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Justice for the Palestinian people: fifty years of Israeli occupation

Communication strategy to support the Palestinian people

Summary

The present document puts forward a proposed media and communications strategy to support the Palestinian people and institutions in their efforts to secure their inalienable rights and to achieve justice and peace. The strategy will be based on making use of ESCWA analytical documents to assist the Palestinian people in ensuring their rights and self-determination, securing justice and holding the Israeli authorities accountable for their violations.

The present document sets out the overall context underpinning the preparation of this strategy and the goals it hopes to accomplish, in addition to the key messages ESCWA aims to propagate and the channels it will pursue to implement the strategy.

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Introduction

1. The Palestinian people's cause and rights remain a key regional and global issue, although the attention given to this issue varies over time, and a principle source of instability in the region. ESCWA and other United Nations entities continue to highlight the situation of the Palestinian people and Israeli violations of their rights and of international law. ESCWA efforts stem from its keenness to protect the Arab region's peoples and countries and to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, notably the rule of law including international law.
2. Over the past decades, ESCWA has striven to enhance the capacity of the Palestinian people and institutions, and assessed the effects of Israeli policies and practices on Palestinians and on economic and social development in Palestine. It has documented these effects in periodic reports and other documents and research. Following a request from its member States, ESCWA has recently begun examining the various aspects of Israeli violations of international law and their resulting economic and social impact.
3. In its reports and studies, ESCWA has documented the effects of Israeli policies and practices on the Palestinian people, drawing from credible sources. It has also conducted evidence-based analyses, in line with United Nations principles. This scientific work provides valuable insight into the reality of life in Palestine, which can be used to support the Palestinian people and institutions in the struggle to secure their inalienable rights and to achieve justice and peace.
4. At its first meeting, held in Amman in June 2015, the ESCWA Executive Committee requested the secretariat to develop a media plan aimed at broadening the propagation of statistical information showing the repercussions of Israeli violations at the humanitarian and rights levels.

PROPOSED MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY IN SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

I. GOALS

5. The strategy will make use of ESCWA analytical documents to assist the Palestinian people in securing their rights and self-determination, ensuring justice and holding the Israeli authorities accountable for their violations.
6. ESCWA thus aims to achieve the following:
 - (a) Provide Palestinian institutions and entities, and other bodies and organizations that support the Palestinian people, with analytical and statistical documentation prepared by ESCWA to be used for raising awareness, advocacy and holding the Israeli authorities to account;
 - (b) Widely disseminate EWCWA material on the rights of the Palestinian people and on Israeli violations of international law within United Nations entities and foreign diplomatic missions;
 - (c) Ensure sufficient media coverage of ESCWA material on the rights of the Palestinian people, and on Israeli violations of international law and their effects on the Palestinian people so as to raise awareness on a wide scale.

II. OVERALL CONTEXT

7. The situation on the ground in Palestine is deteriorating economically and socially as a result of continued Israeli policies and practices. Public opinion regarding the Palestinian people is changing significantly at the global level in general, and particularly in the West, in favour of the Palestinian people and their rights and in opposing Israeli policies and practices that violate international law and the principles of

justice and non-discrimination. These changes are the result of many factors, notably the cumulative efforts of the Palestinian people and their tireless struggle; other advocacy and diplomatic efforts to attain Palestinian rights; and the considerable changes effected by the information and communications revolution and the consequent ability to instantly send photographic evidence and information directly from the field, without the need for journalistic or official intermediaries.

8. The accumulation of evidence, testimonies and documentation on the oppression of the Palestinian people through illegal Israeli practices is of vital importance. This accumulation may suddenly reach a critical mass that can result in a “magical moment” that would cause a snowball effect, thus altering public opinion globally in record time. Increasing evidence on Israeli violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws is being widely covered in the traditional and modern media, including the independent press, thereby strengthening its effects and reverberations among key global figures.

9. There has also been a notable change in public opinion regarding the Palestinian people, following decades of distorted views on the issue resulting from several factors. Opinions on the Palestinian people began to alter from “those savage, bloodthirsty Arabs who love their children less than they hate Israel” or “those poor people from the third world who are beleaguered by consecutive crises and who have no option but to beg the world for sustenance”, to “people who reject oppression, cling to a decent life and sacrifice all to protect and educate their children and guarantee a brighter future for them”. The perception of Palestinians from “primitive people that are unaccomplished in science, art or literature” is changing to “creative and inventive people in the direst of situations”.

