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# Palestinian Virtual Networks: Mapping Contemporary Linkages

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April 2012

This paper investigates the Palestinian diaspora in the context of transnational digital linkages. Mapping results confirm that the World Wide Web has revolutionized both the opportunities and the motivations surrounding community advocacy. Indeed, the Palestinian case is no exception; few communities have experienced such complex struggles for statehood in such a public display. For over 50 years, conflict has remained rooted in the identity of many Palestinians, and present-day diaspora networks are no different. Virtual activity largely focuses on current news and political affairs.

**e-Diasporas Atlas**

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## Reference to this document

## Plateforme e-Diasporas

## Abstract

This paper investigates the Palestinian diaspora in the context of transnational digital linkages. Mapping results confirm that the World Wide Web has revolutionized both the opportunities and the motivations surrounding community advocacy. Indeed, the Palestinian case is no exception; few communities have experienced such complex struggles for statehood in such a public display. For over 50 years, conflict has remained rooted in the identity of many Palestinians, and present-day diaspora networks are no different. Virtual activity largely focuses on current news and political affairs. In addition, mapping results indicate that advocacy is often expressed in the form of personal reflection blogging, ground protest mobilization and dynamic media outlets. The paper concludes by highlighting both the virtual and the physical impacts of networked linkages as beyond rooted struggles for statehood, narratives continue to evolve.

## Keywords

diaspora, internet, web, migrations, Palestine, Palestinians

## Mots-clefs

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In response to the Israeli offensive in Gaza, January 2009 witnessed the mobilization of networked protests and transnational debates surrounding the state of Palestinian affairs. One such protest in Toronto, Canada was documented and posted on YouTube[1]. Protesters chanted "free free Palestine", while waving a variety of flags (these included Palestinian, Turkish, and Canadian flags and even those of Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas). The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC News) estimated some 10,000 people also engaged in similar protests on the streets of London, UK[2]. These protests were largely facilitated online through various networked websites and virtual media outlets.

Beyond the maintenance of historical grievances, contemporary virtual platforms increasingly have the capability to weave themselves into the ground realities of diaspora communities (and even those beyond the diaspora). This paper explores the nature of Palestinian transnational linkages in the context of the world wide web (hereafter web). As indicated by the Palestinian corpus, web based exchanges largely focus on news and current affairs. The corpus also highlights considerable pockets of virtual protest in the frame of human rights, solidarity, and boycotting activities. As such, this paper explores the parameters of contemporary Palestinian networks in a digital age. It questions the role of the web in provoking sentiments of collective unity both within and beyond the Palestinian diaspora. Such sentiments are often woven into greater diaspora discourse, especially in the Palestinian case, a group which has expressed their grievances on an international scale for decades.

Even today, much of the Palestinian identity remains entrenched in narratives of displacement and the unresolved quest for statehood. Transnational linkages between both community members and outside populations moreover, continue to evolve. As a contemporary platform of exchange with limited borders, the web can serve to streamline contencious community debates. As discussed in future sections, the history of Palestinian migration further obscures contemporary diaspora relations. Diaspora composition is largely characterized by both traumatic exodus and voluntary economic migration. We can note the impact of the former (forced exile), in current news affairs which often focus on the reconciliation of perceived political injustices. For Palestinians, such sentiments are most concretely linked to the *Nakbah* (catastrophe) of 1948 and the mass riots and civil war that ensued after.

Web based networks have propelled past Palestinian grievances forward. In the aim of maintaining political relevancy, virtual ploys of engagement often incite emotions of nostalgia, pride and anger. It should be noted that much of the above conclusions stem from the extensive use of social media (songs and films for example) and graphic imagery of homeland violence; which characteristically provoke sentiments of concern, query and ultimately engagement amongst various populations. Beyond networked dialogue, the web has come to compliment the physical manifestations of transnational diaspora relations. As such, the paper begins with a very brief account of what are considered as Palestinian 'cornerstones', ie: concrete grievances, which even today shape the political landscape of not only the diaspora, but also outside supporters.

## Palestinian Baseline Grievances - Physical Platforms

As previously mentioned, Palestinian grievances are largely rooted in sentiments of "exile and displacement"[3]. This is particularly linked to the *Nakbah* (the catastrophe) of 1948, and the 1967 Six-day war known as the -*Naksah* (the setback). Although decades in the past, these events continue to unite the overarching principles and conceptions of 'community' between various Palestinian pockets. The 1948 *Nakbah* in particular marked an exodus of some 750,000-800,000 Palestinians[4]. Many also consider the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to be a key cornerstone narrative of greater Arab (Middle Eastern) socio-politi-

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1. "Toronto Anti-Israeli Protest – January 3 2009" < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DKmFK5iof0 >

2. "Worldwide Protests Urge End to Attacks on Gaza – January 3 2009" <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/01/03/gaza-protests.html>

3. Rabinowitz, Dan (2005) The Return of the Right of Return: The Palestinian Diaspora and the Political Process in the Middle-East in Theoretical Perspective. *JCAS Symposium Series 'o. 17* :39-52). Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, pg.47.

4. Matar , Dina (2007) 'The Palestinians in Britain, News and the Politics of Recognition.' *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 2 (3). pg. 321.

cal relations[5]. Palestinian grievances therefore continue to remain concretely linked to both the *Nakbah* and the creation of the state of Israel[6]. The lack of political reconciliation continues to provide much impetus for those outside the community to increasingly educate and engage themselves within community affairs (often on a transnational scale).

Palestinian grievances jump many physical borders due to the complexity of past and current migration. Migration statistics moreover are largely considered to be approximations - an unfortunate reality often attributed to the lack of consistent Palestinian governing institutions.

Further complicating statistics, many Palestinian migrants (voluntary and forced) have for decades assumed pseudo identities from neighbouring Arab countries (to expedite the process of immigration). Generally however, socio-economic migration to western societies began in the late 18th Century[7]. From the 1950s onward, voluntary migration (including students and civil servant professionals) occurred, albeit at a far more aggressive pace. This was periodically countered with the 'forced exile' associated with 1948 and 1967. Today, it is estimated that some 75% of Palestinians live outside of their ancestral homes[8]. Beyond the West Bank and Gaza, regional areas include Jordan, Lebanon and Syria; externally, they include the UK and the US.

With the international community watching, numerous attempts have been made by key organisations and governing institutions to rectify and resolve contentious land claims of the past, a complex task indeed. Decades of inconsequential resolutions moreover, continue to ignite interest amongst even external populations. Past examples include: General Assembly Resolution 194 (Right of Return) of 1948, Security Council Resolution 242 (ending the illegal Israeli occupation) of 1967, General Assembly Resolution 3236 (Palestinian right to self-determination) of 1974, and Security Council Resolution 446 (ending illegal Israeli settlements) of 1979 - agreements which although concretely established, have provided minimal benefits for the greater Palestinian population.

Indeed, Palestinian grievances have continued to snowball for decades. As a collective community, physical transnational linkages lack coherence in terms of vision, opportunities and motivations. Basic questions of what the Palestinian 'homeland' (if ever attained) would constitute, for example, allude to variance within the community. Nevertheless, overarching sentiments concerning the Right of Return and Palestinian statehood continue to remain integral within current contemporary networks. The role of the diaspora in propelling transnational networks forward currently remains unclear. For example, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the diaspora played a substantial role in provoking transnational sentiments of statehood, comradery and cultural unity[9]. Current networked linkages, (albeit physically) do not mimic those of the past - which has cast some doubt on the role of the diaspora in propagating unified sentiments of Palestinian nationalism[10]. Regardless, unresolved grievances remain salient in greater community discourse. Physical networks moreover stand to expand as a result of the web; a platform which provokes engagement and intrigue both within and beyond the community. Through mapping, this paper considers the impact of virtual platforms in mobilizing Palestinian transnational networks.

# Methodology and Classification of Virtual Platforms

Mapping of the e-diaspora corpus was created by various technological tools and devices (navicrawler, gephi, whois) - all of which are explained in detail in the methodology portion of the atlas. The Palestinian corpus (consisting of 493 websites) was classified based on the following:

Type of Website - such a classification alludes to the platform through which interaction occurs, highlighting the method of interaction, as well as understanding the basis through which information is characteristically exchanged.

Type of actor - this classification treats the source of exchange as an active entity. It is vital

5. Matar , Dina (2006) 'Diverse Diasporas, One Meta-Narrative: Palestinians in the UK Talking about 11 September 2001.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32 (6), pg. 1029.

6. Rabinowitz, 47

7. Matar, 321

8. Rabinowitz, 47

9. Rabinowitz, 41

10. Ibid.

to consider the 'source of information' in order to exhaustively investigate whether there is a loose consensus over online debates.

<u>Type of Activity -</u> classifying the corpus based on activity uncovers the broad utility of the web as a platform of dialogue for diaspora communities. The (digital) corpus classification aspect of the e-diaspora atlas allows for a visual and statistical representation of activity (purpose and interest). This also includes analyzing how activities link and network.

<u>Language -</u> by classifying language, we can begin to understand key attributes of the audience to which information is being presented and provided to. Levels of inclusion and exclusion may inadvertently be decided by linguistic ability. English for example, characteristically becomes a bridge through which diaspora communities have the capability to engage and add to

homeland discussions.

<u>Country & Location -</u> due to the complexity of online IP geographic identification, corpus classification based on location can remain fairly uncertain. Blogs for example are self-defined by the user and thus are relatively untraceable unless otherwise indicated. Through inferences, however we can question the implications of website platform commonalities within the corpus. We
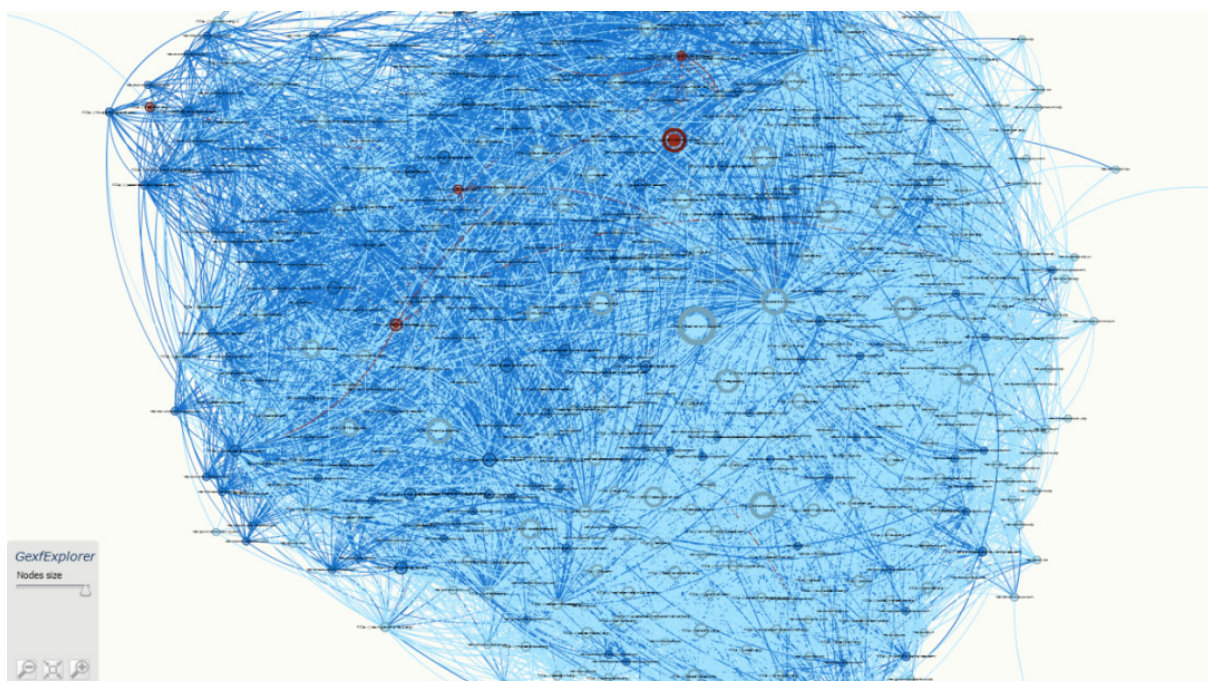
note for example that nodes classified as primarily human rights based are fairly well connected to the US, the UK and Canada.

