

**Palestinian female journalists –
their struggles, risks, and challenges:
A case study of Gaza 2007-2019**

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the assumption that safety of female journalists is a challenge for free expression and free media. The empirical data are based on interviews and discussions with experienced female conflict journalists from Gaza, Palestine. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine female journalists on the Gaza Strip in July to August 2019. In addition, a number of informal background interviews and discussions with persons in the local media environment were used to inform the study. The main theoretical framework applied was risk theory.

Nearly all the female journalists who were interviewed agree that journalists in the Gaza Strip have no autonomy and are forced to work in strenuous conditions. The local authority in Gaza controls the destiny of those who live under their rule. They seem to consider free press as a significant threat to their very existence, ignoring the fact that exposing corruption and human rights violation is why journalism exists as a profession.

The study confirms that the safety risk is doubled by external parties because the journalist is Palestinian. Further risk flows from the internal parties, as females are subject to the rule of an Islamist regime and governed by the customs and traditions of the same society. The dangers and pressure faced by women journalists in Gaza and their attempt to maintain their presence in the journalistic field along with their personal and psychological integrity become an accumulated danger with pressure from many directions. The study concludes that protecting the role of female journalists and providing them with journalistic immunity against personal and professional safety are an urgent necessity.

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1. Introduction

For female journalists in Gaza, things seemingly become worse by the day. It is a fact that living in a religious and traditional community would always make life more difficult for women journalists, but things have grown much worse since the takeover of the Islamist group Hamas in 2007. *"I am not only afraid of the possibility of getting killed here; I am more afraid of the fact that I can never live with dignity," said Journalist Y: Female, age 23, Local reporter in Gaza.*

Perhaps one of the most devastating realities female journalists face in Gaza is that they have no one to complain to. Gaza was never completely free, even after the so-called Israeli withdrawal in 2005. Israel continued to control its borders by imposing a crippling blockade, limiting the movement of local-resident Journalists especially. In addition to the occupation, the local authority in Gaza is an Islamic group that has never approved of women's abilities to make a change.

Newsrooms had been traditionally male-dominated for an extended period. (Chambers, et al., 2004, p. 102) Women, however, managed to step into the field through time and effort. Several female journalists have always chosen to work in investigative journalism, a place where they can somehow expose the violations against humanity, corruption and red lines crossing within their communities. This fact has perhaps made female journalists stronger on so many levels, which is why they are regularly exposed to bullying, threats and abuse. Gender-based discrimination has never been absent in this field. (Chambers, et al., 2004)

The idea of Mass media (T.V., movies, social media, magazines and newspapers) positively impacts the world view of society in terms of gender. Nowadays, the effects of electronic media, T.V. especially, exceeds many other sources. However, print media is still considered the main factor in changing attitudes and people's opinions. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016). Throughout history, journalism has been almost always dominated by men. Even the old publications which were meant for women and the ones that discussed women's issues were often produced by men. The mid of the 20th century was a turning point in the history of female

Journalists, for it witnessed the emergence of several influential female journalists across the globe. It was the time when newspapers and magazines started to include columns for women journalists who finally had the liberty to discuss women's issues. (Chambers, et al., 2004)

Throughout time, stories that have spoken about war victory and defeat were often told from a masculine perspective. Powerful men and male journalists also told social topics that revolved around human emotions and aspirations. This is a clear indicator that even in history, female journalists were always marginalized. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016). It should be understood by those in power as well as audiences that female journalists' voices have the ability to add a new peaceful tone to the narrative, which is told from the male perspective. In many societies today, specifically modern and open-minded ones, women are presented more appropriately. However, it is still a minor representation when it comes to specific domains.

Female journalists in conflict zones appear to be well represented nowadays, despite the fact they are still facing their own conflict in terms of the challenges and risks they face in their communities. They still face more barriers to catch up with other female journalists who work in much safer zones, not to mention the male journalists who are always better represented in this field (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016).

It is certain and beyond doubts that the feminist movements around the world have managed to change the representation of women and their participation in different fields. Media, however, is still widely controlled by men. The traditional patterns and narrative of war still carry the voice of men with no regard to the fact gender makes a difference in war reporting just as much as it makes a difference in other fields on the world. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016). It is a fact that the violations against female journalists often tend to increase during times of conflict and war. There is a sad fact that different forms of peace agreements are primarily negotiated by men to serve men, even the issues related to domestic violence and other forms of abuse. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016).

Issues of safety, peace and conflict are rarely discussed from a feminist perspective, for those who often make the rolls and create a garment in most countries are men. The term security evolves into insecurity and comes both physical and material. Gender is often used as a primarily

idealized principle in terms of global relations, and it has become more symbolic rather than real, which may justify particular policies and policy actions. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016).

Female journalists are often the subject of slang campaigns, physical or psychological abuse and violence. In a place like the Gaza Strip, female journalists are not only subject to the common types of abuses and violations; they are often exposed to different forms of violations related to their community. Gaza is a place where women, and women journalists, especially, are constantly forced to go through a war they seem always to lose. Hundreds of violations against female journalists in Gaza go unreported due to the absence of fair and unbiased government in addition to a community that treats them as sinners whenever they seek to accomplish anything. It is a shame that female journalists in most communities, and especially in Gaza, often have their families as slayers than protectors.

1.0 Purpose of the study and research questions

The study intends to investigate the *risks and security challenges to the safety* of female journalists reporting from Gaza since Hamas took over the strip in 2007 until 2019. In a profession that is still male-dominated on so many levels until this day, many women choose silence over metaphorical bloodshed. Female journalists, especially in conflict zones, often tackle challenges and barriers with pride. The numbers of abused female journalists are shocking and worrisome.

Culture has always been a key element in gender-based abuse; the habits and traditions in eastern communities often make the lives of female journalists unbearable. The religious doctrine has not been helpful as well. Gaza is strong evidence of female journalists suffering, and still going through in their strenuous line of work. The period has been defined by the major events of the still ongoing military confrontations between Hamas and Israel, including three wars in 2008, 2012, and 2014. Below are the questions this study will seek to answer:

- i. What are the risks and security challenges to the safety of Palestinian female journalists in their working environment in the Gaza Strip in the period between 2006 and 2019?*

- ii. *How does social pressure against female Palestinian journalists in Gaza affect the safety of their working environment?*
- iii. *What are the tactics and procedures Palestinian female journalists take to mitigate the challenges to their safety in their working environment in Gaza?*

1.1 The researcher's motivation for the study

In a free society, one cannot be told what to say or what to think. No state institution should formulate people's opinions. Freedom is to be able to formulate your own ideas, and it is highly valued in democratic societies. However, no gender, race, colour, religion, or background should be treated differently than the others, all humankind should be treated equally, we reached the 21st century and women are still fighting for human and civil rights, not even equal rights. It is a significant fact that there is massive control from the state on media in a non-democratic society like Gaza, women still have a different situation of violating their civil, social, human and freedom rights. Female journalists themselves have created rules to survive and keep themselves in the field.

The researcher herself practiced journalism in the Gaza strip for almost ten years. The decision was made to focus on female journalists out of a belief that the researcher has personal knowledge and experience about the work environment, having worked through challenges and risks, which would make it easier to understand the background of the problem investigated. The researcher has the potential to provide wealthy material of gender media studies. Further, the researcher is studying the issue from outside using neutral study tools and stepping outside of the issue, which certainly makes a more solid study.

What might differ is the way to interpret these rules in different cultural contexts and different political situations. Living in Europe for two years and working with different types of media, public and private, reporting from democratic and non-democratic societies, also strengthens the research, with understanding from both perspectives.

1.2 Background of the study

Gaza is a place that has tried to maintain its unique identity for many years. It has gone through many traumatic conditions and events since the 1967 war, commonly referred to as Naksa ("the setback"), when it fell from the rule of the Egyptian government. Israel, however, has always managed to make life unbearable for Gazans, even when the government of occupation does not directly control them directly.

Going through several hardships and events, whether under the rule of Egypt, Israel, the

PA in 1994 or Hamas in 2007, Gaza could never become a safe work environment for journalists, especially women. Female journalists in the Gaza Strip have always been subject to different types of oppression and discrimination. (Azzouni, 2010). They had always endured the force of Israel, backed by Western powers, which has been occupying Palestinian land for nearly 72 years now.

Palestinian conservative society and religious organizations have had several limitations on women's rights, and nothing much has changed despite the open-minded new generations in all the territories. *Suheir Azzouni*, gender equality and human rights advocate, considered Palestinian women currently facing two main types of challenges and obstacles in terms of their rights: those arising from within their own culture and society, and those imposed as a direct result of the occupation, war, and civil unrest. (Azzouni, 2010) Human rights and gender advocates in the Gaza Strip often believe that women are confronted continuously with heightened versions of both power structures. However, Israel claims it entirely withdrew from Gaza in 2005, but the situation suggests otherwise. Ongoing sanctions, a 14-year-old blockade, limiting freedom of movement, and violence and destruction against civilians all make it clear that occupation is still the status quo.

Israel maintains a near-stranglehold on Gaza's resources, including food, water, fuel, and electricity. Sanctions are routine. Sixty percent of Gazan households in 2011 experienced either food insecurity or were vulnerable to food insecurity. This percentage has likely increased as a result of ongoing conflicts in the Gazan enclave. (UNRWA, 2012) Israel is also moving in and out of Gaza extremely difficult, if not impossible, by controlling the airspace, border crossings, and territorial waters. Palestinian fishermen who venture further than three nautical miles from the shore or enter Israeli-designated "no go" zones risk being arrested or shot by Israeli forces. Also, significant, Gaza's population is growing, and its economy is stagnating. (UNRWA, 2012) Absent considerable expansion of access to necessities of primary importance; jobs, social services, education, and healthcare, the United Nations predicts that Gaza's humanitarian crisis will worsen significantly in years to come. (Wendel, 2016) Although some women are central to Hamas' political success and are valued as active fighters in the resistance, they are still subject to violence, censorship, and systemic inequality in education and employment. Hamas movement has promoted single and divorced women to positions of power, yet unmarried couples are routinely stopped for questioning by the police. At times, the organization has prohibited Gazan women from riding bicycles or smoking hookah pipes, while allowing the performance of a play that explicitly calls for women's empowerment and the overthrow of the patriarchy. (Reuters, 2010)

(Al-Ghoul, 2013) This does not mean that Hamas is any more incoherent or contradictory than other governing organizations in the territories. Cultures and organizations, like individuals, are often complex and changing everywhere.

Journalist *Ali Mamouri* delineates Hamas's political priorities in liberating Palestinian land, whereas Salafist Islamic extremists have religious priorities in establishing a totalitarian Islamic caliphate (Wendel, 2016). According to al-Qaeda senior leader Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Hamas and al-Qaeda share neither ideology nor doctrine. (Wendel, 2016) Anyone believes that Hamas is less “extremist” than ISIS or al-Qaeda does not automatically mean that it is somehow benign or even progressive. Also, depictions of the group as an uncompromising threat set on oppressing women misses crucial elements of the group's actual composition, attitudes and objectives regarding these differences. Hamas' movement treatment of women as a reason for political, economic, or military intervention risks a potential use of the oppression of women as a justification for oppressing women in general.

The challenges of living in the Gaza Strip for some women, particularly under Israeli restrictions and constant abusive measurements, are compounded by their own governments' domestic policies. Commonly limits their access to employment and some segments of society.

Most of Gaza's gender-restrictive policies are implemented, enforced and designed by the Islamic Resistance Movement, more commonly known as Hamas, which was democratically elected to power in 2006. An opinion poll conducted in 1992, nearly 14 years before Hamas' electoral victory, found that 67 percent of Gaza's men believed the proper role of a married woman was to stay home, cook and care for their children. (Zureik, 1993) Many women choose to fulfil “traditional” gender roles in the household of their own volition. It is essential to understand that systems of oppression can be influenced by both outside sources and domestic and foreign pressures.

