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**Policy paper**

## **Ways to Strengthen the Role of NGOs in Advocacy in light of the current humanitarian crisis**





شبكة المنظمات الأهلية الفلسطينية  
Palestinian NGO's Network - PNGO

Policy paper on

# Ways to Strengthen the Role of NGOs in Advocacy in light of the current humanitarian crisis

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## I. Executive Summary

This paper addresses the reality of advocacy within Palestinian civil society organizations in the Gaza Strip during the ongoing war since October 2023, amidst widespread destruction of infrastructure, institutional collapse, and the shrinking of civic space.

The paper begins with a comprehensive analysis of the gaps facing these organizations at both internal and external levels, focusing on weak governance, the absence of clear advocacy policies, limited technical capacities of staff, and declining communication with the local community and international actors.

It also monitors the impact of politicization, conditional funding, and field restrictions on the effectiveness of civil efforts in defending human rights.

Through this diagnosis, the paper proposes a package of practical policies aimed at enhancing the response of civil society organizations in a highly complex environment by improving administrative structures, developing institutional guidelines and procedures for advocacy, and building staff capacities in monitoring, analysis, and rights-based communication.

It also calls for activating community participation mechanisms to lend local legitimacy to advocacy efforts and establishing pressure networks and regional and international alliances to strengthen the Palestinian presence in human rights arenas.

The paper emphasizes the necessity of adopting an evidence-based approach, integrating field work with political and legal analysis, to ensure advocacy messages are directed towards international decision-making centers.

The paper concludes that empowering civil society organizations to enhance their role requires a shift from temporary relief work to building an institutional and sustainable advocacy system capable of influencing public policies and protecting rights under the reality of occupation and protracted war.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## **II. Introduction**

The Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO) is an independent, democratic, civil society coalition aiming to support and empower Palestinian society within the framework of promoting the principles of democracy, social justice, equality, and respect for human rights. PNGO includes about 147 civil society organizations in Palestine, 71 of which are in the Gaza Strip. Since its establishment, PNGO has undertaken the role of enhancing and building the capacities of Palestinian civil society organizations and supporting them in performing their national and humanitarian duty, based on a human-centered vision. Therefore, PNGO has worked to advance the intellectual and knowledge foundations of Palestinian civil work and has sought to develop its tools, including advocacy tools, to keep pace with the changing challenges in the political and humanitarian landscape.

Advocacy efforts in the Gaza Strip face an extremely complex reality, amid an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe experienced by the Strip as a result of the ongoing aggression and the widespread collapse of all life systems, including health, education, food security, and infrastructure. In this exceptional context, Palestinian civil society organizations are trying to activate advocacy tools as one of the few available means to influence public opinion, attract the attention of the international community, and defend the rights of civilians, especially in light of the blocked political horizon, the ongoing siege, and the eroded effectiveness of official institutions. Although civil society in Gaza has a long history of struggle, the work environment at present has become more restrictive and complex due to multiple authorities, political division, security surveillance, in addition to the political conditions for funding imposed by some donors, which limit the organizations' ability to adopt a frank discourse based on rights and international law. Furthermore, restrictions on movement, weak infrastructure, and continuous disruptions in communications, internet, and electricity hinder free communication with regional and international platforms.

Despite this, civil society organizations show a remarkable capacity to respond by adopting digital campaigns, initiatives, documenting violations, issuing statements, holding conferences, and working within local and cross-border coalitions. However, these efforts remain fragmented, suffering from a lack of strategic coordination, funding shortages, and weak specialization in advocacy staff, highlighting the need to formulate clear policies that enhance the effectiveness of this role and ensure its responsiveness to people's reality and urgent needs at this critical stage.

From this standpoint, the general objective of preparing this paper lies in diagnosing the institutional and methodological gaps facing civil society organizations in practicing their advocacy role and proposing practical policies and recommendations applicable to enhance their effectiveness and influence on public policies, whether at the local or international level.

The paper's methodology relies on analyzing the current context, reviewing existing institutional experiences, in addition to conducting in-depth interviews with representatives of Palestinian civil society organizations, and organizing focus groups involving field actors, experts, and representatives of diverse community groups, ensuring the development of a comprehensive vision reflecting challenges and opportunities from the reality of experience and contributing to formulating strategic intervention frameworks.

### **III. General Context**

Since the outbreak of the Israeli war of genocide on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, Palestinian civil society organizations have been facing one of their harshest and most complex phases in modern history. The widespread attacks have led to the destruction of the headquarters of many associations and organizations, and the killing and injury of hundreds of humanitarian workers<sup>1</sup>, weakening civil society's capacity to respond to the enormous needs resulting from the war.

Civil society organizations are currently operating in a highly dangerous environment, characterized by insecurity, funding disruptions, supply chain breakdowns, and the collapse of basic infrastructure such as electricity, communications, and roads. Despite this, these organizations have shown remarkable resilience by continuing to provide services such as emergency relief, shelter, water, and psychological support for children and the displaced, in cooperation with local and international partners. However, the war has simultaneously exposed the fragility of the structure of some civil society organizations and the weak coordination among them, resulting from political challenges, internal division, donor pressures, and the restrictions imposed by the occupation authorities on funding and the continuation of the aggression.

