

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF RADIO, TELEVISION AND CINEMA**

MASTER THESIS

**THE ROLE OF INSTAGRAM
IN INFLUENCING THE PUBLISHING, SHARING, AND
POSTING RELATED TO THE SHEIKH JARRAH 2021
EVENTS**

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASST. PROF. YASMIN ALDAMEN**

ISTANBUL, 2022

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by

OMAR MOHAMMAD RASHEED RAYYAN

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Radio Television and Cinema**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASST. PROF. YASMIN ALDAMEN**

ISTANBUL, 2022

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Art in Radio, TV and Cinema Program.

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Date of Submission


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ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname:

Signature



ÖZ

ŞEYH CERRAH 2021 OLAYLARIYLA İLGİLİ YAYINLAMA, PAYLAŞIM VE GÖNDERİLERİ ETKİLEMEDE INSTAGRAM'IN ROLÜ

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Pek çok kullanıcının sosyal medya platformlarının Şeyh Cerrah olayları hakkındaki bilgileri sansürlemeye yönelik eleştirilerine bağlı olarak, çalışma Instagram'ın gönderi ve besleme paylaşma hüküm ve koşullarının Şeyh ile ilgili etkileme, yayınlama ve gönderileri nasıl etkilediğini bulmayı ve ortaya çıkarmayı ve 10 Mayıs 2021'de patlak veren Jarrah 2021 olayları ve Instagram'ın olayla ilgili bilgileri kısıtlayıp silip silmediğini öğrenmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Çalışmada nicel ve nitel araştırma yaklaşımları izlenerek bir anket tasarlanıp (304) kişiye çevrimiçi dağıtılmıştır. Ayrıca, araştırmanın problemini daha derinlemesine anlamak için bazı uzmanlar ve etkileyici kişilerle yoğun görüşmeler ve mülakatlar yapılmıştır.

Çalışma, Instagram'ın silinen gönderiler, sınırlı hikâye erişimi, silinen yorumlar ve hatta Filistin yanlısı ve Şeyh Cerrah'ın olaylarıyla ilgili olan Instagram sayfaları ve hesapları gibi birçok biçimin yayınlanmasını kontrol etmede- Instagram şirketinin sözcüleri tarafından yapılan resmi yalanlamalara rağmen- rol oynadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Bu araştırma için örnek çalışmanın Bella Hadid, Muna Al-Kurd ve diğerleri gibi etkileyicilerin Instagram profillerinden derlenen Şeyh Cerrah'taki olaylarla ilgili haberlerin diğer haber kaynaklarına göre daha güvenilir ve güvenilir olduğunu ortaya koyduğu varsayılmıştır. Instagram influencer profillerinin ve gönderilerinin, kullanıcılara güncel olaylardan haberdar olma veya belki de ilk kez onlar hakkında bilgi edinme konusunda daha fazla fırsat verdiği gözlemlendi.

Anahtar kelimeler: Instagram, Etkilemek, Filistin, Şeyh Cerrah 2021 Olayları



ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF INSTAGRAM IN INFLUENCING THE PUBLISHING, SHARING, AND POSTING RELATED TO THE SHEIKH JARRAH 2021 EVENTS

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Depending on many users' criticism of social media platforms for the censoring of the information on Sheikh Jarrah events, the study aims to find out and expose how Instagram's terms and conditions of sharing posts and feed affect the influencing, publishing and posting related to Sheikh Jarrah 2021 events that erupted on May 10, 2021 and to find out whether Instagram, has restricted and erased information related to the event.

The study followed the quantitative and qualitative research approaches by designing a questionnaire of (304) persons who were distributed an online questionnaire. Moreover, intensive interviews were conducted with some of the experts and influencers to gain more in-depth understanding of the problem of the research.

The study found out that Instagram played a role in controlling the publishing by many forms such as deleted posts, limited story reach, deleted comments, and even removed or deleted Instagram pages and accounts that were pro-Palestinian and related to the events of Sheikh Jarrah, despite the official denials made by spokespeople for the company of Instagram.

It was assumed that the sample study for this research revealed that the news about the events in Sheikh Jarrah gathered from the Instagram profiles of influencers like Bella Hadid, Muna Al-Kurd, and others were more trustworthy and dependable than other news sources. It was observed that Instagram influencer profiles and posts give users greater opportunities to stay up to speed on current events or perhaps learn about them for the first time.

Keywords: Instagram, Influencing, Palestine, the Sheikh Jarrah 2021 Events.



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Omar RAYYAN
ISTANBUL, 2022

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Channel
ICT	Information and communication Technology
IDF	Israel Defence Forces
MEE	Middle East Eye
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
OS APP	Operating System for Mobile Devices
PA	Palestinian Authorities
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
TİB	Telekomünikasyon İletişim Başkanlığı (Telecommunications Directorate)
UN	United Nations
UNRAWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In order to give a better background on what social media is about, this study starts with defining social media explaining its features, uses and some of its impacts on some cases and social movements that occurred in the previous years around the world in general and in the Middle East on a special case. While going through these points, the size of Instagram in social media and the role Instagram has in some political fields are also reviewed. The research moves to talk about and investigate Instagram as a social platform taking its features into consideration and taking a more in-depth look at its roles in some social movements. Instagram is then studied in the field of news, politics and the way it was used in these fields. The censorship policies Instagram goes by are then taken into investigation in this research, as these censorship policies are an important pillar of this study.

Moving to the next chapter, the second axis of the study is taken into hand, as the Sheikh Jarrah events are directly related to the case of Palestine. First of all, the case of Palestine is briefly reviewed and the events of the Palestine case are slowly going through until our day today. Sheikh Jarrah's neighbourhood and the Gaza strip are introduced, and then the escalation of the events was mentioned in detail. As these small factors are being explained, the mist and fog on the research question, the problems of the study and the aims of the study start to clear up slowly.

The literature review is then presented in the following chapter of the study. As not many studies are done in this field and very few were done related to this case, the literature review of this paper mainly focuses on similar studies done on similar cases or events related to the Sheikh Jarrah events and on Instagram's or other similar social platforms' roles in these issues.

As these factors and thoughts are pointed out, this paper's research problems slowly emerge and become visible to the naked eye and mind. The research problem redirects us to the hypothesis of the study where it is mainly assumed that Instagram did not stand by its terms and conditions of use and was rather biased toward a specific side of the case – the anti-Palestinian side that is – and had some pro-Palestinian posts, stories and even some accounts removed, limited and deleted.

This chapter also explains the importance of the study from many points of perspective in favour of future studies to be done and many other dimensions. Moreover, this study explains the qualitative and quantitative methods used in order to gather data and information to prove the hypothesis it has. Details related to the questionnaire performed, the interviews conducted in favour of the study and the interviewees are also given in this chapter.

The results are provided in the following chapter. The results of these data collection methods used are to help prove the hypothesis of the study to either be correct and on point or not. Throughout the discussion chapter, the results are discussed and, along with the discussion, the study reaches conclusions that answer the research question in this paper.

1.1. Social Media And Politics

1.1.1. Social Media: Definition, Features, Uses, and Brief Impacts

Social media are interactive technologies that allow people to share information, ideas, and other kinds of expression through virtual communities and networks (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Interactive Web 2.0 Internet-based apps are referred to as social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The essence of social media is user-produced material, such as written posts or comments, digital images or videos, and data created via all online interactions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Users build service-specific profiles for the website or app, which the social media company designs and maintains (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). By integrating a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups, social media aids the growth of online social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

In other words, social media refers to the ways through which individuals connect in virtual communities and networks by creating, sharing, and/or exchanging information and ideas. The major Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube profiles are managed by the Office of Communications and Marketing (Tufts University, 2021). Social media are "Forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) via which users construct online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). (Social Media Definition and Meaning - Merriam Webster, 2021). However, defining social media in exact and precise terms is considered difficult due to the range of emerging built-in services. Yet, social media experts generally agree that social media includes a number of mutual forms including blogging, collaborative project management, enterprise social networking, business networks, forums, microblogs, picture sharing, product/service review, social bookmarking, social gaming, social networks, video sharing, and virtual worlds (Aichner & Jacob, 2015).

The internet's expansion permitted the launch of online communication services such as CompuServe, America Online, and Prodigy in the 1980s and 1990s, according to "The History of Social Networking" on the technology news site Digital Trends. Email, bulletin board messaging, and real-time online chatting were used to expose individuals to digital communication. Starting with the short-lived Six Degrees profile uploading service in 1997, this gave birth to the first social media networks (Maryville University, 2020).

With the introduction of the Live Journal publishing site in 1999, another early form of digital social communication, weblogs, or blogs, gained prominence. This was at the same time that Pyra Labs, a software start-up that was bought by Google in 2003, launched the Blogger publishing platform. LinkedIn began as a networking service for career-minded professionals in 2002 (Maryville University, 2020). It had expanded to over 675 million users globally by 2020. It is still the most popular social media platform for job searchers and HR managers looking for competent applicants. After a brief period of success, other significant attempts into social media failed. Myspace was founded in 2003. It was the most viewed website on the internet by 2006, thanks to the opportunity for users to share new music immediately from their profile pages (Maryville University, 2020).

In 1999, the introduction of basic chatting and message capabilities marked the beginning of social networking on mobile networks. Thanks to the development of several technologies in mobile networks over the course of four generations, social networking has advanced. The first generation's technologies were application-based and pre-installed on mobile phones, and it ran from 1999 to 2004. One feature allowed for "text-only" communication through chat rooms, and users of these services may remain anonymous. (Lane, Walton-Flynn, & Benlamlih, 2008). Between 2004 and 2006, the second generation was born. Many capabilities and opportunities, such as uploading images, were introduced with the launch of 3G and camera phones. The programs are mostly used for dating purposes (Lane, Walton-Flynn, & Benlamlih, 2008). During the years 2006-2008, the third generation took place.

This generation created mobile social networks as a way of life and brought about substantial changes. Its features include an improved user interface, automatic posting to online profiles and status updates, certain Web 2.0 features, group search and join by interests, alerts, location-based services, and content sharing especially music (Lane, Walton-Flynn, & Benlamlih, 2008).

Beginning in 2008, the fourth generation is still thriving strong today. The ability to disguise or mask one's appearance, asynchronous video chat, multi-point audio chat discussion with one button, and multiplayer mobile gaming are some of the features of this generation of social mobile networks in addition to having all the attributes of the third generation. Due to the development of numerous technologies in mobile networks, the average adult's daily time spent on mobile devices has significantly increased since 2008. (Chaffey, 2021). As of 2014, mobile devices now outnumber desktop/laptop computers as the most frequently used device for everyday internet access. Over the past several years, a steady rise in the use of mobile applications has contributed to the growth of mobile social networks and the diversity of their uses. (Shankar, Huang, Castro, Nath, & Iftode, 2012).

Social Media Outlets of Today include many platforms and services that compete for the attention of more than 5 billion mobile users in the world in today's social media market. Facebook – which was founded in 2004 by Harvard undergraduate Mark Zuckerberg (Carlson, 2010) - according to Pew Research- has almost 1.7 billion users,

including 69 percent of American adults (Gramlich, 2021). Another platform is Reddit, founded in 2005 by Massachusetts 20-somethings Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian as a news-sharing platform, has evolved into a hybrid news aggregation/social commentary site with 300 million members. The option to "up-vote" and "down-vote" user postings contributes to its popularity (Carper, 2019). Twitter is another platform that - according to Pew Research- by 2020, 22 percent of U.S. people have used Twitter, which was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone, and others as a microblogging platform (Hughes & Wojcik, 2019).

Instagram is another interesting social media platform that was founded in 2010 as a photo-sharing service by Stanford graduate Kevin Systrom and was bought by Facebook in 2012. It now has over 1 billion users globally and Instagram is the second most accessed network behind Facebook (hubspot, 2021).

Snapchat is a video-sharing site, which was founded in 2011 by a trio of Stanford students — Evan Spiegel, Reggie Brown, and Bobby Murphy — introduced the notion of "story," or serialized short movies, and "filters," which are used for instructive visual effects, typically depending on geography (Olafson, 2020). And there is also TikTok, a short-form video-sharing platform, founded in 2016 by Chinese internet giant Byte Dance, was combined with the U.S.-based smartphone app Musical.ly in 2018 and became popular with American adolescents and young adults. It has more than 800 million users globally as of early 2020 (Meola, 2020). As each of these platforms has a smartphone app, and the majority of these smartphone applications offer free international calling and messaging in addition to a broad variety of other capabilities including multimedia uploading, photo sharing, and instant messaging (Bersin, 2012). Today, social networking applications are used for more than just social purposes; they are also widely utilized for professional purposes, such as LinkedIn, which is continually increasing (Bersin, 2012).

However, Governments started using social media to improve their public image as it became more popular among younger generations, especially among youth. For instance, in January 2021 it was found that the Egyptian government was using Instagram influencers as part of a media ambassador effort (Michaelson & Safi, Sugar-coated propaganda? Middle East taps into power of influencers, 2021). The initiative

was created to improve Egypt's image and to counter the negative news the country has gotten as a result of its human rights record. Similar projects were carried out in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Similarly, to promote tourism, Dubai has heavily depended on social media and influencers.

The stringent restrictions of Dubai, on the other hand, have always kept these influencers inside bounds so as not to anger the authorities or attack the city, politics, or religion. The content of these overseas influencers is monitored to ensure that no unfavourable images of Dubai are spread (Michaelson, 'In this world, social media is everything': how Dubai became the planet's influencer capital, 2021).

As a result, social media may be utilised as a news source since people use its platforms to get news rather than conventional media's tools and platforms because it is used as a tool for social interaction and self-presentation. Similar to how television from the 1950s to the 1980s changed a nation of people who listened to media content into viewers of media content, the emergence of social media has developed a nation of media content creators.

As reported by the Pew Research Centre, nearly half of Americans use social media as a news source (Walker & Matsa, 2021). Using social media as a news source allows users to connect with news in a variety of ways, as it gives the user the chance to consume, discover, and share news within their own virtual network. News can be shared or re-posted. Users can post their own images, videos, or news reports (citizen or participatory journalism), and comment on current events (Anderson & Caumont, 2014). 81 percent of Americans check the weather online first and foremost, then 73 percent look up national news, 52 percent sports news, and 41 percent look up entertainment or celebrity news. According to CNN, in 2010, 37% of people posted news stories on Facebook or Twitter, and 75% of people got their news via emails or social media posts. (Gross, 2010). People share news stories and comment on other people's postings on Facebook and Twitter, making news a more interactive experience than previously. It is suggested that media production has evolved into a participatory activity that affects communication networks. However, 27% of respondents express concern about the accuracy of a blog piece (Newman & Levy, 2013).

Politicians -also- frequently use social media to try to control public image and online behaviour. Internet police or hidden police monitor or restrict residents' usage of social media in certain nations. For example, following the Taksim Gezi Park demonstrations in 2013, Turkey banned several social media platforms. A court order has temporarily suspended and halted Twitter and YouTube in the nation. Telecommunications Directorate (TİB) employees now have immunity according to a new law enacted by the Turkish Parliament. The TİB has also been granted the power to ban access to particular websites without a judicial warrant (Sarıkaya, 2014). Nonetheless, the constitutional court found in 2014 that TİB's restriction of Twitter was a violation of free expression (Reuter's Staff, 2014). Another example of social media censorship occurrences by governments is when two Egyptian women were sentenced to two years in jail on July 27, 2020, for sharing TikTok videos that the government considered "violating family values." (Walsh, 2020).

1.1.2. Social Media Roles and Impacts on Some Events in the Middle East

As stated by Farid Shirazi's study on social media and the social movements in the Middle East and North Africa, citizens in repressed countries participate in communication discourse by creating equifinal meaning using digital communication technologies such as the internet and its various applications and communication tools such as e-mail, blogs, and social media web sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In the Middle East and North Africa, a new generation of socio-political activists has emerged, consisting primarily of educated adolescents who, through democratic discourse, were active participants in the complicated processes of political actions against oppressive governments in their countries (Shirazi, 2012).

Moving on to more specific events in the region, the Arab Spring has provided a new perspective regarding social media news coverage, as the internet is considered to be the "heaven of freedom" for citizens suffering under authoritarian regimes (Spielhaus & Galal, 2012). As events in Egypt, Tunisia, Iran, Syria, Libya, and Yemen have demonstrated, social media allows the opposition to these regimes to enact freedoms that were previously denied to them. For the first time in human history, social electronic media provides a platform through which political freedoms are within everyone's reach. As a result, it is believed that the internet and social media are

considered to be the “first freedom of the twenty-first century”, and the “gateway to all other forms of liberties” (Spielhaus & Galal, 2012). During the events, there is little doubt that social media played a key part in Tunisia and Egypt's political movements, but this influence should not be overstated. The traditional media, particularly television (e.g., Al Jazeera), played a critical role.

The presence of revolutionary conditions and the state apparatus' incapacity to contain the revolutionary upsurge, however, was the most essential underlying reason (Khondker, 2011). Social media was an important tool—a required condition—in this schema, especially in the face of a muzzled traditional local media, but it was still a tool. It wasn't a good enough situation. In presenting the news of the Arab Spring, Al Jazeera in Arabic, as well as the BBC, France 24, Al Hiwar, and other stations, are emphasized (Castells, 2011).

More on the Arab Spring social media news coverage, social media played a central role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring. A key demographic group in the revolutions used social media extensively to conduct political dialogues. These individuals used and utilized Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to exert pressure on their governments both before and during the revolutions (Howard, et al., 2015). Throughout the revolutionary period, political organizations and individuals used Western news sites to disseminate reliable information to their supporters. As a result of their use of digital technology, proponents of democracy generated a freedom meme that took on a life of its own, spreading ideas about liberty and revolution to an unexpectedly huge number of individuals (Howard, et al., 2015). The revolutions that toppled regimes in Egypt and Tunisia were aided by internet discourse and online conversations. In other words, discussions about liberty, democracy, and revolution on blogs and Twitter frequently preceded large-scale protests (Howard, et al., 2015).

Governments have also realized the strength of social media-enabled opposition movements. Officials in Tunisia attempted to shut Facebook and other social media sites, and bloggers and others who used social media to convey critical information about the government were jailed. Some were tech-savvy, and with the help of hackers and skilled computer programmers, they were able to shut down government services online and supply protestors with censorship workarounds. Similarly, Egypt sought to

block access to social media, but protestors in Cairo's Tahrir Square were still capable of keeping themselves online. The Muslim Brotherhood resorted to bloggers whose servers were based in London and hence could not be shut down (Howard, et al., 2015).

North Africa's and the Middle East's political unrest and upheaval were not caused solely by social media for sure. Information technology such as mobile phones and the Internet have changed citizens' and civil society actors' ability to influence domestic politics. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have a variety of effects on local political communication networks. It also provides social movements with new chances and instruments to adapt to conditions in their respective countries. Individuals and groups can form global connections through social media. This implies that worldwide and local democracy movements create network linkages and ties, and engaging stories, told in brief text messages or extended video films, circulate throughout the region (Howard, et al., 2015).

According to a study done by Vittoria Sacco in 2016, social media has the potential to improve war and conflict reporting in a variety of ways. Journalistic access to remote areas, extra sources of information that can promote alternate frameworks in reporting, and more complicated coverage of war and conflict were all recognized as benefits of social media (Sacco, 2016). As a result, social media enhances news coverage by allowing audiences to develop a critical awareness of war and conflict; increasing public engagement through more human-centred narratives produced by social media accounts of war and conflict; and finally, engaging with more innovative news formats (Sacco, 2016).

Journalists, on the other hand, have issues as a result of their usage of social media. These disadvantages highlight the difficulties of social media use. Social media can be a source of misinformation, manipulation, and biased reporting and can be frequently utilized by a variety of agencies to affect public perception, including understanding, feelings, and values, due to its ability to share information and stimulate debate (Sacco, 2016). Many actors with a variety of interests can use social media to enforce their own stories. As social media engages and generates new groups, these communities may become "social system[s] featuring severe inequalities and conflicts of interests," (Williams R., 2003) (Sacco, 2016).

1.1.3. Instagram and Social Media

Social media as a news source is the usage of online social media platforms rather than more traditional media channels to receive news. The rise of social media has produced a country of media content makers, much as television transformed a nation of people who listened to media content into viewers of media content from the 1950s to the 1980s. In accordance with the Pew Research Centre, 72% of individuals in the United States utilized at least one social networking site in 2019 (Centre, 2019).

Governments started using social media to improve their public image as it became more popular among younger generations, especially among youth. For instance, in January 2021 it was found that the Egyptian government was using Instagram influencers as part of a media ambassador effort. Those ways include consuming, discovering, sharing/reposting news, and getting involved with the news by sharing own photos, posts, comments and reactions (Anderson & Caumont, 2014).

News material on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp, unlike traditional news platforms such as newspapers and news broadcasts, allow anyone without professional journalistic backgrounds to make news (Rosen, 2006). However, due to the lax moderating and open-access nature of these public forums, some have expressed concerns about their authoritative trustworthiness.

Users of social media may read the news that differs from what is featured in the print press by newspaper editors (Bastos, 2014).

Traditional news providers have migrated to online areas in order to compete in this fast-changing technology environment. In response to the growing presence of news providers on social media, the production and circulation of newspaper printing has continued to fall internationally. Popular platforms like Twitter and Facebook have been instrumental in attracting consumers by incorporating journalistic news into their newsfeeds. This functionality has now become an integral element of the user interfaces of many apps (Mitchel, Rossenstiel, & Cristian, 2012).

Individual professional journalists are also encouraged to publish their reports and communicate with audiences on social media platforms in order to increase engagement and progress in their careers (Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2017).

Instagram is a picture and video sharing social networking site established by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, In April 2012, Facebook acquired the company for \$1 billion in cash and stock. Users are allowed to upload images and videos that may be edited with filters and classified using hashtags and geotagging. Posts may be shared with both the general public and pre-approved followers. Users may browse popular content and other users' content by tags and locations. People may contribute content to a personal feed by liking pictures and following other people. (Hutchinson, 2019). Instagram was first defined by the fact that it only allowed the material to be framed in a square (1:1) aspect ratio of 640 pixels to match the width of the iPhone at the time. These limitations were alleviated in 2015 when the resolution was increased to 1080 pixels.

The service also added messaging capabilities, the ability to post multiple images or videos in a single post, and a 'stories' feature, which works similarly to Snapchat's 'stories' feature and allows users to post photos and videos to a sequential feed, with each post accessible to others for 24 hours. As of January 2019, 500 million people were using the Stories feature on a daily basis (Hutchinson, 2019).

Instagram was first released for iOS in October 2010 and quickly gained traction, with one million registered users in two months, ten million in a year, and one billion in June 2018 (Constine, 2018). The Android version was published in April 2012, with a feature-limited desktop interface following in November 2012, a Fire OS app following in June 2014, and a Windows 10 app following in October 2016. Over 40 billion images have been uploaded as of October 2015.

Instagram has been criticized for its effect, particularly for its harmful impact on teen mental health, policy and interface modifications, censorship accusations, and illegal or inappropriate content submitted by users. Cristiano Ronaldo, a Portuguese professional footballer, is the most followed person as of June 2021, with over 300 million followers. The most liked photo on Instagram as of January 14, 2019, is a

picture of an egg shared by the account @world record egg, which was created with the sole intention of breaking Kylie Jenner's previous record of 18 million likes on a post. Over 55 million people have liked the photo thus far. A wedding photo of Ariana Grande and her husband Dalton Gomez is the second most popular photo. In the 2010s, Instagram was the fourth most popular smartphone app (Miller, 2019).

1.1.4. News and Politics on Instagram

Nicole Carty, a New York-based activist and organizer, told Recode (Ghaffary & Stewart, 2020). With Facebook's user activity peaking and its user base ageing, Instagram, which Facebook owns, has emerged as the online place where comparably younger individuals — many of them white — are learning about allyship, activism, and Black solidarity.

