



Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA)

Violations against Female journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

(Special report)

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Palestinian female journalists represent third of the Palestinian journalists' syndicate, with about 290 female journalists from the 900 syndicate members, yet the number of female journalists who are not members of the syndicate is equal to the number of male journalists, while the number of female students majoring in media and press in Palestinian universities almost exceeded the number of male students.

Despite the difficult situation in Palestine, politically and socially, Palestinian female journalists have been active and engaged in press offices and field work, and they have proven merit, professionalism, and courage while covering events in the field fraught with serious attacks and life-threatening risks, This was clearly evident during the coverage of the marches and confrontations with the Israeli occupation army across the West Bank, and during the latest aggression on the Gaza Strip last summer, where they were followed with severe risk wherever they go; in the field, in the workplace, and residence, which was no longer safe for anyone, and increased pressure and burdens on those working female journalists (equal to their male counterparts)

Freelance journalist Samar Abu Ouf¹ told MADA that:

"Like other colleagues I would be there at the event, and getting targeted was constantly for all (male and female journalists) without discrimination. All journalists get physically and emotionally fatigue, and I am married and I have a 9-month-old son, and this is a source of pressure and a large concern for me, where I would be forced to stay for long hours outside the home in order to cover, and come home during work to breastfeed him.. I am always worried about my family and for me, especially as when I am forced to go out on missions during the night hours".

Female journalists in Palestine are exposed to many attacks and attempts aimed to silence them and reduce their ability to express. The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) has been monitoring disturbing patterns of violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces, or from various Palestinian sides in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

¹ Abu Ouf works as a freelance journalist with numerous media outlets (i.e.) Arab Press website, Al-Ghayda' Magazine and other international news agency. Her camera was broken; therefore, she was forced on the last 35 days of the Israeli aggression on Gaza to borrow her colleagues' cameras. She borrowed 9 cameras to implement her job. (According to Abu Ouf's testimony taken on 25/11/2014)

Palestinian journalists have suffered over the past years from Israeli occupation violations during different events. **Diala Jwehan- Al-Quds Net correspondent** was exposed to many injuries and violations; Jwehan says:

“The occupation always targets anyone in the media field, but they see me as a weak woman, and they believe they can intimidate me by their repeated physical attacks on me. In fact, these violations gave me the motivation and determination to continue with quality and more comprehensive work in the media”.

Among the most prominent examples of what the risks, challenges, and threats faced by female journalists during their work what has happened **to journalist Ruba al-Najjar**, where an unknown person on 05/09/2013 published a video on "YouTube", which threatens the presenter of the program A'yn A'la "An eye on" that is broadcasted on Palestinian Public TV "Ruba Al-Najjar" with rape and then murder, after her episode prepared and aired on the phenomenon of begging in Palestine and the episode contained investigative inquiry that revealed the involvement of people holding public positions in this case.

On 25/05/2013 the anonymous also planted a bomb in front of the house of Naser Abu Mayala, a crew member of the “A'yn A'la”, with a threat letter directed at Abu Mayala and the program presenter the journalist Ruba Al-Najjar, demanding not to broadcast their episode which will shed light on “fortune-tellers and charlatans” scheduled to air on the 26th. Al-Najjar reported to MADA then: "an anonymous placed a bag with a bomb inside it, and a threat letter, in front of my coworker's home Naser Aby Mayala, on the morning of Saturday 25th May 2013. The letter stated: “if you broadcast the episode on Sunday, the bomb will explode next time and target you and your coworker Ruba”.

Among the difficult Israeli violations targeting female journalists in the field, is the attack on **Huda Alhodali – Associated Press photographer** in 2013, while she was covering the ejection of the “Al Nawater village” near Jerusalem, where she was pushed and treated harshly by Israeli occupation soldiers, and she fell on her back on a big stone. Another incident, **Linda Shalash Al-Quds TV correspondent** was sprayed with wastewater by occupation soldiers during her coverage of the second batch of Palestinian prisoners release “Shalit Deal”, after midnight on 30th October 2013. Shalash reported to MADA then

“I fell on the ground from the power of water pressure, and I was fully soaked, despite of it I continued my work and I went to the presidential residence in the province to cover the entire activities of the Prisoners, where they held a welcoming reception for them”.

