Between the National and the Islamic: Representation of Jerusalem in the media coverage of HAMAS-affiliated Aqsa TV

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ABSTRACT

The issues of Jerusalem, the holy city, are of vital importance to the Palestinian media. However, Palestinian factions often attempt to cover the different matters of Jerusalem through their various media agencies and means. The coverage of Jerusalem issues is subject to the level of importance according to the agendas of these factions. One of the media outlets is Aqsa TV, which is associated with the HAMAS faction. The study aims to investigate the concept of Jerusalem presented via Aqsa TV's coverage during 2018, which witnessed a number of intensive Palestinian-Israeli conflict struggles on the city. Also, the study aims to explore the degree of importance that the channel gives to issues concerning Al-Quds. As a qualitative research, it employed the content analysis method and the agenda setting theory to analyse the results. Data were collected from prime-time news broadcast in 2018, with a total of 24 broadcasts. The findings reveal that on one hand, the channel discourse prioritises matters related to the violent Palestinian-Israeli struggle that is taking place in the city while, on the other hand, ignores matters concerning the citizens of the city and their daily life problems. Another finding suggests that although the channel considers Jerusalem as the heart of the conflict, but in accordance with the agenda of HAMAS, the focus of the channel shifts to other fierce occurrences in the Gaza Strip Great Return March protests. The research recommends further studies to examine the coverage of different media outlets affiliated with other Palestinian factions to understand in-depth the agendas of these factions. In addition, the representation of Palestinian issues, such as refugees and the struggle with Israel, in both the Arabic language and English language to the local and international audience should be analysed and compared.

Keywords: ***Political agenda, media discourse, Aqsa TV, Jerusalem, and Israeli occupation***

INTRODUCTION

The holy city of Jerusalem, or "Al-Quds" as it is called in Arabic, is one of the most conflict-ridden cities in the world, in terms of religion and politics. As such, Jerusalem is considered a vital concern in the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It has been and still is the heart of the Palestinian cause and the indicator for its survival. Therefore, the city has been the subject of a number of debates on the national and international levels, similar to the other aspects of the Palestinian issue (Amer, 2012). It is no doubt that Jerusalem is a holy city for the main three Abrahamic religions, and its significance has been constructed over history (Mayer & Mourad, 2008). However, both the Palestinians and the Israelis desire to proclaim sole power over the city by declaring it as their capital. Palestinians consider Jerusalem as an Arab city, and it will continue being a united city with its Islamic and Christian landmarks and symbols (Lybarger, 2007). Therefore, the Palestinians struggle to assert their historical right on their holy city, with its Arab-Islamic identity and its manifestation as the political capital of the state of Palestine (Amer, 2012).

For the Palestinians, the notion of Jerusalem and its prominence, has varied in the political discourse of the Palestinian factions over time. There are two prevalent political trends that represent the Palestinian concepts; the first represents the secular Palestinian National Liberation Organization (Fatah), and the second represents the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) (Amer, 2012; Blank, 2011; Lybarger, 2007). These two focal factions have a long history of philosophical and political contradictions with regard to their basic conceptions of the Israeli conflict and their views about the definition of the homeland. Over time, each faction tended to disseminate its particular agenda via the media channels they owned. One of these basic viewpoints is related to the concept and importance of Jerusalem to the factions, especially in the context of the conflict with Israel. Other issues include their stand concerning the Israeli Judaisation of the city, restrictions of Muslim prayers, constraints on Arab civilians and other matters that this article will discuss.

The article will particularly shed light on the Hamas representation of Jerusalem through its media channel called Aqsa TV. The research seeks to comprehend the impact of the political determinants that govern the agenda of the channel with regard to the conception of Jerusalem. Thus, this study aims to answer two questions, firstly, what is the prevailing concept of Jerusalem represented by the Palestinian media, namely through the "Aqsa" satellite channel, and secondly, what is the level of importance does the "Aqsa" satellite channel give to issues of Jerusalem in its news broadcast?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Jerusalem is deemed the heart of the Palestinian cause and a basic constituent of the Palestinian identity (Amer, 2018; Khalidi, 1997). However, with the development and consolidation in the political scene after Hamas' win in the 2006 legislative elections, the Palestinian Authority was pressured to abide by its international commitments to maintain a media discourse free from incitement towards the occupation state of Israel. Therefore, the discourse of Aqsa TV shifted from presenting the Al-Aqsa Mosque news coverage from a religious point of view, to focusing on the significance of Jerusalem as whole (Awais, 2017).