Hamas is sometimes flexible with contradictions when it comes to the treatment of women. The Western and Israeli view of Hamas is skewed by pervasive assumptions of superiority and deficient cultural understanding. "Feminism versus Multiculturalism" (Volpp, 2001), echoing the positions of *Edward Said*, describes these obstacles:

"The tension believed to exist, between feminism, and multiculturalism or universalism, and cultural relativism relies on the presumption that minority cultures are more sexist, also assumes that those cultures are frozen and static entities. Non-western people are assumed to be governed by cultural dictates, whereas the capacity to reason is thought to characterize the West." (Bano, 2012, p. 270)

Hamas was born during the eighties, in violent opposition to the state of Israel, and basically as a rival to the PLO Palestinian Liberation Organization. (Zanotti, 2010, p. 51) It was established at the advent of the first intifada in 1987. Furthermore, the group's influence grew throughout the 1990s under the rule of the Palestinian Authority. (Zanotti, 2010) After the Oslo Peace agreement and the Madrid Peace Conference failed to provide a resolution to the Israel Palestine conflict, many Palestinians withdrew support of the PLO, perceiving it as corrupt and ultimately ineffective. The territorial conflict was no closer to being fixed, and much of the foreign aid that accompanied the peace process was pocketed by several crooked politicians in the Palestinian Authority itself. (Wendel, 2016)

Hamas finds the opportunity, successfully offering itself as PLO alternative by issuing an empowering call to arms while at the same time providing social services to the extremely impoverished Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip. The belief that peace could be brokered or achieved through diplomatic channels died and Hamas rode this wave of disillusionment into power. In their charter, Hamas stakes out a prominent position: "There is no solution for the Palestinian question, but the only way is the holy war (Jihad). Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all waste of time and effort endeavors." (Wendel, 2016)

On the one hand, during the Palestinian Authority elections in 2006, Hamas experienced electoral success. On the other hand, the Fatah movement is the leading secular Palestinian political party, and the majority of the PLO, ousted Hamas officials, elect from the WestBank WestBank. However, after an armed fight and dreadful clashes between both Hamas and Fatah, Hamas was able to take control of Gaza, and they did. (Wendel, 2016) Despite Hamas's being won in a very democratic election, the United States, the European Union, several other countries continue to consider Hamas as a terrorist organization. To this day.

Hamas won the elections and was able to maintain support through a combination of religious, militant, and grassroots social services-driven initiatives, both domestic and foreign, in addition to utilizing its control of many mosques and religious schools in Gaza. (FRONK, et al., 2001) Hamas frames the Islamic dress code as a means of supporting the nationalist movement, and it is encouraged as a sign of commitment as they believe, to the resistance to wearing the Hijab is, whereas bareheaded women are perceived as "vain and frivolous, or, at worst, anti-nationalist. (Wendel, 2016)

Before the Palestinian elections in 2006, Hamas had used female volunteers (Followers) to campaign door-to-door and at polling places. (Wendel, 2016) According to *Mkhaimar Abusada*, professor of political science at Al Azhar University in Gaza City, this was something noticeable

and strangely taken in the Gaza Strip. In Palestinian Gazan society, women are not commonly accepted to go out and campaign in the streets. (Wendel, 2016) *Abu Saada* believes it was a new phenomenon, especially for Hamas. (Wendel, 2016) He described how Hamas had mobilized its female supporters as if it had been "building up for this occasion for 30 years." (Wendel, 2016)

Hamas movement showed and clarified what was going on at the time; they believed "*women have become much more aware.*" (Wendel, 2016) This statement hints at some possible indoctrination or at least substantial control over messaging. However, it is problematic and inaccurate to claim that all the women who do support Hamas are either brainwashed by the movement's propaganda or unable to think independently. Many women made a strong choice to support Hamas because they believed the main alternative, Fatah, had spent less time working for or with women in all the territories. Not just Gaza. Hamas, on the other hand, has consistently provided opportunities otherwise nonexistent for women in the Gaza strip. (Wendel, 2016)

In 2013, the Hamas movement appointed its first female spokesperson, *Isra al-Modallal*, a divorced single mother who was partially educated in the United Kingdom. The employment of *al-Modallal* as the organization's public face somehow contradicted the dominant Western/Israeli perceptions of Hamas as a terrorist organization. A well-educated single mother, women's empowerment and committed to humanitarian causes, is absolutely not the type of woman most Western and Israeli see would expect a regressive "terrorist" group like Hamas could employ. *Ihab al-Ghussein*, head of Hamas's movement media department, appointed *al-Modallal* as part of a larger effort to connect with new Western audiences and work on "strengthening and emphasizing the role of Palestinian women (Wendel, 2016). The idea of using a female representative to make such connections, however, did not last long. *Al-Modallal* was obviously hired to present Hamas in a different way for other foreign audiences. She was supposed to serve as an encouraging example of how empowered women can and do work with Hamas organization, but the idea that she could be a representative of all women in Gaza was not very successful or believable.

Gender-based oppression and violence are still widespread in the Gazan community. In the 2011 poll, 51 percent of married women in the Gaza strip reported having experienced domestic violence and abuses in the preceding year. Further, 65 percent said they would not seek help or report domestic violence. (Wendel, 2016) Reproductive care clinics and domestic violence shelters are often absent in Gaza. Unmarried couples and single women are harassed routinely by Hamas authorities, especially couples in the streets. (DCAF, 2009, p. 23) *Nariman Farah*, a Gazan painter, laments:

"There is much pressure for the Palestinian woman to stand by her man, to support him, be part of him...So many doors have been closed to Palestinian women in Gaza. It is like getting out of one prison only to find another door closed." (Robson, 2012)

1.3 Violations Against Palestinian female Journalists in the Gaza strip:

Journalism has always been considered a demanding and problematic profession across the globe. (Feinstein, 2006, p. x) However, in a place like Gaza, several factors worsen the situation, whether in local or foreign media agencies. Palestinian journalists, females especially, have been subject to abuses, violence and other types of violations for decades now. (OHCHR, 2019) The unique situation of the Gaza Strip, separated from the rest of the world, even its other Palestinian half, had always made it difficult for journalists to function. Violations against Palestinian female journalists can be discussed from two different, yet very related angles. One would be the violations caused by internal conflicts in Gaza's society and the rule of Hamas. The other one would be the countless violations Palestinian female journalists are often exposed to due to the Israeli occupation.

Media in the Gaza strip has been controlled by Hamas authority since 2007. (Adwan & Naser, 2019) Before that, the journalistic scene was either controlled by the Palestinian Authority or Israel. The Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), the radio station Voice of Palestine, and the news agency WAFA are all affiliated with the Palestinian Authority. However, there have been several media agencies and newspapers affiliated with Hamas, even before the takeover in 2007. (Joseph, 2010) After a long tradition of regulation of the press, Palestinian journalists still feel that they might risk their safety whenever they report on the situation in Palestine and Israel, commonly referred to as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Access to information, freedom of movement, and equal treatment are terms that are often missing from the daily life of Palestinian journalists. For women, however, it is almost always worse. (Joseph, 2010)

Palestinian journalists, in general, have no immunity when it comes to the Israeli army. They have always been subject to direct targeting from the Israeli army even though they are well trained on safety procedures and are continually abiding by the profession's rules. (RSF, 2006) Even in this horrible time when the entire world is facing a pandemic, Israel continues to deny Palestinians their right to fight this common enemy. Furthermore, because journalists cannot be separated from their community, Palestinian journalists are still trying to work with no proper means of protection in a place where "no supplies available" is the ugly truth. (UNESCO, 2014) . MADA recorded 9 Israeli violations against women journalists in the Gaza

Strip from 2010 to 2014. Most violations were committed in 2014. (MADA, 2019)

The Israeli attacks on journalists were never an exception on this occasion. As reports from the United Nations confirms that since the protests had started in March 2017, and until September of 2018, over 30 Palestinian journalists were wounded during their coverage of the protests. Yaser Murtaja and Ahmad Abuhussain were both killed while they were working near the border fence during the protests of 2018 (U.N. report). (Al-jazeera, 2018)

The journalists who were targeted in Gaza worked at a distance of 400 meters from the border fence and wore vests labelled "Press." It is not possible that snipers who have the ability to shoot someone elbow could not see journalists, a vest, a helmet, and a camera. The two journalists were both targeted with an explosive bullet in the abdomen, the same place they could clearly read the word "Press." The Return Marches only serve as one evidence of the risks and difficulties Palestinian male and female journalists have to deal with in Gaza, a place that has experienced three wars in its recent history in addition to dozens of escalations and dozens more of impermeable hardships. (MADA, 2019).

Females make up one-third of Palestinian journalists in the Gaza strip. (MADA, 2018) However, there is a significant number of journalists who are not included or registered in the syndicate records for many reasons. The numbers of female students who are majored in the media faculties in Gaza universities exceed the number of males, yet out of the 600 Palestinian journalists whose names are registered in the syndicate, only 200 are included. (MADA, 2018) Palestinian female journalists in Gaza have always risen to the challenge and proven themselves to be unique and thriving despite the various obstacles and barriers they are commonly subject too. (Kilman, 2017, pp. 16-17) Female journalists in Gaza have managed to cover the news and report from the field with significant influence despite the threats and risks they are often obliged to go through or tackle. Palestinian female journalists are constantly experiencing various forms of violations and abuses, especially regarding their right of expression and their right to work in news coverage. (Kilman, 2017, pp. 16-17)

MADA has issued a report to discuss the violations against female journalists in Palestine in which Gaza Strip had included severe and different patterns of violations that are distinguished from the ones their peers from the West Bank West Bank are experiencing in terms of the governing system. The West Bank West Bank is ruled by the Palestinian Authority while Gaza is under Hamas's Islamic government. Unlike the West Bank West Bank, there is an indirect and lesser friction and confrontation with the Israeli army in Gaza. The unique culture, habits and traditions of Gaza are elements critical to this topic. (MADA, 2018)

According to MADA journalist (S.Z.), has pointed out she experienced a high number of violations, abuses and threats in many different ways and from anonymous sources. (MADA, 2018) Some of the threats were implicitly targeting her on a moral scale creating hideous accusations socially and religiously in a community where such acts may cause serious harm to women. The threats were mainly related to her criticism of the Hamas government. (MADA, 2018) The report included a number of violations journalist (N.B.) had experienced in the past few years by the Hamas government's security forces.

Most of the threats were implicit, where the journalist stressed that she faces huge difficulty in reaching information and conducting interviews with several officials in Gaza because the religious male-dominated government often deals more smoothly and efficiently with males or females who wear Hijab (headscarf). She also stressed that sometimes female journalists who do not wear head scarfs are ordered to wear it in certain events and venues. The journalists also explain how they sometimes experience harassment from the local police if they are riding alone in a car with a driver, though the car would explicitly be labelled "press." She also spoke of some terrible experiences where the government used to send a group of young men to harass them while covering a story on the field. (MADA, 2018)

During the years from 2010 and until the end of 2014, 103 violations against female journalists in the Gaza strip were recorded, the most severe and violent part committed by the Israeli army. In Gaza, it is significant to mention that the higher number of violations and abuses against female journalists were committed from Hamas' security forces. unlike the West Bank, where violations are mostly committed by the Israeli army. (MADA, 2018)

Most of the violations are usually committed during field coverage. Thirty-three violations and assaults were spotted during the first half of 2015, all by the security forces in Gaza or Israel. There is no doubt that the killing of 29-year-old journalist *Najlaa Mahoud Elhaj* in an Israeli airstrike that targeted her house in Khan Yunis on July 10th, 2014, was one of the most strenuous and horrible incidents ever recorded in Gaza. It is also significant to mention that nearly 60% of the violations against Palestinian female journalists were committed by inside parties, especially in times of conflict between Fatah and their everlasting rival Hamas. (MADA, 2018)

1.4 Structure of the thesis:

The first chapter:

This chapter involves a general introduction and overview of the research in addition to the research question. It also includes the status of journalists in Palestine and the challenges and obstacles they tackle, whether these challenges were caused by the Israeli army or the ruling authority in the Gaza strip.

The second chapter:

The chapter presented the three theories on which the research was founded, namely the theory of risk and feminist media studies and the theory of democracy and media. The chapter includes a profound explanation of how the researcher used these theories to explain the research problem. A relevant narration of other studies has been included in the research as a means to present multiple angles of the research in a way that gives the reader an in-depth and detailed view of the research problem.

The third chapter:

The researcher reviewed the methodology that she took in constructing this research. The chapter also provides a detailed explanation of the steps the researcher has taken to accomplish this research work in addition to the reasons that prompted the researcher to address this topic and the problems that the researcher faced during her work.

The fourth chapter:

This chapter provides a detailed review of the interviews and their analyzes and discusses the presented points during the interviews in detail.

The fifth chapter:

The researcher reviews recommendations based on the interviews and the analysis of the interviews, as presented in the previous chapter. The chapter also includes answers to the last question of the research questions in a more detailed way; then, the researcher presents a comprehensive summary of the research outputs and what the researcher reached in this research.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

2.0 Introduction:

This chapter reviews the three theories on which this research is based. The theories discussed here are risk theory, feminist media studies and media and the democracy theory. A combination of these three theories would be a proper representation that explains risks and challenges female journalists face in their work in conflict zones. The research illustrates that the democratic environment is the incubator in which journalists can practice their freedom of expression. It also explains how non-democratic societies are often more subject to the absence of these freedoms. The risk theory, along with the challenges that influence the performance of journalists in their line of work, especially in conflict zones, are not separately illustrated in the study and the feminist media studies theory. Female journalists in such societies are often more exposed to risks. Women have always had their own conflict and were still forced to combat being female in a male-dominated profession. It was never easy for them to gain their rights or be treated equally, not even when domestic and foreign parties are victimizing them. The researcher aims to explain that once these gender-based risks and threats are added to the previous theories, it would be almost impossible for female journalists to cope in this profession in such a context.