When you think about who uses Instagram, it's not unexpected that it's getting more political. The main people who have been protesting and organizing over the last couple of years — millennials and Gen Z — are on Instagram,

Instagram is massive when compared to Twitter, which has 166 million daily active users. It has almost 500 million daily active users on its Stories feature alone. While TikTok is growing in popularity, it is still in its infancy. Politics on social media sites, such as Instagram, is nothing new. Twitter was actively used during the Arab Spring in the early 2010s. Political information abounds on Facebook. (Ghaffary & Stewart, 2020) In the United States, Facebook and Twitter have traditionally been the primary forums for political conversation and organization, but some politicians and activists have also used Instagram to communicate with voters and constituents (Ghaffary & Stewart, 2020).

1.1.5. Instagram Censorship Policies

Instagram's Community Guidelines were designed so that its users may assist in nurturing the social platform community. The users are assumed to agree to these rules and Terms of Service by using Instagram. However, if the user crosses these lines, their account may be removed, disabled, or face additional limitations. In some situations, Instagram allows content that might otherwise violate its Community

Guidelines for public awareness if it is newsworthy and favours the public interest. However, Instagram says it only does so after balancing the public interest value against the risk of harm, while basing its decisions on international human rights principles.

Instagram reflects the diversity of our community's ethnicities, ages, and beliefs. We've (Instagram developers) spent a lot of time considering the various points of view that contribute to a safe and open workplace for everybody (Instagram, 2016).

In their community guidelines and terms, Instagram encourages its users to share only authentic media while avoiding nudity, fake or misleading news, supporting terrorism or organised crimes and hate groups, sexual services and services prohibited by law. Moreover, Instagram also included in its community guidelines that it has “zero-tolerance” when it comes to sharing sexual content including minors and threats to post intimate images of others.

Instagram also provides built-in actions that its users can use when facing posts or content that they believe violates the guidelines. The users can report these posts or file a report. Moreover, deleting comments, unfollowing and blocking are also options users and creators can benefit from. (Instagram, 2016).

However, Instagram creators are becoming increasingly irritated with the platform's ever-changing restriction policies. That is due to Instagram's ever-changing Community Guidelines, where certain accounts that focus on instructional issues, art, activism, and more have been flagged or had features taken away. Many users and post creators publish about themes like politics, LGBTQ+, sexuality, and more, then have had to resort to self-censorship and the creation of backup accounts. These accounts' creators are fed up with Instagram's restrictions (Murray, 2021).

Petra Collins, a Canadian photographer, had her Instagram account removed in October 2013 after she shared a photo of herself in which a little amount of pubic hair was visible over the top of her bikini bottom. Collins stated that the account cancellation was unjustified because it did not violate any of Instagram's terms of service (Schraeder, 2013). The Daily Dot's Audra Schroeder went on to say that:

According to Instagram's rules of service, users are not allowed to upload "pornographic or sexually suggestive photographs," but who gets to decide? More sexually provocative photographs than Collins' may be seen on the site, where women reveal the side of "femininity" that the public is "accustomed to" seeing and embracing.

Similar occurrences occurred in January 2015 when Instagram suspended the account of Australian fashion agency Sticks and Stones Agency following the posting of a picture showing pubic hair sticking out of bikini bottoms. (Hinde, 2015). A #FreetheNipple movement was started in response to the incidents to protest Instagram's censorship of images showing women's nipples. Instagram's CEO Kevin Systrom emphasised Apple's content guidelines for applications published through its App Store, including Instagram, which require apps to indicate the appropriate age rating for users, with the app's current classification of 12+ years of age. Instagram has not responded to the advertisement. (Fuller, 2016).

The nudity policy on Instagram is as follows:

We understand that there are occasions when individuals wish to publish nude photographs that are artistic or creative in nature, but we don't allow nudity on Instagram for a variety of reasons. Photos, films, and some digitally-created content depicting sexual intercourse, genitals, and close-ups of fully-nude buttocks are included. Some photographs of female nipples are included, however, photos of post-mastectomy scars and women who are actively nursing are permitted. Nudity is also acceptable in photographs of artworks and sculptures.

Instagram's old community standards, which featured the vague phrase "keep your clothing on," have been updated (Instagram, 2018). In proportion to Instagram CEO Kevin Systrom, every app must have an age rating according to Apple's App Store restrictions. If there is nudity in an app, it must be rated 17+. To attract a younger audience, the CEO would like Instagram to stay at its existing rating of 12+ (Morrish, 2015).

Instagram Censorship has occurred in several different countries. In the United States of America, Instagram temporarily disabled the "recent" tab on hashtag pages on October 30, 2020, to prevent the spread of false information about the 2020 US presidential election (Carman, 2020). President Donald Trump of the United States was banned from Instagram "indefinitely" on January 7, 2021. "We feel the dangers

of permitting the President to utilize our service at this moment are simply too substantial," Zuckerberg said (Tyko, 2020)

Moving more into the politics in the Middle East, Instagram has been accused of censorship after content from a number of notable Muslim accounts was disabled or removed due to posts on recent events in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, several Muslim users of Instagram, which is owned by Facebook, have reported that their accounts have been blocked or that posts concerning the country have been removed during the two weeks before.

The content was removed due to breaking "rules on violence and hazardous organizations" according to Instagram statements posted on the banned pages, raising concerns that Muslims talking about world politics were being tied to violence. Following the publication of the story, Facebook informed Middle East Eye that it was restoring two of the suspended accounts after conducting an investigation (Uddin, 2021).

DOAM (Documenting Oppression Against Muslims), a campaign organization that monitors anti-Muslim crimes around the world, had its Instagram account, which has over 200,000 followers, temporarily banned on August 17th. "Looks like Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar is going to become the new president of #Afghanistan," it wrote on that day, in addition to a photo of Baradar, one of the Taliban's founding fathers, who was to return to the country after living in exile in Qatar. The user also published a widely circulated video of Taliban members having fun at an amusement park. Both posts were removed when the account was disabled for "violating [Instagram's] Community Guidelines on violence or harmful organizations" even though the creators had only shared the content without adding personal comments in the caption section. However, on the 20th of August, it was restored (Uddin, 2021).

Muslim Daily, an Instagram humanitarian and news account with almost 500,000 Instagram followers, was also disabled by the platform. According to Abrar, the account's administrator, the profile was suspended on August 16 after he had shared photos of the aftermath of Kabul's collapse.

Some fighters were stationed at the stations, but there were also locals on the streets." "They took it down because of 'violence and hazardous organizations,'" he explained. "However, nothing I said supported the Taliban.

Abrar said he regained control of his account a few days later, but it was taken away again on August 19 after he posted a meme of a Taliban figure in the manner of a Vogue magazine cover. The same meme had gone viral on some social media platforms. As reported by Abrar of Muslim Daily, the algorithm may be incorrectly associating accounts to the subject matter of their articles. "*The censoring on the grounds of 'violence' is connecting Muslims and Islam with the Taliban or terror organizations because the account is called Muslim Daily,*" he stated.

The recent bans, according to Freeman, were either an algorithmic error based on keywords or the result of "something more sinister."

Following MEE's inquiry, Facebook announced that the Instagram pages of Muslim Daily and Majid Freeman had been reinstated after an investigation revealed that many pieces of information had been accidentally erased (Uddin, 2021).

1.2. The Palestinian Scene in the Occupied Territories of 1948

1.2.1. The Case of Palestine: Brief Overview

The case of the Palestine issue or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a conflict that is fundamentally related to the emergence of Zionism and Jewish immigration to Palestine, settlement in it, and the role of the great powers in the events of the region. The Palestinian issue revolves around the issue of Palestinian refugees and the legitimacy of Israel and its occupation of Palestinian lands in several stages, its perpetration of massacres against the Palestinians and operations of resistance against the Zionist state.

Additionally, it relates to resolutions from the UN, such as Resolutions 194 and 242. Many academics and politicians believe that this war is to blame for the crises and tension in the area. Despite taking place in a relatively small geographic area, this conflict attracts significant political and media attention due to the involvement of

numerous international parties, the involvement of the world's largest countries, the conflict's location in a sensitive region of the world, and its connections to issues that are at the core of the current world crises. (BBC, The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 2021). Examples include the conflict between the East and the West, the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Arab relations with the West, the significance of Arab oil for Western nations, the significance and sensitivity of the Jewish issue in Western civilization, particularly after World War II and the Jewish Holocaust, anti-Semitism issues, and the pressure from Jewish lobbies in the Western world.

With the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip now approaching 54 years, the Palestinian – Israeli case is one of the world's longest lasting conflicts (BBC, "A History of Conflict: Introduction", n.d.). As part of the Palestinian - Israeli peace process, many initiatives have been undertaken to resolve the conflict (Fortna, 2016).

Early tensions in the region were sparked by public declarations of claims to a Jewish homeland in Palestine, such as the 1897 First Zionist Congress and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. The region had a minority Jewish population at the time, but it was increasing rapidly due to massive Jewish immigration. Following the adoption of the Palestine Mandate, which contained a statutory commitment of the British government to "establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people," tensions between Jews and Arabs escalated into sectarian violence (Neal, 1995). The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine and the 1947–1949 Palestine war marked the beginning of the larger Arab–Israeli conflict. Following Israel's armed takeover of Palestinian territory in the 1967 Six-Day War, the present Israeli-Palestinian status quo was established (Britannica, 2021).

Israelis and Palestinians have failed to establish a definitive peace accord despite a long-running peace process. The Oslo Accords of 1993–1995 made progress toward a two-state solution, but Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and in 165 "islands" (Palestinian enclaves) around the West Bank remain under Israeli military rule (Niksic, Eddin, & Cali, 2014). Security, boundaries, water rights, control of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian freedom of movement, and the Palestinian right of return are all key problems that have stymied further progress. The violence of the conflict has

been the focus of multiple international conferences dealing with historic rights, security challenges, and human rights in a region rich in historic, cultural, and religious monuments, and has been a factor impeding tourism and public access to strongly contested regions (Wright, 2000). Many attempts have been made to negotiate a two-state solution involving the construction of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel (after Israel's founding in 1948).

Pursuant to a number of surveys conducted in 2007, the majority of Israelis and Palestinians favoured the two-state solution over any other option for settling the conflict (Yaar & Hermann, 2007). The Israeli government, led by Naftali Bennett, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Mahmoud Abbas, were engaged in direct negotiations. The official discussions were mediated by an international delegation known as the Quartet on the Middle East (the Quartet), which is comprised of the US, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations and is represented by a special envoy.

Another major player is the Arab League, which has suggested an alternate peace proposal. Egypt, as a founding member of the Arab League, has always been a major player. Jordan has also been a crucial player, having surrendered its claim to the West Bank in 1988 and playing a specific role in the Muslim Holy Sites in Jerusalem. (Spangler, 2015).

An enclave-type land has been offered by the Allon Plan, the Drobles World Zionist Organization plan, Menachem Begin's plan, Benjamin Netanyahu's "Allon Plus" plan, the 2000 Camp David Summit, and Sharon's idea of a Palestinian state, as well as by the more recent Trump peace proposal. This circumstance is referred to as the "Bantustan choice." After a thorough investigation into the impacts of the development of these dispersed Palestinian settlements, it was found that they had a "devastating influence on the economy, social networks, and the provision of vital services like as healthcare and education." (Loewenstein & Moor, 2013).

Since 2006, the Palestinian side has been torn apart by a war between two major factions: Fatah, the old ruling party, and Hamas, its subsequent political rival and armed group. Following Hamas' election victory in 2006, the Quartet made future

foreign aid to the Palestinian National Authority (PA) contingent on the future government's commitment to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of past accords. As a result of Hamas' rejection of these requests, the Quartet suspended its foreign aid program, and Israel imposed economic penalties (Spangler, 2015). Following Hamas' control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, the region officially recognized as the Palestinian Authority (PA) was split between Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip a year later.

The breakdown of bipartisan government in the PA was largely due to the distribution of power between the parties. In 2014, however, a Palestinian Unity Government was created, which included both Fatah and Hamas. The most recent round of peace talks began in July 2013 and were put on hold in 2014 (Spangler, 2015).

The Gaza Strip is named after Gaza, its largest city. Around 1.4 million Palestinians live in the region. The Gaza Strip is a Mediterranean Sea coastal strip that is bordered on the south by Egypt and on the north and east by the occupied lands of Palestine. It's around 41 kilometres long and 6 to 12 kilometres broad, with a total size of 360 square kilometres. The border with the occupied lands is 51 kilometres long, while the border with Egypt is 11 kilometres long. The Mediterranean shoreline stretches for 40 kilometres. The geography is flat to undulating, with a coastal plain covered with sand and dune (UNRWA, n.d.). The Gaza region became part of the League of Nations mandate of Palestine under British authority when the Ottoman Empire's reign ended there in World War I (1914–18). The General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) endorsed a proposal for the Arab-Jewish division of Palestine in November 1947 (Zeidan, 2021), just before this mandate expired, under which the town of Gaza and an area of surrounding territory were to be assigned to the Arabs.

In other words, the British mandate expired on May 15, 1948, but prior to that, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 1947 UN Partition Plan, which called for the creation of two nations in Palestine, one Jewish and one Arab. As a result, the Mandatory Palestine Civil War of 1947–1948 erupted. 1948 Arab–Israeli War began when David Ben-Gurion announced Israel's independence on 14 May 1948, and the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria declared war and attacked the next day, supported by soldiers dispatched from Iraq (The United Nations, 1949). Egyptian soldiers

quickly took control of Gaza, which became the Egyptian expeditionary force's headquarters in Palestine.

The region under Arab domination around the town was reduced to a strip of land 25 miles (40 km) long and 4–5 miles (6–8 km) broad as a consequence of fierce combat in fall 1948. The Gaza Strip was then named after this location. The Egyptian-Israeli armistice agreement of February 24, 1949, specified its borders (Zeidan, 2021).

Egypt ruled over the Gaza Strip until 1967 when the All-Palestine Government was disbanded in 1959 on the pretext of pan-Arabism. The Gaza Strip was never annexed by Egypt; instead, it was considered a controlled region governed by a military governor (Goldberg, 2006). The inflow of approximately 200,000 former Mandatory Palestine refugees into Gaza, nearly a quarter of those who fled or were expelled from their homes during and after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, resulted in a drastic drop in the level of living. Due to the Egyptian government limiting passage into and out of Gaza, its residents were unable to find work abroad (Efrat, 2006).

In the Six-Day War of June 1967, the Israeli occupation troops were able to retake the Gaza Strip, and they maintained control of the region for the ensuing 25 years (Zeidan, 2021). Israel's economy expanded at a yearly rate of about 9.7 per cent between 1967 and 1982, helped in part by increasing income from domestic job opportunities, which benefited the country by producing a sizable population of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. With Israel controlling a third of the Strip, competition for limited water resources increased, and the lucrative citrus industry declined as a result of Israeli policies like restrictions on new tree planting and tax breaks for Israeli producers, all of which stunted growth; the agricultural sector in Gaza suffered.

As a result, many farmers have been driven out of the industry. As a result, a substantial number of farmers have been driven out of the agricultural industry. Israel imposed limitations on all items exported from Gaza while removing restrictions on Israeli goods entering the territory (Roy, 1987).

The Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty was signed on March 26, 1979, by Israel and Egypt. The pact stipulated, among other things, that the Israeli forces evacuate its armed

soldiers and citizens from the Sinai Peninsula, which it had acquired during the Six-Day War. The Egyptians decided to demilitarize the Sinai Peninsula. The eventual status of the Gaza Strip, as well as other Israeli-Palestinian ties, were not addressed in the pact. All territorial claims to land north of the international line were relinquished by Egypt. Until 1994, the Gaza Strip was administered by the Israeli military. During that time, the military was in charge of maintaining civil infrastructure and services (Harkabi, 1989).

A progressive handover of administrative control to the Palestinians began in May 1994, after the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations known as the Oslo Accords. Except for some Jewish settlement blocs and military sectors, the majority of the Strip fell under Palestinian sovereignty. Israeli soldiers withdrew from Gaza City and other metropolitan areas, allowing them to be administered and policed by the new Palestinian Authority. Gaza City was chosen as the Palestinian Authority's first regional headquarters by Yasser Arafat. Israel and the Palestinian Authority reached a second peace deal in September 1995, expanding the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction to the majority of West Bank municipalities. Israel constructed the Israeli Gaza Strip barrier between 1994 and 1996 to increase security in the region. However, at the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, Palestinians tore down much of the barrier (Almog, 2004).

In December 1987, Palestinians in Gaza engaged Israeli occupation troops in violent street fights that marked the beginning of the Intifada. Israel started handing over the political authority of the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in phases starting in 1994 in accordance with the terms of the Oslo Accords, which were reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993. In addition to stalled negotiations with Israel over further troop withdrawals and territorial disputes, Yasser Arafat's newly established Palestinian government also had to deal with threats of opposition from Muslim groups like Islamic Jihad and Hamas, which refused to make concessions to Israel and were determined to thwart the peace process. Other challenges faced by the Palestinian Authority include a weak economy, fractious public support, and weakening of the peace process. These organisations were regarded as terrorist and militant groups (Zeidan, 2021).

1.2.2. Jerusalem and the 1948 Lands

A while back in the past, the United Nations suggested dividing Mandatory Palestine into two states at the conclusion of the British Mandate in its United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine. The UN General Assembly endorsed the Plan as Resolution 181 (II) on November 29, 1947. The resolution called for the establishment of separate Arab and Jewish states as well as a special international regime for Jerusalem. The resolution attachment, the Partition Plan, was a four-part document that outlined the boundaries of the two States and Jerusalem as well as the ending of the Mandate and the gradual removal of British military personnel (Quandt, Jabber, & Lesch, 1973).

The Jewish Agency for Palestine endorsed the Plan notwithstanding its disagreement with the spatial restrictions placed on the envisioned Jewish State. The Plan was developed in collaboration with Jewish groups. Arab leaders and nations opposed it and expressed a refusal to accept any kind of geographical separation, claiming that doing so went against the UN Charter principles of national self-determination, which gave people the freedom to determine their own fate. A civil conflict came out shortly after the General Assembly passed the Resolution; hence, the plan was not carried out. (Galnoor, 1995)

The first stage of the Palestine conflict, which lasted from 1947 to 1949, was the Mandatory Palestine civil war of 1947–1948. It started when the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on November 29, 1947, urging the acceptance of the Partition Plan for Palestine.

The Arab Liberation Army backed the Palestinian Arab community throughout the civil war while the British, who were responsible for maintaining order, planned their exit and only sometimes intervened. Following the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel and the British Mandate of Palestine's expiration on May 14, 1948, the neighbouring Arab states of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, and Syria invaded what was then Mandatory Palestine and attacked Israeli forces as well as a number of Jewish settlements (Morris B., 2004).

This escalation led to the start of the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Following the conflict, the UN-designated Jewish state's territory and over 60% of the Arab state's territory were under the control of the State of Israel. The Galilee, certain Negev territories, a sizable section of the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem Road, the Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramle sectors, as well as some West Bank territories, were all included in this area. Israel also occupied West Jerusalem, which was meant to be a part of an international zone for Jerusalem and its surrounds. Transjordan assumed control of East Jerusalem and the rest of the area still under the former British mandate, and the country annexed it the next year.

The Gaza Strip was taken over by the Egyptian military. 2,000 Palestinian representatives urged for the union of Palestine and Transjordan at the Jericho Conference on December 1, 1948, as the first step toward complete Arab unification. A significant population shift was brought about by the fighting throughout the Middle East. In what they refer to as the Nakba, around 700,000 Palestinian Arabs left their homes in the region that became Israel or were driven from them ("the catastrophe"). Approximately 700,000 Jews immigrated to the occupied lands in the three years following the war. During and soon after the war, around 260,000 Jews emigrated from the Arab world to there (Ghanim, 2009).

Jerusalem is one of the oldest towns in the world and is revered by the three main Abrahamic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. It is located on a plateau in the Judaeen Mountains between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. Jerusalem is claimed as the capital of both Israel and Palestine and the city is on the Green Line separating Israel from the West Bank (BBC, Israel plans 1,300 East Jerusalem Jewish settler homes, 2010). While the Palestinian National Authority and Palestine Liberation Organization eventually envision it as the centre of power for the State of Palestine, Israel controls the whole city and keeps its principal administrative institutions there. Because of this ongoing conflict, neither assertion is commonly acknowledged globally (BBC, Israeli authorities back 600 new East Jerusalem homes, 2010).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its peace process still revolve around the status of Jerusalem. West Jerusalem was one of the regions taken over and subsequently

annexed by Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, while East Jerusalem, including the Old City, was taken over and later annexed by Jordan. East Jerusalem was, however, taken from Jordan by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War; as a result, it was essentially annexed and absorbed into the other Israeli-held areas of the city, along with additional surrounding land (Borger & Beaumont, 2017).

1.2.3. Sheikh Jarrah

Sheikh Jarrah is a Palestinian Jerusalem neighbourhood in the Jerusalem Governorate, located in the eastern areas of the city and was occupied by Israel during the 1967 war. It is now one of East Jerusalem's neighbourhoods. Sheikh Jarrah's neighbourhood in Jerusalem was named after Prince Hussam Al-Din bin Sharaf Al-Din Issa Al-Jarrahi, the doctor of Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi, the Kurdish Muslim leader, who became a symbol for successive Arab generations about 900 years ago. An Israeli settlement proposal published recently threatens the neighbourhood, which includes the building of 200 units of residential housing for Jewish settlers in the centre of this Arab neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, which was seized in 1967 (Aljazeera, 2017).

East Jerusalem settlements

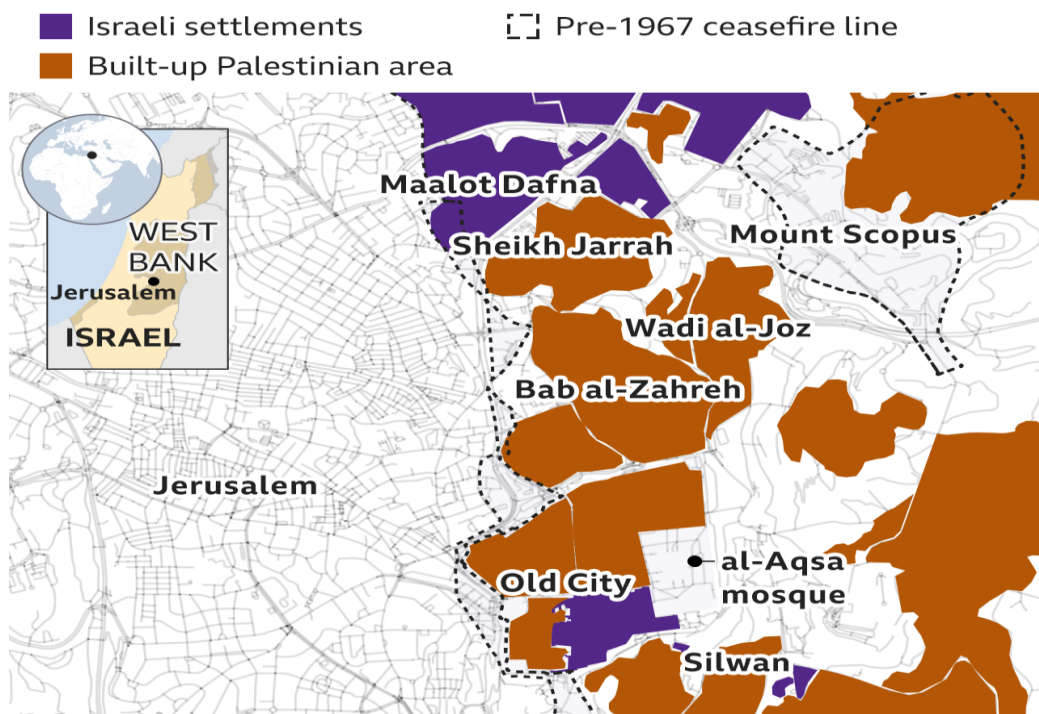


Figure 1.1. The Location of Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood in Jerusalem

The Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood is situated outside the wall on the eastern side of Jerusalem's Old City. As a result of an agreement between UNRWA and the Jordanian government, the neighbourhood was built in Jerusalem in 1956 and initially accommodated 28 Palestinian families who had been forced to flee Jordan's captured lands in 1948 (Aljazeera, 2017).

