Israel/Palestine Sourcing Profile

Each week, ACLED researchers review dozens of English and Arabic language sources to code political violence and demonstrations across Israel and Palestine. The media environment in the region is somewhat restricted, both due to censorship and the danger that journalists face. Journalists are often subject to censorship by the Israeli military, and run the risk of serious injury, arrest, or administrative detention without justification while covering events in the occupied Palestinian territories. This is despite international prohibitions on the targeting of journalists. Often the military will not allow these cases to be covered by the media by placing a gag order on such events, making it illegal to report on them (Reporters Without Borders: Israel 2019). The Palestinian Authority (PA) has also interrogated or arrested journalists who publish reporting that portrays the PA in an unfavorable light. Several websites have been shut down by the PA in the past (Reporters Without Borders: Palestine, 2019). These factors result in a general environment of 'self-censorship' and concern over publishing on controversial topics.

One of the greatest obstacles when sourcing events from Israeli and Palestinian media is the contrasting biases. Often Israeli and Palestinian sources will report the same event in different ways, typically through tone, but also with different information altogether. For example, an Israeli source may report that a Palestinian militant was killed in an airstrike; Palestinian media, on the other hand, may report that the person killed was a civilian. To mitigate cases in which conflicting information is provided about the same event, ACLED uses a number of measures to ensure as much accuracy as possible. First, due to the complexity of the situation in Israel and Palestine, researchers working on this area are provided with training on the region's conflict trends and media environments. The data are further reviewed by management with specialized knowledge of the region's conflict trends and media environment. Both researcher and reviewer assess the likeliness of a report and whether additional reading or discussion is necessary. Second, ACLED uses a range of diverse sources and triangulates information to form a more complete picture. This diverse source list – both in terms of country of origin and type of source – is one of the main methods that ACLED uses to counteract media bias and to fill in gaps resulting from censorship. For Israel and Palestine in particular, national sources are split between both countries roughly equally, with five sources originating from Palestine, and four from Israel. When sources provide conflicting details, researchers defer to reports by international organizations and media agencies which have proven to be less biased in the past. If there is still doubt in terms of casualties and the nature of events, then this is mentioned in the notes, and the event is coded based on the version of events reported by the most sources – ideally using a combination of pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian sources. For more information on how ACLED deals with bias in general, as well as other sourcing issues, see our Sourcing Methodology FAQ.

ACLED uses a combination of traditional media sources (categorized under 'Subnational', 'National', 'Regional', and 'International' in the Source Scale column), local partner data, 'new media', and

'other' sources. Between 85 to 90 percent of events in Israel and Palestine are sourced through traditional media. The use of subnational sources has been extremely limited due to the size of these states, with national sources often covering the majority of areas in both states. Less than one percent of events are sourced through subnational sources. National sources, on the other hand, represent the majority of sources reviewed each week for both states (see Figure 1 below, in teal).

