



Transparency Index in Palestinian Local Authorities in the West Bank (20 local authorities classified “B”)



AMAN
Transparency Palestine



The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN)

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in the West Bank
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2023

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► Executive summary:

The local authorities transparency index was applied to a purposive sample of 20 local authorities classified (B) in the West Bank. Transparency indicators were examined in five domains of the local authorities' work.

According to the color code of this indicator, the overall result of the study's examination of the level of transparency in local authorities was scaled "critical." As these findings demonstrate that the lack of transparency in the local authorities classed (B) that were examined is a widespread phenomenon.


The number of local authorities with official websites is nine (9) out of the twenty (20) local authorities reviewed. Local authorities with official websites performed better in terms of the quality of published information than municipalities that rely solely on social media accounts. However, in the same context, it should be emphasized that the official websites of local authorities do not receive regular updates.

In terms of domain results, the third domain, which examines municipal transparency in financial management, is the best despite its low level. The aforementioned is a result of the fact that the publication of some financial records is one of the conditions for municipalities to obtain loans from the Municipal Development and lending Fund (MDLF) (or project financier).

As for the first domain, it contains the measurement of some best practices related to personal information of the head of the local authority and is not stipulated according to the Palestinian law, such as the financial disclosure of the head of the local authority that is regulated by the Anti-Corruption Law through financial disclosure. Indicators related to this field were not calculated due to the fact that members of local authorities cannot be held accountable, unlike other tax-paying groups. Although the local authorities are very active in publishing their news on social media, they have not announced the dates of the meetings or published their minutes.

The results of the second domain were low, despite the fact that it examines the general administration of the authority, in which it is expected to publish some documents related to the authority's work, such as legislation, regulations, instructions, strategic plans, administrative reports, some lists, and others. The lack of publishing is attributed to the local authorities' reliance on social media platforms rather than official websites due to a lack of financial resources and human cadres to operate official websites.

The results of the fourth domain were likewise critical, despite local authorities' willingness to reveal information regarding recruitment and procurement procedures; however, this publishing is regarded partial. For example, local authorities publish employment announcements but do not reveal staff appointments and disciplinary procedures. Local authorities also adhere to bid announcements on their websites and on the public procurement portal, but they do not post bid policies, contract copies, or those who lost the bids and tenders.



Finally, in the fifth domain, few local authorities have made available their local development plans or structural plans, and while local authorities publish news about holding public discussions with residents, they do not share the outcomes of these discussions and their implications. On the other hand, the local authorities demonstrated activity in publishing information related to the uses of the local authority's lands and the changes in their uses, as a result of land settlement projects in West Bank regions carried out by the Land Settlement Authority in collaboration with the local authorities.

Any reform or advancement of transparency principles in the work of local authorities can be beneficial in the event of raising awareness - among officials in local authorities and the local community alike - of the importance of the right to access information and its development, as well as providing financial and human capabilities for local authorities to develop in this field.

It is also essential to adopt a governmental general policy to promote decentralization of local authorities and their management as a local authority with a council elected by the citizens of the local community and whose head, officials, and employees are accountable to its elected council and its citizens, who have the right to be fully informed of what is done and approved in the local authority.

The Palestinian Authority's general policy on the form, function, and role of local authorities must be reviewed in light of the experience gained in the quarter-century since the establishment of the Ministry of Local Government and the enactment of the Palestinian Local Authorities Law.

► Introduction:

Local authorities play an important role in Palestinian society, representing the local administration in governance that is supervised by the Ministry of Local Government. Moreover, it provides a variety of public services to citizens in accordance with relevant legislation and based on financial and administrative rules and regulations. In addition to a system of direct election by citizens that requires holding its administration and actions accountable. It also holds officials and employees in these authorities accountable to a set of values based on integrity, transparency, and accountability, all within the framework of an established policy to promote integrity and prevent and combat corruption.


The strategic objective of local councils' operations is to promote the local community, provide public services, and construct and maintain infrastructure using democratic methods based on participation and transparency¹.

Following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994, and particularly following the formation of the Legislative Council in 1996 and the adoption of the Local Government Act in 1997, which defined the relationship of local authorities with the PA (Ministry of Local Government), as well as the adoption of the principle of periodic elections by citizens to choose their representatives in the councils of those authorities, it became necessary that the head and staff of these institutions, as well as their responsibilities and obligations to the elected council and citizens, must follow a set of rules and regulations that provide the citizen with the authority and right to be acquainted with their work and practices in a legal framework that is reinforced by a level of official and social accountability for the actions of these institutions. Most local authorities have created codes of conduct for their work to demonstrate their voluntary moral commitment to the principles of these codes, based on their adherence to integrity, transparency, and accountability. Many of these authorities also took the initiative to learn about and implement social accountability mechanisms, which their performance was monitored and evaluated.

The findings of reports carried out by the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN) on the realities of a number of local authorities revealed that there are hurdles and obstacles to the transparent operation of business for a variety of reasons. Some of which are related to aspects of deficiencies in the cohesiveness of the provisions of the Local Authorities Law to include these concepts, the limited organizational capabilities, or the weak culture of disclosure as a practice and an approach that decision makers in the public sector, including these local authorities directly, as in the authority's board, its head or both of them.

Within the bounds of the local authority territory, the Local Authority Council is vested with a range of functions, powers, and prerogatives outlined under Article (15) of the Local Authorities Law No. (1) of 1997 and its amendments. According to this Article, the Council may exercise these rights directly through its employees, entrust all or some of them to contractors, or grant all or some of them through concessions to individuals or businesses for a maximum of three years. It also authorized the Authority's Council to give some or all privileges to individuals or businesses for a period of more than three years, subject to the Minister's approval.

