



Analysis of Indicators to Measure Palestinian Civil Society According to the Civicus Approach

3194

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Abstract:

The study aims to analyze indicators to measure Palestinian civil society according to the Civicus approach, to achieve this aim; the study drew on four key indicators for measuring civil society adopted by the Civicus approach. Firstly, the enabling environment in which civil society organizations operate, secondly, the civil society structure, thirdly, the values that lead civil society organizations in their work, and fourthly the effect of civil society organizations. The study's findings regarding the first indicator highlighted the fact that civil society in the Palestinian situation is different from other civil societies in the world. The enabling environment in which it operates, whether economic, political, social, or legal, has been affected by society's subjection to an environment under occupation. Regarding the second indicator, the study found that the structure of Palestinian society suffers from weak internal management systems and unclear responsibilities. Regarding the third indicator, the study concluded that Palestinian civil society had an impact in spreading positive values before the Oslo accords; however, Palestinian civil society had not the same influence, especially, after the division between Hamas and Fatah. As for the fourth indicator, the study found that it did not have the financial ability to sustain some of its components that depend on external financing and noticed a weakness in its ability to network.

Keywords: Palestinian division, Palestinian civil society, the Civicus approach, the enabling environment, the structure of civil society.

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1. Introduction:

To analyze indicators for measuring Palestinian civil society the (Civicus approach) will be adopted (Hollister, 2017: 74). It refers to a global alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world (CIVICUS). Accordingly, the Palestinian civil society that this study will address will be based on its presence in areas of the Palestinian Authority since there was no intellectual debate about of Palestinian civil society, among Palestinian scholars and intellectuals before the Palestinian Authority's establishment.

The problematic of this study stems from the debate over the role of Palestinian civil society. Some researchers believe that civil society has a role in shaping political trends (Abu Zaher, 2017), and there are those who believe that it has a role in changing security policies (Abu Zaher, 2015). Others argue that it has a role in democratic transition (Afaneh, 2008), while

there are others who believe that it has a role in political participation and human development (Abu Adwan, 2013), etc. However, these roles of civil society have often been addressed in a theoretical controversy without relying on indicators to measure that role. Hence, the debate among researchers who think that Palestinian civil society has a positive role whether in terms of spreading positive values in society or providing services according to its needs (Abu Amr, 1995: 105). On the contrary of those, some scholars think that Palestinian civil society has a weak role, and not as hoped for. (Sheikh Ali, 2008: 85-86). This study is considered significant since it contributes to resolving the debate about the role of Palestinian civil society through the analysis of indicators for measuring Palestinian civil society according to the Civicus approach.



2. Indicators for measuring Palestinian civil society according to the Civicus approach

Civil society is no longer merely a controversial theoretical concept; yet, some international organizations have sought to develop a measure of civil society (Civil Society Index) in the direction of converting it from a theoretical, non-measurable concept to a measurable one. In this regard, Civil Society Index (CSI) according to the (CIVICUS) approach is based on four main indicators, which are firstly the enabling environment in which civil society organizations operate. Secondly, the structure of civil society, and to what extent of its institutionalization. Thirdly, the values that lead the work of civil society organizations, and fourthly the impact of civil society organizations (Heinrich, Fioramont, 2008: xxxviii). Building on these four indicators adopted by the Civicus approach will help analyze indicators to measure Palestinian civil society to resolve the theoretical debate on the role of Palestinian civil society, which will be nextly addressed:

2.1 The Enabling Environment for Palestinian Civil Society

The enabling environment for civil society means the appropriateness of the environment or the conditions in which civil society operates, whether it was an economic, political, social, cultural, legal, environment. It aims to enable it to function effectively in society, to have a positive impact on it. Whenever the environment is appropriate, people's volunteerism in it, this indicates healthy civil society (Assessment Tools for Measuring Civil Society's Enabling Environment: 3), whenever civil society environment is not enabling environment it indicates unhealthy civil society (Thindwai: 2).

