



## LECTURE-DISCUSSION + ACTIVITY # 3

### LESSON PLAN:

Alternative/Independent Media  
Activism in the MENA Region

### DURATION:

Around 75mins

## Overview

In this lesson, participants are introduced to alternative/independent forms of media activism in the MENA region. After a short lecture and discussion on alternative/independent media practices, participants will read the case studies to identify how these examples illustrate alternative/independent media practices in the MENA region. Participants will then share their research in discussion. This lesson can be facilitated so that participants work solo or in teams of two.

## Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- Begin to develop an understanding of alternative/independent media practices
- Identify specific alternative/independent media practices used by MENA media activists

## Preparation and Materials

**Step 1.** Prepare a 10 minute lecture and discussion on alternative/independent forms of media activism

- **OPTIONAL – Provide participants access to excerpts from the following open access reading:**  
Forde, S. (2011). Chapter 1: Understanding alternative and ‘independent’ journalism. In *Challenging the News: The Journalism of Alternative and Community Media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from: [https://www.macmillanihe.com/resources/sample-chapters/9780230243569\\_sample.pdf](https://www.macmillanihe.com/resources/sample-chapters/9780230243569_sample.pdf)
  - Suggested excerpts “How do practitioners see ‘alternative journalism’?” pp. 9-11 and “Working towards a meaningful definition” pp. 18-19.

**Step 2.** Prepare to give participants access to the activity prompt and the Diraya website

- <https://www.diraya.media/>



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## Procedure

**Step 1.** Facilitate a 10 minute lecture and discussion on alternative/independent forms of media activism

- **ASK – What do alternative/independent media do?**
  - Ask questions no one else is asking
  - Try to empower people to understand issues and act
  - Documenting the POV of those closest to news, interviewing prisoners about prisons, students about school, etc.
  - More often committed to active publics, social responsibility
  - Provide context to news, motivating public policy solutions, give voice to voiceless
  - Redefining news (not just headlines and features, also community announcements, talk shows)
  - Engage citizens in public life (i.e. public service journalism)
  - Often disclose bias where mainstream pretend to be unbiased
- **ASK – What are the broad organizational practices that define alternative/independent media?**
  - can be commercial (business operating for-profit) or non-commercial (not-for-profit organizations) or something else
  - can be independent or chain-owned, but does not belong to a media conglomerate
  - offers news and information from an alternative point of view
  - shows attachment to politics or social movements
  - produced by amateurs and/or professionals, by volunteers and/or paid staff
  - provides a range of content from local journalism to investigative reporting
  - shares content (broadcasts to) a mass audience or a niche audience

**Step 2.** Participants work solo or in teams of two for 30 minutes. Direct participants to the Diraya website and provide instructions on how to review the case study they choose

- **OPTIONAL – Organize participants to work solo or in teams of two**
- **INSTRUCTIONS –** Choose one case study from Diraya (<https://www.diraya.media/>), see Case Studies and pick one from Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, or Tunisia. Read and take notes on what defines your chosen media as an example of alternative/independent media practices. Use the following questions to guide your reading and prepare notes to share your research in discussion:
  - *What is the mandate and editorial position, is it from an alternative point of view?*
  - *Is your case study linked to politics or social movements, civil society, community, etc.?*
  - *What is the ownership structure? Is it a registered organization, what kind?*
  - *Who produces the media content - amateurs, professionals, volunteers, paid staff?*
  - *What kind of content is produced?*



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- *How is the organization funded?*
- *Who is the target media user?*

**Step 3.** Facilitate a 25 minute concluding discussion with participants. Have participants share the outcomes of their research to focus on two questions:

- 1) *Why do these media do what they do?*
  - a. Encourage participants to reflect on voice, marginalization, absence, misrepresentation, etc.
- 2) *How they do it? What are the motivations or goals and what are the ways in which these goals are achieved?*
  - a. Encourage participants to think about the alternative ethos of media activist organizations and how the decision-making processes, funding, limitations, aesthetics, etc. are different?