There is also the injury of Palestine TV correspondent Kristin Rinawi in her shoulder by rubber bullets fired at her by the Israeli Occupation Police, while she was covering demonstrations in Jerusalem on 2nd July 2014. Rinawi reported to MADA then:

“Following the kidnapping and torture to death of Mohammad Abu Khdeir (16 years old) by Israeli settlers (one of the suspects confessed that they had strangled and burned him), clashes broke out between Palestinians and the IOF in the Shu’fat neighborhood, north of Jerusalem. While we were covering the fierce clashes, with the IOF shooting rubber bullets and stun grenades indiscriminately and intensively, I was injured by a rubber bullet in my right shoulder and my colleague Ali Yassin (23 years old) by a rubber bullet in his left hand. An ambulance drove us to Al-Maqased hospital in Jerusalem, where they made an X-rays and gave us treatment. Overall, our injuries were described as minor since the bones were not injured or hurt.”

On 6th March 2014, 48 hours prior to the International Women’s Day, **Faten Alwan- Alhura channel correspondent** was pushed and threatened by a member of security forces while she was covering a women’s protest in front of the Palestinian Authority Headquarters “Almoqata’a” in Ramallah, demanding amendments on the Penal code and the personal status for women law, especially in regard to the so-called “honor killings”. Alwan Reported to MADA then:

*“A security personnel in his civil cloth started pushing us and all the journalists who were present on site, including my colleague, **Yahya Habayeb- Alhura TV cameraman**, and when I asked him why are you doing this? He commanded me to stay away or he will confiscate the camera, and when I asked him what his name was, he told me: “you journalists need discipline”, and then he said: Thank your Lord that you are not a man”. Alwan said she insisted on knowing his name so she can file a complaint against him, but he told her: “I’m a ghost no one can punish me”.*

Things did not stop there; the Ministry of Palestinian Women's Affairs withheld the honoring of **Nahed Abu Taima "a journalist and Informative"** because of her criticism of the government, parties and institutions for not protecting women in Palestine on her Facebook page. The Incident raised the ire of other women journalists like **Amal Joma'a, Ruba Al-Najjar, and Kristin Rinawi**, which led to their refusal to be honored by the ministry at its honorary ceremony that is supposed to be held to mark the International Women's Day.

Abu Taima reported to MADA: "There is a heavy burden on Palestinian women, and for 20 years we have begged the successive governments to protect women by amending the legal penalties and personal status, but without a avail, and since all Palestinian laws guarantee citizens the right to freedom of expression, it is our right as journalists to express our opinions about the government's different policies especially those relating to women. The attempts to intimidate women journalists, offending and abusing them in any form, and imposing censorship on their writing are unacceptable and contrary to the spirit of the laws".

In Gaza, women journalists face numerous threats due to their profession. **Samia Alzebidi "journalist"** reported to MADA that she had received several threats and in different ways from an unidentified person for expressing her opinion, and that sometimes the threat is padded and alludes to the possibility of fabrication of a moral case against the journalist if she continues her criticism of the government.

Nofuth Albakri – Alhaya Aljadeda newspaper correspondent reported to MADA - who monitored numerous attacks on her in the past years –That there are many obstacles that limit the ability of journalists to practice journalism in Gaza, and she noted that the security forces and officials exercise hidden and evident violations on the right of journalists. One example of this is the difficulty of access to information by journalists, where officials could deal with journalists in the smoothest and fastest manners, and women journalists are harassed and forced sometimes to wear a veil before entering for some events.

Albakri added: *"we also face the problems of access to some places; In general the police or security can stop a taxi and inquire about the reason for our presence in the car with the driver without a man, which hinders our work and our access to*

many of the events. In addition, when we go to cover in the field, they push young men to harass us by entering our personal space and stand very near to us”.

During the past five years (2010 - 2014) MADA has monitored 103 violations against female journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; the IOF committed the largest number and the most dangerous violations².

The attacks, which affected female journalists throughout this period accounted for 7.5% of the total violations committed by the Israeli occupation and Palestinian sides against media freedoms in Palestine, which totaled to 1356 violation committed against (female and male) journalists and media freedoms in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.³

The reasons for the limited number of violations against female journalists "compared to violations monitored by MADA against male journalists" are that the number of female journalists working in Palestine, and who now account for about a third of the members of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, in addition to that most of the abuses and violations against journalists are concentrated during field coverage and that the bulk of workers in the photography and filming of field coverage are male journalists.

