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Prisoners' Radio: Giving a Voice to Lebanon's Prisoners

By

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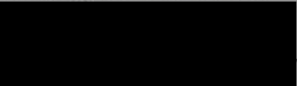
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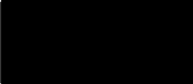
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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to my family and friends who have been a constant source of support. Thank you for encouraging me to pursue my passion and for supporting me every step of the way. Without you, this journey would have not been the same.

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I would like to start by thanking my advisor, Dr. Gretchen King for providing me with constant guidance and feedback. Dr. King's knowledge and insight were instrumental in writing this thesis study. I would also like to thank my defense committee members, Dr. Denijal Jagic and Dr. Heather Anderson for their comprehensive feedback and objective critique throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Jad Melki who inspired me to pursue a Master's in Multimedia Journalism and encouraged me to tackle the subject matter of this thesis study. A big thank you also goes to the radio stations who gave me access to their archives and the interviewees who allowed me to interview them. Without you I would have no content for my thesis.

Prisoners' Radio: Giving a Voice to Lebanon's Prisoners

Dalia Attar

ABSTRACT

This study examines prisoners' radio and its ability, as an alternative media platform, to enhance the lives of prisoners behind bars. It demonstrates the power of prisoners' radio in providing an alternative platform that allows prisoners to connect with the outer world to enact their suspended citizenship and sustain relationships with family and friends. The study examined how Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media in the MENA region and international prisoners' radio covered prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the study explored the current communication and media restrictions in Lebanese prisons and examined how prisoners' radio could potentially be introduced to Lebanon's prisons. The study applied a qualitative mixed method approach utilizing Media Framing Analysis (MFA) and in-depth interviews. Overall, results from MFA covering 10 Lebanese mainstream media outlets, 10 alternative media outlets in the MENA region and nine international prisoners' radio programs (29 in total) show that most of the Lebanese news outlets provided predominantly positive stories endorsing the measures taken by authorities to combat Covid-19 in prisons while alternative media in the MENA region and international

prisoners' radio presented negative stories highlighting the lack of sufficient measures, reinforcing the need to do more to combat healthcare risks and increased isolation of prisoners. On the other hand, results from 10 in-depth interviews revealed the benefits of alternative media and highlighted the importance of alternative media production in keeping people behind bars informed and connected to the outside world especially during a crisis like Covid-19 when prisoners' isolation was heightened due to strict lockdown measures. Results also revealed the benefits of introducing prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons to reaffirm part of prisoners lost identity, exploring, and outlining practical guidelines covering the various genres and content of prisoners' radio. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to studying prisoners' radio content and practices, an area with limited research and great potential, reinforcing the importance of communication and active involvement of prisoners. Additionally, the study provides a potential plan of action to facilitate prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons which future research that centers praxis can build on.

Keywords: Prisoners' Radio, Alternative Media, Citizen Media, Praxis, Framing Theory.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MFA..... Media Framing Analysis

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Historically, prisoners' voices have been labeled as less important in society. Prisoners are forgotten members behind bars and despite evidence showing the need for prison reforms, prisoners' rights are hardly covered in the news unless there is a prison scandal or a riot (Gest, 2010). Research on prisoners and prison conditions has explored the effects of imprisonment on prisoners while more radical research has called for the abolishment of prisons or the traditional prison system (Nashabe, 2003; Davis, 2011; Anderson; 2013). Many prisons across the world suffer from overcrowding, lack of trained staff, and limited access to health services (Benyounes, 2021), which defies the fundamental notion of how prisoners ought to be treated as outlined by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 45/11. In addition to clearly stating the right of prisoners to be treated with respect and dignity with full access to healthcare, the resolution states prisoners' rights to take part in educational and cultural activities aimed at supporting their development and personality (United Nations, 1990). This, however, seems to be ignored by many prisons across the world (Meissner, 2021).