Next, this study will examine whether Palestinian civil society's environment is enabling or not?

2.1.1 Social Environment

Social environment refers to the social milieu in which civil society organizations operate, as for the Palestinian situation, the social environment has affected the nature and extent of civil society's role in society as a whole. Hence, the specificity of the civil society in the Palestinian situation, which is represented by Israel's occupation, the absence of a state, has affected the social environment in which civil society organizations have operated in a way that may

differ from other civil society in the world. During the Intifada 1987 and prior to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, a tangible impact was noticed on Palestinian civil society role, because of the social factors and values that prevailed in that period. Such as community cohesion, cooperation, general societal trust, tolerance among the different members of society, and community volunteerism which aimed at working for the common good (Abu Zaher, 2020). However, after the Palestinian division between Hamas and Fatah, the social environment reflected a decline in civil society's cohesion, values and trust in civil society organizations. The only study conducted to measure social capital in Palestine revealed a relatively high level of mistrust of individuals, generally, in Palestinian Authority institutions, parties, trade unions; civil society institutions, as well as in international institutions and donor countries (Nasr and Hilal, 2007:95).

3195

2.1.2 Political Environment

The political environment in which Palestinian civil society organizations operate affects the role they play in society. In the Palestinian situation, civil society organizations have a different specificity than other civil society organizations in the world. This specificity is derived from the Palestinian cause and the development of the conditions in which Palestinian society is going through. Such as, the absence of a Palestinian State, the subordination of Palestinian society to the Israeli occupation. Subsequently, a Palestinian Authority is formed with freedom of organization, during which various political and societal institutions and organizations exercised their activities with the continued existence of the occupation and the absence of a Palestinian state (Abu Zaher, 2008: 237).

Owing to the link between civil society organizations in the Palestinian situation and the Palestinian cause, the future of "Palestinian civil society" and the role it plays in society was linked to the political developments that have occurred or may occur. That being said, the political environment in which civil society lived during the intifada 1987 forced civil society to play a positive political role, whether facing the Israeli occupation, which infringes on the human



security and freedoms of the Palestinians or to provide services that the absent Palestinian state is supposed to provide. During that period, people were willing to voluntarily participate in various civil society activities prior to the Oslo accords, specifically during the first intifada (Abu Zaher, 2013: 146-147).

Additionally, the political environment in which civil society lived during the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, formed after the Oslo Accords, reflected its impact on the rapid deployment of NGOs and increased the number of civil society organizations. (Mehaisen, October 2001:6). The political environment itself also reflected civil society's interest, which had shifted from an interest in how to counter the occupation to an interest in the form of the future political system of an emerging Palestinian Authority. (Al-Maliki, 1999:34). The future of Palestinian civil society and its impact on the democratization process have thus been inextricably linked to political developments in the region (Hassassian, 2002:134)

The division between Hamas and Fatah also led to the weakening of the role of civil society organizations, such as human rights organizations. (CSO Sustainability Report 2013 for the Middle East and North Africa, 2013: 50).

2.1.3 Legal Environment

The legal environment means the legal framework that regulates the formation of civil society organizations, administer their registration mechanism, and defines their relationship with the state. In this sense, the negative view of the role of the state in civil society has led some writers to call for the separation of civil society from the state (Fraser, 1992: 133). However, others rejected the complete separation between the state and civil society, since the state works to organize civil society through a legal framework that regulates its registration and work mechanism (Matthes, 2003: 86). The legal environment in which civil society organizations operated in the Palestinian situation differs greatly from the experiences of their counterparts in the world, both in terms of the surrounding circumstances, the laws that regulate the exercise of the right to form associations, and control their activities. The legal environment influenced the effectiveness of civil society, so Palestinian civil society

organizations were subjected, before the arrival of the Palestinian Authority, to several legal frameworks (Mazen, Muhanna and Al-Dahdouh prepared and compiled, 1994: 29). The real change in the legal environment for the work of civil society organizations was associated with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. Since that time, the Basic Law guaranteed the freedom to form associations in Clause (2) of Article (26) of the law approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council - in 1996, which was signed by President Yasser Arafat in 2002, amended by the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2003, and in 2005. It stipulates that Palestinians have the right "to form unions, associations, federations, associations, clubs and popular institutions in accordance with the law" (Amended Basic Law, 2005: 17).