Israeli Occupation violations against female journalists

the Israeli occupation committed 66 violation of the total number monitored against female journalists during the past five years, or what constitutes 64% of them, while the Palestinian sides committed a total of 36 assault against female journalists in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, or what accounts for about 35% of them, knowing that MADA monitored only one violation (threat) committed by an anonymous.

² During the 1st third of 2015 MADA monitored 14 violations against female journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; which shows an escalation compared to the last 5 years.

³ The Israeli occupation forces committed 905 violations out of the total 1356 violations; while the Palestinian sides committed 451 against journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the last 5 years.

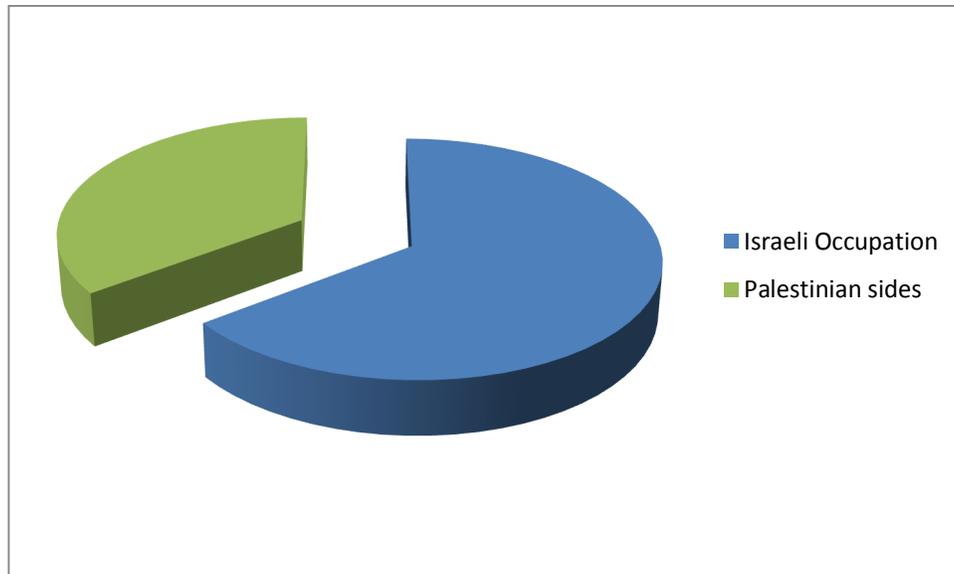
(Violations against female journalists since 2015)

By perpetrator and location

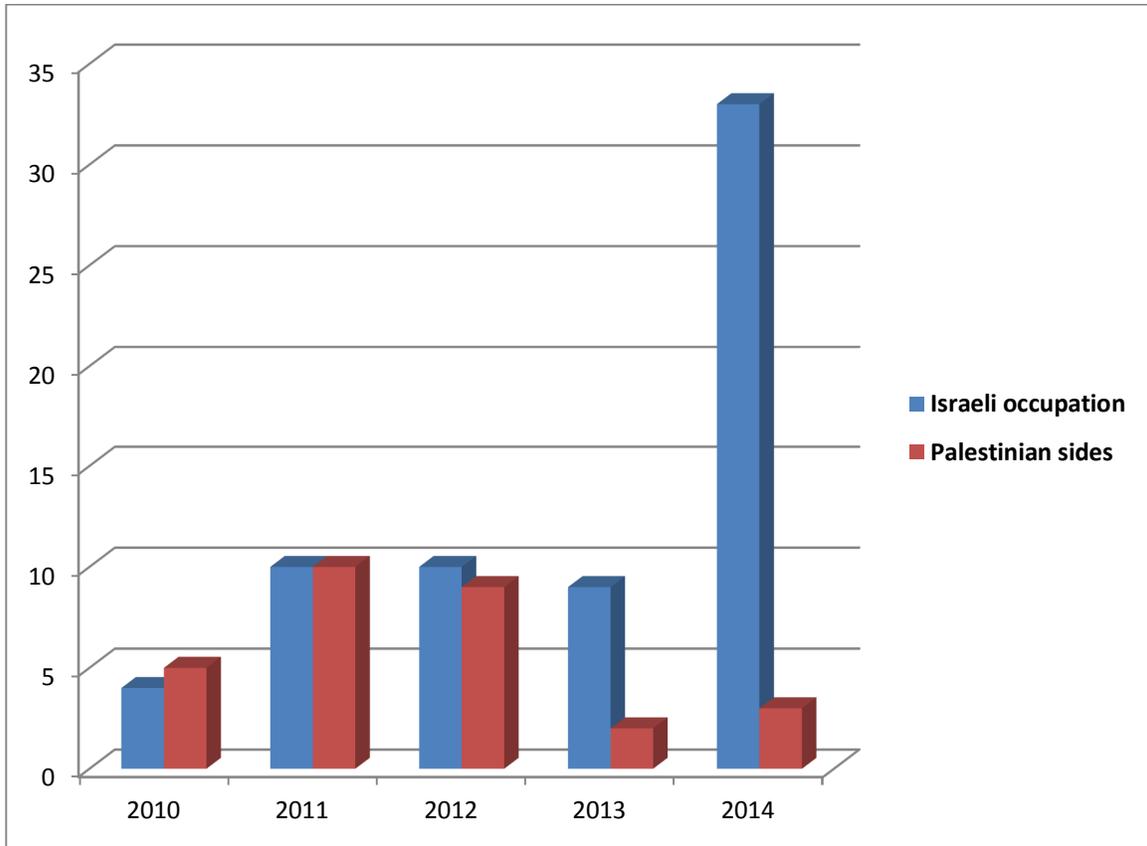
Perpetrator Year	Israeli Occupation		Palestinian sides		Total
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip	
2010	4	0	0	5	9
2011	10	0	2	8	20
2012	8	2	4	5	19
2013	9	0	1	1	11
2014	24	9	(another violation by an anonymous)	3	44
Total	66		36 + violation by anonymous		103