The poor living conditions prisoners suffer from amplify their sense of isolation and disconnection to the outer world (Bedford, 2016). Additionally, and as part of their punishment, prisoners have limited access to communication. Communication rights however have been widely researched as an important human right tool that goes beyond just being heard to having access to information and being listened to by those in power,

which prisoners do not seem to enjoy (WACC, 2016). The denial of basic human rights and the harsh living environment prisoners are subjected to create considerable damage on their ability to connect with their families and fit in society post-release (Baker, 1994). Despite their isolation from the world, prisoners find refuge in prisoners' radio, which offers them a space to connect with the outer world. Prisoners' radio is a form of alternative media that provides prisoners with an alternative platform to enact their voice to connect with their families and the wider community (Anderson, 2013). While the full potential of prisoners' radio is yet to be explored, it is defined as a format that focuses on two areas: providing prisoners and the public with information related to criminal justice issues and connecting prisoners with their family and friends through playing dedications and requests. This type of media facilitation allows prisoners to take part in the public sphere and practice their citizenship, discussing issues of relevance to them (Anderson, 2012).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the suffering and isolation of prisoners was heightened, affecting over 11 million prisoners globally. Security measures included restricted access and suspension of rehabilitation programs. Additionally, visitation rights were deferred for extended periods. With limited access to the world, prisoners resorted to riots in over 50 countries to voice their struggles, reinforcing the importance of communication and active involvement (Benyounes, 2021).

The situation in Lebanon was not much different. Lebanon has 25 detention centers out of which only three are designed to be prisons: Women's Central Prison in Beirut, Zahle and Roumieh prisons (Rizk, 2020). The infamous Roumieh prison is considered one of the most overcrowded prisons in the world (Navani, 2022). Ill-treatment and torture,

which often take place in the first 24 hours of detention, are routinely ignored even when reported. Prisoners in general and refugees and illegal migrants in particular, are detained for longer periods exceeding their release dates. This is due to administrative corruption, lack of resources and bureaucracy (Rizk, 2020). As a result, over 60 percent of detainees in prisons are pre-trial detainees. Additionally, there are no clear guidelines on how to divide prisoners and as a result, prisoners are grouped based on their religious sect. This means that a prisoner of a crime or a felony are locked in the same cell. These measures are to prevent inter-sectarian aggression amongst prisoners (Nashabe, 2003; Philips, 2019). Prisoners also rely heavily on aid from humanitarian organizations for medical assistance and vocational training in the absence of a clear program from the Lebanese authorities (ALEF, 2020).

The inhumane living conditions in Lebanese prisons only got worse during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid increased numbers of critical positive cases in prisons, Amnesty International, amongst other international organizations, urged Lebanese authorities to release prisoners who have served their sentences or are awaiting trial. The Ministry of Interior responded by releasing 600 prisoners and a vaccination plan that took longer than expected to implement (Maalouf, 2020). During this period, further restrictions were applied on family visitation rights which increased prisoners' isolation and detachment from society (Shibani, 2021).

While prisoners' radio cannot eradicate all the struggles of prisoners, it addresses the lack of access to information and the isolation prisoners suffer from. Furthermore, it provides a platform that allows prisoners to voice their struggles and engage in conversations and content of relevance to them. Therefore, building on studies that

consider prisoners' radio a contributor to enacting prisoners' sense of citizenship and connection to community (Rodriguez, 2001; Anderson, 2013; Bedford, 2016; Braisby, 2021), this study examines how Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media in the MENA region and international prisoners' radio covered prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the study explores the current communication and media restrictions in Lebanese prisons and examines the format by which prisoners' radio could potentially be introduced to Lebanon's prisons. It builds on alternative media, citizens media, alternative media in the public sphere theories in addition to praxis and framing theory to better understand the crucial role prisoners' radio has on lives behind bars.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to prisoners' radio, an area with limited research and great potential, reinforcing the importance of communication and active involvement of prisoners. Additionally, the study provides a potential plan of action to facilitate prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons which future research can build on. Providing a plan of action is in line with Freire's educational theories and major writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that includes praxis, which is putting theory and research into action to empower change in the name of social justice (Freire, 2001).

The study applies a qualitative mixed method approach utilizing Media Framing Analysis (MFA) and in-depth interviews. MFA, which is a process built on Entman's (1991) framing work aimed at examining media texts (Shaw & Giles, 2009) is used to analyze and document how Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media in the MENA region and international prisoners' radio covered prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the study relies on in-

depth interviews with various experts from different fields to explore and capture the complexity of what is possible in Lebanese prisons to facilitate prisoners' radio. The study first reviews literature that explores how prisoners' radio can help improve the lives of prisoners based on the theoretical framework covered in the section below and moves to the methodology of data collection that informed the assessment of the data. The conclusion section highlights key findings and identifies areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A multi-theoretical framework approach is required to encompass all the functions and benefits of prisoners' radio. This study draws upon alternative media, citizen's media, alternative media in the public sphere, praxis, and framing theory.