With the escalating humanitarian catastrophe, there is an urgent need to rebuild the Palestinian civil work system on more sustainable and independent foundations that ensure effective advocacy, activate the role of organizations in defending human rights, monitoring war crimes, and contributing to strengthening the social fabric after the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfam statement, Israeli attacks kill Oxfam partner and destroy clinics in Gaza  
<https://www.oxfamireland.org/press/israeli-attacks-kill-oxfam-partner-colleague-destroy-clinics-in-gaza>, Accessed on 15 November 2025 , see also Palestinian NGO Network, Initial Rapid Assessment of Civil Society Organizations in the Gaza Strip, p. 35 <https://en.pngoportal.org/p/3777>

## IV. Analysis of the Current State of Advocacy Efforts in Palestinian Civil Society Organizations.

In this section of the policy paper, we seek to provide an in-depth analytical reading of the reality of Palestinian civil society organizations' work in the field of advocacy, by deconstructing the system of institutional, environmental, and financial factors that affect the effectiveness of this vital role. This is done by analyzing the structure of organizations and their response to the advocacy process, the existence of guidelines and regulating policies for advocacy, the level of knowledge, training, and staff capacities, the public space and external environment, community and stakeholder engagement, impact assessment and response review, risks of politicization and hate speech, and funding gaps

### At the Level of Public Space

The general context in which Palestinian civil society organizations operate is considered one of the most complex environments, due to an intertwined mix of influences from Israeli military occupation, Palestinian political division, administrative and security restrictions, the shrinking of civic space, and social, cultural, and technical obstacles. This has worsened following the genocide in the Gaza Strip.

These factors are deeply reflected in the organizations' capacities to practice advocacy, especially when it comes to political issues related to liberation, holding the occupation accountable, or socially sensitive issues such as sexual harassment.<sup>2</sup>

In the Gazan context specifically, the restrictions imposed by the occupation authorities, including the closure of crossings and the prevention of movement between the West Bank and Gaza, weaken the capacity of staff to participate in regional and international forums, limiting access to international decision-makers and policymakers. Moreover, the Palestinian legal environment itself suffers from wide gaps, most notably the absence of a unified law between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and interventions by security apparatuses and political authorities in the work of civil society, leading to self-censorship or reluctance to address certain issues.<sup>3</sup>

Digital space does not necessarily represent a safe alternative, as many organizations and individuals face campaigns of digital restriction, including surveillance, hacking, and defamation, especially if the campaigns are linked to international parties or take positions intersecting with the "red lines" set by governmental authorities or the occupation. Many organizations lack clear digital security strategies and do not provide their staff with sufficient training or tools to deal with these risks.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mohamed Herz, Director of Ajyal Association for Creativity and Development, personal interview on October 20, 2025

<sup>3</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Sultan Nasser Juha, Advocacy Expert, Personal Interview 10 October 2025

Furthermore, the communications and internet infrastructure in Palestine suffers from chronic delays and deliberate interventions from the occupation, weakening the quality of communications, which affects organizations' ability to organize effective digital campaigns or conduct visual and written communication with international partners.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of content, advocacy issues are also subject to increasing social, religious, and cultural censorship, especially when addressing topics such as gender-based violence, divorce, or even personal freedoms, which are sometimes viewed as imported issues or in conflict with societal culture, creating a complex environment that organizations must navigate carefully.<sup>6</sup>

## **At the Level of Organizational Structure and Response to the Advocacy Process**

In most Palestinian civil society organizations, advocacy does not occupy a fixed and institutional position within the organizational structure in practice. It is often managed as an incidental function carried out by program staff, without being part of a specialized unit with a direct reporting line to senior management<sup>7</sup>. This reality reflects a structural challenge affecting advocacy effectiveness, especially in light of weak knowledge accumulation, institutional instability, and changing funding sources. Some organizations with more stable funding have established "advocacy units," but they are still limited and do not represent a general trend<sup>8</sup>.

With the absence of advocacy within the organization's structure, the burden of advocacy tasks falls on project staff<sup>9</sup> or volunteers<sup>10</sup>. Usually, these individuals implement advocacy activities within the context of the projects themselves, not within the organization's overall vision and mission. Project staff are often on temporary contracts, making it difficult for project coordinators to grasp the organization's mission, identity, and vision when implementing project activities<sup>11</sup>.

During the genocide war, a number of civil society organizations were forced to change their structure to respond to current challenges. The restructuring focused primarily on the organization's response to humanitarian relief, neglecting advocacy as an active unit within the organization due to critical priorities. The absence of advocacy from the organization's structure weakens internal coordination, leading to conflicting messages, duplication of efforts, and a lack of clarity in the organization's identity as an advocating

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<sup>5</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Rami Al-Sharafi, Journalist and media expert, 23 October 2025

<sup>7</sup> Samaher Al-Masri, Director of Al-Ataa Association, Personal Interview, October 10, 2025

<sup>8</sup> Sultan Nasser Juha, Advocacy Expert, Personal Interview 10 October 2025

<sup>9</sup> Ghaida Shawa, Project Officer of Haider Abdul Shafi Center for Development, Personal Interview, October 10, 2025

<sup>10</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Gaza Date November 13, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Ghaida Al-Shawa, Project Officer, Haider Abdul Shafi Center for Development, Personal Interview, October 10, 2025

actor, where advocacy in this case becomes part of activities within requests submitted to donors or a response to field pressure <sup>12</sup>.