The bulk of the total violations were monitored in the West Bank, reaching 70 violations committed by the occupation and Palestinian sides, while the total number of violations monitored and documented against female journalists in the Gaza Strip was 33 committed by the occupation and Palestinian sides.

The overall violations against journalists during the past 5 years by the perpetrator



Violations against female journalists since 2010 based on perpetrator



Najla' Mahmoud Al-Hajj (29 years old), media activist and a volunteer at Facebook radio station, was killed after the IOF shelled her family's house in Khan Younis city, south of Gaza Strip, on 07/10/2014, this was no doubt the most severe among the total violations monitored against journalists during the past five years, especially because the bombing killed eight members of Alhaj's family too.

Najla's sister, Fida' Al-Hajj, reported to MADA, that their house had been shelled with two F-16 missiles with a short while between them, which killed her sister Najla', her parents, 3 of her sisters and 3 of her brothers. The shelling also

completely destroyed their house, affecting 30 other houses nearby with bombardment's Shrapnel.

Najla's friend, Noura Fat'hi reported to MADA: "Najla' was a volunteering at Facebook online radio station, in Gaza. She used to prepare reports for the station and she presented an on air program several times. She was a media activist on Facebook: she was the administrator of the page "Radya Rida Allah. Najla' completed a 150 hour training course with me on editing, photojournalism and new media. In addition, Najla' was active in covering issues and other events in the area like the prisoners issue, and she had prepared and published many reports."

Most of the Israeli attacks on female journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were within the category of the most dangerous attacks on media freedoms.

Among the 66-violation committed by the occupation forces against female journalists during the five years, 55 violation where among these types of violations: murder, physical attacks, arrests, destruction of homes in addition to the destruction of media feminist institutions, which means that more than 83% of the Israeli attacks which were monitored and documented against female journalists were among the most severe types of violations and dangerous to their lives.

(Israeli violations against female journalists based on type in 2010)

Year / Type of violations	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Murder	0	0	0	0	1	1
Physical attack	3	7	8	8	18	44
Arrest	0	1	1	0	1	3
Threats and prevention from coverage	0	0	1	0	0	1