¹ Al-Daour, Islam. The Extent to Which Governance Standards are Applied in West Bank Municipalities. MA study, College of Graduate Studies, Hebron University, Palestine. 2008. PP. 50-51




Adopting an open and transparent policy in the administration of public affairs and funds in the local authority, by publishing information and disclosing documents, facilitates community engagement in defining the priorities of the local authority and its programs, and improves societal accountability by citizens, the local community, and the media, and then public accountability later through elections. Furthermore, publishing helps to expose incidents of conflict of interest, which increases the reality of deterrence to its practice and thus reduces the chances of corruption. Moreover, the practice of transparency and disclosure by senior officials contributes to enhancing and strengthening citizens' confidence in the local authority and its officials in all aspects of their work. Particularly in financial and administrative matters, such as committing to publishing the annual budget, financial reports, administrative reports, the strategic plan, and decisions of the Local Council, work manuals, systems and procedures, and codes of conduct on an ongoing basis, employment announcements, and tender announcements. It is acceptable for publications to include the resume of the head of the local council, the agenda of the council's meetings, its decisions, the structure of the local authority, and contact information of heads of various departments and divisions. These items together form what can be called an "index of transparency"².

Palestinian legislation concerning local governance may disregard transparency principles. For example, in relation to the sessions of local councils, Article (8) of the Local Authorities Law of 1997 states that (the council may allow any person to attend any of its sessions if the majority of its members present decide so for the purpose of participating in the discussion of the subject matter). According to the aforementioned Article, citizens may attend meetings of councils of local authorities, but only with the approval of the local council, as the principle allows attendance that can be organized, noting that the Article did not stipulate strict requirements such as the approval of two-thirds of the council members. Furthermore, Article (36) of the Law, which requires the production of the annual report and the submission of a copy to the Minister of Local Government, does not specifically require the publication of the report for public knowledge. The same is true for the annual budget (Article 31) and the final account (Article 32), which must be approved by the local council and approved by the Minister without regard to the subject of publication³. However, the Council may adopt the publishing, which is not against the law because the legislation does not prohibit it.

AMAN's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 focused on strengthening the integrity system of local authorities, raising local awareness of combating corruption, and activating their internal and external accountability mechanisms within the framework of enhancing the values of integrity, principles of transparency, and systems of accountability in the work of local authorities. AMAN's interest in the matter stems from its view of the importance of the role played by local authorities, who are responsible for delivering many daily services to citizens, including numerous vital parts of life. It also includes managing the authority's revenues and expenses, as well as preparing, issuing, and approving bids and appointing permanent or temporary employees. It additionally undertakes various financial and administrative decisions that affect all citizens living in the local authority's region.

² The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), 2019, Report of the Transparency Index and the extent of its application in the work of local bodies classified (C) in the West Bank, pp. 6-7.

³ The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), 2014, Local Integrity System Assessment, The Integrity Environment in Ramallah Municipality "Case Study", p.33.



This study, which is being carried out by the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), is a continuation of efforts to improve transparency in the work of local authorities, taking into account the lack of a law on the right to information and the shortcomings of the administrative records system and the national archive.

Overall Objective of the Report

The "Transparency Index in Palestinian Local Authorities in the West Bank (20 local authorities classified "B")" aims to measure the level of transparency in these local authorities in a way that serves the development of their performance and formulates recommendations that contribute to bridging the gaps and lapses that hinder and affect the level of transparency in these local authorities.

► Methodology of the Study:

After determining the sample of the targeted local authorities, the relevant domains and indicators were determined in order to fulfill the objective of the report. The preparation of the report and implementation of the scale began with data collection using the following mechanisms:

- Accessing local authorities' websites and Facebook pages, as well as searching their data, to investigate the extent to which it publishes information and offers data connected to its work in services, its procedures, structure, and legislative reference.
- Holding meetings with local authorities to confirm some observations, or inquire about some missing information: For example, is it available but not published, or is it not available at the local authority?
- Correspondence with local authorities via e-mail and WhatsApp.
- To confirm that the local authority does not object to providing information to citizens upon request. The local authorities' websites or social media accounts were visited, and then its employees were contacted about the means of providing information to citizens if it was not found on its websites. Furthermore, what is the best way to receive that information (by email, phone, or in person at the municipality headquarters)?

Examine the Extent of Adherence to the Principles of Transparency in the Work of Local authorities: Evaluating transparency in the work of local authorities using indicators related to the following principles:

- The right of citizens to access available public information in principle. This means the right of citizens to obtain public information related to the work of the local authority automatically and without the need to justify or prove a special interest in obtaining it, as well as confirmation that the authority that decides to withhold information should bear responsibility for this obstruction.
- The effectiveness of providing information and the simplicity with which it can be obtained on the ground. The local authority must constantly collect, update, organize, register, save, and update general information. For example, information about local council members such as résumé, disclosure of financial statements and property assets disclosure, and information on the decision-making process (past, present, and future). Furthermore, understanding of local and international players and stakeholders, as well as information on decisions and outputs such as financial and administrative reports, appointments, and planning issues.
- The information available is useful and reasonably priced: the information must be correct, thorough, and up to date.