Regarding coalitions, many organizations participate in various thematic frameworks and coalitions, such as the CEDAW convention, rights of persons with disabilities, early childhood, etc., but their participation in advocacy remains marginal and often non-strategic. Representation does not necessarily mean effectiveness, and clear protocols for managing partnerships or issuing joint statements are often absent<sup>13</sup>.

## At the Level of Existence of Guidelines and Policies on Advocacy Issues

A limited number of Palestinian civil society organizations still suffer from the absence of written and institutional policies or guidelines specifically for advocacy. Despite the availability of such policies and guidelines through the resource library provided by several networks, including the Palestinian NGOs Network<sup>14</sup>, the existence of these guidelines does not mean their activation. They often remain part of the organization's compliance procedures. Advocacy - when practiced - is often a response to a funding opportunity or circumstantial pressure, not the result of an institutional vision based on an adopted policy. Some organizations lack a procedural guide clarifying the steps for preparing advocacy messages, their approval, legal review, and identifying official spokespersons or tools for managing risks resulting from advocacy campaigns<sup>15</sup>.

Messages produced within advocacy projects are sometimes subject to reviews<sup>16</sup> by donors, imposing conditions related to politically acceptable language and vocabulary, sometimes restricting the organization's ability to adopt a radical rights-based or explicit political discourse amidst the genocide faced by Palestinian society. In the absence of internal policies, these messages become subject to personal interpretations or donor interference.

Furthermore, preserving supporting evidence for advocacy, such as photos, data, and human stories, is sometimes done in an unorganized manner, often without applying the Do No Harm principle or obtaining informed consent, exposing the organization to ethical and legal risks. A few organizations have developed data protection policies, but

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<sup>12</sup> Talal Abu Rukba, Researcher, Personal Interview, 25 October 2025

<sup>13</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Mahmoud Hamada ‐Palestinian NGOs Network, Personal Interview, November 19, 2025

<sup>15</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025

<sup>16</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025

they remain ungeneralized and unsupported by secure digital systems due to resource constraints.

Regarding dealing with media and social media, many organizations lack a clear communication policy that controls the message<sup>17</sup>. An official spokesperson is not always designated, leading to scattered media messages or increased risks of misunderstanding, especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as gender-based violence or occupation violations<sup>18</sup>.

## At the Level of Knowledge, Training, and Staff Capacities

Palestinian civil society organizations suffer from a clear gap in the knowledge and technical aspects related to advocacy, especially at the international and digital levels. Often, staff working in these organizations - particularly at the field level - do not receive sufficient training in specialized skills such as public policy analysis, formulating advocacy messages, pressure tools, local and international legal frameworks, and preparing materials directed at decision-makers or international public opinion.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, many organizations rely on non-institutional individual expertise or external consultants, often linked to the implementation of short-term funded projects, without a permanent plan or institutional knowledge accumulation. Also, only a limited number of organizations have an annual capacity-building plan for staff in the field of advocacy, and if it exists, it does not necessarily include all staff, but is limited to the media or project circles.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of familiarity with international humanitarian law and human rights law, the vast majority of staff lack in-depth knowledge of the legal framework governing advocacy work at the international level, such as UN mechanisms, special rapporteurs' reports, or the Geneva Conventions. This weakens their ability to formulate clear legal demands based on international references.<sup>21</sup>

Palestinian civil society organizations face a clear weakness in knowledge management within their institutions, as they lack organized systems and tools for documenting and exchanging experiences. There are no digital libraries or open-source databases that all relevant staff can benefit from and analyze. Also, a large portion of organizations do not commit to preserving lessons learned from previous projects or advocacy campaigns.

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<sup>17</sup> Rami Al-Sharafi, Board Member of a Non-Governmental Organization, 23 October 2025

<sup>18</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

<sup>19</sup> Samaher Al-Masri, Director of Al-Ataa Association, Personal Interview, October 10, 2025

<sup>20</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, unified tools for monitoring and accountability are absent, such as templates, forms, and common standards for evaluation and reporting.

This weakness in knowledge management leads to a loss of institutional knowledge accumulation in advocacy and repetition of mistakes in planning and implementation when conducting advocacy processes. It also limits organizations' ability to develop future advocacy strategies based on previous experiences. The situation worsened during the genocide war in Gaza, where the headquarters of dozens of organizations were completely or partially destroyed, leading to the loss of archives, data, and internal files that represented valuable institutional memory.

Due to the absence of mechanisms for exchanging experiences and mutual learning between organizations, knowledge has become scattered and individual, relying on personal expertise rather than sustainable institutional systems, weakening the effectiveness and impact of civil work in the complex work environment experienced by Palestine.<sup>22</sup>

Weak language capabilities, especially in the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish)<sup>23</sup>, is also one of the most prominent obstacles to international advocacy orientation, as work teams are often unable to formulate impactful human rights statements or communicate directly with various international institutions and reach a wider international audience.<sup>24</sup>

## At the Level of Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The issue of involving the local community in advocacy efforts is one of the most problematic aspects for Palestinian civil society organizations. Although the majority of organizations theoretically emphasize the importance of community participation, practical reality shows that advocacy is often designed and managed from the top down<sup>25</sup>, without actual involvement of local communities, sometimes failing to address the depth of their priorities and perceptions regarding the genocide they are experiencing. This causes the local public to lose a sense of ownership over advocacy.

