



Quarterly Violations Report



20 21

June - August 2021

Introduction

Although international covenants guarantee a set of human rights, such as the right to liberty and security of the person, in accordance with Article 9 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the right to privacy and protection of correspondence from smear campaigns and interference with privacy according to Article 17 (1) from the same covenant. The International Covenant also protects the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and to manifest and disseminate beliefs without interference, according to Article 18 (1, 2, 3). However, the Palestinian reality during the time of preparing this report reflects a clear violation of these international covenants.

After the arrest and killing of the political activist Nizar Banat, in the city of Hebron on June 24, the Palestinian Authority security forces violently suppressed the demonstrations and launched campaigns of defamation and arrests against the activists. During, an atmosphere of intense polarization prevailed between the security services and opponents of the Palestinian Authority, which is reflected until today, including repercussions of this tension on the Palestinian digital space.

These internal political conditions have created a fertile environment for violations of digital rights, particularly violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and violations of the right to privacy. 7amleh has documented many digital violations, whether by the Israeli authorities, the Palestinian Authority, or from social media platforms.

This took place, at a time, when new information was revealed regarding the role of the Israeli censorship industries in suppressing political male and female opponents, journalists and activists in Palestine and around the world, through the provision of monitoring and tracking systems by a number of Israeli private companies, most notably NSO.

This quarterly report discusses the violations of Palestinian digital rights that were monitored and documented by "7amleh Center" from various actors, from the beginning of June until the end of August, against the Palestinians' right to advance and protect these rights, and create a just and secure digital space.

Authorities

During the past three months, Al-Haq documented 5 cases of arbitrary detention or summoning in connection with freedom of opinion and expression on social media platforms in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in addition to the attempted arrest of political activist Nizar Banat who was killed during an attempt to arrest him in connection with his activity on social media platforms. Arrests in the West Bank escalated at an unprecedented pace under the pretext of peaceful gatherings, following the killing of activist Nizar Banat.

Official and unofficial Israeli incitement against Palestinians continues in the media and on social media platforms. Over the past three months, [Wafa News Agency](#) documented about 100 items and inflammatory content from Israeli politicians and opinion writers who influence the digital space. There is no official monitoring of inflammatory content in general in the Hebrew digital space during these past three months.

Gender-based defamation/violence campaigns

Personal accounts on various social media platforms that support the Palestinian Authority have published personal and private photos of the male/female participants in the demonstrations, with the aim of blackmailing, defaming and excluding them from exercising their right to express their opinions and peaceful assembly, after confiscating and stealing the male/female demonstrators' mobile phones, with the aim of inciting and defaming them, which led to the breach of their right to privacy.



“I received #videos of immoral female activists who demonstrated against the PNA, and I have more in stock #Fire”

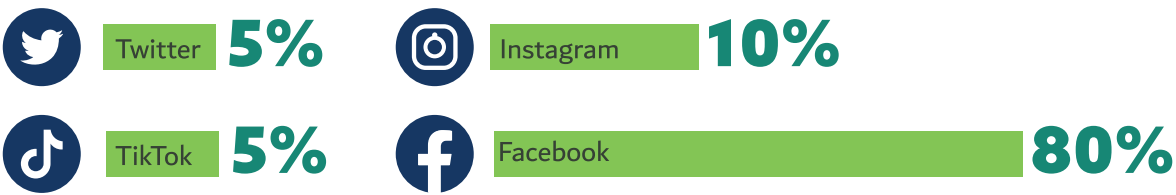
7amleh Center documented 20 cases of defamation against female and male activists and journalists due to their participation in protests. 16 cases were documented in one day, which may indicate a systematic campaign, noting that in addition to defamation, most of these cases constitute incitement to violence and gender-based violence, where female activists and journalists were particularly targeted. The documented content was targeted in 18 cases of female activists, while the content in two cases targeted male activists. 7amleh monitored a number of other offensive and inflammatory comments against the female activists, which included discriminatory content on the grounds of gender and political opinion.