International Transparency Index in the Work of Local Authorities (Transparency Index)

The International Transparency Index primarily seeks to determine the extent to which it is applied in the work of local authorities through their adherence to disclosure policies and principles and the publication of information relevant to their work. Furthermore, it provides scholars and specialists in numerous sectors with tools to assess the extent to which local authorities are committed to the policies and principles of transparency and information disclosure in their work, as permitted or required by law.

Objectives of the Report

The report specifically aims to:

- Evaluate the availability of information related to local authorities and identify strengths and weaknesses regarding disclosing them.
- Create competition and encourage local authorities to communicate information, with the aim of adopting sound best practices in this regard.
- Developing recommendations to improve transparency principles in collaboration with the target authority.

Main Dimensions of Scale

(46) of the scale's questions were applied to the targeted local authorities in order to acquire relevant information (on websites and other means of collecting and disseminating information), as follows:

- Information on all elected local council officials and executive branch officials, including resumes and financial disclosure.
- Information pertaining to the management and performance of officials' duties, as well as the attainment of their objectives: Any information on the decision-making process, including (strategic planning, practical plans, citizen engagement and integration in local authority activity, as well as stakeholder information).
- Any information concerning instructions, decisions, financial management, appointment procedures, planning and organization, as well as additional issues related to dealing with the public such as services, conditions for getting them, and taxes.

Scale Instrument and Indicators:

In the previous paragraph, we clarified the basic areas included in the scale under study. The indicators included in the scale tool that was used to collect information are detailed below. The following points should be highlighted:

In the process of grading the study (corresponding) paragraphs, the following paragraph distribution was used:

Table No. (1): Grading scale

High	Moderate	Low	Very low (critical)
3	2	1	0

The tool has been modified to suit the Palestinian reality by altering or deleting some indicators. The following are the five domains and their sub-components:

Domains and their Sub-components

The scale consists of five domains, each of which consists of a number of indicators, as follows:

First domain: Information about the local authority, its employees, and its affiliated institutions (12 indicators)

1. Resume of the head of local council.
2. Disclosure of the assets and property of the head of the local authority for a maximum of 4 past years
3. Disclosure of the income of the head of the local authority (annual statement of the income of the head of the municipality).
4. Record of the private financial interests of the head of the local authority or his/her immediate relatives.
5. Names of department heads in the local authority and their contact information (e-mails and phone numbers).
6. Contact information for the members and head of the elected local council.
7. A list of the local council members.
8. The schedule of local council meetings, especially the upcoming one, including (time, date and place).
9. Minutes of local council meetings during the past two years.
10. Working hours of the local authority.
11. Information regarding contacts and centers for submitting complaints and objections in the local authority.
12. A list of the names of associations, institutions, and beneficiaries (i.e., those that received concessions, contracts, or aid from the local authority, not including assistance for needy individuals, such as the poor) from the local authority.

Second domain: General administration of the local authority (9 indicators)

1. Codes of conduct for members of local councils.
2. Codes of conduct for employees of local councils.
3. Strategic plan for the next five years.
4. Annual administrative report/achievements' report.
5. Anti-corruption plan (preventive measures and activities and criminal prosecutions).
6. Regulations, procedures, instructions and bylaws applicable in the local authority.
7. Taxes and service fees charged by the local authority.
8. An inventory of the assets and properties of the local authority (buildings...etc.).
9. List of associations and companies that the local authorities mainly contributed to their formation.

Third domain: Financial management of the local authority (9 indicators)

1. Current year budget.
2. Detailed budget for the current year.
3. Citizens' budget or read budget.
4. List of local authority revenues for the past year.
5. Planned and executed budget for the past year.
6. All amendments made to the current budget.
7. Public debt.
8. Payables of the local authority for service providers and contractors.
9. Audited annual financial reports.

Fourth Domain: Recruitment (staffing) and procurement procedures (8 indicators)

1. Announcing vacancies in local newspapers and the media 10 days before the deadline for submission.
2. Procedures for promotion and dismissal of employees, and penal proceedings against them.
3. The number of all employees (including employees of temporary and permanent contracts).
4. Public procurement policy that does not require competition for quotes, its value, and suppliers.
5. Public Procurement Policy "tender document" (purchase requests, proposals, and bids).
6. The amount of additional workload for each work contract.
7. Public contracts (public works and services that require contracts with private contractors) with all their attachments and appendices during the past year.
8. Names of losing contractors, bidders or consulting societies during the past year.

Fifth domain: Urban/civil planning (8 indicators)

1. Local development plan: which means the presence of (an updated document that regulates the uses of the entire municipality's lands, and outlines road and transportation networks, municipal equipment, water extraction and supply systems, wastewater system, communications and other infrastructure).
2. Urban expansion plans (organization and organizational structure).
3. The results of the public discussion/public sessions about the local authorities' plans, including handling complaints, suggestions and comments made by citizens on a certain topic.
4. A list of associations/legal persons and the funds confiscated by the local authority and the amounts allocated for this during the past year.
5. A list of the authorities' lands exchanged or sold (locations, amounts, and compensations).
6. Deadlines or required dates to obtain licensing service.
7. The uses of the lands of the local authority and the changes that occurred to their uses.
8. List of concession contracts owned by the municipality, whether by use or urban development rights (i.e. licenses granted for use or construction in land owned by the municipality).