This top-down approach to designing advocacy makes the community a passive recipient rather than an active partner. Moreover, most organizations lack systematic mechanisms for community accountability, such as effective complaint systems, feedback on advocacy campaigns, or reviewing the impact of messages on target groups. The actual participation of marginalized groups in shaping advocacy priorities is

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<sup>22</sup> Talal Abu Rukba, Researcher, Personal Interview, 25 October 2025

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.un.org/ar/our-work/official-languages>

<sup>24</sup> Rami Al-Sharafi, Board Member of a Non-Governmental Organization, 23 October 2025

<sup>25</sup> Mohamed Haddouka, Volunteer in a Youth Group, Personal Interview, October 23, 2025

absent, leading to the production of non-representative or elitist narratives.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the organization may lose the popular base that supports its steps.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that there is a necessary need to prepare the local community, especially the displaced and their representatives, with the knowledge and tools that enable them to lead real advocacy efforts within their communities or convey their voices to official authorities. The absence of this integration deprives advocacy campaigns of their social legitimacy and makes it difficult to mobilize the local public around rights issues, especially in light of the influence of hate speech or accusations of treason, and fear of security and social consequences.<sup>28</sup>

## At the Level of Public Discourse and Advocacy Narrative

Public discourse and narrative represent two structural challenges for Palestinian civil society organizations when implementing advocacy campaigns, especially amid the ongoing genocide war, the reality of political division between Gaza and the West Bank, and the risks of internal violence and its impact on civil work. This context produces a tense and charged environment, forcing organizations in many cases to adopt a "cautious discourse," avoiding clashing with any political or authoritative party, at the expense of rights and justice-based advocacy.

One manifestation of these complexities is the decision by the US administration in September 2025 to include Al-Haq, Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights (Al-Mezan), and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) on the sanctions list under Executive Order 14203 concerning imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court, due to these institutions' participation in international legal advocacy efforts.<sup>29</sup>

While some organizations are aware of the difference between neutral, rights-based political advocacy and the politicization of humanitarian issues, many organizations feel that there are red lines for advocacy that cannot be crossed on certain issues.

Issues most affected by hate speech are those related to gender and women, such as marriage, divorce, custody rights, or personal freedoms. Advocacy campaigns in these areas are sometimes met with defamation and skepticism campaigns or are viewed as Westernizing projects aimed at dismantling the societal fabric. This places organizations

<sup>26</sup> Rami Al-Sharafi, Board Member of a Non-Governmental Organization, 23 October 2025

<sup>27</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Gaza Date November 13, 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Mohamed Haddouka, Volunteer in a Youth Group, Personal Interview, October 23, 2025

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, <https://www.state.gov/releases/2025/09/sanctioning-foreign-ngos-directly-engaged-in-iccs-illegitimate-targeting-of-israel>

before a dilemma: either proceed with an explicit rights-based discourse or retreat to preserve social legitimacy and institutional security<sup>30</sup>.

At the international level, Palestinian civil society organizations face a deep gap in their discourse directed at the international community amidst the genocide. The siege has led to field and media isolation, limiting these organizations' ability to communicate directly with the outside world or build effective solidarity networks and alliances with international institutions and global public opinion. Furthermore, fears of US sanctions or defamation campaigns led by Israeli lobbying groups impose additional restrictions on Palestinian rights-based and political discourse, pushing many organizations to adopt diluted and softened language, fearing classification or targeting.

Despite the existence of widespread popular and international sympathy with Palestinian suffering during the genocide, Palestinian civil society organizations have not been able to transform this sympathy into organized political pressure or a coherent rights-based narrative reflecting the Palestinian story in international forums. In contrast, the efforts of individuals and independent activists, as well as some international organizations, have emerged more strongly and influentially in shaping public opinion and defending Palestinian rights than local organizations<sup>31</sup>. This reality reveals a gap in communication capacities and the ability to frame discourse among local organizations and confirms the need to build a unified professional discourse capable of overcoming the siege and marginalization and achieving tangible impact on global public opinion and decision-makers.

Accordingly, the Palestinian NGOs Network seeks to influence international policies in UN forums through its sectors and member organizations by submitting joint reports and shadow reports through which they present human rights violations and provide specific recommendations, some of which have been adopted in reports by international special rapporteurs. As well as influencing donor policies regarding funding directed to local organizations and funding conditions. A tangible example in this field is the success of advocacy efforts in including specific issues such as conditional funding, leading to a review of some international funding policies towards Palestinian organizations to ensure their flexibility and independence.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Gaza Date November 13, 2025.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Mahmoud Hamada ‐Advocacy Coordinator at the Palestinian NGOs Network, Personal Interview, November 19, 2025

## At the Level of Funding Gaps

Funding gaps are among the fundamental factors hindering advocacy efforts in the work of Palestinian civil society organizations<sup>33</sup>, as advocacy does not occupy a priority in resource allocation compared to essential services such as education, health, psychological support, and relief. In many organizations, the percentage of funding allocated for advocacy does not exceed 3% of the general budget, and this funding often comes within short-term projects funded by international donors, without being viewed as a long-term investment in societal change or policy influence.<sup>34</sup>

Available funding for advocacy suffers from several problems; most notably its lack of flexibility, with part of it linked to political conditions and narrative frameworks that conflict with donor orientations. Advocacy related to holding the occupation accountable is sensitive for many funders, pushing some organizations to manipulate discourse or avoid core issues in exchange for obtaining funding, which contributes to emptying advocacy of its rights-based content. Advocacy groups have also faced accusations of antisemitism, leading to funding withdrawal, defamation, and platform cancellations, in attempts to strip them of legitimacy and silence critical voices.<sup>35</sup>

Conditional funding may also create a gap between the content of advocacy and the actual Palestinian reality amid the challenges faced by the Palestinian people. This tension weakens the effectiveness of messages and affects the local community's trust in the civil society sector.

