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# Online consultation with Member States

## Survey response 1

### Information details

Name of the State:
State of Palestine
The institution responding to the survey:
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and expatriates

### Questions

1. What innovative practices did authorities in your state adopt to facilitate civil society's input to decision-making during the COVID-19 crisis, including through online channels? (Maximum limit: approximately 5,000 characters with spaces)
Despite the limited resources of the State of Palestine, taking the Israeli occupation into account, it has introduced a noteworthy model in crisis management, creating committees, governmental and popular executive bodies, all in partnership with internal and external stakeholders, including Civil society to ensure the rule of Law, respect for human rights and transparency. The Pandemic was dealt with as a national concern from the very beginning; hence, the crisis management structure was formed in a manner that allows for all community members, including the civil society, to participate in the decision-making. The civil society beared an integral complementary role and contribution in all committees that were formed to combat the pandemic, in fact the structure ensured the inclusion of partners from the civil society organizations, private sectors (e.g., hotel association, private hospitals), media institutions (e.g., press union), associations (e.g., chambers, Palestine workers union).
2. Are there innovative practices that authorities in your country used to enable safe and inclusive online participation, which encourages a diversity of participation, with a particular emphasis on underrepresented parts of civil society? (Maximum limit: approximately 5,000 characters with spaces)
N/A
3. Do you have examples of good practice in including civil society in designing and implementing strategies to respond to the pandemic? (Maximum limit: approximately 5,000 characters with spaces)
The "Waqfit Izz" Fund was established by a decision from the Prime Minister in collaboration with the business community to organize fundraising, and enable businesses; civil society and citizens donate and contribute to the medical and social needs during the crisis. The Civil Society was involved in monitoring the distribution of the funds and ensuring transparency. The Civil Society was further kept comprehensively informed with any steps taken in relation to the vaccinations rollout, and were engaged in supervising the distribution process and raising awareness in that regards.
4. Do you have examples of innovative steps taken to minimise the impact of measures imposed during the pandemic, including emergency measures, on the free and safe functioning of civil society and on public freedoms (of expression, access to information, assembly, and association) as well as on the protection of personal data and privacy? (Maximum limit: approximately 5,000 characters with spaces)
To fight the spread of the Covid-19 virus, the state of Palestine declared the state of emergency, and properly notified the UN Secretary General accordingly, restricting Articles (12) and (21) of the International Covenant on Civil and political rights relating to the right to freedom of movement and the right to peaceful assembly. Despite the State of emergency, the state of Palestine was committed and continued its policy of protecting freedoms, including the freedom of movement and peaceful assembly. The Civil society was further engaged in monitoring the state of emergency and reporting any violations of freedoms including the freedom of movement on the security checkpoints that were deployed at all entrances of cities and villages to limit the movement of citizens in order to keep security and safety of people and businesses. In the cases in which violations were reported by the civil society, the complaints were dealt with promptly by the competent authorities pursuant to article 112 of the Palestinian basic law on the state of emergency.

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5. Did authorities in your state implement any innovative measures to protect and facilitate civil society access to resources in the COVID-19 context? (Maximum limit: approximately 5,000 characters with spaces)

To strengthen communication and transparency between the authorities and the public, the Prime Minister formed a media cell headed by the government's spokesperson, media officers of ministries of health and interior, and social media experts. The committee held daily press conferences to discuss infection updates, to provide statistical updates on the infections and how the government dealt with internal and external issues, as well as respond to questions and raise awareness. The process of raising awareness and answering questions also took place through different communication outlets such as text messages, TV programs and advertisements, radio talks, videos and social media. The State of Palestine provided a positive example in interaction with critical journalism and media, as well as providing access to resources to any partner. This wide, focused, and timely communication with the public has minimized rumors and gave people assurance of reliability and credibility.

6. Has your state identified any good practices to identify, and protect civil society from, online intimidation and attacks (e.g. online threats, harassment, organized smear campaigns etc.)? (Maximum limit: approximately 5,000 characters with spaces)

It was reported in a joint technical report by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab and Amnesty International's Security Lab reviewing Front Line Defenders' technical research in October 2021 that the devices of six Palestinian human rights defenders working in renowned civil society organizations were hacked with NSO Group's Pegasus spyware in 2020 and 2021. The State of Palestine condemned the Israeli occupation's intimidation and attacks on the workers in Palestinian civil society organizations and stressed that it must be held accountable as a flagrant violation of international law and human rights, and an integral part of the continuous Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and institutions, of which the State of Palestine will expose and include its submissions towards relevant international bodies, including the International Criminal Court. Furthermore, during the twentieth session of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the state of Palestine initiated and drafted the language provided for in Resolution ICC-ASP/20/Res.5 on Strengthening the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of States Parties regarding the threats and intimidation directed to the civil society, condemning the threats that have been made against civil society and human rights defenders for their engagement with the Court.