

Palestine Digital Activism Forum (PDAF) 2021 Theme

Due to changes in the environment related to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, being connected to the Internet is no longer optional. The Internet and the online world turned into a necessity for all, as almost all daily life activities became associated with its usage, whether economics, education, health care, politics or social communication. This change brought about a decline in the fields of human rights, and in particular digital rights, as a result of the escalation of the use of the Internet and the digital space, which contributed to the expansion of the crisis of democracy and freedoms around the world and the further reduction of the spaces of freedoms globally and in Palestine.

During the coronavirus pandemic, many state and non-state took advantage of the emergency situation and the increased need to access the Internet to expand and enact legislations that shrink the space for freedom of expression, to collect and store the public's private data that violate people's right to privacy. This has left many, who already do not have adequate protection against digital rights and human rights violations, in an even more dangerous situation.

The online world and its related rights and freedoms has changed during this year more than in the past decade. Under the guise of the coronavirus pandemic, authorities have justified the use of espionage, surveillance and tracking technologies that are known to result in violations of digital rights and freedoms and have collected and shared more of the public's private information without any deterrence. At the same time, they have also blocked access to information during a time of widespread fake news and misinformation, and worked to criminalize the public for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Despite all the challenges caused by the pandemic, it has created new opportunities for the public and private sector to reform and to adopt digital practices. Many companies and entrepreneurs have built new online platforms that can be used by Palestinians and others in the region, and new e-commerce businesses have been launched that can benefit the digital economy.

This shift in political, social, economic life requires the public and private sector and the public at large to build new capacities so that the day after the coronavirus pandemic ends, the positive advances made during the pandemic will not be at the cost of digital rights.

In the Palestinian context, violations of Palestinian digital rights escalated intensely during the pandemic. This added to an already oppressive human rights situation due to the Israeli occupation, fragmentation of the Palestinian society and the Palestinian political division. In addition, governments have been working to systematically shrink the space for freedom of expression and to limit the digital space for Palestinians, either directly or indirectly with the support of a network of government supported NGOs and technology companies whose content management policies and practices are enabling the spread of hate speech against Palestinians, while simultaneously taking down large swaths of Palestinian content and accounts critical of Israeli human rights violations.

The 5th edition of the PDAF is organized around the theme, “Palestinian Digital Rights During and After the Coronavirus.” The PDAF’s aim is to raise awareness about the digital rights challenges and opportunities created by the coronavirus pandemic. The PDAF will provide a platform for sharing experiences, knowledge and skills among activists, technologists, academics, human rights activists, media professionals, members of civil society and the public and private sectors. The PDAF will also address the impacts of the pandemic on political, social and economic life, in particular issues related to freedom of expression, the right to access to information, data protection and privacy, among other digital rights issues impacted by the pandemic.

The pandemic demonstrated the need for intensified cooperation between policymakers from governments and companies, and local and international civil society organizations. Therefore, the PDAF will provide an opportunity for actors to come together to discuss the policies and practices that impact Palestinian digital rights and to work towards improving the digital environment at the local and international level.

The PDAF 2021 will be held from 29 March- 1 April 2021. The activities include sessions, workshops, and roundtable discussions to raise awareness and coordinate efforts to advocate for Palestinian digital rights, and build the capacities of activists and workers in the field of digital rights in various topics related to the field.

The March 22 - April 1, 2021 PDAF includes the following activities:

Type of Event	#
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Sessions	6
Workshops	15+
Debate	1
Inspirational Speaker	1-2
Inspiring Platform	4
Competition	1

7amleh – The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, is a professional Palestinian civic center for social media, specialized in building and managing effective civil media campaigns and training professionals in media and social and political marketing. 7amleh is a non-profit organization that aims to empower Palestinian and Arab civil society to practice digital advocacy, through building professional capabilities, defending digital rights, and developing effective media campaigns.

"7amleh" deploys a pool of multidisciplinary professionals and innovative team of experts where it applies the latest methods, approaches and advanced media tools, to plan, design and implement social and political campaigns in partnership with Palestinian activist groups and civil frameworks in the country and the Diaspora. 7amleh's interventions depend on the participation of the Palestinian female/male citizens in its campaigns to disseminate information, positions and content to convey its messages on the largest local, Arab and international scale.

7amleh addresses three key areas through its projects and interventions:

Training: by training civil society organizations, grassroots and youth movements, male and female activists in all areas in Palestine to strengthen their skills in new media, online campaigns, improving their digital presence

Advocacy: through forums, publications and coalitions for the protection of digital rights as human rights, including the right to Internet access, digital safety and privacy, freedom of expression and organization in digital networks

Campaigns: Plan and manage advocacy and awareness campaigns for community-based organizations and frameworks on various issues that intersect with 7amleh work.

Contact us:

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