

9

Civic Education in Palestine

Background

In 2005, PASSIA embarked on this new project feeling that it is imperative at the current critical stage in Palestinian history that people who are and will be shaping their future are equipped with relevant knowledge and experience. The leaders of tomorrow lay today the basis of civic life in the anticipated state and promote the practice of a rule-of-law regime; yet, it is evident that there is a huge lack of the basics of civics among Palestinians, including appropriate understandings of constitutional principles (rule of law, separation of powers, individual freedoms and rights), concepts and purposes of citizenship and governments, and political and legal processes created to make decisions, seek consensus, and resolve conflicts in a free society, and so on.

For a democracy to survive and flourish, its citizens must know about the basic features of a democratic political system to be able to access it when their interests are at stake, and they must believe in the importance of certain key democratic values, such as tolerance for divergent viewpoints and support for the rule of law. They must also be willing and able to participate in local and national politics, and they must believe that their participation is important to the continued viability of the democratic political system.

In countries emerging from authoritarian rule, citizens often lack democratic experience, especially with regard to knowledge about formal democratic structures and processes and thus about the opportunities that exist for advancing their interests. Another common aspect in transitioning countries is that citizens experience difficulty adjusting to the competition, compromise, and loss that are inherent parts of the democratic political process. Without values such as political tolerance, trust in democratic institutions, and respect for the rule of law prevailing, this can be severely destabilizing, particularly if it ignites or exacerbates economic, ethnic, religious, and other forms of tensions.

The tool to counter the lack of democratic socialization is civic education, which, by imparting the necessary skills and knowledge, helps promoting support for democratic behaviors and values among ordinary citizens.

With this in mind, PASSIA launched the project, providing training courses in civics and governance for young professionals, with the aim to achieve a level of understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities among the citizens that is required for the maintenance and improvement of any constitutional democracy.

Program Activities

In a set of three seminars, the PASSIA civic education project sought to develop and empower groups of approx. 20 young professionals each to deal more effectively with the tasks ahead by enhancing their civic knowledge, skills and norms.

In 2005, PASSIA organized two such seminars, each of which lasted five days and imparted basics such as the meaning of constitutional democracy, types of government, features of the political system, and the ability to identify public issues and influence public policy decisions. In addition, each seminar focused on particular topics where an urgent need for knowledge and skills enhancement had been identified.

The seminars were organized as follows:

- (a) *Application and Selection of Participants.* Six to eight weeks before the actual training seminar, it was advertised in the local press. Application forms were available at PASSIA and candidates had two or three weeks to apply. A shortlist of applicants were then invited for interviews, conducted – in line with PASSIA’s policy - by an external examiner. Based on the results of these interviews, the selection of candidates was made.
- (b) *Preparatory Reading Period and Writing Assignment.* Upon selection, participants were required to state their and their employee’s acceptance of the placement in writing (PASSIA has specifically developed a form for this). Once the form was returned signed to PASSIA, the participant was provided with preparatory reading material gathered by the PASSIA Project Team in coordination with trainers and lecturers, with the aim to familiarize him/herself with the basic course subjects. Each participant was also assigned a topic on which to prepare a paper for presentation and/or discussion during the seminar.
- (c) *Intensive Training Seminar.* Trainees then attended a five-day training course in which they learned functional skills imparted by local and/or international experts. Where available or needed, additional study material was given and relevant case studies were examined. At the close of the seminar, participants received a second assignment, the completion of which formed an integral part of the overall course.
- (d) *Conclusion.* PASSIA collected the seminar proceedings (papers given and other possible materials deemed useful), and is selecting and editing them for publication in book form at the close of the program. Certificates were awarded to participants who completed the program.

During 2005, PASSIA planned, organized and implemented the following two seminars, one dealing with *Citizenship*, the other with *Human Rights*:

■ Seminar on Civics, Government & Citizenship

The course on Civics, Government & Citizenship was meant to act as an important mean for capacity development by improving the participants' understanding of democratic institutions and principles as well as empowering people for effective civic engagement.

The seminar was designed for participants who work in the governmental, private and NGO sectors and who would benefit from an opportunity to develop their civic education skills and knowledge and become more active and informed with regard to political processes and participation.

Following the selection of participants, the preparatory reading period commenced; each participant received a list of reading materials (assorted background articles) and the following writing assignment:

Based on what you know about the Palestinian Constitution, please write a 400-500 words essay commenting on/criticizing/evaluating it.

The actual seminar took place from 30 July to 3 August 2005 and was followed by a second assignment, that had to be completed within four weeks.