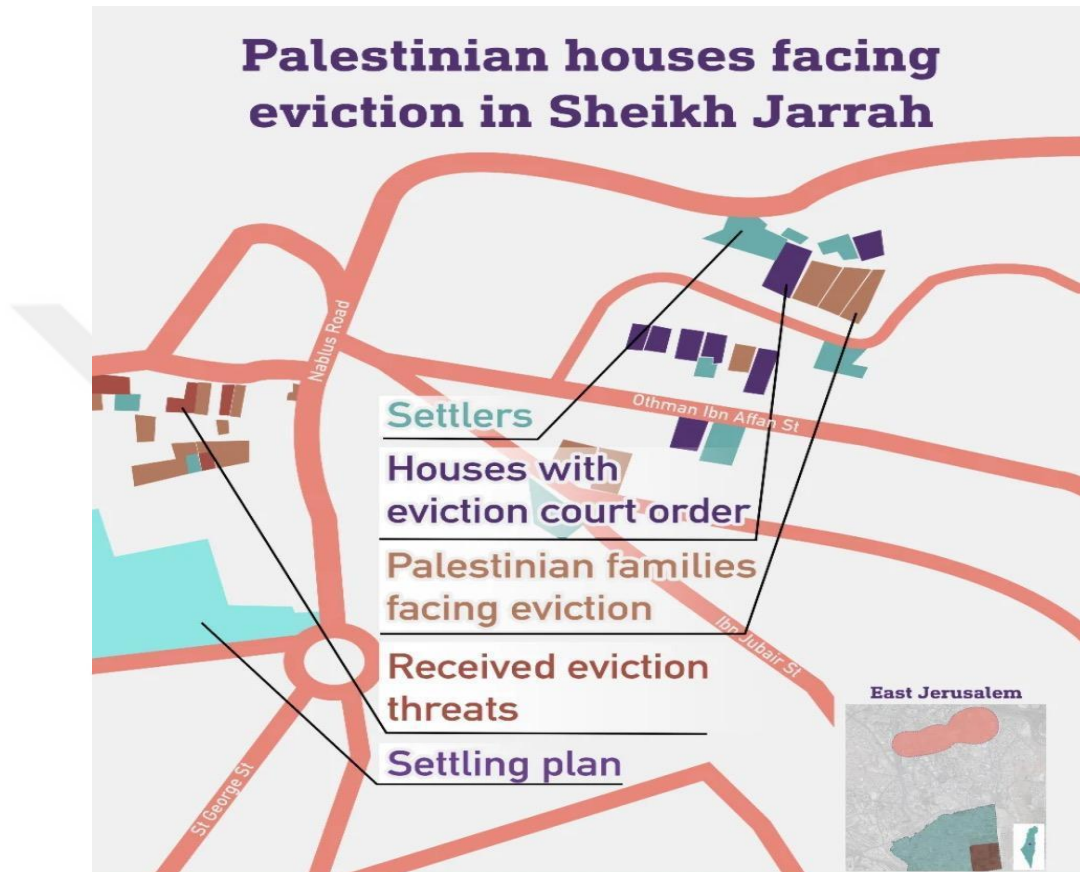


Figure 1.2. Palestinian Houses Facing Eviction in Sheikh Jarrah

Source: AlJazeera, 2017

The majority-Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah is located in East Jerusalem, 2 kilometres from the Old City. The area has a long history; it is home to the oldest written accounts dating from the 12th century. According to historians, there has been a steadfast Jewish presence in Sheikh Jarrah for countless years, residing close to the grave of Shimon Hatzadik, better known as Simeon the Just, a Jewish High Priest of the Second Temple period (he died in the 3rd century BCE). Even now, a lot of Jews still call the area Shimon Hatzadik. The Sephardic Community Committee and the Ashkenazi Assembly of Israel bought his tomb and the adjacent site in 1875 (Kunza, 2022).

Yusuf bin Rahamim, a Jew from Europe, came to Jerusalem in 1880, avoiding the persecution that afflicted the Jews there. This lease is known as Tahkeer in Shariah law since it permits Jews to lease the property and prohibits it from being sold to them according to Ottoman rules and regulations (Arnaout, 2011).

In 1948, "Israel" attempted to conquer the area because of its strategic location, which connects east and west Jerusalem (Haroh, 2021). It is controlled by the Hebrew University, which is located on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. Israel was unable to seize the area until 1967, following the setback war.

In 1967, during the expansion of the Zionist occupation, the neighbourhood suffered from the settlement of Jews in the neighbourhood, as well as the displacement of some Palestinian families and their expulsion from their homes, as the people of the neighbourhood were subjected to the occupation imposed on them by the Jewish settlers present in the neighbourhood and their separation through settlement units and the confinement of inhabitants in what appears to be a jail, particularly on Jewish festivals and occasions (Aljazeera, 2017).

In 1956, Jordan agreed with UNRWA to settle Palestinian refugees in the Karm al-Jaouni region in exchange for them abandoning their refugee status and owning their houses three years later. The 1967 conflict prohibited these properties from being recorded in Jordan's Land Registry since the problem was not resolved. The Palestinians believed that once the confinement period ended, they would be able to reclaim their land. However, in 1997, soon before the reprimand period ended, Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah moved to Israeli courts, requesting the return of the Waqf lands with the end of the revocation. The petition was denied, the families appealed, and the court approved their request in 2010. The properties belong to Jewish settlers, and a settler group named Nahalat Shimon International has been trying to destroy the neighbourhood and build a massive colony isolating Jerusalem's Arab districts from the Old City since 2008 (Arnaout, 2011).

The anticipated 44,000 Arab residents in East Jerusalem increased to 327,700 in 2016. Due to their exile in 1948, there were only a small number of Jews living in other East

Jerusalem districts in 1967. There were 214,600 Jews living in East Jerusalem as of 2016 (Kunza, 2022).

In 1972, Ashkenazi and Sephardi settlement organizations went to the Israeli Lands Registrar Department to register the land of Karam al-Jaouni in Sheikh Jarrah, and the Israeli courts accepted the application based on fraudulent paperwork. The Israeli court dismissed the claim, ruling that the papers were fabricated. In 1983, a Jewish lawyer deceived the residents of Sheikh Jarrah by pleading their case with the eviction of dozens of families, and it was later discovered that he recognized the settlers' entitlement, and the Arabs living in the neighbourhood were legally defined as "protected tenants" who paid the settlers' rent. The Palestinians discovered the lawyer's motives and declared the deal invalid. However, the settler and government arms succeeded in displacing three families in 2008, the Al-Kurd family, and the Ghawi and Hanun families in 2009, and the inhabitants in the Karm al-Jaouni area are still fighting against the displacement and settlement plans to this day (Qawasmi & Oudatallah, 2021).

In many East Jerusalem neighbourhoods in 2021, violent clashes broke out between Jewish settlers and Israeli police forces and Palestinian demonstrators in response to Israeli court orders foreclosing Palestinian homeowners in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in favour of Israeli settlement associations. According to sources in the Israeli media, although inhabitants of the Sheikh Jarrah region retain their ownership of the land on which they were born and raised, Jewish settlers assert that they bought the land from Jewish organisations, who in turn bought it around a century ago. (Royanews, 2021). Based on the progression of events in the neighbourhood, conflicts erupted across the country's territories and towns, prompting the Palestinian resistance in Gaza to retaliate against the Israeli onslaught on the neighbourhood's residents, resulting in the commencement of Israeli-Palestinian hostilities in 2021.

1.2.4. The Escalation of the Sheikh Jarrah Events

As a result of the earlier riots, violence in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict broke out on May 10, 2021, and continued until May 21, when a truce was announced. Police riot control and demonstrations were frequent, as were Israeli bombardment of the

Gaza Strip and rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. (Halbfinger & Rasgon, 2021). Palestinians in East Jerusalem started demonstrating on May 6 in anticipation of a decision by the Israeli Supreme Court over the eviction of six Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah, which sparked the start of the crisis. The land, which Israel has essentially annexed, is a component of the occupied Palestinian territories under international law. Israel's laws are enforced there. (UN NEWS, 2021). Palestinians threw stones at Israeli police officers on May 7, according to Israel's Channel 12, who then invaded the al-Aqsa Mosque compound with tear gas, rubber bullets, and stun grenades (Holmes & Beaumont, Israeli police storm al-Aqsa mosque ahead of Jerusalem Day march, 2021).



Figure 1.3. Called on to Gather in High-Tension Neighbourhood, Palestinian Crowd Compels Jewish Settlers to Leave Area

Source: Anadolu Agency, 2021

The violence took place on Qadr Night (8 May), a Muslim Holy night, and Jerusalem Day (9–10 May), a national holiday in Israel. The clashes erupted before a far-right Jewish nationalists' planned Jerusalem Day march, Dance of Flags, which was eventually cancelled (Federman & Akram, 2021) as shown in figure 4 below. Over 600 individuals were injured, the majority of them were Palestinians, prompting worldwide outrage.



Figure 1.4. Israeli Ultra-Nationalists' Wave National and Party Flags During an Unauthorized 'Flag March' in Jerusalem on 20 April 2022

Source: Middle East Eye, 2022

Consequently, the Supreme Court's ruling regarding the evictions from Sheikh Jarrah was delayed for 30 days as Avichai Mandelblit, Israel's attorney general, tried to resolve the situation. (Kingsley, 2021).

Israel was given until May 10 at 6 p.m. by Hamas to remove security agents from Sheikh Jarrah and the Temple Mount compound. After the deadline expired without a response, missiles were fired by Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, respectively. Several homes and a school were hit by missiles. (Ahronheim, Joffre, & Zonshine, 2021). Israel launched a bombing campaign on Gaza on May 16, demolishing, totally or partially a total number of 950 targets including 18 buildings, consisting of four high-rise skyscrapers, 40 schools, and four hospitals, as well as the Al-Shati refugee camp (Pietromarchi, Gadzo, & Regen, 2021). In addition, the Israeli bombing has damaged or destroyed at least 19 medical institutions (Akram & Krauss, 2021). According to the UN, Israeli bombings damaged 94 structures in Gaza, totalling 461 housing and commercial units, including the al-Jalaa Highrise, which houses the Associated Press and Al Jazeera offices, as shown in figure 5 below, as well as 60

condominiums, by the 17th of May (Sokol, 2021) around an hour after Israeli military informed the building's owner of the strike and recommended all inhabitants to escape, the building was hit by three missiles. When the media demanded an explanation, the IDF replied that the building housed Hamas's military intelligence capabilities. Israel said on June 8 that the building housed a Hamas electronic warfare unit developing a way to interfere with the Iron Dome. When the Associated Press requested confirmation of this, Hamas was slow to respond. (BBC News, Israel says Gaza tower it destroyed was used by Hamas to try to jam Iron Dome, 2021).



Figure 1.5. Israel's Attacks on Gaza's Civilian Buildings

Source: Aljazeera, 2021

At least 256 Palestinians, including 66 children, fell martyrs as a result of the violence (OCHA, "Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt): Response to the escalation in the oPt Situation Report No. 1: 21–27 May 2021", 2021). At least 13 people (Winer & Staff, 2021), including two children, have been killed in Israel. More than 1,900 Palestinians were injured, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health (Lazaroff, 2021), while at least 200 Israelis were injured (Goldman, Jabari, & Smith, 2021).

At least 72,000 Palestinians had been displaced as of May 19th. Over 90% of rockets aimed at inhabited areas were intercepted by the Iron Dome (Kirby, 2021). Around 4,360 rockets were fired toward Israel from Gaza, with 680 landing within the strip. On the Gaza Strip, Israel has launched 1,500 air, land, and naval assaults (OCHA,

Flash Update #02: Situation in the occupied Palestinian territory: Humanitarian situation in the Strip, continuing tensions in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and Israel, 2021). Hamas originally requested a truce on May 13th, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused (Holmes & Sherwood, Israel draws up plan for Gaza ground attack as mob violence spreads, 2021). On the 18th of May, France, Egypt, and Jordan announced the submission of a UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire (The Associated Press, 2021). Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire on May 21, 2021, after 11 days of fighting in which both sides declared victory. According to reports, on June 16, 2021, incendiary balloons were thrown from Gaza into Israel, restarting hostilities. The Israeli Air Force responded by carrying out multiple airstrikes in the Gaza Strip. (BBC News, "Israel-Gaza ceasefire holds despite Jerusalem clash", 2021).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many Palestinian organisations in the occupied areas and the diaspora, as well as pro-Palestinian activists in the West, played a critical role in persuading western audiences of the Palestinian situation. To comprehend the critical necessity for the internet, one must go beyond the media (smoke-) screens (Philo & Berry, 2004). The way the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is reinterpreted is possibly the most disputed of all modern conflicts, whether purposefully or because of the 'Israelization of Middle East policy' (Beinin, 2003). The increasing severity of war and occupation continues to take a toll, but the widespread adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) has enabled unexpected resistance, new kinds of alliances, and political imaginations, and as Israel tightens its grip, Palestinian resistance in online spaces grows.

There is a fair number of studies done on the case of Palestine and how media cover its events, that look into the growing importance of the internet for Palestinians in the diaspora, as well as the consequences of these practices in the context of occupation and exile.

Political activism via the internet fills a critical void that exists offline. Some studies show how the internet gave rise to Palestine in cyberspace and has changed activist methods through multi-sited fieldwork (especially in Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan) (Aouragh, 2008). As stated in some studies, the media is not neutral regarding the events occurring in Palestine and offered a framework to explain the (consequences of) the fusion of the Internet and political activism (Aouragh, 2008). By utilizing new electronic media forms, pro-Palestinian activists challenged stereotypical channels.

The skewed media helps understand why so many individuals chose to take matters into their own hands, and how the internet has created a counter-public arena to tell oppression's experience. Political and capitalist authoritarianism is asserted but also contested by technological advancements and internet use. The internet is not a stand-in for offline and everyday opposition.

In the meantime, popular political movements such as Hamas and Fatah developed their use of the internet by creating discussion forums. As a result, despite Israeli surveillance, grass-roots internet capacity has gained greater political significance in terms of political mobilization and repression (Aouragh, 2008).

Many of the primary ways in which the media can influence public understanding of the violence unfolding in Jerusalem and Gaza in May 2021 are outlined in other studies. However, the incidents studied were not unique; and have a lengthy history. The examples provided were not exhaustive; rather, they were picked because they are the most common and widely used to sway public opinion (Morris R. H., 2021).

Other studies focused on the connection between social media and Palestinian politics, with a particular focus on #Palestine (Siapera, *Tweeting #Palestine: Twitter and the mediation of Palestine*, 2015) or on other similar measures. The theoretical underpinning is mediation, which views the connection as dialectical, in which producers/users and contents are all part of a continuous cycle that feeds into and changes each other. In proportion to these certain studies, coverage of the Palestinian issue on social media resulted in a subjective, positioned co-construction of an emotive Palestine. This type of mediation also entails a redistribution of power from the mainstream, branded media's fact-based hard news and information to dispersed networks of news producers who tweet during real-time events as they witness or participate in them, or who tweet their opinions and reactions to these events (Siapera, *Tweeting #Palestine: Twitter and the mediation of Palestine*, 2015).

According to their article, while it used 7557 tweets using the hashtag Palestine to collect and analyse data the analysis revealed that the mediation of #Palestine includes the co-construction of a subjective, positioned, and emotionally charged #Palestine by a large number of users who are ideologically similar when it comes to Palestine. However, among the Tweets and users studied in favour of this article, there were some “Profiles suspended by Twitter, no explanation offered – mostly retweets” (Siapera, *Tweeting #Palestine: Twitter and the mediation of Palestine*, 2015). However, the study did not give further comments on these cases.

The studies, on the other hand, had concentrated on very tiny slices of the Twittersphere, employing a specific metric, such as a single hashtag or similar metrics. More research is needed to determine whether or not these same findings found in these previous studies and research can be applied to other hashtags or other measures related to Palestine or other sensitive causes related to the case of Palestine (Siapera, *Tweeting #Palestine: Twitter and the mediation of Palestine*, 2015). We can expect both similarities and differences in re-examinations of #Palestine examined in Siapera’s study and other issues or themes in different contexts because mediation is a dynamic process (Siapera, *Tweeting #Palestine: Twitter and the mediation of Palestine*, 2015), but it can also give other results if done on a different measure.

Another study looked through two main aspects to trace the contours of the discourse on Gaza and Palestine, particularly at times of escalation, and to explore the mediatization of Palestine as a result (Siapera, Huntb, & Lynn, *#GazaUnderAttack: Twitter, Palestine and diffused war*, 2015). These two aspects were the mediality of Twitter and the vectors of Twitter communications in Gaza as their study was done by studying all of the tweets that were sent during Operation Protective Edge during the Gaza attack over the summer of 2014 and analysed them. They did this by gathering tweets that included the relevant hashtags and key terms, including Gaza, GazaUnderAttack, Hamas, Palestine, and Israel. Several well-known screen identities were also mined for tweets, including IDFSpokersperson, AlqassamBrigade, ALQassamilitary, Tsahal IDF, Intifada, Qassam English, Qassamenglish, and qassamsms. Among their findings, the main

user groups were students and journalists. In addition to that, 'Muslim' was often used in screen-name descriptions to indicate religious beliefs.

They also performed studies on the gender, location and language classifiers of the users and accounts of the tweets they had studied. However, among the accounts that they had studied, they found that among the top 25 accounts only 7 were categorised as humans, while 10 were categorised as bots. The remainder of the 25 accounts were terminated or suspended. This indicates that this domain has signs of coordinated bot activity. However, activity in such political domains has the potential to harm the role of Twitter as a source of information and news.

Through analysing the antagonists of their study, they pointed out that while the asymmetry between the antagonists continues on Twitter, the official Al Qassam Twitter account was suspended on July 19th. Although Twitter did not provide a rationale for the ban, Hamas is designated as a terrorist group in the United States, and Twitter is based in the United States. Al Qassam, on the other hand, continued to tweet through other accounts in English, Arabic, and Hebrew, but its tweets received little attention. The term "mediality" is used to describe the uniqueness of Twitter, as well as the "noise" it adds to the conversation (Crocker, 2007). Some of their major conclusions are that there is a significant user base and that activist accounts outnumber both the news media and the two opponents (IDF and Al Qassam/Hamas) in terms of communication volume (Siapera, Huntb, & Lynn, #GazaUnderAttack: Twitter, Palestine and diffused war, 2015). This emphasises the relevance of Twitter not only for activists, but also for witnesses and others caught up in the violence. These witnesses are usually pro-Palestinian, even if they are not political activists. Moreover, as reported in the study, Twitter's mediality can be described as providing a many-to-many type of communication, albeit one with a pyramid structure and hence an obvious hierarchy in terms of volume, popularity, and information dispersion. The two rivals had quite different perspectives, with the IDF having more power than Al Qassam, but neither was as well-known as some of the activists' accounts, and neither was involved in spreading large amounts of information.

In summary, in accordance with their study, keeping in mind that many accounts including official ones like the Al Qassam Twitter account were suspended or terminated and that many videos, pictures, links and other contents were either no longer valid or removed by Twitter without offering any explanation for the suspension actions they took, the Twitter platform itself is to be considered and understood as an actor of the events occurring then (Siapera, Huntb, & Lynn, #GazaUnderAttack: Twitter, Palestine and diffused war, 2015). But yet, their study did not show any pro-Israeli accounts that were suspended or terminated.

Another study done by Trneem Z.Y. Khater aimed to track the extent to which Palestinian university students relied on social media during Israel's 2014 attacks on Gaza, as well as the reasons for this reliance, its goals and motives, and the consequences of this reliance. The survey method was used in the study, and the data was collected using the survey newspaper, which was distributed to a stratified random sample of (400) respondents from the students of the main universities in the Gaza Strip (Al-Aqsa University, University Islamic University, and Al-Azhar University) between November 23 and December 15, 2014 (Khater, 2015). In proportion to the study's findings; the most significant obstacles and problems encountered by respondents in using social networks during the 2014 aggression on Gaza were (interrupted Internet and unavailability of electricity), which received 91.8 percent of the vote, followed by (weak public confidence in information published in social networks), which received 16.3 percent of the vote. Then came (bias in reporting on Gaza aggressions), in third place with a rate of 13.8 per cent. Then came (poor organization and lack of unification of individual effort) in fourth place with a percentage of 10%, and (inaccuracy in dealing with events relating to the invasion of Gaza in 2014) in the fifth position with a percentage of 4.8. With 3.5 per cent, (extension of information distribution without certainty) was ranked sixth (Khater, 2015). However, as the obstacle that came in place was bias in reporting what was occurring then in Gaza 2014 events on social media, no additional information, evidence or examples were given in the paper. Yet, it concluded other results; the most notable of which is that social media ranked first among the sources on which respondents relied on following up on the events of Israel's 2014 aggression on Gaza, with a rate of 57.8%.

Having that said, the most important social media platforms that respondents used to get information from during Israel's 2014 onslaught on Gaza were; Facebook came out on top with 78.3 percent of the vote, followed by Twitter, and then Google Plus. Moreover, during the Israeli onslaught on Gaza in 2014 41% of respondents had a medium level of trust in information gained through social media. In addition to that, respondents confirmed that they relied on social media during Israel's 2014 aggression on Gaza because of the rapidity with which information was disseminated.

According to the paper, the emotional consequences of Palestinian university students' reliance on social networks during the Israeli onslaught on Gaza in 2014 occurred first, followed by the cognitive effects, and ultimately the behavioural effects. During the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2014, there were no statistically significant differences in the degree of reliance of Palestinian university students on social networks due to (gender, university, and academic level), but there were statistically significant differences due to (conservation and specialization). Finally, the findings of the study revealed a statistically significant associative link between Palestinian university students' reliance on social networks and their confidence in these networks as a source of information concerning Israel's 2014 war on Gaza (Khater, 2015).

As reported by a study done By Hatem El Zein and Ali Abusalem, Several Twitter accounts, including #GazaUnderAttack, #Gaza, #StopIsrael, and #PrayForGaza, were run by military media units of militant groups, primarily the unit that is a part of Hamas' military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, to provide up-to-date news about Palestinian casualties and rocket launches towards Israel (Fowler, 2014). Furthermore, this militant group's tactic of using social media was to debunk Israel's claim that Hamas members are using civilians as human shields and public infrastructure, such as schools, to lob missiles at Israel (El Zein & Abusalem, 2015). In comparison to the hashtag #IsraelUnderFire, the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack attracted a large number of followers. Despite the fact that social media cannot change the current quo, it does have an impact. Access to social media appears to have changed the face of war since it restricts the authority of traditional media and allows both sides of a conflict to use it to legitimize their

activities and explain them as defensive actions. However, scenes of blood and innocent people slaughtered are unavoidable they say in their study. As a result, according to the paper, the victims' photographs may at the very least elicit moral outrage around the world, putting pressure on the international community to take action to end the bloodshed.

The challenge for any military authority to have control over all means of communication in order to prevent others from disseminating their version of the case is one of the lessons of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. As a result, Palestinian militant organizations in Gaza were aware of the problem and used social media to rally support. In this manner, they broadcasted the stories and photographs to illustrate that they are occupation victims and that the Israeli army kills the elderly, women, and children. Because of the use of social media in this battle, it appears that the current war on Gaza will serve as a turning point for both Palestinian terrorist organizations and Israel to rethink their media strategy and tactics in preparation for any future confrontation (El Zein & Abusalem, 2015). Their study concluded that during the war, social media had an impact because it gave victims a voice by allowing them to show the world their agony and loss of homes and loved ones. It appears that Palestinian armed organization groups have invested in the concept of victimization on social media sites in order to morally beat the Israeli army. This funding was supported both directly and indirectly by social media sympathy campaigns for Palestinian civilians in Gaza during the war. As El Zein's and Abusalem's paper aimed to review and assess Palestinian performance on social media during the Gaza war while also aiming to demonstrate the Palestinian armed organizations and Gaza sympathizers communication strategies, and while mentioning the hashtags it shed no light on how biased social media platforms performed in reaction to the posts and tweets shared.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

3.1. Research Problem

According to the Anadolu Agency, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have reportedly blocked and removed content and associated US foreign policy. It also retweeted a post claiming that Instagram only allows English and Arabic postings with the hashtag #Jerusalem. Users on Twitter criticized social media corporations for suppressing Sheikh Jarrah-related information (Aliyev, 2021). "Twitter is battling Palestinian information that exposes the crime of removing Palestinians from Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah area," NewPress claimed, adding that the "Twitter administration" had disabled its English account (Aliyev, 2021). In consonance with an article posted by Reuters, Hind Khoudary, a 25-year-old Palestinian journalist working in Turkey, was one among many who observed that several posts concerning Sheikh Jarrah from her Instagram archives were not loading last Thursday.