The history of HAMAS

HAMAS, which means "zeal" in Arabic, is an acronym for its Arabic name *Harakat al-Muqawwama al-Islamiyyah* and in English, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Satloff, 2006). HAMAS evolved as a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood that was founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, and had a military involvement in the 1948 war led by the Brotherhood

leader Haj Amin al-Husseini, a prominent Palestinian nationalist leader (Abu-Amr, 1993). According to Odeh (2011), the Muslim Brotherhood did not play a political role since its initial presence in Palestine during the 1948 *"Nakba",* which is an Arabic word meaning "catastrophe" in English to indicate the establishment of Israel on the Palestinian land, until the mid-seventies of the last century. Despite its advanced social activities, the researcher attributes this delay to several factors, including the blows that followed the Brotherhood in various Arab countries, most notably Egypt, and the emergence of the Fatah movement in which its first leaders carried the group's ideology. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine preferred to stay away from any political or military roles, arguing that the priority now requires reviving Islamic concepts in the Palestinian society.

In the early 1980s, the awakening efforts culminated in the rise of student groups affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestinian universities. However, their real involvement came only during the outbreak of the first *Intifada,* which is Arabic for "Uprising," after a settler truck ran over Palestinian workers in Jabalya in the Gaza Strip, Hamas issued its first statement on 15 December 1987. It named itself "Islamic Resistance Movement—Hamas" after initially calling itself "AL-*Murabitoun* on the land of *Isra"* and "Islamic Struggle Movement" (Atawneh, 2007; Satloff, 2006). From the outset, the outline of the direction of Hamas was clear; it believes in armed struggle as the path to liberate Palestine from the Zionist occupation. Therefore, Hamas refuses to give up any part of the Palestine land, and it deems that a peaceful settlement with the occupier is invalid, because it entails the recognition of the right of occupation on the land of Palestine. Consequently, millions of Palestinians are denied the right of return and self-determination, as it considers it to be *"Haram"* in Islamic Fiqh and may not be accepted (Odeh, 2011). Hence, HAMAS sought to continue the resistance action through its military wing, "Izz Al-Din al-Qassam Brigades," which played a renowned role in the first and second Intifada. It was known for the bombing of Israeli buses and martyrdom operations, and later advancing the manufacturing of rockets that reached Haifa and Nahariya, which were originally Palestinian cities but are now under the Israeli control.

HAMAS entered the political arena after winning the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) election, which enabled the movement to overcome Fatah and control the PLC. In addition, HAMAS also won the elections of municipalities and the governorates, which paved the way for the division between the two factions. Subsequently, this shift in power developed a near-total separation between the Fatah that dominates the West Bank and Hamas that dominates the Gaza Strip (Atawneh, 2007; Sen, 2015). Moreover, Hamas does not acknowledge any accords that were signed between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, including the Oslo Accord, which caused dilemma for Israel and put HAMAS and the Gaza Strip in isolation (Satloff, 2006; UN, 2017).

Despite the fact that HAMAS neither recognises the agreement that Yasser Arafat endorsed with the Israeli government, nor believes in negotiations, it eventually came around. In 2011, HAMAS managed to seal an agreement with Israel to swap 1027 Palestinian prisoners in return for the captive Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit (Alhossary & Sathivellu, 2014). This event presented HAMAS as an equal power to Israel, and solidified HAMAS locally and international as an influential player in the struggle that should not be ignored. It also brought about HAMAS remarkable popularity and respect among its followers and the rest of the Palestinian people who are not members of any other factions.

As Hamas spent more time administering the Gaza Strip, its dogma started to evolve and alter in what was believed to be a regeneration in thought and discourse. In mid-2017, the movement launched an innovative renewal speech to replace its 1988 charter, known as *Al-Watheeqa* which eased the momentum of its religious discourse (Hroub, 2017). With this charter, HAMAS attempted to harmonise with the national consensus, and accept the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967, provided that the rest of the

occupied territories are not compromised. The former head of HAMAS' political bureau, Khaled Meshaal, pointed out, that in this charter, the establishment of a fully sovereign Palestinian state, with Al-Quds as its capital based on the lines drawn in June 1967 is a common national consensus formula. It does not imply acknowledgment of the Zionist entity, nor the negligence of any Palestinian rights, especially the right of return. Therefore, according to Hroub (2017), the charter not only reiterated basic facts for the Palestinians, bu also redefined the meaning of Palestine and eased its radical tone, as an attempt to fit into the new pragmatic role of Hamas in the region. *Al-Watheeqa* triggered a Palestinian controversy and was deemed a retreat from "a whole Palestine from the sea to the river." It was also considered a setback in the strategic objective of the resistance's movement. Yet the movement's spokesperson, Fawzi Barhoum argued that the charter Hamas put forward carries a set of common denominators that does not abandon the fixed beliefs, such as the right of return for the refugees who left their lands after the *Nakbah* (Jabri, 2017).

