

2024

Against All Odds:

**Upholding Freedoms
in a Year of War**

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A Message From

The Executive Director

Dear friends,

The year of 2024 witnessed major transformations on both regional and local levels. It began with the war on Gaza and ended with a war on Lebanon, reshuffling the deck and placing a heavy burden on journalists and the information ecosystem. Wars broke out, victims fell, and losses impacted everyone. Amid fear and tension, we remained steadfast in our pivotal role, working tirelessly to protect freedom of expression and of the media while upholding the integrity of information.

We documented violations against journalists during the war and highlighted the challenges faced by media outlets. Throughout the year, we pursued our efforts to reform the media law, enhance transparency and accountability, while also focusing on ending impunity and protecting journalists in Lebanon. Additionally, we supported journalists through training programs and fellowships in combating misinformation, as well as in other fields including governance, fiscal transparency, environmental reporting, and digital safety—especially for women journalists and activists. These initiatives aimed to foster professional media content, and hold public officials accountable, and amplify the voices of all segments of society.

As this exceptional and challenging year comes to an end, we reflect on our achievements and prepare for another year of hard work and resilience. The responsibility is immense, the challenges persist, and the region continues to experience drastic shifts. Yet, we firmly believe that free media is the cornerstone of building a public opinion capable of holding power to account, achieving justice, and upholding public freedoms and human rights.

We thank you for your continued support, and as we look ahead to 2025, we carry with us the lessons of resilience, solidarity, and the unwavering belief that informed and engaged citizens are essential to democratic societies.

And we pledge that Maharat will remain a strong voice for the protection of journalism and freedom of expression in Lebanon and the region. Amid continued adversity, we draw strength from our community and partners, and from a shared determination to uphold human rights, support inclusive dialogue, and build a future where media and information serves the public good.

With resilience and determination,

Roula Mikhael
Maharat Foundation
Executive Director



2024

In Numbers

Despite a year marked by war, disruption, and immense pressure on Lebanon's media and information landscape, Maharat remained a firm defender of free expression and credible journalism. In 2024, we responded swiftly to the needs of journalists, tackled disinformation, and continued building a more transparent and resilient media environment. This section offers a snapshot of our impact throughout the year, and our collective efforts when it was needed most.

Studies, Reports and Publications:

15 Studies

- Media Regulations (12)
- Coverage of fiscal transparency topics in media (1)
- Climate change and Environmental issues coverage in media (1)
- Media coverage of the security sector (1)

13 Manuals

Essential tools and knowledge for journalists, users, activists, and civil society organizations to protect their communications, safeguard their data, and responsibly address evolving digital threats.

11 Reports

- Journalists Amid war (3)
- Gender and Media: Commitments of media institutions to gender equality (1)
- Tracking sectoral reforms in the 3RF framework (7)

7 Media Alerts

Issued monthly as part of Maharat Foundation's "Fiscal Transparency Tracker", providing updated data, insights and tips, from the monitoring team, to deepen media coverage and enhance fact-checking.

6 Standard-Setting Documents

Summarized best practices and proposed recommendations aimed at developing the media sector in Lebanon, based on the studies done by local scholars and international experts, about media regulations.

Trainings and Capacity Building:

10

Fellowships and
Training Programs

- "Media Reform and Promoting Freedom of Expression in Lebanon"
- "Fact-checking, inclusive journalism, in-depth journalism, and access to information"
- "The coverage of the reform process in Lebanon"
- "The Impact of Conflicts and Wars on Media and Journalism in the MENA Region"
- "Gender-sensitive coverage"
- "Fiscal transparency in connection to sectoral reforms"
- "Climate change and environmental policies: The role of the Lebanese media"
- "Principles and foundations of media and security coverage in Lebanon"
- "Enhancing the ability of CSO's to protect their digital security"
- "Principles of constructive journalism"

Journalists and Media Engagements:

Through the projects and trainings that Maharat carried out during the year 2024, we were able to support:



Maharat News:

Maharat's editorial team sustained its commitment to counter disinformation and promote accountability through quality journalism, by publishing impactful and diverse content to inform and engage the public:





Upholding Our Mission:

**Supporting Journalists
Amid War**

During the initial weeks of the war on Lebanon, Maharat listened to journalists and addressed their needs on both the individual and broader media landscape levels, as well as within the information ecosystem.