Weak funding also means the absence of the ability to hire specialized advocacy staff, such as experts in digital campaigns, researchers, international legal experts, or public policy analysts, forcing organizations to rely on non-specialist project staff or unsustainable consultancy services.<sup>36</sup> Funding gaps also hinder access to UN mechanisms, submitting shadow reports, or participating in Human Rights Council sessions or addressing special rapporteurs.<sup>37</sup>

Reliance on a single funding source increases the fragility of the organization and makes it more vulnerable to funding fluctuations or political pressures. Conversely, very few organizations have succeeded in building a "diversified funding basket" including multiple sources or developing unrestricted funding that allows them freedom in choosing advocacy issues and tools.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Anas Bouatneh, Ola Adawi : Research Paper on the Needs of Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank during and after the Israeli Aggression, Palestinian NGO Network, p. 20

<sup>34</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

<sup>35</sup> Osuchukwu, N. C., Idigo, B. C., Udegbunam, C. U., & Mbanefo, O. D. (2025). Political Mobilization and Advocacy Strategies of Palestinian Groups Amid Genocide Allegations in the Gaza Conflict, 2023–2024. International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, 6(8), 4601–4624. <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.6.0825.3141>

<sup>36</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> A focus group held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGOs Network in Deir Al-Balah on October 20, 2025.

## At the Level of Impact Assessment and Response Review

Impact assessment of advocacy is considered one of the weakest institutional links for the majority of Palestinian civil society organizations, due to the nature of advocacy itself as a non-linear process, the difficulty of measuring its tangible results in the short term, in addition to organizations' weak awareness of the existence of qualitative evaluation tools specifically designed for this purpose. Organizations often focus on superficial outputs such as the number of statements issued, pressure campaigns, or digital participations, without possessing a comprehensive framework to track changes in policies, decision-makers' stances, or general social behavior towards a specific issue.<sup>39</sup>

Most organizations do not possess a theory of change specific to advocacy efforts or qualitative tools measuring the extent to which advocacy messages reach the target audience or their impact on the behavior of local authorities, donors, or the international community. Also, the indicators adopted in funded projects rarely go beyond the scope of activities (outputs), without addressing real change outcomes or long-term impact. Furthermore, post-campaign reviews are usually not conducted effectively, leading to a failure to generalize lessons learned and weak knowledge accumulation within the organization.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, organizations do not always distinguish between "reaching the general public" and "reaching decision-makers," creating a kind of digital inflation in success evaluation based on public interaction on social media platforms, without real impact on the decision-making process or amending existing policies. To achieve real improvement in this area, there is an urgent need to develop local tools appropriate to the Palestinian context, combining quantitative and qualitative indicators, and considering the nature of the relationship with authorities, political division, and dual legal references.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, successful models have emerged showing the possibility of achieving tangible impact when conducting advocacy using appropriate tools. Examples include:

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<sup>39</sup> Rawan Fayyad, Follow-up, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Consultant, Personal Interview, October 22, 2025

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Sultan Nasser Juha, Advocacy Expert, Personal Interview 10 October 2025

Palestinian NGOs Network ≡

Issue ≡

Problem ≡

Tool Used ≡

Impact ✓

**Issue**

Extending the validity of signatures of civil society organizations' boards of directors

**Problem**

Regulations issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Interior stipulated that the validity of board signatures expires three months after the end of the electoral term, due to the inability of civil society organizations to hold elections, which disrupted the work of many associations and halted their administrative and financial transactions.

**Tool Used**

Policy dialogue led by the Palestinian NGOs Network with relevant government agencies, supported by official meetings, intensive communications, and official memos and notes.

**Impact**

The Palestinian Council of Ministers responded to the demand, formally approving the extension of signature validity to six months, helping to ensure the continuity of associations' work and putting an end to disruptions to their activities.

Save Youth Future Society, Social Developmental Forum, Ajyal, Medical Relief Society, Al-Awda Health Association, Haidar Abdel Shafi Health Association ≡

Issue ≡

Problem ≡

Tool Used ≡

Impact ✓

**Issue**

Discovery of polio cases in the Gaza Strip

**Problem**

The emergence of polio infection cases due to vaccine interruption and difficulty entering them into the Strip because of the siege and imposed restrictions, posing a widespread health risk to children.

**Tool Used**

Awareness and implementation of pressure and advocacy campaigns led by civil society organizations in coordination with health authorities and international organizations to pressure for the urgent entry of vaccines into Gaza.

**Impact**

Polio vaccines were introduced into the Strip, and over half a million children received the second dose, making 94% of children under the age of ten protected from the life-threatening disease.