The basic element in the legal environment in which civil societies operate in the Palestinian situation is Law No. (1) of 2000 Concerning Charitable Associations and Civil Society Organizations (Law No. (1) of 2000 Concerning Charitable Associations and Civil Society Organizations, 2000). The Palestinian Legislative Council has issued this law, which determines the conditions that must be met for the practice and formation of charitable societies. While the executive regulations of this law issued by a decision of the Council of Ministers. Many detailed and related matters was clarified in the executive regulations such as, the conditions for forming an association, the authorities concerned with following up on its registration, the competent ministry that follows up on it according to the activity of the association and other detailed matters related to the association and its obligations, etc. (Council of Ministers Resolution No. 9 of 2003 regarding the executive regulations of the Law of Charitable Societies and Civil Organizations No. (1) of 2000). According to the Arab Network for Social Responsibility (ANSA), the freedom to establish associations according to Palestinian law and the Law of NGOs and Charities No. 1/2000 compared to the Arab state is relatively ahead of other laws in the region. Despite political pressure and rights infringement in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Atwana et al., 2013: 102).

In practice, Civil Society Organizations Sustainability Report referred to the efforts made by the governments led by the Palestinian National Authority and Hamas to continue to

provide security approval for the work of civil society organizations. This often hinders the work of these organizations (Civil Society Organizations Sustainability Report 2012 for the Middle East and North Africa, 2012: 44).

There is another matter related to the specificity of the legal environment in which civil society organizations operate, apart from the succession of several governing authorities and the change of laws governing the work of civil society organizations, a situation related to Gaza and Jerusalem. With respect to civil society organizations in East Jerusalem and in Areas C and B of the West Bank, they are subject to Israeli law¹. Regarding Gaza civil society organizations, and after the division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the government there amended a law which bears resolution No. (3/205/11) of 2011, regarding the amendment of Cabinet Resolution No. (9) of 2003 regarding the executive regulations². (Palestinian Center for Human Rights, 2011).

2.1.4 Economic Environment

The relationship of the economy with civil society is a dialectical one, as opinions ranged among those who defend the role of the economy in civil society because the economy works to protect civil society from state violations and interventions and thus protects its independence. There are also those who argue that civil society originally needs protection from

the interventions of the economy (Varty, 1997:27-30).

Whatever the debate about the relationship of the economy with civil society, whether the relationship is positive or negative, the economic environment in which civil society operates affects the nature of the role it plays in society as a whole. If the economic environment is poor, the role of civil society is mostly focused on how to combat poverty and influence the state's public policies to achieve further economic development. If the economic environment in which it operates is rich, the role of civil society is usually focused on achieving more welfare for the community and affecting the state's policies to achieve this.

In the Palestinian situation, the nature of the economic environment affected the role of Palestinian civil society, as the problems of poverty and unemployment are among the most important problems that Palestinian society suffers from. The exceptional situation in the Palestinian territories under occupation imposed restrictions on the ability of the Palestinian people to control their economy and also prevented the optimal use of its available economic resources and led to the increase in the poverty rate in the Palestinian society (Sadiq, 2005: 70). The existence of these two problems in Palestinian society may be considered an explanation for what a study found that a high percentage of Palestinians gave utmost importance to improving the economic situation and fighting poverty and unemployment (Nasr and Hilal, 2007: xix). Considering this high percentage of Palestinian civil society that gives priority to improving the economic situation and fighting poverty and unemployment may be justified for addressing these two problems. However, some studies have found that despite what civil society has done to combat poverty and unemployment by adopting a set of policies that enhance the participation of Palestinian citizens in the productive process and work to provide them with basic needs. Yet, the role of civil society did not reach the level that Palestinian society aspires to since its role alone cannot eradicate poverty and unemployment, but it needs to work on creating a kind of partnership between it and the public and private sectors. (Abu Adwan, 2013: 105-106).