Maharat published two reports: the first, titled ["A War Without Red Lines: Threats and Risks Facing Journalists in Lebanon."](#) outlines the violations as well as the field and legal obstacles hindering the work of journalists and concludes with practical recommendations aimed at enhancing journalists protection and ensuring accountability for crimes targeting them.



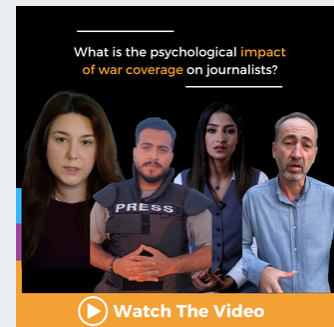
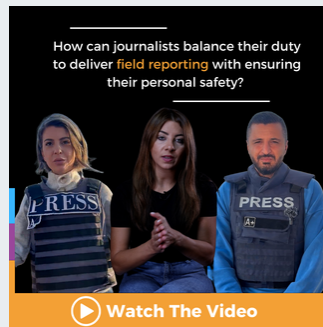
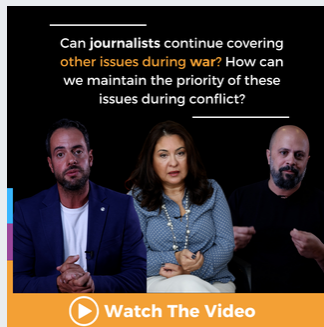
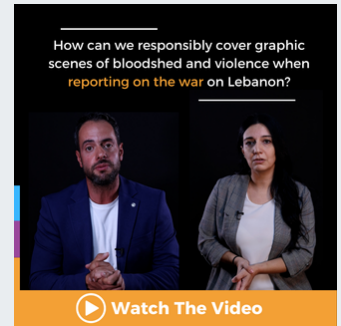
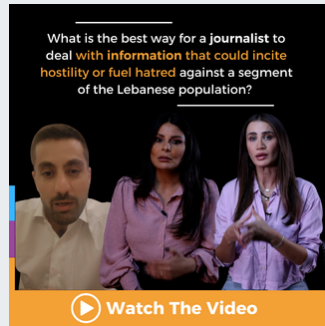
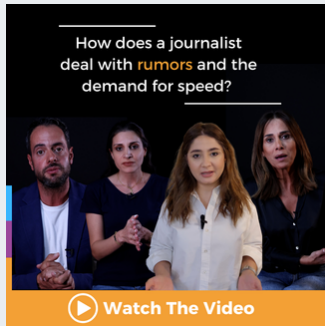
Additionally, Maharat collaborated with the Gulf Centre for Human Rights and IFEX to release a report titled [Attacked from all directions: Media workers under fire in Lebanon's war.](#)

The second report, titled ["Challenges of Media Coverage of Israel's War on Lebanon"](#), examines the realities of media warfare and the difficulties journalists face in covering the war.