Visual and statistical representations from the e-diaspora atlas provide the data necessary to assess the nature of the Palestinian virtual community. This alludes to uncovering the physical manifestations of non-static web based activity. The following sections explore the transnational impact of Palestinian virtual network linkages.

## Virtual Platforms: Palestinian e-diaspora Atlas

Upon initial investigation of the Palestinian corpus, we note that web activity is equally extensive as it is dense in terms of networked linkages[11]. It is apparent that Palestinian virtual platforms compliment and provoke sentiments of collective unity on the ground. Emphasis is often placed on propelling the 'injustices' of the past to the present. The isolation below indicates that beyond websites, blogging activity is fairly significant in the corpus. The isolation also highlights the lack of news groups and organization based websites - a significant trend.

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11. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=nodeattribute&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=3&section=35

We can note the extensive use of blogs in the isolation below. Compared to other site platforms, blogs are characteristically far more reflective, personal and relatable. Blogs account for 36% (177 nodes) of corpus websites, and with an outbound density of 7.4% (compared to an inbound density of 1.8%), network linkages are comparatively disproportionate[12]. The strength of outbound blogging therefore is found in its ability to convey emotion; often reaffirming entrenched grievance narratives within the community.
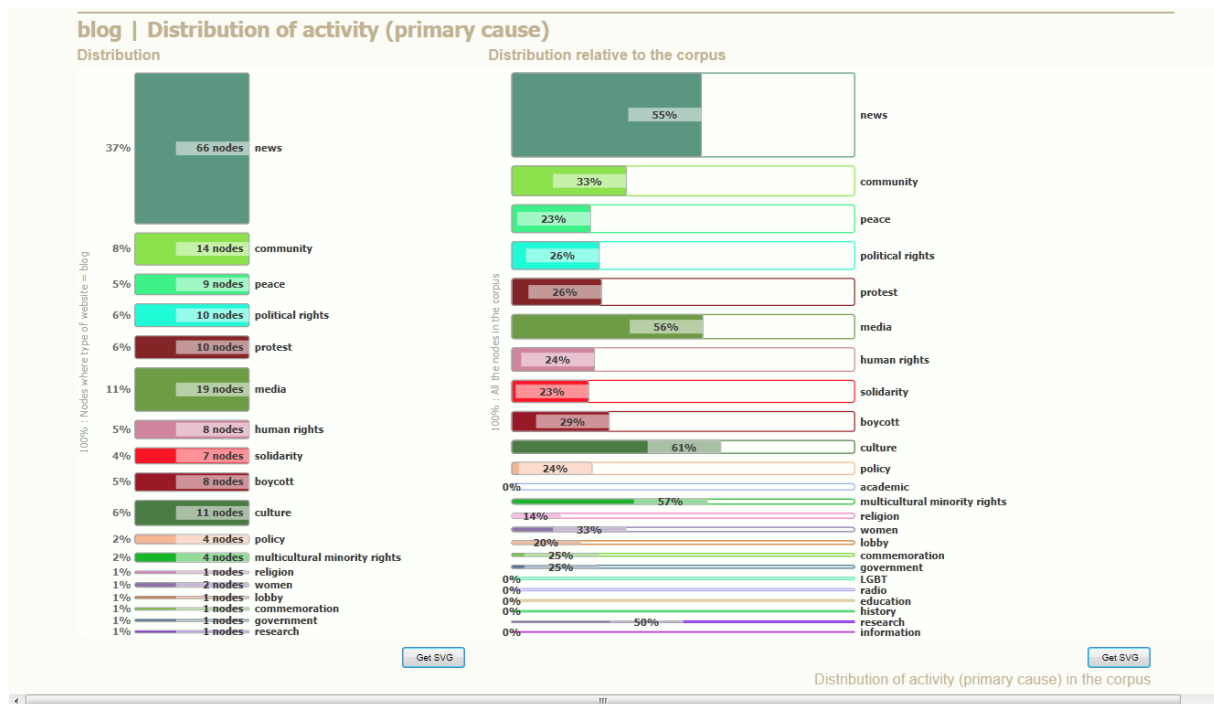
12. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=value&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=3&section=35&value=blog



Some 37% (66 nodes) of blogs are news based, a notable cluster when considering that blogging focused primarily on community accounts for only 8% (14 nodes) of corpus activity[13]. News based bloggin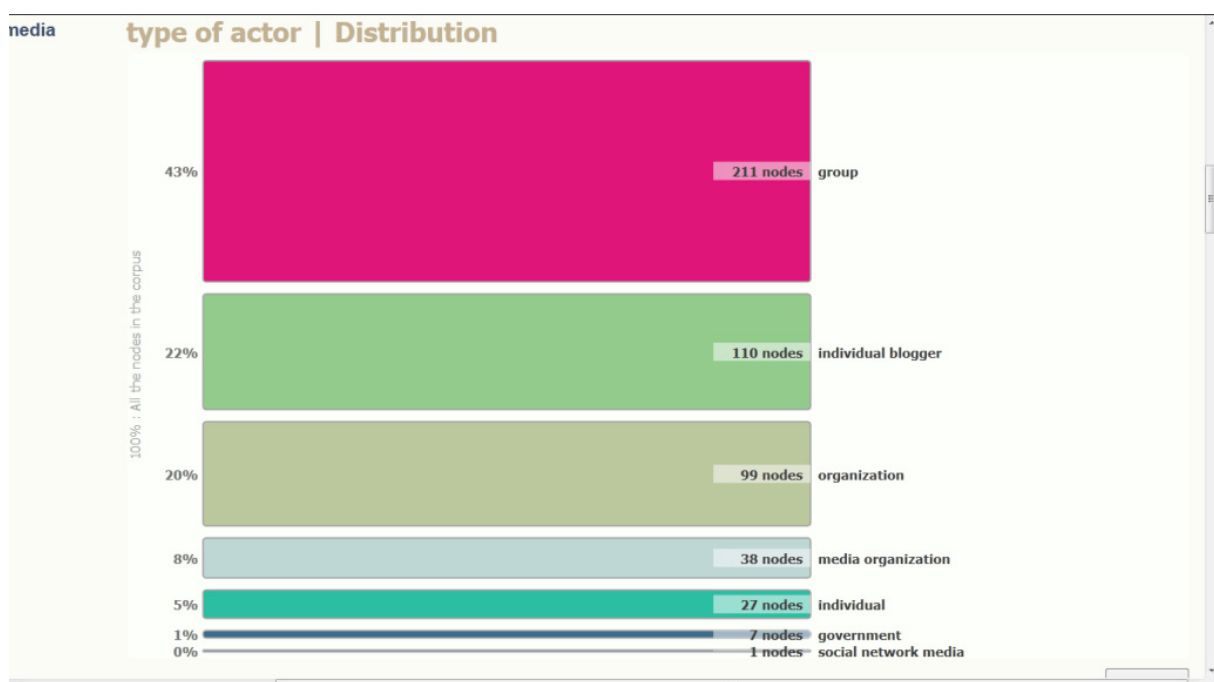g provides the blogger with ample opportunity to comment on current affairs (as defined by the individual or group). Hence, the subjectivity of blog based news may in actuality provoke and entice specific audience members to engage in virtual platforms compared to others.

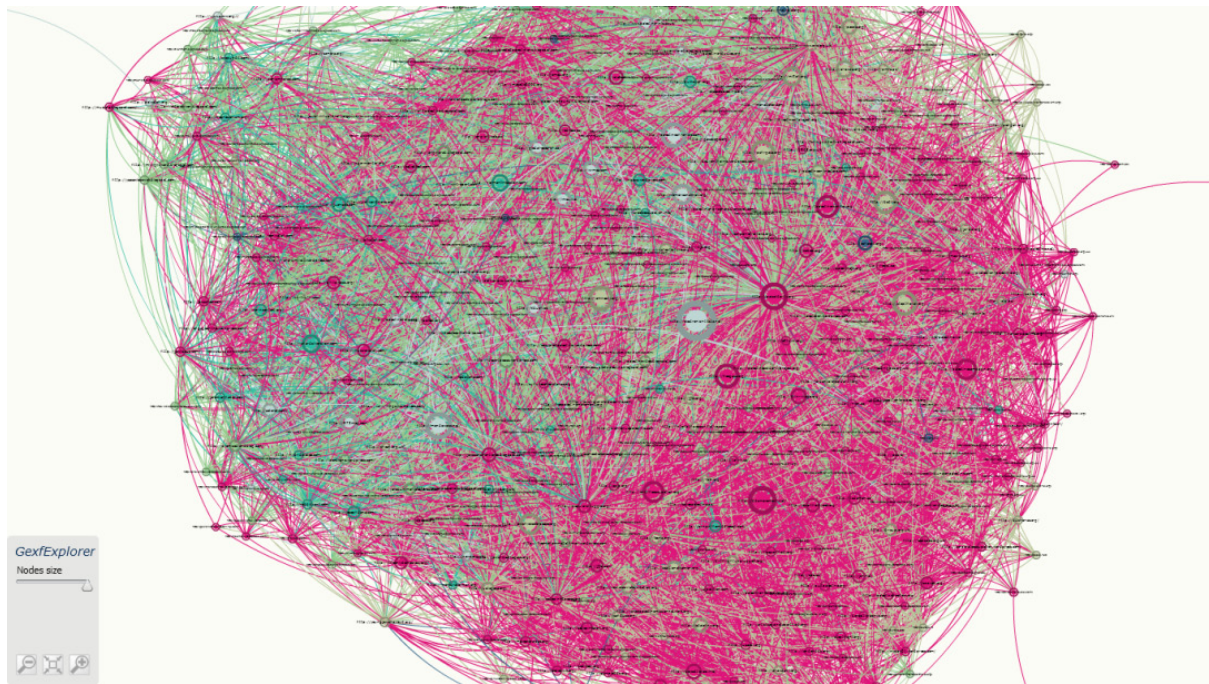13. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=nodeattribute&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=4&section=35

blog | Distribution of activity (primary cause)