3197

¹ According to Israeli law, there are three laws regulating freedom of association:

- The Law of Associations (1980), which regulates the process of formation and work of non-governmental organizations, companies and cooperative societies.
- Criminal Law, especially the "Prevention of Terrorism Law" (1948),
- The Law on Implementation of the Interim Agreement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (1994), and the Law on Prohibition of Financing Terrorism (2005).

² Article 47 that has been added is considered the most criticized article by civil society organizations in Gaza and is considered a fundamental violation of the text of the Charitable Societies Law. The article states: "1. all branches of local associations and bodies must provide the Ministry and the competent ministry with any documents or papers if requested. 2. The Ministry and the competent ministry may follow up the work and activities of the branches of associations and organizations to verify that their funds were spent for the purpose for which they were allocated.



2.2 The Structure of Palestinian Civil Society

The structure and of Palestinian civil society means how to build a civil society organization. If it is on organized legal norms to which the organization invokes. In addition, to be grounded on a management structure in how to work and make decisions whether they stem from individuals or the organization's law or not at work and whether or not they possess a value system at work and whether or not they possess sophisticated human and financial capital?

Turning to civil society organizations in the Palestinian situation, despite the fact that the US Agency for International Development in its report, found that Palestinian civil society organizations have, in comparison with other Arab countries, a developed organizational capacity and a developed infrastructure, especially for their qualified staff and for their advanced capabilities in work. The problem noted by the agency in its report is that qualified staff does not apply to all civil society organizations, as smaller organizations find it difficult to compete for and retain highly skilled professional staff.

Despite the sophisticated infrastructure, with regard to the extent of its institutionality, it seems that it has not been as powerful, in terms of administrative structures; the governing bodies continue to operate in a pattern described by US Agency for International Development in its report as "authoritarian, inherited or opaque. Boards of directors and members of public assemblies rarely participate in the policy-making processes of civil society organizations... civil society organizations form local project committees that employ volunteers, but once these projects are completed, these structures are dissolved. (CSO Sustainability Report 2013 for the Middle East and North Africa, 2013: 45). The agency concluded in its report that the civil society organizations of the countries included in the report, including Palestinian civil society organizations, suffer from weak internal management systems, with ineffective boards of directors and unclear divisions of responsibility. In terms of democratic internal structures, these structures are rarely ready to work (Civil Society Organizations Sustainability Report 2013 for the Middle East and North Africa, 2013: 7).

At the level of the value system, the spread of corruption in civil society institutions is noted, as

a survey conducted by (Aman) on corruption indicated that there is a spread of corruption in all Palestinian labor sectors, whether public, private, NGOs, media, political parties, etc. (Aman, April 2009: 1-3).

Palestinian civil society organizations are still unable to put in place strong internal structures that are democratic, accountable and transparent (CSO Sustainability Report 2013 for the Middle East and North Africa, 2013: 48).

2.3 Values Leading the Work of Palestine Civil Society Organizations

Civil society contributes to the promotion of many positive values in society by exercising its different roles. May be difficult to address all the values that civil society contributes to promoting, but some of the positive values to which it contributes are to promote democracy as well as equality and political participation. Democracy is promoted through building trust and communication among citizens; civil society conveys people's concerns and interests to the Government and restricts the abuse of Government power (McFaul, et al., 2004: 140-141).