Figure 1: Percentage of Events by Source Type by Time Period

Israel *2016-2019*

Palestine *2016-2019*

Source Scale

- International
- Regional
- National
- New media
- Other
- Local partner-New media
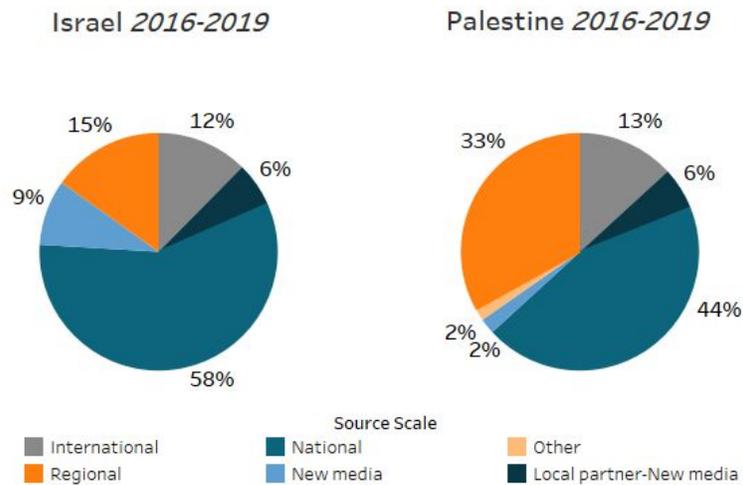
Among those, Ma'an News Agency, Palestinian News and Information Agency (WAFA), Jerusalem Post, and Times of Israel are the most prolific. The greater number of regional sources being used for Palestine (see Figure 1, in orange) is a result of Israeli national sources reporting on events in Gaza and the West Bank. The Jerusalem Post in particular often reports on events involving Israeli state forces in Palestine, as well as the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank. Some Palestinian sources also report on events in Israel, although this is rarer as there are fewer events occurring in Israel overall. The remaining regional sources are based in nearby countries like Jordan (Jordan News Agency) and Turkey (Anadolu Agency). Moreover, non-regional international sources mostly cover major events, and are therefore most useful in cases where Palestinian and Israeli sources provide contradicting information. These well-respected sources, which include Agence France Presse (AFP) and BBC News, typically fact-check their own sources and provide seemingly fair assessments of events – although their opinions on intent can differ (a factor not coded by ACLED). International sources are often cited for their coverage of armed clashes in the West Bank (see 'Battles' on the left-hand side of Figure 2 below, in gray).