The political determinants of Hamas regarding the representations of Al-Quds/ Jerusalem

Since the establishment of the HAMAS movement, Al-Quds/Jerusalem has always been at the heart of its ideology for the liberation of the land. The founders of HAMAS decreed Al-Quds a special status due to its holiness in Islam. They also believed that the city has a symbolic position for both the Palestinians and Arabs, which enabled the movement to mobilise more supporters.

In its resistance and political activities, the faction laid several objectives for the city of Al-Quds in response to the Judaisation projects and the Zionist occupation. Al-Zahar, a prominent Hamas leader, demanded on 21 August 1994, the launch of a Palestinian housing project in Al-Quds to stabilise the Arab population. Al-Zahar appealed that it is the Muslims duty to expend all energies, invest Zakat funds and collect donations to provide material support to the residents of Al-Quds, fight their displacement, and preserve their institutions (Hassouna, 2015). Hamas also rejected all settlement schemes that consider East Al-Quds as the Palestinian capital or giving the Palestinian control only over the sanctuaries of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

It should be noted that the movement attaches great importance to the geographical and demographic transformations impacting the city of Al-Quds, and has established a number of international and charitable institutions that monitor the status of Al-Quds. It was involved in the task of supporting the resilience of its residents and empowering them to exist by renovating their homes and enabling them to survive in the city (Hassouna, 2015). A number of scholars, including Attawneh (2007), pointed out that this interaction with the issue of Al-Quds is centred in an Islamic dimension only, which concerns Al-Aqsa Mosque, at the expense of other matters affecting Al-Quds and its inhabitants. Attawneh claimed that HAMAS is preoccupied only in the religious significance of Al-Aqsa Mosque or as it is called in Arabic, *Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa* which seems to be the only thing that it sees in Al-Quds, and which is unacceptable for such a leading movement.

The establishment of Aqsa TV

Abdelal (2016) stated that since its early days, Hamas has widely exploited media as a tool for mobilising its political and ideological agendas. Its media channels have witnessed a remarkable evolution from graffiti messages during the Intifada, to satellite broadcasting, one year before the 2006 elections. Hamas allocated significant budget to develop its media structure, with the aim of reaching a larger audience, Arab and global. It also founded several press offices, commenced communication links with international and regional media agencies,

and established audio-visual and even social media outlets in order to circumvent the ban imposed by both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli occupation.

Al-Aqsa TV, which took its name after the third-holiest mosque for Muslims located in Jerusalem, started its experimental broadcast on 7 January 2005 as a local TV for the Palestinian public in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Athoraya, 2010). The channel enabled Hamas to promote its electoral agenda for the 2006 elections. Later, beginning 20 November 2006, Al-Aqsa expanded its local satellite network broadcasting to international.

Since its establishment, the satellite channel has faced diverse obstacles, including the refusal to allow it to broadcast on Nilesat, difficulties bringing in broadcasting equipment, and bombings of its headquarters several times during the various aggressions on the Gaza Strip (Boms & Chiche, 2009). In addition, the media teams of the channel were prevented from operating in the West Bank and occupied Palestine, which reduced its ability to adequately fulfil its role to cover the West Bank issues (Athoraya, 2010).

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The main focus of this study is to understand how Hamas' Aqsa TV channel represents the concepts of Al-Quds/Jerusalem to the public and to its followers according to its predetermined agenda. Towards this attempt, the researchers employed the Agenda Setting Theory (AST) to analyse the channel's role in setting the public agenda with regard to the holy city of Al-Quds/Jerusalem.

The Agenda Setting theory first appeared following the Chapel Hell presidential elections campaign, when research on agenda-setting was initiated by Maxwell McComb and Donald Shaw in 1968 (Ahmad et al., 2017). The research hypothesised that the political campaign agenda is set by the mass media and accordingly, specified issues are observed to be recounted to the public. In media research, the agenda-setting term implies intentional or unintentional measures of impact, through which the significance of social occurrences and characters in the public's eye is determined by the subsequent representations of such occurrences and characters in the mass media. Consequently, the public attitude can be designed and concentrated by repetitive media reportage, and the emphasised people or matters would become more prominent.

