Annual Report 2009



Coalition for Integrity and Accountability - AMAN

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Advocacy and Legal Advice Center (ALAC) Project - AMAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Advocacy and Legal Advice Center aims at introducing the concept of corruption by highlighting wrongful practices of clients while performing their work duties or while receiving a public service. It also aims at identifying the process of combating corruption in the Palestinian society by engaging ALAC clients and providing them with simple and easy mechanisms and ways to communicate their grievances to officials after being supported by legal advice and necessary protection if needed. ALAC provides legal advice on ways of combating corruption, where it provides assistance to victims of corruption and monitors the performance of the state institutions and their officials and their actions on means to solve corruption-related issues in accordance to law.

The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability- AMAN has launched the ALAC project on 19/3/2009, while ALAC is a member in an international network that joins likewise-centers from 42 countries around the world.

Being the first annual report issued by ALAC, which it covers all the achievements made during 2009.

REPORT'S OBJECTIVES

The general goal is to provide an informative database and descriptive analysis of the magnitude and nature of cases received by ALAC in order to help evaluating its trends, work mechanisms and activities as well as means to develop them in a way that best serves the ALAC's objectives.

Specific objectives:

- 1. Infer the most outstanding features characterizing complainants, to forward plan for attracting other segments that did not show in the analytical study that will present in this report. Whereas, the report shows a general breakdown of the incoming calls based on gender, geographic location, age groups, the nature of the complaint, the educational level of the complainants and their means of communication with ALAC. In addition, it analyzes the complaints and the party to which the compliant is lodged against, the type of corruption, the measures taken and the results on following-up the complaints.
- 2. Provide statistics that support the studies and researches carried out by AMAN.
- Identify corruption-related complaints that formed a phenomenon due to its recurrence during
 the year, while AMAN prioritized this issue in the activities identified in its annual plan in order
 to envisage a concept on how to deal with such an issue.
- 4. Identify the main obstacles and challenges that faced the ALAC's work in order to specify mechanisms to overcome these challenges in the coming years.

During the first year of its inception, ALAC received 884 contacts^[1] whether through toll-free phone, office visits, email and fax correspondence with a various increase over the different months. Several factors contributed to this increase in demand, namely:

- 1. ALAC's first and second quarterly reports reflecting its accomplishments and successes.
- 2. Field visits by the ALAC staff to different Districts which contributed in defining the concept and forms of corruption, in addition to introducing the ALAC and motivating people to approach it.
- Promoting ALAC through workshops, conferences, training seminars, briefings and hearings
 conducted by AMAN in general and ALAC in particular which created an interest to reach out
 ALAC to learn more and benefit from the services provided.
- 4. Having a genuine desire among citizens to combat and report corruption, which was confirmed by the poll carried out by AMAN during February 2009. it reported that approximately 70% of respondents would report corruption cases they have witnessed, also 80% of them said they would report any case of corruption if they were victims. However, having witnesses report corruption cases were relatively weak compared to whistle-blowers who have fallen victims.
- 5. ALAC, still represents the first specialized party in Palestine to combat corruption, as all the Palestinian authorities working in this field are not specialized as their work merely follows up these issues on the sidelines of other rights issues of the Palestinian citizens, or while monitoring the commitment to the provisions of law and its implementation.

^[1] Contacts refers to communication by using phones, office visits or sending faxes or emails

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report includes four chapters; the first one is the executive summary, while the second chapter is a review of all statistics on communications received by ALAC categorized by a set of variables such as communication, gender, age groups, educational level geographic area and the like. Further, it introduces a more thorough analysis on complaints adopted and followed-up by ALAC which were considered directly related to corruption.

Chapter three, however, introduces the most important events and activities organized by ALAC during its first year, ranging between field visits, accountability sessions and workshops, which mainly aimed to raise awareness and follow-up on the filed complaints, and highlight some issues of direct relevance to promoting integrity, transparency and accountability.

The report also provides analysis of the relationship between the concerned parties and the received complaints, demonstrating the most significant conclusions and recommendations in 2009. It also reflects the advantages as well as the challenges facing ALAC through its work in receiving and following up on complaints.

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ALAC CONTACTS

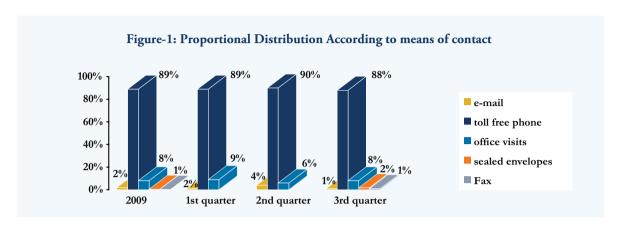
Means of Contacting the ALAC

Since its inception in March 19th 2009 and until December 31st 2009, ALAC received a total number of 884 contacts, with a rate of three contacts per day, and were distributed across the three quarters in 2009 as follows: The first quarter received 30% of the total contacts, while the second quarter had the biggest proportion of contacts mounting to 36%, and the third quarter had 34% of the total contacts, which is more than the first quarter and closer to the second quarter by 303 contacts.