Distribution

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 37% | 66 nodes | news |
| 8% | 14 nodes | community |
| 5% | 9 nodes | peace |
| 6% | 10 nodes | political rights |
| 6% | 10 nodes | protest |
| 11% | 19 nodes | media |
| 5% | 8 nodes | human rights |
| 4% | 7 nodes | solidarity |
| 5% | 8 nodes | boycott |
| 6% | 11 nodes | culture |
| 2% | 4 nodes | policy |
| 2% | 4 nodes | multicultural minority rights |
| 1% | 1 nodes | religion |
| 1% | 2 nodes | women |
| 1% | 1 nodes | lobby |
| 1% | 1 nodes | commemoration |
| 1% | 1 nodes | government |
| 1% | 1 nodes | research |

100% : Nodes where type of website = blog

Distribution relative to the corpus

| | |
|---|---|
| 55% | news |
| 33% | community |
| 23% | peace |
| 26% | political rights |
| 26% | protest |
| 56% | media |
| 24% | human rights |
| 23% | solidarity |
| 29% | boycott |
| 61% | culture |
| 24% | policy |
| 0% | academic |
| 57% | multicultural minority rights |
| 14% | religion |
| 33% | women |
| 20% | lobby |
| 25% | commemoration |
| 25% | government |
| 0% | LGBT |
| 0% | radio |
| 0% | education |
| 0% | history |
| 50% | research |
| 0% | information |

100% : All the nodes in the corpus

Get SVG                    Get SVG

Distribution of activity (primary cause) in the corpus

This is not to negate other virtual linkages. Beyond blogging activities for example, we note the concentrated linkages of actor networks below. Individual bloggers largely located on the left of the corpus, group actors (accounting for 211 nodes) are isolated to the right of the corpus.



type of actor | Distribution

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 43% | 211 nodes | group |
| 22% | 110 nodes | individual blogger |
| 20% | 99 nodes | organization |
| 8% | 38 nodes | media organization |
| 5% | 27 nodes | individual |
| 1% | 7 nodes | government |
| 0% | 1 nodes | social network media |

100% : All the nodes in the corpus

If isolated for organizations (20% of actors, comprising of 99 nodes), the variance of actors within the Palestinian corpus becomes increasingly visible. The following statistical representations illustrate the diversity of networks within Palestinian virtual platforms.
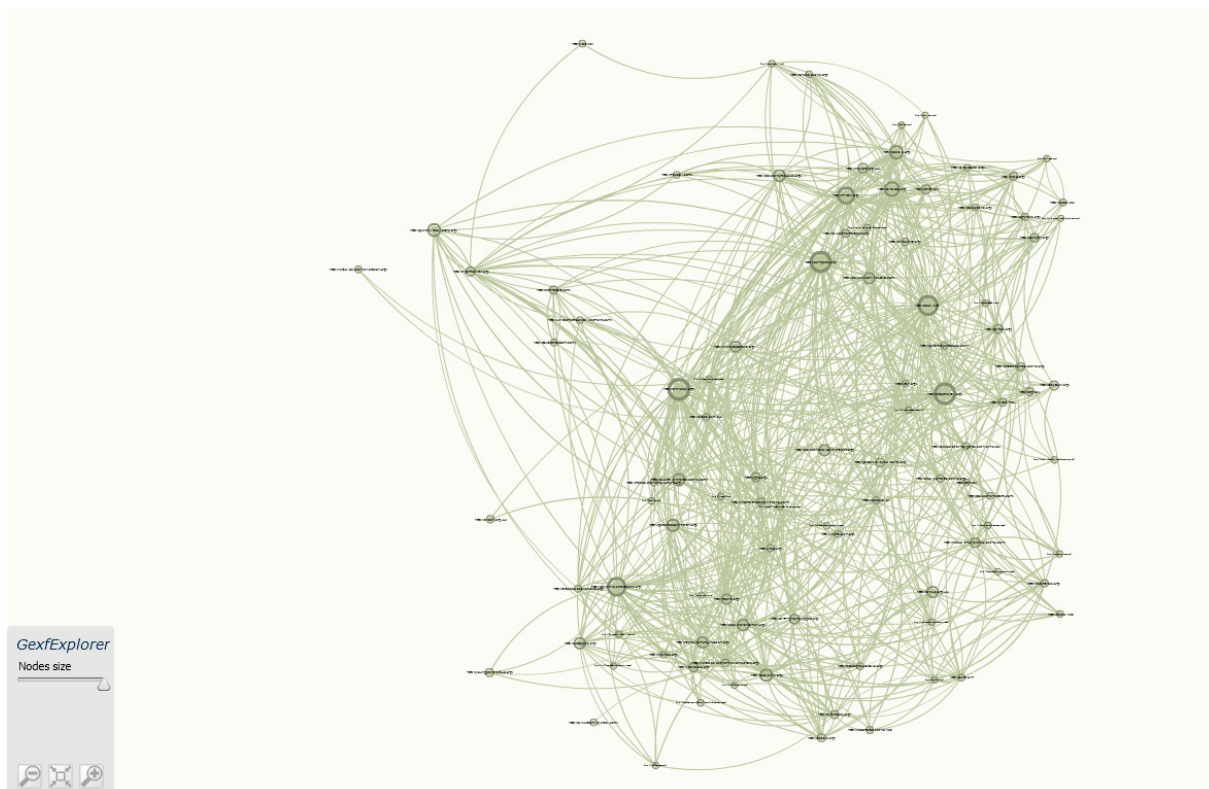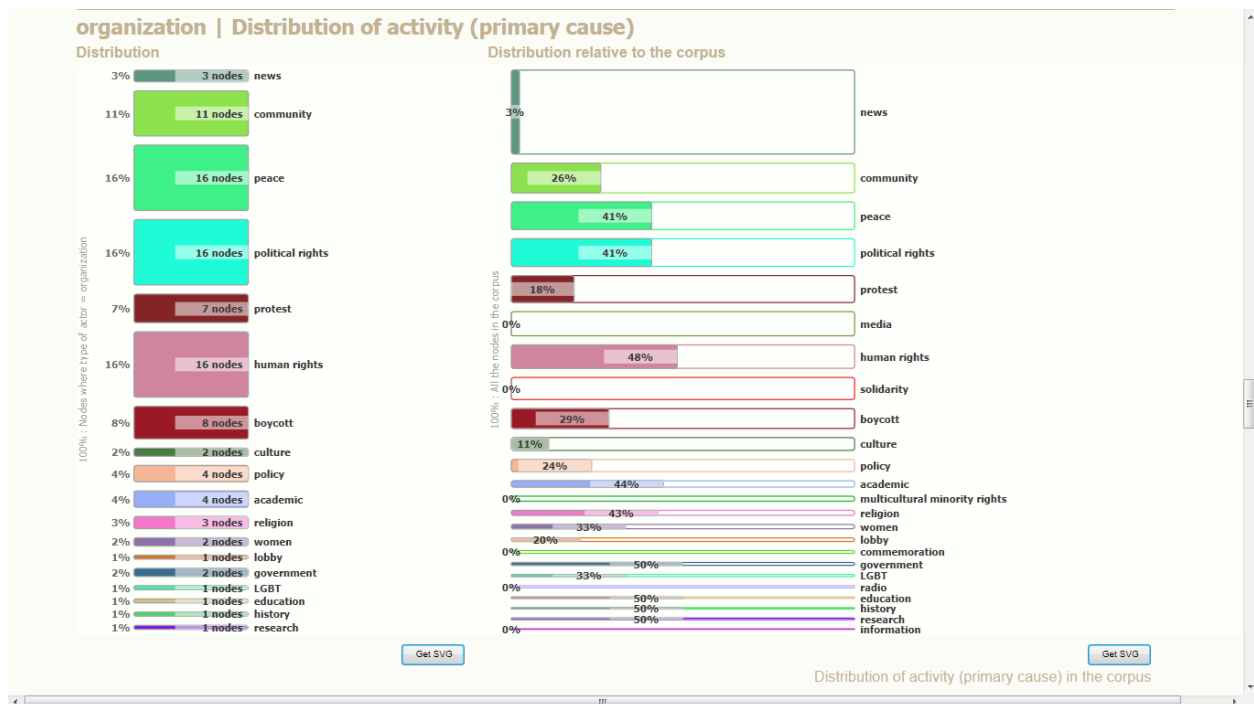
With an inbound density of 7.1% and an outbound density of 4%, organizations are largely 'in profit' (as opposed to blogs)[14]. Interestingly, densities to actors classified as media organizations are 'in deficit' (inbound density of 5.7% and an outbound density of 9.7%). Such disproportionate outbound linkages is attributed to the diversity of actors classified as "organizations".

For example, from the graphical isolation of organizations above we note actors on the bottom of the map vary from *jewishvoiceforpeace.org*, *birthrightunplugged.org* and *coalitionofwomen.org*. Although connected, each of these respective nodes carry independent objectives, highlighting the non-static flexibility of virtual platforms. On the left side of the isolation, conversely we note

channels of linkages in *jewishvirtuallibrary.org* and *ngo-monitor.org* - nodes which set the boundaries of organizational clustering within the corpus. Hence, organizations may intentionally maintain outbound networked linkages with specialized media organizations; actors, who are comparatively influential vis-a-vis their strategic communication tactics.

We also take account of representative authorities, that is, organizational nodes that are most commonly cited by external actors. Such organizations may be similar in terms of institutional structure and even interest. The top three representative authorities thematically focus on human rights (16% of organizational activity), highlighting a key underlying theme within the greater Palestinian corpus.