Subsequent to the original work by McComb and Shaw, many more studies which were persuaded by their theory, replicated their model into various contexts. Some studies investigated the factors that affect incidents reported as news, to be construed as the media agenda. The external media factors that influence the media agenda comprise advertisers, public relations personnel, political personalities; government authorities; while at the organisational level, owners and senior executives do affect the insertion of news in agenda-oriented media agencies (Colistra, 2012, as cited in Idid, 2017). In the case of this present study, a prominent political party that is controlling a part of the country is the influencing factor.

Further studies have related both the agenda setting and framing theories in an attempt to comprehend the role that media plays in shaping public opinion, especially the national media. Cruz and Cucueco (2015) contended that the government is the primary informant that influences citizens through the national TV by highlighting issues that the government wishes the public to be concerned with and adopt the remedies presented by the government. Their study looked at the frames of poverty used in the Philippines, and discovered that government media and other sources of media were not working towards providing the public with a clear picture about the poverty problems cause by natural disasters, or their long-term solutions. It was clear to the researchers that news reports on long-term solutions were not being prioritized by the media, governmental or non-governmental agencies (Cruz & Cucueco, 2015).

Photiou, Papadopoulou and Maniou (2017) expanded on this insight when they contended that the national TV in every country contributes to the shaping of public opinion and collective identity through the selection of specific frames presented to people. When Greece was facing a financial crisis in 2015 and was anticipating aid from the European Union, the national TV discourse was directed towards preserving the national identity and highlighting the European identity in a positive frame.

METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to provide insights on the media's portrayal of Al-Quds in 2018, namely via Al-Aqsa TV that is affiliated with the Islamic Party of Hamas. This study examined the concepts used by the prime time broadcast news in portraying issues of Al-Quds pertaining to the agenda that Hamas wishes to highlight to the public and its followers. In addition, the researchers also looked at the importance given to Al-Quds issues by examining the position and duration of the issues in the broadcast news in comparison to other issues. The researchers recognise the role of the media in communicating to the audience the pre-set agendas of its owners or sponsors. Thus the role of the media in shaping public opinion towards certain issues via the media, especially TV channels is emphasised.

To investigate the media portrayal of Al-Quds issues, content analysis was employed to determine the concepts portrayed and their level of importance. Two prime-time news broadcasts of every month in 2018 were selected using purposive sampling while ensuring that these selected days did not coincide with any formal occasions or events that directly concerned Jerusalem/Al-Quds per se. A total of 24 prime time news broadcasts were sampled. The data were then coded for emerging themes. Themes were then classified and categorised based on the research questions raised in this study. Finally, these themes were translated to English, since the broadcasts were originally in Arabic.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The paper presents the findings according to the objectives and research questions of the study, but nevertheless taking into account all results.

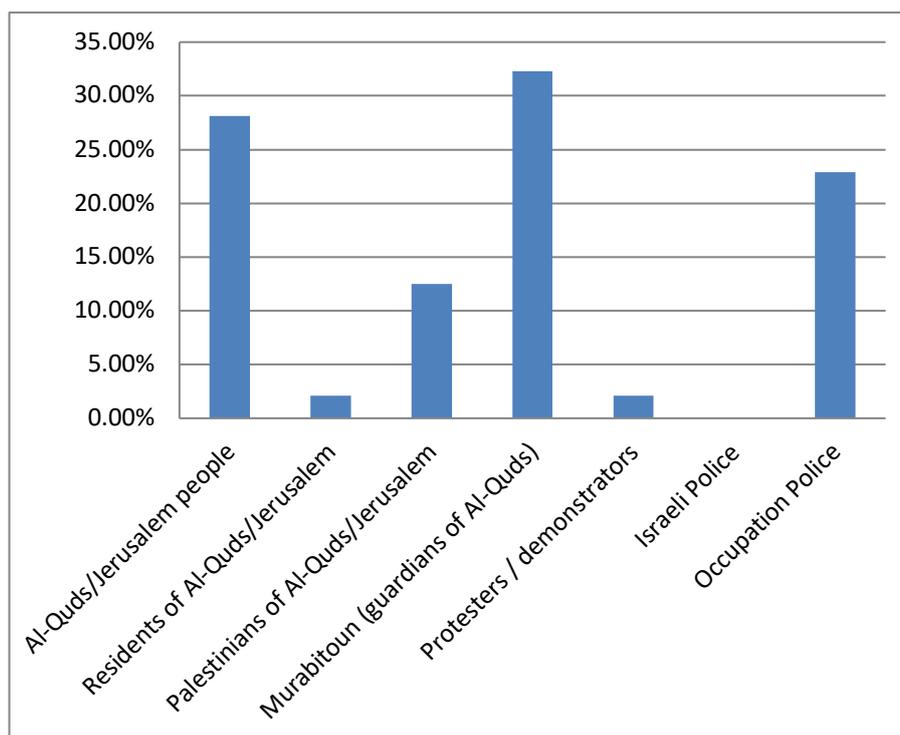### The representations of Al-Quds/ Jerusalem in Aqsa TV