Means of communication selected by the contacts to the Advocacy ALAC were distributed as follows: phone calls, office visits, e-mails, sealed envelop, and faxes. Here, we define the means of communication that ranks first, followed by office visits, and then sending documents via fax and e-mail.

Most of the contacts chose the toll-free phone to contact ALAC, where it reached in the third quarter 88% demonstrating close percentage to the previous quarters with only 1% difference compared to the first quarter and 2% compared with the second quarter. Office visits scored 8%, with a rise of 2% compared to the second quarter and a fall by 1% compared to the first quarter. While the percentage of using the email as means of communication ranged between 1% to 2% in 2009.

However, the third quarter marked a change in the utilized means of communication compared to the previous quarters as ALAC received 2% of sealed envelopes and 1% of complaints by fax. The following figure demonstrates the proportional distribution of contacts as means of communication with ALAC:



Based on our practical experience with ALAC's contacts, it was evident that the toll free phone is the easiest, fastest, effortless and less expensive way for contacts to use, as it provides a sense of relief and assurance, especially when they become certain that the call is not being recorded and the caller's ID is unknown. This increases their courage in reporting, especially when callers are witnesses and not victims.

The most important thing the toll free phone provides to ALAC is that it is a direct contribution to raise the public awareness on the concept of corruption, as a large percentage of contacts sought some orientation of the ALAC's nature of work and what is meant by combating corruption.

ALAC's staff has succeeded in well investing these calls to raise awareness of citizens on the concepts of transparency and accountability, introduce the concept of corruption, ways of combating it and how to avoid any kind of involvement.

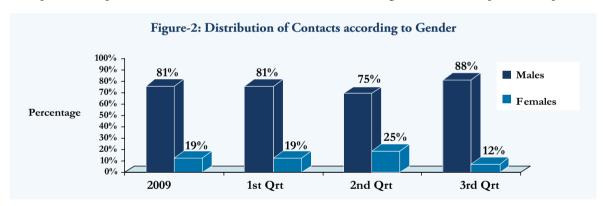
ALAC's campaigns targeted employees and encouraged them to visit its website that has forms to file a complaint or legal advice. ALAC has actually begun to receive such complaints.

Note that the illustrated percentages are rounded to the nearest number

Distribution of contacts according to gender

In 2009, it was obvious that the number of male contacts was fairly higher than female contacts as in the three consecutive quarters it was as follows: 81% male contacts compared to 19% of female contacts in the first quarter; 75% of male contacts compared to 25% of female contacts in the second quarter, which is the highest percentage of female contacts; and 88% of male contacts compared to 12% of female contacts in the third quarter, which is the lowest percentage of female contacts in 2009.

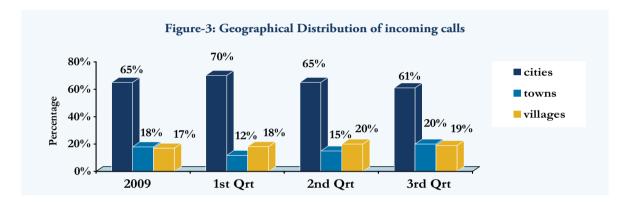
Comparing the percentages of female contacts with female workers, we found out that there is considerable convergence in percentages, where data from the Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that the percentage of females in the labor force is 15.4%^[2], meaning that the percentage of female contacts to ALAC reflects that women in the labor force more than housewives, as they are more subjected and better informed about the corruption concept and its forms in the different institutions, making them more competent to report it.



^[2] Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009, labor force survey: July- September 2009 3rd Quarter. Press conference on the survey's results in Ramallah Palestine

Geographical Distribution of Contacts^[3]

The geographical distribution of the received contacts totaled 884 during 2009 and was allocated on cities, towns and villages at various rates. As expected, cities scored the highest rate reaching 65% of the total contacts, while percentages of towns and Villages were convergent. This distribution has not changed during ALAC's operation in the last three quarters of 2009



Approaching ALAC in the third quarter reached 303 calls. After processing the data, it turned out that the percentages of received communication from villages are close in the three quarters, where it reached in the third quarter 19%, whereas in cities, it reached 61% falling by 9% compared to the first quarter and 4% compared to the second quarter, which means a reasonable increase in the received communications from towns reaching to 20%, a percentage that is higher than the other quarters.

^[3] Contacts refers to communication by using phones, paying visits or sending faxes or emails

Hence, we can conclude the role of media and publicity in promoting ALAC, its various activities and successes have all contributed to increasing the number of communications from towns and subsequently increasing the number of citizens from towns visiting ALAC.

Figure 3 above illustrates what has been stated.

Sources of knowledge about the ALAC

The experience in 2009 confirmed the efficiency of the used means in promoting ALAC and its services. Radio spots had the biggest impact on citizens, followed by billboards and then the word of mouth.

