 2025.
9. Sami Suhweil, Director General of Planning and Policies, and Ayat Al Faqih, Director of the Gender Equality Department at the Ministry of Women's Affairs, personal interview by the author, December 8, 2025.
10. Ammar Al Dweik, Director General of the Independent Commission for Human Rights, personal interview by the author, December 15, 2025.
11. Palestinian Anti Corruption Commission, written response to interview questions received by the author, December 28, 2025.

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.

Website: www.aman-palestine.org

Email : info@aman-palestine.org

f @ t v in /AmanCoalition

Ramallah, Irsal St, Remawi Building , 1st floor

Tel : 2989506 2 (970+) 2974949 2 (970+)

Fax : 2974948 2 (970)

Gaza-Southern Rimal - Habboush St. - Sub of Martyrs St. Dream

Tel : 082884767

Fax : 082884766