As a starting point, prisoners' radio is a form of alternative media that aims to connect prisoners with the larger community, enacting their voice and citizenship (Anderson, 2012). Alternative media provides an alternative discourse that is more democratic, encompassing the voices of different and often marginalized members of society. It does so by engaging the public in counterhegemonic public spheres through alternative content that is significantly different from mainstream media content (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015). In other words, alternative media defies in its nature the content of mainstream media by presenting the voices of the powerless. This type of facilitation allows the engagement of everyday people in the production of media content that challenges dominant media powers, thus allowing prisoners to have a voice (Atton, 2002).

Additionally, alternative media facilitates the participation and production of alternative content, which in turn enables citizens' media. Citizens' media is defined as citizenship that is actively built instead of being derived from a legal or state-sanctioned status (Rodriguez, 2001). As a participatory tool, prisoners' radio focuses on giving prisoners a sense of that citizenship. As such, theorizing prisoners' radio relies heavily on the citizens' media model. The focus of citizens' media is to facilitate participation that

creates an impact on the community. Through this, prisoners' radio becomes a tool of citizenship that actively involves and contributes to society by giving prisoners a voice. Thus, looking at prisoners' radio under the citizens' media model, provides a space for prisoners to actively retain their citizenship by connecting them with the larger community on relevant issues that matter to them (Anderson, 2012).

As the aim of this paper is to study prisoners' radio, it is important to consider the wider audience participating and listening to such a platform. Most prisoners' radio broadcast through community radio or through internet radio. The broadcasting tends to take place outside the prisons and on occasions and in certain prisons, from within the prison to a larger audience outside prisons. Former prisoners and prisoners' solidarity activists are heavily involved in broadcasting while production of the actual content is created by and for prisoners. Participants include academics, political and media activists, family, friends, and the wider community. The participation of these members varies from listening to disseminating news and information, which cannot be adequately captured under citizens' media (Bedford, 2016). As such, it is important to include alternative media within the public sphere as part of the theoretical framework to effectively recognize the role of these participants in these participatory and information-based programs, which are key features of prisoners' radio. In addition to family and community news, the content focuses on providing an alternative discourse on prison issues and the criminal justice system (Anderson & Bedford, 2017). The theory of public sphere reinforces the importance of citizens participation in the political debate. This framework involves the wider community irrespective of the size of this community, ensuring that all

its members, especially minority groups, have an alternative public sphere that challenges the hegemonic public sphere (Habermas, 1989).

As prisoners are treated as discredited or forgotten citizens (Brown & Wilkie, 2002; Brown, 2007), framing theory is also deployed in this study to better understand how media frame prisoners and prison conditions. Framing is defined as the process of selecting parts of a constructed reality and making it more dominant over others (Entman, 1993). Research concludes that media influences audiences' perception of a certain topic or issue through the types of frames they deploy (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; de Vreese, 2005). Additionally, media play an important role in understating or reinforcing dominant power hegemonies, depending on the frames they use (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016). These frames are the lens by which the wider public sees and labels prisoners (Gest, 2010).

Lastly, and as the aim of this study is to facilitate a plan of action to introduce prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons, it is important to include Freire (2001) critical approach for praxis which advocates for the need to act against oppression. In addition to theory, change can only be achieved by building programs from within communities rather than for them. It is a process that requires dialogue, reflection, and action to form what Freire referred to as conscientization (Freire, 2001). This framework, which puts theory into practice helps advance the rights of minorities and marginalized people. As such, Freire's praxis is central to the facilitation of prisoners' radio that aims to empower prisoners by giving them a platform to voice their struggles and engage in their own media production.

In sum, adopting a multi-theoretical approach allows for a critical review and a much deeper analysis of a larger scope of research that contributes to the facilitation and advancement of prisoners' radio, which is broken down in the literature section below and the research questions this study examines.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Media Framing as a Process for News Reporting

Goffman (1974) first referred to a frame as a framework that allows its users to organize social interactions and events. Framing studies suggest that how the media cover a specific issue is of great importance (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Media uses frames to sway public opinion to perceive an issue in a certain way (de Vreese 2005). At its core, frames breakdown problems, highlights specific causes, and presents an argument that suits a specific agenda (Entman, 1993). The framing process mainly focuses on a dominant narrative the media want to report (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). More importantly, frames are shaped according to social and political discourses. Agents with more power such as politicians and elites, are more likely to influence a media frame than those less powerful (Entman, 2003). For example, prisoners are often framed as high-risk and danger to society. This ensures that the public are less concerned with criminal justice policy reforms and more concerned with ensuring prisoners remain locked up (Gest, 2010).