The other side of the research is more related to the previous studies conducted in this regard. The research suggests that a thorough understanding and deep insight can be reached when looking into some more detailed studies. It can certainly serve the purpose of the study without the need to narrate a group of unfocused studies. People frequently believe they were all created equally. This does not seem to apply to journalists when it comes to their tasks, status, influence and working conditions. Classificatory questions are often asked when the subject is journalists; what are their jobs like? What boundaries and challenges do they come to face? How much can they influence or be influenced? Moreover, most importantly, what kinds of risks do they take and face? Yes, life is risky, but humans are not all equal, and neither are professions.

2.1 Risk theory:

Journalism is often dubbed the profession of troubles worldwide. In conflict zones, however, the forms of risks and violations journalists are subject to are beyond description. Terms of intimidation, harassment and physical and psychological abuses are never absent when it comes to journalists lives in conflict zones. Moreover, female journalists tend to suffer more, for they

have committed to the greatest sin of being female in places where masculinity often takes control of everything. The local community hardly approves female journalists, and they are often underrated on all social and economic levels regardless of how good or bad they can be in covering stories or news.

It is a fact that the disruptions present in journalism often cause threats not only to journalists themselves, but also causes problems within their communities, as well as threats to business models, and established journalistic practices and roles. It is also important to illustrate that risks to journalists, regardless of their type, occur in different forms and leave different effects. Journalism and media have always been one of the most dangerous professions in the world (Cottle, et al., 2016). The various risks and threats journalists tend to face commonly stem from geopolitical changes as well as a perceived loss of objectivity and neutrality for journalists. It is established that journalists are often treated with a concept of “either with us or against us” in their communities (Cottle, et al., 2016).

The dangers and risks journalists often go through, especially in conflict zones, are direct most of the time. According to a study from the International News Safety Institute INSI, more than 1000 journalists have died while covering stories or reporting from the field in the past ten years, mostly journalists who worked in volatile conflicts. (Wahl-Jorgensen, et al., 2016) . However, this does not mean that all threats journalists face happen in conflict zones, even in European countries, where the law seems more reliable in terms of journalist’s protection, journalists are still subject to harassment, intimidations and other forms of risks. (COE, 2020)

With the number of journalists being victimized, whether by local authorities or other parts and facing intimidation, abuses, harassment, physical harm and blackmail, there are further dimensions specific to physical risks. Among them is the *gender issue*. An example is the high-profile sexual assaults on several women journalists in the Middle East. *Technology* is an important dimension, as well. New developments and techniques have enabled journalists to get closer sometimes covertly in their work of covering conflicts or crimes. It is understandable that this has made them more vulnerable to all types of risks. Technology has been beneficial to these journalists as it made it much easier and faster for them to access information, but it has also made them easily exposed to risks like surveillance, spying and breach of privacy, whether by hostile governments in their countries or sometimes hostile groups. (Wahl-Jorgensen, et al., 2016).

It is significant to illustrate that other kinds of threats journalists face today are present, risks that mainly affect their livelihoods as well as their lives. Some of these risks are institutional as in being forced to quit or lose their jobs if they were not willing to abide by certain behaviors’ or rules.

While the journalistic business model has been struggling for decades, the crisis has grown much deeper and more intense, especially after the global recession of 2008 that led to the demise of some of the long-established and well-regarded media institutions in different areas across the world. Some good examples of these would be the Independent in the United Kingdom and the Tampa Tribune in the United States. (Wahl-Jorgensen, et al., 2016) Print, meaning traditional newspapers, and media organizations have been losing readership and ratings due to several aspects, including the public's tendency to rely on online media platforms. Therefore revenue, advertisers are now seeking other venues while local, national and international media outlets are still crippled and losing business. Journalists, of course, are often first to be affected by this process. (Wahl-Jorgensen, et al., 2016)

The challenges in this economic model of journalism have led to a strenuous growth in the victimization of the workforce, mainly journalists. It has caused more to lose their jobs, and significantly, it has forced freelance journalists to take on more responsibility for reporting if they were not willing to face the term “low-pay, no pay” journalism (Bakker, 2012).

Technology had definitely eased and created a sense of a de-professionalization of journalism with a consequence of many economic, quality-related and ethical questions as well as opportunities for greater participation from other parts of the workforces. Sometimes the impact of these changes occurs in very surprising ways. Freelancers, for example, are working more innovatively, perhaps as a result of resource cuts and undermines job security (Gynnild, 2014). It is to be said, however, at the local level, the economic viability of professional journalism still faces severe pressure with the traditional democratic role of local news being undermined since newsrooms hallowed out, and costs were significantly cut in many places. (Franklin & Carlson, 2012).

Democracies around the world have always relied on journalism to keep its essence as journalism often acts as a watchdog on the state and practice its role of informing citizens about the decisions that affect their daily lives. Journalists, however, face a high number of new threats that limit their ability to fulfil their role as a watchdog (Repucci, 2019). In an increasingly market-driven media landscape, the resources journalists have to scrutinize political elites and expose wrongdoing are increasingly diminished in many local, international and national contexts. The information supply of public affairs and local politics is often threatened due to the cuts occurring in public service broadcasting in addition to the concentration of media ownership (Wahl-Jorgensen, et al., 2016).

International affairs coverage, for example, is often expensive. There is no guarantee for

media outlets that such stories would be appealing to their audiences, which can be a result of a general lack of public knowledge about war-torn countries and humanitarian crises in addition to social, political or economic events. This can leave democratic decisions at national levels under-informed. This is why they rely on social media, and online media platforms are not reassuring most of the time because it is not guaranteed that this would help enhance democratic citizenship openness to questions. (Repucci, 2019)

The disruption in models of traditional journalism does not disqualify them. However, it still raises risks when it comes to both professional journalists and institutions. It also suggests there is a long-term risk that often seems greater in terms of the public and civic life in our communities (Cottle, et al., 2016). The risks and challenges female journalists are still facing in conflict zones like Gaza seem to be everlasting as there were never enough laws and regulations that could protect their professional and human rights. Female journalists are always underrated because of their gender, a reality that still appears to be indispensable in many communities around the globe.

2.2 Feminist Media studies theory:

The term "journalism" has always been an indicator by which freedom of expression can be measured in democratic societies. Further, the presence of democracy should instantly suggest the existence of freedom of expression and free press in all contexts. It is significant to note that the last election in Gaza was conducted in 2006, which is one of the main reasons the researcher chose to imply the theory of democracy and media in this study.

Democracy and media theory go appropriately with the theory of *feminist media studies* as they share similar conditions regarding female journalists and the fact that women specifically are always more subject to the barriers, risks and challenges journalists come to face regularly. It is why the researcher chose to gather both theories and apply them in this study.

The majority of early feminist studies on the media mainly focused on the assumption that hegemonic and stereotypical values were often conveyed in media (Zoonen, 1994). Media has often been considered to illustrate gains of social control and public liberty, shedding light on many factors that may explain how women were displayed in media through different times. Such factors discuss the number of women that exist in the media industry (Zoonen, 1994). This principle can be very much applicable when it comes to Palestine, as the study shows that despite the increase in the numbers of women who enter academic training in communication, they are still considered a minority. This fact suggests that women have a tendency to choose the areas

of communications studies over journalism (Zoonen, 1994).

Women are still displayed improperly both as news subjects or journalists, and it appears that women who actually work as journalists are not given the right space or just opportunities to develop their careers or to reach their full potentials. Such facts can be widely seen in conflict zones like Gaza.

This is why women in this industry may not seem to be as influential and effective as their colleagues from the opposite sex. These elements tend to suggest those female journalists in Gaza have come to face what might be called a male-dominated industry in a male-dominated society. (Zoonen, 1994) Zoonen also argues that "if data tell something about differences between women and men in journalism, they actually say something about self-perception and self-images." In Palestinian media, however, this is not a case of self-perception or self-image, but, rather, about socioeconomic and cultural factors related to gender. The Palestinian woman is culturally considered a second-class citizen, and this affects her opinions. Nor does she have the same economic power as a man. (Zoonen, 1994)

There were various theories through time that suggested women's incursion in certain jobs such as journalism might cause damage to the professions and might lead to what is called a softer content. Establishing theories based on the characteristics of women and men should not be applied in the twenty-first century. An example of that would be the critical mass theory, as discussed in Romy Frohlich 2004. In general, several content analyses assumed both cause (sexism and, relatedly, women's lack of access to media employment) and effect (the lowering self-esteem of women consumers). Rather brutally refuting the "mythology" of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, Marjorie Ferguson (1990) attributed feminists' demands their demand for better representations of women in the programs' content and a higher status representation of women inside media organizations – to their shared beliefs about "increased visibility as a key to greater access, equity, and power." (Chambers, et al., 2004, p. 212)

The sound wave of the feminist media theory focused on how women reflect, reproduce and result from prevailing dominant ideologies. This is why portrayals tend to perpetuate the roles of workers and the fact they can be limited by race, gender and social class. Feminists' studies, on several occasions, suggested that this causes women to internalize a constrained sense of their options. There was an argument that women have always been more subject to limited and negative stereotyping, especially women of colour. The need to reach more positive and realistic images of women is very crucial for it about the ideals and values of societies and, more importantly, those who defined them. After this, more nuanced approaches began to emerge and to evolve. (Cantor,

1980, pp. 305-314)

2.3 Media and democracy theory:

There are different normative frameworks used to assess and evaluate the performance of media, and they most likely depend on a specific theory of democracy. It is significant to illustrate that the different models of democracy play an essential role in discovering the environment journalists work in. When it comes to media studies, the relation between democracy and the media has always been very debatable. (Curran, 2014) The different conceptions of democracy and the variable views of how it affects media are key players to the monitoring and evaluation of media freedom both in democratic and non-democratic societies. The theory of ideal democracy as a normative basis tends to be the cause of how scholars and media workers comprehend their professional work environments in different communities. (Curran, 2014)

In addition to the previous theories we have mentioned, it is also necessary to illustrate some theories regarding safety and security within the journalistic environment. Such theories are set out within the conceptual framework identified in the theories mentioned earlier. Perspectives in this regard have been developed before in order to explain how threats and violations against journalists may prevail in conflict zones. Throughout the thesis, there would be an urgent need to shed some light on the current security and safety theories and the perspectives from other disciplines and how they would be applied in this manner. There would be a need to integrate such theories with other conceptual frameworks in which the theory of safety and security of journalists can be readily examined and discussed, especially in the Palestinian territories. (Levett, 2017)

There should be an understanding of the fact that democracy is not only built on the two crucial elements: government and citizens. There are also other key players like political parties and public-interest groups that are supported by the media itself. It must be acknowledged that some other activities and institutions share the burden of protecting the society other than media. The democratic role of media, however, should be examined in conjunction with think tanks, critical researchers, social and civil movements and the political institutions in the society. (Curran, 2011, pp. 61-84)

It is not our aim to particularly study the philosophical theories that seek to find definitions and views of the values and principles of democracy, because the democratic theory can be identified merely as a particular subfield of social and political theory. The roots of such theory go back to ancient Greece. (Curran, 2011) However, it is more important to find other ways

to conceptualize the essential values of democracy in order to create a theory of how media can and should be freed within any type of democracy and especially in such conflict zones where this study will be conducted (Curran, 2011, pp. 61-84). The theory of media and democracy has always been related to the actual establishment of freedom of expression's values and principles. (Paul, et al., 2004, p. 83). Therefore, we shall find the means to investigate the issue using both theories.

The democratic societies and the democratic legal system in nearly all states advocate for the necessity of protecting the freedom of expression. This has always been the central foundation upon which the general theory of law and state was built. The theory considers that all states are subject to a set of rights and liberties regardless of the time and place of the individuals involved. This is where all states of the world must stand, to their views and perspectives and ensure that such laws are applied to all people, especially those who are working in conflict zones like Palestine. (Trevino, 2017)

2.4 Media and gender-related studies:

2.4.1 Introduction:

There are devastating records on the number and types of violations committed against female journalists in the world. Female journalists in third-world countries tend to face more obstacles and barriers than others due to many reasons. (Mellor, 2007) In addition to religious convictions, the habits and traditions commonly found in these countries often encourage male-dominated societies to misrepresent female journalists. They also empower male journalists to the extent that female journalists are hardly able to defend themselves or present their cases more appropriately. In conflict zones, these phenomena exist at the worst levels. A high number of studies were conducted in several communities to address this issue and perhaps to discuss possible means of a better representation of female journalists.