I reset my phone and WIFI, but everything was still missing, and Instagram was really slow, Khoudary explained.

According to screenshots from her phone that she provided with the Thomson Reuters Foundation, some of her postings had been restored by Friday afternoon, but others, going as far back as April and as recently as Saturday, were still gone (Gebeily, 2021). Instagram sent notifications to some of the impacted individuals accusing them of "violating community standards." A Twitter user said that Instagram has removed "the whole highlight of posts concerning what's happening in Palestine hashtags connected to current tensions in occupied Jerusalem. "For at least the past day, Instagram and its parent, Facebook, have been blocking content linked to Sheikh Jarrah," independent website Mondoweiss claimed on Twitter. Mondoweiss is dedicated to educating readers about developments in Israel, Palestine." (Aliyev, 2021).

Selçuk Bayraktar, the drone magnate Baykar's chief technology officer (CTO), stated on Twitter that his Instagram post, which purportedly depicted hard-line Israelis dancing and singing while watching a fire burn outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque, was removed by the company after it was designated "hate speech." as shown in Figure 6 below. Bayraktar referred to Israel as a "racist, fascist terror state" in the statement (DailySabah, 2021).

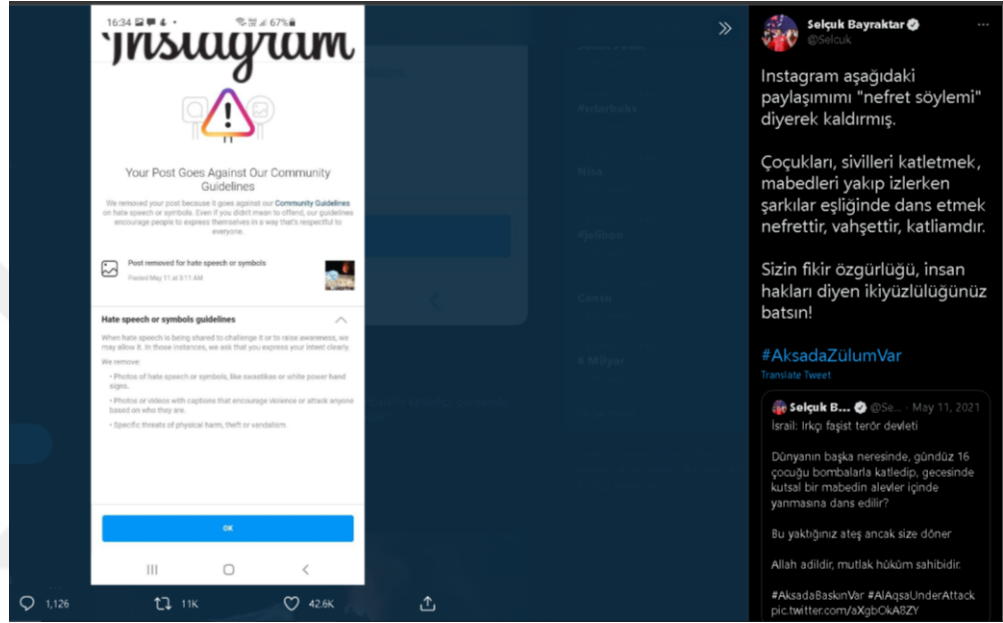


Figure 3.1. Selcuk Bayraktar's Tweet on Instagram Removing His Post

Source: DailySabah, 2021

Palestinian digital rights non-profit group called 7amleh tracked nearly 500 removals and deletions on Facebook and Instagram between May 6 and May 19. As part of a campaign called Facebook, We Need to Talk, 7amleh and more than 30 other human rights groups are demanding greater openness into the social network's decision-making, particularly as it relates to Palestine (Paul, 2021). Pursuant to the report, half of the 500 instances occurred on Instagram, with 179 occurring on its parent company's platform, Facebook; Facebook also appears to have increased geo-blocking, which is when social media companies target the geographical location of content to aid moderation efforts, with "a number of these cases [documented] for activists from the occupied Palestinian territory." As reported by the organization, deleted Stories were responsible for 45 percent of all reported Instagram violations, with users receiving no

warning or notification. While Instagram did not answer 7amleh's request for information on 143 of the incidents, it did state, "Just one case violated the community rules." On May 7, Instagram acknowledged the removal concerns, although 7amleh claims that the bulk of reports (68%) came after the issue seemed to be resolved (Smith, 2021).

As stated by 7amleh, there have also been instances of Facebook suspending the accounts of Palestinian journalists, a criticism that has also been levelled at Twitter, where there have been 55 occurrences of breaches of Palestinian material, 91% of which resulted in account suspension. The Twitter account of Palestinian-American writer Mariam Barghouti, who was reporting on Palestinians being evacuated from Sheikh Jarrah, was also temporarily blocked. "We took action against the account you incorrectly mentioned. Since then, the situation has been rectified" In a statement, Twitter claimed that Barghouti's account was "temporarily disabled because it breaches the Twitter Media Policy." (Smith, 2021).

Employees at the Facebook-owned photo and video-sharing site complained that pro-Palestinian posts were not being shared across the platform, while other posts and hashtags were blocked and removed by the moderation system after being incorrectly flagged as associated with "violence or dangerous organizations," according to BuzzFeed (Staff, timesofisrael, 2021). After being accused of removing posts and banning accounts reporting on Israeli evictions in east Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, Instagram has confessed that user posts were deleted.

After Palestinian activists and media outlets claimed that messages had been taken down, the social media platform said it was a technical issue. The threat of evictions for Palestinian families has heightened tensions in Jerusalem, where hundreds of protestors were hurt over the weekend in clashes with Israeli police. The deletions were caused by a "technical fault," according to Instagram CEO Adam Mosseri, who apologized to users who were unable to "draw attention to really important issues." (AlTaher, 2021). Below is a screenshot of Mohammed Alkurd's tweet regarding Instagram removing his stories.



Figure 3.2. Screenshot on Mohammad Kurd's Tweet Regarding Instagram Deleting His Posts

Source: Middle East Eye, 2021

In accordance with what a business spokesperson stated, the reasoning behind prioritizing original postings was that most Instagram users had more stories to follow than time to check them, and the firm thought that consumers were "more interested in original stories from their closest friends." "People have also assumed that we were concealing articles regarding certain topics or points of view. We want to be clear about something: this is not the situation" she stated, "Any post that gets re-shared in stories, no matter what it is about, falls under this category." (BBC, 2021). Earlier that month, Another Facebook-owned application, WhatsApp, banned 17 Palestinian journalists, reportedly after they joined a WhatsApp group that disseminates information on Hamas operations. Israel and the United States, where Facebook is based, consider Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, to be a terrorist group. WhatsApp also deactivated the accounts of more than a dozen Israeli far-right extremists linked to the Otzma Yehudit party, including the wife of its chairman, MK Itamar Ben Gvir, and Bentzi Gopstein, the leader of the extreme Lehava group. (Staff, timesofisrael, 2021).

After the distribution of a video clip (02/05/2021), depicting an altercation between a Palestinian woman called Muna Al-Kurd and an Israeli settler, the pioneers of the communication sites tweeted under the hashtags #SheikhJarrah and

#SaveSheikhJarrah. Palestinian activists and their allies accused Instagram of censoring postings, restricting accounts, and cancelling profiles entirely after the video provoked worldwide anger on social media.

The activist Muna Al-Kurd also accused the site of suspending her "Instagram" account, though it currently appears to be active. Palestinian activists and supporters also accused Instagram of censoring posts protesting the threat to expel Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah district of occupied Jerusalem and that the number of their views of many stories and posts dropped dramatically. The image below shows a screenshot of the video that went viral of Muna Alkurd trying to make an Israeli settler move away from her home, while his response was: "If I don't steal it, someone else is gonna come and steal it". The image that follows, (Figure 9) shows how Muna Alkurd's Instagram account was disabled.

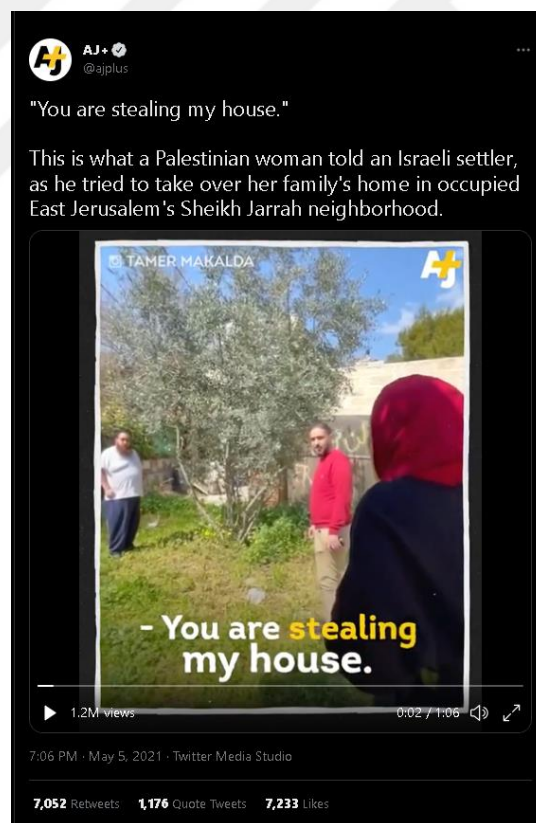


Figure 3.3. Screenshot of Muna Kurd's Video That Went Viral Posted on AJ+ Twitter Account

Source: AJ+ 2021

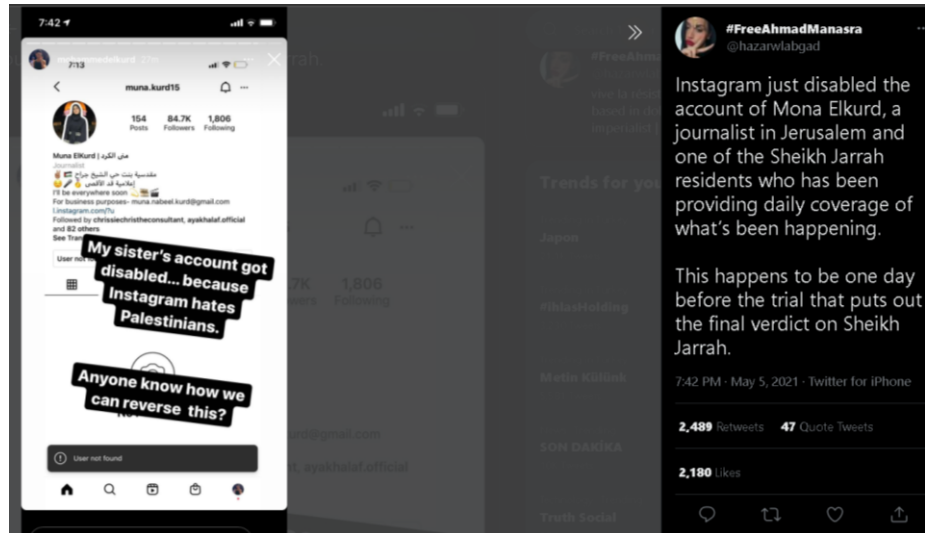


Figure 3.4. Screenshot Showing How Instagram Disabled Muna’s Account on the Platform

Source: Middle East Eye, 2021



Figure 3.5. Screenshot on Dr. Yara’s Tweet Related to the Deletion of Palestinian Activists’ Instagram Posts

Source: Middle East Eye, 2021

Danny Noble, a campaign organizer for Jewish Voice for Peace, told Newsweek that the coalition had received "hundreds of emails in 12 hours".

We've had cases where users have been warned that sharing videos of Israeli police beating Palestinian protesters in Sheikh Jarrah violates Community Guidelines," Noble said. "We've seen other cases when user content has completely vanished from their stories or feeds.

We've received indications from organizations and people that if they continue to publish about the brutality perpetrated by Israeli police and settlers against Palestinians

in Jerusalem, their accounts will be permanently blocked, Noble added (Almayadeen & Newsweek, 2021).

Deep links exist between democracy and human rights; one is dependent on the other in some manner and is incomplete without the other. Without ongoing adherence to human rights, "democracy" is likewise lacking. Without other fundamental rights being upheld, true participation in governance is all but impossible. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of expression are examples of some rights expected in a democratic setting. It's crucial to have the freedom to not just think what one wants, but also to speak their minds, whatever the thought may be. How can individuals "take part" in governance if they are forbidden from expressing their opinions in the media or in conversation with others? When, in essence, their viewpoint has been excluded from the potential solutions being thought about (Council of Europe, 2022). Democratic human rights on the Instagram platform are in a way doubted and questioned in this case being studied.

3.2. Hypothesis of the Study

From the observation, some views of many stories and posts of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem 2021 events shared by some activists were dropping dramatically during many live streams.

As social attention focused on the uprisings occurring through Instagram's platforms, it is assumed that there is a possibility that Instagram took action on the sharing and posting features of the Palestinian activists and their followers' accessibility to many of their and other' posts and stories created related to hashtags on the event.

In other words, this study hypothesizes that Instagram's terms and conditions of sharing posts and feeds and the momentary changes on them had affected and controlled the publishing of posts related to the Sheikh Jarrah 2021 events.

It is also assumed in this study that the democratic principles that the Instagram platform is assumed to go by and respect were not that of no value. As it is believed

that Instagram did not respect the Human rights and their freedom of expression and thought in this case being studied.

3.3. Research Question

- **Depending on the Above Hypothesis, the Main Question of the Study Is:**

Did Instagram's terms and conditions of sharing posts and feeds affect the publishing and posting related to the Sheikh Jarrah 2021 events? To what extent did Instagram stay committed to its democratic principles on the related posts shared during the events?

3.4. Importance of the Study

This study tries to shed light on the case of Palestine and the appropriate effect of social media covering its events especially during and after the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem. The study will also explain what media covers what events and how the covered events are interpreted regarding the Sheikh Jarrah events, in addition to learning more about the effects of these media on their followers and audiences.

Moreover, this study will convey information for future research that will explore upcoming similar events that occur in the Middle East or anywhere else and grow well known and viral on social media platforms.

It is essential for one to be able to speak their thoughts, as well as to think the way they like. If people are not allowed to voice their thoughts in the media or in social interactions, how can they "take part" in governance? Instagram, by taking action against the posts related to the events (banning, deleting, blocking the posts and shares on the platform that were related to the events), had their perspectives in essence disregarded.

3.5. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to pinpoint the role that Instagram had taken during the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem like many other social media platforms had done. Therefore, as the social attention focused on the uprisings occurring through Instagram's platforms, this study is to study the actions Instagram took on the sharing and posting features of (at least) the Palestinian activists and on their followers' accessibility to many of their and others posts and stories which are created and related to or include hashtags on the Sheikh Jarrah 2021 Events occurring later.

In addition, it also aims to study the fall in the number of viewers of certain Instagram post creators on the events and to determine its possible causes. Moreover, the accounts, posts, stories, live videos and even some hashtags ban and limitations applied by the Instagram platform are to be critically studied.

In other words, the study aims to investigate whether Instagram has played a role in controlling the publishing and sharing related to the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood events. It aims to find out whether there were any bans on hashtags or users and influencers that posted posts related to the case while the event was occurring. In addition, it also aims to prove whether or not some Instagram users or influencers were banned or got their accounts removed as claimed for posting posts related to the case mentioned. Moreover, this study also aims to investigate to what extent the Instagram platform was committed to being a democratic platform during the events of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

3.6. Distinguishing Factors from Other Studies

This study was done on a new and recent event that not many have enough knowledge of. Moreover, it is rather a sensitive case where not many people would rather study due to some political consequences that may be applied to the ones involved in this kind of study.

3.7. Limitations of the Study

One of the study's main factors is the main Instagram influencers in the case of Sheikh Jarrah. The study has intended to host Muna Al-Kurd and her brother in addition to other influencers living in the region, but most likely due to pressure and fear of falling into more trouble, in addition to being too popular and famous to the point, it gets hard to reach one using normal contact information, no interview or hosting of any kind was manageable. Another limitation is that one user can provide answers to the same questionnaire more than once, since the questionnaire form did not include personal details or have any sort of one-time answer limitation.

3.8. Concepts of the Study

- **The Sheikh Jarrah events:** Two kilometres (one and a half miles) north of the Old City on the way to Mount Scopus lies East Jerusalem's largely Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah. Its name comes from the nearby grave of Sheikh Jarrah, a Saladini physician who died in the 13th century. The present neighbourhood was established in 1865 and over time evolved into a hub for the Al-Husayni family and other members of Jerusalem's Muslim aristocracy. The events mentioned are the ones that started in the neighbourhood at the end of April 2021 and that lasted until around 22 June of the same year (Zirulnick & Bryant, 2011).

- **Instagram:** In 2012, Facebook purchased Instagram, a free online photo-sharing tool and social media platform. Through a smartphone app, Instagram users may edit and post still images and brief videos. In addition to adding a description to each post, users may utilise geotags and hashtags to index their content and make it searchable by other app users. When tagged with hashtags or geotags, a user's posts are visible to the public and show up on their followers' Instagram feeds. In order for just their followers to see their postings, users can also choose to make their profiles private. Users of Instagram may send their friends private messages using the Instagram Direct tool, as well as like, comment on, and favourite other people's posts. A single click may post photos to one or more other social networking platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr (Holak, 2017).

- **Instagram sharing:** on the platform, you may now instantly share a post as a sticker to your story for your friends and followers to see when you come across

anything in the feed that inspires you, such as a post from a friend collecting money for a cause or a picture of a new design from your favourite business (Instagram, 2018).

3.9. Methodological Framework and Data Collection Techniques

To better comprehend the research problem and to support the findings and conclusions of both methodologies, this study uses a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative methods.

A questionnaire is to be issued and analysed as part of the study, the findings are to be supported by the outcomes of the intensive interviews that are conducted as well, which will allow additional understanding of the research findings. The methodology of the current study is explained in this chapter, as well as the study population and sample, study tools, and means of data collection. Finally, a discussion of the statistical treatment that was used in the analysis of the acquired data was addressed.

3.10. Data Collection Sources

- **Preliminary Source:** The study variables needed for the hypothesis test and descriptive analysis were compiled using data collection strategies, information from people who lived the event and actively shared posts and news on their social media platforms while consented to participate willingly, so questionnaires were distributed among Instagram users that followed up the events. In addition, in-depth interviews with activists in the case of Palestine were conducted to obtain further in-depth insights and information on the subject.

– **Secondary Sources:** Data on the study subject (theoretical framework) was gathered by referring to scientific studies, domestic and international prior research, magazines, scientific journals, statistics, and official websites relevant to the study's subject.

3.11. Ethical Considerations

One of the most crucial aspects of the research involves ethical considerations. Voluntary participation was guaranteed; in addition, no harm of any kind should ever

be done to research subjects. Moreover, priority was given to treating study subjects with respect. The questionnaire participants' privacy and anonymity were protected. In addition, the confidentiality of the study data is adequately protected.

3.12. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

3.12.1. Quantitative Method; Questionnaire

The questionnaire was chosen since it gives any research more structure, which may help with anything one is trying to learn and figure out and answer. (Cleave, 2021).

The questionnaire was used as the main tool of the study because it is considered one of the basic methods for collecting primary or basic data, either directly from the selected sample or from all members of the study community, by asking a set of specific questions prepared in advance, with the goal of identifying certain facts, the respondents' viewpoints and attitudes, or the motives, factors, and influences that push them to act in certain behaviours.

The current study used a questionnaire to obtain data from respondents, with the researcher disseminating the URL of the questionnaire via social media platforms, relying on voluntary responses and snowball probability sampling methods. Furthermore, the questionnaire included both closed questions based on the Likert scale and open questions aimed at achieving the study's goals.

The following issues were covered in the questionnaire:

- 1- The first axis contains the respondents' demographic data.
- 2- The second axis is related to the user's behaviours and usage of the Instagram social media platform.
- 3- The third axis: how often and whose hashtags and influencers they had followed during the event. and whether they had participated in sharing and publishing-related posts during that period.
- 4- The fourth axis is about whether they were banned from the platform for posting posts on the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood or not.

3.12.2. Means and Standard Deviation

A collection of data's mean and standard deviation are generally provided together. If the centre of the data is calculated around the mean, the standard deviation is a "natural" measure of statistical dispersion. This is because the standard deviation from the mean is lower than the standard deviation from any other point. The coefficient of variation, which is the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean, may also be used to quantify variability.

Information on the accuracy of the mean we have gotten is usually required. This may be done by calculating the sampled mean standard deviation, which is the standard deviation divided by the square root of the total number of values in a data collection. As a result, an unbiased standard deviation estimate is a highly technical challenge.

Attitudes, views, demographic information, circumstances, and processes are all assessed in typical descriptive research. Survey research is the research design that has been used for this investigation. A survey is an attempt to gather information from members of a population in order to ascertain the population's present condition concerning one or more factors. At its best, knowledge survey research can supply every useful piece of information. It entails meticulous planning and implementation of each component of the research process. The survey instrument was created and administered to the research sample. The objective of the questionnaire was to gather information on people's thoughts and opinions on Instagram's role in influencing the publishing, sharing, and posting of Sheikh Jarrah 2021 events.

3.12.3. Questionnaire Population and Sample

A questionnaire was designed and distributed on 01/03/2022 to investigate Instagram users' points of view on how Instagram dealt with the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood and the posts and stories that were shared and related to it. Responses to the questionnaire were closed on 09/04/2022. The questionnaire studies the respondent's arguments and the experiences that they had gone through in relation to Instagram's actions towards their sharing on the platform. The questionnaire was distributed and shared using the snowball method where 304 participants shared their

answers. The questions mainly investigated which influencers were the most followed and whether the users had witnessed any sort of blocking, removing or limitation or not on the posts shared that were related to the events then.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and optional where the participants were fully free to share their answers and experiences. The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions, 10 of them were multiple-choice questions, three open-ended questions, 5 Likert scale questions and more questions where they were allowed to pick more than one answer.

3.12.4. Questionnaire Validity

The validity of the questionnaire content shows to what extent the scale measures are prepared to measure in a certain context through the logical analysis of the scale content. The questionnaire is enclosed in the appendix. Two academicians¹ who have experience in the field of media have observed, checked and judged its questions before the questionnaire was distributed. All observations were taken and the questionnaire was edited based on these observations until the questionnaire reached the final form. The questionnaire was also distributed once before on a 10% pilot study in order to test and check the validity of the questionnaire as it was proved to be well.

3.12.5. Statistical Processing

After completing the collection data, the data was transferred from the Excel program, and then the results were processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the conclusions were drawn. Simple frequencies and percentages were used in the analysis of the study data to obtain the necessary statistical results, answer the study questions, and test the hypotheses.

¹ The academicians: Assist. Prof. Yasmin Aldamen and Assist. Prof. Hakki Öcal from, Ibn Haldun University

SPSS was used to analyse the collected data and test the research hypotheses to answer the study questions and hypotheses that were formulated to examine the role of Instagram in Influencing the Publishing, Sharing, and Posting related to the Sheikh Jarrah 2021 Events. The following statistical techniques and tests were used in the data analysis:

1. Frequencies and percentages to describe the responses of the study sample.
2. Descriptive Statistical Techniques: these included means and standard deviations. These techniques were used to illustrate respondents of the study fields.