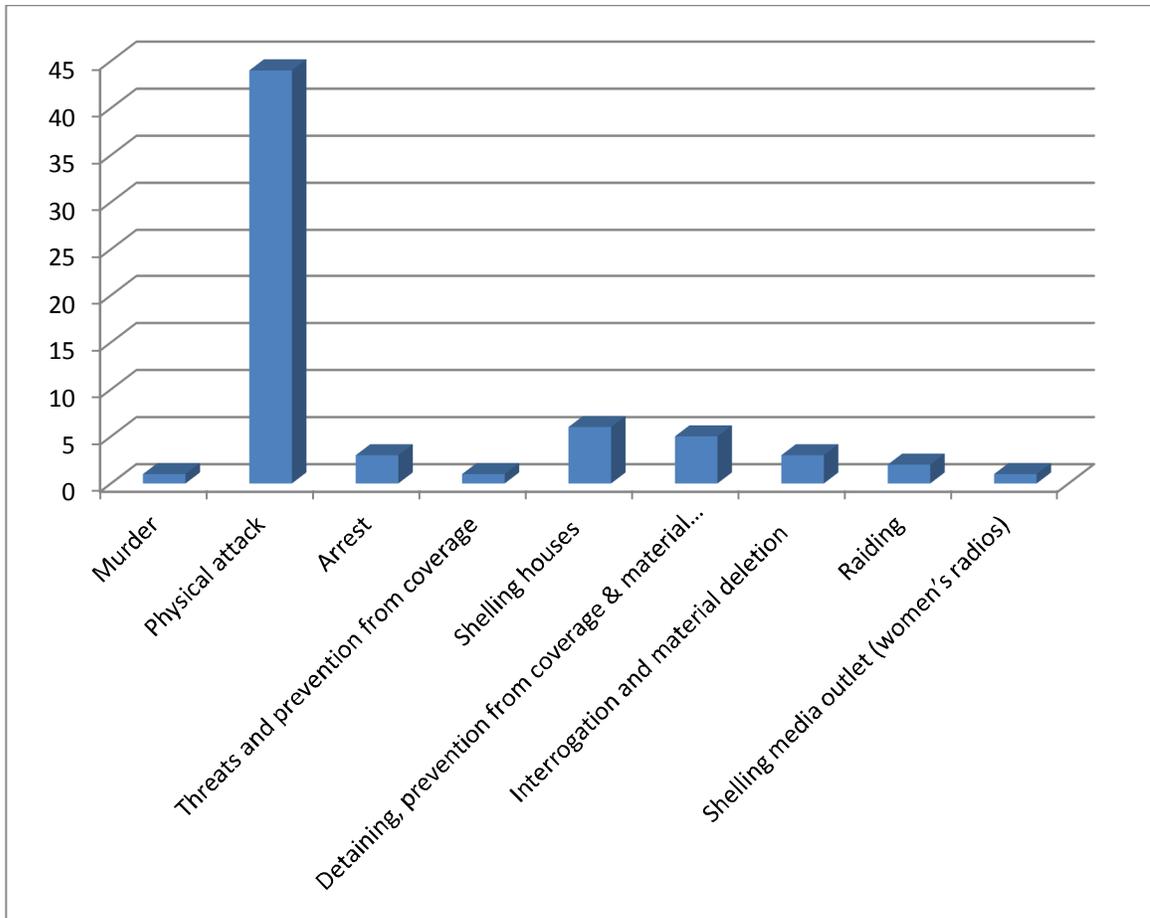
Shelling houses	0	0	0	0	6	6
Detaining, prevention from coverage & material deletion	0	2	0	1	2	5
Interrogation and material deletion	1	0	0	0	2	3
Raiding	0	0	0	0	2	2
Shelling media outlet (women's radios)	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total9	4	10	10	9	33	66

Israeli violations were distributed among eight types: murder, physical attacks, arrests, threats and denial of coverage, the bombing and the destruction of homes, the destruction of media organizations/ outlets, summoning and investigation, detention and prevention of coverage

The largest type of violation committed against female journalists was physical assaults, with 45 physical attack (one was a murder), accounting for more than 68% of the total violations committed by the occupation forces against female journalists during the past five years.

It is clear that prevention of coverage implemented by the Israeli occupation the Palestine was the most prominent engine of the occupation army to commit these violations against female journalists and, of course, those committed against journalists in general.

(Israeli violations against female journalists during the past 5 years based on type)



In addition to physical attacks aimed at its core dimensions to keep female journalists and journalists from getting to the site of events and prevent them from coverage, the majority of other violations that have been monitored range from detention to deleting their camera's memory, and the threat as an integral part also of procedures and attempts of the occupation to prevent female journalists from covering events or certain activities.

adding to the aforementioned violations, the occupation's continued preventing the free movement of Palestinian female and male journalists across the Palestinian territories, especially to prevent them from reaching Jerusalem, or movement between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinian violations against female journalists

The total violations committed by Palestinian sides against female journalists in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the past five years (since the beginning of 2010 until the end of 2014) were a total of 36 violations, 22 of which occurred in the Gaza Strip (equivalent to 61%) and 14 violations in the West Bank (the equivalent of 39%).

these violations committed by Palestinian sides against female journalists in the West Bank and Gaza were within ten types: physical attacks, arrests, prevention from coverage and deleting camera materials, threat, travel ban, work prohibition, summoning and investigation, raids and searches, detention and confiscation of equipment and materials, preventing journalistic activities.