The mechanism for calculating the scores of the scale's indicators:

Table No. (2): The mechanism for calculating the scores of the scale indicators

Situation	Score
If not applicable	The question is crossed out and not counted in the average
If the information is published on the Internet	perfect score(3)
It is given if the information was not published on the Internet, but was published by any other means, and it has no legal text	(2)
It is given if the information was not published on the Internet, but was published by any other means, providing it has a legal text	(1)
It is given in the event that the information was not published by any means.	(0)

Clarifications related to the publishing mechanisms for the uses of the indicator:

Internet: The official website on the Internet of the local authority and its social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp).

Other means: local official newspapers, local radio stations, public procurement portal, written and electronic bulletin boards within the authority, and mosque entrances.

Some scale indicators are based on examining some of the best practices adopted internationally in the transparency of local authorities' work, despite the absence of local legal texts governing them, with the goal of motivating Palestinian local authorities to follow these values and practices and informing citizens about them in the absence of binding legal texts.

It is worth noting that these indicators were fixed in the scale without calculating their scores, particularly those related to the financial information of the head of the local authority, because they are linked to the Anti-Corruption Law, which prohibits the publication of financial disclosure. Additionally, the culture of publishing the financial information of the individual in charge is still not ready to accept these practices.

The local Authorities' Sample Included in this Report:

The indicator was applied to an intentional sample of municipalities classified as (B) in the West Bank, as the municipalities were determined based on a database that is approved by the Ministry of Local Government, which shows that there are (29) municipalities classified as (B) in the governorates of (Hebron, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Tubas, Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm). While the governorates of Qalqilya, Salfit, and Jericho are devoid of (B) classified municipalities. Table No. (3) lists the twenty local authorities chosen as a purposive sample to apply the indicator to.

Table No. (3): A sample of the municipalities to which the indicator was applied

Halhul	Al-Thahreya	'Al-Samou	Bani Na'im	Taffuh
Al-Yamun	Qabatia	Arraba	Ya'bad	Tamoun
Beit Furik	Anabta	Dir Dibwan	Bietunia	Silwad
Bani Zeid Al-Gharbia	Beit Jala	Beit Sahour	Al- Ram	El 'Eizariya

► **The results of the scale examination on the local authorities:**

First: The result of examining the indicators of transparency and disclosure in the work of 20 local authorities, as a sample of the local authorities classified (B) in the West Bank

According to the color code adopted in the index methodology, the transparency index in the sample of municipalities classified as (B) in the West Bank received a very low score, which is a level classified as (critical).

Table No. (4): The result of examining the indicators of transparency and disclosure in the work of 20 local authorities, as a sample of the local authorities classified (B) in the West Bank

#	Municipality	First Domain:	Second Domain:	Third Domain:	Fourth Domain:	Fifth Domain:
		Information about the local authority, its employees, and its affiliated institutions	General administration of the local authority	Financial management of the local authority	Recruitment (staffing) and procurement procedures	Urban/Civil Planning
		(Full score 3)	(Full score 3)	(Full score 3)	(Full score 3)	(Full score 3)
1	Halhul	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow
2	Al-Thahriya	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red
3	Al-Samou'	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
4	Taffuh	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red
5	Bani Na'im	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
6	Beitunia	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
7	Silwad	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
8	Dir Dibwan	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
9	Bani Zaid Al-Gharbiya	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
10	Ya'bad	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
11	Arraba	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
12	Al-Yamun	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
13	Qabatia	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
14	Anabta	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
15	Beit Furik	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
16	Tamon	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
17	Beit Sahour	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red

18	Beit Jala	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Yellow
19	Al-Ram	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
20	El-E'zariya	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
Average		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red


Although all domains were labeled as «critical,» there is a minor difference between them. The fifth domain, which examines municipalities' transparency in the field of urban and civil planning, is regarded as the most dangerous, as it received the lowest score of the five domains. However, despite its low score, the third domain that examines the transparency of municipalities in the aspect of financial management was the best. The results of all the domains were as follows: <The first domain was about 0.66, the second domain was about 0.43, the third domain was about 0.80, the fourth domain was about 0.59, and the fifth domain was about 0.56.

Second: The result of examining the indicators of transparency and disclosure in the work of a sample of local authorities classified (B) in the West Bank according to domains:

First domain: Information about the local authority, its employees and its affiliated institutions

The first domain was rated as critical (0.66 out of 3). It expresses the average rate of disclosure by municipalities of information related to the head and members of the council in terms of the head of the local authority's resume, disclosure of his/her assets and properties for a maximum of four previous years, and of his/her income (annual statement of the mayor's income). Along with a record of the head of the local authority's or his/her immediate relatives' private financial interests, contact information for the head of the local council and its elected members, as well as a list of their names. The indicator, on the other hand, is concerned with examining the dissemination of information pertaining to the names of department heads in the local authority as well as their contact information (e-mails and phone numbers).

The indicator also looks at information related to managing the schedule of local council meetings, particularly the next meeting, such as (time, date, and location), as well as minutes of meetings of the executive body or the local council held in the previous two years. Furthermore, information about the local authority's working hours, contacts and centers for submitting complaints and objections to the local authority, and, finally, a list of the names of associations, institutions, and individuals who benefit from the local authority.



It should be noted that this domain includes three indicators that are considered best practices but are not mandated by the Palestinian law, such as financial information of the head of a local authority, which is regulated by the Anti-Corruption Law through financial disclosure statements. Now, while the law stipulates the confidentiality of statements, it does not stipulate anything to prevent the taxpayer from publishing. Since local authorities and their various components follow the Law and, like the rest of those subject to it, do not publish financial disclosure statements, the indicators related to this field were not calculated because local authority members are not held accountable, unlike the rest of taxable groups.