Course program:

Day One:

Saturday, 30 July 2005

9:00-9:30	Welcoming Address/Opening Remarks Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi , Head of PASSIA, Jerusalem
9:30-10:45	Introduction: Types of Government Dr. Gregory Mahler , Provost, Kalamazoo College, Michigan, USA
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-12:30	Constitutional Democracy: Universal Principles Dr. Gregory Mahler
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:00	Constitutional Democracy: Problems Dr. Gregory Mahler



- 15:00-15:15 Break
15:15-15:30 Evaluation of the day

Day Two: Sunday, 31 July 2005

- 9:15-10:45 Democratic Institutions, Structures and Processes
Dr. Gregory Mahler
- 10:45-11:00 Break
- 11:00-12:30 Constitutional Political Culture in the Middle East
Dr. Gregory Mahler
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch
- 13:30-15:00 The Palestinian Constitution
Dr. Ali Khashan, Head of the Law Department, Al-Quds University
- 15:00-15:15 Break
15:15-15:30 Evaluation of the day

Day Three: Monday, 1 August 2005

- 9:15 - 10:45 Government & Governance in the Arab-Islamic World
Dr. Nasser Eddin Al Shae'r, Dean, Faculty of Shari'a, An-Najah National University
- 10:45-11:00 Break





- 11:00-12:30 Religion and State from an Islamic Perspective
Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Islamic Research Center, Al-Quds University
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch
- 13:30-15:00 Citizenship and Citizens' Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities
Dr. Gregory Mahler
- 15:00-15:15 Break
- 15:15-15:30 Evaluation of the day

Day Four:**Tuesday, 2 August 2005**

- 9:15 - 10:45 The Concept of Citizenship, Nationality & Identity
Dr. Ali Jarbawi, Professor of Political Science, Birzeit University
- 10:45-11:00 Break
- 11:00-12:30 Palestinian Citizenship: Past, Present and Future.
Dr. Ali Jarbawi
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch
- 13:30-15:00 Citizens, Subjects and Metics
Dr. Saïd Zeedani, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Al-Quds University
- 15:00-15:10 Break
- 15:10-15:30 Evaluation of the day



Ali Jarbawi

Day Five:

Wednesday, 3 August 2005

9:15 - 10:45	Forms of Citizen Participation Dr. Ali Jarbawi
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-12:15	Case Study I Terry Bullata , Advocacy and Lobbying Department, PARC, Ramallah
12:15-13:15	Lunch
13:15-14:30	Case Study 2: Civil Society & Citizens' Rights Daoud Dar'awi , Legal Consultant, Defense for Children International-Palestine Section
14:30-14:40	Break
14:40-15:30	Final Discussion and Wrap up Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi

Participants:

Abdel Latif, Fida'

- Unit Director, Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ), Bethlehem.

Abu Hummos, Rania

- Director of Training, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ramallah.

Abu Khalaf, Naheel

- Director, Abu Khalaf Medical Laboratory, Nablus.

Aghazarian, Elise

- Researcher at PASSIA, Jerusalem

Aqel, Hanadi

- Head of Recruitment Department, General Personnel Council, Ramallah.

Al-Araj, Eyad

- Area Development Manager, World Vision, Jerusalem.

Awawdeh, Maher

- Director of the Department of Foreign Publications, Ministry of Information, Ramallah
- Publication Officer, Civic Forum Institute, Ramallah.

Dajani Abdel Latif, Lama

- BA, Business Administration, Birzeit University, Ramallah.

Al-Farra, Haya

- Coordinator and Assistant to the Head of the Technical Committee /Disengagement Plan, Office of Mohammed Dahlan, Gaza.



Hasan, Mirvat

- Department Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ramallah.

Herbawi, Wafa'

- Masters Candidate, Education Management, Birzeit University, Ramallah.

Jamous, Khalil

- Web Application Developer and IT Trainer, Al-Quds University, Jerusalem.

El Madhoun, Rafeek

- Logistics Assistant, United Nations World Food Program, Gaza.

Natsheh, Rawan

- Masters candidate, International Law and Human Rights, University of Malta, Malta; BA, Sociology and Anthropology, Birzeit University, Ramallah.

Nazzal, Nader

- Volunteer, Center for Defense Liberties and Civic Rights, Ramallah.

Omar, Rajaa

- Deputy Director, Ministerial and Legislative Council Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ramallah.

Qishawi, Thuqan

- Program Coordinator, American Friends Service Committee AFSC (Quakers), Ramallah.

Samara, Maies

- Volunteer, Development Worker Women Association, Tulkarem.

Serhed, Zakaria

- Officer of General Oversight and Human Rights Committee, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Ramallah.

Al-Shouli, Siba

- Masters candidate, Urban and Regional Planning, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), USA; B.Sc., Architecture, Birzeit University, Ramallah.

Al-Yousef, Areej

- Office Manager, Delegate of German Industry and Trade, Ramallah.

Al Za'aneen, Ibtisam

- Chairwoman, Al A'atta' Benevolent Association, Beit Hanoun.

Zakarneh, Ahmad

- BA, Accounting, Arab American University, Jenin.

At the close of the seminar, participants:

- understood how governments function and share governing authority;
- had an understanding of the three branches of government and the system of checks and balances;
- displayed comprehension of the core democratic values and the responsibilities of the citizen living in a democracy;
- had gained an understanding of the responsibilities of being a citizen in relation to the constitution.



■ Seminar on Civics, Constitution & Human Rights

The course on *Civics, Constitution & Human Rights* was designed to establish a fundamental background on the key issues, concepts and practice of human rights and to impart a deeper understanding of human rights issues and the skills and attitudes required to help in their defense.