(Palestinian Violations against female journalists based on type since 2010)

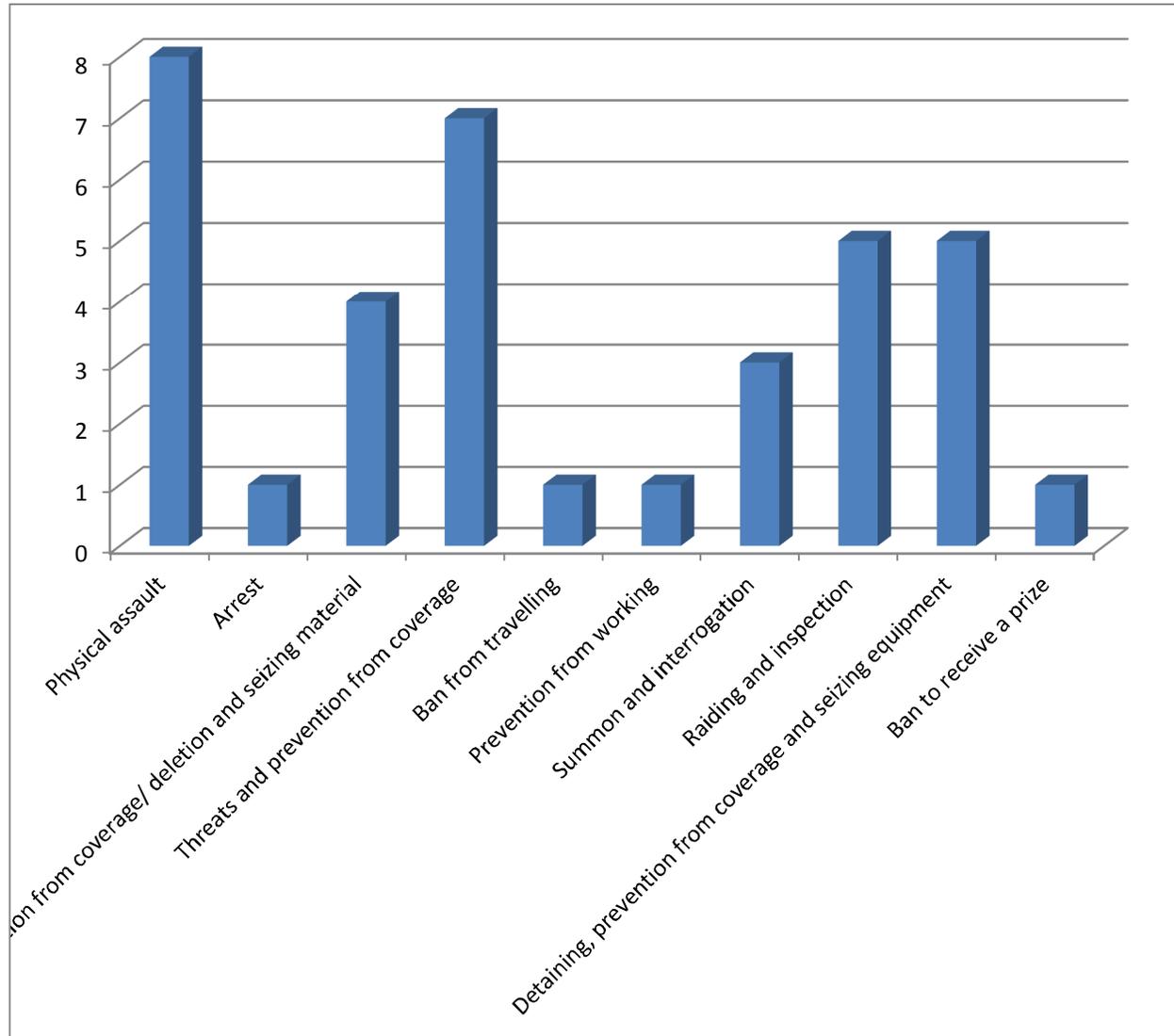
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Type of violation						
Physical assault	0	6	1	0	1	8
Arrest	0	0	1	0	0	1
Prevention from coverage/ deletion and seizing material	0	1	0	1	2	4
Threats and prevention from coverage	1	0	1	1	4	7
Ban from travelling	0	0	1	0	0	1
Prevention from working	0	0	1	0	0	1
Summon and interrogation	0	2	0	0	1	3
Raiding and inspection	3	1	0	0	1	5
Detaining, prevention from coverage and seizing equipment	1	0	4	0	0	5
Ban to receive a prize	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	5	10	9	2	10	36