Many local authorities did not publish the resume of the head of council or contact information for council members or heads of departments in the local authority. This is due to the fact that the targeted sample of municipalities is located in small communities where members of the local authority and its employees are well known to citizens, and where the municipality's phone numbers, in addition to social media platforms, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, constitute an actual social communication method between citizens and the local authority.


As for announcing the dates of the meetings and publishing their minutes, no announcement appeared for any local authority in this regard, despite the fact that social media accounts are full of news and activities of these authorities.

The second domain: The general administration of the local authority

The second domain received a critical rating. This result expresses the average of local authorities publishing information on the codes of conduct for members of local councils and its employees, strategic plan for the next five years, annual administrative report/achievements' report, anti-corruption plan (preventive measures and activities and criminal prosecutions), regulations, procedures, instructions and bylaws applicable in the local authority, taxes and service fees charged by the local authority, an inventory of the assets and properties of the local authority (buildings... etc.), and a list of associations and companies that the local authorities mainly contributed to their formation.

Table No. (6): Scores of indicators of the second domain
 “General administration of the local authority”

Municipality	Codes of conduct for members of local councils.	Codes of conduct for employees of local councils.	Strategic plan for the next 3-5 years	Annual administrative report/ achievements' report	Anti-corruption plan (preventive measures and activities and criminal prosecutions)	Regulations, procedures, instructions and bylaws applicable in the local authority	Taxes and service fees charged by the local authority	An inventory of the assets and properties of the local authority (buildings... etc.)	List of associations and companies that the local authorities mainly contributed to their formation
Halhul					Not counted				Not counted
Al-Thahriya					Not counted				Not counted
Al-Samou'					Not counted				Not counted
Taffuh					Not counted				Not counted
Bani Na'im					Not counted				Not counted
Beitunia					Not counted				Not counted
Silwad					Not counted				Not counted
Dir Dibwan					Not counted				Not counted
Bani Zaid Al-Gharbiya					Not counted				Not counted
Ya'bad					Not counted				Not counted
Arraba					Not counted				Not counted
Al-Yamun					Not counted				Not counted
Qabatia					Not counted				Not counted
Anabta					Not counted				Not counted
Beit Furik					Not counted				Not counted
Tamon					Not counted				Not counted
Beit Sahour					Not counted				Not counted
Beit Jala					Not counted				Not counted
Al-Ram					Not counted				Not counted
El-E'zariya					Not counted				Not counted
Average					Not counted				Not counted



Although the score for this indicator is generally low, some local authorities have made some progress in this field. The municipality of Halhul received a low rating compared to similar local authorities in the West Bank, which received a critical rating.

The presence of an effective official website for the local authority online, like in the municipality of Halhul, is a point of strength for the authority. Many of the information assessed by the indicator in this domain are published materials that take the form of a high-volume and momentum documents that are impossible to publish on social media accounts, such as laws, systems, strategic plans, and many lists. Local authorities have demonstrated weakness in this domain because the majority of them lack an official website, have one that is inactive, or rely on social media accounts. For example, while this study used the item of publishing the strategic plan for the «coming» years rather than the expired strategic plan, as they are in the process of preparing their strategic plan for the coming years, a review of the official websites of the local authorities having them indicates that they do not publish the strategic plans. It appears that they deem it sufficient to post news about the municipality's activities, such as meetings with experts or local community representatives only.

With regard to the indicator of the existence of an anti-corruption plan, it was excluded for all local authorities because ministries lack an anti-corruption plan; thus, the indicator is directed to deal with local authorities by not holding them accountable for not publishing this plan.

It was additionally found that local authorities did not publish administrative reports or annual achievements reports on their work. Although local authorities, represented by their heads, are required by law to prepare an annual report on the work carried out in the authority, the law does not require them to publish these reports.

The disclosure of what is included in this domain by municipalities is not a tremendous challenge, especially as the published material does not include personal information, as in the first domain. Rather, it is determined by documents, the majority of which are expected to be prepared in advance, such as laws and regulations, or the types of taxes collected. Not adding these documents to the official accounts can only be explained as a lack of awareness of the significance of publishing them or a lack of capabilities to publish these documents, such as a lack of website creation capabilities or human resources to manage these websites.

Third domain: Financial management of the local authority

The third domain received a critical rating despite being the highest of the five domains. This result expresses the average scores of the local authorities' publication of information related to the financial management of the authority. These information are represented in the publication of the current year's detailed budget, the citizens' budget or the read budget, the list of the local authority's revenues for the past year, the planned and implemented budget for the past year, all amendments made to the current budget, public debt, payables of the local authority for service providers and contractors, and annual audited financial reports.

Table No. (7): Scores of indicators of the third domain
 “Financial management of the local authority”

Municipality	Budget for the current year	Detailed budget for the current year	Citizens' budget or read budget	List of local authority revenues for the past year	Planned and executed budget for the past year	All amendments made to the current budget	Public debt	Payables of the local authority for service providers and contractors	Audited annual financial reports
Halhul	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red
Al-Thahriya	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
'Al-Samou	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red
Taffuh	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Bani Na'im	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Beitunia	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red
Silwad	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green
Dir Dibwan	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red
Bani Zaid Al-Gharbiya	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Ya'bad	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red
Arraba	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Al-Yamun	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Qabatia	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red
Anabta	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Beit Furik	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Tamon	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green
Beit Sahour	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red
Beit Jala	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green
Al-Ram	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red
El-E'zariya	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green
Average	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red

The high average scores in this domain are due to the fact that financial transparency in local authorities is linked to the fulfillment of the Municipal Development and lending Fund (MDLF) (or project financier) conditions, which considers the publication of some financial data to be one of the conditions for municipalities to obtain loans from the Fund. Despite the majority of local authorities' commitment to publish the budget summary approved by the Ministry of Local Government, there was no annual commitment to publish the audited financial report, the read budget (citizens' budget), or the detailed budget. It should be noted that the audited financial report and the citizen's budget are among the documents that have a greater impact on the citizens' interests than others because they are more understandable to the average citizen and introduce him/her to the revenues, expenses, and debts of the local authority that represents them.