To answer the first question: What is the concept of Al-Quds, and what are the most critical determinants of the Al-Aqsa TV channel? The data collected are presented in two tables; the first one is related to the various names used to denote Jerusalem during the news broadcast, while the second looks at the representations of Palestinians inhabiting Jerusalem.

Table 1. The representations of Al-Quds/Jerusalem in Aqsa TV

Concepts	Terms used in the news broadcast	Repetition	%
Religious/Islamic	The First *Qibla*	3	2.50%
	The Holy City	12	10.00%
	The Land of Religions	1	0.83%
	Al-Quds/Jerusalem is a land of Islamic *Waqf*	4	3.33%
Arab/National	Arab Jerusalem	3	2.50%
	Al-Quds/Jerusalem, our Capital	14	11.67%
	The old city	19	15.83%
Political	Al-Quds/Jerusalem, the capital of 'the Zionist entity'	14	11.67%
	Al-Quds/Jerusalem as the capital of the State of "occupation"	12	10.00%
	Two-state solution	0	0.00%
	Occupied Al-Quds/Jerusalem	29	24.17%
	East Al-Quds/Jerusalem	0	0.00%
	West Al-Quds/Jerusalem	0	0.00%
Total		120	100.00%

The names and phrases used to represent Jerusalem are grouped into 3 main categories: religious/Islamic, Arab/national, and political. It should be noted that Aqsa TV used religious words to represent the city of Jerusalem such as; the first *Qibla* (the direction where Muslims face when they pray), the land of religions, the Holy City, a land of Islamic *Waqf* (a land not be sold or bought due to its holiness). Such usage of Islamic representations stems from the fact that the channel belongs to the Islamic Party HAMAS. Therefore, the channel adheres to discourse of the party that originates from the main Islamic discourse. In the Arab/national concept, Aqsa TV placed high emphasis on the historical background of Jerusalem (15.83%) and asserted that Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine (11.67%). In comparing the religious and national representations, Aqsa TV foregrounded the national importance of the city to the Palestinians, which also stems from its Islamic belief, but did not affirm this as it wished to present the city as unifying Muslims and Christians.

Under the political concept, the representation of Jerusalem as an "occupied city" was the most common (24.17%). In addition, the channel employed specific terms to refer to the occupation such as "the Zionist entity" and "state of the occupation." The channel did not recognise Jerusalem as the capital of the occupation, yet this emerged during the news coverage of the decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. Based on the concepts used, the channel asserts its stand on Jerusalem as neither the capital of the "Zionist entity" (11.67%), nor "the capital of the state of occupations" (10.00%). Moreover, Aqsa TV completely avoided the use of any terms related to "two-state solution" or the division of the city into "East and West Jerusalem." Such evasion stems from the dogma of HAMAS which refuses both the negotiations with Israel as well as its recognition as a state (Abdelal, 2016).

Figure 1. Representations of the Al-Quds/Jerusalem population and administration in Aqsa TV

Figure 1 shows, that while Aqsa TV asserted that the status of the inhabitants of Jerusalem as being its people and rightful owners with a frequency of 28.13%, the channel also refers to them as mere residents (2.8%). In addition, the channel emphasized that the people of Jerusalem are Palestinian citizens (12.50%). However, the most used concept was the religious description of these people as *Murabitoun*, which in Arabic means the frontiers/guardians of the holy Masjid Al-Aqsa (32.29%). On the other hand, the channel never mentioned the term "Israeli police", which indicates that it does not recognize them as a state police. In fact, the channel foregrounded these troops as illegal by repeatedly using the term "Occupation Police" (22.92%).