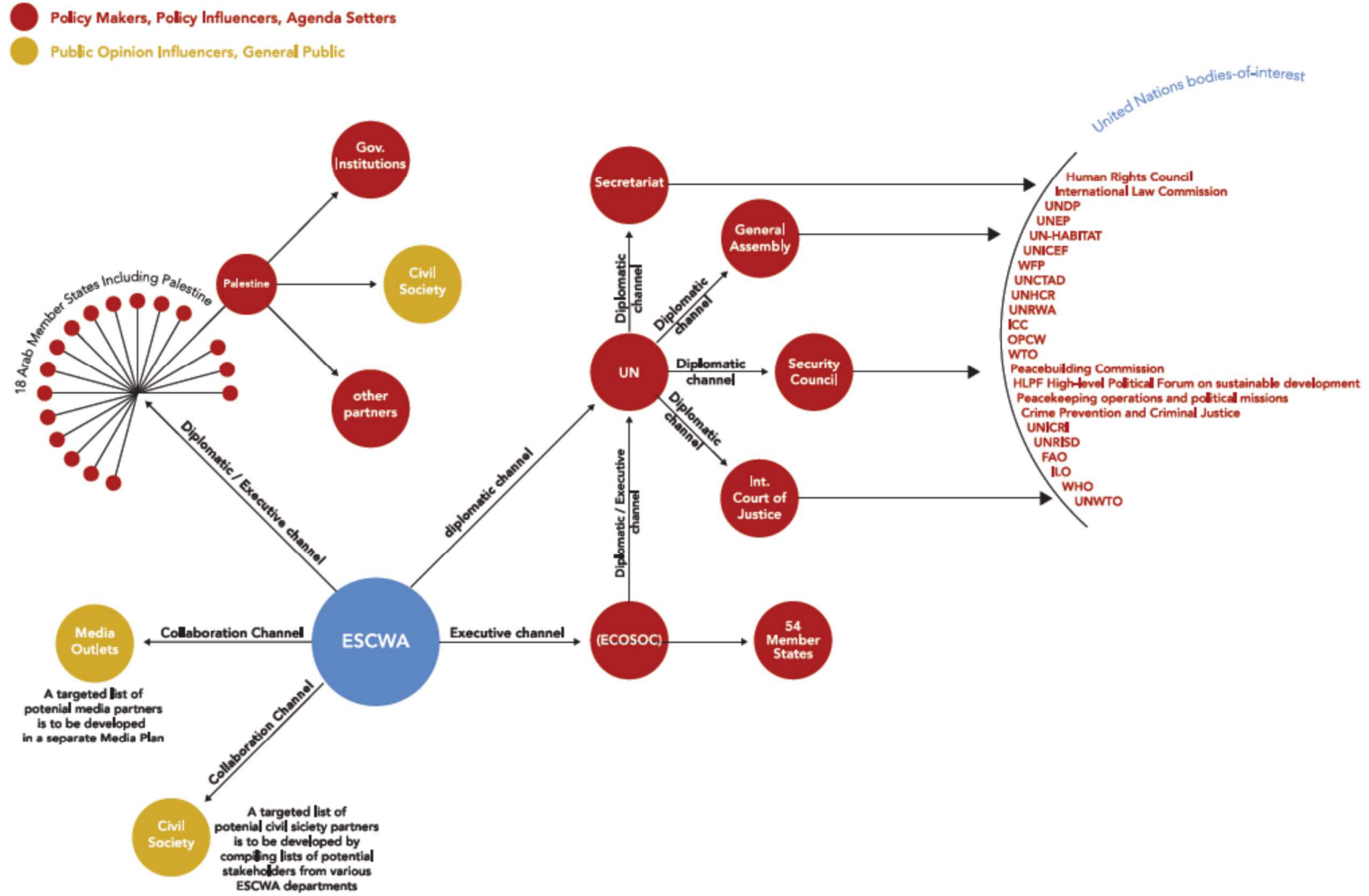
10. This change in the image of Palestinians leads to increased empathy and to an awareness that they are equal to other human beings, deserving respect and dignity rather than pity and contempt. They struggle daily against difficult man-made circumstances. This change constitutes a necessary platform for advocacy, protection and awareness-raising efforts at the rights, legal and political levels.