On the other hand, despite all efforts to push the Palestinian local governance system away from centrality, it was clear throughout the application of this indicator that local authorities are linked to the central government. The local authorities did not publish their budgets until after the State's general budget was issued in early April of this year, which caused the assessment of the financial domain to be postponed until the government issued its budget so that local authorities could publish a summary of their budgets signed by the Minister of Local Government. Although waiting for the issuance of the general budget does not contradict the publication of the audited financial report, the majority of local authorities have yet to do so, reflecting local authorities' preference for publishing documents related to their relationship with the government over documents related to their relationship with citizens.

Fourth domain: Recruitment (staffing) and procurement procedures

The results of the fourth domain indicate that it has a critical rating, and this result expresses the average scores of the domain indicators related to the dissemination of information by local authorities related to the following: Announcing vacancies, procedures for promoting and dismissing employees and penal proceedings against them, and the number of all employees (including employees of temporary and permanent contracts). In addition to publishing information related to public procurement policy, such as publishing the public procurement policy that does not require competition for quotes, their value and suppliers, public procurement policy "tender document" (purchase requests, proposals, and bids), the amount of additional workload for each work contract, as well as public contracts (Public works and public services that require contracts with contractors from the private sector) with all its attachments and appendices during the past year, and finally the names of the losing contractors, bidders or consulting societies during the past year.

**Table No. (8): Scores of indicators of the fourth domain
"Recruitment (staffing) and procurement procedures"**

Municipality	An- nouncing vacancies in local newspapers and the media 10 days before the deadline for sub- mission	Proce- dures for promo- tion and dismissal of employ- ees, and penal pro- ceedings against them	The number of all em- ployees (including employ- ees of temporary and per- manent (contracts	Public pro- curement policy that does not require competi- tive bids, its value, and suppli- ers	The amount of ad- ditional workload for each work contract	Public Procure- ment Policy "Tender Document" (purchase requests, propos- als, and (bids	Public con- tracts (public works and ser- vices that re- quire contracts with private contractors) with all their attachments and appen- dices during the past year	Names of losing contrac- tors, bidders or con- sulting societies during the past year
Halhul	Green	Orange	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Al-Thahriya	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
'Al-Samou	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Taffuh	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Bani Na'im	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red
Beitunia	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Silwad	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Dir Dibwan	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Bani Zaid Al- Gharbiya	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red



Ya'bad	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Arraba	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Al-Yamun	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Qabatia	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Anabta	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Beit Furik	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Tamon	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Beit Sahour	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Beit Jala	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Al-Ram	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
El-E'zariya	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Average	Yellow	Red	Orange	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red

The publication of job announcements by local authorities has been a source of strength, as the vast majority of them do so on their web pages and in the media in accordance with the law. However, in general, local authorities reported weaknesses in disseminating information about personnel, such as their number, promotion and dismissal procedures, or penal proceedings against them. If this information appears on certain municipal pages on the internet, it appears indirectly, for example, through the citizens' budget.

In terms of public procurement information, the publication of tender announcements on local authorities' social media accounts appeared evident, although without being linked to procurement policy or even publishing the Public Procurement Law. Some local authorities noted in their announcements that the tender brochure and associated policies can be obtained by visiting the Public Procurement Portal, where local authorities are required to publish procurement announcements. Aside from that, no local authority has initiated the publication of procurement policies. Moreover, none of them published a copy of any execution contract or the names of those who lost the bids, and some local authorities were simply satisfied by publishing the winners only. Keeping in mind that the opening of bids occurs in the presence of all applicants, the winners are the only ones documented in the publications.


The fifth domain: Urban/civil planning

The results of the fifth domain indicate that it has a critical rating, and this result expresses the average dissemination by local authorities of information related to the following fields: The local development plan, urban expansion plans (organization and organizational structure), the results of public discussion /sessions regarding local authorities' plans, including handling complaints, suggestions and the comments made by citizens on a certain topic, a list of associations / legal persons and funds confiscated by the local authority and the amounts allocated for that during the past year. In addition to publishing a list of the authorities' lands exchanged or sold (locations, amounts, and compensations), the uses of the lands of the authority the changes that occurred to their uses, deadlines or required dates to obtain licensing service, and finally the publication of concession contracts owned by the municipality, whether by use or urban development rights (i.e. licenses granted for use or construction in land owned by the municipality).