Reading the set of numbers related to the Palestinian violations against female journalists shows that the bulk came in the context of attempts to prevent the coverage of some events or activities that do not appeal to some of the Palestinian sides, or pressure on female journalists and intimidating them to refrain from covering, through direct prevention at times, and the threat or summons or detention, and the confiscation of some of the equipment at other times, this as well as some physical attacks actually occurred to prevent coverage of the events or certain activities.

At least half of all violations suffered by female journalists (53% of them at least) were committed in order to prevent coverage.⁴

⁴ The total of violations under the title: prevention from coverage, threats and prevention from coverage summon and interrogation, detention & prevention from coverage and seizing material and equipment reached 19 violations. Besides, some of the physical assaults aimed to prevent from covering specific events.

(Palestinian Violations against female journalists during the past five years based on type)



Violations against female journalists based on perpetrator and location:

Given the geographic distribution of Israeli violations against female journalists during the five years, the bulk of them were monitored in the West Bank (55 in West Bank vs. 11 in the Gaza Strip) meaning more than 83% of the Israeli attacks against female journalists took place in the West Bank while 17% of violations were monitored against female journalists in Gaza.

We (MADA) believe that the reason for the focus of occupation violations against female journalists in the West Bank more than in the Gaza Strip, is because female and male journalists in the Gaza Strip only interact with the Israeli army in the event of an Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip, in contrast to the case in the West, where the journalists (female and male) are in constant interactions with Israeli occupation forces, in most places during coverage of field events and during their movements.

The pace of Israeli violations against female journalists has escalated significantly during the year 2014 and formed half of all those committed by the occupation against female journalists during the five years (50%).

Although a noticeable section of the violations committed by the occupation during the year 2014 against media freedoms and journalists (female and male) were monitored in the Gaza Strip during the aggression of the Israeli army over 51 days, yet the largest number of Israeli attacks monitored against female journalists in 2014 occurred in West Bank, where 24 violations were monitored Vs. 9 violations in Gaza.

As for the Palestinian violations against female journalists, the bulk were monitored in the Gaza Strip, with 22 violations were monitored Vs. 14 in the West Bank (61% versus 39%).

While 2011 witnessed the highest number of violations against Palestinian female journalists in the Gaza Strip (8 violations), the year 2014 witnessed the highest number of violations against female journalists in the West Bank (7 violations).

Violations committed against female journalists

Violations committed in 2010:

(Total violations committed against female journalists during 2010 based on perpetrator and location)

Perpetrator	Israeli occupation		Palestinian sides		Total
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip	
	4	0	0	5	
Total	4		5		9

(Israeli occupation violations against female journalists during 2010 based on location and type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Physical assault	3	0	3
Summon & Interrogation	1	0	1
Total	4	0	4

(Palestinian violations against female journalists during 2010 based on location and type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Raiding houses and seizing equipment	0	3	3
Threats	0	1	1
Detention, interrogation and prevention from coverage	0	1	1
Total	0	5	5

Violations committed in 2011:

(Total violations committed against female journalists during 2011 based on perpetrator and location)

Perpetrator	Israeli occupation		Palestinian sides		Total
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip	
	10	0	2	8	
Total	10		10		20

(Israeli violations against female journalists during 2011 based on location and type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total

Physical assault	7	0	7
Arrest	1	0	1
Detention & interrogation (Prevention from coverage)	2	0	2
Total	10		10

(Palestinian violations against female journalists during 2011 based on location and type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Physical assault	1	5	6
Prevention from coverage & deletion of material	0	1	1
Summon, interrogation and seizing of equipment	1	1	2
Raiding & inspecting houses	0	1	1
Total	2	8	10

Violations committed in 2012:

Total violations monitored during 2012 amounted to 19 against female journalists; 10 committed by the occupation, and 9 by Palestinian and 9 sides