Relative importance, for five-Likert scale assigned due to:

1	2	3	4	5
Rarely				A lot

Class Interval = $\frac{\text{Maximum Class} - \text{Minimum Class}}{\text{Number of Level}}$

$$\text{Class Interval} = \frac{5 - 1}{3} = \frac{4}{3} = 1.33$$

- The Low degree from 1.00- 2.33
- The Medium degree from 2.34 – 3.67
- The High degree from 3.68 – 5.00

The relative importance for six Likert scale assigned due to:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never					A lot

Number of Level

$$\text{Class Interval} = \frac{5 - 0}{3} = \frac{5}{3} = 1.66$$

- Low degree from 0.00- 1.66
- Medium degree from 1.67 – 3.33
- High degree from 3.34 – 5.00

3.13. Quantitative Method; Intensive Interviews

In-depth interviews, also known as intensive interviews, are a mix of one-on-one interviews. For the following reasons, intensive interviews are unique:

They usually work with smaller samples and they go into great depth regarding the reasons why people respond in certain ways. They also enable long-term monitoring of respondents' nonverbal reactions, allowing for the extraction of respondents' opinions, values, motives, recollections, experiences, and feelings. Moreover, interviewers can develop questions based on the responses of each respondent in intensive interviews. In addition to that, connection built between the interviewer and the responder is critical to the effectiveness of extensive interviews (wecommunication, 2016).

An online interview was conducted through computer-mediated communication technologies like instant messaging, email, or video. Online interviews do not require the same ethical considerations, sampling, or rapport that traditional face-to-face interviews do.

There are two sorts of online interviews: synchronous (conducted in real-time), such as those done through online chat, and asynchronous (conducted in "non-real-time," such as those done through email). Some writers address online interviews in the context of online focus groups, while others consider them to be distinct research approaches. (Williams & Stewart, 2005).

A number of in-depth interviews were done in Arabic Language and completed online with experts in the industry as well as those who witnessed the above-mentioned Instagram issues first-hand during the events. The first occurred on February 15, 2022, with Nour Abu Ghoush, a Master's degree holder in Diplomatic Studies and a well-known young activist in Palestinian matters on social media. Another interview with Dr. Abdullah Maarouf, Professor of Bait al-Maqdis Studies, Professor of Islamic History and Biography of the Prophet at the Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, and former media official for public relations at Bab al-Rahma - Al-Aqsa Mosque, was conducted as the second interview on February 22, 2022.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1. Quantitative Results; Questionnaire Results

4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics

Table 4.1. Gender of the Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	165	54.3
Female	139	45.7
Total	304	100.0

Table 4.1.) shows that males were (54.3%) and females were (45.7%) of the sample of the study.

Table 4.2. Age of the Participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 28 years	210	69.1
29 – 39 years	75	24.7
40 – 50 years	12	3.9
51 years and above	7	2.3
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.2.) shows the demographic distribution for participants' ages, which showed that (69.1%) of them were from (18 – 28 years), (24.7%) were (29- 39 years), (3.9%) were (40 – 50 years) and (2.3%) of the participants were (51 years and above).

Table 4.3. Latest Academic Qualification

Latest Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's Degree	140	46.1
Secondary School	94	30.9
Master's Degree	46	15.1
Less than Secondary School	13	4.3
PhD	11	3.6
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.3.) shows that (4.3%) of the participants' latest academic qualification was less than secondary school; the participants from secondary school were (30.9%), and (46.1%) from them were holders the Bachelor's Degree, Master's degree was (15.1%) and the participants whose latest academic qualification was PhD were (3.6%) of the participants.

Table 4.4. Participants Region

Region	Frequency	Percentage
Arab countries other than Palestine	148	48.68
Turkey	88	28.95
Palestine West bank	21	6.91
Europe	14	4.6
Palestine: Gaza	12	3.95
Asia (Other than the Arab Countries)	10	3.3
1948 occupied lands of Palestine	6	2.0
North / South America	4	1.31
Africa (Other than the Arab Countries)	1	.3
Total	304	100

Table (4.4.) shows that (48.68%) of the participants were from Arab countries other than Palestine, (3.95%) of them were from Palestine: Gaza, (28.95%) from Turkey, (6.91%) from Palestine Westbank, (3.3%) were from Asia (Other than the Arab Countries), (4.6%) from Europe, (2%) from 1948 occupied lands of Palestine, (1.31%)

from North / South America, while Africa (other than the Arab Countries) were (0.3%).

4.1.2. Study Sample’s Usage of Instagram in Relation to the Events

Table 4.5. Study Sample’s Usage of Instagram

How Often do you use Instagram?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Rarely	14	4.6
	little	24	7.9
	Medium	86	28.3
	A lot	100	32.9
	Very much	80	26.3
	Total	304	100.0

As it appears from (Table 4.5.) above, 32.9% of the study sample describe their usage of Instagram as “a lot”, 25.3% describe their usage as a “medium” level, while 26.3% of the sample believe they use Instagram on a “very much” level. Meanwhile, 7.9% use it on a “little” level and 4.6% say that they rarely use Instagram.

4.1.3. Interacting with Posts and Shared Stories Related to Events in Palestine and Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood on Instagram

Table 4.6. How Often the Study Sample Saw Posts Relate to Events in Palestine (in General)

How often do you see posts related to events happening in Palestine (in general) on Instagram?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	6	2.0
	Rarely	42	13.8
	Little	52	17.1
	Medium	77	25.3
	A Lot	71	23.4
	Very Much	56	18.4
	Total	304	100.0

Table 4.6.) explains how 25.3% of the study sample described their interactions with posts related to Palestinian events in general as “Medium level”, while 23.4% say that they see such posts “a lot”. 18.4% believe that they see such posts a lot and with a close percentage, 17.1% interact “a little” with such posts. 13.8% rarely see such posts while only 2% believe they never see posts related to the Palestinian events on Instagram -generally speaking-.

Table 4.7. How Often the Study Sample Saw Posts Relate to the Sheikh Jarrah Events

How often did you see posts on Instagram related to the Sheikh Jarrah events in Palestine during the events?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	7	2.3
	Rarely	28	9.2
	Little	47	15.5
	Medium	69	22.7
	A Lot	66	21.7
	Very Much	87	28.6
	Total	304	100.0

Table (4.7.) states that 28.6% of the study sample had been seeing posts related to Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events on a high level describing it as “very much”. Meanwhile, 22.7% of the sample thought of their viewing of such posts as “medium” level, whereas 21.7% described it as “a lot” and 9.2% believe they rarely saw such posts. Meanwhile, 2.3% of the participants in the questionnaire do not remember viewing such posts.

4.1.4. Hashtags and Influencers They Had Followed During the Event and Sharing Activity Status

Table 4.8. Which Hashtags Do You Remember Encountering During the Events?

Which Hashtags do you remember ENCOUNTERING during the events?	Frequency	Percentage
# Gaza	73	16.8
# حي الشيخ جراح	63	14.6
# انقذوا_حي_الشيخ_جراح	61	14.0
# Savesheikhjarrah	55	12.7
# freepalestine	53	12.2
# Gazaunderattak	46	10.6
# Palestine	40	9.2
# الأقصى	30	6.9
# stopthegenocide	13	3.0
Total	434	100

Table (4.8.) shows that (16.8%) of the participants that participated in the questionnaire remember encountering the (#gaza) hashtag, while (14.6%) of the participants remember (# حي الشيخ جراح) during the events and (14.0%) remember encountering the hashtag (# freepalestine), The hashtag (# freepalestine) was remembered to be encountered with percent of (12.2%) of the participants, while (12.7%) of the participants remember encountering (Savesheikhjarrah). The rest of the hashtags follow as viewed in the table above.

Table 4.9. Hashtags Remembered to be Used During the Events?

Which Hashtags do you remember USING during the events?	Frequency	Percentage
# Gaza	68	16.6
# حي الشيخ جراح	57	14.0
# انقذوا_حي_الشيخ_جراح	53	13.0
# freepalestine	52	12.7
# Savesheikhjarrah	47	11.5
# Gazaunderattak	44	10.8
# Palestine	39	9.5
# الأقصى	21	5.2
# stopthegenocide	15	3.8
Other hashtags	7	1.7
Did not share hashtags	5	1.2
Total	408	100.0

The results in table (4.9.) show that (14%) of the participants remember that they used (# حي الشيخ جراح) during the events, and the ones that remember using (# freepalestine) was with a percentage of (12.7%), (# Palestine) was remembered being used in the events with a percentage of (9.5%), (# savesheikhjarrah) with a percentage of (11.5%), meanwhile (10.8%) remember using (# Gazaunderattak), (13%) remember using (# انقذوا_حي_الشيخ_جراح) and (# Gaza) with a percentage of (16.6%) from the respondents.

(# الأقصى) was remembered to be used with percent of (5.2%) by the respondents, (3.8%) of the respondents remember using (# stopthegenocide), while (other hashtags) were remembered to be used with the percentage of (1.7%). Meanwhile, the participants that did not share any hashtags were proved to be (1.2%) of the participants.

Table 4.10. How Often the Study Sample Shared Posts Related to the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood Events

How often did you -as an Instagram user- share POSTS related to the events on Instagram?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	27	8.9
	Rarely	45	14.8
	Little	53	17.4
	Medium	78	25.7
	A Lot	53	17.4
	Very Much	48	15.8
	Total	304	100.0

Table (4.10.) shows that 25.7% of this study sample had shared posts related to the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events on a “medium” level. Whereas 17.4% believe that they had shared “a lot” of posts on this matter, another 17.4% had shared a “little”. On the other hand, 15.8% of the sample saw itself sharing posts on a “very much level”. Meanwhile, 14.8% believed that they rarely shared any posts related to the matter and 8.9% do not recall sharing anything.

Table 4.11. How Often the Study Sample Shared Stories Related to the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood Events

How often did you -as an Instagram user- share STORIES related to the events on Instagram?			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	19	6.3
	Rarely	49	16.1
	Little	57	18.8
	Medium	76	25.0
	A Lot	56	18.4
	Very Much	47	15.5
	Total	304	100.0

Table (4.11.) shows how the participants in the questionnaire describe themselves sharing stories on Instagram related to the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events. According to the results, 25% of the study sample say they shared stories related to the matter on a “medium” level. 18.8% shared stories on a “little” level while 18.4% described their story sharing as “a lot”. 16.1% of the sample stated that they “rarely” shared stories on their Instagram pages, meanwhile, 15.5% say that they shared stories on a “very much” level.

Table 4.12. Influencers Whose Posts, Stories, or Live Videos on Instagram During the Event Remembered to Be Viewed

Which of the influencers below do you remember viewing their posts, stories or live videos on Instagram during the event?	Frequency	Percentage
Muna Alkurd	131	19.5
Muhammad Alkurd	94	14.1
Bella Hadid	67	10.0
Abdalafo Bassam	63	9.3
Saleh Zeghari	59	8.8
Nour Abu Ghosh	47	7.0
Alaa Salaymeh	41	6.0
Ramzi Abbasi	41	6.0
Dua Lina	40	5.9
Roger Waters	37	5.5
Zayn Malik	32	4.8
Tamer Makalda	21	3.1
Total	673	100.0

Table (4.12.) shows that the influencer who was remembered having their stories, posts and live videos on Instagram viewed the most during the events was (Muna Alkurd) with a percentage of (19.5%) of the participants, followed by (Muhammad Alkurd) with (14.1%) from the respondents. Bella Hadid followed according to the participants' responses with a percentage of (10%), these were the most remembered influencers during the event.

The other influencers mentioned were Zayn Malik with a percentage of (4.8%), Dua Lipa (5.9%), Roger Waters (5.5%), Saleh Zeghari (8.8%), Tamer Makalda (3.1%), Abdalaf Bassam (9.3%), Ramzi Abbasi and Alaa Salaymeh (6%) and Nour Abu Ghosh with a percentage of (7%) from the respondents of the participants.

Table 4.13. How Did the Study Sample Stay Updated with the Events on Instagram?

How did you stay updated with the events on Instagram?	Frequency	Percentage
By following the influencer Instagram pages	91	29.9
Option 1+ 2 + 3	63	20.7
Option 1 + 2	55	18.1
By following the hashtags on Instagram	33	10.9
By following the News Channels' Instagram pages	32	10.5
Option 1 + 3	22	7.2
Option 2 + 3	8	2.6
Total	304	100.0

The results in Table (4.13.) show that (29.9%) of the participants in the study stayed updated with the events on Instagram by following the influencer Instagram pages, following the News Channels' Instagram pages with a percentage of (10.5%) and following the hashtags on Instagram with a percentage of (10.9%).

Participants selected Options 1 + 2 with percentage of (18.1%), and Options 1+3 with percent of (7.2%), Options (2 + 3) with percent of (2.6%) and all of options 1 + 2 + 3 with percent of (20.7%).

4.1.5. Bannings and Post Removals on Instagram

Table 4.14. Has the Study Sample Ever Heard or Witnessed that Instagram Had Removed a Number of Posts or Limited the Reach of Posts Related to the Events?

Have you ever HEARD or WITNESSED that Instagram had removed a number of posts or limited the reach of posts related to the events?	Frequenc y	Percentage
Yes	263	86.5
No	41	13.5
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.14.) shows that (86.5%) of the sample of the study have either heard or WITNESSED Instagram removing a number of posts or limiting the reach of posts related to the events. It also shows that the participants that have not heard or witnessed Instagram removing posts or limited the reach of posts related to the events with a percentage of (13.5%) of the sample.

Table 4.15. Has the Study Sample Posted Video Posts, Photos, or Hashtags on Your Instagram Page Regarding the Events of Sheikh Jarrah Before?

Have you posted video posts, photos, or hashtags on your Instagram page regarding the events of Sheikh Jarrah before?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	193	63.5
No	79	26.0
Not Sure	32	10.5
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.15.) shows that (63.5%) of the sample of the study have posted video posts, photos, or hashtags on the Instagram page regarding the events of Sheikh Jarrah before. However, the participants that have not posted came with a percentage of (26%) of the

participants, Meanwhile, the ones who responded by being not sure whether they had posted or not came with a percentage of (10.5%) of the participants.

Table 4.16. If Their Answer to The Previous Question Was "Yes", Were Any of Those Posts They Shared Regarding the Events of Sheikh Jarrah Removed by Instagram?

If your answer to the previous question was "yes", were any of those posts you shared regarding the events of Sheikh Jarrah removed by Instagram?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	107	35.2
No	118	38.8
My answer to the previous question was no	79	26.0
Total	304	100.0

According to the results shown in Table (4.16.), the participants said that there were (35.2%) of them who believed that those posts they mentioned in the previous question were related to the events of Sheikh Jarrah and thus removed by Instagram, (38.8%) of them do not believe that the post was related and therefore removed. Meanwhile (26%) of the participants had answered the previous question with a “No”.

Table 4.17. Was the Study Sample Ever Blocked or Banned from Posting or Commenting on Instagram Due to Something You Had Shared Related to The Events?

Were you ever blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something you had shared related to the events?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	115	37.8
No	189	62.2
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.17.) shows that (37.8%) of the sample of the study have experienced getting blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something they had shared related to the events while the ones who have never got blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something they had shared related to the events came with a percentage of (62.2%) of the participants.

Table 4.18. Does the Study Sample Know Someone Who Has Been Blocked or Banned from Posting or Commenting on Instagram Due to Something They Had Shared Related to The Events?

Do you know someone who has been blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something they had shared related to the events?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	240	78.9
No	64	21.1
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.18.) shows that (78.9%) of the participants know someone who has been blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something they had shared related to the events and (21.1%) of the participants did not know anyone who has been blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something they had shared related to the events.

Table 4.19. What Knowledge Did the Study Sample Acquire Through Instagram Regarding The Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood Events?

What knowledge did you acquire through Instagram regarding the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events?	Frequency	Percentage
I was further updated of the event through Instagram	152	50.0
I did not know about it before, and heard about it via Instagram	96	31.6

Table 4.19. (cont.)

I did not gain anything regarding the events through Instagram	33	10.9
Not Sure	23	7.6
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.19.) shows that (31.6%) of the participants did not know about Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events before, (50%) got further updated on the events through Instagram, while (10.9%) of the participants did not gain anything regarding the events through Instagram, and (7.6%) of the participants were not sure of an accurate answer.

Table 4.20. Did the Study Sample Watch Any Live Videos on Instagram Covering the Events of Sheikh Jarrah Events?

Did you watch any live videos on Instagram covering the events of Sheikh Jarrah Events?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	200	65.8
No	60	19.7
I do not remember	44	14.5
Total	304	100.0

Table (4.20.) shows that (65.8%) of the participants watched live videos on Instagram covering the events of Sheikh Jarrah events, (19.7%) of the participants did not watch any live videos related to Sheikh Jarrah events on Instagram, while (14.5%) of the participants did not remember whether they watched any live videos on Instagram covering the events of Sheikh Jarrah events or not.

Table 4.21. Distribution of the Answers Regarding the Pages the Users Follow

People who had started watching live videos during the events in the question before	Frequency	Percentage
Mentioned	179	89.5%
Didn't mention	21	10.5%
Total	200	100.0

In accordance with Table (4.21.), 179 out of 200 of the study sample answered the question about the Instagram users and pages whose live videos they had watched during the events. Meanwhile, 21 participants (10.5% of the total people who approved of watching live videos) didn't mention it.

Table 4.22. Frequencies of The Instagram Users and Pages Mentioned in The Study Samples Answers on The Question Related to Who's Live Videos They Watched during the Event

The Influencer	Frequencies	Percentage
Muna Alkurd	107	64.5
Alaa Hamdan	27	16.3
Mohammad Alkurd	21	12.7
Muna Hawwa	21	12.7
Saleh Zeghari	21	12.7
Ramzi Abbasi	17	10
Bella Hadid	12	7
Abdalafu	10	6
Nour Abu Ghoush	8	5
Alaa Salaimeh	7	4
Enes Yilman	5	3
Eye Of Palestine	4	2.4
Zeyin Malek	3	1.8

Table 4.22. (cont.)

Dua Lipa	3	1.8
Abdullah Marouf	2	1.2
Ayman Abli	2	1.2
Lourance Almansi	2	1.2
Mohammad Ghanayim	1	0.6
Givera Abueirri	1	0.6
Roger Waters	1	0.6
Mohammad Abu Flipin	1	0.6
Diya Elayyan	1	0.6
Alaa Sous	1	0.6
Mesut Eryatan	1	0.6
Yahya Ebuznaid	1	0.6
Esra Ebu Nab	1	0.6
Khadija Khweis	1	0.6
Hanadi Al'Alwan	1	0.6
Naim Eleyubi	1	0.6
Ahmad Hhazi	1	0.6
Emir Dana	1	0.6
Muna Zeki	1	0.6
Nawras Abu Saleh	1	0.6
Osama Awdat	1	0.6
Paliroots	1	0.6
Tamer Nfar	1	0.6
Mohammad Taha	1	0.6
Mohammad Alqazza	1	0.6
Latifa Abu Latif	1	0.6
Nicholas Kouri	1	0.6
Alaa Abu Faris	1	0.6
Ola Alfarisi	1	0.6
Mohammad Assaf	1	0.6
Wesam Qutub	1	0.6

In this question, the participants were allowed to provide more than one answer on the question. As the question had asked about the Instagram pages and users whose live videos the study sample had watched, it is only natural for them to provide more than just one page in a short-answer question. In this question, some choices were given to the participants to choose as well the option Others was available to let them add any name they want. As we see the option Others let the participants include new names. All mentioned names were included in the table 19 above with their frequencies and percentage. According to the Table (4.22.), Muna Alkurd was mentioned quite a lot, where her name was given in 107 times (64.5% of the answers), meanwhile Alaa Hamdan came in next with her name provided in the answers 27 times (16.3%), followed up by Mohammad Alkurd, Muna Hawwa and Saleh Zeghari where each of them were mentioned 21 times.

4.2. Qualitative Results; Intensive Interview's Results

The descriptive and conceptual information gathered through surveys, interviews, or observation is referred to as qualitative data. We may investigate concepts and further explain quantitative outcomes by analysing qualitative data. Individual interviews that are in-depth allow for a lot of interpersonal engagement. This approach is suitable for gathering in-depth comments from a single participant or for talking about more sensitive topics (Ivan, 2021).

Table 4.23. Interviewees of the Research

Interviewee name	Position	Place of interview	Date of Interview	Duration of interview
Nour Abu Ghosh	Masters graduate – Social Media Influencer	Zoom – Online	15/02/2022	21:18 min
Abdullah Marouf	Professor of Islamic History and Biography of the Prophet /Istanbul 29 Mayis University	Zoom – Online	22/02/2022	23:20 min
Ahmad Barakat	Marketing and digital platforms	Zoom – Online	18/04/2022	17:14 min

A number of intensive interviews were conducted and performed online with people with experience and good knowledge in the field and who experienced the Instagram issues mentioned above first hand during the events. The first was with Nour Abu Ghoush (Appendices 3.1.) in 15/02/2022, who is a graduate of Master's degree in Diplomatic Studies and is a well-known young activist in events related to Palestinian affairs on social media.

The second interview was in 22/02/2022, with Dr. Abdullah Maarouf (Appendices 3.2.), Professor of Bait al-Maqdis Studies, Professor of Islamic History and Biography of the Prophet at the University of 29 Mayıs in Istanbul, and former media official for public relations at Bab Al-Rahma - Al-Aqsa Mosque.

On 18/04/2022, an interview was conducted with Ahmad Barakat (Appendices 3.3.), who works in the field of marketing and digital platforms. He has a company called "GO SOCIAL" which is a company specialized in digital skills and a consultant for more than one company. He has supervised training courses in more than one country, including Turkey, Jordan, Palestine, the Palestinian interior, and in the cities of Jerusalem and in some of the Gulf Arab states. He also gave some lectures related to Business at the basic level. Regarding issues similar to the case of Sheikh Jarrah, he is participating in giving lectures with the "7amleh" centre in Palestine in the field of digital rights, and is their advisor there.

Regarding the use of social media during the events, Ms. Abu Ghoush believes that "The arrival of events and the arrival of the issue through these media meant that they reached the youth. The first thing that was benefited from social media in the case of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in particular and in the case of Sheikh Jarrah in general was initially a stronger media than the old (traditional) media.

Secondly, it reached the youth segment, as it was expected that this segment or group was not interested in politics and similar events and the cause and was interested in other issues and matters, but the case came to them precisely with that. The third thing is giving language to the case. Social media, including Instagram, have made the issue - despite it being a political issue in the first place - a purely humanitarian issue. As we have a young man and woman, the case was represented by Muna and Muhammad

at the beginning, as they were demanding a serious basic right, which is "I want to stay in my house." Therefore, by giving a language to the case in this way, people began to interact more and thus people began to understand this topic better. Therefore, if there was something that was benefited from in the past period, it is to reach the largest number of people and new segments of people."

Dr. Maarouf's comment when interviewed was that *"Not only in the events of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, but social media has proven in the past years that it is an effective weapon for the popular confrontation in the face of Jerusalem because the occupation did not imagine that social media would have that great role that began to become clear, which was present in the events that preceded... But what is very distinctive in the year 2021 is the role of the Instagram platform. Because if we are going to talk about the previous year's 2017-2019, the two platforms that had the most role in covering the events were the Facebook and WhatsApp platforms. But this time, no, Instagram was too big. Instagram did not have a large presence in the past, but this year it has had a very large presence at the events."*

Dr. Maarouf also agrees that Instagram was rather biased to the anti-Palestinian side of the case as he says: *"Yes, there is a clear targeting of activists, there is no dispute. And it seems that there are certain algorithms that deal with specific people and specific posts"*.

As stated by Ahmad Barakat, *"The impact of these platforms on any issue, especially the issue of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, was in the first place in raising awareness of this problem and the problems that the neighbourhood residents suffer from"*.