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14.  http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=value&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=4&section=35&value=organization

## REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORITIES

**Nodes *inside* organization
that *are cited by* the most nodes *in other type of actor***

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM other type of actor |
|---|---|
| http://amnesty.org/ | 181 |
| http://stopthewall.org/ | 172 |
| http://pchrgaza.org/ | 167 |
| http://badil.org/ | 135 |
| http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/ | 133 |
| http://miftah.org/ | 117 |
| http://al-awda.org/ | 97 |
| http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ | 84 |
| http://gazafreedommmarch.org/ | 77 |
| http://australiansforpalestine.com/ | 74 |

If explored in further detail, we note the variance in subject scope of the above nodes. Amnesty International (*amnesty.org*) for example remains one of the most widely renowned non-profit organizations advocating for the maintenance and restoration of human rights on a global scale. This differs significantly from the Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (*stopthewall.org*), which focuses primarily on the eradication of the Israeli West Bank barrier wall. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (*pchrgaza.org*) conversely advocates for human rights in Gaza through rule of law and democracy[15]. PCHR has gained notariety through its various affiliations (examples include the Economic and Social Council of the UN, International Commission of Jurists-Geneva, and the International Federation for Human Rights)[16]. Indeed, the above nodes differ in terms of their networked linkages and subsequent scales

of influence. However, as a basis it is interesting to note that objectives largely focus on similar grievances, that is, the 'liberation' of Palestine.
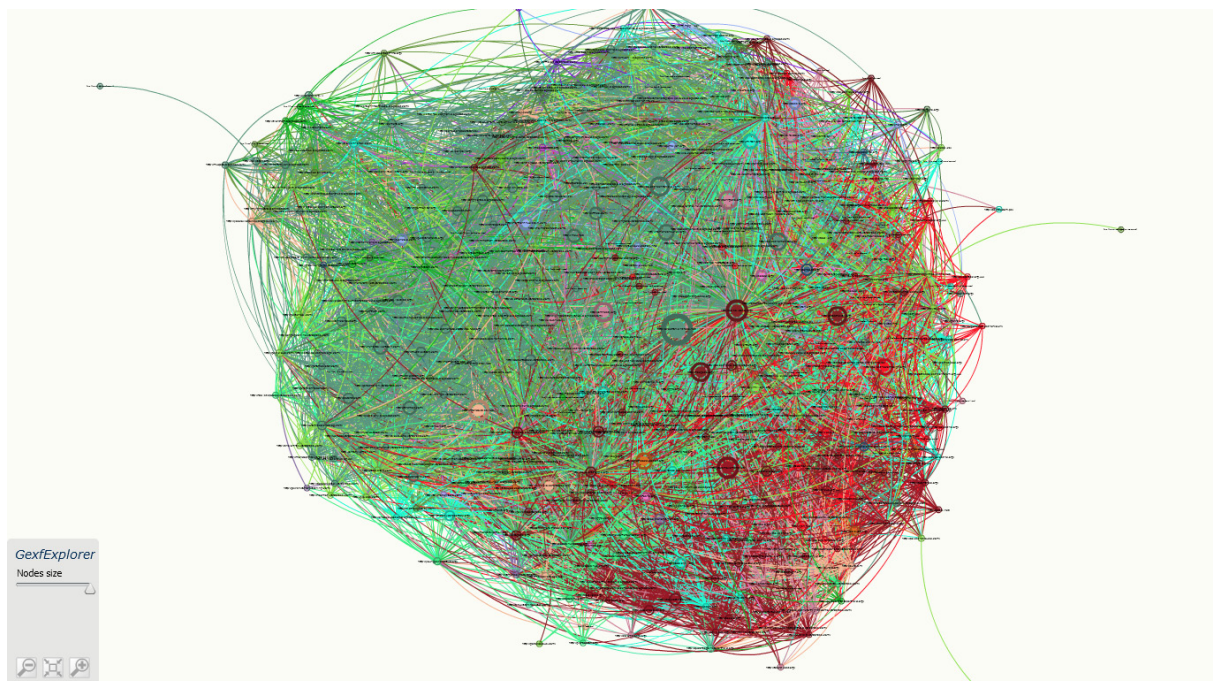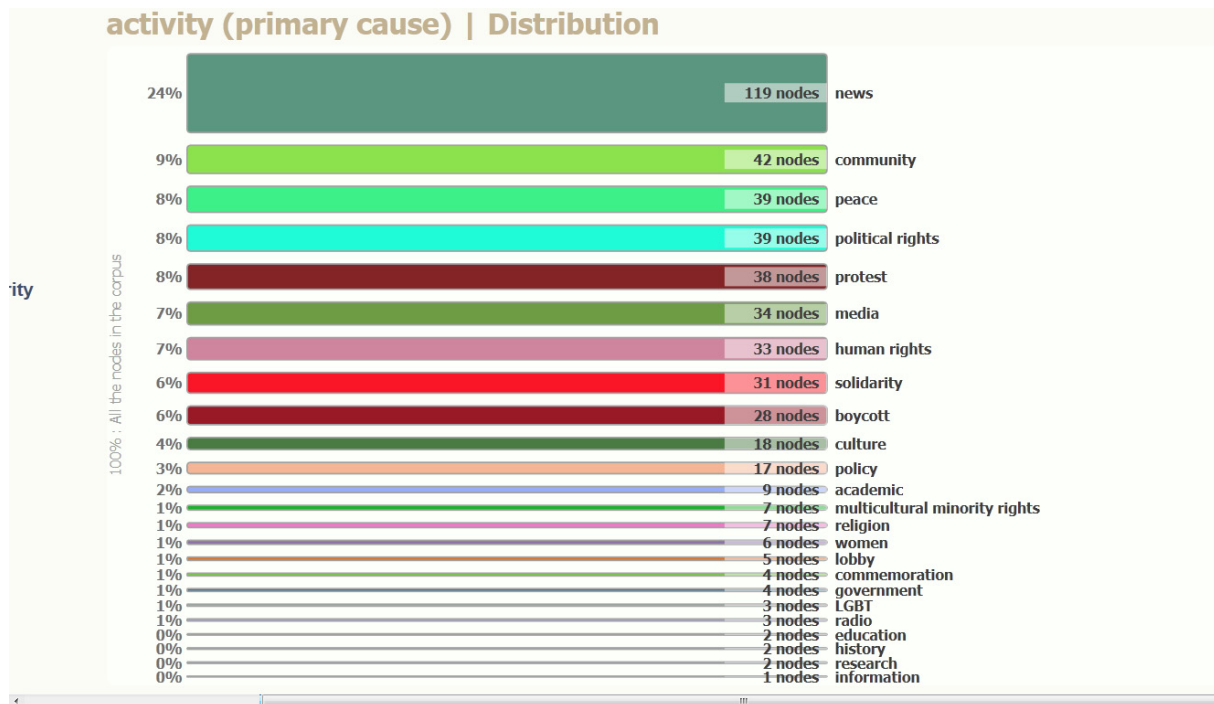
Analysis of primary activity within the greater corpus reaffirm the above observations. As visible below, corpus networks divide into visible community clusters. We note this in the relative polarization of activities focusing on protest, solidarity, and boycotting versus those of news, community and peace[17]. That being said, the map isolation below also illustrates that human rights, community and political rights based activities maintain linkages largely throughout the entire corpus platform. These trends indicate that community and political/human rights based narratives are not only wide enough to maintain a diverse set of linkages, but also sufficiently coherent to also provoke a sentiment of virtual unity between respective nodes.

15. «PCHR - Palestinian Centre for Human Rights» http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3027&Itemid=182

16. Ibid.

17. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=nodeattribute&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=5&section=35

## activity (primary cause) | Distribution

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 24% | 119 nodes | news |
| 9% | 42 nodes | community |
| 8% | 39 nodes | peace |
| 8% | 39 nodes | political rights |
| 8% | 38 nodes | protest |
| 7% | 34 nodes | media |
| 7% | 33 nodes | human rights |
| 6% | 31 nodes | solidarity |
| 6% | 28 nodes | boycott |
| 4% | 18 nodes | culture |
| 3% | 17 nodes | policy |
| 2% | 9 nodes | academic |
| 1% | 7 nodes | multicultural minority rights |
| 1% | 7 nodes | religion |
| 1% | 6 nodes | women |
| 1% | 5 nodes | lobby |
| 1% | 4 nodes | commemoration |
| 1% | 4 nodes | government |
| 1% | 3 nodes | LGBT |
| 1% | 3 nodes | radio |
| 0% | 2 nodes | education |
| 0% | 2 nodes | history |
| 0% | 2 nodes | research |
| 0% | 1 nodes | information |

*ity*

*100% : All the nodes in the corpus*



*GexfExplorer*
Nodes size

It is visible from the above map illustration that news based activity is one of the main networks through which Palestinian virtual platforms have the opportunity to flourish. With an inbound density of 5.9% and an outbound density of 4.9%, exchanges of information are fairly comparable (although slightly 'in deficit'). This is attributed to the interactive nature of news - a medium which is incredibly dynamic and ever-changing. Moreover, as visible in the tables (external authorities) below, news based sites share links with a vast array of external activities.

This is not to discount the role and influence of key authorities internally. We must consider for example, the influence of sites such as *electroni-cintifada.net* and *palestinechronicle.com*.
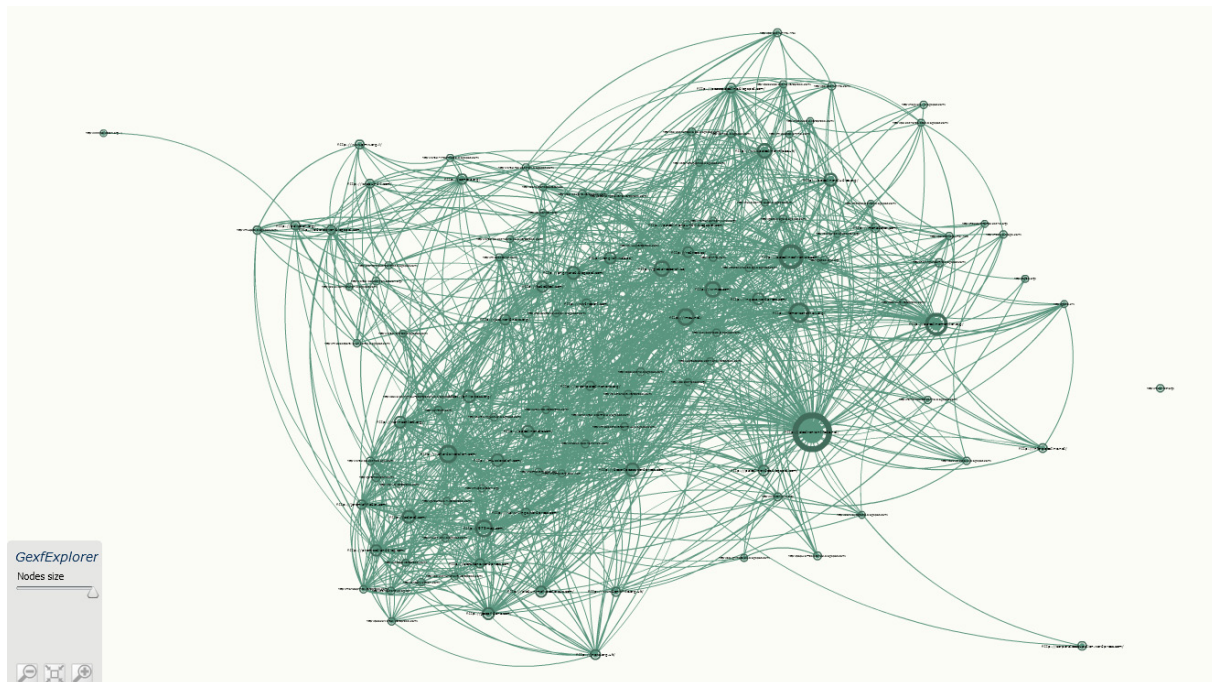
## External Attracting Authorities

**Nodes *outside* news
that *are cited by* the most nodes *in news***

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM news |
|---|---|
| http://mondoweiss.net/ (policy) | 67 |
| http://amnesty.org/ (human rights) | 61 |
| http://palsolidarity.org/ (protest) | 61 |
| http://pchrgaza.org/ (human rights) | 53 |
| http://freegaza.org/ (protest) | 52 |
| http://bdsmovement.net/ (boycott) | 49 |
| http://juancole.com/ (academic) | 44 |
| http://miftah.org/ (political rights) | 43 |
| http://normanfinkelstein.com/ (academic) | 40 |
| http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org/ (education) | 39 |

News networks also share notable links with peace based online activity. The table below illustrates many 'in deficit' linkages between peace based nodes and other primary activities. In terms of news, peace based nodes are 'in deficit' with an outbound edge density of 7.3% compared to an inbound density of 3.4%. Peace based nodes characteristically rely on virtual news platforms to update and reassess advocacy campaigns. Such nodes are often normative in their desires for reconciliation and thus may look to news to justify and strengthen specific policy prescriptions.