Civil society has been considered a "school of democracy" (Putnam, 1993:338). It is the primary source of social capital formation (Leicht, 2000:72). According to Putnam is based on cooperation, tolerance, trust and values that maintain the cohesion of any society³ (Krishna, 2000: 75). The decline in trust was considered a threat to democracy (Tilly, 2005:133). Civil society also fights against poverty.

In the Palestinian situation, the values that lead Palestinian civil society organizations have varied across different political phases that have undergone the development of Palestinian civil society:

2.3.1 Values that Led Palestinian Civil Society's Work before the Oslo Accords (During the Intifada 1987)

Civil society before Oslo accords, and specifically during the first intifada, contributed to the consolidation of many positive values, especially

³ Although some writers refuse to consider trust as the essence of the concept of social capital and consider trust as a result of it, other writers believe that trust and cooperation constitute the core of the concept, like (Krishna, 2000).



through its most prominent widespread and acceptable components among the people (popular committees). Through the popular committees, civil society was able in the first intifada to play a role in spreading public trust, cooperation, reciprocity, the spirit of volunteerism, and working for the public good rather than the private ones; it had thus a positive effect on Palestinian society (Abu Zaher, 2013: 234). Civil society was also able to play a political role in confronting the Israeli occupation, which infringes on the human security and freedoms of the Palestinians, and in confronting the poverty that the occupation caused to the Palestinian society. Civil society organizations, especially the zakat committees, were keen to collect donations from the rich with the aim of providing them to the poor and helping them to face poverty. The zakat committees gained the confidence and respect of the Palestinians for their positive role in society (Brown, 2003: 14). Thus, civil society relied for its funding on the local community, not the external one.

The People's Committees also contributed to combating poverty within the Palestinian society by collecting donations and distributing them to the needy. They worked to provide assistance to all without discrimination, and they constituted the most prominent example of the solidarity and cohesion of the Palestinian people (Ayed, 1988: 50). Its work was closer to volunteering and working for the public interest and not for the partisan interest. It did not allow the members of the Palestinian society to be drawn to participate in partisan disputes and provided support to the Palestinian community in emergency situations (Abu Amr, 1995: 73-74). The popular committees constituted another prominent example of the solidarity and cohesion of the Palestinian people (Ayed, 1988: 50).

During the intifada, civil society was also able to contribute to the strengthening of democracy in the Palestinian situation. Its experience was considered more democratic than that of Arab States (Labib, 1992:103). Civil society organizations during Intifada, were characterized by the absence of centralization and the establishment of non-hierarchical relationships (Abu Omar, 1995: 95). For instance, popular committees were formed from all segments of Palestinian society. Thus, it was

considered as a fragmented democratic form open to the widest popular participation (Ayoub, 2006: 207).

Civil society also contributed to spreading tolerance among its various segments, regardless of whether they were Muslims or Christians. The challenge of the Israeli occupation continued to be a major catalyst for Muslim-Christian cohesion (Maoz, 2002).

2.3.2 The Values that Lead the Work of Palestinian Civil Society after the Oslo Accords

After Oslo, the values that civil society contributed to promoting differed from what they were before Oslo, and perhaps one of the reasons for this is the different roles that civil society played after Oslo than it was before it such as its focus on spreading the values of democracy, human rights, gender equality, spreading transparency, fighting corruption. However, there were those who doubted the ability of civil society to spread positive values such as democracy, transparency, fighting corruption. Many of writers who relied on civil society were disappointed to reach the desired democratic transformation. They believed that the agreements concluded between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel in Oslo constituted a burden on the development of civil society and the democratic transformation within Palestinian society (Abu Amr, 1995: 34). There are also studies that considered that some civil society organizations operate according to the agendas of the parties they established and carry the same diseases that they carry (Sheikh Ali, 2008: 68). Consequently, many of the positive values that civil society contributed to spreading during the intifada declined after Oslo, similar to, the willingness to volunteer for the common good. As the positive values such as solidarity and cooperation, etc., that civil society contributed to during the days of the intifada declined (Abu Zaher, 2017), new agendas for the work of civil society appeared, and there was more concern for self-interest than in the interest of society. "Oslo period has become the stage of individual projects, to search for personal benefits" (Giacaman, 1998: 31). Thus, the interest of civil society organizations in the public interest of the Palestinian society declined at the expense of their own interest, and some of these organizations entered into competitive



relations, mainly caused by the struggle over funding sources (Al-Maliki et al., 2008: 1-2).