Table No. (9): Scores of indicators of the fifth domain
"Urban/civil planning"

Municipality	Local development plan	Urban expansion plans (organization and organizational structure)	The results of the public discussion/ public sessions about the local authorities' plans	A list of associations/legal persons and the funds confiscated by the local authority and the amounts allocated for this during the past year	A list of the authorities' lands exchanged or sold (locations, amounts, and compensations)	Dead-lines or required dates to obtain licensing service	The uses of the lands of the local authority and the changes that occurred to their uses	List of concession contracts owned by the municipality
Halhul	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Al-Thahriya	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
'Al-Samou	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Not counted
Taffuh	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Bani Na'im	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Beitunia	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Not counted
Silwad	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Green	Red	Not counted
Dir Dibwan	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Bani Zaid Al-Gharbiya	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red
Ya'bad	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Not counted
Arraba	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Not counted
Al-Yamun	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Qabatia	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Not counted
Anabta	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Not counted
Beit Furik	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Tamon	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Beit Sahour	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Not counted
Beit Jala	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Not counted
Al-Ram	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Not counted
El-E'zariya	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Not counted
Average	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Not counted

A review of the various types of profiles of local authorities that were the subject of this study revealed that there are no local development plans for the local authorities that can be viewed as documents. It was also discovered that the trend of local authorities' publishing on social media accounts is usually limited to publishing news relating to the indicators being analyzed. For example, news is made about a public meeting to discuss the municipality's plans, but neither the outcomes of the meeting nor the plans are published at a later stage. In other cases, it seems adequate for local authorities to disclose the plans only during the discussion, rather than storing them as documents to be returned to later, which is understandable given the lack of official websites where these documents can be uploaded.




On the other hand, the majority of the local authorities under study are active in disclosing information about the uses of their lands and changes to their uses. The aforementioned occurs as a result of land settlement projects carried out in the West Bank regions by the Land Settlement Authority in collaboration with local authorities. While the concession contracts do not appear at all on the profiles of the local authorities, either because they are not published, or because the authority itself does not have any concession contracts. The foregoing has not been confirmed as a result of numerous municipalities refusing to answer some of the questions brought to them during the conduct of the study.

► Conclusions:

- The transparency index of each local authority in the five domains that were examined, despite the slight discrepancy in publication within the fields of work of each local authority, reflects that all local authorities came in the category of critical classification in publication. While the municipality of Halhul received a higher rating than its counterparts did, but it is still viewed as low.
- These findings indicate that the lack of transparency in the local authorities classified (B) is a widespread phenomenon, and that the information published is driven by citizens' interests in keeping up with the latest news, activities, and achievements of the local council, as reported by some officials in the local authorities. This reflects the citizen's lack of awareness of his/her right to know everything about the local authority, which may justify the local authority's reliance on social media accounts that highlight the social relationship between the local council and the citizen rather than the professional relationship reflected in the official website. As followers of social media accounts will find many announcements of congratulations or obituaries of people from the local community, as well as news of the activities of the local authority.
- The number of local authorities with official websites is nine (9) out of the twenty (20) local authorities studied. Local governments with official websites performed better in terms of the quality of information published, particularly those that used the e-municipality model⁴ over municipalities that rely solely on social media accounts. However, in the same context, it should be emphasized that the official websites of local authorities are not updated on a regular basis.
- It was discovered that some local authorities have several social media accounts, which causes confusion for followers if the update dates are missed.
- Some of the information and data searched for during the study's implementation were published indirectly through its placement within a work manual, system, or law, preventing easy access to the required information and reflecting the low quality of publication.
- A number of municipalities have signed the so-called "Disclosure Policy Document," which is a recent experience within municipal and community development projects, funded by the Municipal Development and Lending Fund. However, the experience is still new and has not yet been generalized to other local authorities or fully implemented.
- Despite the fact that AMAN Coalition signed numerous agreements on codes of conduct with local authorities, none of the local authorities examined in this study published these codes on their websites/accounts.

⁴ The Palestinian Ministry of Local Government's "Strategic Framework for Transforming the System of Local Municipalities into an Electronic System within the Years 2019-2023" defines e-municipality as "a system based on bringing about a transformation in the way the local authority and joint service councils work through the optimal and effective use of IT and communication in order to improve the management and provision of services for beneficiaries to promote the realization of the concepts of good governance."



While local authorities are not exempt from the obligation to publish and disclose their work, it should be noted that during the review of publication in local authorities, it became clear that the overall environment for disclosure in the various components of the central government reflects on local authorities. This is especially true given the lack of a right to information law and the delay in approving the state's public budget and disclosing general data rather than the final report. As a result, it is impossible to hold local authorities accountable for irregular publication and disclosure, or even for providing their delay in publishing their detailed budget and audited financial reports.

► Recommendations:

Request the following from local authorities:

- Creating official websites and activating existing ones.
- Using social media platforms as an interface for local authorities' news and activities and using these platforms to direct users to their official websites for documents and information.
- Creating appendices outlining public procurement policies to be included in bid announcements, especially in small communities where stakeholders may not visit the Public Procurement Portal or specify in the bid announcement that these policies may be downloaded from the Portal and attach its link.
- Publication of information and documents issued by the local authority in a direct manner to facilitate access to the browsers and stakeholders.

Request the following from the Municipal Development and lending Fund (MDLF):


- Tying the conditions of receiving loans or grants from the Fund to the quality of the local authority's publication, as well as increasing the amount of documents to be published.
- Building on the e-municipality's experience and assisting municipalities in its development by creating additional icons that cover all areas of the local council's work, which fall under the following headings: (Members of the local authority, employees and affiliated institutions, general administration of the local authority, financial management of the local authority, employment and procurement, and urban planning).
- Building on the experience of the so-called "disclosure policy document" adopted by some local authorities and generalizing the experience to other local authorities.