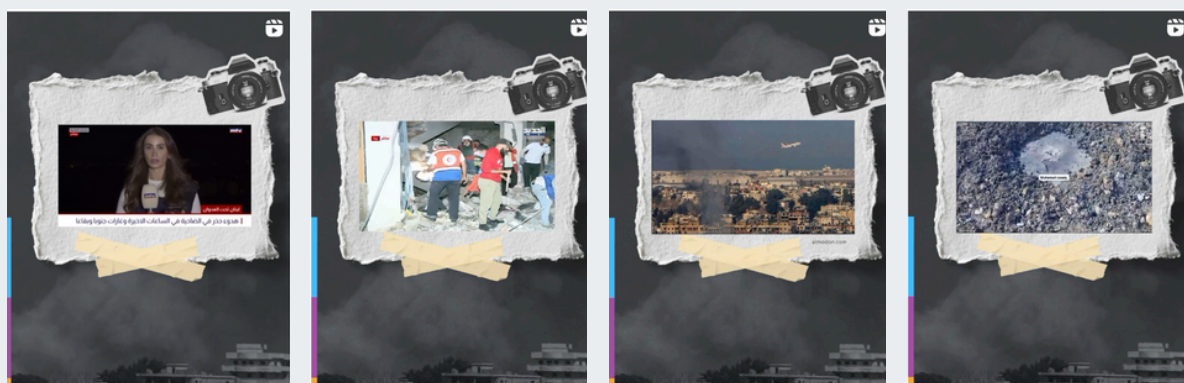


Maharat sought to provide small financial contributions to support journalists whom it had worked and collaborated with over the past two years to cover their temporary displacement. It also partnered with the Beirut office of Reporters Without Borders and the Idraac Center to offer training on mental health and coping with the psychological impacts of the war.

Maharat also launched an awareness campaign on its social media platforms, where journalists shared their experiences and insights from field coverage of the Israeli war on Lebanon.



After the Ceasefire, Maharat shared journalists' stories through the campaign **#رواية_خلف_التغطية** "Story Behind The Coverage", asking them about the most impactful scene or image they witnessed during their war coverage that remained engraved in their memories.





Maharat & **Media Reform In Lebanon**



Throughout the year, Maharat engaged in legislative efforts in Parliament, actively participating in discussions of the subcommittee formed under the Administration and Justice Committee, chaired by MP Georges Okais. Maharat contributed to these discussions with findings from studies and seminars published as part of its project "Media Reform to Enhance Freedom of Expression in Lebanon", supported by the EU.

In 2024, Maharat released a series of studies and standards setting documents prepared by local scholars and international experts, outlining essential criteria for any proposed media law. These studies and documents included:

1. Abolishing criminal defamation laws used against journalists.
2. Incentives for media startups in Lebanon amidst turmoil: Challenges and opportunities.
3. Modernize Lebanese Media Laws to Cope with Digital Changes.
4. Protecting journalists and their sources: Addressing violations of media freedom in Lebanon.
5. Freedom of journalistic associations: reality and challenges.
6. Media regulation in Lebanon: Facts and perspectives.



These studies reflected findings from national [seminars](#) that included all stakeholders, aimed at developing standards to advance the media sector. The goal was to enhance freedom of expression, protect journalists, and shape public policies that ensure the sustainability of media while fostering innovation.



Journalists who participated in the [fellowship program](#) on media standards contributed to producing in-depth articles and public awareness activities that highlighted the urgency of reforming the legal environment in the media sector.



Jana Dhaybi



Joyce Nawfal



Edmond Sassine



Mariam Swaydan



Micheline Abi Khalil



Christine Mhanna



Yara Hindy



Nour Moukhader



Naim Berjawi



Nazeer Rida



Maharat &

Gender Equality in Media



Building on its efforts to enhance the role of media in achieving gender equality, Maharat collaborated with 13 media outlets to adopt a gender equality commitment paper for media organizations, aiming to promote more gender-sensitive media practices.

This initiative aims to foster a more gender-sensitive media environment. The collaboration was launched "Gender and Media: Commitments of Media Institutions to Gender Equality."

As part of the project "Media and Gender Equality," with the support of UN Women, Maharat trained 10 journalists on the principles and foundations of gender-sensitive media coverage. The participating journalists then transferred their acquired skills to other journalists, expanding the reach of the initiative to a network of 80 journalists who benefitted from the project.





Maharat & **Fiscal Transparency Amplified in Media**

MAHARAT'S FISCAL TRANSPARENCY MONITORING-PERIODIC NEWSLETTERS FOR JOURNALISTS

Maharat launched the [“Fiscal Transparency Tracker”](#) in collaboration with the Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan, to monitor public discourse on fiscal transparency and key reforms, and to assess the accuracy of information shared in the media, as well as in statements by politicians, experts, and on social media platforms.