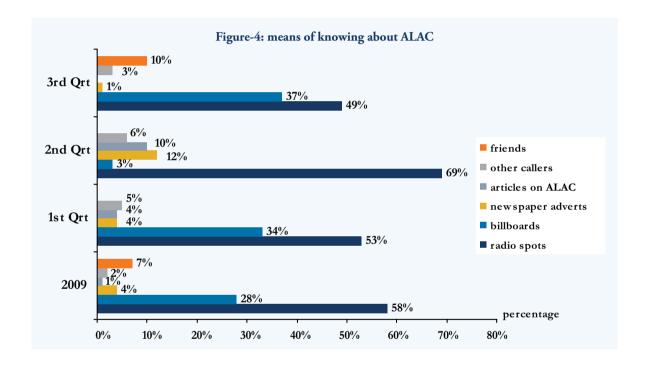
Over the past year, ALAC made sure to know the source with which citizens became acquainted with its services while results were convergent in the first three quarters. The number of people who had heard of ALAC through the radio was 49% in the third quarter, comprising a big fall from the second quarter by 20%. This shows the different means of media distributed on contacts, especially that the percentages of contacts are close in both the first and second quarters.

As for those who knew about ALAC through billboards, the highest percentage was in the third quarter that reached 36%, which was close to the percentage in the first and far from the second mounting only to $3\%^{[4]}$.

3% of contacts initiated contact through the word of mouth in the third quarter, whereas newspaper adverts scored a low percentage reaching only 1%, compared to 12% in the second quarter which resulted from adverts on ALAC during that period.

^[4] ALAC did not use billboards advertising during the second quarter

However, no one mentioned hearing about ALAC through articles, but few said they came across some posters, 1%, and some knew about ALAC but came to visit only after their friends recommended, 10%. This matter has not appeared during the first and second quarters. Figure 4 below shows the detailed distribution



Linear Distribution of Complains According to Procedures Taken

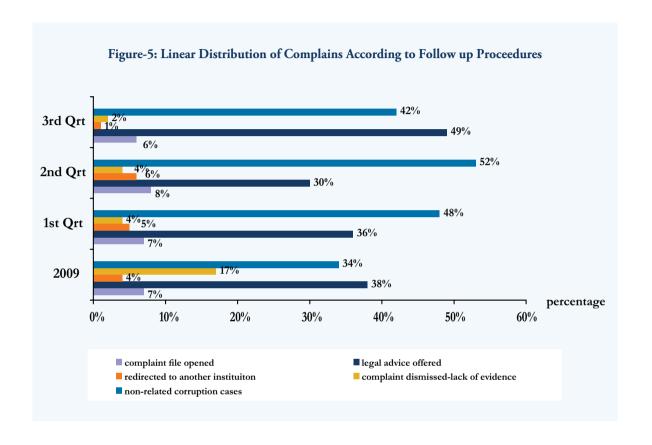
Means of following up the complaints received by ALAC vary depending on the nature of the complaint and type of inquiry. ALAC received 884 contacts from different citizens and regions. Clearly, these communications were not handled in the same manner and procedures, considering that some complaints reflected clear indicators on corruption, while others were far from being related to corruption and a third group lacked evidence.

In 2009, 7% of communications were considered corruption-related complaints, 38% of citizens received legal advice, 34% indented to learn about ALAC and addressed issues irrelevant to corruption, 17% of complaints were rejected due to lack of evidence on any alleged corruption case, and 4% of communications were redirected to another institution.

If we look at the data on a quarterly basis, it shows that 6% of complaints were considered as corruption cases in the third quarter, which is close to the previous quarters. Also, we noted the growing interest in getting legal advice where the third quarter reflected the highest percentage of 49% recording a difference of 13% compared to the first quarter and 19% compared to the second.

As for redirecting citizens to other institutions, it had the lowest percentage among quarters, where in the third it reached 1%. As for complaints that were turned down due to lack of evidence has equaled at 4% in both the first and second quarters while the third scored 2%.

The following figure shows the procedures taken for each received complain by ALAC in 2009:



A STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION CASES RECEIVED BY THE ALAC

In 2009, complaints that suspected the existence of corruption reached 7% of the total number of received complaints that mounted 884, as the number of complaints that suspected the existence of corruption was 62 cases. All cases were followed up and some of them, 29%, were closed successfully. The bigger number of cases, 53%, remained under follow up mainly the ones received towards the end of 2009.

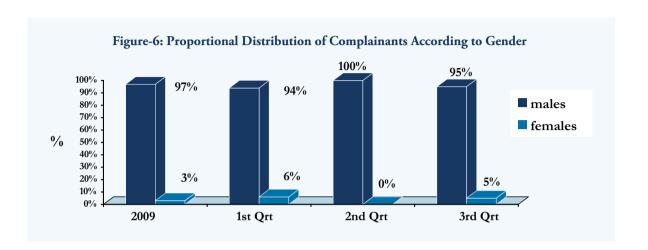
This section of the report, seeks to give an analysis on some of the aspects of these complaints and comparison between complaints received in the third, second and first quarters.

Gender of Complainants

In 2009, male contacts were the most to approach ALAC, forming the highest percentage to blow the whistle on corruption-related complaints that were later adopted and followed up.

The percentage of complaints filed by males was 97% versus 3% filed by females. During the third quarter, ALAC received 19 complaints distributed as follows: 95% were filed by male complainants and the other 5% were filed by females.