Issue	Problem	Tool Used
Enactment of the Right to Access Information Law	Absence of a legal framework regulating citizens' right to obtain information, weak transparency and accountability in public institutions, and the need to align legislation with international standards.	Sustained pressure through advocacy campaigns, preparation of specialized policy papers, organization of workshops and national dialogues, mobilizing public opinion, participation in drafting the law in cooperation with civil society organizations and broad coalitions (including the AMAN coalition and human rights and media institutions).
Impact		
Issuance of Decree-Law No. (10) of 2021 regarding the right to obtain information, representing an important step towards enhancing transparency and accountability and ensuring citizens' right to access public information.		

## V. Policy Recommendations

Based on the institutional diagnosis of the structural and organizational gaps in the work of Palestinian civil society organizations, especially in light of the current state of emergency, this paper proposes a set of policy recommendations aimed at enhancing institutional readiness, developing capacities, improving community participation, and providing a sustainable funding environment for advocacy. These recommendations are based on a comprehensive approach that integrates institutionalization, alliance-building, flexible funding, and long-term strategic planning.

These recommendations seek to shift the role of civil society organizations from limited reactive work to a sustainable and effective institutional approach in advocacy, based on strategic planning, activating the community role, building impactful partnerships, developing institutional guidelines, and providing flexible funding that supports continuity. Adopting these policies will enhance organizations' ability to influence public policies and protect the rights of marginalized groups in Palestine, especially under the exceptional circumstances witnessed by the Gaza Strip.

### First: Policies to Enhance Institutional Structuring for Advocacy

01

Establishing specialized advocacy units within civil society organizations directly linked to senior management and granted flexible powers for rapid response to humanitarian and political developments.

02

Developing internal coordination mechanisms between programs and departments to ensure integration of positions and rights-based messages and limit conflicting discourse during crises.

03

Preparing a clear organizational structure and job description for advocacy units, along with an annual advocacy plan linked to program plans.

04

Implementing capacity-building plans for staff in the field of advocacy to bridge human resource gaps in the event of sudden structural changes.

### Second: Policies for Developing Institutional Guidelines and References for Advocacy

01

Preparing a written package of advocacy policies including: Emergency Advocacy, Advocacy Evaluation, Data Protection Policy, "Do No Harm" Policy, and Official Spokesperson Guide.

02

Developing a unified guide for rights-based messages based on neutral language and international standards, ensuring harmony among messages issued by institutions.

03

Disseminating advocacy policies adopted by the Palestinian NGOs Network to institutions that do not yet have clear guidelines, to enhance sectoral consistency.

04

Integrating advocacy evaluation standards within Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems to ensure systematic measurement of campaign effectiveness.

### Third: Capacity Building and Knowledge Development Policies

01

Implementing a specialized training program in rights-based advocacy in a war environment, including digital security, monitoring and documentation, position preparation, and policy analysis.

02

Preparing a standardized training curriculum addressing international humanitarian law, local laws, literature on women, children, and persons with disabilities, and policy analysis tools.

03

Enhancing staff proficiency in major global languages to ensure organizations' ability to deal with international media and cross-border reports.

04

Adopting English language proficiency as a basic condition for employment in advocacy units to enhance quality and effectiveness.

#### Fourth: Policies to Enhance Community Participation in Advocacy



01

Adopting a community-based advocacy approach that places marginalized groups—women, youth, persons with disabilities, the displaced—at the center of the priority-setting process.

02

Forming representative local advisory committees that participate in advocacy planning and identifying priority issues.

03

Building the capacities of volunteer and community committees in the digital aspects of advocacy to enhance local impact.

04

Integrating internally displaced persons into decision-making processes related to advocacy to raise the legitimacy and representativeness of the discourse of the humanitarian reality.

#### Fifth: Policies to Enhance Impact Measurement and Improve Response



01

Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework specific to advocacy that focuses on measuring qualitative impact and shifts in policies and practices resulting from campaigns.

02

Preparing a matrix of qualitative indicators measuring behavioral and institutional changes among decision-makers and the public.

03

Conducting post-campaign assessments (After-Action Review) to extract lessons and develop future advocacy methodologies.

04

Formulating a theory of change specific to advocacy that aligns with the conflict environment and enhances the organization's ability for long-term planning.

#### Sixth: Advocacy Funding and Sustainability Policies



01

Adopting a sustainable advocacy funding strategy based on diversifying funding sources, including unrestricted funding, community funding, and international alliances.

02

Integrating a permanent advocacy funding line into program and project budgets to ensure activity continuity and not link them solely to emergency conditions.

03

Establishing an emergency fund to support rights-based campaigns during periods of war and crises.

04

Relying on local funding sources such as the private sector, businessmen, and collective digital fundraising campaigns to reduce dependence on international donors.

## Seventh: Adopting Strong and Effective Advocacy Messages



01

Adopting joint advocacy messages among Palestinian civil society organizations, formulating them accurately and clearly based on the principles of international humanitarian law and the existing humanitarian context in the Gaza Strip.

02

Unifying discourse to enhance credibility and increase impact, and ensuring consistency of messages directed to decision-makers and international parties, limiting the dispersion of efforts and enhancing the collective capacity for pressure and accountability.

03

Focusing on formulating targeted and appropriate messages for each target entity, based on practical and implementable demands, away from presenting ideas or beliefs, and in line with the humanitarian and rights-based approach.

