



**Reconciliation, not splitting –
the role of the media in Palestinian
politics**

Palestinian society is split into two political blocks, Fatah and Hamas, which are at each others' throats. This rift runs through all parts of society, and is significantly

reproduced and strengthened by the partisan reporting of the local media. Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2007, the media, which are variously identified with the different parties, have conducted defamation campaigns against the “other” side. Provocations and polemics have been substantial components in television, radio and Internet reporting. The result has been a further heightening of domestic Palestinian divisions.

Given the influence of the media, it seems important to counter these polarizing tendencies and to view media reporting as a means which may also be capable of reducing tensions and contributing to reconciliation. Against this background, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, in conjunction with its new partner, the Forum of Palestinian Journalists (FPJ), has initiated a series of seminars about the role of the Palestinian media in



reducing tensions between the parties. The goal of these meetings was to promote professional work by Palestinian journalists and in this way to inaugurate a development towards objective reporting. In addition a code of ethics was worked out, in order to constitute the basis of professional and responsible journalistic work in the Palestinian Territories.

Extensive discussions took place at the seminars. Topics included such issues as party-related intolerance in the media and possibilities of reducing rifts with the assistance of the media. Representatives of all the local media institutions, in particular young journalists, who were addressed especially as a target group, took part in the seminars. Decision-makers from the various media institutions were invited to the seminars and were called upon to support and promote objective reporting. At a press conference the FPJ called on all the media institutions to avoid the use of provocative terms and expressions.

The events aroused considerable interest and were a resounding success. Given the fact that Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, has launched an initiative to relaunch the political dialogue and undertake reconciliation, the series of seminars attracted special attention. The media provided detailed reports of the events. The most important satellite broadcaster in the region, Aljazeera Live, transmitted all the seminars.