Having a comparative overlook among quarters, we note a convergence between the first and third quarters, with no female participation in the second quarter. Female's engagement in the third quarter was subsequent to holding meetings that specifically targeted women. This increase shows the necessity to continue reaching out to women when ALAC's staff holds meetings in the different districts. It is also necessary to examine the factors that make women refrain from blowing the whistle on corruption. The following figure shows the distribution of complainants according to their gender during 2009:

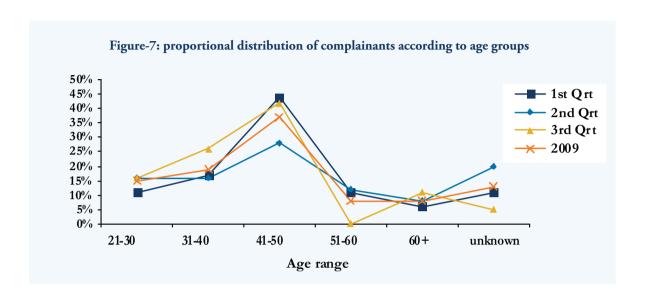


Age Groups of Complainants

Age is one of the significant characteristics of complainants which ALAC seeks to examine and analyze to develop the necessary plans to stimulate and encourage the participation of the least involved in combating corruption.

In 2009, Data showed 41-50 years is the age group that ranked highest in blowing the whistle on corruption cases with 37%. This is probably normal as this age group are mostly more professionally stable with a better vision on the working system and corruption patterns and forms.

Second, ranks the age group of 31-40 years which formed 19% of the received and adopted corruption complaints in 2009. Then the age group of 21-30 years, forming 15%, followed by 51-60 years and 61+ with an equal percentage of 8% while the remaining 13% went an unidentified age group. The following figure shows distribution of complainants according to age groups:



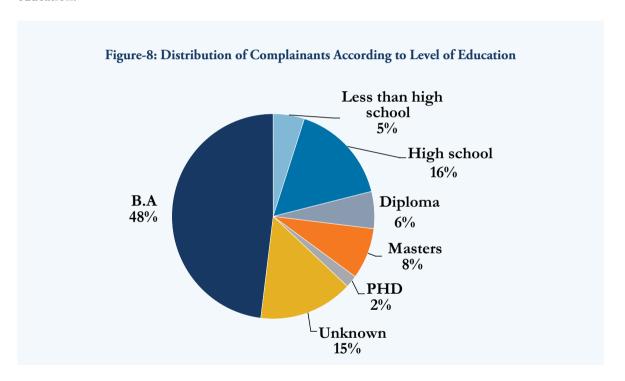
Educational Level of Complainants

Holders of BA degrees formed the biggest percentage in filing corruption complaints in 2009, with differences in each quarter, where it was the highest in the first quarter by 61%, followed by the third quarter with 58%, and the second quarter, as the lowest, by 32%. However, the category with the lowest percentage was the PhD holders, which might also reflect the percentage of people having a PhD in the community as a whole, where there was a 6% participation in the first quarter and no participation in the second and third quarters.

Also, citizens who have not completed their secondary education (high school) formed a small percentage, 5%, out of the total complaints filed in 2009. ALAC has been working and is still targeting

this category through promotional campaigns, radio spots and billboards, supported with the support of AMAN's Coalition to address the disadvantaged group in education through publications, radio and television interviews.

Following is a figure that shows the proportional distribution of complainants according to their level of education:

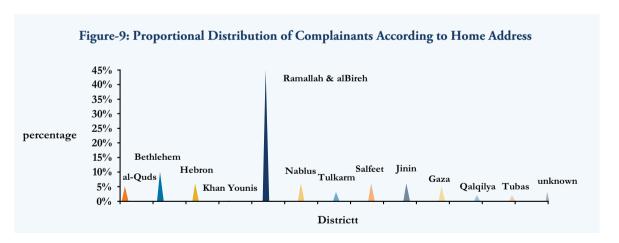


Geographical Distribution of Complainants According to Their Home Address

In 2009, ALAC received corruption-related complaints from the various districts in the Palestinian territories in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where the biggest percentage came from the Ramallah and al-Bireh District for two main reasons; first, the fact that this district is the headquarters of the official institutions of the three executive, legislative and judicial authorities and the center of the economic activity. Second, the head office of AMAN's Coalition is located in Ramallah and al-Bireh district, which gives more access to citizens and better knowledge with its work.

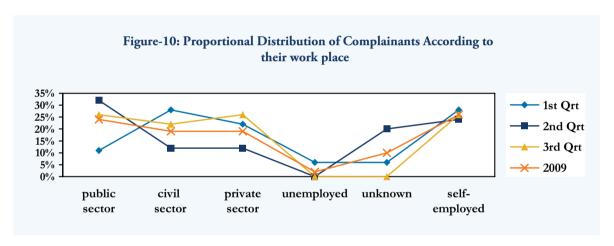
ALAC and AMAN ensured conducting promotional campaigns extensively in the other districts and focusing on the toll free phone to facilitate the task of citizens from all over the country.

With regards to the Gaza Strip, a new staff has recently been appointed to receive corruption complaints filed at AMAN Coalition office in the Gaza Strip, which will encourage citizens to come forward and report. It is worth noting that the percentage of contacts received from Gaza Strip were not few, but were mostly about other legal or civil issues, outside the jurisdiction of the ALAC's work.