Framing utilizes a model or a process that encompasses production and content (De Veerse, 2005). Building media frames allow information to pass on more effectively to the intended audiences (Giltin, 1980). The placement of a story, the headline, narrative, repetition, and visuals used are all important parts of framing. These elements ground stories in frames that are either positive, negative, or neutral (Entman, 1993). The same news report however may include either positive, negative, or neutral frames for the same story. As an example, a positively framed story can include negative frames that the media

want to highlight (Giles & Shaw, 2009). Additionally, Gamson and Lasch (1983) outlined various framing techniques that can work in combination or alone to create an intended story. Framing devices can be viewed as “metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, depictions, and visual images within which to view the issue, while reasoning devices such as roots, consequences, and appeal to principal work to provide justification or reasons for general positions” (Gamson & Lasch, 1980, p. 8). When it comes to prisoners, negative framing devices are often used depicting them as outcasts or dangerous criminals (Gest, 2010). Thus, applying framing theory to the present study allows the examination of prisoners’ coverage and the frames constructed by Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media in the MENA region, and international prisoners’ radio.

3.2 Media Framing of Politics and Criminal Justice Policies

Studies have supported the idea that framing can influence people’s perception of political and social issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). This is specifically evident when reporting on criminal justice policies. Framing of policies and correction issues play an important role in news as they tell the audience what and how to think of a specific issue (Kent & Davis, 2006). Similarly, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) argued that how people interpret an issue, especially political issues, depends on how the media frame a story. Gross (2006) concluded that media provide more than timely and accurate facts when covering political issues and policies. They also provide news frames that direct attention to a specific part of a story. As an example, when covering protests against government policies, media often use negative frames to discredit the protestors as they challenge the status quo (Di Cicco, 2010). The same applies when reporting on prisoners. Correction issues and criminal-justice policy reforms rarely ever make the front page of a newspaper

or a television lead story unless the story is framed around prison scandals or riots (Gest, 2010).

Callaghan and Schnell (2001) argued that media framing is used as a political tool to construct a reality that helps control public policies and debates. This analysis supports Entman's (2013) cascade model of dominant hegemonies which argues that prevailing frames are those that support people in power. This means that those with less power are "definite underdogs" in framing, while those with more power have "ideological inertia on their side" (Ryan, 1991, p. 68). This also suggests that news is not only assessed based on its importance but other factors and more importantly, the political agenda it serves (Molotch & Lester, 1974). While media are granted relative power, they ultimately project the ideology of the dominant power. This model dictates how policy frames are constructed in the media to serve government agendas (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016).

3.3 Mainstream Media Framing of Prisoners and Prison Conditions

The general public knowledge of imprisonment is considered the lowest amongst the justice system and policies (Doyle & Ericson, 1996; Roberts & Hough, 2005). Prisoners' news is considered sensational news that is only on the radar when it revolves around events such as riots, training, and government officials' visits (Hog & Brown, 1998). A seminal study by Iyengar (1991) categorized this type of mainstream media coverage under two kinds of frames: episodic and thematic media frames. Episodic frames explore issues limited to events or individuals while thematic frames focus on issues that center around society and the need for better policies. The more episodically issues are framed, the less likely it is for citizens to hold governments accountable for solving the problem (Iyengar, 1991; de Vreese 2005). Media tend to use negative thematic frames when

referring to crime, violence, and prisons to divert attention from policies and the need to address them (Abraham & Appiah, 2006). Additionally, media's usage of episodic and thematic frames is determined by two factors when reporting on political issues. These are the types of policies being reported and the political affiliation of the media outlet publishing the story (Kostadinova & Dimitrova, 2012).

The quality of coverage related to prisoners and prison conditions needs more investigation (O'Sullivan, 2001). A study that examined news coverage of Canadian papers concluded that only four percent of news is allocated to criminal justice policies, prison reforms and prisoners (Doyle & Ericson, 1996). Similarly, a study examining news media in Toronto reported that only six out of 529 official sources were attributed to prison correctional officials (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991). Cheliotis (2010) examined the coverage of crime, and the panic such reporting creates in societies. Results showed that the constant manipulation of prison stories leaves behind a negative image in the minds of the public when thinking of prisoners (Cheliotis, 2010). As an example, stories of prisoners' struggles are either neutralized or justified because of the crimes committed. This type of coverage represents prisoners inhumanly, steering the public away from penal policy debates that could push for much needed reforms (Cheliotis, 2010). A similar study by Mason (2007) looked at how prisons and prisoners are represented by news media. The study specifically examined the media frames constructed by the British press in October 2005 and investigated the Home Office documents which informed the media's reports. Data showed that media relied heavily on government or elite sources that supported the laws governing the criminal justice system. As a result, media reports refrained from questioning government policies (Mason, 2007). This type of hegemonic media coverage

means that even when media frame events outside the status quo, in most cases, these frames document how elites go about restoring order (Gans, 1979).