This area illustrates how these studies were conducted on the issue of violations against journalists, specifically female journalists. The idea of presenting a nutshell on these studies stands from our firm belief that this could undoubtedly help readers reach a better understanding of the barriers and challenges female journalists in conflict zones tend to face. (Mellor, 2007)

A study conducted by Ibrahim Hazboun, for example, focused on how the war of 2014 in Gaza left a massive impact on both male and female journalists and reshaped their practices. The

experiences journalists go through, sometimes as humans commonly force them to change their methods. A change in motive often leads to a change in practice. The narrative of the events in which Gaza journalists witnessed at the time needed to be rephrased and a new picture of that scene needed to be represented in a way that suits them best. (Hazboun, et al., 2016).

There have been other studies and articles which shed light on other angles as to why journalistic standards may change along with journalists' practices. (Mellor, 2011) Mellor drew examples of male and female journalists in pan-Arab media who often decide to find a balance between journalistic ethics and the way they can add more credibility to their work in their attempt to enhance and boost their professional image. It also suggested that women journalists tend to adopt an unemotional style when reporting news of pain and suffering, while male journalists emotionally engage with this type of news. The discussions in the study are informed by the debate around detachment versus attachment in news reporting, in addition to the feminist media debate about the distinction between feminine and masculine values in mediating suffering, which applies not only to the Arab region in general but to the Gaza Strip as well (Mellor, 2011).

Studies conducted on the issue of female journalists and their safety often assume that the safety of journalists is a precondition for free expression and free media. Interviews and discussions in a study titled *Women in War Challenges and possibilities for female journalists covering wars and conflicts* negotiated questions linked to what particular challenges and opportunities women journalists face, and how their security can best be guaranteed when covering wars, especially in conflict zones. The deliberations are believed to have a direct bearing on debates about female journalists' safety, both offline and online. The study also illustrates the importance of female journalists' presence in these zones and how their presence may serve as a strong indicator of freedom of expression, civil rights and media freedom (Orgeret, 2016).

The different circumstances surrounding individuals indeed lead to different outcomes when it comes to their careers. Journalists are not excluded from this equation. A study titled "*Palestinian freelance journalists - self-censorship, customers and role in society*" implies that once journalists are financially safe, they can be more straightforward and uncompromising in their work. However, freelance journalists fall in a completely different category as the financial scarcity often limits them because of the Palestinian media. They are not paid enough, and they almost always lack the support they need. Freelance journalist in Gaza prefers to work with foreign news desks even if they have to alter their implications of professional ideals such as objectivity and neutrality. Such work also provides a way of expressing oneself with less fear of

repercussions from differing factors in Palestinian society. In Gaza, the term "security" is almost non-existent, which is why journalists tend to do other jobs in accordance with their work in journalism. (Fridh & Wingren, 2015).

An article titled "Censorship and Freedoms of The Press Under Changing Political Regimes, Palestinian Media from Israeli Occupation to the Palestinian Authority" presented a thorough examination of the Palestinian media both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It gave a good understanding of how censorship functions in an environment of changing political realities. The article discussed the impact of censorship and its relation to freedom of the press in the period of Palestinian self-governance under the Palestinian Authority and under the period of Israeli military (administrative) rule.

Questions like how and to what degree have the Palestinian media changed under the two different systems of rule were asked in addition to a discussion of the extent to which new Palestinian media organizations developed freedom of expression as part of the P.A.'s general development. This case study of the Palestinian media after and before the periods of self-government was discussed and suggested some essential conclusions in the broad context of media and journalism research and its relations with political authorities, and the use of censorship and other regulatory systems. The formal legal processes practiced in the territories has advanced or hindered the P.A.'s development and determined the particular type of political system to which the P.A. belongs. It also discussed the boundaries and challenges of freedom of expression in the Palestinian society and how they changed. (Nossek & Rinnawi, 2003)

It is significant to mention that studies and articles do not always come in the same form or shape. For example, a study under the title "Killing Journalists is Not Media Regulation: Private Rights, Collective Wrongs and the Impact of Impunity" argued that the role of a new international instrument targeting the harassment of and violence against journalists. The study is supported by a review of U.N. and regional human rights jurisprudence and includes a thorough emphasis on hitherto undiscussed weaknesses, in addition to an analysis of loopholes in the international humanitarian law as a whole. However, it appears to aim at a new instrument that provides better safeguards for both societal interests in the media and, of course, journalists.

This, according to the study, would be a new means in which journalists can use to help themselves tackle such obstacles and challenges in their practices. (City, 2018)

2.5.2. Palestinian political conflict and its impact on the freedom of press:

The results of the elections were not fulfilling to the two main rivals, Fatah and Hamas. The two factions, however, agreed to form a unity government at the time supported by several regional efforts. Interventions from different parties were made in favor of one but not the other. (Daoud, 2011) The repercussions of this turned out to be catastrophic as it led to a deadly phase full of clashes in the Gaza Strip. The residents of the Gazan enclave had to suffer from this deadly battle for a period of two years until Hamas finally took over the authority by force in 2007. (Daoud, 2011)

Media was not distant from the clashes at the time as both parties used the agencies they support to advocate for their agenda and to launch endless smearing campaigns against one another. Violations against Palestinian journalists of all ideologies and beliefs were often present. The lack of a genuinely free press within the Palestinian territories had eased what appeared to be the mission of the two rivals: to steer the media and try to convince people of what served their interests best. Both Hamas and Fatah did and still control a number of influential media platforms, and despite the difference in ideology, both somehow managed to create a state of deformity within the body of Palestinian journalism. (Daoud, 2011)

Israel appeared to have managed to take advantage of this conflict and made great efforts towards increasing the tension between the two parties as it served their own nationalistic interest. The fragile political status of the Palestinians made it much easier for the Israeli governments to continue their work on many levels. (Daoud, 2011) A weak enemy is an absent one as it appeared, and the Palestinian conflict eventually led to a political and geographical division, from which no one has recovered until this day. (Daoud, 2011) The researcher seeks to emphasize how Israel managed to benefit from the Palestinian internal conflict, and that it also caused many violations against journalists both in Gaza and the West Bank.

The entire Palestinian political system was somehow dismantled due to the conflict. (Daoud, 2011) The difference in ideology led to a difference in practice and law-making processes once Gaza became separate from the West Bank. Both Hamas and Fatah continued to implement their beliefs in smear campaigns colored by the roots of their belief. (Daoud, 2011) Hamas, for example, had always used religion not only to convince the public of their agenda but also as a tool of confrontation, perhaps as a weapon. Their rivals were often accused of being infidels or treasonous, terms that carry much influence when used in a conservative religious society. It is also worth mentioning that the conflict between these two factions has definitely caused a lack of trust within the Palestinian community, a fact that Israel was able to use very creatively to pass

some of their long strategic goals on so many levels. (Daoud, 2011)

The researcher suggests that journalists should try to form groups and take several systematic steps towards enhancing their professional lives and more significantly, to enhance the reality of media in the Palestinian community. (Daoud, 2011) The researcher stresses that journalists should be kept out of all political conflicts and that freedom of journalists, as well as the rest of the public, should be respected unconditionally. Journalists should also abide by the conventional ethics of journalism and follow global ethical guidelines in their profession. (Daoud, 2011)

2.5.3. Palestinian Journalists and the ability to access information:

Female journalists especially tend to face several challenges in their daily work life. The study seeks to reach an understanding of both the legal and practical aspects of the right to access information for Palestinian journalists. It explores the legal frame and discusses the different types of classified information journalists aim to get. It is also known that there are a huge number of regulations all journalists should work under as well as many obstacles which they seek to tackle in their line of work. The study explores these boundaries and challenges and the way Palestinian journalists deal with them in addition to the tremendous amount of pressure they experience in order to reach information. (Marouf, 2016)

The study mainly concluded that nearly 66.67 % of the journalists in the Palestinian territories are quite familiar with the legal frame of access to information. It also showed that meeting personally with officials is the most common way to obtain information and that this is used by 78.00% of journalists in Palestine. According to the study, 78.50% of the information is sometimes banned by the executive authority, which highlights that it is the leading party that relatively controls the amount of information released to the public. The judicial authority comes next in line as the study clarified it bans around 62.50% of the information. (Marouf, 2016)

The study made a few recommendations in the end. Most of them revolved around the need to mend the basic Palestinian law by enlisting the conventions of the right to access information and make sure such a right is granted explicitly to all journalists under explicit guarantees and criteria. The study also suggested that the legal system must be modified, and laws and regulations should be reviewed to make sure that journalist's rights would not be undermined under any circumstances. (Marouf, 2016)

2.5.4. Palestinian freelance journalists:

This study tried to map and to make a proper analysis of the working conditions in Palestine. It also discusses the possibilities and boundaries, Palestinian journalists, freelancers especially, tend to tackle and overcome. (Fridh, 2015) In the process of analyzing the answers of those whom the researcher interviewed, the researcher came to a few interesting findings. The flexibility of Palestinian freelance journalists was the primary source of strength. A stable income, however, is what they all need.

The study found that those journalists may have a chance to become more straightforward and less willing to make compromises if they felt financially secure. The collapsing economy of Palestine has always suffered from can be reflected in all sectors, including media. This has also given local media agencies within the territories a chance to be unjust when it comes to journalists' pay. For freelance journalists, it is worse, as they would have to make more compromises at the expense of their economic rights. (Fridh, 2015)

The study also discussed the fact that freelance journalists who work for foreign media agencies tend to overlook some of their main ethical guidelines in order to get paid. Their work may lack objectivity and neutrality in order to fit the standards and perspective of their foreign employers. Some would also suggest that it can be a mechanism to practice a type of freedom of expression far from their local community standards. (Fridh, 2015)

2.5.5. Media and gender narrative:

Gendered narratives on peace, security and news media accountability to women an article by *Sarah Machria* discusses several findings from media monitoring research, carried out in fifteen transitional and countries considered as conflict zones, on the news related to peace and security. The analysis and conclusion are reached from a thoroughly feminist perspective in which the monitoring results are assessed against the standards of journalistic professionalism usually adopted by the news media industry and comprehended through a gender lens, locating the critique centrally within the profession. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 49- 58).

The study implies in a very explicit way that news reporting falls considerably short on the measures of respect when it comes to concepts of freedom of expression, particularly for women, (gender-responsive) media professional ethics, and (gender-responsive) peace journalism. The cross-country and cross-regional findings are instructive on the transnationality of patriarchal capitalist norms beginning at the foundational, structural level of news media systems as well. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 49- 58).

Most of the studies conducted in this area came across some similar findings suggesting a term of transnationality when it comes to patriarchal capitalist norms in different news media systems. They also suggest shaping newsroom practices and approaches to news production content delivery. The findings on a wide array of indicators indeed reveal the intricate workings of this normative foundation, which manifests through its content. The findings do not only prove the exclusionary character of the local mainstream media public sphere regarding matters of peace and security, but they also indicate the severity of marginalization based on gender differences and other sorts of discrimination. Equality in participation in discourse in this space is foreclosed for women and feminized subjects. However, there is an unfair representation and misrepresentation, which somehow legitimizes the culture of inequality and injustice, as the study mentions. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 49- 58)

There are also struggles when it comes to constructing counter-narratives in the media, narratives that relatively empower subordinated groups who have little room to succeed against the onslaught of media reports, which usually support dominant ideologies. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 49- 58). These struggles may have limited means to create other discursive spaces and are capable of posing sufficient challenges to the wide-reaching mainstream media. When it comes to space in different forms of alternative media, the conversation remains present, though it exists on the margins with a slim possibility of being permeated into public discourse. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 49- 58).

The idea of shaping/re-directing popular response regarding influencing policy agendas also remains very strong. The media's critical function of holding power bearers accountable, especially to their weaker publics, is actually an imperative for all democratic and egalitarian societies no matter where they or what their cultures are. Regarding policy, however, the insights point to a desperate need for adoption and/or enforcement of gender-responsive morals in addition to practice codes in media houses, and that those initiatives should be conducted on national regulatory levels, without ignoring the necessary enforcement measures. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 49- 58).

The study also stands as an approach to media assistance, which creates the notion of specific requirements for gender-responsive journalistic professionalism must be present. This final action calls for policy and programming responses both on a national and also an international level, and it should be overseen by media development agencies, especially in areas and societies where transition and conflict are often present. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 49- 58).

Lilian Ngusuur aimed to investigate how gender discrimination may affect gender-

sensitive reporting in the Northeast Boko Haram conflict zone. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 63-70). The study on conflict reporting, conducted in Nigeria, illustrates that women from the northern part of Nigeria who obviously have their own culture and religion would speak more freely than other women from the rest of the country. Due to gender constraints, however, female journalists are not allowed to report on specific sensitive topics like the conflict in Nigeria itself. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 63-70)

News coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency depicts a 'single story' analysis of women victims. This, in fact, suggests that women's affairs and their issues are not preferable topics to be worked on by journalists there. Sensational and controversial stories seem to sell best in Nigeria, as the male-dominated media industry there has never done any good in that particular subject. The media industry, being controlled by men, has caused women in that area to become more distant from the 'hot' news spot of politics, conflicts and economics. They can, however, focus on issues concerning lifestyle, entertainment and public relations in their news reportages. The study claims that despite the fact the media industry in Nigeria continues to grow, the notable growth has been in the increase of media establishments and practitioners rather than in topics or diverse opinion. The representation and participation of women in the media do not naturally reflect reverse pre-existing discrimination, but it can clearly foster generational mentorship.