Distribution of the defamation campaigns by gender



7amleh Center also documented 16 cases of defamation on the Facebook platform, two cases on the Instagram platform, one case on the TikTok platform, and another on the Twitter platform. As a trusted partner of many social media companies, 7amleh Center contacted Facebook and reported defamatory accounts and content and demanded their removal from the platforms. The company responded to 7amleh's requests to remove defamatory content in three cases, and responded negatively in one case. While Facebook hasn't replied yet to 16 other cases.

Defamation campaigns and breach of privacy as per platform



Right to privacy and personal security

The Israeli police seeks to [install facial recognition cameras](#) in public places and streets by enacting a law in this regard, which will allow a number of security agencies, other than the police, to obtain the information collected by these cameras. This trend has sparked controversy among Israeli political circles because the practice of censorship may affect the Israeli population, while these cameras are installed in the occupied Palestinian territories and are used against the occupied Palestinian people without objection.

7amleh Center published a report on [privacy and data protection](#), which concluded that the concepts of privacy and personal data are unknown to the majority of the research sample, that a small percentage of users check the privacy policies of the websites they use, and the vast majority believe that a law should be enacted to protect privacy and data.

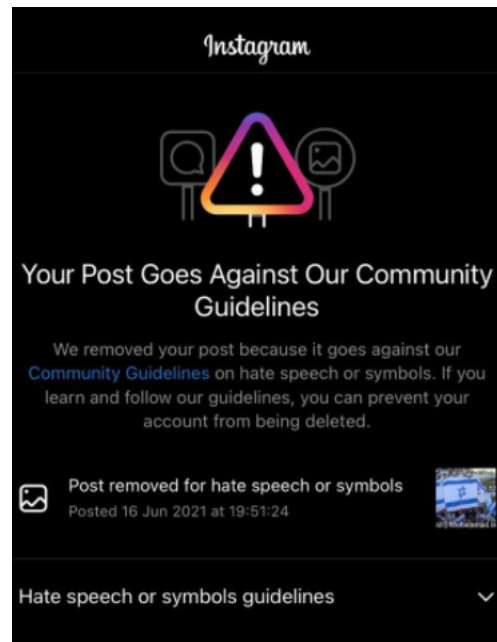


Social Media Platforms:

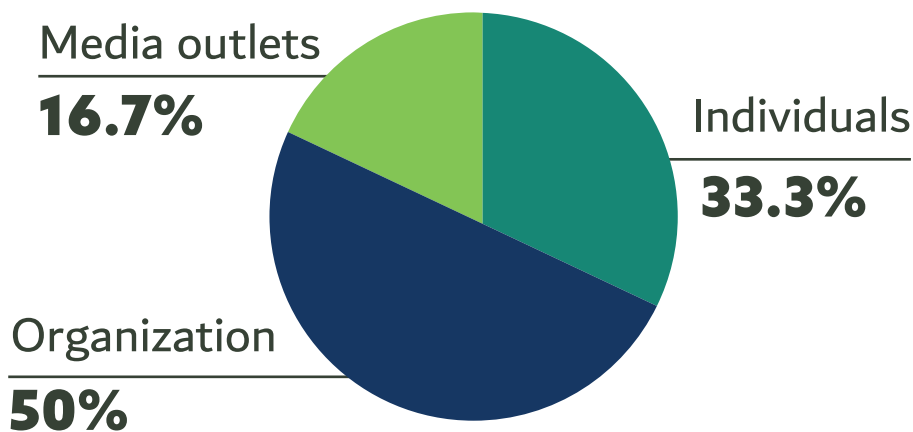
7amleh Center has documented a total of 116 violations against Palestinian users and supporters of the Palestinian cause committed by social media platforms.

7amleh Center has documented 16 cases of content removal during the past three months. The forms of deleted content varied as follows: 5 images, 4 text posts, 3 comments, 3 stories, and 1 video¹.

The violations occurred against 9 people, including 7 females and 2 males, 2 organizations, and 2 media outlets. The platforms where these violations were repeated varied, as 9 of them took place on Instagram, 3 on Facebook, and 1 on YouTube. While 9 of these violations were against personal accounts for individuals, and 4 of them were for public pages, 7amleh Center communicated with these platforms regarding all cases and submitted reports in this regard.