Distribution of inbound and outbound edges (and densities)
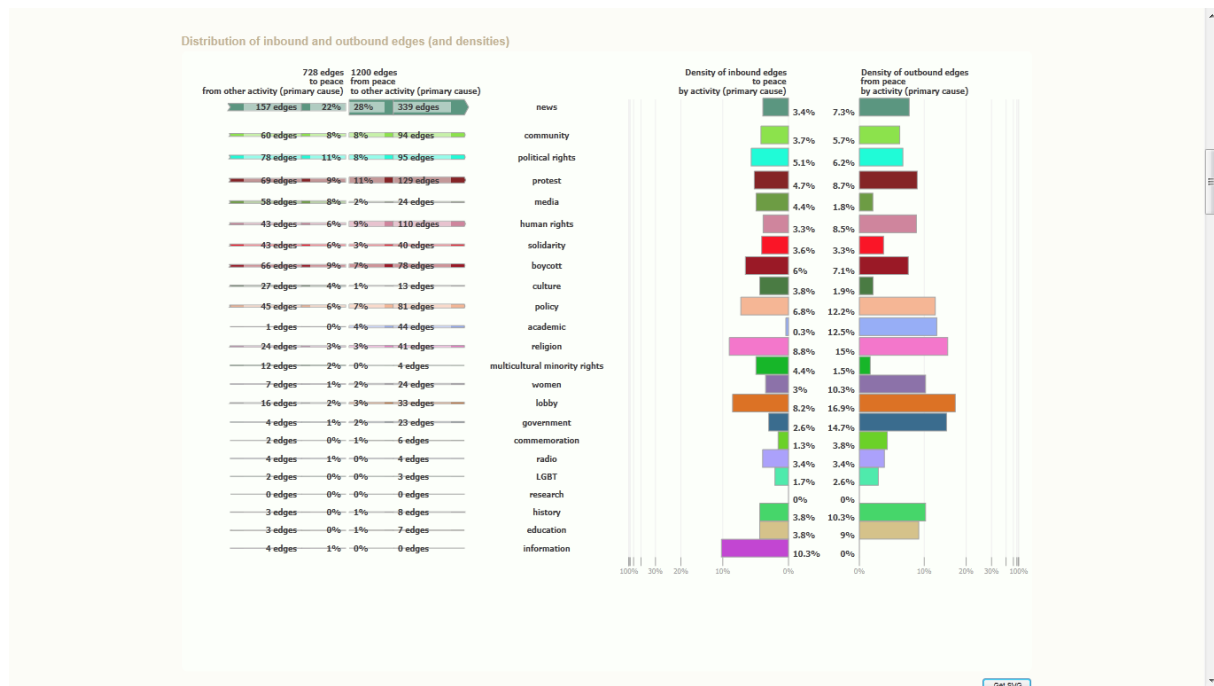
In terms of outbound linkages, peace based nodes are incredibly diverse. Beyond news websites, we note the variety of activities peace based nodes link to. External attracting authorities concentrate mainly on networked activities such as human rights, lobbying and protesting. Such authorities also link to nodes focusing on policy debates.

## EXTERNAL ATTRACTING AUTHORITIES

### Nodes *outside* peace
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in peace*

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM peace |
|---|---|
| http://electronicintifada.net/ (news) | 35 |
| http://mondoweiss.net/ (policy) | 28 |
| http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/ (policy) | 28 |
| http://endtheoccupation.org/ (lobby) | 25 |
| http://freegaza.org/ (protest) | 23 |
| http://bdsmovement.net/ (boycott) | 22 |
| http://stopthewall.org/ (protest) | 22 |
| http://amnesty.org/ (human rights) | 20 |
| http://palestinechronicle.com/ (news) | 19 |
| http://palsolidarity.org/ (protest) | 19 |

External source hubs (nodes outside peace, citing the most nodes in peace) are equally diverse with activities ranging from religion, boycotting, and political rights. Unlike external attracting authorities, we note the presence of blogging based sites: hoseyblog.blog.com, desertpeace.wordpress.com, and stephensizer.blogspot.com. Although varied in terms of subject matter and scope (activities for example include culture, news, religion) all of the above blogs maintain linkages that coincide thematically with peace. Such platforms of peace characteristically address stigma associated with greater Israeli-Palestinian relations through personal reflections, contentious debates and open dialogue.

## EXTERNAL SOURCE HUBS

### Nodes *outside* peace
### that *cite* the most nodes *in peace*

| Node name | Outbound edges TO peace |
|---|---|
| http://usacbi.org/ (boycott) | 13 |
| http://fosna.org/ (religion) | 11 |
| http://al-awdany.org/ (political rights) | 10 |
| http://sadaka.ie/ (political rights) | 10 |
| http://uspcn.org/ (political rights) | 9 |
| http://boycottisrael.info/ (boycott) | 9 |
| http://hoseyblog.blog.com/ (culture) | 9 |
| http://desertpeace.wordpress.com/ (news) | 9 |
| http://stephensizer.blogspot.com/ (religion) | 9 |
| http://moveoveraipac.org/ (policy) | 8 |

Rights based activity renders particularly interesting results. With an outbound density of 5.7% compared to an inbound density of 4.5%, political rights are slightly "in deficit"[18]. We note moreover, that once again, linkages are first and foremost connected to news based activity. As expected, activities surrounding boycotting, protesting and human rights are most often cited by political rights based nodes. Thematically points of interest, and even mobilization attempts are likely to coincide with one another. This may also be case for community based badil.org (19 inbound edges from political rights) which focuses on issues of Palestinian residency in the context of refugee rights[19]. The greater Palestinian community for example may regard refugee reconciliation as a fundamental political right owed to descendants.

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18. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=value&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=5&section=35&value=political%2Brights

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19. «BADIL Resource Centre» < http://badil.org/en/about-badil>

## EXTERNAL ATTRACTING AUTHORITIES

**Nodes *outside* political rights
that *are cited by* the most nodes *in political rights***

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM political rights |
|---|---|
| http://electronicintifada.net/ (news) | 35 |
| http://bdsmovement.net/ (boycott) | 25 |
| http://stopthewall.org/ (protest) | 22 |
| http://ifamericansknew.org/ (news) | 22 |
| http://badil.org/ (community) | 19 |
| http://freegaza.org/ (protest) | 19 |
| http://palestinechronicle.com/ (news) | 17 |
| http://pchrgaza.org/ (human rights) | 17 |
| http://endtheoccupation.org/ (lobby) | 17 |
| http://al-awda.org/ (human rights) | 16 |
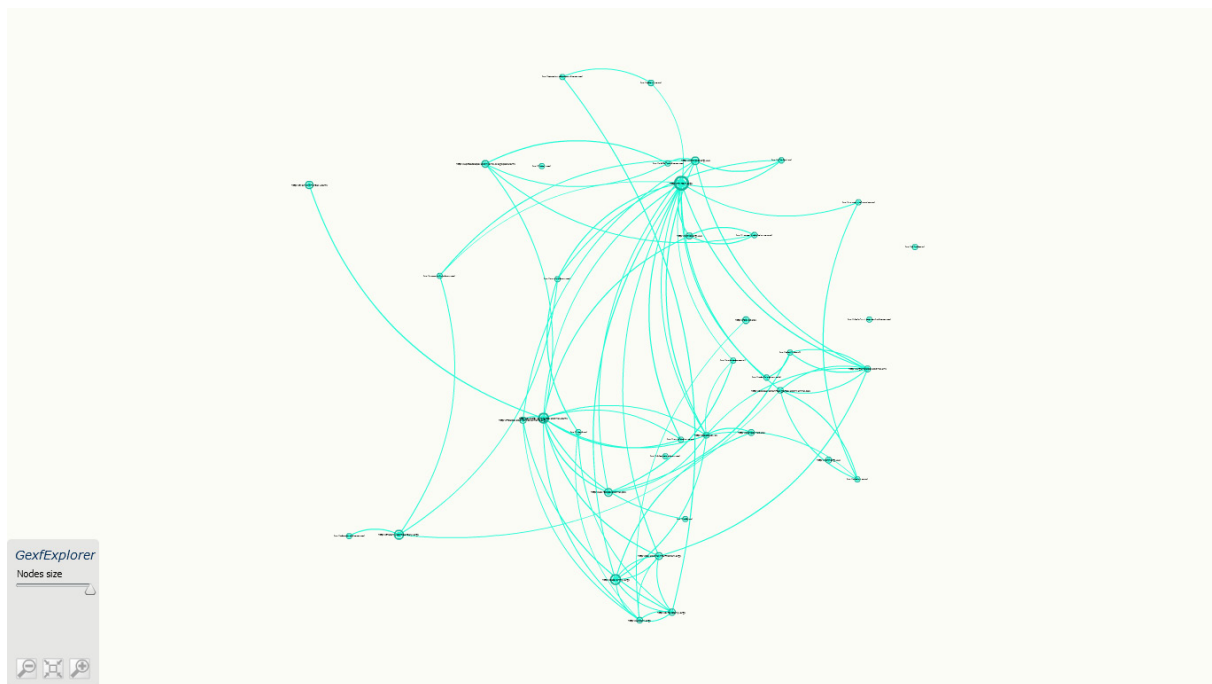


In contrast to the above, with an inbound density of 7.5% and an outbound density of 4.5%, human rights based activity is largely «in profit»[20]. Debates surrounding Palestinian conceptions of 'human rights', are incredibly diverse. We note this in the representative authorities, that is, human rights based nodes that are cited the most by external nodes. As visible in the table below, sites vary from *amnesty.org*, an internationally renowned human rights based non-governmental organization to *occupiedpalestine.wordpress. com*, a blog focusing on the liberation of Palestine to *www.stoptorture.org.il*, a public committee against the use of torture against both Israelis and Palestinians.

20. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=value&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=5&section=35&value=human%2Brights

## Representative Authorities

### Nodes *inside* human rights
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in other activity (primary cause)*

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM other activity (primary cause) |
|---|---|
| http://amnesty.org/ | 207 |
| http://pchrgaza.org/ | 199 |
| http://al-awda.org/ | 118 |
| http://kibush.co.il/ | 113 |
| http://reliefweb.int/ | 90 |
| http://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com/ | 61 |
| http://www.stoptorture.org.il/ | 60 |
| http://birthrightunplugged.org/ | 46 |
| http://bodyontheline.wordpress.com/ | 26 |
| http://divestmentproject.org/ | 21 |

Once again we note the importance of news based nodes, more specifically *electronicintifada.net* (as visible in both external attracting political right authorities and the chart below). News based sites characteristically provide the impetus for much debate and dialogue within greater corpus activity.