According to the study, an effective media agenda must include gender equality and gender-sensitive reporting, no matter how hard the environment becomes. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 63-70)

It is beyond doubt that women in Nigeria continue to contribute significantly to the economic, educational, political and cultural development of the country, and that should be reflected in their representation. The researcher recommends encouraging female journalists to do more reporting on the 'hot' topic concerning conflict and political affairs, as well as holistic gender-sensitive reporting no matter what the situation is currently. Editors must not expect a good story from male journalists only. Instead, they must give women the opportunity to do the same. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 63-70)

The researcher argues that male journalists should always put themselves in the shoes of female journalists affected by conflict. That is, they must understand the situation. 'Whom better to understand a woman than a woman?' is how the study describes it. While the increased use of female journalists in conflict reporting can be argued to be essential for providing a balanced gender perspective, the issues of insecurity, impunity, insurance and other challenges must be tackled effectively and urgently. Also, society must stop making being a woman in Nigeria a

"crime." It must stop the war of gender stereotyping and inequality, which is a hindrance to the achievement of the goal of the global goals for sustainable development conflicts reporting in Nigeria. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 63-70)

Also, a study by *Eva Boller* focusses on the representation of women in T.V. news regarding the war in Libya in 2011. A quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the newscasts of Tagesthemen, News at Ten and Le Journal de 20 Heures was combined with correspondent interviews. The results show a striking lack of female presence in all newscasts. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 91-102)

The findings show that in all three newscasts, hardly any women were seen or heard. Women were not visible in nearly 60 percent of the reports. German TV had no female correspondent in the country and French TV only one. Only the BBC had as many as seven female reporters in Libya at one point. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016) One could argue that foreign correspondents focus too heavily on the male perspective. War affects the whole population, including women. By not showing their situation and giving them a voice, one denies them the power to be heard. In addition, in television news, women are sometimes presented, sometimes through exclusion, in a way that might justify military intervention. More common than the use of female visuals as justification is the exclusion of females in general. The interviewed subjects revealed four main reasons as to why this happens. Most of the interviewees blamed culture claiming that media is only a mirror to social reality. *"If there are no women, I can't show women,"* they said. They also emphasize that women are often over-simplified by their communities. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 91-102)

Lack of time was another reason they say. War correspondents nowadays face substantial time pressures, for they are often expected to report for several TV newscasts, and they are reporting under direct and dangerous circumstances. Finding female interview partners in a culture where women are not so accessible in public life undoubtedly takes longer. One could argue, however, that omitting women is not a minor detail since it excludes literally half of the population from the conflicting picture. In a hypothetical case of a report only including women, the editor-in-chief would probably immediately ask for an explanation.

Lack of awareness is also a strong reason as the correspondent tries typically to fulfil the expectations of the home office. The final version of the report that is broadcast is the result of a collaboration between the correspondent and the editor-in-chief. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 91-102) a difficult task for a man/has to 'make an effort: Several of the male correspondents stressed that female journalists had the advantage of being able to speak to women with more ease and

were, therefore, able to present a complete picture of society. Since the exclusion of the female perspective weakens the quality of war reporting, the presence of more female war correspondents is therefore absolutely necessary to improve the quality of war reporting and the possibility of peace journalism. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 91-102)

2.5.6. Sexual Violence against Journalists in Conflict Zones:

A study by Marte Høiby discussed *sexual violence* as a threat to both men and women in war and conflict zones. The study illustrates that cases concerning male victims are mostly absent from the public discussion, and women's vulnerability is commonly assumed. The study suggests that procedures for journalists' safety are mainly influenced by a male- aggressor/female-victim paradigm, which leads to a sense of underestimation in the vulnerability of male colleagues and discrimination against women as well. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 75- 88)

The statements from informants in the study indicated that female and male reporters experience threats and violence but not equally. It also suggests that violations are usually motivated by social and political control. Sexual violence against female journalists, however, falls within the main concerns' category for all journalists and editors regardless of their gender. The interviews in this study, as well as research from interested organizations, all indicate that female journalists face risks during challenging gender stereotypes and mainly for doing the work of a journalist, to begin with. They also point to the assailants aiming to silence them more often. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 75-88)

It is a common understanding that sexual assaults usually happen directly or through harassment, in personal attacks and sometimes in phone calls, e-mails and SMSs. Female journalists who experience such attacks also suffer the aftermath, and some are usually reluctant to report these incidents due to fear of appearing fragile or vulnerable to other colleagues and to their superiors. The competition for assignments, especially in war and conflict zones, tend to be tough, and journalists may wish to appear strong and well-suited to the physical and psychological challenges. This, in fact, gives a better notion of how traditional masculine stereotypes can and usually do cause more problems. It also illustrates the importance and true objective of quality journalism. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 75-88)

Editors' responses to protecting their employees often depend on whether the employee is a man or a woman. Many editors have said that they are reluctant to send women staff to a site where there is a specific risk of rape, however, while statistics show that the proportion of male

journalists killed is significantly larger than that of females (UNESCO, 2014, p. 93), neither editors nor journalists in this study mention that a situation could be more dangerous for men than women, these are indications that adaptation strategies may rely upon constructed ideas of stereotypical gender roles. The purpose of this chapter is thus not to encourage journalists and editors to stop taking preventive measures to stay safe from rape or any other form of violence, but merely to warn against seeing it as a women's issue instead of a societal problem constituting a threat to democracy and free speech. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 75-88)

It seems like sexual violence is considered an issue that pertains only (or mostly) to women journalists, although we know that it also affects men. The notion that men are slightly better suited to work in conflict zones and require less protection than women appears mainstream at times. Men may strive to comply with a heroic ideal of the masculine, for which they are often admired. It would be interesting to test whether those men who cannot or will not comply with the script of heroic manliness become marginalized, or to what extent their alternative form of masculinity is recognized. Whereas women are more likely to face sexual violence than murder, this is not a risk they are admired for taking because of the considerable stigma around this form of violence.

In some cases, women reporters may strive to comply with the same masculine heroic ideal as the men and, if successful, contribute to the same dominant masculine culture. In that case, reporting incidents would be an ultimate setback for compliance with the macho ideal for both men and women. Men are reluctant to report sexual violence, but under the same masculine regime, it seems to be difficult for the women too, as they may lose the competition for future work. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 75-88)

2.5.7 Female Journalists at the Frontline:

It is to be a female reported in times of conflict. The study also described how dangerous it is to be reporting amid the civil war and political unrest in Libya. It shows my own experiences and how my gender affected the coverage. The findings also demonstrate that volatility in gender roles is a common phenomenon in times of civil unrest. (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 129-139)

The autobiography shows how the journalist's background coming from a Muslim majority country like Indonesia, affected how the way she negotiated her identities with people in Libya, also a Muslim-dominated country.

The journalist's gender influenced her decision to choose a specific topic for the coverage;

she decided to see how women, in particular, got involved in the revolution to ask for international support in order to eliminate the regime. The study definitely represented her preference and power as a reporter in such a conflict zone to choose whose voice was to be quoted in the news. It helped to create a new agenda without ignoring any of the facts. This was also reflected in the sources selected to comment on every issue and the language used for a story (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 129-139).

The well-experienced said that in telling of her experiences using autoethnography, she became more able to relate her experiences with common practice in the media industries. This also confirms *Caldas-Coulthard's* (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016) argument that news is culturally constructed. It helps readers reach the understanding that media has the power to spread the word and lead public opinion, mainly in the context of war coverage. "News, therefore, has a social, a political and an educational role" (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 129-139), and with its powerful media play an important part in the construction of reality. This leads to the notion that media could potentially perpetuate more conflict, which might lead to further casualties and catastrophes. *"In the beginning, there was a conflict in my head when writing this chapter, as I came to admit that our work as journalists could be biased by our interests and backgrounds," Desy said.* (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016)

However, as *Peter McIlveen* (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016) says, through autoethnography, scientist-practitioners could bring themselves "into critical view and reveal a phenomenon with the intellectual objective of a shared disciplinary understanding and empathy." The journalist believes that by opening our potential subjectivity as journalists up for public scrutiny, it will help us become more cautious during our work, especially when we write stories or report the news because the news we report could and often do provide an insight which is much better than escalating a situation or silencing voices (Lippe & Ottosen, 2016, pp. 129-139).

3. Methodology

3.1. introduction:

This is a qualitative study aimed to investigate the assumption that female journalists' safety is a great challenge and risk for free expression and free media. The study is based on interviews and discussions with experienced female journalists from Gaza, Palestine. This is a purely qualitative study in which semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine female journalists during the time July 7th to August 17th 2019. The discussion here develops around questions linked to what barriers are, challenges and risks female journalists face covering the conflict in such zones, and how their security can be best ensured when reporting from conflict zones. The study also discusses social pressure toward female journalists in Palestine. The discussions basically revolve around the importance of female journalists and how significant it is to ensure their safety in this problematic line of work.

Palestinian female journalists tend to face more pressure as they perform in a conflict zone. The study sheds light on how the presence of these journalists may serve an indicator of civil rights, freedom of expression and media freedom in general. It also measures and questions the tactics and procedures Palestinian female journalists take to mitigate the challenges to their safety in their working environment in Gaza.

Interviews can be defined as a qualitative research method that includes conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to investigate their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation (Gubrium, 2012, p. 345). The advantages of interviews include the possibility of collecting detailed data about research questions. In this type of primary data collection, the researcher has direct control over the flow of the process, and she has a chance to clarify certain issues during the process if needed.

3.2 Arriving at the methodology:

Research methodologies have various definitions, one that can be more feasible to our process "is a strategy or architectural design by which the researcher maps out an approach to problem-finding or problem-solving.". (Jamshed, 2014) Crotty, on the other hand, emphasizes that research methodology "is a comprehensive strategy 'that silhouettes our choice and use of specific techniques relating them to the anticipated outcomes.'" (Crotty, 1998, p. 211)

Frances J. Riemer in his book "Qualitative Research: An Introduction to Methods and Designs" discusses the importance of using qualitative researches when it comes to the views of those underrepresented in society is the groundwork for qualitative researchers who now use different methodologies and methods, seeking to uncover the meanings individuals bring to life experiences. The growth in the application of qualitative research approaches was pronounced by the 1970s, with the most significant expansion occurring in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Today there are dozens of journals, handbooks, research texts and organizations devoted to qualitative designs and strategies. (Riemer, et al., 2011, pp. 300-320)

The qualitative research methodology is almost always a better choice when the researcher seeks to examine a new field of study or to attempt to include prominent issues in their study. Qualitative methods are often developed to have a better and more extensive understanding of the study issues. This is the main reason the researcher decided to use in-depth interviews as a method that fits best. In our interviews, social research methods were applied to reach a full understanding of the subject's perspective." (Andresen, 2015, p. 63) In his Ph.D. dissertation professor Skjerdal, while quoting Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, p. 3), suggests that "qualitative research interview is not meant to be representational of the population at large but rather seeks to study meaning pertaining to the individual interview subject by means of "obtaining descriptions of the lifeworld of the interviewee" (Skjerdal, 2012, p. 100). The emphasis in qualitative studies is usually on in-depth interviews, which is why the study relied on a model that is more descriptive explanatory and analytical. (Bryman, 2013) Bryman argues that a large portion of academic research work is based on social researches. This type of research gives a better insight into the developments and changes the society might go through whether the changes, whether positive or negative. The relevance and impact of every change can be seen or megared based on such techniques.

The literature for this study which is gathered through the primary (in-depth interviews in this research) and the secondary sources (the books, the articles from journals and leading newspapers along with the internet sources like official government sites) and is studied, analyzed and described comprehensively. This is mainly why social methods of research were chosen to be applied here. This study basically aims to examine the challenges and risks, female journalists, in the Gaza strip face with a proper emphasis on the fact they live in a conflict zone. Starting from data gathered from previous studies, we used social methods of qualitative studies, specifically in-depth interviews, to reach an understanding of the work environment female journalists live in and

how they are sometimes threatened by the common barriers of their male-dominated community, and non-democratic religious government(Hamas).