The seminar addressed professionals who would benefit from an opportunity to develop their civic education skills and knowledge and become more active and informed with regard to political processes and participation.

Following the selection of participants, the preparatory reading period commenced; each participant received a list of reading materials (assorted background articles) and the following writing assignment:

- Give an example of a human rights violation that has occurred to you, your organization, or relatives of yours.
- State which human right was violated and cite the specific Article of it in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or any other document of international human rights law.

The course itself took place from 17-21 December 2005

Course program:

Day One:		Saturday, 17 December 2005
9:15-10:00	Welcoming Address/Opening Remarks Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi , Head of PASSIA, Jerusalem	
10:00-11:15	Constitutional Democracy - Principles & Problems Dr. Ali Jarbawi , Professor of Political Science, Birzeit University	
11:15-11:30	Break	
11:30-12:30	Constitutional Democracy - Principles & Problems Dr. Ali Jarbawi	
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-15:30	Participants assignment	
Day Two:		Sunday, 18 December 2005
9:15-10:45 Concept	Democracy as a Universal Dr. Ali Jarbawi , Professor of Political Science, Birzeit University	

- 10:45-11:00 Break
- 11:00-12:30 Democracy as a Political System of Governance
Dr. Ali Jarbawi, Professor of Political Science, Birzeit University
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch
- 13:30-15:30 Understanding Human Rights (understanding what are human rights – key values, history and evolution of human rights)
Dr. Yaser Amouri, Birzeit University

Day Three:**Monday, 19 December 2005**

- 9:15-11:30 The Palestinian Constitution
Dr. Feras Milhem, Assistant Professor of Constitutional and Comparative Law, Birzeit University



- 11:30-12:00 Break
- 12:00-13:30 Human Rights - Concepts and Principle (Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN Charter, Arab and Islamic Human Rights Charters)
Dr. Yaser Amouri, Birzeit University
- 13:30-14:00 Lunch





14:00-15:30 Human Rights - Concepts and Principle
Dr. Yaser Amouri, Birzeit University

Day Four: Tuesday, 20 December 2005

9:15-10:45 Human Rights and Gender and the Case of Women's Rights
Juliana Johann, International Relations Expert

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-12:30 Human Rights Skills (drafting reports, campaigning, lobbying and advocacy, registration of violations, information gathering, appraising evidence critically, being aware of preconceptions and biases, etc.)
Mohammed Abu Harthieh, UNDP

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-15:30 Human Rights Skills, contd.
Mohammed Abu Harthieh, UNDP

Day Five: Wednesday, 21 December 2005

9:15-10:45 Case Study 1: Example(s) of successful Human Rights Activism
Ayed Abu Kteish, DCI

11:00-12:30 Case Study 2: Example(s) of successful Human Rights Activism
Luna Sa'adeh, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-15:00 Final Discussion and Wrap up
Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi

At the close of the seminar, participants:

- had an understanding of meaning and functions a constitutional democracy;
- had gained an understanding of human rights issues and the skills and attitudes required to help in their defense.

Participants:

Abu Sa', Abdullah

- Legal Assistant, the Democracy and Workers Rights Center, Ramallah.

Alawneh, Tahsin

- Education and Social Affairs Committee Clerk, Palestinian Legislative Council, Ramallah.

Anaya, Ohood

- Director of Urban Planning Department, Ministry of Local Government, Ramallah.

Aref, Yosra

- BA, Political Science, An-Najah University, Nablus.

Asad, Samar

- Computer Instructor, the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development, Tulkarm.

Al-Bizreh, Khitam

- Child Program Coordinator, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Ramallah.

Daqah, Husni

- Director, Ministry of Interior, Ramallah

Hijazi, Saleh

- Public Relations Manager, Ministry of Planning, Ramallah.

Hijjawi, Shaher

- Program Coordinator, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ramallah.

Ismail, Muhammad

- Director, Office of the President, Al Mukata'a, Ramallah.

Jaffal, Faten

- Coordinator and Office Manager, Establishment for Management and Development of Orphans Fund, El-Izariyyeh.

Jaffal, Mu'tasem

- Lawyer, Ahmad As-Sayyad Law Office, Ramallah



Khatib, Hasan

- Lawyer, El Khatib Law Office, Bethany.

Khilleh, Taghrid

- Trainer and Facilitator, Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy (PCPD), Ramallah.

Khoury, Bassima

- Projects Coordinator, Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University, Ramallah.

Mustafa, Mohammed

- Youth Mobilization Coordinator, Stop the Wall, Jayyous, Ramallah.

An-Natshah, Manar

- Project Development Officer, Bani Naim Society, Hebron.

Odetallah, Kulthoom

- Researcher, Ensan Center for Democracy and Human Rights, Bethlehem.

Qabaha, Sa'ed

- Chief of Activities Department, Ministry of Education, Jenin.

Sabassi, Haifa

- Student Counselor and Teacher, Birzeit University, Ramallah.

Shafi, Fida'

- Advocacy and Lobbying Program Manager, Teacher Creativity Center, Ramallah

Shaheen, Samer

- Teacher, Aboud School, Birzeit.

Thabit, Ekrema

- Media Officer, Mandela Institute, Ramallah