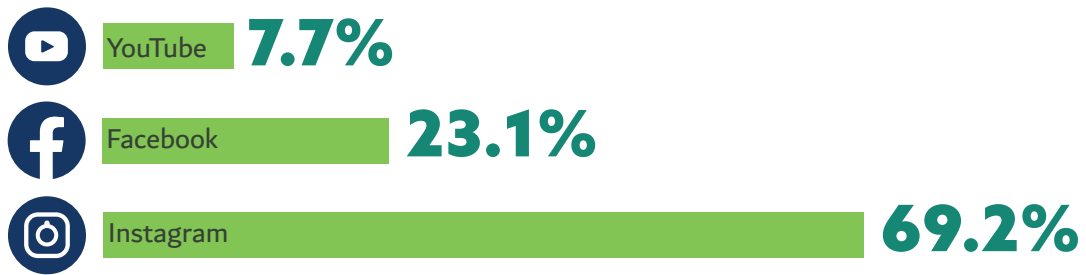


Types of accounts that were deleted in accordance to their ownership

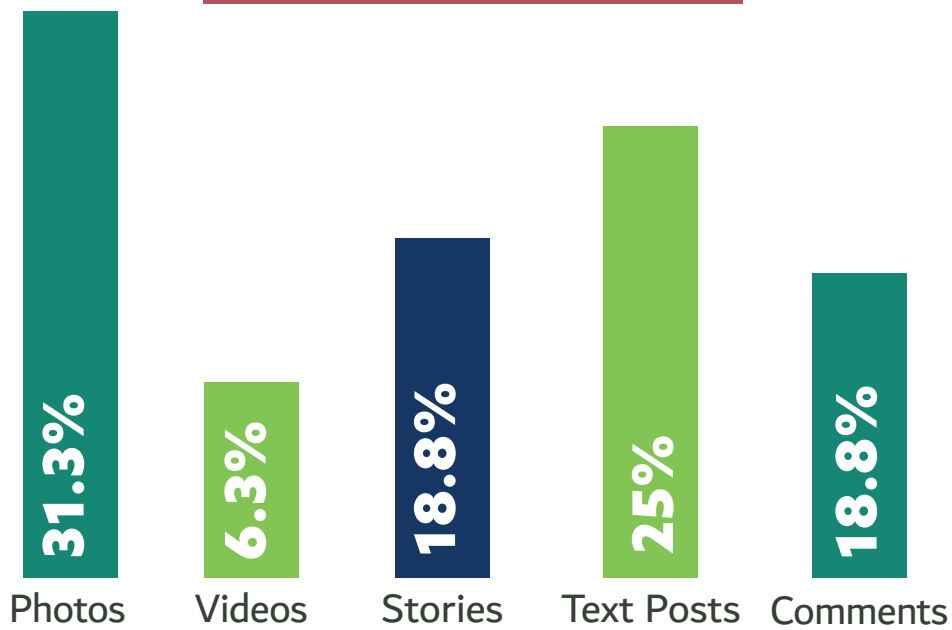


1. The number of violations outnumber the number of cases as some cases were exposed to more than one violation.

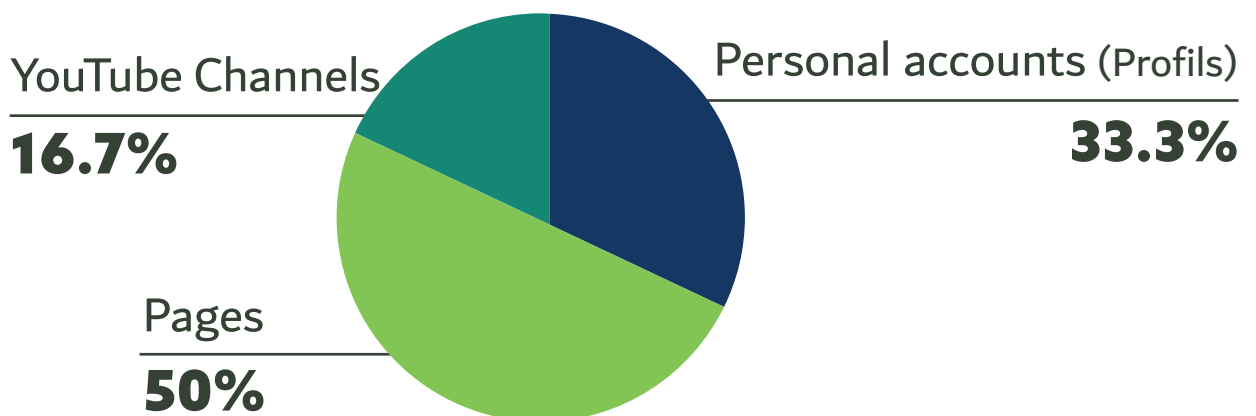
Types of violations by platform



Types of deleted content



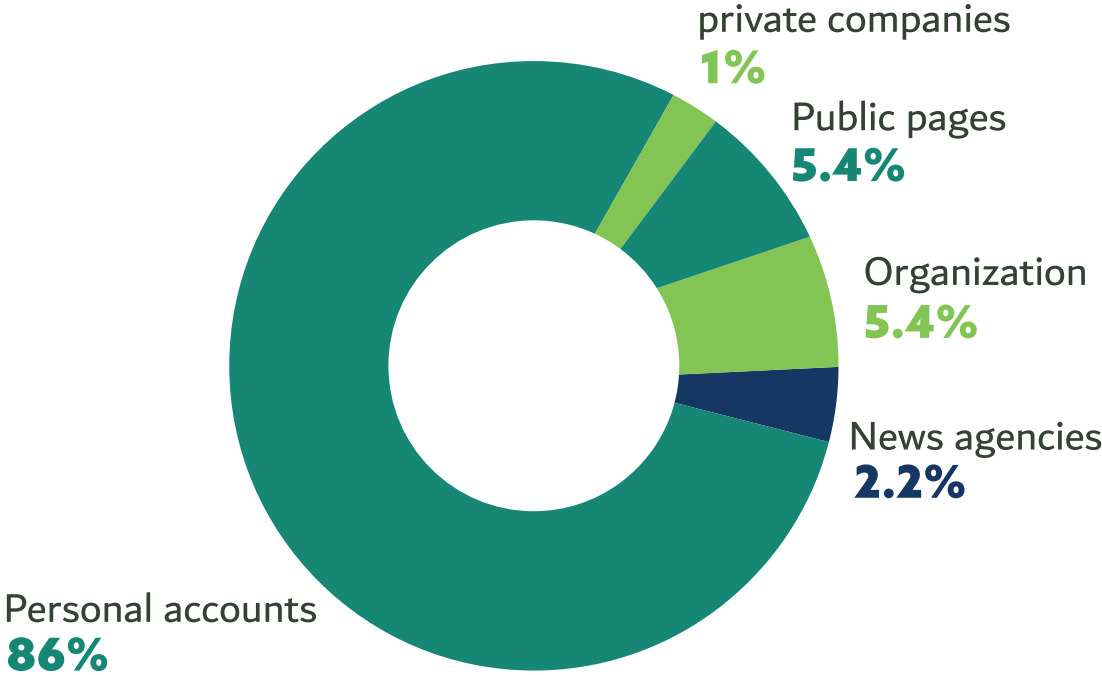
Types of accounts that underwent content deletion



Additionally, 7amleh Center has documented 100 violations in the form of account suspensions (in its various forms) on various social media platforms during the past three months. The categories of violations were distributed as follows, 52 cases of account suspension (and deletion), 33 cases of account restriction, 9 cases of account warnings, two cases of hacking, one account suspension, one case of reduced viewership and access, and two other cases².

Violations were distributed on social media platforms as follows: 63 cases on Facebook, 22 cases on Instagram, 5 cases on Twitter, two cases on TikTok, and one case on BIGO Live platform. These violations were committed against the accounts of 80 individuals, the pages of 5 NGOs, 2 media agencies, 5 other public pages, and one private company. Of the total number of individuals who were subjected to suspension of accounts, 35 were females and 45 were males.