Media attention on Al-Quds issues

To answer the second research question, regarding the extent of media attention on Al-Quds issues, the study analysed the frequency of Aqsa TV news on these various issues. In addition, the motives and objectives of the media coverage were also examined, whether based on daily developments or brought to the spotlight to entrench them in the minds of the public and Hamas followers. Other related factors such as media format, allocated time, depth and positioning in the news broadcast were also analysed. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Focus of Aqsa TV on the Al-Quds/Jerusalem issues

Al-Quds issues	Repetition	%
Settlement	1	2.17%
Judaisation	3	6.52%
The Apartheid Wall	0	0.00%
Demolition of houses	2	4.35%
Prohibit the license	1	2.17%
Revoking identities	1	2.17%
Confiscation of property	2	4.35%
The resistance of Al-Quds/Jerusalem people: "Martyrs and Prisoners, Physical Attacks."	6	13.04%
Deportation	1	2.17%
Detention of children and home detention	0	0.00%
Restrictions on the Al-Quds/Jerusalem people	4	8.70%
Restrictions on the educational process	0	0.00%
Constraints on churches	1	2.17%
Restriction on mosques and storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque	9	19.57%
Excavations under the Aqsa Mosque	4	8.70%
Racist occupation laws	3	6.52%
US Embassy transfer to Al-Quds/Jerusalem	6	13.04%
The annexation of Al-Quds/Jerusalem "united Al-Quds/Jerusalem."	2	4.35%
Total	**46**	**100.00%**

Al-Aqsa TV covered various Jerusalem-related issues 46 times during the data collection period (as presented in Table 2). The most prominent issue highlighted was the harassment and storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque (19.57%). This was followed by the news on the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the resistance of Al-Quds people' both by a large margin (13%.) The third most covered issues were the restrictions on the Jerusalem people and the excavations under the Aqsa Mosque; both of which carried similar weight (8.70%). The rest of the issues were not of sufficient interest or positioning. The least covered issues were related to domestic difficulties that the Jerusalem people suffer from, such as racism, education, revoked identities, etc. While the channel's main emphasis was on Islamic concerns, it placed less concern regarding Christian issues e.g. constraints on churches (2.17%). Thus, it is undeniable that the main focus of the channel is to cover issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that stems from the Islamic dogma of the faction that owns the channel. Therefore, it is clear that Aqsa TV's agenda consists of highlighting the struggle as perceived by Hamas.
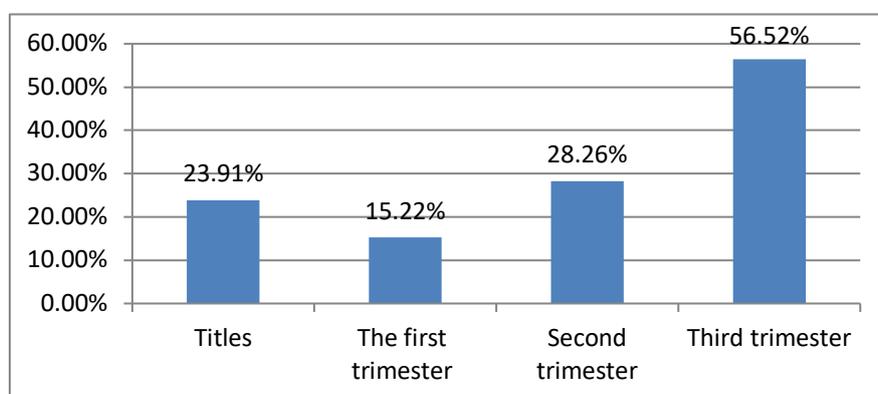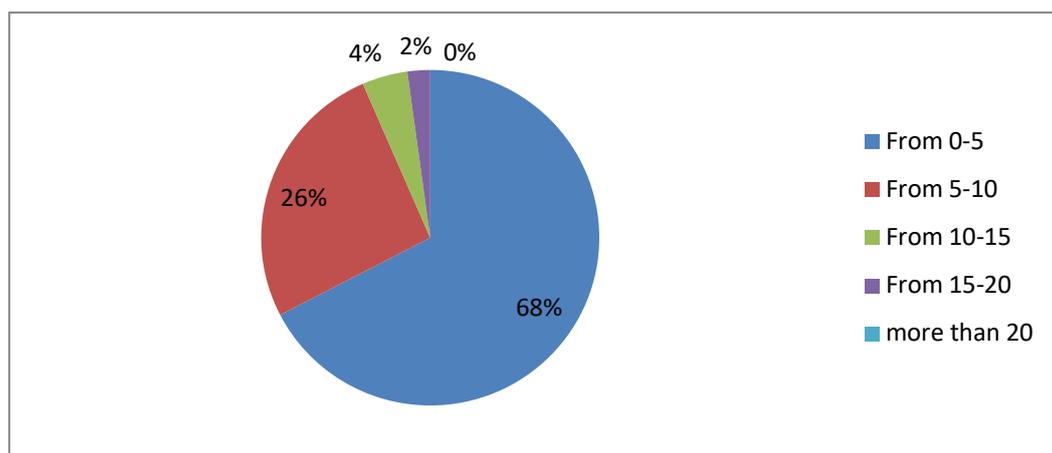