Ms. Abu Ghoush also shared her experiences related to the banning and removing of posts and comments related to the case of Palestine as she says the following regarding the matter: *"Of course, these things used to also happen even before the events, but it increased with the development of events to the point that we were surprised that the restriction had become increasing"*. She then describes the stages where she and others acted in return to Instagram's actions saying *"At first, we avoided using some words, and we knew that these words could be perceived by some algorithms on the communication platforms, and therefore impede the access and spread of this*

publication. However, later we were surprised that, despite the presence of some breaks and simple tricks, it became possible to detect them. Even the number of words and terms increased (words on which the platform's algorithms depend), as it did not initially include words such as "martyr" and "steadfastness", so some words were created in the current period as if someone is following with us and adding to this list of words first-hand. Then we were surprised that the (published) images also were recognized. That is, you can upload a picture of a person in Jerusalem or in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, without even writing anything in the description of the picture, or even by writing something that has absolutely nothing to do with the case, and yet the picture is taken (adjusted) and narrowed.

The narrowing and limitation were done in more than one-way, beginning with a narrowing that obstructed access. In other words, we noticed that when we published stories about our personal lives that contained content such as "*Good Morning*", they spread very quickly. At first, we used to make comparisons with a few numbers, and then these comparisons became beyond imagination when looking at the arrival of these private stories that are not related to the Palestinian issue. Then the stories related to the case were obstructed. So much so that they are no longer visible to people - even to our followers. That is, you follow a certain person for example, but his posts and shares do not appear unless you enter his page first manually. Then we moved to a new stage, which is deleting the content.

We were surprised when we uploaded certain content, and it gets published, and when you sign in again to your account, you find out that it no longer exists. You say to yourself the first time that it happened perhaps by chance, and the second time as well, but it was repeated with us several times - with all of us. The third thing, and it is something that happened to me personally, is that the account gets completely deleted. In my account, I had over 30,000 (followers), but it was "annihilated", and when I contacted them (Instagram customer service) that I could not log in to my account, I was replied that "This account belongs to a terrorist figure or encourages terrorism, and therefore this account does not meet our standards." The definition of terrorism has become related to the number of your use or shares related to the Palestinian issue.

The restriction was increasing, and the frankly surprising was that people supported us to remain persistent and steadfast, so some of us created alternative accounts but pressure or tightening was also done on the alternative account as well. Unfortunately, the restriction was severe, and the bias was so, and the lack of impartiality and lack of fairness was very clear in the past period. She also added that she was not able to retrieve her Instagram account (as well as her Facebook account) as it was removed for good. On the other hand, Dr. Maarouf did not suffer such problems like Ms. Abu Ghoush had, as he comments: *“No, so far, I have not encountered problems like this on the Instagram platform, for the simple reason that someone has become experienced in how to deal with these things and algorithms, even on Facebook”* as he continues justifying his comment *“the content is presented in a manner that does not violate the publishing standards. That is, you can present your message without provoking the algorithms of their publishing criteria”*.

Mr Barakat also went through a similar experience as he says: *“As I mentioned earlier, there is a clear duplication of dealing with Palestinian content and the content of the Zionist entity. ... I tried writing a post on the Facebook and Instagram platform in both languages (Arabic and English), and I used some keywords that were famous when they were used that caused the post to be deleted even though they Words that are not outside the framework of what is usually accepted in Instagram standards, and I was surprised that the account was banned for two days, just minutes after writing the post. I was also banned from ads for 60 days.”*

Ms. Abu Ghoush explains that everyone she knows who post on social media in favour of the Palestinian cause, *“all of them without exception”*, have had their accounts restricted in a way or another. Ms. Abu Ghoush does not remember what post she posted or shared that was the direct reason for her account’s removal. However, she does believe that it was during the Battle of Saif Al-Quds during the events of Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events.

Ms. Abu Ghoush’s comment on Instagram’s official response to the complaints and criticisms related to the banning and the types of restrictions that Instagram practiced on its users was critical as she believes that *“the response was a mock response, and it had no meaning at that time, because this response did not include returning any*

account that was deleted because of it, because any institution that has a specific defect has to make compensation or something.... It may seem that an apology was announced, and it was a mistake and a technical glitch, but in reality, there was no significant result.” Dr. Maarouf’s opinion was similar as he says commenting on this issue: “the party linked to Meta Company, I do not trust them or their justifications, and I do not trust their words or anything related to them because I believe what I see and not what I hear. Whatever the justifications from Instagram, I do not consider them to be true justifications, as they are in front of us dealing with specific personalities and specific parties - and what is this error that occurs only to this particular person and not to anyone else, in the end man has a mind that knows how to think and estimate. And these justifications, I think, are more propaganda than truthful justifications”. Mr Barakat shares the same belief on the issue as he describes it saying “Not a logical response, a platform as large as Instagram or Meta cannot have a lack of ability to solve problems related to artificial intelligence that are constantly repeated on Arabic content only. The deliberate double standards are evident here”.

Ms. Abu Ghoush also confirmed that she believed that the Instagram platform modified its algorithms during the events in order to hinder the sharing of related posts or photos, she comments: “it is not only for us as senders of the posts, but also for the recipients of the posts as well. In the past, it was shown to you as an Instagram user that this particular image contains scenes of blood, corpses, or something that not everyone would like to view, as was the case during the events of the Syrian war. But now, when you authenticate one of the photos that were published related to the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, you will find in it only photos of a demolished house, buildings or a wrecked car, knowing that it has given you a warning that this photo is offensive or contains violent scenes. This is evidence that the algorithms have been modified, and it is something that is noticeable whether you are a sender or a receiver of the message”.

However, Dr. Marouf’s point of view on this matter was “No, I think there are specific algorithms that target images, but I don't know if Instagram applies this to it or not. However, what I noticed is that any published photo that contains a confrontation with the occupation classifies it as containing sensitive content. And this talk indicates that

yes, these algorithms exist. But I did not notice a change in these algorithms applied to pictures of buildings such as Al-Aqsa Mosque or the Dome of the Rock”.

Mr Barakat also added in the interview saying, “(Instagram) is a system of American companies and companies. America considers some movements such as Hamas as terrorist. Therefore, publications based on these grounds get deleted or removed. Therefore, in the period of Ukrainian-Russian events, we clearly see ambivalence on this point. Even photos that are normally considered sensitive by Instagram standards were treated differently in the Palestinian and Ukrainian contexts.

The issue is not that it happened suddenly or something like that, but rather how the situation was exploited through Instagram...in the end, the survival of the strongest even on the level of social media, and until a solution is reached with the two platforms, there will always be some kind of duplication, and now there is a so-called “OVER-SIGHTS” on Facebook, and it is one of its sections that has been created in a way Special to talk about duality and its solution, but nothing has happened so far on the ground”.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussion

As the questionnaire was distributed randomly to the respondents using the snowball method, where people would answer the form and then share it with their friends, 54.3% of the answers were provided by male respondents which would give the impression that most of the respondents were males interested and willing to provide data to the study. 69.1% of the respondents were 18-28 years old and 24.7% were 29-39 years old according to the results of the questionnaire, which is also harmonic to the most popular Instagram user age group in 2021 (Omnicom agency, 2022). This would prove that the answers given in the questionnaire results were provided by a social group considered mature and open to social media. Moreover, the academic qualification of 41.8% of the respondents was “Bachelor's Degree” which would indicate that most of the respondents are rather mature, aware and - according to social standards - take things seriously when it is related to what information they provided. Geographically speaking, 48.67% of the respondents were in Arab countries other than Palestine. This would indicate that the Instagram users of the study sample followed up on the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in the nearby Arab countries more than the other locations given in the form – which can indicate that people in these countries might show more interest in the topic.

As 32.9% of the respondents describe their daily use of the platform as “a lot”, it is indicated that they somewhat keep themselves updated with the new trends, hashtags and news of their points of interest. 25.3% of these respondents describe their viewing of posts and news related to the case of Palestine via Instagram as a “medium rate” in general, while 28.6% of them agreed that they had been seeing posts related to the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood on a “large rate” during the events.

According to the respondents, Broadcasting via Instagram and social media definitely felt more trustworthy as it was directly from people in the area where the event was occurring. However, it also allowed misinformation to spread, as many older videos were reposted under the guise of it being recent or related to the Shaikh jarrah events.

Table 5.1. Using and Seeing the Events on Instagram

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Importance Level
1	How Often do you use Instagram?	3.68	1.09	High
2	How often do you see posts related to events happening in Palestine (in general) on Instagram?	3.10	1.37	Medium
3	How often did you see posts on Instagram related to the Sheikh Jarrah events in Palestine during the events?	3.38	1.40	High

It is clear from Table (5.1.) that the participants used Instagram with a mean of (3.68) and with a standard deviation of (1.09) which is a high level. The participants saw the posts related to events happening in Palestine (in general) on Instagram with a mean of (3.10) and with a standard deviation of (1.37) which is a medium level. Moreover, the participants saw the posts on Instagram related to the Sheikh Jarrah events in Palestine during the events with a mean of (3.38) and a standard deviation of (1.40) which is a high level as well.

As given by the study sample, the hashtags that had the most impact and were best remembered as well as used by the respondents were “حي_الشيخ_جراح_#” and “انقذوا_حي_الشيخ_جراح_#” in Arabic and “#savesheikhjarrah” in English. 25.7% of the users used these hashtags as well while posting and sharing posts on Instagram during the time of the events in the neighbourhood. 25% of the users had done a fair amount of sharing posts and stories on the platform according to their answers. While the very least number of the respondents share nothing. This would indicate that this study sample and further interest in the case was not just a bypassing event to them as they were rather active on Instagram during the occurring events.

In proportion to their answers, most of the participants in the study agreed that “Muna Al-Kurd” was the most followed influencer for her live videos on Instagram with a percentage of 64.5% of the respondents' answers, followed by Alaa Haman (16.3%), and then Muna’s brother “Muhammed Al-Kurd” along with Muna Hawwa and Saleh Zeghari with 12.7% each. Later comes “Ramzi Abbasi” with 10% and “Bella Hadid” with 12% followed by other influencers and pages with posts related to the events. In addition to that, almost one-third of the respondents stayed updated with events by following these influencers rather than using other means to stay updated according to the questionnaire. The interviewees as well mentioned that they had also followed these influencers and their pages to keep themselves updated with the events as they found them more reliable than other sources (Abu Ghoush, 2022), (Marouf, 2022), (Barakat, 2022) Along with that, a respondent to the questionnaire states the media influencers had made every effort to convey the image of the events to the public through the Instagram program and succeeded in doing so with great influence in favour of the cause of Sheikh Jarrah.

Table 5.2. How Often Did You – as Instagram User – Share Posts and Stories Related to the Events

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Importance Level
1	How often did you -as an Instagram user- share POSTS related to the events on Instagram?	2.75	1.52	Medium
2	How often did you -as an Instagram user- share STORIES related to the events on Instagram?	2.80	1.47	Medium

As shown in Table (5.2.), the participants as Instagram users Shared POSTS related to the events on Instagram with a mean of (2.75) and standard deviation of (1.52) which is a medium level and the participants share STORIES related to the events on Instagram with mean of (2.80) and standard deviation of (1.47) which is of a medium level.

Up until now, the settings of questionnaires and the data collecting methods were completed. The source of the data can be at least to some extent considered acceptable.

Therefore;

In accordance with the study sample, 86.5% of the respondents had either heard, witnessed or known users and pages related or those posted posts related to the events getting banned, disabled, limited, removed or deleted. Yet, 63.5% of the study sample did NOT experience user banning off Instagram first-hand. This would indicate that it was mostly only the influencers or people with a large number of followers that suffered in this case – even though most of the study sample had shared posts and stories related to the event. However, 35.9% of them did have a number of their posts and comments related to the event removed or deleted by the platform.

Nevertheless, even though Instagram gave an official statement on this matter describing it as an innocent glitch, the interviewees and many others find it a sarcastic statement and rather not possible for a platform as huge as Instagram to have a glitch repeating many times on the same context on different users solely on one side of the case.

It is believed that only the pro-Palestine posts were the ones to get removed by the platform (Marouf, 2022) (Barakat, 2022) according to one of the interviewees, Instagram should have recompensed and made up for it in a way or two if it was an innocent mistake; however, it was not” (Abu Ghoush, 2022).

According to the data gathered in this study, Instagram did take down many posts and shares as mentioned before. However, when it comes to account temporarily or permanent banning, deletion or account removal on the platform, 37.8% of the respondents say that they have experienced such a thing. On the other hand, 78.9% of the respondents have at least acquaintances that experienced such problems. conforming to Ms. Abu Ghoush in her interview, “All of the people I know who post on social media in favour of the Palestinian cause, all of them without exception, have had their accounts restricted, some of them could not share directly (share a live video); others had their posts blocked, and others had their account removed. But I do not know a person who published in favour of the Palestinian cause and who did not

encounter problems from the platform itself.” (Abu Ghoush, 2022). A respondent to the questionnaire stated, “The role of the Instagram application was to communicate the events from the people on the battlefield, a visual delivery that you could feel, but the Instagram laws that prevent the publication of these events were very annoying to me”. Another respondent’s comment on the issue was “I think it is beyond despicable that selective algorithms are intentionally removing posts and potentially inciting further devastation due to this lack of clarity and awareness. It is obvious that the Ukraine crisis is supported by all social media platforms, what changes for Palestine? It is targeted and it is treacherous”

Instagram had a good effect in keeping the users updated with the events, as – according to the study – more than 80% of the study sample did not know about the things occurring during the event in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood or were further informed about it via Instagram. In consonance with the interviewees, Instagram’s role was much larger than other platforms – surprisingly – even though it is not a platform used as much as the other platforms. More than half of the study sample watched and followed up on the live videos that covered the events in the neighbourhood.

A respondent to the questionnaire adds to the role of Instagram in this case saying “It was a very big and undeniable role and helped spread the events on a very wide scale and gave us the opportunity to learn about what is happening in a voice and image from the people of the neighbourhood itself, and this was in the interest of the events and the people of the neighbourhood, which made the whole world stand in solidarity with them and know the truth of what is happening”. Another respondent expressed their thoughts saying “With Instagram, I was able to get information every moment. I was able to watch all developments at the moment that occurred. Not only did I read what was happening but also, I saw it and felt what they felt there”.

However, according to the interviews done, and regarding Instagram’s official statements in reply to the complaints it got about the banning, deletion and removal of posts and limitations of stories, Ms. Abu Ghoush pointed out that “Unfortunately, the response was a mock response, and it had no meaning at that time because this response did not include returning any account that was deleted because of it, because any institution that has a specific defect has to make compensation or something. We

take simple productive institutions as an example, as when they find a fault in their product, they withdraw it from the market and apologize” (Abu Ghoush, 2022).

Dr Marouf shared the same opinion on the topic and said:” in my personal opinion, in my opinion, the party linked to Meta Company, I do not trust them or their justifications, and I do not trust their words or anything related to them because I believe what I see and not what I hear. Whatever the justifications from Instagram, I do not consider them to be true justifications, as they are in front of us dealing with specific personalities and specific parties - and what is this error that occurs only to this particular person and not to anyone else, in the end, man has a mind that knows how to think and estimate. And these justifications, I think, are more propaganda than truthful justifications” (Marouf, 2022).

Mr Barakat shared his opinion as well and believes that it is “not a logical response, a platform as large as Instagram or Meta cannot have a lack of ability to solve problems related to artificial intelligence that are constantly repeated on Arabic content only. The deliberate double standards are evident here” (Barakat, 2022).

5.2. Conclusion

According to the results of the study and its analysis results, and in accordance with what was mentioned in the interviews conducted in favour of the study, it can be said that despite the official statements Instagram spokesmen gave, it is believed that Instagram deliberately removed posts, limited story reach, deleted comments and even removed or deleted Instagram pages and accounts that were pro-Palestinian and related to the events of Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood while and after the events were occurring. These penalties that Instagram applied were not exclusive to big influencers only, but as well other users with much fewer followers suffered from Instagram’s actions. This study involved and included Instagram users that had experienced these cases for the first time as well as users who had witnessed this happening.

This study, as reported by the data it gathered, argues that is illogical that a platform as huge as the Instagram platform would allow a “glitch” to occur this many times repeatedly in the same context and only to the pro-Palestinian posts related to the

events. Moreover, it was figured that the sample study of this research found that the news related to the Sheikh Jarrah events taken from the Instagram pages of the influencers like Muna Al-Kurd, her brother Muhammed Al-Kurd and others, to be more reliable and trustworthy than other news resources. It was noted that the influencer's Instagram accounts and posts gave the users more chances to be further updated on the events occurring or even learn about them for the first time. It is also shown in the study that Instagram goes with double standards where in the case of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood events; no anti-Palestinian posts were reported removed according to the sources and study samples in this study, even though many posts included hate speeches and content that go against Instagram's terms of use. Moreover, it is noted in the study that Instagram's way of dealing with the Russian-Ukrainian 2022 conflict-related posts was very much different when compared to the way it dealt with the posts related to the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood events.

From a democratic perspective, one of the first rights that are regarded as being quite vital is freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. People must have the freedom to think for themselves and hold the views that are most important to them without fear of repercussions.

Governments have attempted to restrict this freedom throughout history out of concern that it may jeopardise the present system if people consider other systems of government. People have been imprisoned as a result of having the "wrong" thoughts. Prisoners of conscience are those who fit this description. However, a society without a diversity of viewpoints is not only intolerable, but it also restricts its ability to advance in novel and perhaps better ways. Instagram's banning, post removals and the limitations it applied on the related stories and posts shared during the events can be considered as forms of aggression against democracy and the known democratic principles.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE

The Role of Instagram in Influencing the Publishing, Sharing, and Posting Related to the Sheikh Jarrah 2021 Events

تم اعداد هذا الاستبيان لدراسة أثر انستغرام في تغطية أحداث حي جراح في فلسطين في الفترة 6-21 أيار 2021 هذا
لأي سبب اخر وستعامل بسرية دون طلب أو ذكر بيانات شخصية وستستخدم البيانات لغايات بحثية بحتة وليس
للمستجيبين.

This questionnaire was prepared to study the impact of Instagram in covering the
events of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Palestine during the period 6-21 May
2021. This data will be used for research purposes and not for any other reason and
will be treated confidentially. without requesting or mentioning personal data of
respondents

***Required**

*** اخر شهادة اكااديمية تم الحصول عليها - Latest Academic Qualification**

- Less than Secondary school - ما دون الثانوية العامة
- Secondary school - الثانوية العامة
- Bachelor's Degree - درجة البكالوريوس
- Master's Degree - درجة الماجستير
- PHD - درجة الدكتوراه

* النوع الاجتماعي - Gender

- Male - ذكر
- Female - انثى

* العمر - Age

- 18-28
- 29-39
- 40-50
- 51+

* الموقع الجغرافي - Region

- فلسطين الداخل - اراضي ال1948 - 1948 Occupied lands of Palestine
- فلسطين - غزة - Palestine: Gaza
- فلسطين، الضفة الغربية - Palestine: West Bank
- البلاد العربية غير فلسطين - Arab countries other than Palestine
- اوستراليا - Australia
- اوروبا - Europe
- تركيا - Turkey
- آسيا، عدا الدول العربية - Asia (other than the Arab countries)
- أفريقيا، عدا الدول العربية - Africa (other than the Arab countries)
- أميركا الشمالية / الجنوبية - North / South America
- Other: _____

* How often do you use Instagram? -- كيف تقيم درجة استخدامك لتطبيق انستغرام؟

	1	2	3	4	5	
rarely- نادرا	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	A lot- كثيرا جدا

* كيف تقيم درجة رؤيتك للمنشورات المتعلقة بالأحداث التي تحدث في فلسطين اثناء استخدامك لتطبيق انستغرام (بشكل عام) - How often do you see posts related to events happening in Palestine (in general) on Instagram ? -

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Never - ابدا	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	A lot- كثيرا جدا

* كيف تصف درجة رؤيتك لمنشورات على انستغرام تتعلق بأحداث الشيخ جراح في فلسطين خلال فترة وقوع الأحداث? --How often did you see posts on Instagram related to the Sheikh Jarrah events in Palestine during the events?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Never - ابدا	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	A lot- كثيرا جدا

* اي الهاشتاقات (الايوسمة) التي تذكر انك صادفتها أثناء الأحداث على منصة انستغرام؟ (يمكنك تحديد أكثر من خيار من الأسفل)
Which Hashtags do you remember ENCOUNTERING during the events?
(you can check more than one option from below)

#حي_الشيخ_جراح

#freepalestine

#palestine

#savesheikhjarrah

#gazaunderattack

#انقذوا_حي_الشيخ_جراح

#gaza

#الاقصى

#stopthegenocide

I do not remembering seeing hashtags

Other: _____

* اي الهاشتاقات (الاوسمه) التي تذكر انك استخدمتها أثناء فترة وقوع الأحداث أثناء نشرك على منصة انستغرام؟
Which Hashtags do you remember USING during the events? (you can check more than one option from below)

- #حي_الشيخ_جراح
- #freepalestine
- #palestine
- #savesheikhjarrah
- #gazaunderattack
- #انقذوا_حي_الشيخ_جراح
- #gaza
- #الاقصى
- #stopthegenocide
- other hashtags
- Did not share hashtags
- Other: _____

* How often did you -as an Instagram user- share POSTS related to the events on Instagram?
كيف تقيم درجة مشاركتك - كمستخدم انستغرام- لمنشورات متعلقة بالأحداث على انستغرام؟

0 1 2 3 4 5
Never ابدا كثيرا جدا A lot

* How often did you -as an Instagram user- share STORIES related to the events on Instagram?
كيف تقيم درجة مشاركتك - كمستخدم انستغرام- حكايات متعلقة بالأحداث على انستغرام؟

0 1 2 3 4 5
Never ابدا كثيرا جدا A lot

* أي من المؤثرين أدناه تذكر مشاهدة منشوراتهم أو حكاياتهم أو مقاطع الفيديو الحية الخاصة بهم أو أي نوع من السشاركات لهم على انستغرام؟ (يمكنك تحديد أكثر من خيار من الأسفل)
Which of the influencers below do you remember viewing their posts, stories or live videos on Instagram during the event? (you can check more than one option from below)



Muna AlKurd منى الكرد



Muhammad Alkurd محمد الكرد



Bella Hadid بيلا حديد



Zayn Malik زين مالك



Saleh Zeghari صالح زيغاري



Tamer Makalda تامر مقالده



Abdalaf Bassam عبدالهفو بسام



Ramzi Abbasi رمزي عباسي



Alaa Salaymeh آلاء سلاميه

Other:



Noor Abu Ghosh نور أبو غوش

كيف بقيت على اطلاع مستمر بالأحداث على انستغرام؟ How did you stay updated with the events on instagram? *

- By Following the influencer instagram pages - من خلال متابعة صفحات الانستغرام الخاصة بالمؤثرين - الاعلاميين
- By Following the News Channels' Instagram pages- من خلال متابعة صفحات الانستغرام الخاصة -بالتقنوات الاخبارية
- By Following the hashtags on Instagram- من خلال متابعة الهاشتاقات (الاسمة) على انستغرام
- options 1 + 2
- options 1 + 3
- options 2 + 3
- options 1 + 2 + 3

هل سمعت أو شهدت يوماً قيام انستغرام بإزالة/حذف عددًا من المنشورات أو حدّ من وصول المنشورات المتعلقة Have you ever HEARD or WITNESSED that Instagram had removed a number of posts or limited the reach of posts related to the events? *

- Yes - نعم
- No- لا

هل نشرت منشورات مشاركات فيديو او صور او هاشتغات، على صفحتك عبر انستغرام بخصوص احداث الشيخ هل نشرت منشورات مشاركات فيديو او صور او هاشتغات، على صفحتك عبر انستغرام بخصوص احداث الشيخ Have you posted video posts, photos, or hashtags on your Instagram page regarding the events of Sheikh Jarrah before? *

- Yes - نعم
- No- لا
- Not Sure - لست متأكدًا

* ان كانت اجابتك على السؤال السابق "نعم"، فهل واجهت ازالة من قبل انستغرام لاي من تلك المنشورات او المشاركات التي نشرتها بخصوص أحداث الشيخ جراح؟
If your answer to the previous question was "yes", were any of those posts you shared regarding the events of Sheikh Jarrah removed by Instagram?