The tracker issues a monthly media alert for journalists, providing updated data, insights from the monitoring team, and tips to deepen media coverage and enhance fact-checking. Maharat released the first media alert in July 2024 and has since [produced seven editions](#).

Additionally, Maharat established the Help Desk, consisting of professional journalists and sector-specific experts, to offer technical assistance to journalists covering issues related to the public sector, fiscal transparency, economic reforms, and sectoral developments in the Lebanese context.

Additionally, Maharat organized a [training program](#) in two rounds, reaching 30 journalists, in collaboration with the Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan. The program focused on fiscal transparency in connection to sectoral reforms.



The training included sessions on critical topics such as the state budget cycle and its challenges, the public procurement law, taxation, and the promotion of the right to access information. The training was followed by the production of in-depth journalistic reports under the mentorship of Maharat trainers and experts from the Institut des Finances.

This program was designed based on the findings of the study titled [“Monitoring Media Coverage of Fiscal Transparency Issues”](#), which highlighted gaps in media coverage, particularly the lack of in-depth reporting and reliable sources.



Maharat &

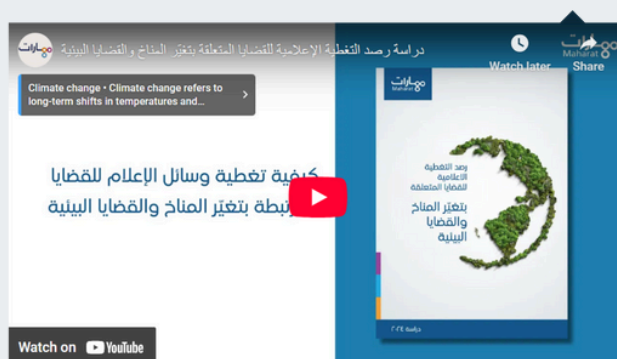
Media Coverage Of Environmental Issues



Maharat launched its first [training program](#) for journalists on covering environmental and climate change issues.

The program aims to enhance expertise in handling environmental and climate-related information scientifically, identifying journalistic sources related to these topics, and empowering journalists to play an oversight role in combating environmental crimes and monitoring public policies and national plans in this regard.

As part of this effort, Maharat released a study titled "[Monitoring Media Coverage of Climate Change and Environmental Issues](#)", which revealed minimal coverage of environmental topics and its public policies, despite the severe environmental challenges Lebanon faces.



In November 2024, Maharat organized two discussion sessions on environmental issues amid war, attended by journalists, experts, and

environmental organizations. The first session, "Environmental Impacts of War: Are They Included in the Planning and Response?" explored who is collecting data on the environmental impacts of war, whether these impacts are addressed in response plans, and whether future aid would include measures to address these effects.

The second session, "Environmental Degradation and the Lebanese Economy: Additional Challenges for Agriculture and Tourism," highlighted the impact of environmental deterioration on Lebanon's economy, particularly in the agriculture and tourism sectors, which are further strained by the ongoing effects of the war.





Maharat & **Media Coverage Of Security Sector**



Maharat launched a [training program on the principles and foundations of media and security coverage in Lebanon](#). The program included 23 journalists from various media outlets.

Following the training, participants produced articles and in-depth reports addressing specific security issues. The program aims to strengthen collaboration between journalists and security institutions, enabling journalists to advocate for good governance and play an effective oversight role.

The training program was built based on a study titled "[Monitoring Media Coverage of the Security Sector in Lebanon](#)", which highlighted the sensitivity surrounding security topics in media coverage. The study also noted that security institutions approach their relationships with the media cautiously.

Maharat launched the second phase of in-depth reporting on security issues in the context of the war on Lebanon. This phase focused on the roles of security forces in managing multiple challenges and responsibilities.





Maharat & **Safety and Digital Security**



In today's interconnected world, digital security is essential, especially in sensitive and conflict-prone environments. In response to this challenge, Maharat Foundation has developed a comprehensive [Digital Security Manual](#). This manual, consisting of 13 different modules, provides essential tools and knowledge for journalists, users, activists, and civil society organizations to protect their communications, safeguard their data, and responsibly address evolving digital threats.