## External Attracting Authorities

### Nodes *outside* human rights
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in human rights*

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM human rights |
|---|---|
| http://electronicintifada.net/ (news) | 27 |
| http://stopthewall.org/ (protest) | 21 |
| http://palsolidarity.org/ (protest) | 19 |
| http://bdsmovement.net/ (boycott) | 18 |
| http://badil.org/ (community) | 14 |
| http://palestinechronicle.com/ (news) | 13 |
| http://endtheoccupation.org/ (lobby) | 13 |
| http://freegaza.org/ (protest) | 13 |
| http://ifamericansknew.org/ (news) | 12 |
| http://palestinemonitor.org/ (news) | 11 |

Human rights based nodes appear to be comparatively streamlined in terms of networked vision and outreach tactics. In line with the above for example, we consider the distribution of actors and note that 48% of human rights based sites are managed by self-defined organizations (49% if accounting for media organizations as well). Compared to bloggers and loosely defined 'groups', and in search of legitimacy, relevancy and even funding, organizations often feel a sense of obligation to present a more coordinated recollection of respective grievance claims.
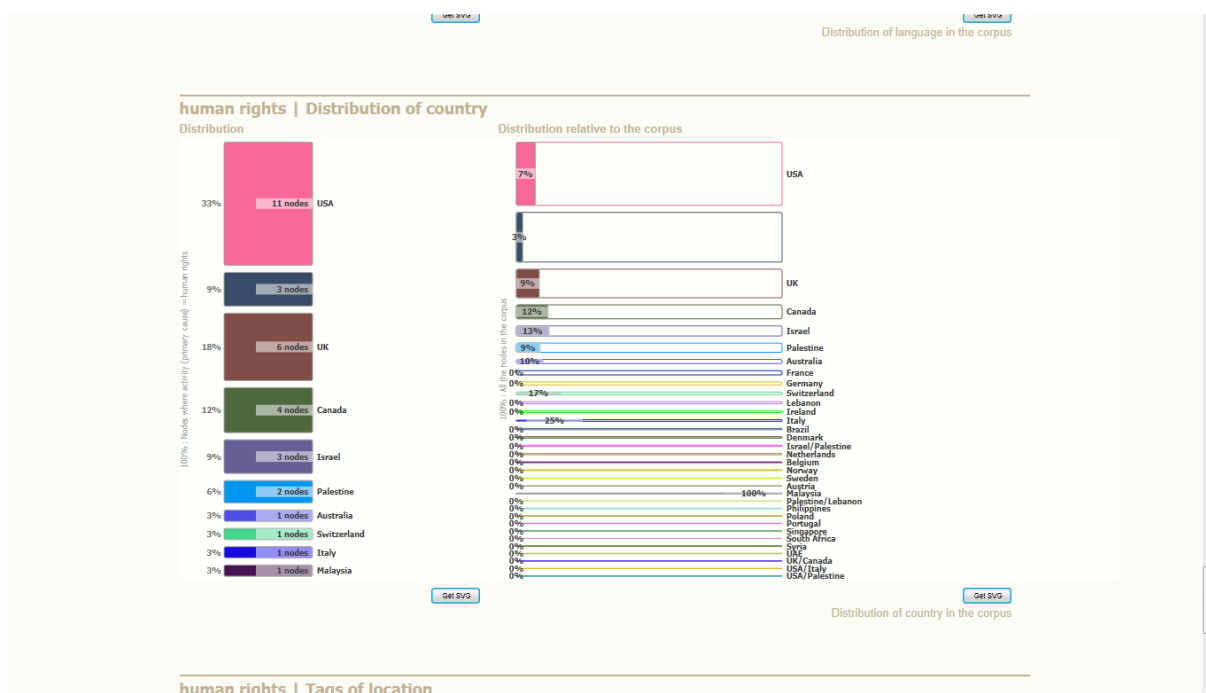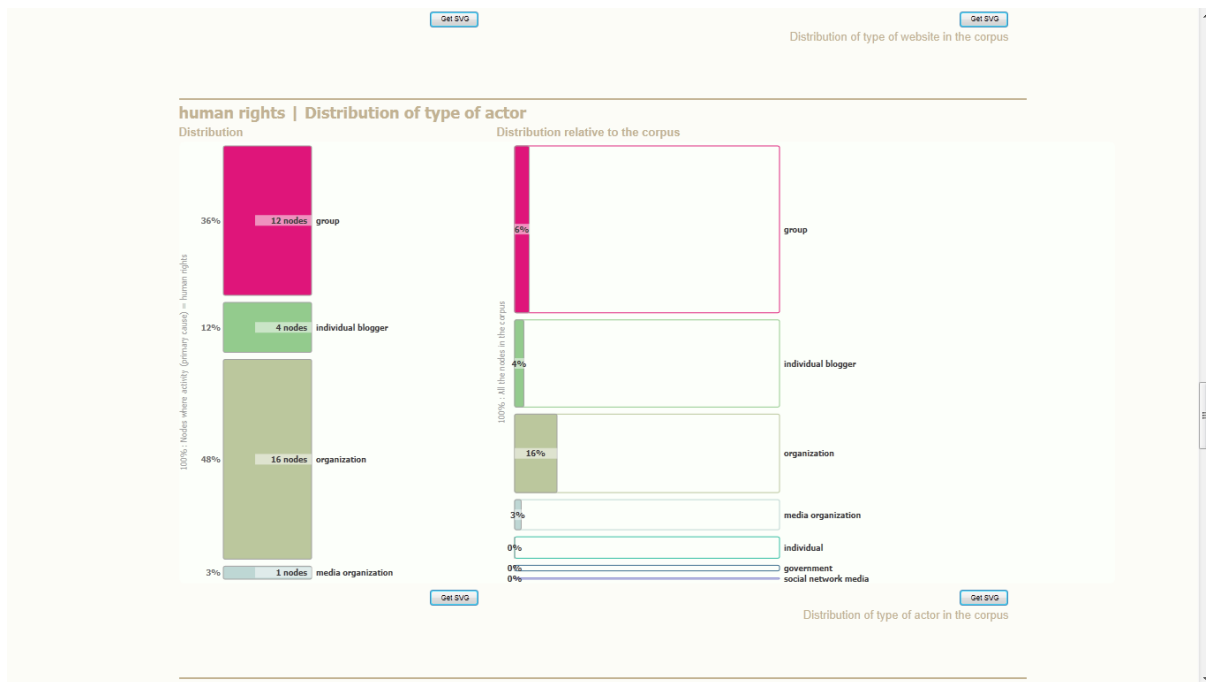
It is interesting to note the distribution and concentration of human rights based sites in terms of location. Beyond undefined nodes, a substantial percentage of sites are located in what are considered to be 'immigration hubs', that is, countries that have an extensive history of proactive immigration policy. Over half of all human rights based corpus activity is hosted by webmasters in the US, UK and Canada (see distribution table above). If we reconsider the variety of actors in terms of bot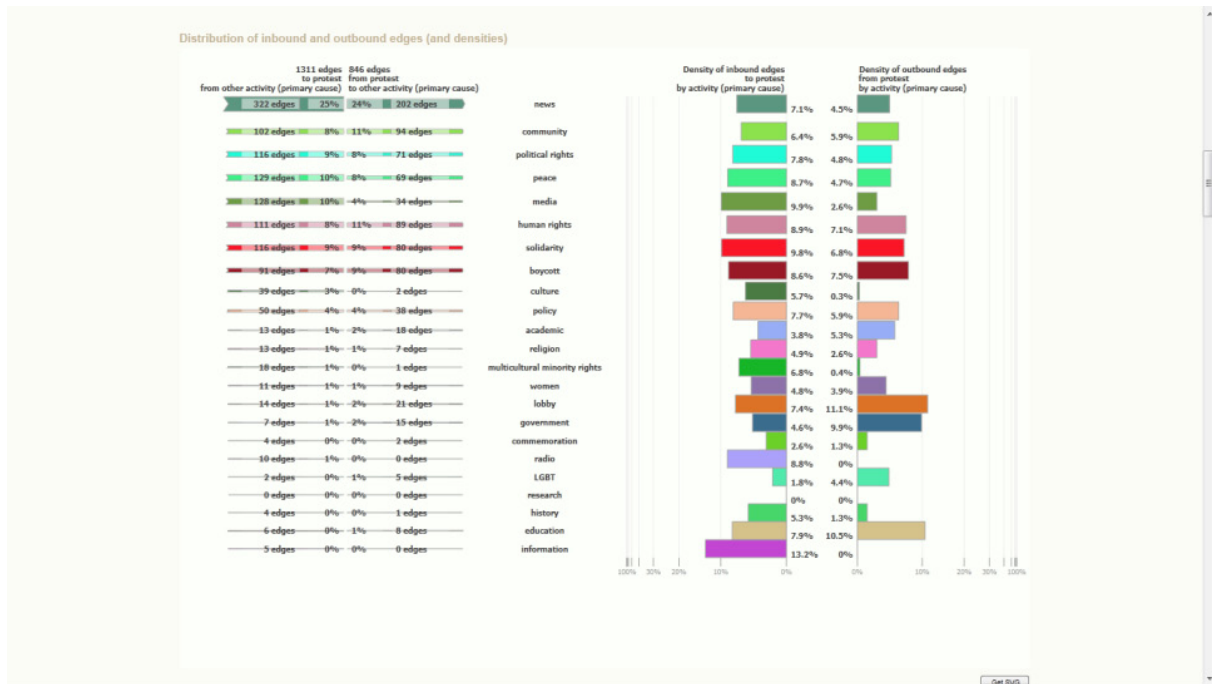h representative authorities and external attracting authorities moreover, it is clear that much of the fervour behind human rights claims stem from beyond the greater Palestinian network. As such, the role of external groups and organizations (such as Amnesty International) within Palestinian grievance claims cannot be discounted. Similar trends are visible with respect to virtual protest activity with the US and the UK collectively account for 52% of all protest based nodes within the corpus.
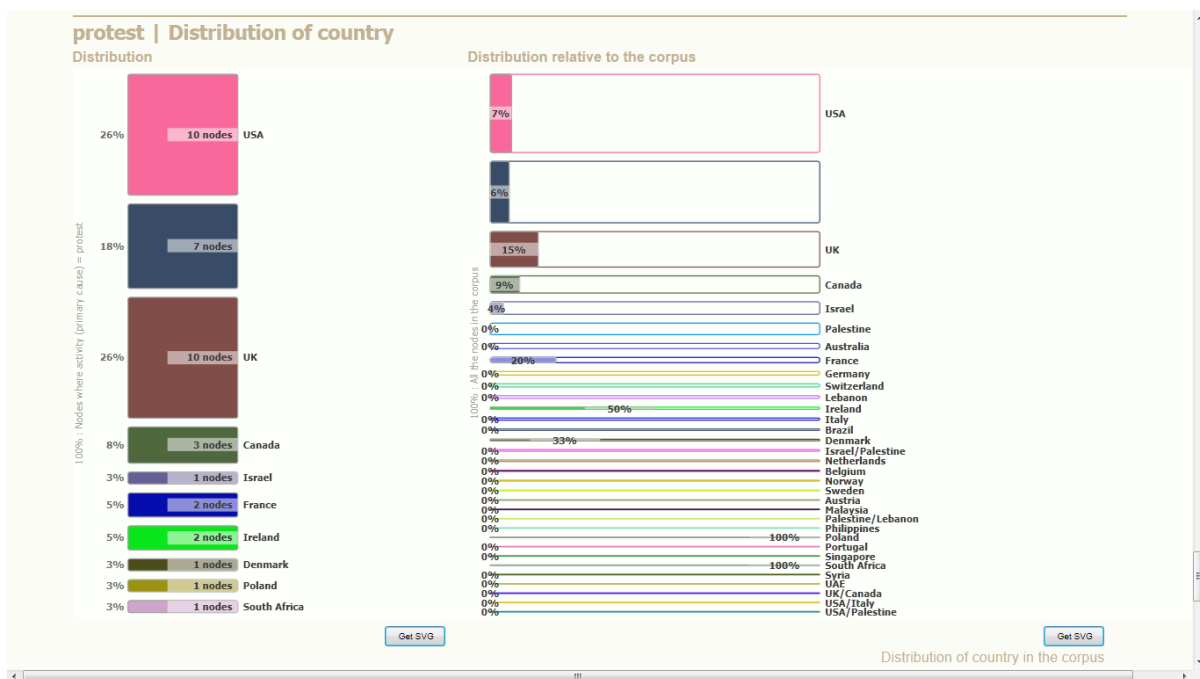