Figure 2. Position of Al-Quds/Jerusalem issues in the news broadcast

Coverage on Jerusalem occupied heavily the third trimester of the news broadcast (56.52%), which can be considered surprising, given the fact that Jerusalem is the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli struggle, according to HAMAS. The analysis of the news broadcast showed that there is much interest in the Great Return March that started in March 2018 in Gaza and has continued until now. The people in Gaza started these peaceful marches to protest their difficult live conditions in Gaza under the siege, which lasted for more than 10 years. The coverage of these marches has received the most considerable amount of time and space of the channel. The channel's first report in the first trimester looked at the international solidarity with the Great Return March, followed, by the condemnation of the crimes of Israeli occupation, and thirdly, a denunciation of what is happening in Jerusalem. In this context, the study urges future research to look at the coverage of Aqsa TV for the Great Return March protests.
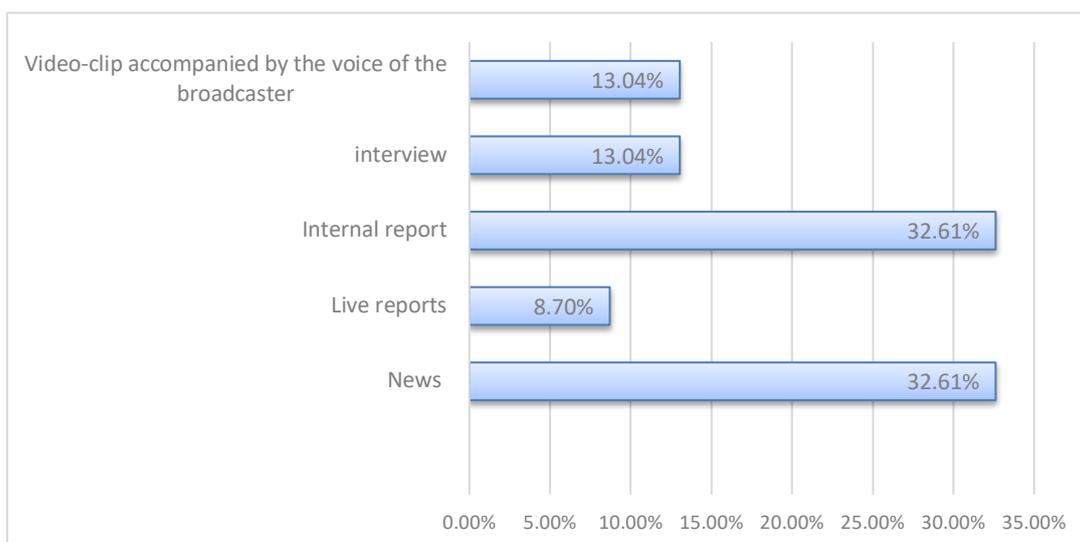

Figure 3. Media formats used to cover the Al-Quds/Jerusalem issues in Aqsa TV

The Aqsa channel's basic forms of coverage were news and internal reports (each received 32.6% of total coverage on Jerusalem issues). These were followed by interviews with people and video clips accompanied by the voice of the broadcaster who recited the news (each 13.04%). The least common form of coverage was live broadcast reports by reporters from within Jerusalem. The reason for the high percentage of internal reports against live reports can be attributed to the prohibition of the channel in the West Bank and occupied Palestine beginning 1948. Any connection with Aqsa TV is considered an act of terrorism by Israeli authorities, resulting in many of its reporters being arrested; thus, the channel replaced live reports with other archived news or reporting by international agencies.