Distribution of complainants by place of work

The proportional distribution of complainants by their workplace varied during 2009. In the three quarters, the highest percentage came from self-employed complainants, with an average of 26%, followed by employees in the private sector by 24%, whereas the percentage of complaints received from the private sector employees equaled the one received from the civil sector, which reached 19%. Also, the unemployed had participated by 2% of the complaints and 10% of the complaints received by ALAC where by complainants whose working status was unidentified.



Distribution of Corruption cases based on Institution Implicated

Figure 11 shows the distribution of corruption complaints received by ALAC in 2009 according to the type of institution complained of. The highest percentage of complaints received were against the

Ministries' Institutions reaching 40%; complaints on local bodies, municipalities and village councils reached 18%; while complaints against civil society organizations mounted to 13%, which is equivalent to the percentage received from non-ministerial public institutions. Also, complaints filed against security and military institutions reached 8% in 2009, followed by state institutions^[5] by 6% and the remaining 2% were for complaints filed against the private sector.

If we look at the details of these complaints during the three quarters the ALAC operated in, in 2009, the following is reflected: complaints on the public ministerial institutions reached 42% of the complaints in the third quarter, which is close to the second, and exceeding the first quarter by 9%.

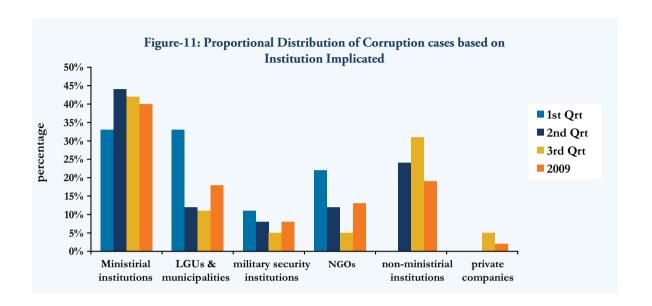
The percentage of complaints on non-ministerial public institutions, of the total complaints received by ALAC, reached 26%, a much higher percentage from the first and second quarters; whereas complaints received on the private institutions (public shareholding companies) had reached 5% in the third quarter, while no complaints were received in the first and second quarters.

However, the previous quarters (First & second) have exceeded the third in the percentage of received complaints against the security, military and state institutions, village councils and municipalities as well. While, the third quarter had the lowest percentage, 3%, decline from the first quarter and 11% decline from the second quarter.

Finally, complaints received against NGOs had the highest percentage in the first and second quarters, 12%, followed by a 5% decline in the third quarter.

The following figure illustrates what have been stated:

^[5] State institutions: non-ministerial yet official institutions like the Higher Judicial Council, the PLC, the public prosecution



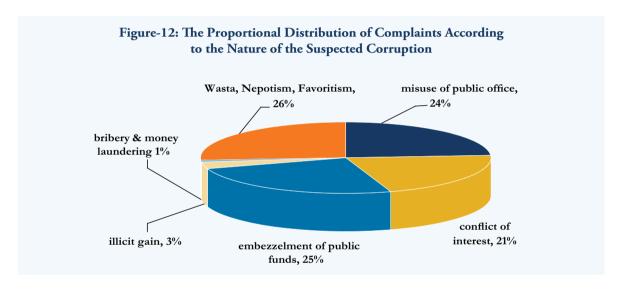
Distribution of Complaints by the nature of the suspected corruption

Complaint filed at ALAC in 2009 varied in six forms of corruption while some complaints contained more than one form of corruption. Wasta, favoritism and nepotism overlapped with other forms like embezzlement, waste of public fund, conflict of interest, misuse of an office bribery and money laundering.

These complaints, once reviewed, indicated that the suspicion of exercising Wasta nepotism and favoritism were the most pronounced by a 26%, followed by embezzlement and waste of public funds by 25%, abuse of public office for personal gain and the use of public resources for private purposes reached 24%. Conflict of interests scored 21%, while simple cases, 3%, were on suspicion of illicit gain. Finally,

bribery was only reported in the fourth quarter in 2009, by 1%, which confirms that bribery is not a phenomenon in Palestine.

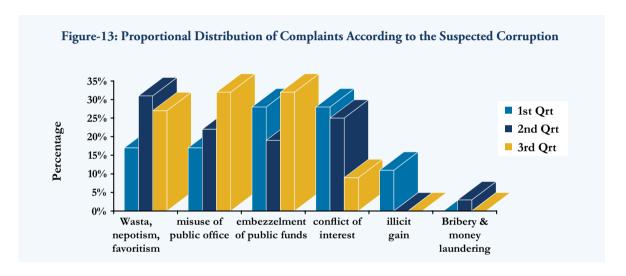
The following figure shows the proportional distribution of complaints according to the nature of the suspected corruption in 2009:



In 2009, each quarter reflected different forms of corruption, where some reached up to four or five forms. As shown in figure 13, the third quarter had four forms; Wasta, nepotism, favoritism by 27%, forming the highest percentage in the three quarters. The second form, misuse of public funds, which manifested prominently in the non-enforcement of the decisions issued by the Supreme Court scoring 32% in the third quarter, which is higher by 10% and 15% from second and first quarters respectively.