The ground for this study will be the use of three theories '*The risk theory, Feminist media studies* and *Media and democracy*. The assumption will be free media equal treatment for journalists in the field of journalism and methodology will be mapped in order to reach a better understanding. This study concentrates on female journalists who live and work in Gaza, Palestine. The West Bank is, unfortunately, excluded. The situation in the area makes it impossible to even get into West Bank as the researcher is a female Palestinian from Gaza who comes to face many restrictions and risks and would not be able to go back and conduct the interviews face to face as she wishes. Few studies have discussed the issue of female journalists there but did not go deep into the problem. The study, if conducted, is fascinating because of the conflict with Israel and the conflict between different Palestinian factions (mainly Fatah and Hamas), which had always left a massive impact on so many levels. Women were never excluded from this impact, as well as the journalism industry.

The Palestine-Israel conflict is now one of the most prolonged ongoing conflicts in the world, and Gaza's female journalistic culture has developed during the time of conflict. The focus on the case of Palestinian journalists' studies is mainly on the risks of both male and female journalists face. It is significant to illustrate those female journalists in Gaza come to face more risks than males in Gaza due to the culture of that community in addition to armed conflicts and the political and legal system which had always left Palestinian female journalists unsheltered.

3.3 Interviews:

The researcher has made sure that she does not need a permit to conduct interviews because the researcher would not keep any personal data of female journalists on any e-mail and would use NSD Data Protection Service. To answer the question formulation, the researcher has chosen theories about media democracy, feminist media studies, and the risk theory. From these theories, the researcher choice an open conversation asking: What are the risks and challenges Palestinian female journalists face during their work in the Gaza strip?; How do female journalists deal with social pressure and what kinds of support they need?; What are the needs female journalists use to ensure their safety during their work in Gaza to tackle such obstacles?; After explaining what the study is about and its objectives and introducing the researcher identity, the researcher wanted the respondents to feel relaxed and that they are experts of the topic (the respondent's thoughts).

It was also essential to make the questions as open as possible. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 16) says that it is crucial to make sure that the questions are free from bias. During both the interviews and their analysis, the researcher found that both the questions and answers covered the purpose of the study in a very satisfying way.

This study is built upon in-depth interviews with nine female journalists. The journalists are working or have worked for different kinds of media, with different ownership and in a different format, including television, radio, and the internet, in news agencies and newspapers. They are of different ages, where the youngest is in the early twenties and the oldest around forty-five. They live or have lived, and work or have worked in the Gaza Strip. The researcher did not meet them. Interviews were conducted through online applications for security and safety purposes.

Further, interviews were conducted in Arabic, the researcher's and subject's mother tongue, and translated to English later. What even makes the situation worse in the Gaza Strip is the fact that they do not get the desired support from society, lawmakers, or the government. Female journalists are still part of the feminist movement fighting their battle to be recognized. For that reason, only ten out of twenty-three female journalists in Gaza have agreed to be interviewed, even though the researcher insured them, the interviews will be anonymous.

Nine interviews were used. Other interviews were useless, and the researcher decided not to quote them but rather use them as a background for more understanding of female journalists working in a conflict zone, due to technical reasons.

3.4. Information collection mechanism:

The researcher chose in-depth interviews as a way to gather knowledge about female journalists' opinions and experiences. I intended to compile information about the female journalist's struggle, risks, and challenges faced working in a conflict zone. Further, the researcher sought to explore how they are coping with the challenges and risks and what they need in order to be protected and empowered. According to (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 16), in-depth interviews are used for answering the questions on how and why to an existing situation. Questions sometimes would be too sensitive to discuss even privately and anonymously. The language was not a barrier. The researcher agreed with the journalists what parts we are going to use, as some parts were very personal and given to help the researcher understand the situation for each individual journalist. The journalists prefer not to be mentioned in the study. Segments related to sexual harassment

were removed because no corroboration in this matter could be established. The collection of necessary information depends on different means appropriate to each indicator. The information was obtained from its primary sources, in addition to sources active in the field of female journalist's situation in Gaza to maintain the accuracy and credibility of each indicator, notable among these sources:

The researcher looked through some relevant government resources. However, There was a lack of information about the challenges and the risks female journalists face from the culture and the government of Gaza. The main focus was the Israeli attack against journalists in general. I contacted civil society organizations active in the field of press freedom in Palestine. I went through their website to reach more information, like MADA and the Palestinian Centre for human rights, and the international organizations, especially those providing information about freedom of the press. In-depth interviews were my data collection tool, which I used to investigate deeply the risks and challenges female journalists face in the field of journalism in Gaza-Palestine.

3.5 Analysis of the interviews:

The analysis of the interviews conducted in this research was mainly based on the grounded theory approach in which the generation of concepts and theories is extracted from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Along with this method, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of all the transcribed interviews. The number of categories afterwards was reduced through a technique of combining similar categories and laying more focus on those that emerged as being most relevant and central to the topic of the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The analysis mainly revealed three different themes that are presented later in the study.

3.6 Selection of the respondents and ethical consideration:

The researcher applied systematic random sampling to select female journalists and who work/had worked and live/lived in the Gaza Strip from the time Hamas controlled Gaza. The researcher interviewed a sample size of nine journalists who were selected to participate in the study. They were interviewed individually, and their interview contexts were analyzed to assess what sort of risks and challenges female journalists face in the Gaza Strip during their coverage. The study deeply examined the motivation behind taking a risky profession and how society, political regime and the work environment affect their career. The researcher ensured the respondents' privacy would remain confidential, and any part of the information they did not want

to get published or known was kept anonymous. The researcher will not release anything without their permission. The researcher tried not violating their confidentiality in any manner.

3.7 Limitation and delimitations of the study:

There is what we may call the applicant number of female journalists who work in Gaza and have the proper experience suitable for the study. The experiences Gazan journalists, especially women, have developed through years of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and internal conflict, provide substantial material for such studies. It seems to be easy to find a high number of journalists with proper knowledge and experience. It is difficult, however, to find ones who would agree to be interviewed. The risks and challenges those female journalists have learned from are the very same reason they feel threatened enough to choose to remain in the shadows. The researcher has reached out to a high number of well-experienced journalists. Female journalists, in particular, believed it unsafe to conduct such interviews and discuss their work environment under the role of non-democratic religious government Hamas. Most of the female journalists assured that their names would not be mentioned, still chose to take the safer route, and to apologize, mentioning that even that online apps can be reached.

The researcher would have preferred to include other female journalists who work in the West Bank and Jerusalem, but the legal limitations have kept them from doing so. Being from Gaza has always been a legal boundary, for it is not possible to quickly get a permit to visit Jerusalem or the West Bank and conduct the interviews needed for the study. Also, it is essential to note the difference in the work environment and the political regime. Researching between the three areas would undoubtedly lead to a difference in the outcomes, which is why different study methods may be required when discussing the West Bank or Jerusalem. The researcher did not wish to conduct a comparative study, and that is why they have chosen to make a qualitative study on the female journalists from Gaza, the same place the researcher learned and worked in for several years.

4. Findings and discussion

4.0 Introduction:

Based on the interviews, the research outputs that risks and challenges are multiple, detailed, and overlapping. Therefore, the researcher decided to detail the risks and challenges in the form of points with examples and testimonies that would allow the reader to understand the nature of journalistic work for women in the Gaza Strip as a region of political conflict and also a region that lacks a democratic atmosphere due to the fact an Islamic group controls it.

In this chapter, the researcher has taken a recommendation from the interviewees and divided the risks and challenges into two categories: internal and external. The external risks journalists face basically revolve around the abuses of the Israeli army and the cruel practices of the Israeli government. Whereas the internal risks are often related to the practices and behaviors of the ruling government inside the Gaza Strip, in addition to the surrounding community and the environment in which female journalists work.

Women who live in the Gaza Strip are often victims of different types of oppression. There is the force of Israel, backed by Western powers, which has occupied Palestinian land for generations. The other is the conservative Palestinian elements of society and religious organizations, which sometimes advocate limitations on women's rights.

It is significant to mention that Gaza is a small community where people are familiar with each other, and individuals can be reached easily once their names are announced. This way, we have decided to use the initials of the journalists' names to ensure their true identities remain covered. The act of hiding names was purely necessary because the information released by the female journalists we interviewed may, at some point, create certain risks from different domestic or foreign actors.

4.1 Risks and challenges female journalists face during the news coverage:

Female journalists face many risks and challenges while covering the news. Such risks hold them back from doing their job properly. Despite this fact, female journalists share many of these risks with their male peers. Several risks and obstacles only affect females for no reason other than their gender. As mentioned in the previous chapter of this study, there are several

challenges that can be more severe when it comes to female journalists who work in conflict zones. The risks are divided into external risks and internal risks.

4.1.1 External risks:

External risks come from the Israel assaults on female journalists, which some journalists argued they experienced during their coverage. There is consensus among the interviewed female journalists that the Israeli occupation has deprived generations of Palestinian journalists in the Gaza of their fundamental rights, including the rights safety and security, usually carrying on military orders issued in the first days of the Israeli occupation. Such restrictions cannot be justified in terms of preserving public order and safety. The discontinuing of core rights more than half a century later with no end in sight violates Israel's essence responsibilities under the law of occupation.

“When it comes to the Israeli forces, civilians, journalists, and medics are subject to the same risks as they are all seen as terrorists in the eye of Israeli.” (Journalist Y: Female, age 23, Local reporter in Gaza)

This subject mentioned she has a constant feeling of insecurity while being in the field to cover the news. She attributes this to the disrespect of the Israeli forces of all international treaties regarding the protection of journalists in conflict zones. This Israeli behavior, she says, affects her coverage and sometimes limits her ability to reach the scene in proper time. The element of time is very crucial when it comes to news coverage. A few minutes late could cause me to lose a report. *(Journalist Y: Female, age 23, Local reporter in Gaza)*

She stresses that being a freelance journalist is also a barrier that puts her at higher risks, as she does not have the protection kit journalists in a conflict zone should possess during their work in the field. A proper kit includes a "protection vest, helmet, medical kit, gas mask." This causes a great sense of hesitation in going to a particular scene and following up with the news in the field as soon as it happens. She believes that the big agencies, both local and international, tend to hire male journalists. This is why she believes male journalists who work in the field are often more prepared.

There are risks concerning the wellbeing and health of journalists who work near the protests or in places where we find constant confrontations. The tear gas canisters journalists are exposed to cause many nerve diseases. Journalist *(Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional*

Middle East, in Gaza) is a female journalist who is fighting a battle against breast cancer. After she returned from a long journey of treatment and went to continue her work, she was exposed to tear gas in addition to a bullet that was only a few centimeters from her body. She is in constant fear that this incident would cause her significant damage giving the chemotherapy she received. This incident has created a personal fear that she might relapse (*Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional, Middle East, in Gaza*), which is why she started to consider leaving fieldwork until she is in full remission. She was not the only one who was exposed to such violations. Five out of the nine female journalists who were interviewed for the study testified that they were exposed to such assaults and experienced gas inhalation.

Physical assault was not the only type of female assault journalists reported. Journalists expressed they were banned from travelling and suffered from a lack of freedom of movement on many occasions. This journalist had lost opportunities to train and work abroad because of the Israeli government, as she could not get a permit on time. (*Journalist C: Female, age 39, a reporter for international media, in Gaza*) This has held her from continuing the visa process in Jerusalem. Countries Gazans hope to travel to do not have embassies or representatives inside the Gaza Strip. Therefore, interviews for the visa are conducted either in Jerusalem or in Egypt. Travelling to Egypt through Rafah crossing is also difficult, as it can be time-consuming. People would have to include their names in the registry and sometimes pay bribes, which can be significantly high. In addition to that, the road to Egypt through Sinai is full of danger and hardships.

Some would think that working with foreign journalists or foreign media agencies might make life easier when it comes to working and that it could minimize the risks of being targeted by the Israeli force.

"Being close to the border fence means that you could be the next target, even if some of the journalists, even if the journalist were combining them, were a foreigner." (Journalist N: Female, age 27, a photojournalist for international media, in Gaza)

"One time, we were doing a story on the life of fishermen in the sea and the risks they are constantly exposed to, and we were targeted and persuaded by the gunboats of the Israeli army, which forced us to withdraw before we even started our work, this types of stories require pre coordination with the Israeli side a luxury that I do not have. Not even the journalist whom I was working with at that time had this kind of luxury, so we only took pictures near the beach". (Journalist D: Female, age 36, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

As the previous journalists who left journalism and turned to another career that the notion of

putting her life at risk and losing a limb was fear enough reason for her to leave the profession of journalism for good and turn into some other field.