11. Today, media, political and diplomatic attention to rights and violations is linked to the identity of those whose rights are being violated or of those who are committing those violations. Political and diplomatic positions and media coverage do not address violations of Palestinian rights in the same manner as violations of Israeli or Western rights. This reality must be acknowledged, regardless of whether it conflicts with United Nations principles, human rights and other humanitarian values.

12. Constructing an image or “brand” for Palestine and its people is therefore as important as documenting, analysing and disseminating the facts related to Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. To ensure justice for the Palestinian people, end Israeli violations of international law and hold those responsible to account, it is necessary to alter the international community’s view of Palestinians, especially that of Western countries, and no longer perceive them solely as recipients of humanitarian aid and a source of concern and inconvenience. The international community must acknowledge that the Palestinian people inspire societies, have economic value and are a force for positive change in the world. Therefore, any violation of Palestinian rights is an infringement on the rights of humanity as a whole.

13. Although the history of media and communications shows that there is no magic fix in advocacy efforts to radically alter public opinion, this accumulation of efforts could lead to the above-mentioned “magical moment”. In this context, ESCWA enjoys a strategic position in its ability to play a pivotal role in accumulating a critical mass of evidence and public awareness, free of political pressures.

ESCWA potential audiences and communication/information dissemination channels



III. KEY MESSAGES

14. In view of the above, for the media and communications strategy to succeed, its key messages must be formulated in line with the nature of the case of Palestine and from the perspective of Palestinian rights and the principles of the United Nations and international justice. The following messages are proposed to be included in ESCWA communication material based on its analytical and documenting activities on Palestine:

- The Palestinian people are committed to attaining a decent life and justice, and can inspire other peoples and contribute to human development and a better world;
- Peace cannot be achieved without justice, and justice cannot be secured before Palestinians enjoy their rights in full, including self-determination, development and the right to return;
- To leave the Palestinian question unresolved and Israeli violations of international law undeterred threatens the international system, which is based on justice, non-discrimination and the rule of law;
- Any solution to the Palestinian question must be in line with the principles of non-discrimination, justice and the right to self-determination, as enshrined in international law.

IV. ESCWA FRAMEWORK

15. ESCWA possesses the resources, analytical capacity, data and knowledge to formulate a framework to expedite change in global public opinion and translate it into political positions, policies and practical steps towards securing Palestinian rights and achieving justice in Palestine. ESCWA efforts in that regard can pursue the following two trajectories:

- Working with Palestinian institutions, member States and other partners to strengthen advocacy efforts and raise awareness of Palestinian rights and justice in Palestine; and relay the real image of the Palestinian people;
- Working with member States and United Nations entities, via international and legal forums, the media and civil society organizations, to highlight the injustice suffered by the Palestinian people and Israeli violations of international law and United Nations principles, so as to strengthen efforts aimed at ending this injustice and holding perpetrators to account.

16. The following sections sets out the channels that ESCWA and member States can pursue to deliver their key messages.

A. DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS

17. It would be beneficial to provide diplomats from missions and foreign ministries with information, in coordination with relevant Palestinian institutions. This would result in the development of more supportive official positions towards the Palestinian cause, based on ESCWA information and analyses. In this context, the following can be proposed:

- Member States, through their embassies globally, use ESCWA material in their communications with diplomats at events and bilateral meetings;
- ESCWA and member States present ESCWA material at meetings and official events to deliver the above-mentioned key messages;
- ESCWA and member States use official activities organized to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November of every year) and other activities to disseminate information and raise awareness.

B. UNITED NATIONS FORUMS

18. Several United Nations entities and mechanisms have registered strong positions regarding the Palestinian cause, but it is necessary to widely disseminate ESCWA material within these entities as input for their programmes, projects and decisions related to Palestine. The following can be undertaken in this context:

- Work with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and with the United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights by participating in their annual conferences and organizing joint activities so as to promote networking and cooperation between ESCWA and the Committee and between ESCWA and conference participants, and to disseminate ESCWA material;
- Include sessions on Palestine in the work programmes of relevant conferences and meetings, especially those organized by United Nations entities, and review the status of various sectors in Palestine and Israeli violations of related international treaties using ESCWA material.