Categorizing accounts by ownership

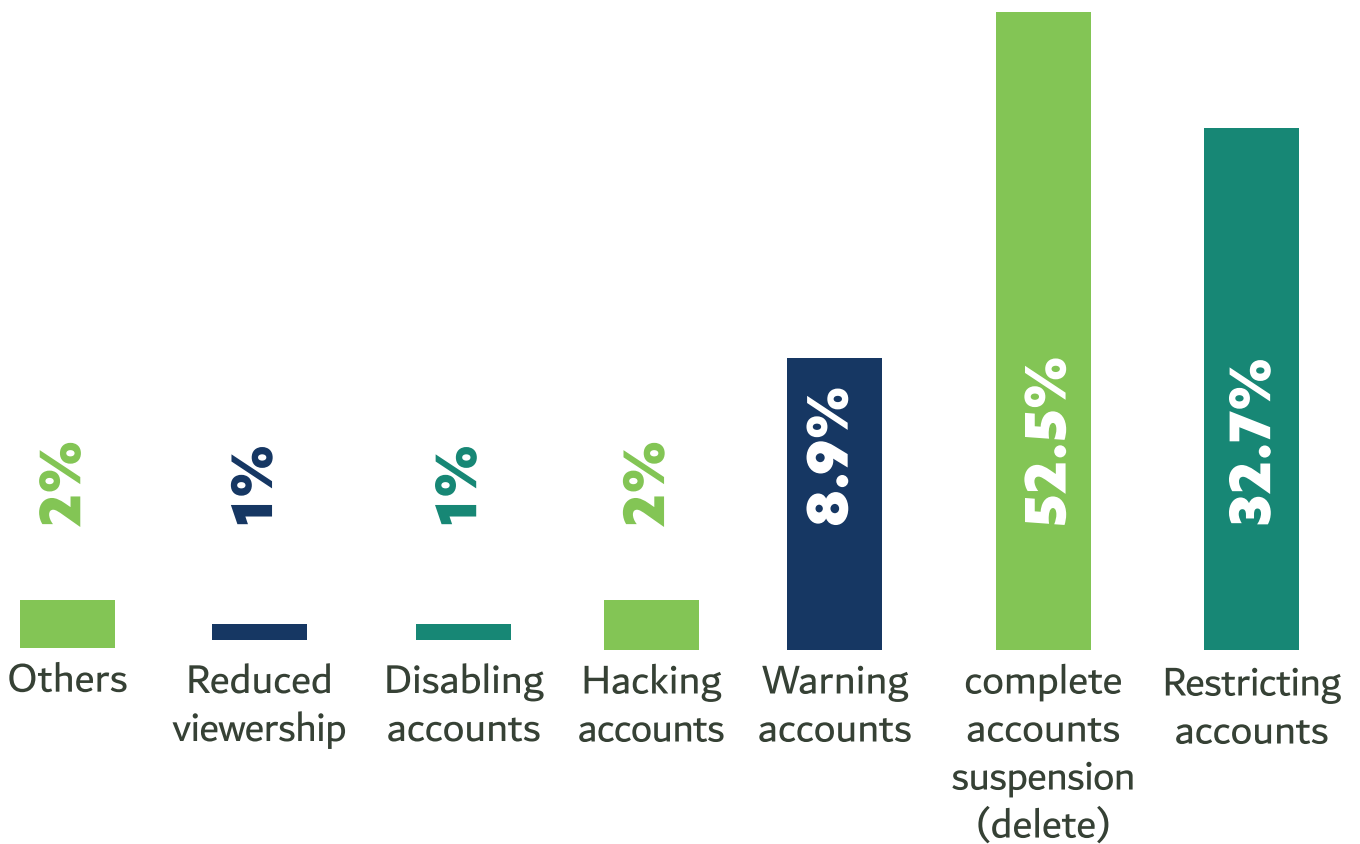


2. The total number of violations is greater than the number of cases because some cases were subjected to more than one violation.