As for the embezzlement of public funds, it had a clear and steady percentage within the three quarters, reaching to 32% in the third and 28% in the first.

The last form of corruption in the third quarter was conflict of interest by 9%, while it reached to 25% and 28% in the second and first quarters respectively. The following figure illustrates the forms of corruption complained against in the three quarters of ALAC's operation



Distribution of corruption cases according to follow-up results

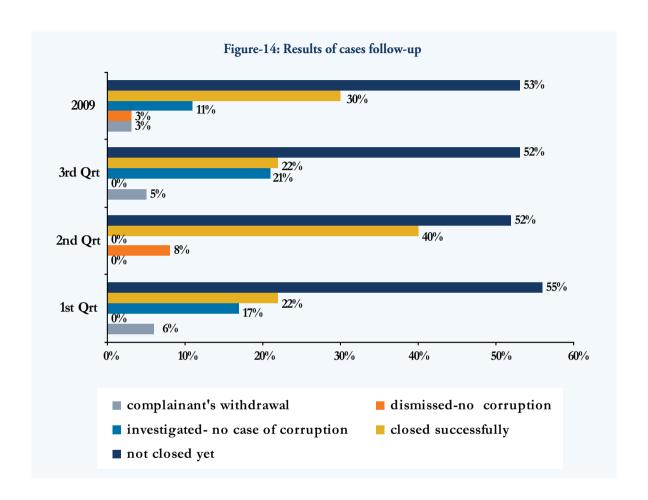
During 2009 and after ten months of functioning, ALAC was able to successfully close 30% of the received complaints. This means that the reported corruption complaints have been followed up, responded to and worked on by the competent institution.

53% of the received complaints are still under processing, while 11% of the complaints were closed after investigating with the official authorities and concluding that there was no corruption, 3% of the complaints were dismissed due to lack of evidence on corruption, and 3% were closed due to the complainant's withdrawal.

It is worth noting that most of the formal institutions that were addressed on the reported corruption cases to ALAC expressed their interest and willingness to follow-up and communicate with AMAN Coalition on their results. This indicates that officials are interested in following up corruption-related complaints received by AMAN.

However, the cases directed to the Ministry of Interior (as being the official body in charge) are still undergoing follow-up and none are closed yet.

The following figure shows the results of follow-up on complaints in 2009 as a whole, and also shows details of these follow-ups in the three quarters which ALAC operated in 2009:



ALAC'S ACTIVITIES IN 2009

The most significant objectives of ALAC since its inception in early 2009 were to raise awareness on the importance of promoting the values of integrity and transparency, with emphasis on accountability and motivating citizens to blow the whistle and combat corruption.

Therefore, there was a focus, from the beginning, on promoting ALAC through media and advertising, and then field visits which brought together ALAC's staff and citizens from various factions and regions. Holding accountability sessions and hearings with officials on the basis of the received complaints indeed raised ALAC's credibility which also held workshops that aimed at discussing some issues and certain phenomena that were complained about.

To that end, below is a list of the various activities and events undertaken by ALAC during 2009.

1. Promotional Campaigns

- 1.1 ALAC carried out several media campaigns using billboards, daily radio spots and newspaper adverts, where each had an impact in awareness-raising and citizens' engagement with ALAC.
 - The practical experience in 2009 of having continuous announcements and adverts proved to be essential in keeping citizens alert of ALAC and the services it provides.
- 1.2 The Campaign of Reporting on the abuse of using governmental vehicles

The most prominent of these campaigns was the campaign for the misuse of governmental vehicles that was carried out in support of the efforts of the Ministry of Transportation, which had started a campaign to control the use of governmental vehicles.

This campaign had a great impact on the citizens who started to contact the center for reporting on

governmental vehicles used outside working hours, in cooperation with the Ministry of Transportation, which started monitoring those vehicles as a way to ensure the authenticity of the reports. The campaign managed to achieve some positive results concerning the misuse of governmental vehicles and the Centre continues to receive citizens' reports and complains around the misuse of governmental vehicles and in turn follows-up with the Ministry of Transportation. As a Result of the efforts made by the Ministry of Transportation and AMANs' Foundation in the campaign of the misuse of governmental vehicles certain good results were achieved even if they weren't enough, and they are as the following:

- 1. Commitment of most of the Palestinian National Authority ministries to ensure Bed-owned vehicles in the places allocated for them. The commitment of the Water Authority reached 80% of the total vehicles. While the rest of the Palestinian Authority ministries commitment didn't exceed 40% of the total vehicles, which require follow-up and control with these ministries.
- 2. Many of the vehicles issued to official figures were dealt with by restricting there usage for the official figure only and not by their family members. As a result, 50% of the vehicles in the governorate of Ramallah were committed to the regulations. while we found that this ratio is higher in other provinces and reached about 80%. Taking into consideration that a warning was given to everyone of the possibility of confiscation the vehicle in the event of being caught in violation of regulations and laws.
- The institutions felt more responsible and needed to monitor their vehicles, and that was clearly evident through the reactions of some ministers and officials who have reassessed their policies.
- 4. Many modifications/adjustments were made on the work of the government Transport Department through developing new forms for vehicles users and for their names and that wasn't available in the past.