2.3.3 Values That Lead the Work of Palestinian Civil Society after the Division

If the role of civil society declined after Oslo in promoting the positive values that it contributed during the Intifada (Abu Zaher, 2020: 3015), after the division between Hamas and Fatah, the positive values that civil society contributed in Palestinian society declined to their lowest levels. The division led to the decline of the social capital that civil society supposed to build, in favor of increasing the influence of elites at the expense of the decline of the rule of law (Abu Zaher, 2013: 395). The disintegration of Palestinian society increased, and the ties between families declined (Palestine Women's Information and Information Center, March 22-April 8, 2008). Cooperation and trust have also declined (Human Development Report 2009/2010 Occupied Palestinian Territory: Investing in Human Security for a Future State, 2010: 13, 83), and the democratic transition in Palestine has declined (Shikaki et al., 2008: 9). Transparency also decreased, as Palestine became one of the most corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index. (Corruption Perceptions Index 2010, 2010: 8-9). The division also reduced the willingness to volunteer for the common good to its lowest levels. The increase in the number of civil society organizations after the division did not reflect the willingness to volunteer, but rather had different goals. After 2006, the number of civil society organizations established by both Hamas and Fatah increased significantly. The latter believed that civil society organizations established by Hamas contributed to its victory, so Fatah became aware of the importance of civil society (Abu Zaher, 2013: 156), and thus the majority of civil society is formed from the associations established by parties, especially from the two sides of the conflict, Hamas and Fatah, to serve partisan goals.

2.4 The Impact of Palestinian Civil Society

The views on the impact of civil society in the Palestinian situation can be summarized as ranging from the point of view that defended the impact of civil society as positive for the Palestinian society. In addition, to this point of

view, there is a point of view questioned the positive impact of civil society.

Some studies defended the positive impact of civil society on citizenship (Kabsa, 2013), democratic transition (Abu Amr, 1995: 105), freedoms, fighting corruption and nepotism (Majdalani, April 16, 2003), and supervising a large part of social services (Costantini et al., 2015: 9).

While the other point of view argued that the impact of civil society weak and not at the desired level such as: Political participation; pressure on the political authority for the sake of the higher national interest (Sheikh Ali, 2008: 48-85); achieving human development (Abu Adwan, 2013); voluntary participation; defending of human rights (Rabaa, 2013); changing the security policies in the Palestinian Authority; reforming the security sector (Abu Zaher, 2015); influencing decision-making. (Sayegh, 2011:28)

This point of view found that the impact of civil society weak after the Oslo accords, because it depends to a very large extent on foreign fund and agenda, and that those the organizations seek merely their own interest. Therefore, they have not worked to spread public trust and cooperation among citizens.

Although some civil society institutions played a role in analyzing the general budget of the Palestinian Authority such as (AMAN), other civil society organizations did not have any influence on what the executive authority in the West Bank is doing after the division between Hamas and Fatah in approving the budget. (Abu Zaher, 2015: 306).

A master's thesis regarded that despite a large number of civil society organizations after Oslo, the great phenomenon indicates that many of these organizations do not represent, in real life, more than a cadaver. It also found that many Palestinian civil society organizations consider the members of their registered public bodies to be permanent volunteers, although the truth is to the contrary. Another possibility to explain the aforementioned is that these organizations are specific to the political or cultural elite, and therefore they remain practically isolated from the active street on the one hand, and turn in a way into a tactical ally of the political authority



on another hand. An ally that is closer to the authority than the street in core interests. (Sheikh Ali, 2008: 64).