Inviting the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) and civil society organizations interested in local authorities' operations to:

- Evaluating the impact of its implemented projects in raising the citizen and local community awareness, as well as identifying and addressing the reasons for citizens' persistent unwillingness to demand their right to inspect the work of local authorities.
- Raising local authorities' awareness of the significance of disclosing their business, and that this should not be tied to the terms of projects that solely benefit local authorities, but rather is a right of citizens as a voter and taxpayer.
- Assisting local authorities with actual projects to build websites with specifications that adhere to best practices in publishing, rather than simply providing comments to improve publication and disclosure of their work.

Request the central government the following:

1. Issuing a Right to Information Act to provide local authorities with a framework for publishing their work.
2. Implementing the National Cross-Sectoral Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy, which is supervised by official government entities, including local authorities.
3. Encourage local governments to do the following:

- 
- Publishing the estimated or proposed budget at the beginning of the fiscal year and not having it linked to the issuance of the State's general budget.
 - Publishing the detailed budget and simplifying it in a manner that is understandable to citizens, and not only the budget summary signed by the Minister of Local Government.
 - Committing to publish audited financial reports on an annual basis.
 - Publication of the administrative report and achievement report prepared by local authorities, a copy of which shall be submitted to the Ministry of Local Government in accordance with the Local Authorities Law.

AMAN Coalition, in cooperation with the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) and the Municipal Development and lending Fund (MDLF), is required the following:

- Preparing a needs assessment study for the infrastructure and human resources necessary for local authorities to be able to fulfill the implementation of the scale indicators.
- Raising awareness and providing training to the local authorities that were the topic of the study on all indicators of the transparency index, its concepts, and the necessary publication mechanisms.
- Targeting one of the municipalities as a pilot project and applying the scale to it after applying the two above-mentioned proposals.
- Applying the scale to the other local authorities covered by this study after training, boosting their level, and providing them with the necessary infrastructure and human resources.

► List of references:

- Palestinian Local Authorities Law of 1997.

Plans and strategies:

- Palestinian Ministry of Local Government. The Strategic Framework for Transforming the System of Local Municipalities into an Electronic System within the Years of 2019-2023.
[https://www.mdlf.org.ps/Document/E-Municipality-StrategicFramework-2019-2023\(1\).pdf](https://www.mdlf.org.ps/Document/E-Municipality-StrategicFramework-2019-2023(1).pdf)

Reports:

- The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), 2019. Report of the Transparency Index and the extent of its application in the work of local bodies classified (C) in the West Bank. Ramallah-Palestine.
- The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), 2022. Transparency Index in the work of Palestinian local authorities (17 municipalities in the West Bank). Ramallah-Palestine.

Social media accounts and official websites of the local authorities examined in the study:

- 1- Halhul Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Halhul.Municipality>.
- 2- Halhul Municipality Official Website: <https://halhul-city.ps/site/>.
- 3- Al-Dhahiriya Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AldahriehPS>.
- 4- As Samou' Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/SamouMunicipality>.
- 5- As Samou' Municipality Official Website: <https://www.samou.ps/>.
- 6- Bani Naim Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/baninaimmun>.
- 7- Taffouh Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Taffouh.org>.
- 8- Taffouh Municipality Official Website: <https://taffouh.org/>.
- 9- Deir Debwan Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/DeirDebwanM>.
- 10- Bietunia Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064788993891>.
- 11- Beitunia Municipality Official Website: <https://beitunia.ps/index.php/ar/>.
- 12- Silwad Municipality Official Website: <http://silwad.org/>.
- 13- Silwad Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Silwad.Municipality>.
- 14- Bany Zaid Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/west.bany.zaidmunicipality>.
- 15- Yabad Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/YabadMunicipalityPS>.
- 16- Arrabah Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Arabbahmanu>.
- 17- Arrabah Municipality Official Website: <https://arraba.ps/>.
- 18- Alyamoun Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/alyamounmunicipality>.
- 19- Qabatia Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Q.Municipality>.
- 20- Qabatia Municipality Official Website: <https://www.qabatia.ps/>.
- 21- Al-Ram Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064724347458>.
- 22- Aizaria Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/aizariamun>.
- 23- Beit Sahour Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Beitsahour.Municipality>.
- 24- Beitjala Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/beitjala.municipality>.
- 25- Beitjala Municipality Official Website: <https://www.beitjala-city.org/ar/contact-us>.
- 26- Beit Foureek Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/beit.foureek.municipality>.
- 27- Anabta Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AnabtaMunicipality>.
- 28- Anabta Municipality Official Website: <https://anabta.org/>.
- 29- Tammoun Municipality Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/TAMMOUN2011>.

AMAN
Transparency Palestine



AMAN was established in 2000 as a civil society organization that seeks to combat corruption and promote integrity, transparency and accountability in the Palestinian society. The Coalition was first formed by an initiative from a number of civil society organizations working in the field of democracy, human rights and good governance. In 2006, the Coalition was accredited as a national chapter for Transparency International.

AMAN is a Palestinian think tank and a specialized body providing knowledge on corruption at the local and regional level through producing specialized reports and studies. The periodic publications include: The annual Integrity and Anti-Corruption Report, the annual Palestinian Integrity Index and the National Integrity System studies and reports, in addition to the Coalition's continued contributions to produce reports and studies on the status of corruption in the Arab region.

As part of the global anti-corruption movement - and of international alliances and partnerships with relevant specialized coalitions and organizations - AMAN plays a key role in the transfer and contextualization of necessary international knowledge and tools to combat corruption in all sectors.

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