2. Field visits and meetings

ALAC's Staff held a series of meetings and field visits in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that including the districts of Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarem, Salfit, Beit Jala, Qalqilya. The meetings aimed at introducing ALAC, its objectives and nature of the provided services to citizens. These initiatives were met with positive interactions and large responses, where some citizens reported a number of corruption complaints.

AMAN sensed that reaching out to citizens at their whereabouts is one of the most important mechanisms of communications as it contributes to mobilizing citizens to combat corruption in their communities. Accordingly, AMAN took this mechanism into account when it recently planned an advocacy campaign to disseminate results of the studies that were conducted on the nature of corruption in the Palestinian society and subsequently raise awareness in this regard.

The workshops aimed at targeting different groups including women and employees in both the civil and private sectors, in addition to workers and fishermen in Gaza as well as university students. The workshops were described as being lively since participants asked many questions which expressed their interest in the issue.

3. Workshops with officials:

Following some of the filed complaints, ALAC held three workshops with officials from various ministries in 2009.

Following is a presentation on these workshops and their results:

Fines System for Traffic Violations workshop

ALAC held a workshop dated 1/8/2009 which aimed at discussing the fines issued for traffic

violations with the Minister of Transportation and representatives from the Higher Judicial Council, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Interior, Traffic Police, traffic Supreme Council and some civil society organizations.

Following days of correspondence between AMAN and other relevant parties, the workshop was organized to follow-up on a complaint received by ALAC in this regard. The goal was to conclude recommendations on implementation mechanisms of the new traffic violations system which was adopted by the Council of Ministers.

Recommendations were as follows:

First: options for applying the system are confined in two approaches:

- a. Paying the fine first, while refraining from doing so refers the violator to court through the traffic police. Refraining from paying the dues leads to suspension of renewing either the vehicles or the person's licenses until the violation file at court are closed. Also the citizen can address the court if injustice is supposed towards getting a violation. (The majority of participants in the workshop supported this approach
- b. Modify the system so as to set two limits for the violation, a maximum and minimum, as the traffic officer gives the violation ticket to the citizen to pay through the bank within 30 days, where s/he pays the minimum if paid in time.

Second: banks must be involved in enforcing the mechanisms of the traffic fines system, as being a key part of this process, which needs a sub-committee that includes the following: Monetary Authority, representatives from the banks, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transportation and Traffic Police

Third: With regard to the traffic police

1. Prepare a guideline specifically for the violation system and distribute to traffic police.

2. Train the traffic police on the violation system. The party responsible for supervising the guideline and training should be appointed, where representative of the Higher Judicial Council expressed the council's willingness to participate.

Fourth: Forming a subcommittee of three to consider the distribution mechanism of half the collected fines on the local bodies, in line with Article 25 of the Law on Local bodies of 1997. The committee should include; Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Local Governance and the Federation of local bodies.

3.2 Workshop for discussing the Complaints filed by taxi offices' owners against the Ministry of Transportation

In 7/9/2009, ALAC held a meeting at AMAN's headquarters, gathering the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, a number of taxi offices owners, representatives of municipalities and districts in order to discuss complaints made by some of the taxi offices in Hebron, Jenin and Ramallah against the Ministry's policy regarding granting and withdrawing licenses to offices and its rights and obligations.

The owners, who submitted their complaints to AMAN, were given the chance to present their cases before officials in the Ministry of Transportation, whom were also informed by AMAN before convening this meeting.

Eng. Jamal Shqeir, Director-General of Traffic in the Ministry of Transportation, presented the procedures taken by the ministry directly after receiving the complaints from AMAN. He personally visited the complainants' offices and clarified that after investigating the complaints, faults were corrected in favor of the plaintiffs.

For instance, a license of one of the offices was approved after the ministry notified the office to close down and relocate. Mr. Shqeir confirmed that the Ministry of Transportation receives all complaints from citizens and investigates each case separately.

At the end of the meeting, participants recommended the need to work on developing mechanisms that

regulate the work of the traffic committees and their relationship with the ministry, as well as to develop a system for the fees owed from taxi offices and working drivers.

A number of recommendations were concluded in the workshop:

- 1. The need to develop mechanisms that regulate the work of traffic committees, and specify their authorities and relationship with the Ministry of Transportation
- 2. The need to develop a system for the fees owed from the taxi offices and working drivers and limits the fees ceiling
- 3. The need to organize a working system for the taxi station in cooperation with the municipalities.
- 4. To monitor the implementation of the decisions taken against the presented complaints during the meeting.

4. Hearings Session:

On 3/8/2009, ALAC held a hearing session for Mr. Anwar Zakaria, Director General of grants and scholarships in the Ministry of Education, in order to highlight the criteria and mechanisms for accessing scholarships and grants in the Palestinian higher education institutions, while informing the Palestinian public on the access criteria and ways of distribution.