Figure 4. Allocated time (minutes) for news coverage of Al-Quds/Jerusalem in Aqsa TV

Figure 4 shows that the time allocated for Jerusalem issues is usually about five minutes (68%) followed by 5-10 minutes (26%). It should be noted that the channel had never allotted more than 20 minutes for any Jerusalem news coverage during the period of the study.
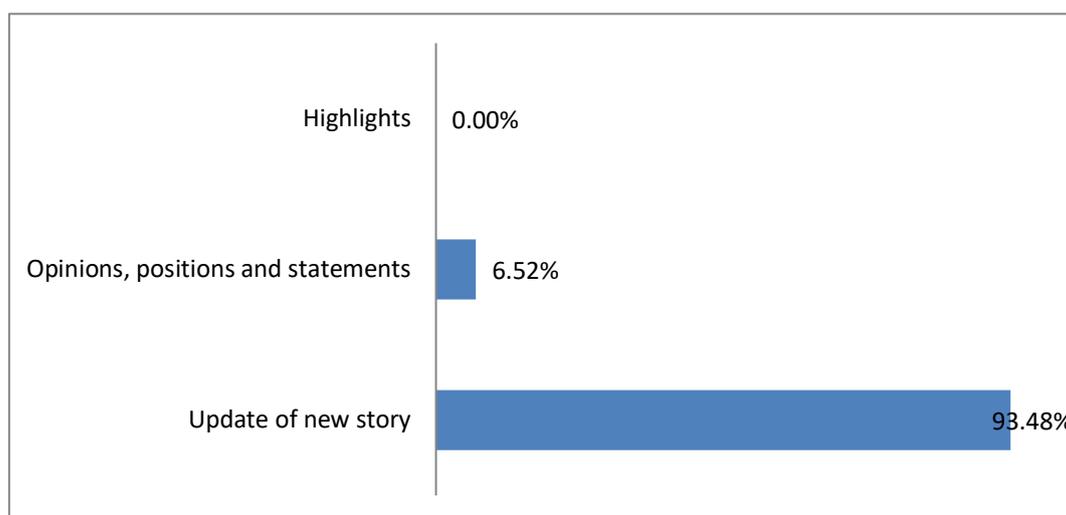
Figure 5. Motivation for media coverage of Al-Quds/Jerusalem issues in Aqsa TV

Aqsa TV mainly covered Jerusalem for incidents or new updates on existing stories (93.48%). This suggests that the channel makes no effort in intensive research to highlight other core issues and instead has limited itself covering events/incidents that take place. Moreover, only 6.52% of the channel's coverage were aimed at presenting opinions and statements of public figures.

The motivation of the coverage reflects the interest of the channel which is focused on incidents and issues that are not visible, or are not currently addressed in other media. Thus, future research should also examine whether the TV channel's editorial policy puts the issue of Jerusalem permanently in the heart of its coverage, or daily developments are imposed on the news context.

The results provide insights into the coverage Al-Quds/Jerusalem issues by Aqsa TV according to the Hamas' agenda. The findings reveal that while Al-Quds/Jerusalem is the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli struggle, especially for its religious position in Islam, in 2018, Hamas decided to shift its agenda from focusing on Al-Quds issues to the Great Return March protests

and its day-to-day updates. In addition, results also reveal that the concepts of Al-Quds/Jerusalem that Hamas conveys to the public are presented from a religious point of view rather than nationalistic. Thus, the findings argue that Hamas neglects the civil representation of Al-Quds as a city and instead focuses on its religious significance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the issues of Jerusalem and its developments have and continue to receive intense attention in the Palestinian media. Aqsa TV attempts to be the voice of the HAMAS faction, therefore it mirrors or reflects the political agenda of the party through its news coverage. The political agenda of the channel becomes noticeable from a number of determinants influencing the type of coverage; starting from the representations of Jerusalem and its population, the issues highlighted and their format, the position of Jerusalem issues in the news broadcast, to the time allocated for its news. The findings of the study reveal a number of insights; first, it showed that in Hamas' Aqsa TV, Jerusalem is represented based on its religious significance in Islam. This result is not surprising given the fact that HAMAS as a Islamic resistance faction that extracts its principles from Islam. Therefore, Jerusalem is deemed as a prominent issue to be covered in the Aqsa TV.

However, it seems that although the issues of Jerusalem are essential to the channel, the channel chooses to amplify specific issues and downplay others. On one hand, the channel foregrounds issues that are related to the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli struggle, especially the dominance on the city and its importance as a capital for each conflicting faction. On the other hand, the channel downplays the civil issues of the Jerusalem population by neglecting these issues. Moreover, that the channel is incapable of presenting live news and reports to cover updates of hot issues due to the restraints enforced on its activities in the occupied territories.

The second insight indicates that the coverage of the Jerusalem stories were impacted by the new agenda of the channel to cover the protests of the Great Return March. This calls for more studies to examine the agenda behind the change in policy. Finally, further research is encouraged to study the coverage of Jerusalem issues by other Palestinian factions which are influenced by the agendas and beliefs of these factions. Such studies would provide better insights into the various interplaying focuses of these factions, which in turn are reflected in their media coverage and political positions.

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