Among the factors that led to the increase in the impact of civil society are first the sources of financial sustainability, and secondly, the ability of civil society to network and establish relationships. The following is an explanation of those factors that led to an increase in the impact of Palestinian civil society in Palestinian society:

2.4.1 Resources for Sustainability for Civil Society

The sources of sustainability for civil society are multiple, and perhaps the most important source indicative of the sustainability of civil society is financial sustainability or financial safety, through building local fundraising capacities (Lewis et al., 2015: 6). The (OECD DAC) believes that the financial capacity of civil society organizations should be developed in order to be accepted and independent from reliance on external funding linked to external agendas (OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice, 2007:229 -230). As there are risks from external funding, therefore, we must be wary of support directed to it. Another source indicative of the sustainability of civil society is the sustainability of services provided by civil society organizations according to local needs rather than "financiers prioritizing their work" (OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice, 2007: 232).

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has identified sources other than financial sustainability and service delivery, including a legal environment that allows civil society to continue to operate effectively and that civil society has organizational capacities that allow it to be sustainable in achieving its goals. (2012 Civil Society Organizations Sustainability Report for the Middle East and North Africa Region, 2012:56)

In the Palestinian situation, some components of civil society, such as zakat committees, depend on funding derived from the local community, especially from the money of the rich. The zakat committees collect donations from the rich in order to provide them to the poor and help them face poverty. The zakat committees have gained the trust and respect of the Palestinians for their

positive role in society (Brown, 2003: 14). In addition to the many services it provides due to its reliance on sustainable sources of funding from the local community.

Not all civil society organizations rely on local funding. What is noticed on the components of civil society organizations after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority is an increase in the number of non-governmental organizations funded from abroad. (Al-Maliki et al., 2008: 13). In the West Bank and Gaza, major civil society organizations produce strategic plans at the request of donors (CSO Sustainability Report 2012 for the Middle East and North Africa, 2012: 7).

Results concluded indicating the status of civil society organizations in the West Bank and Gaza is characterized by a remarkable progress compared to other Arab countries. It was found that the West Bank and Gaza Strip enjoy high sustainability rates (4.3) in civil and civil society institutions (CSO Sustainability Report 2013 for the Middle East and North Africa, 2013: 8).

2.4.2 The Ability of Civil Society to Network

Another thing that helps civil society increase its impact on society is its ability to network civil society organizations. Networking is a viable means of exchanging information on needs and solutions for society. Networking is also seen as a means of strengthening non-governmental organizations by consolidating rhetoric and increasing influence in negotiations and lobbying. Networking also contributes to strengthening democratic performance and the development role of civil society organizations. Networking is a tool for strengthening non-governmental organizations in the independent pursuit of their decision in the face of the Government's predominance (Arab NGO Network for Development, n.d: 2).

In terms of cooperation and networking between civil society organizations in the Palestinian situation, as noted in the Master's thesis, cooperation and networking among community organizations is a significant weakness in the field of cooperation and networking between civil society organizations operating in the same sector or specializations. In addition to the existence of a kind of hidden conflict between these organizations over the political background or party affiliation of their leaders. This factor leads to political or ideological



competition between these organizations and deepens the phenomenon of the citizen's party or clan affiliation at the expense of the necessary and basic affiliation to the homeland and citizenship (Sheikh Ali, 2008: 120).

Despite these criticisms of the networking of civil society organizations in the Palestinian situation, cooperation and networking between civil society organizations cannot be overlooked. This networking was expressed through the establishment of the Palestinian NGO Network in 1993, which, according to the Network, is a democratic civic gathering with a voluntary membership of some 140 active NGOs who are eligible for membership in the West Bank, including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The Network has many objectives, among which it seeks to strengthen the spirit of cooperation, consultation, coordination, and networking among the various organizations of society. Its aim is to help them in the independence and empowerment of civil work in Palestine and to mobilize the potential of the private sector based on the values of social justice, the rule of law, democracy, human rights, etc. All in all, to strengthen the Network's capabilities and sectors to enable it to achieve its mission (Palestinian NGO Network website, 2022).