"I cannot afford being injured or having a disability because I am the only source of income to my family, and I also need to maintain this income." (Journalist E: Female, age 38 freelance photographer, in Gaza)

All in all, the abuses and violations against journalists in terms of the Israeli forces are not very variable. As we mentioned in the previous parts of our study, we can find that there are differences when it comes to female journalists who work in the West Bank and those who work elsewhere. Journalists who work in the West Bank are more vulnerable to being violated during their work, tortured, beaten, arrested or getting injured, and sometimes having their equipment confiscated by the Israeli forces. This is because of Gaza Strip has been freed from the Israeli forces since their withdrawal in 2005. The Israeli forces left the Gaza Strip entirely in 2005, but they kept supervision and imposed a blockade on exports and imports. The siege that Israel is still imposing on the Gaza Strip is from the air, the sea and the ground. Despite the fact that we said that these violations are not various or variable, but they form a greater risk when it comes to the lives and wellbeing of journalists.

4.1.2 Internal risks and challenges:

Journalists also noted the fear of being violated when it comes to the right of expression and the fight to work as a journalist from the security forces inside the Gaza Strip.

"I have witnessed many co-workers from other female journalists who were exposed and subject to arrest, integrations and other types of violations; this could lead to my death. My family is varied simple and very conservative when it comes to the habits and traditions of our community here, and my extended family has a huge impact on my direct family as well". (Journalist E: Female, age 38 freelance photographer, in Gaza)

4.1.2.1 Summons and interrogation

Summons and interrogations by the security forces in the Gaza strip also affected our work as a female journalist in Gaza. Five out of nine female journalists the researcher interviewed experienced this type of violation and discussed them in their interviews.

"Because of my work with foreign journalism, I was summoned many times to the government

media office in Gaza and also the office of internal security to interrogate me about foreign journalists I have been working with. The reason for these interrogations simply because I would be the proxy for these foreign journalists when they come to Gaza, and my name will be listed as the person who works with them during the time of their presence in Gaza". (Journalist D: Female, age 36, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

"I would have all the information regarding the reports they made in Gaza; the questions would revolve around whom these journalists work for, their religion, their ethnicity, and whether they would be in direct contact with Israel and the types of questions these journalists would have asked to the audience in Gaza. This caused a great effect on my work and my liberty and my personal comfort in terms of self-censorship. at some points, I have felt that they are dealing with me that if I was informant, they were not convinced that I'm doing my part and role as a journalist.". (Journalist N: Female, age 27, a photojournalist for international media, in Gaza)

4.2.2.2. Complications regarding administrative procedures:

The research has confirmed that journalists in Gaza are often forced to deal with several administrative complications during their work. The Hamas government administration that rules the Gaza Strip has always put many restrictions that sometimes keep journalists from covering stories or reporting news in desperate times. The nine journalists the researcher interviewed agreed on this fact, and five of them reported they have personally experienced such challenges in Gaza. Journalists need a special permit at most times to film in certain places or to conduct certain interviews.

"On many occasions, we do not get the permit personally we tend to ask our male co-workers to get them for us because he would be able to obtain these permanent easily through his relationships and physically because he is a man." (Journalist D: Female, age 36, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

4.2.2.3 The circle of security obsession:

Working with foreign media that speak English, another interviewee always felt that she is under a microscope. She also said that the government in Gaza has an obsession with security.

"They have reached a point that they have started to act with everyone who speaks English during their work as a potential spy or at least a supporter of foreign agendas." (Journalist D: Female, age 36, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

This is what was causing her negative feelings toward her work and the environment that she was working in.

“This is very depressing and disappointing. feeling that you are constantly obliged to prove your objectivity and professionalism, patriotism is very hard and worrying sometimes and sometimes scary because at many points you would be accused of being a spy”. (Journalist N: Female, age 27, a photojournalist for international media, in Gaza)

4.2.2.4 Verbal and physical abuses during coverage:

The journalists interviewed for this research agreed they had been exposed to many harassments and violations during their work covering protests. A journalist experienced this type of assault by people who are affiliated with security forces in the Gaza strip.

“Sometimes their forces would be dressed up as civilians, and they would not identify themselves during abusing and assaulting female journalists either with questioning evacuating them from the event place or sometimes when these abuses progress, and they start bushing and beating.” (Journalist A: Female, age 25, Local reporter in Gaza)

Sometimes insulting words were hurled toward these female journalists, such as "women were not supposed to leave their house and act like men," and other comments that suggest the work of female journalists are against religion, traditions or habits. These comments also caused negative feelings among the female journalists, and the subjects gave examples from their experience.

“Go home, what are you doing wandering the streets? Do you think you can act like men?”. (Journalist C: Female, age 39, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

Sometimes there would be a target or airstrike at night. Due to the conditions and to the security situation of the Gaza strip, a journalist could not move to the scene and cover from there, especially if the target was military or the incident happened at night.

“The security forces could interrogate me, and that would make me under a security microscope.” (Journalist F: Female, age 30, a freelance reporter for international media, in Gaza)

4.2.2.5 Jail time:

One journalist out of the nine journalists interviewed for this research was actually sentenced to do jail time while she was receiving medical treatment for an illness outside of Gaza.

"I was sued based on a particular investigative report I made about the health sector in the Gaza strip and the corruption in that area." (Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional, Middle East, in Gaza)

Despite an abundance of corruption in the health sector in the Gaza Strip, even disagreement of some journalists about the way journalist should be covering the story; she still assures that she has the right to maintain her journalistic amenity and her freedom to access information without being subject to arrest and law suits. (Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional, Middle East, in Gaza)

4.2.2.6 Threats and electronic slander:

Journalists expressed they were subject to many negative actions through websites affiliated with Hamas and those who support them. Female journalists unanimously agreed on the existence of this repeated attack, illustrating mainly negative comments they often face on social media sites or threatening messages they receive in addition to suspicious comments that contain accusations of betrayal and religious desertion. Seven out of nine journalists reported that they were subjected to this form of attack repeatedly, in different situations and circumstances.

"I have had many negative comments and Cyberbullying and threats from anonymous people who would use fake names. I was threatened with things related to honor, reputation and other types of standards". (Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional, Middle East, in Gaza)

4.2.3. Social challenges:

The interviewed journalists also noted that habits, traditions, and the extended family in Gaza influenced their decision to leave the journalistic work. That they might get killed if any rumors related to religion or honor reached them. Many Journalists suffer oppression in such daily challenges and risks related to family neighbors' habits, traditions and the society's system in general, which are the main cocurator of any work or any feminist movement that rebels against the reality in Gaza. Some journalist claims that there is a rumor suggesting that female journalist are strong. "Strong" here has a negative correlation, not a positive one.

"The strength is not a positive quality in the way the society looks at us." (Journalist D: Female, age 36, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

Also, her family tries to understand her journalistic work, but sometimes when there is an escalation or a war, her father would stop her from going out to work, which negatively affects her career.

"Despite that stopping me from working sometimes keeps my right to live, I still prefer to operate with more freedom." (Journalist D: Female, age 36, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

She also concedes that the society surrounding her has a significant impact on her family's discussions regarding the liberty and freedom of the girl, mainly when she works as a journalist.

"My family is simple and supportive, but there are also could be conservative when it comes to fear. My father believes that society is the one who does not support women" (Journalist D: Female, age 36, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

4.2.3.1. The impact of the common social culture on the behavior of the individuals:

Some journalists believe that the culture of the society is not supportive or understanding at most times. The community's culture affects its performance and the language and behavior used in the field against female journalists. She has also shared personal experience from the field.

"Some kids throw stones at me in the filming location during an interview we were conducting. They also assaulted us verbally. the cameraman I was with threw them out, and we had to leave the place". (Journalist C: Female, age 39, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

4.2.3.2 The Impact of the social culture and the responsibilities on the freedom of work:

Journalists believed that habits and traditions and social culture affect the liberty and freedom of work. At work times, she believes she cannot move freely once an incident occurs because of the social background that surrounds her.

"I cannot work at night, I cannot leave the kids, and this is not only because of some surrounding social pressures like family and neighbors, but the community and habits and traditions also interfere with every detail of our lives." (Journalist F: Female, age 30, a freelance reporter for international media, in Gaza)

4.2.3.3 The impact of masculine culture on the social status and family relations:

The disease was not the only reason why this journalist was divorced. Also, the masculine

perspective and her successes up to the challenges and the violations she exposed to due to her work as a journalist. Further, she works on exposing corruption, as far as she said, and the masculine perspective toward the success of female journalists and women, in general, was one of the main reasons for her getting a divorce.

"I paid money for you; you should stay home." (Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional, Middle East, in Gaza)

This has also extended to the journalist's family calling the masculine tone and asking them to be more dominant.

"I always see your daughter speak with another man. I do not like this". (Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional, Middle East, in Gaza)

4.2.4 The Work Environment:

Female journalists are undermined and marginalized. One of the challenges they face is low wages in comparison with their male peers. Security and safety procedures are also a key element. Despite the superiority perspective, they face the male journalists in the field, sometimes certain journalistic figures are respected members of society and still support and value the role of women.

"These men still support women and believe that they can be reliable when it comes to their struggle for equal opportunities" (Journalist F: Female, age 30, a freelance reporter for international media, in Gaza)

She conceded that the oppression in the work environment that female journalists exposed to regardless of gender is since there are no work laws and binding contracts that are good enough for journalists. This what is making the work environment extremely for both male and female journalists. The Palestinian syndicate in the Gaza Strip is not functioning properly and is not fulfilling its role fully to support and empower female journalists. (Journalist C: Female, age 39, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

The interviewed journalist assured that this is truly a fact. She has mentioned one of her personal experiences with a media company she used to work for, as they have fired her for no reason and refuse to give her financial rights. She went to sue them. She asked for the help of the court system and the journalist's syndicate.

"The stand of the journalist syndicate was very negative as they supported the notion of the financial settlement the way the company proposed, which meant that I was not going to get me rightfully. They did not stand with me? or support me". (Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional, Middle East, in Gaza)

She was asked to take what the company proposed and agree to forget about the rest of the remaining amount of money; they were supposed to pay her, which was completely unfair for her as a working journalist. The big news organizations and media companies play a key role in this. They often rely on male journalists and use them in conflict times.

"Most of the filmmakers and the photographers are men and journalists in the field are men some of women correspondence are only used in front of the camera for their good looks." (Journalist N: Female, age 27, a photojournalist for international media, in Gaza)

That does not deny the fact that there are female journalists who are worthy and successful and able to rise to the challenges and prove themselves in the field. However, the question remains how much time and effort they have to spend, and how many opportunities were and still are available to women in this work environment, and what were the difficulties they have to face, giving the fact that they have families.

They are working as a freelance journalist has more risks when it comes to how media agencies and companies deal with them. Female correspondents, especially if there were freelancers, tend to face more challenges in this aspect when asked whether she was subject to a discriminative act when it comes to payment.

A journalist said that she had not experienced such discrimination in a long time. She believed this was because she is a fixed member in a big international media agency with a fixed contract. She did, however, mention that she was exposed to threats of being fired from her job when she was a freelancer years ago if she would ask for more money in exchange for her report.

"I am a fixed staff member in a big media agency at this time. That is why I take a good salary no matter how hard, many or few the reports I report monthly. I believe if I'm still a freelancer, I will not get this amount of money for the lives I make or report I report; I heard a lot of stories like this from co-worker's female especially". (Journalist M: Female, age 34, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

However, being a young female freelancer in the Gaza strip means that she had to constantly

face such threats with a different media company in the Gaza Strip.

"I was supposed to deliver two reports to a media company once, they were helping me, and the TV channel who ask for the report did not know about this they were offering to pay me 500\$ for the report, but the local agency in Gaza only proposed 100\$ for the report. They said that you don't have any other alternatives and that if I did not agree to do the report, they would bring another freelance reporter". (Journalist Y: Female, age 23, Local reporter in Gaza)

Being a female freelancer means that the reporter must take any chance they can find to have their names printed on a report. It also means they would not have the luxury to choose whom to work with or how to do the reporting itself. (Journalist F: Female, age 30, a freelance reporter for international media, in Gaza) who also works as a freelance in Gaza, said every journalist in Gaza, especially the females, are subject to this discrimination while reporting, especially in times of peace. When there is an escalation in Gaza, there will be many reports required from different reporters, whether males or females. Media agencies would not have the luxury of time to change reporters as long as the escalation continues, but the problem arises in times of peace when there are not many assignments for everyone.

"I was once asked to write four different articles for a local newspaper. They only offer to pay 100\$, which is nearly quarters the amount of money that should have received. When I try to object, they threatened to stop dealing with me, and I had no other opportunity at that time, so I had to say yes. I don't think this incident would have happened to me if I was a man; I think that they look down at me because I was young at that time a meanly. After all, I was a woman". (Journalist F: Female, age 30, a freelance reporter for international media, in Gaza)

4.3 How do female journalists handle risk pressures? What is the support they need to overcome these obstacles?

Some female journalists left the journalistic world because they could not receive the family support needed for their work. She chose to withdraw from the field and select another career. Some of them are still fighting that war to get their rights and existence in the journalistic world, in other to reach their dreams, which requires a lot of times many compromises just to be able to exist. (Journalist E: Female, age 38 freelance photographer, in Gaza)

4.3.1 Avoiding dangerous places and friction:

The interviewed journalists deal with these challenges by avoiding dangerous places.