In addition to the manual, Maharat Foundation, in collaboration with digital security expert Bahaa Nasr, organized a [three-day online training](#) for civil society organizations. This training aimed to enhance their ability to protect themselves and their work digitally and manage their data securely and responsibly. All of this aims at fostering a safer and more resilient information ecosystem and empowering individuals to effectively and ethically counter digital challenges.



Support and Capacity Building
**Ongoing Training
Programs and Fellowships**



Maharat Foundation continued its work supporting alternative media platforms in Lebanon, providing assistance to [Taraf Khayt](#) from the Bekaa, [Spotcast](#) from Akkar, and [Anti Feminist](#) from Tripoli. Media viability experts worked with the three platforms to develop

comprehensive strategies that included their vision and mission, editorial policy, audience analysis to better understand their users, marketing strategies, employees' job descriptions, financial management training, and the creation of a crisis contingency plan for each platform.



Call for Fellowship

دعوة للصحافيين/ات اللبنانيين/ات للتقدم لبرنامج زمالة صحافية حول التغطية الإعلامية لمسار الإصلاحات، شفافية المساعدات والتحقق من المعلومات

شروط التقدم

- خبرة لا تقل عن 5 سنوات من العمل

من يحق له التقدم

- صحافيون/ات عاملون/ات في مؤسسات إعلامية (تلفزيون، راديو، موقع إخباري أو منصات إعلام بديلة).
- صحافيون/ات مستقلون/ات

الموعد النهائي للتقدم: 18 تشرين الأول 2024

MaharatFoundation.org

Call for Fellowship

دعوة للصحافيين/ات اللبنانيين/ات للتقدم لبرنامج زمالة صحافية مع مؤسسة مهارات

شروط التقديم

- الإهتمام بتغطية القضايا المرتبطة بالحكومة، الشفافية، التحقق من المعلومات والحق بالوصول إلى المعلومات.
- القدرة على الالتزام بكافة فترة الزمالة والإنتاج.

من يحق له التقديم

- صحافيون/ات شباب
- طلاب صحافة

الموعد النهائي للتقديم: 25 أيلول 2024

MaharatFoundation.org

Through Maharat-News, Maharat Foundation launched [a fellowship program for young journalists covering fact-checking, inclusive journalism, investigative reporting, and access to information](#). Another [fellowship focused on covering the reform process in Lebanon](#). Participants benefited from the editorial team's expertise, receiving technical support to produce their stories.

Maharat-News: **Investigations** **and Fact-Checking**



Maharat News:

Investigating And
Fact-Checking



In 2024, [Maharat-News](#) focused on critical issues affecting citizens' lives in Lebanon through its ["Investigations" section](#), addressing various topics. The platform monitored key public sectors (energy, water, judiciary, social security, education, health, telecommunications, and others) to evaluate governance improvements and the implementation of reforms required by international partners under the 3RF (Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework).

A total of 16 investigations were published, examining whether tangible reforms had been initiated, and emphasizing the media's role as a tool for accountability and transparency.

Environmental challenges and emerging initiatives in Lebanon also featured prominently on the editorial agenda, with 13 investigations published by journalists participating in a fellowship on ["Climate Change and Environmental Reporting Principles."](#)

Fiscal transparency took another significant focus, with 11 in-depth investigations produced by journalists

from the first round of the ["Fiscal Transparency in Lebanon"](#) fellowship.