Despite the establishment of this body, which reflects cooperation and networking among civil society organizations, the aim of its establishment was affected after the Palestinian division between Hamas and Fatah, as it prevented cooperation and networking among society organizations in both the West Bank and Gaza. As real cooperation among civil society organizations and the Government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is lacking between Hamas, Fatah, and the regime owing to divisions (CSO Sustainability Report 2012 for the Middle East and North Africa Region, 2012:9).

3. Finding

This study examined the analysis of indicators to measure Palestinian civil society according to the Civicus approach, according to which four key indicators to measure civil society are adopted. Based on these indicators, the study's findings in relation to Palestinian civil society have been several, most notably are:

1. The enabling environment for Palestinian civil society and the adequacy of the environment or conditions in which civil society, whether economic, political, social, cultural, legal, or other, in order to function effectively in society and to have a positive impact on the ability of citizens to participate voluntarily in civil society which it demonstrates healthy civil society. The social environment in which civil society organizations operate has certain effects that may differ from other civil societies in the world. During intifada 1987 and before the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, a tangible impact was noticed of the social factors, and positive values prevailed in that period, such as cohesion and community cooperation, general societal trust, tolerance among the different members of society, and community volunteering with the aim of working for the common good on the role of civil society. These values declined after the Oslo accords were replaced by negative values especially after the division between Hamas and Fatah. With regard to the possible political environment for Palestinian civil society, the study concluded that the political environment in which civil society worked during the Intifada forced civil society to play a positive political role. However, the possible political environment in which civil society operates after the Oslo accords did not play the same positive role, as the division between Hamas and Fatah, which led to the weakening of the role of civil society organizations, such as human rights organizations. Considering the legal environment in which civil society organizations worked in the Palestinian situation, it differed greatly from the experiences of its counterparts in the world, as the legal environment influenced the effectiveness of civil society. Before the arrival of the Palestinian Authority, Palestinian civil society organizations were subjected to several legal frameworks. The real change in the legal environment for the function of Palestinian civil society organizations has been associated with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, because since the establishment of the latter the Basic Law has guaranteed the freedom to form associations and special laws have been found in the sake of regulating the work of civil society organizations. The nature of the economic environment also affected the quality of the role it plays in Palestinian civil society, as the problems of poverty and unemployment were



among the most important problems that Palestinian society suffers from, hence, Palestinian civil society has given priority to improving the economic situation and fighting poverty and unemployment.

2. With regard to the second indicator related to the structure of Palestinian civil society and the extent of its institutionalization, the study found that Palestinian civil society organizations possess, in comparison with other Arab countries, a developed organizational capacity and an advanced infrastructure. Nevertheless, the study found that the Palestinian civil society boards of directors still operate in a non-transparent manner, and suffer from weak internal management systems and unclear divisions of responsibility.

3. With regard to the third indicator related to the values that drive the work of Palestinian civil society organizations, the study concluded that civil society contributed to the promotion of many values in Palestinian society at its stages of development. Prior to the Oslo accords, it contributed to the promotion of positive values. After the Oslo accords, many of those positive values that it had contributed to promoting declined. The positive values that Palestinian civil society contributed to promoting reached their lowest levels after the division.

4. With regard to the fourth indicator related to the impact of Palestinian civil society, the study concluded that there are two contradictory views regarding the impact of Palestinian civil society, the first seeing that it has a positive impact on society, and the second view that it did not have a positive impact as expected. Considering the impact of Palestinian civil society on society as a whole, there are three factors in particular that affect it: financial capacity, sustainability, and networking. As for civil society, the study found that it did not have the financial ability to sustain some of its components that depend on external funding, besides detecting weakness in its ability to network.

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