04

Strengthening and building multi-level strategic alliances including international human rights alliances, networks of Arab civil society organizations, partnerships with unions and federations, in addition to alliances with student and youth movements, contributing to expanding the support base, unifying efforts, and enhancing impact on advocacy tracks at regional and international levels.

## Eighth: Optimal Use of Advocacy Tools to Influence Policies, Increase Awareness, and Support Various Issues



01

Conducting research and analytical studies: Collecting accurate data and conducting field studies to support issues with evidence, preparing brief and clear reports and position papers that facilitate understanding of needs and demands effectively by decision-makers and target groups.

02

Implementing targeted media campaigns: Using traditional and digital media to disseminate messages effectively, producing attractive visual content such as infographics and videos, making it easier for the target group to grasp the issue and enhance support for it.

03

Direct advocacy with decision-makers: Holding official meetings with officials to present demands directly and in an organized manner, in addition to sending petitions and official letters to follow up on responses and enhance the position of civil society organizations in influencing policies.

04

Using existing laws and policies: Monitoring the application of laws and policies and holding responsible parties accountable in case of violation or negligence, in addition to submitting formal complaints or filing lawsuits when needed to protect rights and promote justice.

## **Proposed Policies to Enhance the Role of Civil Society Organizations in Advocacy Efforts**

This section of the policy paper is dedicated to presenting a set of policies based on the previous diagnosis of institutional gaps, aimed at enhancing the organizational structure and technical capacities and improving the internal and external work environment of civil society organizations. These policies seek to shift from temporary reactive work to building a sustainable and proactive approach in advocacy, based on institutionalization, strategic planning, participatory alliances, flexible funding, and community integration:

## 1 At the level of organizational structure and its response to the advocacy process



THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Absence of an institutional unit specialized in advocacy and weak integration between departments during emergencies.	<p><i>"Empowering and establishing advocacy units within the civil society organization so that they are linked to senior management, granted flexible powers to manage public discourse and rapid response to humanitarian developments, while developing internal coordination mechanisms between programs to ensure integration of institutional messages and positions in a conflict environment."</i></p>
<b>SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS</b>	
01	Preparing a clear job description and administrative structure for advocacy units.
02	Preparing an integrated annual plan for advocacy activities linked to program and project plans.
03	Preparing a staff capacity-building plan across various programs in advocacy campaigns, aiming to bridge gaps in case of emergency structural changes in institutions.

## 2 At the level of guidelines and policies specific to advocacy



THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Absence of written policies regulating rights-based discourse and mechanisms for managing risks and communication during crises.	<p><i>"Preparing a comprehensive package of institutional advocacy policies including: Emergency Advocacy Policy, Advocacy Evaluation Policies, Data Protection Policy, 'Do No Harm' Policy, and Official Spokesperson Guide. These policies aim to establish approved foundations for the advocacy process."</i></p>
<b>SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS</b>	
01	Developing a unified guide for rights-based messages using neutral language and based on international standards.
02	Disseminating advocacy policies approved by the Palestinian NGOs Network to organizations that do not yet have approved guidelines.
03	Developing Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) guides to include parts for effectively evaluating advocacy processes.

### 3 At the level of knowledge, training and staff capabilities



THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Weak capacities of staff in policy analysis, using secure digital advocacy tools, and understanding international humanitarian law.	<i>"Implementing a specialized capacity-building program for staff in the field of rights-based advocacy in a war environment, including training on digital security, monitoring and documentation, position preparation, and using data in campaigns."</i>

**SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS**

**01**  
Designing and implementing a standardized training curriculum that includes raising the awareness of advocacy workers on international humanitarian law, policy analysis tools, local laws, and literature on women, children, and persons with disabilities.

**02**  
Building the capacities of advocacy workers in the five major languages, and improving recruitment processes so that proficiency in a foreign language, at least English, becomes a unified standard for civil society organizations when appointing or selecting advocacy workers.

### 4 At the level of community engagement



THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Weak popular participation in setting advocacy priorities and weak community accountability mechanisms.	<i>"Adopting a community-based advocacy approach to ensure representation of marginalized groups (women, youth, persons with disabilities, the displaced) in the process of identifying advocacy issues, through consultative mechanisms, enhancing the legitimacy of civil discourse and increasing the organization's acceptance within the community during emergencies."</i>

**SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS**

**01**  
Forming advisory committees or representative local community committees from various groups and involving them effectively in advocacy planning.

**02**  
Building the capacities of local and volunteer committees in advocacy, especially in digital aspects.

**03**  
Focusing on integrating internally displaced persons into advocacy planning processes.

## 5 At the level of impact and response review

THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Absence of tools to measure the qualitative impact of campaigns and weak analysis of actual advocacy outcomes.	<p><i>"Developing a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework so that it becomes capable of measuring the impact and outcomes of advocacy processes, including qualitative indicators to measure changes in policies and practices, while building the organization's theory of change in the field of advocacy under conflict."</i></p>
<b>SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS</b>	
01	Developing a matrix of qualitative indicators measuring behavioral and institutional changes and decision-makers' responses to advocacy campaigns.
02	Preparing post-campaign evaluation reports (After-Action Review) to extract lessons from experiences and campaigns.

