70 Years to '48: The Role of Media in Shaping Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel

Wednesday, June 6, 2018, JPC (Jerusalem Press Club), Mishkenot Sha'ananim, Jerusalem

* The discussion will be held in Hebrew. Simultaneous translation into English will be available

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In the Declaration of Independence of May 14, 1948, the newly born State of Israel undertook that it would "ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex" and would "guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture." The declaration combined the Jewish character of the state with its democratic character. Alongside the statement "We hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, to be known as the State of Israel," the declaration called upon the " the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel … to participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship."

The past few years have witnessed an intense public debate over attempts to define Israel as a "Jewish state" for the first time since 1948. The Arab community's leadership rejects initiatives by the government to legislate the Jewish character of the state. Criticism of the Jewish character of the state is based on both pragmatic and ideological arguments. On the pragmatic level, the claim is made that the definition in national law may deepen discrimination against the Arab public, whose members are citizens of the state, especially since the law will effectively nullify the status of Arabic as a second official language. On the ideological level, the discussion revisits the events of 1948, the conflict between Jews and Arabs over the land, and the circumstances under which Israel was established. Thus, 70 years later, considerable questions remain regarding the balance between the Jewish and the democratic character of the state.

The debate is conducted in many media outlets: print media, television and radio stations, Internet sites and social networks. The media revolution in the past decade is felt mainly among young people who are connected in real time to political events. Thus, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, especially among the "smartphone and Facebook generation."

The concept of an "imagined community" from the past has now given way to a "virtual community" that is not geographically, politically or socially defined. The younger generation does not hesitate to make its voice heard. The intense activity in the virtual arena serves as a catalyst for protest activity in the field, as occurred in late 2013 during the protest against the Prawer project (for resettling Bedouin inhabitants in the Negev), in October of 2015 during the spontaneous demonstrations in protest of the events at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and even this past May.

This state of affairs raises several questions:

- What images do media outlets in different languages create of the "other side"?
- How is the image of the Arab citizen portrayed in Hebrew media? Alternatively, how are state institutions and the Jewish majority portrayed in the Arabic-language media?
- Does the proliferation of media, especially social networks, contribute to deepening the rift between Jews and Arabs or could it contribute to softening differences and improving mutual understanding?
- Compared to the past, do the media and social networks now serve as a channel for 'letting off steam' and a substitute for protest measures on the ground, or do they actually serve as a channel of mobilization and a catalyst for more active protest?
- In situations of conflict, is it the role of media professionals to describe reality to the target audience or consciously aspire to change public opinion?

19:15	**Gathering**
19:45 – 20:30	**Iftar Dinner**
20:30 – 21:30	**Roundtable discussion: "The Role of Media in Shaping Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel"**

Greetings:	**Dr. Alexander Brakel**, Director, KAS Israel Office
Moderators:	**Iman al-Qassem,** Journalist, editor, and broadcaster, Kol Israel in Arabic
	Dr. Ronni Shaked, The Harry S. Truman Institute, correspondent on Arab Affairs for Yedioth Aharanot
Participants:	**Dr. Itamar Radai,** Academic Director, Konrad Adenauer Program
	Eran Singer, Arab Affairs Editor - Israeli Public Broadcasting (KAN)
	Wadea Awawdy, Author and journalist, expert and commentator on Arab and Middle Eastern affairs
	Arik Rudnitzky, Project Manager, Konrad Adenauer Program
	Dr. Hama Abu Kishek, Department of Communications, Tel Aviv University
	Nazir Majalli, Author and journalist
	Elhanan Miller, Journalist and blogger on Arab affairs, researcher at the Forum for Regional Thinking
	Kholod Massalha, Project Coordinator of I'lam – Arab Center for Media Freedom, Development and Research
	And others