Figure 2: Percentage of Events Yielded by Source Type by Event Type, *2016-2019*
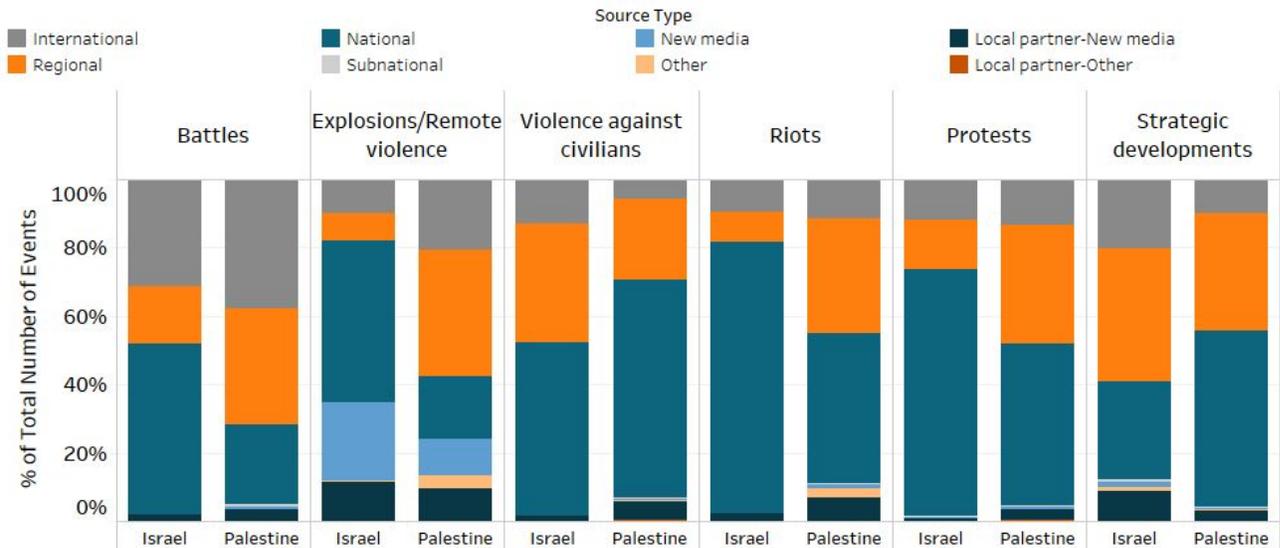
Additionally, ACLED relies on a number of other source types to improve the scope and quality of its coverage. 'New media' has proven particularly useful in capturing remote violence (i.e. artillery, airstrikes, and makeshift 'incendiary devices') along the border between the Gaza Strip and HaDarom – Israel's southern province. Because of the number of projectiles fired during ceasefire violations, traditional media often reports only that missiles were fired, without mentioning the locations in which they landed. Trusted Twitter accounts often provide images and videos denoting more exact locations. For example, the Twitter account of the Israeli Defense Forces produces infographic maps of mortar and airstrike locations – these are analyzed by ACLED researchers and converted manually into usable data points. With the exception of HaDarom, 'new media' is almost exclusively used for events in Palestine, often providing details on settler and expansion violence in the West Bank and Israeli airstrikes landing in Gaza (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Number and Location of Events Using New Media, *2016-2019*
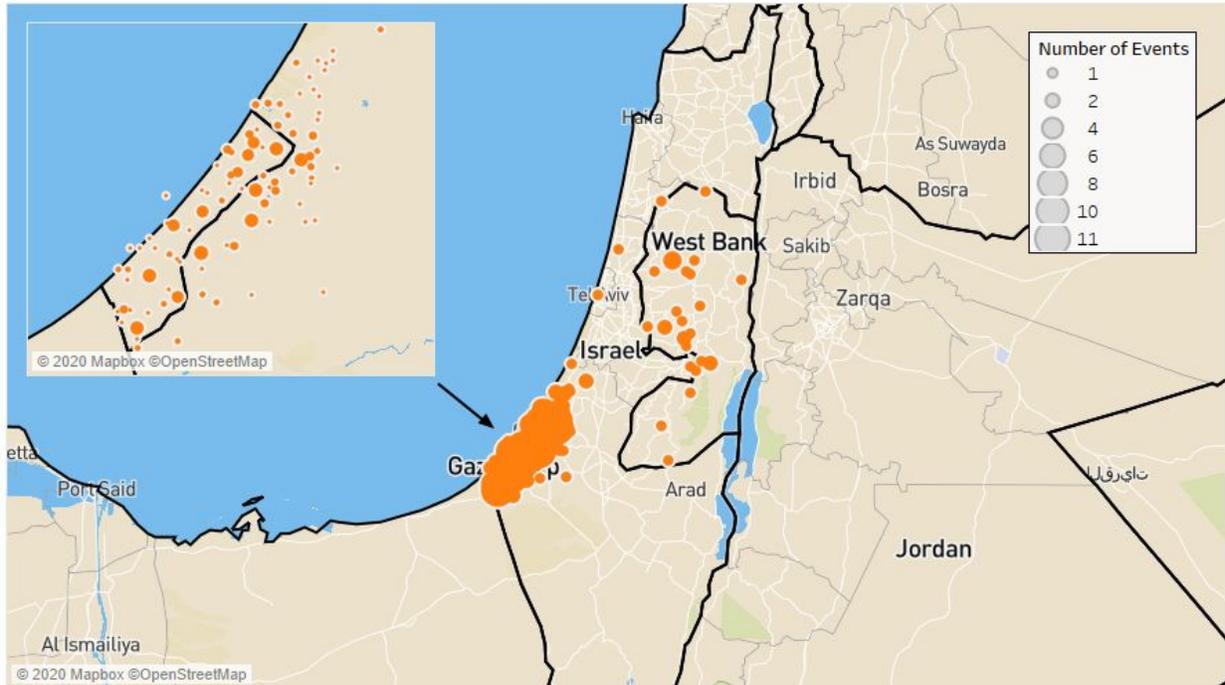
ACLED also regularly reviews humanitarian reports produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) and the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, an NGO based in the Jabalia Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip (both categorized under 'Other' in the Source Scale column). These typically focus on human rights abuses, and clashes between Israeli state forces and demonstrators in Gaza – particularly as part of the National Authority for Breaking the Siege and Great March of Return protest movements.

Lastly, data collected by local partners can be a powerful supplemental source to improve data. While ACLED does not yet have a local partner organization based in either Israel or Palestine, data from ACLED's global partners help to improve coverage. These partners include Front Line Defenders, the Aid Workers Security Database, and ProtectDefenders.eu. ACLED's 'new media' partners, LiveuaMap and Menastream, provide data for approximately six percent of total events for both states.