## 6 At the funding level

THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Weak flexible funding for advocacy and its dependence on short-term politically conditioned grants	<p><i>"Adopting a sustainable advocacy funding strategy based on diversifying funding sources (community funding, unrestricted funding, international alliances), integrating a permanent advocacy funding line into project budgets, and establishing an emergency fund to support rights-based campaigns in times of war."</i></p>
<b>SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS</b>	
01	Preparing a multi-source funding mobilization plan to ensure financial sustainability; it is not necessary to rely on international donors for funding mobilization plans, and conversely, advocacy units in particular may rely on internal funders such as the private sector, businessmen, or collective digital fundraising campaigns.

## 7 At the level of public discourse and advocacy messages

THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Scattered discourse, multiplicity of messages, and weak alignment with the humanitarian and legal context.	<i>"Adopting and unifying joint advocacy messages among Palestinian civil society organizations, formulating them accurately based on the principles of international humanitarian law and the humanitarian context in the Gaza Strip, while aligning them according to the target entities of the message."</i>
<b>SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS</b>	
01	A unified framework for humanitarian advocacy messages.
02	Advocacy messages directed at decision-makers, international parties, and UN agencies.
03	Forming international human rights alliances, Arab civil society networks, partnerships with unions and federations, along with alliances with student and youth movements to support joint advocacy efforts.

## 8 At the level of using advocacy tools

THE GAP	PROPOSED POLICY INTERVENTION
Lack of accurate data and analytical studies supporting issues. Weak media coverage and public awareness of issues. Limited direct communication with decision-makers. Shortcomings in following up on the application of existing laws and policies.	<i>"Collecting accurate data and conducting field studies to prepare brief and clear reports and position papers. Implementing targeted media campaigns through traditional and digital media, producing attractive visual content (infographics, videos). Holding official meetings with officials and sending petitions and official letters to follow up on responses. Monitoring the application of laws and policies and holding responsible parties accountable in case of violation, and submitting complaints or filing lawsuits when needed."</i>
<b>SPECIFIC PRACTICAL OUTPUTS</b>	
01	Reports and position papers supported by evidence that facilitate understanding of needs and demands by decision-makers and target groups.
02	Diverse media content that reaches target groups and increases awareness and support for the issue.
03	Following up on official responses and enhancing the position of civil society organizations in influencing policies.
04	Protecting rights, promoting justice, and activating legal accountability.

## VI. References

Previous Research and Studies		
No.	Reference Language	Reference
1	English Reference	Osuchukwu, N. C., Idigo, B. C., Udegbunam, C. U., & Mbanefo, O. D. (2025). Political Mobilization and Advocacy Strategies of Palestinian Groups Amid Genocide Allegations in the Gaza Conflict, 2023–2024. <i>International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews</i> , 6(8), 4601–4624. <a href="https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.6.0825.3141">https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.6.0825.3141</a>
2	Arabic reference	Anas Bouatneh, Ola Adawi. A research paper on the needs of Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank during and after the Israeli aggression. Palestinian NGO Network.

Personal Interviews			
No.	Name	Capacity / Employer	History
1	Sultan Nasir Juha	Expert in the field of advocacy	10 October 2025
2	Samaher Al Masri	Executive Director of a Non-Governmental Organization	10 October 2025
3	Ghaida Shawa	Project Officer	10 October 2025
4	Talal Abu Rukba	Researcher	25 October 2025
5	Rami Al Sharafi	Board Member of a Non-Governmental Organization	23 October 2025
6	Mohammad Hadouqa	Volunteer in a youth group	23 October 2025
7	Rawan Fayyad	Follow-up, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning (MEAL) Consulting	22 October 2025
8	Samir Saad Khalifa	Journalist	13 November 2025
9	Dr. Raed Halas	Researcher	13 November 2025
10	Mahmoud Hamada	Advocacy Coordinator at the Palestinian NGOs Network	19 November 2025
11	Nuha Al Sharif	Media and Advocacy Coordinator, Agricultural Development Association - PARC	20 November 2025

### Focus Group:

Two focus groups were held at the headquarters of the Palestinian NGO Network in Deir al-Balah on October 10, 2025, and in Gaza City on November 13, 2025, attended by:

NAME OF THE FOUNDATION		≡
1	Al-At'a Charity Association	2
3	Ajyal Association for Creativity and Development	4
5	Agricultural Development Association "Agricultural Relief"	6
7	Palestinian Medical Relief Society	8
9	Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network	10
11	Democracy and Workers' Rights Center	12
13	Al-Najda Social Association	14
15	Educational Counseling Center Association	16
17	Arab Center for Agricultural Development	18
19	Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution	

ELECTRONIC WEBSITES			🌐
No.	Website Address	Access Date	
1	<a href="http://www.oxfamireland.org/press/israeli-attacks-kill-oxfam-partner-colleague-destroy-clinics-in-gaza">www.oxfamireland.org/press/israeli-attacks-kill-oxfam-partner-colleague-destroy-clinics-in-gaza</a>	October 10, 2025	
2	<a href="http://www.state.gov/releases/2025/09/sanctioning-foreign-ngos-directly-engaged-in-iccs-illegitimate-targeting-of-israel">www.state.gov/releases/2025/09/sanctioning-foreign-ngos-directly-engaged-in-iccs-illegitimate-targeting-of-israel</a>	October 11, 2025	
3	<a href="http://https://www.un.org/ar/our-work/official-languages">https://www.un.org/ar/our-work/official-languages</a>	October 7, 2025	



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