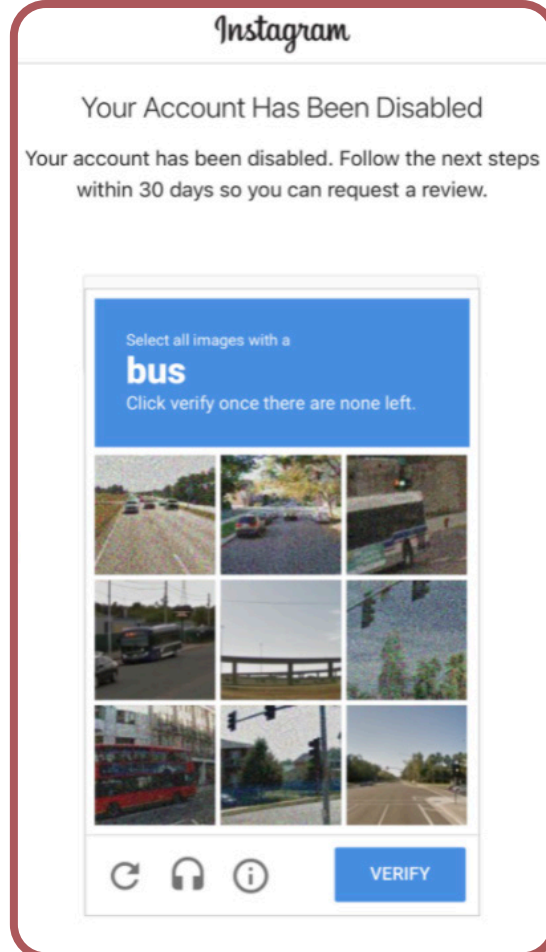
Categorizing individual victims by gender



Types of accounts violations



Companies have been contacted and reports were sent regarding 89 of these violations, where we received positive responses for 10 cases, one negative response and the rest automatic responses.



Tech company updates

[A coalition of human rights organizations around the world](#), including 7amleh Center, sent a letter to PayPal and Venmo demanding that they stop the closing and freezing of accounts on political and ethnic grounds, especially the accounts of Arab and Muslim users. The coalition called on the two companies to enhance the principle of transparency and accountability in their practices and policies, provide clear appeal mechanisms and develop alert mechanisms following suspension or freezing of accounts. Amnesty International launched a new report on the [Israeli censorship technology industries](#) during the reporting period, and it was found that a list of more than [50,000 names of individuals, public figures, human rights organizations, male and female activists and journalists](#) was prepared to be hacked by the Israeli company's customers. The revelation sparked a lot of confusion, controversy and discussions, and revealed the Israeli role in suppressing opponents around the world, not just the Palestinians.

[The Anti-Defamation League has signed a memorandum of understanding with PayPal](#) to investigate how what it calls, "extremist and hate groups", use financial platforms to fund "terrorism". This means that PayPal recognizes the League's definition and criteria for "terrorism." It is known that the League exerts tremendous efforts in stigmatizing the Palestinian critical content of the Israeli occupation, and it is known for its defamation campaigns against male and female activists, painting them as anti-Semitic, thus seeking to protect Israel from any criticism and suppress freedom of opinion and expression for activists.

Conclusions

It appears from the data in the report that the Palestinian digital space does not enjoy safety and justice, and does not protect rights and freedoms. Although the violations fluctuate according to the current political conditions in reflection and interaction with the field, the approach of companies and authorities in pursuing and punishing male and female social media activists for their opinions, has spread all over the cyberspace whether by suspension of accounts, deletion of content, defamation campaigns, or spreading of false news and incitement.

It is clear that social media platforms and digital economy companies still digitally discriminate against Palestinians instead of promoting justice and freedoms in the digital space. In addition, various authorities take part in suppressing Palestinian's freedoms and violating their digital rights, especially the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to protect privacy.

Israel is still leading the world in the censorship industry, which has been highlighted during the past few weeks. This type of digital security industry has been subjected to thorough analysis and feedback through various local and international media outlets, and the issue has taken on wide-ranging political and diplomatic dimensions.

حملة - المركز العربي
لتطوير الإعلام الاجتماعي
7amleh - The Arab Center For
the Advancement of Social Media



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20
21
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