Protest activity remains "in profit" with an inbound density of 7.6% (compared to an outbound density of 4.9%)[21]. The above can be explained through analysis of distribution trends and outbound densities as visible in the chart below. We note for example, that political rights, peace, human rights, solidarity and boycotting based activities all share an "in deficit" relationship with protesting nodes. Interestingly, lobbying remains "in profit" - a trend which is likely attributed to the necessary virtual outreach linkages protest nodes seek to establish. To the benefit of protesting bodies, lobbying networks characteristically look to make connections with official governing bodies and policymakers.

21.   http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=value&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=5&section=35&value=protest

Distribution of inbound and outbound edges (and densities)

As in the case of human rights based external attracting authorities, news node *electronicintifada.net* remains the most cited website within virtual protest activities. Similar trends are also visible within solidarity based networks[22].

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22.  http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=value&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=5&section=35&value=solidarity

## EXTERNAL ATTRACTING AUTHORITIES

### Nodes *outside* protest
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in protest*

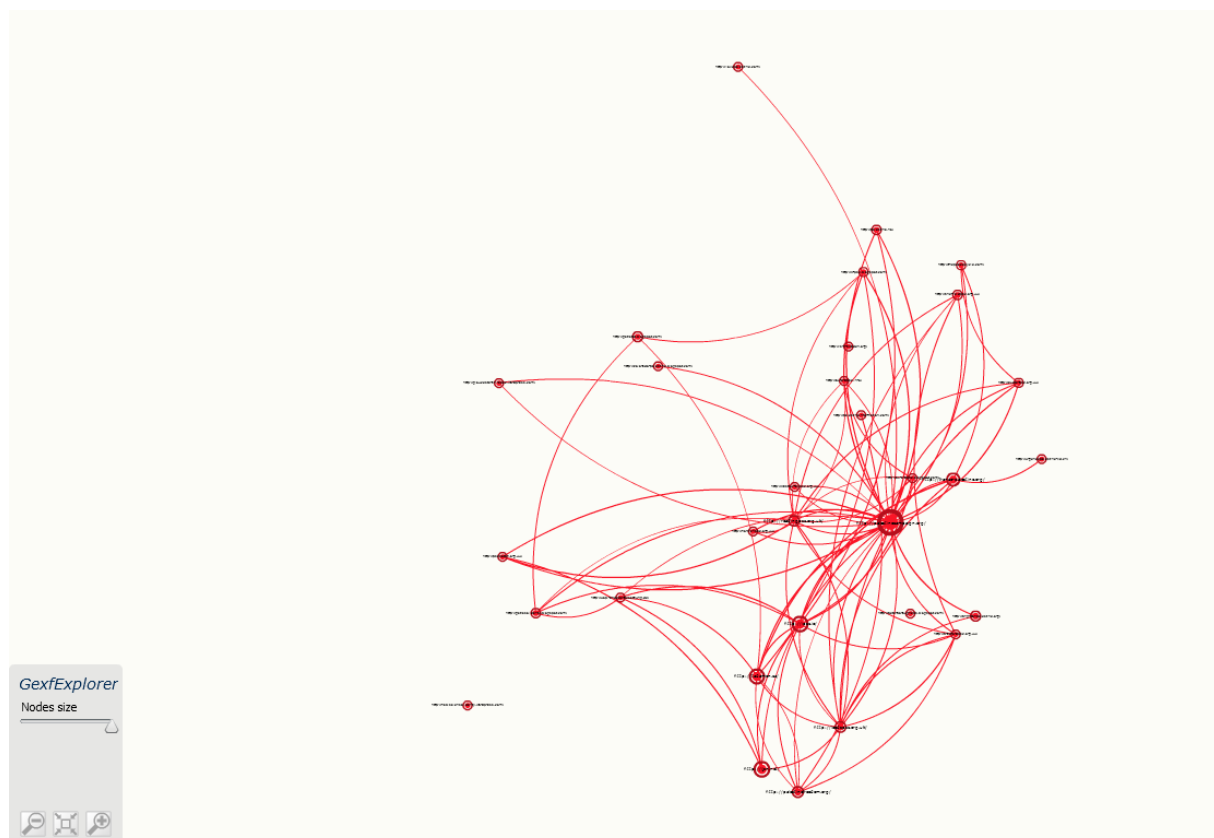| Node name | Inbound edges FROM protest |
|---|---|
| http://electronicintifada.net/ (news) | 33 |
| http://bdsmovement.net/ (boycott) | 23 |
| http://badil.org/ (community) | 21 |
| http://palestinecampaign.org/ (solidarity) | 18 |
| http://palestinemonitor.org/ (news) | 15 |
| http://mondoweiss.net/ (policy) | 15 |
| http://ipsc.ie/ (solidarity) | 15 |
| http://pchrgaza.org/ (human rights) | 14 |
| http://amnesty.org/ (human rights) | 14 |
| http://palestinechronicle.com/ (news) | 13 |

## EXTERNAL ATTRACTING AUTHORITIES

### Nodes *outside* solidarity
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in solidarity*

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM solidarity |
|---|---|
| http://electronicintifada.net/ (news) | 30 |
| http://stopthewall.org/ (protest) | 22 |
| http://palestinechronicle.com/ (news) | 20 |
| http://palestinemonitor.org/ (news) | 19 |
| http://palsolidarity.org/ (protest) | 19 |
| http://bdsmovement.net/ (boycott) | 18 |
| http://freegaza.org/ (protest) | 18 |
| http://pchrgaza.org/ (human rights) | 15 |
| http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/ (news) | 13 |
| http://endtheoccupation.org/ (lobby) | 12 |

Solidarity based activities are "in deficit" (3.7% inbound density to 5.3% outbound density). As visible in the corpus graphic below, solidarity linkages emerge largely out of palestinecampaign. org, the key authority and hub within the isolation. As a representative authority, palestinecampaign.org maintains considerable leverage over other networked nodes (150 inbound edges).

## REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORITIES

### Nodes *inside* solidarity
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in other activity (primary cause)*

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM other activity (primary cause) |
|---|---|
| http://palestinecampaign.org/ | 150 |
| http://ijsn.net/ | 71 |
| http://ipsc.ie/ | 64 |
| http://tadamon.ca/ | 63 |
| http://france-palestine.org/ | 40 |
| http://palestinefreedom.org/ | 21 |
| http://leedspsc.org.uk/ | 19 |
| http://readingpsc.org.uk/ | 15 |
| http://brightonpalestine.org/ | 14 |
| http://gaza08.blogspot.com/ | 12 |

Boycotting activities also follow suit, as visible in the external attracting authorities below. Once again, *electronicintifada.net* (a news based node) remains the most cited website within boycotting virtual platforms[23].

_____

23. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=value&graph=86&map=68&nodeattribute=5&section=35&value=boycott

## EXTERNAL ATTRACTING AUTHORITIES

### Nodes *outside* boycott
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in boycott*

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM boycott |
|---|---|
| http://electronicintifada.net/ (news) | 25 |
| http://palestinecampaign.org/ (solidarity) | 21 |
| http://mondoweiss.net/ (policy) | 19 |
| http://stopthewall.org/ (protest) | 18 |
| http://ijsn.net/ (solidarity) | 17 |
| http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/ (policy) | 16 |
| http://adalahny.org/ (political rights) | 15 |
| http://badil.org/ (community) | 14 |
| http://endtheoccupation.org/ (lobby) | 14 |
| http://amnesty.org/ (human rights) | 13 |

With an inbound density of 5.4% and an out-bound density of 5.5%, exchanges between nodes are fairly even and not particularly "in deficit". Based on the graphic isolation below, we note that majority of virtual boycotting activity stems from subgraph authority *bdsmovement.net* (25 inbound edges from boycotting nodes).
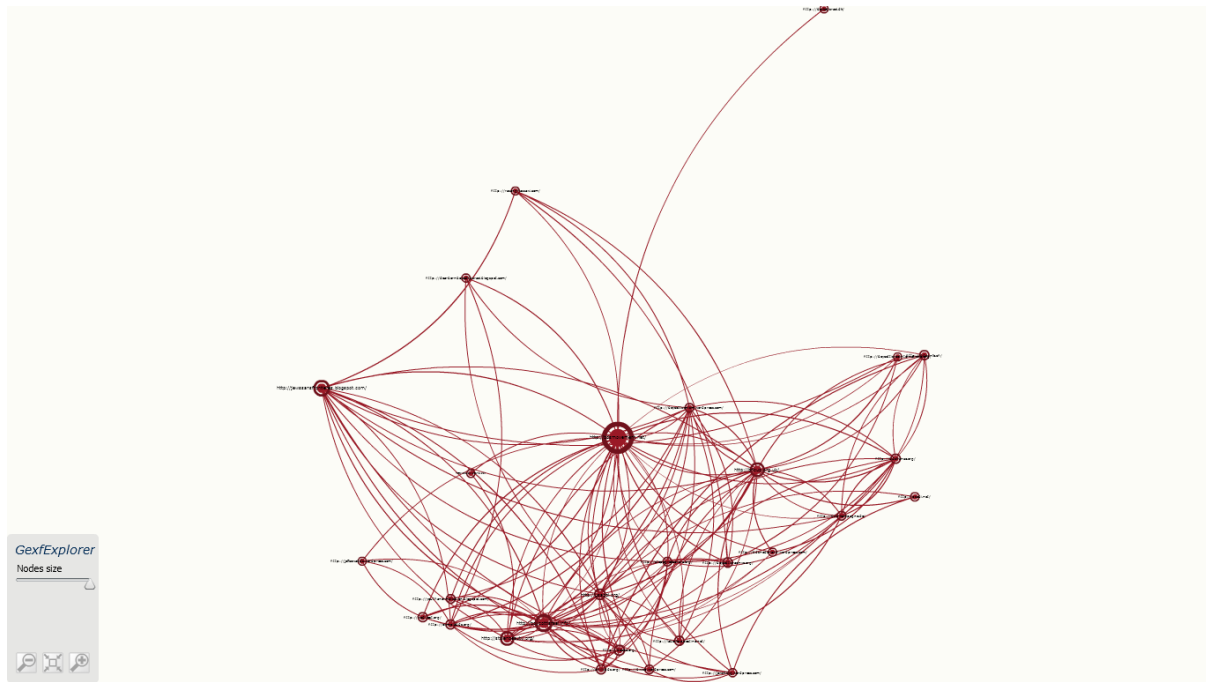
This trend is equally (if not more) visible with respect to representative authorities where *bds-movement.net* maintains an astounding 237 inbounded edges from external nodes. The BDS campaign (boycotting, divestment and sanctions against Israel) was launched in July of 2005 and has been endorsed by over 170 Palestinian organizations[24]. Both physically and virtually,

the campaign continues to expand its networks. This has been mainly through the promotion of entrenched grievance narratives, which members often strive to make applicable to contemporary networks. Examples include, the use of histori-cally significant words such as "apartheid", and even collective worldwide BDS conferences[25].