"Right now, I only report the news from home; I share reports about what is going on without express my own opinion on social media, especially when it is related to internal and domestic issues. We need a bigger representation of women, and the agencies, newspapers and TV channels who use female journalists during peace should also use them during the war. Female journalists should have the right place in the field, and they should not have to use the aid of foreign journalists. And should not ask the helm from their male co-workers in the field". (Journalist A: Female, age 25, Local reporter in Gaza)

4.3.2 Moving to a desk job:

Journalists confirmed that female journalists need enabling and support in the field from the companies, agencies, newspapers, and TV channels through merging them and using them on a larger scale. *(Journalist C: Female, age 39, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)* One also expressed that there is an important role the syndicate should play in reaching this notion:

"We need bigger support from the journalist's syndicate; we need to be enabled and empowered as female journalists. And we also need the community to become more aware of the fact that women can be share revealing the truth and can set on the throne of the fourth estate next to the male journalists if they are not disclosed and if they would get more opportunities to work with respect and freedom". (Journalist C: Female, age 39, a reporter for international media, in Gaza)

4.3.3 Focusing on topics that do not rise conflict and do not criticize the government: Some took the safe road by covering social and humanitarian stories, stories that are not related to criticism of government performance.

"I only cover humanitarian stories and the fact that we are living under blockade, this is the way I perform to maintain my job and stay out of troubles without having to let go of my dream to work as a journalist." (Journalist A: Female, age 25, Local reporter in Gaza)

4.3.4 Escape:

For some journalists, the solution was to leave the country for a better place where they can finally find comfort, security and some peace.

"I got tired of confrontations, violations, and accusations ".(Journalist N: Female, age 27, a photojournalist for international media, in Gaza)

This is how she described her inner feelings after many years working as a journalist and

struggling in the field as a female.

4.3.5. Going through war:

Some female journalists choose the safer path to maintain their careers and to preserve their dreams in the journalistic field. But some also insisted on being in the field and standing right next to their male peers to reach out to the truth. Also, they wished to maintain the notion of journalism as a fourth state guarantee to the society, maintaining the work that they have always dreamed of having. This was the status of a journalist who chose to go through this legal war and sue the company she was working for while continuing to publish investigative reports uncovering the corruption in some sectors inside Gaza. (*Journalist B: Female, age 35, Reporter for Regional Middle East, in Gaza*)

These interviews reflect the general status of the journalistic scene inside the Gaza Strip when it comes to female journalists. They also reflect experiences they have often shared, even though not all of them were exposed to the same types of violations when it comes to their freedom of expression. Some of them were subject to these horrific violations of freedom of expression, and some of them were exposed to verbal abuse, physical abuse, and other types of assaults, which caused them to start practicing self-censorship when it comes to their work as journalists. Fear has become their best friend from both the inside and out.

Note: When it comes to sexual harassment, female journalists apologized for answering or even discussing this matter. Most of them denied the question to be subject to this type of violation. There is a comment the researcher has noticed and the interviewee as agreed to quote.

"If we could not talk about the violations that people see with their own eyes and everyone agrees its wrong, then talking about this subject will expose female journalists to greater social pressures, and it could lead to them being out of the career."

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.0 Conclusion:

This chapter contains a final analytical narrative of the research topic. As the previous chapters included the theoretical basis, of which the research was based on, and a detailed explanation of the political and social background reflected on the journalistic scene and women journalists in particular in the Gaza Strip. It summarizes how the researcher explained the methodology and added a chapter where a special analytical view was illustrated regarding the interviews, she conducted with women journalists from the Gaza Strip in a specified period. See chapter three.

The effort in this research was to highlight the crisis of female journalists in the world and conflict areas. Every addition and update in this research field is essential and valuable for changing the socially and politically adopted policies towards female journalists working in conflict areas. It is a fact that political and social changes often impose new types of challenges. It is well understood that studies that are based on presenting and discussing the challenges and risks faced by female journalists through the in-depth interview tend to give a psychological dimension and voice that the numbers may not always reflect. The researcher's recommendations in this research are based on events, stories, testimonies experienced and described by women journalists and a conceptual idea of their needs and demands. Such recommendations come in an attempt to change the reality often experienced by women journalists, a reality that continually threatens their security, physical and psychological integrity, and professionalism.

The second chapter touched on the theoretical framework in which the researcher presented the basis for a safe work environment for female journalists, which is represented by democratic and good governance, in addition to the risks and expected pressures that the researcher tries to verify as correct, as reviewed in the theory of risk and the theory of feminist studies where the results confirmed the hypotheses. In the second chapter, the researcher came to a new result, namely, the complexities of the press environment in the Gaza Strip and the sequence of journalistic work in the journalists' spatial framework.

The discussion confirmed that the risk becomes doubled by external parties because the journalist is Palestinian. Further risk flows from the internal parties, as females especially are considered people residing under the rule of an Islamist regime and governed by the customs and traditions of the same society. The dangers and pressure faced by women journalists in Gaza, and their attempt to maintain their presence in the journalistic field. Along with their personal and

psychological integrity, in many cases, it is considered an accumulated danger from many directions.

Palestine, especially Gaza, still draws the attention of both the local and international public and, therefore, the center of attention of regional and international agencies and newspapers and local media agencies. Gaza is a region of continuous conflicts and events regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Hamas takeover in 2007. That makes enhancing the role of female journalists, their protection, and providing them with journalistic immunity against personal and professional safety an urgent necessity.

Women journalists need actual protection on the ground, based on what international protection and guardianship of journalists have been granted to them as civilians in conflict zones. When it comes to freedom of opinion and expression, local laws and regulations related to journalistic and media work are still considered challenges, all relevant parties should consider. This research also pointed to more complex and hierarchical points related to the surrounding society and its cultural and religious background. Such As customs and traditions, which negatively affect the freedom of journalists and their presence in the field of journalism.

Female journalists in Gaza seem to have fallen between the anvil of political Islam and the hammer of the Israeli occupation. In all cases, women journalists are accused of either violating customs and traditions, or serving external agendas and deviating from the national rank and targeting the ruling regime.

It is a common understanding that female journalists have always been subject to all sorts of violations and abuses. Marginalization is a term that is often present once the issue of female journalists is discussed. The research has led to nearly 11 types of challenges and risks that female journalists in the Gaza strip tend to face. Gaza is a conflict zone in which wars and social boundaries are always present. The Gaza Strip is a place that has been ruled by a religious militant group, adding to the cultural and religious status of this impoverished strip of land. All this makes it extremely difficult for female journalists to ensure their safety and security in this problematic line of work. The Israeli army was never the sole reason for the suffering of Palestinian female journalists in Gaza. It is, however, the most dangerous element that threatens their right to live and work with safety and security.

Nearly all of the female journalists who were interviewed for the study agree that journalists in the Gaza Strip have no autonomy and are often forced to work in strenuous conditions. The local authority in Gaza still controls the destiny of those who live under their rule. They seem to

consider free press as a significant threat to their very existence, ignoring the fact of exposing corruption and human rights violation is why journalism exists as a profession.

The ugly truth that female journalists still lack their fundamental rights both as humans and journalists has led us to believe their issue should be addressed, if not by the world, then at least in a student's study. It is why questions of the risks and security challenges that Palestinian female journalists face were asked, significantly during the period from 2006 to 2019. The study also discussed the social pressure against female Palestinian journalists in Gaza and the way it affects the safety of their working environment, as well as the tactics and procedures Palestinian female journalists, take to mitigate the challenges to their safety in their working environment in the poor Gazan enclave.

There is a general idea that Hamas and the Israeli governments often walk in the opposite direction, except when it comes to journalists. It seems the one thing they always agreed on is that journalism stands as an ever-lasting threat to their existence. Journalists were always subject to violations and abuses from both sides, sometimes at the same time and place. This should be a significant concern as all journalists should be entitled to do their job and access information with zero risks to their safety and security, especially in times of wars and conflict. Humans, journalists included, are never immune to errors. However, they should be immune to the violations of the occupation forces, and to the violations of their own governments and communities.

5.1 Recommendations:

The researcher has included detailed recommendations that cover the points that the journalists interviewed reported as risks they have personally encountered. The recommendations also cover the challenges that hinder the work of female journalists in Gaza as a conflict zone, and it is hoped that these recommendations will reach the decision-makers in order to pay attention to the great injustice experienced by women journalists.

In this part, we aim to discuss the measurements female journalists need to take in order to ensure their professional safety as well as their jobs. We also seek to display how they can ensure a better and safe environment in which they can practice their work without being subject to risks. The elements emphasized here are all based on the interviews we conducted and the recommendations they provided.

The road of the struggle is still very long, and women have still had to work very hard to get equal rights when it comes to the field of journalism in the Gaza Strip. There are many

complications, internal and external when it comes to this place. The social crises and current security situation also play a key role in this. We have come to the conclusion that female journalists basically need the community, civil rights organizations, and the government to step and ensure their rights.

5.1.1 The journalist syndicate:

Female journalists must be appropriately included in the journalistic environment; female journalists must be trained in professional safety and security. The syndicate also has to ensure those female journalists to obtain official memberships. They also should review the terms of entry when it comes to the requirements of the membership and consider the new specialty within the field of journalism, including freelance journalists and fixers. They should also follow up with the procedures with the media companies and media organizations that can sometimes be unfair to female journalists. Many sometimes break the rules and conditions of contracts, or they hire female journalists without a contract.

The syndicate basically has to play a key role when it comes to the journalist scene in the Gaza Strip, and especially when it comes to female journalists. Providing safety and security, like life vests for all journalists, should also be included within the responsibilities of the journalist syndicate. They have to make sure that media laws are adjusted and altered, especially when it comes to the representation of female journalists in every media association where women should be represented fairly just like men. This supports the culture of trust of female journalists and their right to work in journalism. Also, they should have better communication with the government to ensure the immunity of journalists in general and female journalists, especially.

5.1.2 Civil society organizations and international NGOs:

That work is related to media in the Gaza Strip should launch campaigns to change the stereotype and the typical image of female journalists within the local community. This can be done by shedding light on successful female journalists who were able to book their places within the field. They should work harder to support and empower them in reaching their rightful places in the work environment. Also, conducting research and more in-depth studies is also a part of their responsibilities when it comes to the status in Gaza. Studies should be made to shed light on the female journalist's struggle and the importance of supporting them. Training of safety and security should be provided by these associations as well.

These organizations also have a responsibility to reach out and communicate with the government and the security forces inside the Gaza strip regarding this matter. International reports about assaults and violations against female journalists should be reported to the United Nations, who can apply pressure and help to stop crimes against journalists from both Hamas and the Israeli forces.

5.1.3 Government procedures:

The governing system inside the Gaza Strip should train their members to understand the variety of human rights and freedom of expression and the legal rights and civil rights for the civilians. Further, it should educate them about the purpose of journalism and its value to society, stressing the idea of journalists' immunity. They should stop imposing their religious and military ideologies on the journalistic field. They should start acting as if the journalists comprise a legitimate fourth state. The dictatorship of the Gaza Strip should be ended in order to maintain democracy, freedom of speech, and better representation for women.

5.1.4 The surrounding community:

Habits and traditions cannot and do not change overnight. The change will come when the community, through all its members, work together. Years ago, the community could not accept that women would work as nurses or doctors. Now, these careers are among the respectable jobs that are often performed by females. The social status in terms of the wages nurses and doctors receive a positive model of society. If this example was to be applied to the field of journalism, and if women were given more chances to be represented in that field, they would be more supported and enabled. The community may actually reach a point where people start encouraging their daughters to hold on to their dreams and ambitions to work in the field of journalism. Females would be empowered to work in journalistic fields such as sport, entertainment, politics, and more. Arabic local and regional agencies should hire more female journalists in wartime as much as they do in peace.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

- Identification of the researcher, the nature of the research and the party responsible for publishing the research.
- What is the nature of your work?
- How do you describe your work in the Gaza strip?
- What are the obstacles and risks you come to face during your work?
- Can you provide us with an example from your own personal experience?
- Does working as journalist affect your personal safety and security, how? Please give us an example from your experience.
- What are the most dangerous elements in your career as a female journalist?
- Can media, as a profession, be described as safe and secure when it comes to female journalists especially in the times between 2006 until present?

Note: this part thoroughly describes the political status and work environment in the Gaza strip.

- How did the social pressures affect female journalists in the Gaza strip? Please provide a personal experience.
- From your own experience, how did you tackle the obstacles and barriers you had to face in your work?
- Can we divide the challenges and risks into two categories: internal and external? What would each of them include?
- What do female journalists need to ensure a safe work environment in the Gaza strip?