The hearing came during the period of universities' and institutes registration and applying for grants and scholarships. The hearing was held within the ALAC and AMAN's goals aiming at enhancing transparency and citizen's rights to be informed about the work of public institutions, which will help him when exercising accountability, regarding his rights

At the end, it was noted that ALAC will receive any complaints from citizens, when surpassing the standards and mechanisms that have been announced during this session, regarding access to grants and scholarships.

EVALUATION OF COOPERATION WITH OFFICIAL AUTHORITIES

Here, we must also pause to assess the extent of cooperation of official institutions addressed regarding some complaints received by ALAC for investigation.

During 2009, the cooperation and response of official institutions continued, as some were more responsive than others. The expressed clear interest in following up the complaints received through AMAN Coalition which they successfully contributing to closing some cases.

The Office of the Prime Minister, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Justice, the Higher Judicial Council, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Local Governance, the Water Authority, Office of the Attorney General, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Transportation have all responded and expressed willingness to cooperate. The Ministry of Transportation also expressed willingness to participate in all the workshops and meetings organized by ALAC which relate to complaints filed against the Ministry.

It should be noted that there are a series of pending complaints sent to the Ministry of Interior, which we hope to take action against together with the ministry and solve and close them successfully.

We thank all the official institutions and we hope to continue this cooperation in following-up the complaints filed by citizens to AMAN.

CONCLUSIONS

After the end of the first year of ALAC's operation and based on the analysis presented in this report, we can say that there are some cases and issues that were frequently complained about due to some discrepancies in the integrity and transparency environments. This must be highlighted to be addressed as clarified below:

- 1. Public tenders, as same tenders were called for more than once in addition to some allegations on failing to follow proper procedures when opening the tenders' documents, price declaration and non-referral, where re-tendering is submitted again. Also, the frequent resorting to direct contracting in procurement which limits the principle of competition and equal opportunities. In addition, some bidders tend to change the tender's conditions after submission and declaration, due to the terms and conditions of the donor leading to calling for the tender again.
- Cases of misuse of public funds in charities and civil bodies, especially in light of the poor
 oversight by the Ministry of Interior, the competent party responsible for the registration of
 such associations. The ministry did not have any role in monitoring and controlling these
 societies that fall under its competence.
- 3. Issues misuse of office and conflict of interest in the local bodies, due to the weakness of the official regulatory bodies, especially the Ministry of Local Government, as well as the weakness of community control.
- 4. Issues of discrimination in offering services and public positions, as a result of political, family, geographical and other non substantive considerations, especially in light of the internal Palestinian divide.
- 5. The Issue of non-enforcement of courts' decisions, which reflects an imbalance in the principle of respecting the rule of the law by the executive bodies.

MAIN CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES FACED ALAC IN 2009

ALAC encountered a set of challenges and obstacles during its first year of operation limiting its efficiency as detailed below.

- 1. Lack of cooperation by some official parties in following-up the complaints referred to them. This may create frustration among complainants as they will become reluctant to blow the whistle on corruption in the future.
- 2. The continued misconception of corruption among citizens, despite the promotional and awareness campaigns conducted by ALAC throughout 2009. This has exhausted ALAC in receiving hundreds of complaints that are irrelevant to corruption. In addition, complaints are mostly ones in which complainants are directly affected by corruption while only a few aim at combating corruption and achieving public interest.
- 3. The weakness in filing corruption especially public sector employees due to the absence of legislation and procedures that protect whistle-blowers in Palestine.
- 4. The weak responsiveness of female whistle blowers on corruption cases despite being directly targeted by ALAC through its informative and awareness campaigns in 2009.
- 5. Some institutions did not take the findings of the workshops held by the ALAC seriously neither did they implement the suggested actions for reform in their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis presented in this report and after one year in operation, the following recommendations were concluded:

- 1. To develop the Palestinian legislation system, in relation to combating corruption and whistleblower protection, particularly the criminalization of all forms of corruption and increasing the penalty.
- The need to focus on workshops and hearings carried out by ALAC discussing the received complaints as this procedure contributed to ending the reported corruption-related complaint in a fast manner
- The need to focus on educating citizens about the difference between violations that are considered as corruption-related in line with the legal concept adopted by AMAN and other legal violations.
- 4. The need to continue focusing on raising the awareness of employees in the public sector on reporting corruption cases, being the ideal category to detect these crimes, but their insecurities about being protected may prevent them from doing so.
- 5. The need to continue focusing on raising public awareness regarding the possibility of corruption to occur in service-providing institutions of the private sector as well.
- 6. Referring to the experience described above, indicating the existence of corruption in the Ministry of Transportation and since a number of complaints were filed in this regard, it is recommended to target the Ministry to be the first to apply the National Integrity System project that seeks to create an anti-corruption environment. The system to be built should include:
 - Transparency in work procedures.

- Having an accountability system and an external and internal control system.
- Having codes of conduct for employees and specifying a supervisory body to provide follow-up and training, while engaging the external audit institutions, such as the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau, the General Personnel Council, the Financial Monitoring Units in the Ministry of Finance and concerned committees of the Legislative Council.
- 7. Educating citizens on the importance of preserving public money and the need to report any witnessed corruption, where most of the complainants were victims of corruption and a small percentage of them were witnesses. Therefore, we need to engage all citizens whether victims or witnesses, to combat corruption.