—————————
24. http://www.bdsmovement.net/BNC#.Ttj2WdV1GSo

—————————
25. http://www.bdsmovement.net/BNC#.Ttj2WdV1GSo

## Representative Authorities

### Nodes *inside* boycott
### that *are cited by* the most nodes *in other activity (primary cause)*

| Node name | Inbound edges FROM other activity (primary cause) |
|---|---|
| http://bdsmovement.net/ | 237 |
| http://boycottisrael.info/ | 81 |
| http://jewssansfrontieres.blogspot.com/ | 77 |
| http://stolenbeauty.org/ | 55 |
| http://bricup.org.uk/ | 51 |
| http://usacbi.org/ | 24 |
| http://baceia.org/ | 21 |
| http://wedivest.org/ | 15 |
| http://boycottisraelnyc.org/ | 15 |
| http://phillybds.org/ | 13 |

Efforts to unify virtual narratives exist even beyond baseline primary interest activities. We note that in terms of language specifically, efforts (whether intentional or not) have been made to streamline English as the main dialect of network interaction. Statistics on language distribution for example indicate that some 80% (394) of nodes are presented in solely English. The graphic isolation for language (below) further highlights the overall saturation of English based nodes within the corpus.
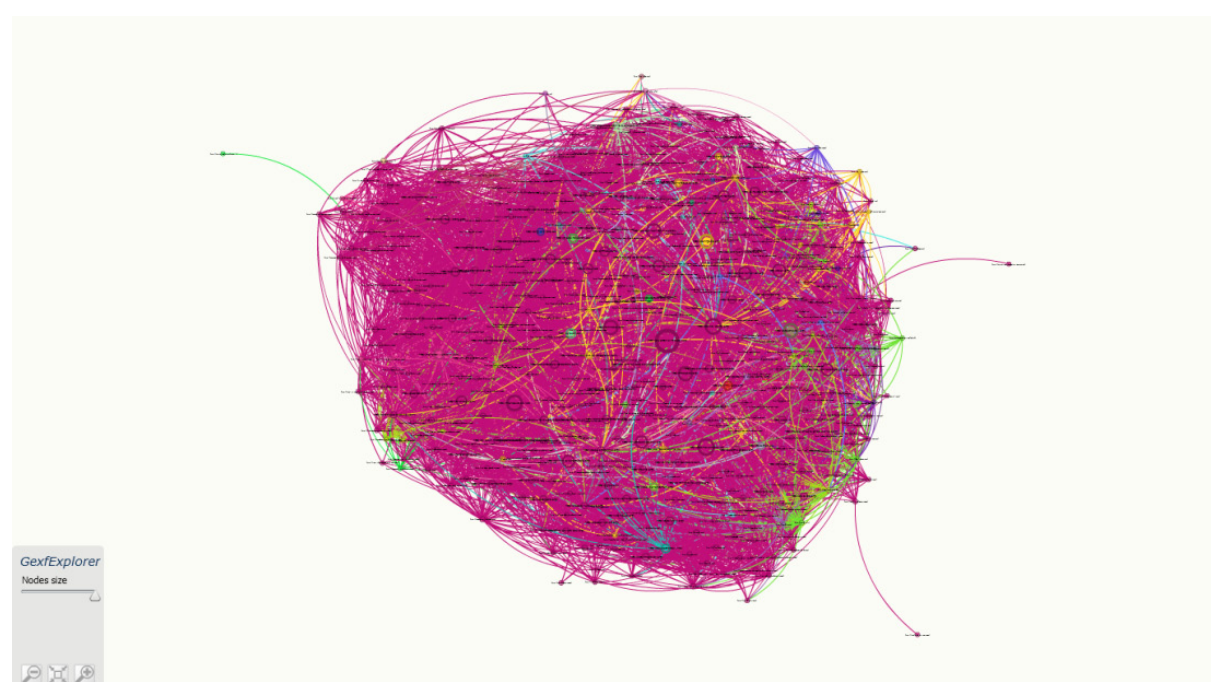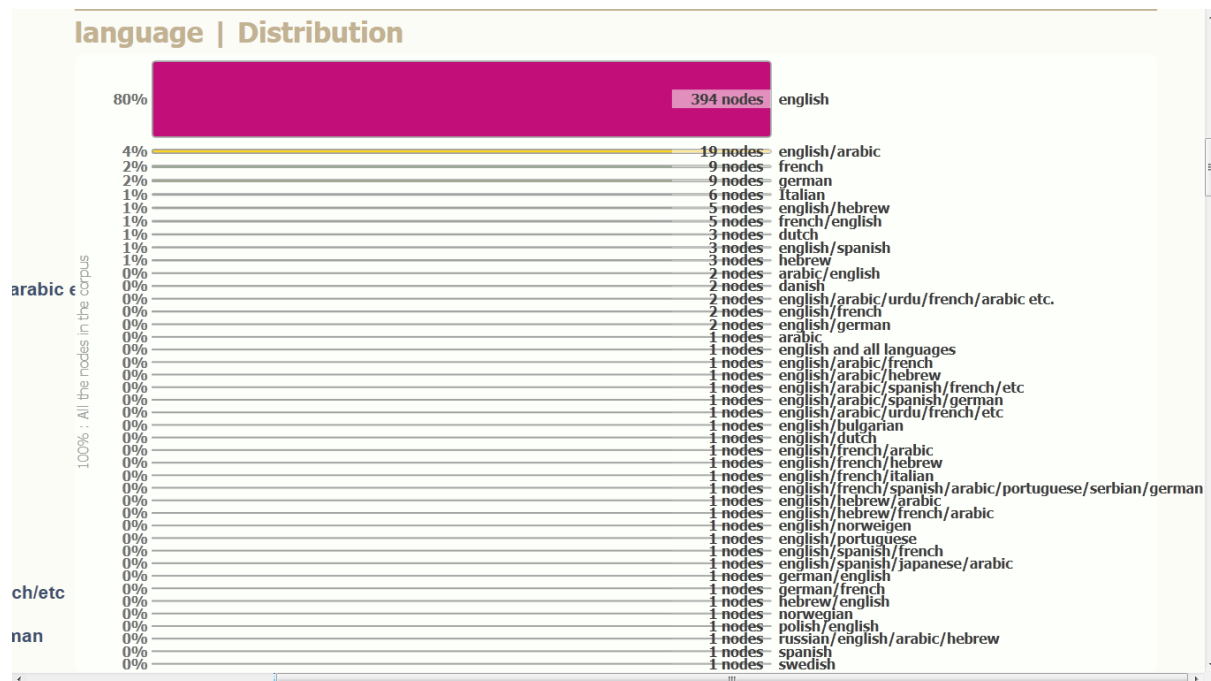
## Virtual and Physical Network Linkages

The above analysis and exploration of Palestinian virtual platforms highlights the complexity of current networked linkages. The sheer volume of nodes (493) within the corpus cannot be discounted. Virtual linkages are extensive, well coordinated and diverse. The variance of websites stems from the past and present physical realities of the greater Palestinian community. Indeed, decades of unresolved conflict and (perceived) 'injustices' have come to manifest themselves online. Furthermore, as grievances continue to snowball, offshoot networks continue to expand.

The intersections between individuals inside and outside of the diaspora increasingly stand to be blurred, a trend which is often attributed to the web. We note this for example, in the way in which both human rights and news based activities link to cornerstone community grievances (such as the Right of Return). Recall *amnesty.org*, a non-governmental organization renowned for its valiant commitment to the maintenance and restoration of human rights all around the world. Although not necessarily a community 'insider', Amnesty International remains proactively engaged with the greater Palestinian network. As such, linkages may be maintained based on normative values (in this instance human rights based advocacy) which characteristically expand beyond internal communities.

Transnational networks are increasingly propelled by virtual news updates as visible through the extensive linkages of news authority *electronicintifada.net*. Corpus statistics reaffirm the centrality of the node - with 415 referers (nodes that cite *electronicintifada.net*) and only 34 citations (external nodes that *electronicintifada.net* cites)[26]. Virtual narratives have the capability to be largely dictated by the above corpus authority.

It is apparent that efforts are consistently made by virtual actors to ensure applicability in terms of website readership. At the most basic level, this is commonly achieved through linguistics, in the case of the Palestinian corpus: English based websites. The use of English by 394 of corpus websites (an astounding 80% of nodes) cannot be negated. Consider that English/Arabic language websites account for only 4% (19) of the nodes.

Beyond virtual platforms, the above collectively promote sentiments of universal applicability. This is especially the case for youth populations and individuals outside of the diaspora. Such individuals may look to virtual news for updates on current affairs, irrespective of physical location. The physical manifestations of virtual networks stand to expand particularly through youth populations. We note this in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) network which maintains various factions in the UK (Leeds, Bradford and Oxford among others). Beyond virtual networks, the PSC organizes many events such as film festivals, conference speeches and protests. The web in this regard is complimentary to physical realities, and stand to increasingly harness and propel unresolved past grievances.

## Conclusion

As visible in the Palestinian case, virtual platforms, although non-static in nature increasingly have the capacity to revive contentious political debates. Admittedly, the echo of Palestinian grievances have been heard around the world for decades. Hence, narratives have had time and space to build self-perpetuating identities. Dialogue surrounding the reconciliation of perceived fundamental 'injustices' moreover remain salient amongst individuals both within and beyond the diaspora. With emphasis on maintaining relevancy and legitimacy in current contemporary times, virtual networks continue to provide innovative resources for both community actors and special interest groups. We note this in the increased popularity of news based websites as well as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. Linguistic simplicity (the extensive use of English for example) further highlights the efforts made by actors to streamline and unite community narratives. Virtual and physical Palestinian networks remain interlinked, the impacts of which currently remain unknown. In a quest for greater legitimacy, relevancy and transnational applicability, networks continue to evolve. Propelling past grievances and ground realities forward, the Palestinian case underlines the emerging utility of the web in expanding the borders surrounding community narratives.

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26. http://maps.e-diasporas.fr/index.php?focus=node&graph=86&map=68&node=353&section=35

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Houda Asal, *Dynamiques associatives de la diaspora libanaise : fragmentations internes et transnationalisme sur le web.*

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