- نعم - yes
- لا - No
- كان جوابي على السؤال السابق "لا" - "My answer to the previous question was "no"

* -- هل سبق لك أن حُظرت أو مُنعت من النشر أو التعليق على انستغرام بسبب شيء شاركته متعلقاً بالأحداث؟
Were you ever blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something you had shared related to the events?

- نعم - Yes
- لا - No

* -- هل تعرف شخصاً تم حظره أو منعه من النشر أو التعليق على انستغرام بسبب شيء شاركه بخصوص الأحداث؟
Do you know someone who has been blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram due to something they had shared related to the events?

- نعم - Yes
- لا - No

* - - What knowledge did you acquire through Instagram regarding the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events?
ما المعلومات التي أضافها لك انستغرام حول قضية الشيخ جراح؟

- لم اكن اعرف بها من قبل - I did not know about it before, and heard about it via Instagram
و عرفتھا من خلاله
- زادت معرفتي بالموضوع من خلاله - I was further update of the event through Instagram
- لم يزد معرفتي بالامر - I did not gain anything regarding the events through Instagram
- غير متأكد - Not sure

Did you watch any live *
هل شاهدت أي بث مباشر لاي من المؤثرين على انستغرام حول قضية الشيخ جراح
videos on Instagram covering the events of Sheikh Jarrah Events?

- Yes نعم
- No -لا
- I do not remember - لا اذكر

If your answer to the previous question was "yes", then please do write down below who's live video you had watched:

Your answer

Any additional comments regarding Instagram's role and influence on the Posts and Shares related to the events you would like to mention?

Your answer

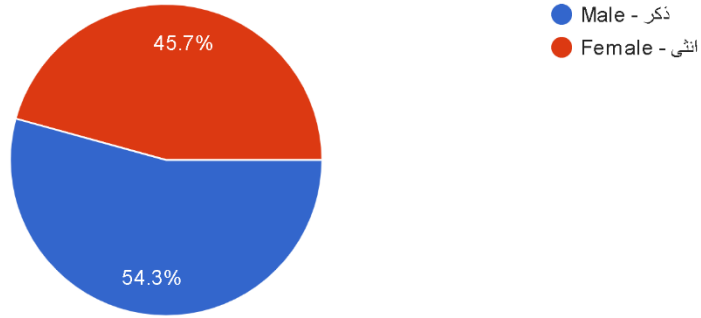
هل تريد منا التواصل معك لاحقاً من أجل جمع مزيد من المعلومات لصالح البحث في الأسابيع القليلة التالية؟ اذا كانت اجابتك "نعم"، فترجوا منكم تزويدنا بمعلومات تواصل تراها مناسبة لنستطيع التواصل معكم. أما ان لم ترغب بذلك، would you like us to contact you later in order to collect further information in the following few weeks? If yes, then please provide us with any contact information you see suitable for us to contact you through below

Your answer

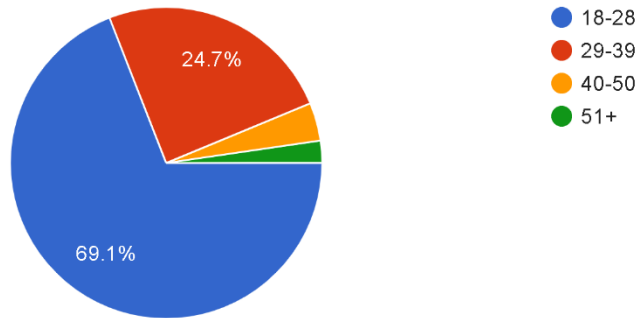
APPENDIX B

GRAPHS

النوع الاجتماعي - Gender
304 responses



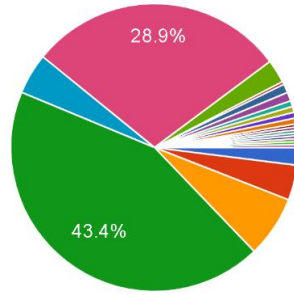
العمر - Age
304 responses



اخر شهادة اكااديمية تم الحصول عليها - Latest Academic Qualification
304 responses

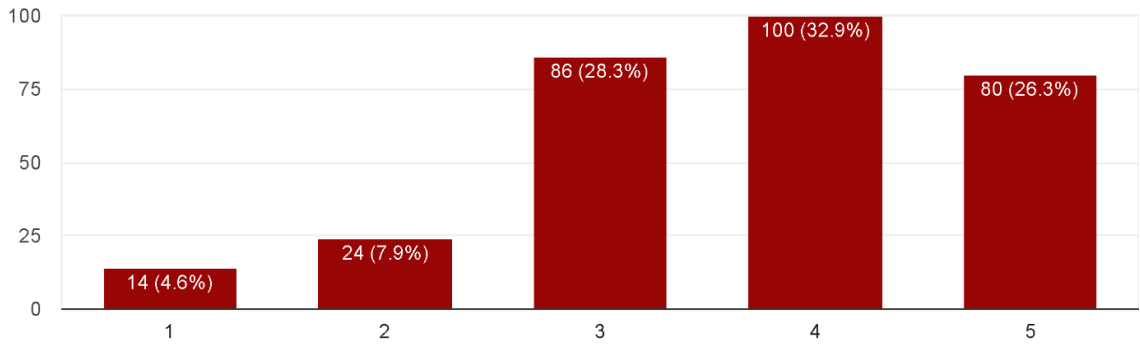


الموقع الجغرافي - Region
304 responses

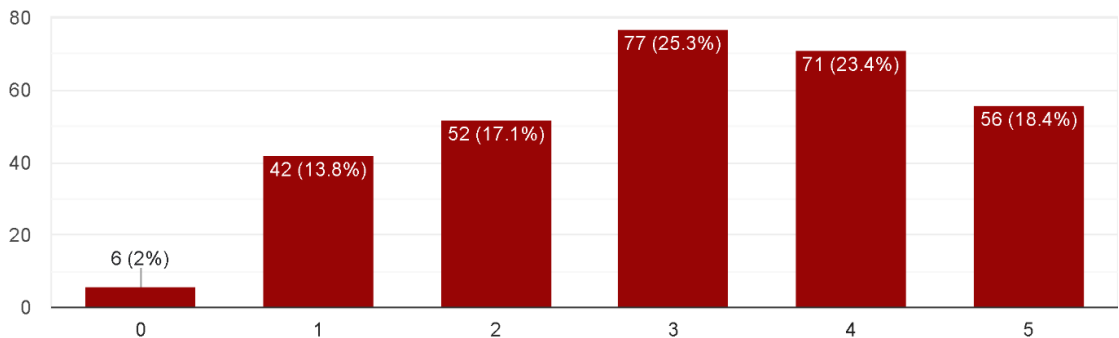


- 1948 Occupied lands of Palestine - فلسطين...
 - Palestine: Gaza - غزة - فلسطين
 - Palestine: West Bank - الضفة الغربية - فلسطين...
 - Arab countries other than Palestine - أ...
 - Australia - أستراليا
 - Europe - أوروبا
 - Turkey - تركيا
 - Asia (other than the Arab countries) - أ...
- ▲ 1/3 ▼

--How often do you use Instagram?
كيف تقيم درجة استخدامك لتطبيق انستغرام؟
304 responses

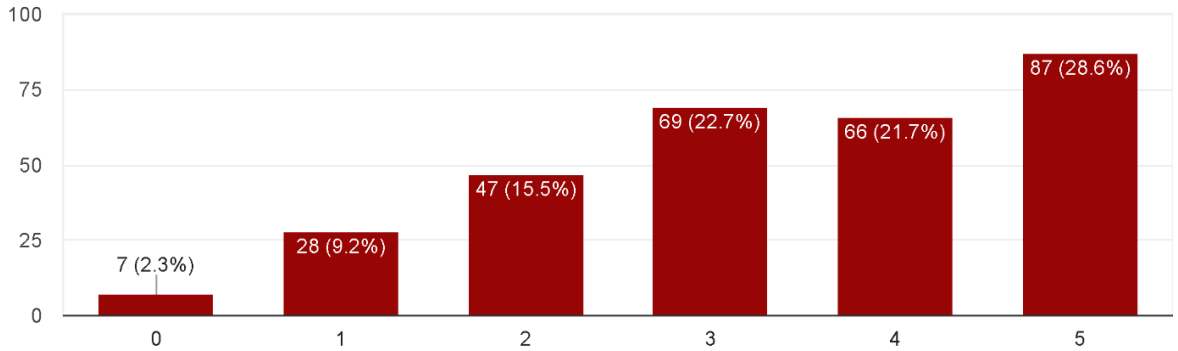


How often do you see posts related to events happening in Palestine (in general) on Instagram ? -
كيف تقيم درجة رؤيتك للمنشورات المتعلقة بالأحداث التي تحدث في فلسطين اثناء استخدامك لتطبيق انستغرام (بشكل عام)؟
304 responses



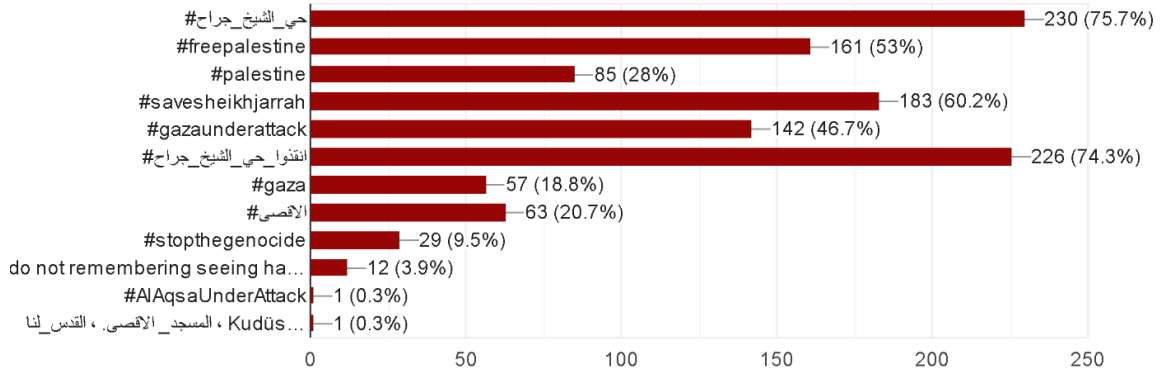
--How often did you see posts on Instagram related to the Sheikh Jarrah events in Palestine during the events?

304 responses

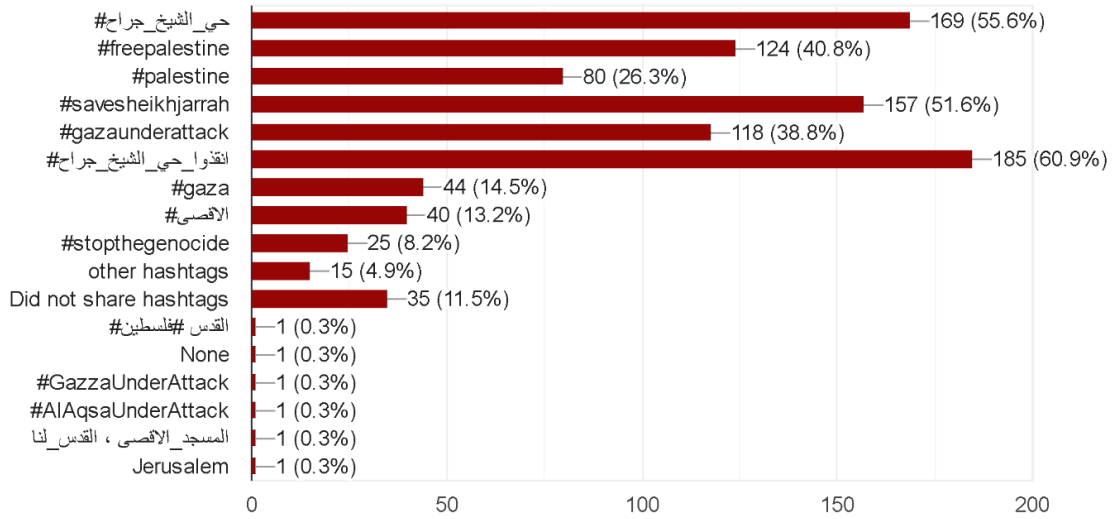


Which Hashtags do you remember ENCOUNTERING during ...u can check more than one option from below

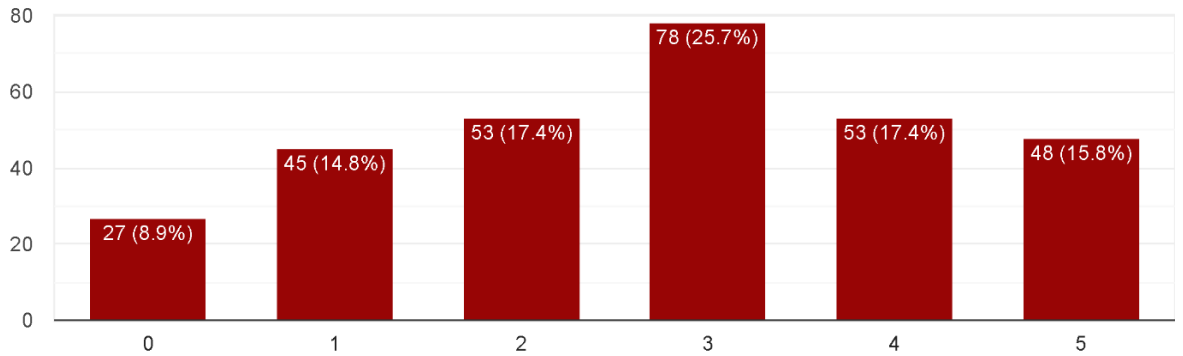
304 responses



اي الهاشتاقات (الواسمة) التي تذكر انك استخدمتها أثناء فترة وقوع الأحداث اثناء نشرك على منصة انستغرام؟ (يمكنك تحديد أكثر من خيار من Which Hashtags do you remember USING dur...you can check more than one option from below) (الأسفل)
304 responses

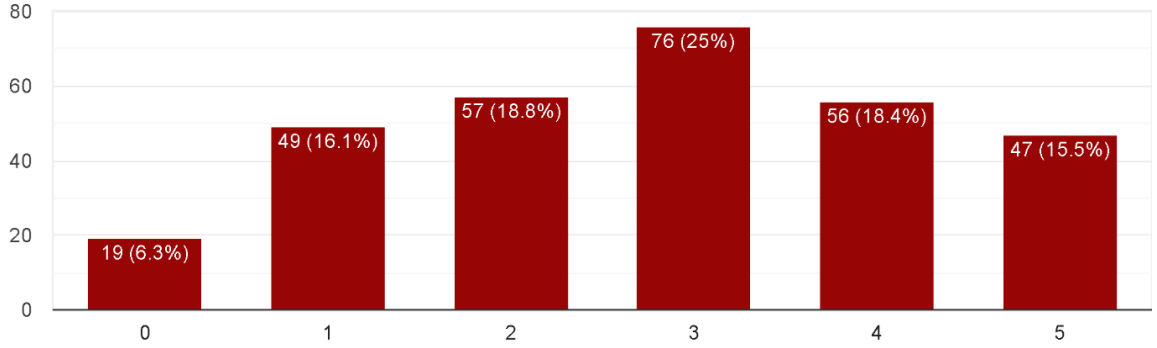


كيف تقيم درجة مشاركتك - كمستخدم انستغرام- لمنشورات متعلقة بالأحداث على انستغرام؟ How often did you -as an Instagram user- share POSTS related to the events on Instagram?
304 responses



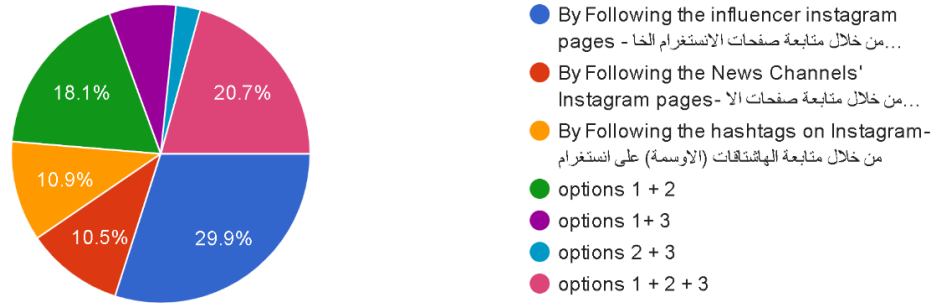
كيف تقييم درجة مشاركتك - كمستخدم انستغرام- حكايات متعلقة بالأحداث على انستغرام؟ How often did you -as an Instagram user- share STORIES related to the events on Instagram?

304 responses



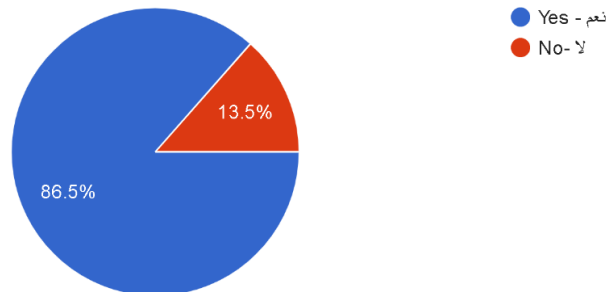
كيف بقيت على اطلاع مستمر بالأحداث على انستغرام؟ How did you stay updated with the events on Instagram?

304 responses

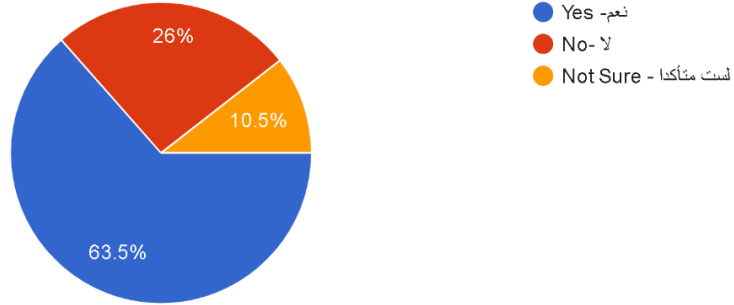


هل سمعت أو شهدت يوماً قيام انستغرام بإزالة/حذف عددًا من المنشورات أو حدُّ من وصول المنشورات المتعلقة بالأحداث؟ ----Have you ever HEARD or WITNESSED that Instagram had rem...mited the reach of posts related to the events?

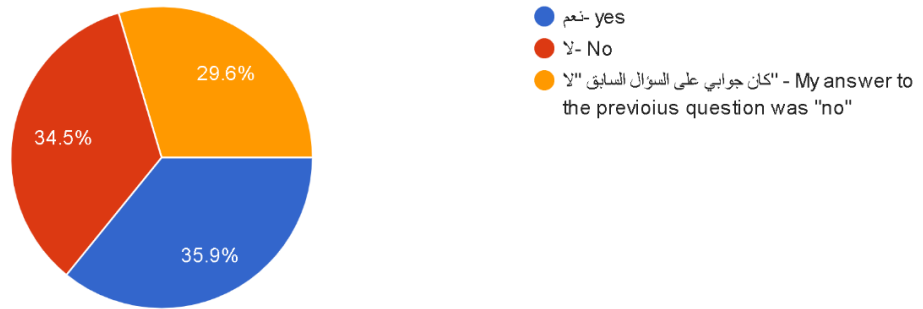
304 responses



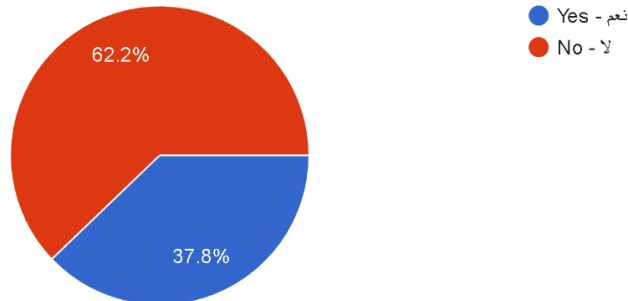
Have you posted video posts, photos, or hashtags on your page regarding the events of Sheikh Jarrah before? - هل نشرت منشورات مشاركات فيديو او صور او هاشتغات، على صفحتك عبر انستغرام بخصوص احداث الشيخ جراح قبلا؟
304 responses



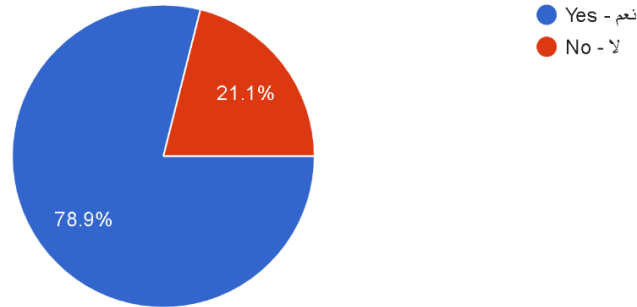
If your answer to the previous question regarding the events of Sheikh Jarrah removed by Instagram? - ان كانت اجابتك على السؤال السابق "نعم"، فهل واجهت ازالة من قبل انستغرام لاي من تلك المنشورات او المشاركات التي نشرتها بخصوص احداث الشيخ جراح؟
304 responses



Were you ever blocked or banned from posting or commenting on Instagram...something you had shared related to the events? -- هل سبق لك أن حُظرت أو مُنعت من النشر أو التعليق على انستغرام بسبب شيء شاركته متعلقًا بالأحداث؟
304 responses



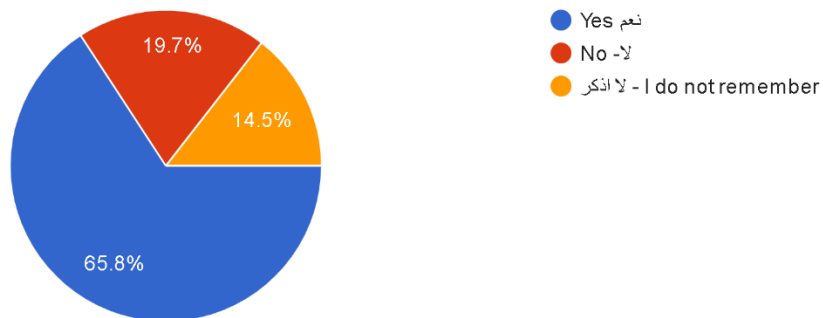
Do you know someone who has been blocked or banned from posting something they had shared related to the events?
304 responses



What knowledge did you acquire through Instagram regarding the Sheikh Jarrah Neighbourhood events?
304 responses



Did you watch any live videos on Instagram covering the events of Sheikh Jarrah Events?
304 responses



APPENDIX C

INTENSIVE INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIPTS

C.1 Nour Abu Ghoush

Omar: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and prayers and peace be upon the most honourable prophets and messengers, our master Muhammad and his family and companions all. The purpose of the interview is to benefit my Master's degree thesis at Ibn Khaldun University related to the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood last year, in particular, and to the event currently continuing nowadays in general. In the first place, my focus in this study is on media coverage on social media platforms - the Instagram platform in particular (exclusive). First, Ms Nour Abu Ghoush, can you please give a brief introduction about yourself?

Ms Abu Ghoush: This is Nour Abu Ghosh, a graduate with a master's degree in diplomatic studies, and a youth activist in Palestinian affairs.

Omar: Ok, Ms Nour, you are a master's graduate, and soon, God willing, a doctorate graduate. I want to ask you if you are a user of the Instagram application in the first place or of any social media platform.

Ms Abu Ghoush: Yes, Facebook and Instagram in addition to the Twitter platform

Omar: All right, my teacher, as I told you at the beginning, the study focuses on Instagram and its coverage of the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, later (in addition to) the Instagram reactions to the hashtags and publications supporting the cause during the events. Now, I want your personal opinion regarding the impact of social media platforms on the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood last year.