(Total violations committed against female journalists during 2012 based on perpetrator and location)

Perpetrator	Israeli occupation		Palestinian sides		Total
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip	
	8	2	4	5	
Total	10		9		19

(Israeli violations against female journalists during 2012 based on location & type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Physical assault	6	2	8
Arrest	1		1
Threats & prevention from coverage	1		1
Total	8	2	10

(Palestinian violations against female journalists during 2012 based on location & type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Physical (injury by mistake)	1		1
Ban from travel		1	1
Arrest	1		1

Threats	1		1
Ban from work	1		1
Detention, prevention from coverage & seizing material and equipment		4	4
Total	4	5	5

Violations committed in 2013:

(Total violations committed against female journalists during 2013 based on perpetrators & location)

Perpetrator	Israeli occupation		Palestinian sides		Total
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip	
	9	0	1	1	
Total	9		2		11

(Israeli violations against female journalists during 2013 based on location and type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank
Physical assault	8
Detention & deletion of material	1
Total	9

Violations committed in 2014:

Palestinian female journalists suffered during 2014 from a total of 44 violations; 33 were committed by the Israeli occupation, and 10 by Palestinian sides while another monitored violation (the threat of a female journalist from Jerusalem through Facebook) was committed by an unknown (due to not being able to say for sure which side committed the violation).

(Total violations committed against female journalists during 2014 based on perpetrator & location)

perpetrator	Israeli occupation		Palestinian sides		Anonymous	Total
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip		
	24	9	7	3		
Total	33		10		1	44

(Israeli violations against female journalists during 2014 based on location & type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Murder		1	1
Physical assault	17	1	18
Arrest	1		1
Shelling houses		6	6
Prevention from coverage	2		
Detention, interrogation & deletion of material	2		

Raiding	2		
Shelling of media outlet (Women's radio)		1	
Total	24	9	33

(Palestinian violations against female journalists during 2014 based on location & type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Physical assault	1		1
Prevention from coverage & deletion of material	2		2
Threats	1	3	4
Summon & interrogation	1		1
Raiding houses & seizing material and equipment	1		1
Ban from receiving a prize	1		1
Total	7	3	10

Violations committed against female journalists in 2015:

The first third of 2015 witnessed a total of 103 violations against media freedoms in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli occupation has committed 55 while 48 violations were committed with Palestinian sides.

The number of violations against female journalists in 2015 was 14 violations, 11 were committed by the occupation, and only 3 violations by the Palestinian sides (two were monitored in Gaza and one in the West Bank).

The amount of violations monitored against female journalists during the first third of 2015, points to the pace of attacks on female journalists are still rising or at relatively high levels compared to previous years.

the violations monitored against female journalists during the first third of 2015, has gone beyond the total violations monitored against female journalists in 2010 (which was only 9 violations), and beyond what was monitored in 2013 (11 violations), the violations monitored so far in 2015 is near what was monitored in 2011 and 2012 (amounted to 20 and 19 violations against female journalists).

It is noted that the rate of violations against female journalists rose, where the number of attacks they have suffered during the first third of 2015, which is 20% of the total Israeli violations against media freedoms and journalists, which is a higher percentage than about three times what female journalists have been subjected to during the past five years⁵.

In terms of the nature of these attacks, it also notes that physical assaults of female journalists accounted for about half of the Israeli violations they have suffered during the first third of 2015.

**(Total violations committed against female journalists during the first third of 2015
based on perpetrator and location)**

Perpetrator	Israeli violation		Palestinian sides		Total
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip	
	11	0	1	2	
Total					14

⁵ Between 2010 and 2014 the violations faced the female journalists equaled 7.5% of the total Israeli violations.

(Palestinian violations against female journalists during the 1st third of based on location & type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Interrogation & detention of money transfer	1	0	1
Threats	0	1	1
Physical assault	0	1	1
Total	1	2	3

(Israeli violations against female journalists during the 1st third of 2015 based on location & type of violation)

Type of violation	West Bank
Physical assault	5
Arrest- extension of arrest & bail	2
Prevention from coverage & interrogation	4
Total	11

MADA center is proud of Palestinian female journalists who are role models with their level of professionalism, and they have done great efforts to convey the true picture of the reality of Palestinian women and other issues of concern to the Palestinian community in spite of all difficulties and obstacles and repression, We also condemn all attacks on them, and demand they stop and to end all forms of discrimination against them.