C. CIVIL SOCIETY AND STUDENT MOVEMENTS

19. Support can be provided to civil society organizations and students movements striving to secure justice and Palestinian rights by providing them with United Nations material, so as to increase the credibility of their demands and activities in the public eye, thus strengthening their effectiveness. This can be achieved through the following:

- Networking and communicating with activists, civil society organizations and student movements and establishing a fixed mechanism for the dissemination of ESCWA material;
- Formulating ESCWA material in a way that facilitates its use by civil society organizations and students to increase effectiveness, including material on new media such as social networks.

D. MEDIA

20. At the media level, differences in approaches should be taken into account between traditional media (television, newspapers and radio) and new media (social networks).

1. *Traditional media*

21. Traditional media continues to play a key role in shaping public opinion globally. While some media outlets worldwide follow set editorial guidelines with regard to the Palestinian cause on the basis of purely political or ideological considerations, many others do not and can therefore cover and publish ESCWA material to disseminate key messages. The following can be undertaken in this context:

- Promote direct communication between ESCWA and journalists and managers in media outlets, ensure coverage and publication of ESCWA material on Palestine and conduct interviews with ESCWA officials to achieve the following:
 - Conduct press interviews on the launch of key reports and related events;
 - Secure free media space to publish media material produced by ESCWA and its partners;
 - Involve experts, ESCWA officials and partners in media/news programmes covering issues related to Palestine, especially during crises;
 - Provide material, information and interviews to documentary makers and producers;

- Write or commission opinion articles and analyses on Palestine based on ESCWA material and information;
- Operationalize the role of communications officers in member State embassies and missions to ensure adequate coverage of ESCWA material;
- Ensure cooperation between ESCWA and civil society organizations in various countries to communicate with local media institutions and ensure coverage and dissemination of ESCWA material on Palestine;
- Adopt methods to guarantee the wide dissemination of ESCWA key messages via the media, including:
 - Preparing tactical messages for each media appearance or article, in line with needs and occasions;
 - Formulating tactical messages and specialized media material in simple language;
 - Ensuring the readiness of information and material to attract media attention when necessary.

2. *New media*

22. New media provides a forum for discussion, and guarantees the broad and rapid dissemination of information. It has even become a source of information for traditional media stories. New media is therefore a powerful tool for altering public opinion. ESCWA can therefore play a pioneering role in raising awareness and propagating key messages via new media by undertaking the following:

- Establishing ESCWA social media sites as key information sources on the Palestinian people and Israeli violations of international law;
- Producing accessible and easily disseminated material targeting different groups, including activists, diplomats, students and development officials;
- Identifying and monitoring relevant resources and channels in modern media for use in propagating key messages and information;
- Using social media sites and other sites to monitor, understand and collect data on alterations in public opinion regarding the Palestinian people and on their causes;
- Adopting approaches that strengthen participation and dissemination in modern media, such as:
 - Ensuring ESCWA credibility as an information source;
 - Formulating simple messages and propagating them individually;
 - Using memes and infographics in information distribution;
 - Incentivizing the public to communicate, collaborate and disseminate information;
 - Paying attention to the aesthetic aspects of audio-visual material;
 - Using simple language, free of complexities, technical terms and expert phrases;
 - Employing consistent tone and terminology in each topic;
 - Using the element of surprise.

E. SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

23. The effective implementation of this strategy requires several support activities and measures, including the following:

- Prepare an exploratory report that identifies countries with influence in the Palestinian case, such as permanent members of the Security Council, in terms of public opinion and civil society

organizations supporting the Palestinian cause, and determine the most effective media channels in those countries;

- Organize workshops and consultative meetings with relevant Palestinian institutions to develop and coordinate workplans and communication and media mechanisms;
- Ensure the participation of numerous member States in official meetings that consider reports on Palestine and occupation practices, including the annual report by the Secretary-General prepared by ESCWA on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan;
- Train ESCWA staff members and member State representatives to write journalistically and formulate messages related to the Palestinian cause;
- Prepare material that member State embassies and diplomatic missions can use to raise awareness on the Palestinian cause;
- Cooperate with media and communications experts to develop plans and design media campaigns;
- Hold meetings with media representatives, public figures, civil society activists and student movements to build relationships, partnerships and communication and cooperation mechanisms, in the region and globally, especially in countries that directly influence the Palestinian cause.