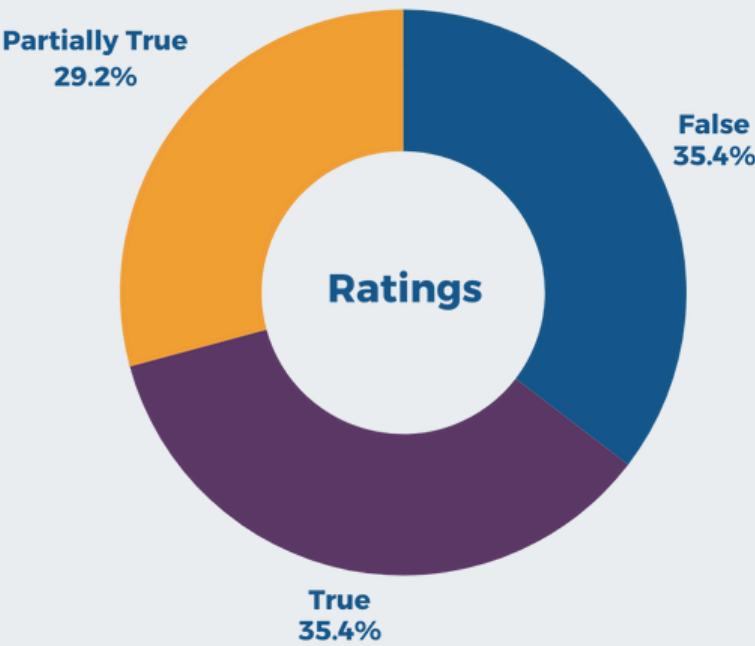
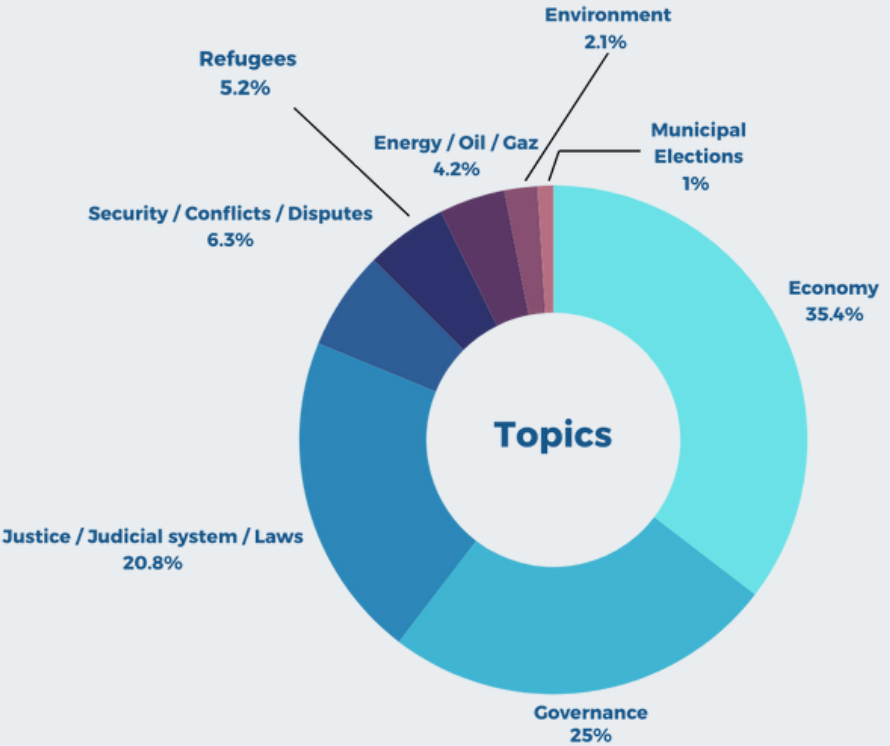
Following the Israeli aggression on Lebanon this year, urgent issues were highlighted in 7 investigations, covering topics such as:

- ["Israel's Manipulation of the Telecommunications Network"](#)
- ["Challenges Faced by Displaced Individuals with Disabilities from the South Amid State Absence"](#)
- ["The Emergency Telecommunications Plan"](#)
- ["The Potential Cancellation of the Maritime Border Agreement Following Israeli Energy Minister's Statements"](#)
- ["The Role of Relief and Disaster Bodies During the War"](#)
- ["The Uncertainty Surrounding the \\$250 Million World Bank Solar Energy Project"](#)
- ["Transparency in Monitoring Aid and Grants During the War"](#)



In the ["Fact-o-meter" section](#), Maharat-News verified the accuracy of statements by officials, as well as widely circulated information in media and social media platforms.