Ms Abu Ghoush: Yes, now we always realise the importance of social media because it is one of the importance of the media, that is, the importance of communicating the event, and that this event is heard by all people and that all cameras witness it and witness everything behind the scenes. Due to all the restrictions that occur in all

media, and because some media are affiliated with governments that do not want to expose the actions of this enemy / this entity, the means of communication were the closest to the people, and that is because they are the most widely used. Our young generation now uses it in all its communication and transactions.

Omar: *Yes, with the development of events - of course - hashtags were issued by influencers in the first place and by followers who also used and published them widely. Now it is said that there is some sort of bias by the Instagram platform, which was bought by Facebook and then all got merged into the “Meta” company, which now contains Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. So, along with the development of events and the increase in tension in the region, according to what some say, the platform and its supervisors were biased towards the party opposing the case of Palestine.*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *Correct!*

Omar: *Now, what do you think of this as a user and influencer on the Instagram platform, and have you noticed or witnessed something like this?*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *Of course, these things used to also happen even before the events, but it increased with the development of events to the point that we were surprised that the restriction had become increasing. At first, we avoided using some words, and we knew that these words could be perceived by some algorithms on the communication platforms, and therefore impede the access and spread of this publication. But later we were surprised that, despite the presence of some breaks and simple tricks, it became possible to detect them. Even the number of words and terms increased (words on which the platform’s algorithms depend), as it did not initially include words such as “martyr” and “steadfastness”, so some words were created in the current period as if someone is following with us and adding to this list of words first-hand. Then we*

were surprised that the (published) images also got recognised. That is, you can upload a picture of a person in Jerusalem or in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, without even writing anything in the description of the picture, or even by writing something that has absolutely nothing to do with the case, and yet the picture is taken (adjusted) and narrowed. The narrowing and limitation were done in more than one way, beginning with a narrowing that obstructed access. In other words, we noticed that when we published stories about our personal lives that contained content such as "Good Morning", they spread very quickly. At first, we used to make comparisons with a few numbers, and then these comparisons became beyond imagination when looking at the arrival of these private stories that are not related to the Palestinian issue. Then the stories related to the case get obstructed. So much so that they are no longer visible to people - even to our followers. That is, you follow a certain person for example, but his posts and shares do not appear unless you enter his page first manually. Then we moved to a new stage, which is deleting the content. We were surprised when we uploaded certain content, and it gets published, and when you sign in again to your account, you find out that it no longer exists. You say to yourself the first time that it happened perhaps by chance, and the second time as well, but it was repeated with us several times - with all of us. The third thing, and it is something that happened to me personally, is that the account gets completely deleted. In my account, I had over 30,000 (followers), but it was "annihilated", and when I contacted them (Instagram customer service) that I could not log in to my account, I was replied that "This account belongs to a terrorist figure or encourages terrorism, and therefore this account does not meet our standards." The definition of terrorism has become related to the number of your use or shares related to the Palestinian issue. The restriction was increasing, and the surprise frankly was that people supported us to

remain persistent and steadfast, so some of us created alternative accounts but pressure or tightening was also done on the alternative account as well. Unfortunately, the restriction was severe, the bias was so, and the lack of impartiality and fairness was very clear in the past period.

Omar: *Yes, I understand from you, that you were influential on the platform and your account was banned or deleted, and you have not been able to recover your account so far?*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *Right, and I was never able to recover my account after that, as both my Facebook and Instagram accounts were deleted.*

Omar: *Do you know others besides you that you also communicate with directly, had experienced the same thing, or maybe they were exposed to the same thing that you were exposed to on the Instagram platform?*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *All of the people I know who post on social media in favour of the Palestinian cause, all of them without exception, have had their accounts restricted, some of them could not share directly (share a live video), others had their posts blocked, and others had their account removed. But I do not know a person who published in favour of the Palestinian cause and did not encounter problems from the platform itself. Until yesterday, I was sitting with one of the influential sisters on Instagram, and she told me, "Since the battle of Saif al-Quds, and until now, I have not recovered my page's activity, although the number of followers has increased." Views and interactions are supposed to increase, but that did not happen, the interaction decreased and the number of views decreased. This indicates that some things are happening.*

Omar: *As for your account being restricted, was it because of a specific post you shared?*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *It happened during the events of the Battle of Saif al-Quds, during the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood. I don't remember which post it was exactly but I do remember that it was during that time. I woke up in the morning and I had received a message stating that my page had been restricted, but it was not the first time that I had received such a message, as I had previously. But after receiving the message, I used to enter Instagram like usual and found myself banned from broadcasting, publishing, commenting and so on. But this time the page was completely restricted and when I followed the mentioned steps to recover my account, I was informed that this account has been completely deleted and it will not be possible to register with it again.*

Omar: *The party supporting the Palestinian cause says that the Zionist entity had calculated some accounts and was prepared for Facebook and Twitter regarding the "media war", in contrast, it had miscalculated for Instagram and TikTok. Do you think TikTok had an effective role in publishing about events as well?*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *My testimony regarding TikTok may be less knowledgeable because my follow-up to the TikTok platform is not as much as I follow Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. But from my knowledge of the topic, Instagram was the most influential, more than other platforms. But with regard to TikTok, my words are based on general observation and not based on an extensive study of it, but even the young generation under the age of 12, and the arrival of young people to them was a nice thing, but I do not have a picture of the extent of the impact of TikTok on them in this regard.*

Omar: *The events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood are still going on until this moment, as you know, my teacher. After the complaints increased regarding the banning of publications, accounts and the restrictions that we mentioned, the response of the Instagram supervisors was that it was a matter that resulted from a technical*

glitch and not an intentional matter. As a user of the platform and a former influencer on it, what is your response to them?

Ms Abu Ghoush: *Unfortunately, the response was a mock response, and it had no meaning at that time because this response did not include returning any account that was deleted, because any institution that has a specific defect has to make compensation or something. We take simple productive institutions as an example, as when they find a fault in their product, they withdraw it from the market and apologize. Actually, if what happened was a mistake, it is assumed that the accounts that were banned or restricted will be returned, but that did not happen. The second thing is that it is as if this statement was issued simultaneously, because the restriction “calmed down” for a period of weeks and no more, in fact, now the restriction has returned to previous and old shares. Instagram comes to you and makes a restriction or action towards a post that you published a month ago, and usually, this is not supposed to happen in this way. But it looks like a retrospective. It may seem that an apology was announced, and it was a mistake and a technical glitch, but in reality, there was no significant result.*

Omar: *In your opinion, did the Instagram platform modify its algorithms during the events in order to hinder the sharing of related posts or photos?*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *Correct, and it is not only for us as senders of the posts, but also for the recipients of the posts as well. In the past, it was shown to you as an Instagram user that this particular image contains scenes of blood, corpses, or something that not everyone would like to view, as was the case during the events of the Syrian war. But now, when you authenticate one of the photos that were published related to the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, you will find in it only photos of a demolished house, buildings or a wrecked car, knowing that it has given you a warning*

that this photo is offensive or contains violent scenes. This is evidence that the algorithms have been modified, and it is something that is noticeable whether you are a sender or a receiver of the message.

Omar: *Thank you very much, my teacher, for your time.*

Ms Abu Ghoush: *All the best.*



C.2 Dr. Abdullah Maarouf

Omar: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and prayers and peace be upon the most honourable prophets and messengers, our master Muhammad and his family and companions all. The purpose of the interview is to benefit my Master's degree thesis at Ibn Khaldun University related to the events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood last year, in particular, and to the event currently continuing nowadays in general. In the first place, my focus in this study is on media coverage on social media platforms - the Instagram platform in particular (exclusive). First of all, Dr Abdullah Maarouf, can you please give a brief introduction about yourself?

Dr Maarouf: Abdullah Maarouf, Professor of Bait al-Maqdis Studies, Professor of Islamic History and Biography of the Prophet at the University of 29 Mayıs in Istanbul, and former media official for public relations at Bab al-Rahma - Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Omar: Thank you very much for your time. And as I had told you before we began recording the interview, the aim of this interview is to benefit my research on Instagram's role in media coverage of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood events. First of all, what do you think about the events of Sheikh Jarrah and the impact of platforms such as Facebook and Instagram on them?

Dr Maarouf: Not only in the events of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, but social media has proven in the past years that it is an effective weapon for the popular confrontation in the face of Jerusalem actually because the occupation did not imagine that social media would have that great role that began to become clear, which was present in the events that preceded The events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood began on the 28th of last Ramadan, which was in the year 2021, but to begin with, the response and popular communication between the inside and the outside and the inside between each other and the transfer of the image in a big way actually in the Jerusalem area was evident in major events since the year 2017. In the events of Bab Al-Asbat, because

it was absolutely clear that the means of communication, in general, had an amazing role in the movement of people and in informing them about the events and in their communication with each other's home in a great way, and it was also clear in its great impact on the events of 2019 in the "Gift of Bab al-Rahma" and it became very clear and the role of the means of communication in general in the events on the 28th of last Ramadan. But what is very distinctive in the year 2021 is the role of the Instagram platform. Because if we are going to talk about the previous year's 2017-2019, the two platforms that had the most role in covering the events were the Facebook and WhatsApp platforms. But this time, no, Instagram was too big. Instagram did not have a large presence in the past, but this year it has had a very large presence at the events.

***Omar:** Yes, doctor, do you agree with those who say that this time the entity had calculated the account of Facebook and Twitter, but they had not calculated the account of the Instagram platform but were rather surprised by the "burning" of the publications and their abundance on this platform?*

***Dr Maarouf:** True, but partially true. The matter in WhatsApp is different, as it is an internal means of communication and depends on the user. It is not a general-individual media platform. There is no way to control it in any way. There were groups posted in a video or something like that and it spreads among everyone like wildfire - there is no room for the occupation to deal with this issue. The problem with the occupation in 2017 and 2019 was Facebook, as this platform was the main platform in Palestine, and its presence was greater and clearer than Twitter, for example, as it did not have many users in Palestine. They dealt with Facebook and made agreements with it, and this was mentioned in the media that there were agreements between the entity government and the Facebook company, based on the work was done to*

“purify” the content or “filter it”. This was very clear in the year 2020 and in the year 2021, when any content related to Palestine was published, it was automatically filtered by the algorithms. The one which did not calculate its account or its presence was Instagram, as you mentioned, because its users in Palestine are not many in the normal situation, and it is not considered a “strong” platform among the Palestinians in the normal situation. So, on this point, I generally agree with you.

Omar: *Yes, of course, we moved to the next topic that I wanted to talk to you about, which is the issue of the bias of Instagram towards the party opposing the Palestinian cause. What do you think, Doctor, of this, and do you think that Instagram, which became part of Facebook and later both became platforms under the Meta company, was biased with the side of the Zionist entity by banning or limiting publishing or modifying its algorithms?*

Dr Maarouf: *With regard to this speech, my honourable sir, you must differentiate between the events of Ramadan 28 and the events that followed it. Before that, it was clear that the algorithms focused primarily on the Facebook platform, so when a person posted something on Facebook and had a strong presence on the platform, he would receive warnings, and I am a person who suffered from this thing. I was prevented from publishing a live broadcast more than once in a while, knowing that it was the events of Bab Al-Asbat and then in the events of Bab Al-Rahma, and I used to publish at least 4 or 5 live broadcasts. These penalties were enormous for its period. And before the beginning of the events of Sheikh Al-Jarrah, these algorithms were not yet in place, as they did not have accounts in this matter. But in the end, at the beginning of the escalation of events and the role of Instagram in this battle became clear, the application of these algorithms and modifications to them began, and, yes, there was bias against the Jerusalemites, and this talk we suffer from this year since*

the second half of it, i.e., from the month of June until the time. Currently, we have noticed that in the recent period, Instagram is almost like Facebook, as it works to limit the appearance of publications and obstruct the live broadcast of active personalities such as Muna El-Kurd for example, and prevents the live broadcast or excludes activists from broadcasting when starting it. Yes, there is a clear targeting of activists, there is no dispute. And it seems that there are certain algorithms that deal with specific people and specific posts.

Omar: *Doctor, you mentioned a while ago that you suffered from these things from Facebook, but did you see any problem like this while using Instagram?*

Dr Maarouf: *No, so far, I have not encountered problems like this on the Instagram platform, for the simple reason that someone has become experienced in how to deal with these things and algorithms, even on Facebook.*

Omar: *Do you mean by that content encryption?*

Dr Maarouf: *No, not by encrypting the content, but by the way the content is presented in a manner that does not violate the publishing standards. That is, you can present your message without provoking the algorithms of their publishing criteria.*

Omar: *Doctor, some have mentioned that it is not only the text content that is subject to these algorithms, but that some images are distinguished by the algorithms without transcribing the text content with the published images. For example, if you publish a picture of the Dome of the Rock or the Al-Aqsa Mosque, there will be a kind of censorship by these algorithms, and if it is later proven that this publication supports the Palestinian side of the issue, it is dealt with in a way either by specifying, warning, or removing... Etc.*

Dr Maarouf: *No, I think there are specific algorithms that target images, but I don't know if Instagram applies this to it or not. But what I noticed is that any published*

photo that contains a confrontation with the occupation classifies it as containing sensitive content. And this talk indicates that yes, these algorithms exist. But I did not notice a change in these algorithms applied to pictures of buildings such as Al-Aqsa Mosque or the Dome of the Rock, because when uploading a picture of the Dome of the Rock - and by the way, the second party can upload pictures of this mosque or Al-Qibli Mosque as it considers it a sacred place as well, but if it is a personal picture It is rejected by the other party, such as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, for example. As soon as you upload his picture, the regime immediately recognizes it as a picture of so-and-so and that it violates the standards, and so on. Yes, there is work in this way and algorithms, but in general, the issue is only about Al-Aqsa Mosque, and I do not think that it takes that large dimension at least for the time being.

Omar: *The events in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood are still going on until the moment, as you know my teacher, after the complaints increased regarding the banning of publications, accounts and the restrictions that we mentioned, the response of the Instagram supervisors was that it was a matter that resulted from a technical glitch and not an intentional thing. Knowing that some of them say that something happened over and over again, what is your response to them, Doctor?*

Dr Maarouf: *My honourable sir, in my personal opinion, the party linked to Meta Company, I do not trust them or their justifications, and I do not trust their words or anything related to them because I believe what I see and not what I hear. Whatever the justifications from Instagram, I do not consider them to be true justifications, as they are in front of us dealing with specific personalities and specific parties - and what is this error that occurs only to this particular person and not to anyone else, in the end, man has a mind that knows how to think and estimate. And these justifications, I think, are more propaganda than truthful justifications*

Omar: *Yes, doctor, events are still going on in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, but do you think that the effectiveness of social media from publishing publications and pictures as it was last year?*

Dr Maarouf: *Yes, in my opinion, it is effective, of course, and it must be to the same degree. The evidence for this is that the occupation forces target personalities based on their publications and videos that they publish on their pages on these platforms. You are now hearing inside the Palestinian territories and in Jerusalem - and this matter is no longer a hidden thing. You hear indictments in the entity's courts against people accused of publishing "inciting" publications on these platforms. And there is a group of influential young people, after leaving these courts, who declare that they have been tried or investigated for their publications. The idea of these incitement leaflets was originally created by the occupation. Yes, I think that there is an effect because the occupation does nothing without there being an effect.*

C.3 Ahmad Barakat

Omar: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and prayers and peace be upon the most honourable of the prophets and messengers, Prophet Mohammad, and upon all his family and companions. Thank you, Mr Ahmed, for your presence and for agreeing to allocate time to assist in this study. Of course, I studied at Ibn Haldun University in Istanbul, and I am now studying the importance and role of Instagram in the events of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood that took place last year and which continue to this day. And as I mentioned before the beginning of this interview, it will be recorded so that I can transcribe it and write it after it ends. Mr Ahmed Barakat, first of all, can you introduce yourself quickly?

Mr BARAKAT: All right, bless you, I am Ahmed Barakat and I work in the field of marketing and digital platforms, which are parallel to each other, marketing in business, and advocating social, national and global spaces. I have a company called GO SOCIAL, which is a company that specialized in digital skills and is a consultant for more than one company. It has supervised training courses in more than one country, including Turkey, Jordan, Palestine, the Palestinian interior, and in the cities of Jerusalem and in some of the Gulf Arab states. I also gave some lectures related to Business at the basic level. Regarding issues similar to the case of Sheikh Jarrah, I am participating in giving lectures with the “7amleh” centre in Palestine in the field of digital rights, and I am their advisor in it, and God willing, soon I will give lessons with Amnesty in this field.

Omar: Thank you, Mr Ahmed. Sir, in the beginning, we were almost all following the events of Sheikh Jara neighbourhood last year, and we are still following many of its events until now, in your opinion, Mr Ahmed, the impact of social platforms in general such as Instagram, Facebook and the like, what is their impact on these events and their occurrence

Mr BARAKAT: *The impact of these platforms on any issue, especially the issue of Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, was in the first place in raising awareness of this problem and the problems that the neighbourhood residents suffer from, especially with regard to the differentiation between those who sell (land) and those who do not because it is done in some homes we have from time to time. People no longer have confidence in issues related to these matters, and it was the case of the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood that returned the compass to its correct position and indicated that the issue is purely racist and Zionist issue whose main concern is the people who live in it legally and to allow settlers to live in their place. This time, the events began locally in Jerusalem, and then began to spread widely at the Palestinian level, and then Arab and international. And here the benefit stems because at least there is a focus on Palestinian silver, which is originally a number of combined issues. This was the first real event in which we see this in an enlarged manner, and the focus is clear on it*

Omar: *Mr Ahmed, we have now talked about the role of social platforms in general, and we have covered many platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and others. In your opinion, how was the Instagram platform different from others? What were its special effects for others on the level of these events?*

Mr BARAKAT: *The feature in Instagram, in which influential people on the platform exploited the feature of the joint live broadcast, such as Alaa Hamdan, Muna and many others, who benefited from this feature and communicated with people who are already in Jerusalem and in the neighbourhood and made a form of strengthening in this matter, so we see a person who has 5,000 followers or has a million followers, for example, and so on. In this case, they contributed to spreading the cause to the people in the Arab world and in the world in general. What happened on the stage happened*

very spontaneously, contributing to the origin of the case of Sheikh Jarrah in a very rapid and never expected way.

Omar: *What do you think is the reason why Instagram has found this degree of ease and flexibility in dealing with these events, knowing that it is now part of the Meta platform group, which in turn made the case of Sheikh Jarrah a well-known event to this degree.?*

Mr BARAKAT: *There is no flexibility at all in Instagram itself, as it was all in the hands of influencers, who suffered greatly from interruption of broadcasting and exposure to warnings and bans by Instagram, as some were, as soon as they typed the word “Jerusalem” were subject to the closure of their account and publications to the extent that Instagram admitted it and described it as a technical glitch. The point is that Instagram users have benefited from the features that already exist on the platform without the platform realizing that it will benefit them to this degree. Their posts were interesting, and they were exposed to the so-called shadow banning feature, which is the “obvious” ban feature, which was what happened when someone published something related to the issue and found that access to it was decreasing a lot, so we cannot say that Instagram as a platform helped spread silver as much as What we say from users and influencers are the ones who made the best use of the features in it despite the obstacles that were occurring before.*

Omar: *What I meant by flexibility is that, and I am now quoting the words of some, “The Zionist party had not calculated an Instagram account at the beginning of the events, as it had done regarding Twitter and Facebook, and they are recognized as platforms in which a media war is taking place. There are no specific algorithms against the Palestinian side of Silver, such as those found on the Facebook and Twitter platforms, in which posts related to the Palestinian cause are blocked or restricted.*

Mr BARAKAT: *All platforms have algorithms, including TikTok, which in turn also deleted many publications related to Palestine. The issue is not the issue of whether they are awake or not, or the issue of whether the Zionist government intervened or not, but rather that it is a system of American companies and other companies. America considers some movements such as Hamas to be terrorists. Therefore, you delete and remove these publications based on these grounds. Therefore, in the period of Ukrainian-Russian events, we clearly see ambivalence on this point. Even photos that are normally considered sensitive by Instagram standards, were treated differently in the Palestinian and Ukrainian contexts. The issue is not that it happened suddenly or something like that, but rather how the situation was exploited through Instagram, as I expect.*

Omar: *OK, Mr Ahmed, you preceded me in talking about deleting or banning posts or some users on the platform. What do you think about the issue of Instagram bias towards the Palestinian side, have you ever witnessed such cases or did they happen to you before?*

Mr BARAKAT: *As I mentioned earlier, there is a clear duplication between dealing with Palestinian content and the content of the Zionist entity. Yes, and to be honest, I tried writing a post on the Facebook and Instagram platforms in both languages, and I used some keywords that were famous when they were used that caused the post to be deleted even though the Words that are not outside the framework of what is usually accepted in Instagram standards, and I was surprised that the account was banned for two days, just minutes after writing the post. I was also banned from ads for 60 days. Of course, there is a kind of lack of awareness regarding publishing posts on Instagram, or on other social media. The platforms in our publications want us to be impartial, which is something we cannot do on issues like this. Terms such as "martyr"*

and others were considered a reason for the post to be deleted. And herein lies the problem, if some publications are considered inflammatory, and this does not comply with the standards of the platforms, as any free platform considers these matters inflammatory. However, it did not deal with inflammatory Zionist publications of this kind in the same manner or degree, and herein lies the duplicity that I mentioned. Of course, errors are found by the platform in this regard. We were participating in a global digital campaign against Facebook called in-digital persecution, which is the largest campaign in the Arab world against Facebook. Some posts on these platforms were deleted by artificial intelligence without manual review, and therefore, some posts were automatically deleted, knowing that they were not necessarily inflammatory posts.

Omar: *As you mentioned earlier, the Instagram response was apologizing for deleting the posts, saying it was a technical glitch and not a deliberate thing. What is your response to their response, Mr Ahmed?*

Mr BARAKAT: *Not a logical response, a platform as large as Instagram or Meta cannot have a lack of ability to solve problems related to artificial intelligence that is constantly repeated on Arabic content only. The deliberate double standards are evident here*

Omar: *With the continuation of events until today, do you think that the degree of importance or strength of the role of Instagram in this period is the same as at the beginning of the events?*

Mr BARAKAT: *In the media, events often occur in the form of waves, as they are a force in the first period and the degree of their influence decreases later. The stronger the event, the more talked about it in the means of social media, and in the recent*

events of Jerusalem, had it not been for the occurrence of some events in it, they would not have been mentioned.



CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information:

Name - Surname: Omar Mohammad Rasheed RAYYAN

E-mail (1):

E-mail (2):

Education and Training:

2012-2016 BA in Applied English, Univrsity Of Jordan, Jordan

2020-2022 MA in Arts in Radio Television and Cinema, Ibn Haldun University,
Turkey

Experience:

Teaching Experience

2011–2016 Institution: Redwan Qur'an Centre, Amman (Jordan)

Details:

- Teaching Students (1st Grade - 11th Grade)
- Teaching languages (English / Turkish)
- Training students on communication skills and human capacity building

Private Tuition (English)

2011–2016 Details:

- 6th – 10th Grade (English)
- University Students (English)
- Turkish for foreigners

Private courses and conversational skills for non-native Arab speakers
(Arabic Language)

2013–2016

Easy Taxi Call Centre –Costumer Care

2015-2016

- Company: Easy Taxi

B Real Estate and Tourism

2017-2019

Details:

- Selling estates of all types to local and international buyers
- Arranging tours for local and foreign tourists in Trabzon

TOURISM GUIDE

2019-2020

AGENCY: Gold Batum Tours

- Worked as a tour guide in three languages for the Gold Batum agency in Batum, Georgia. The agency used to arrange up to 4 tours a day for each guide. I gained a lot of knowledge and experience through working in this field.

2021 -

ALAYSA TUR

Ongoing

- Sales Manager and Partner

TURKISH-ENGLISH-LANGUAGE

2020 -

Institution: Different Dimension Academy

Ongoing

- I mainly worked at the language-teaching field at this institution, where I taught Turkish to the Arab new arrivals and students, and English and Arabic to the local Turks in Trabzon.