A total of 98 fact-checks were published, with economic and financial news dominating the topics (35.4%), followed by governance (25%), legal information (20.8%), and the remainder covering issues such as internal security, conflicts and war, refugees in Lebanon, energy, oil and gas, the environment, and municipal elections.



The findings showed a significant proportion of the verified information was false (35.4%), while 29.2% was found to be partially true and 35.4% was confirmed to be true.



Maharat's (3RF)

Monitoring and Assessment of Reforms



In 2024, Maharat Foundation also focused on reform-related issues in the country under the 3RF to assess the extent of the authorities' seriousness in implementing the internationally required reforms to unlock international support, and put Lebanon back on the path of economic recovery.

This was achieved through a series of reports addressing [the progress of reforms in public procurement law](#), [social protection](#), [judicial independence](#), [environmental recovery](#), [the electricity sector](#), [the National Anti-Corruption Commission](#), [the mechanism for spending special drawing rights \(SDRs\)](#), and [the bank restructuring law](#).

The reports concluded that progress in reforms faces numerous political challenges, including legislative delays, slow implementation of laws, and the failure to appoint the entities mandated by these laws, such as the Public Procurement Authority, the Procurement Complaints Authority, and the Electricity Regulatory Authority.

Additionally, stagnation and the lack of political will for reform in various sectors persist despite international efforts and assistance. This is evident, for instance, in the issues surrounding judicial independence and the restructuring of banks.

Another significant challenge is the absence of fiscal transparency across sectors, as exemplified by the lack of clarity in the mechanism for spending special drawing rights (SDR) funds, which has raised considerable doubts, especially since the disbursement process was conducted unlawfully.

In response to these challenges, Maharat proposed a series of recommendations urging stakeholders to fulfill their legislative responsibilities, meet international reform demands, enhance transparency, and improve access to information across sectors. This would enable civil society and journalists to monitor reform progress, ensure accountability, and oversee the management of public funds



Maharat In
The Arab World



On a regional level, Maharat Foundation published [the 17th issue of Maharat Magazine](#) on World Press Freedom Day, focusing on "The Digital Space in the Arab World: Shrinking Space for Expression."

The issue addressed key topics, including ["Content Suppression: Between Corporate Policies and Government Censorship,"](#) ["Holistic Safety for Women Journalists and Activists: Increased Risk in Digital Spaces,"](#) ["Personal Data Protection in the Arab World: Flawed Laws,"](#) ["Electronic Armies: Silencing Dissenting Voices and Threatening Alternative Narratives,"](#) ["The Silencing of Palestinian Voices: Documented and Advocated by Zamleh – Arab Center for Social Media Advancement."](#)

Maharat also launched a [fellowship program](#) titled "The Impact of Conflicts and Wars on Media and Journalism in the MENA Region," with 20 journalists from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya participating. The program aims to foster exchange among journalists interested in the subject, support them in writing opinion articles about current or past conflicts in the region, and document their experiences while analyzing the effects of conflicts and

wars on media and journalism in the MENA region.

The fellowship included six sessions covering:

- Suppression of Press Freedom
- Journalist Safety and Security
- Facing Impunity of perpetrators of attack against journalists
- Documenting human rights violations during conflicts
- Navigating Bias and Double Standards
- Ethics and Professional Standards

Maharat organized a [workshop as part of the Media Connect regional training initiative](#), introducing 18 journalists from Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Palestine to the history and principles of constructive journalism.

The program taught participants how to transform traditional stories into constructive ones, highlighting the differences between constructive journalism and other types of reporting.

Participants produced [constructive stories](#) that tackled key issues in the Arab world, offered solutions to major problems, and contributed to opening channels of dialogue between decision-makers and citizens.

Maharat Foundation

Address:

Jdeideh, Matn
Lebanon

Contact Information:

Website: maharatfoundation.org

Email: info@maharatfoundation.org



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