Additional factors like budget and human resources also play a role in prison coverage. It is not often that media institutions focus on hiring criminal justice journalists or have a dedicated beat for prison news and as a result, prison issues get covered on specific occasions like passing correctional bills or prison riots (Gest, 2010). Moreover, limited resources make it harder for journalists to spend time on newsgathering when they need to meet predetermined schedules and deadlines. As such, media tend to rely on information that is accessible and easy to find, and this often means government websites or statements (Meadows, 1999). These restrictions result in self-censorship that journalists impose on themselves when covering prison stories to avoid negatively impacting their government sources (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). This results in limited coverage of prisoners that is often misguided, stereotyping them as outcasts or violent agents (Gest, 2010).

In Lebanon specifically, mainstream media outlets claim their independence from government authorities. This notion however is not particularly true as media outlets decisions rely heavily on the sectarian coalition these outlets follow (Dajani, 2013). This means that when it comes to prison controversial issues, media tends to use negative episodic frames, focusing on the prisoners' personal stories, scandals or riots as opposed to focusing on prison reforms (Gross, 2006). Given the role of media in the representation of prisoners and prison conditions, this study examines the frames journalists in Lebanon employed in covering prisoners struggles during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RQ 1: How did Lebanese mainstream media cover prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic?

RQ 2: Were positive or negative frames applied in covering prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic?

3.4 Alternative Media as a Supplement to Mainstream Media

Alternative media platforms play a crucial role in covering sensitive and controversial issues in the absence of adequate mainstream media coverage (Downing, 2001). While such platforms do not have the same budget or resources as privately or state-owned media, the focus of alternative media is to bring about change by covering under-represented issues like prisoners' struggles behind bars (Anderson, 2012). Such a framework means that most of the workforce that produces alternative media are activists who work as volunteers and rely on limited funding. In that context, alternative media is defined under its clear opposition of hegemonic content that often misguides the public and marginalizes others. The focus is on providing alternative programs that embrace communities' diversity and enhance communication amongst citizens by tackling sensitive issues. This approach creates trust between media practitioners and the public, encouraging citizen's media and extending the public sphere activity in pursuit of equal representation in a democratic society (Rodriguez, 2001). Habermas (1989) theory of public sphere first defined it as a forum that allows the political participation of citizens which is an indispensable act in theorizing democracy. The public sphere activity is an applicable framework for alternative media to increase understanding of different realities beyond the dominant discourse (Downey & Fenton, 2003; Fraser, 2021). Ultimately, public sphere activity exists outside mainstream and hegemonic media to offer an

alternative public sphere under which alternative media operates (Habermas, 1989). While alternative media are not public spheres themselves, they are platforms that facilitate public sphere activity. This in turn allows media outlets, not funded by those in power, to contribute to democracy by producing content that is oppositional to the hegemonic public sphere (Dahlgren, 1991). This shift in coverage has been witnessed across the Arab world in more recent years. The growing number of alternative media platforms that emerged following the Arab Spring has helped in constructing a new mode of media practices that challenge hegemonic media coverage (Douai & Moussa, 2016).

Research shows that dominant public spheres and hegemonic media do not focus on the representation of minorities and marginalized groups, which reinforces the need for an alternative sphere (Lumby, 2002). This is very much applicable to prisoners whose citizenship is suspended behind bars. Thus, alternative media is an alternative public sphere activity providing prisoners with visibility and a space to voice their struggles (Jacob, 1999). Similarly, Squires (2002) concluded that while prisoners and other minority groups feel powerless against a dominant public sphere, an alternative public sphere grants them power in the context of an alternative or counter sphere. Alasuutari (1999) concluded that alternative media can promote public sphere activity by allowing prisoners to go from watching limited news that does not represent them to engaging in the production of their own media. On the other hand, Curran (1991) reinforced the need for alternative media to counter mainstream media's dependence on powerful institutions for news sources. This imperfect public sphere presents a distorted image of prisoners which further isolates them from society (Carroll & Hackett, 2006). In this sense, alternative media has the power to break this cycle by facilitating participation with the outer world (Downing, 2001). The

participatory nature of alternative media provides a meaningful space for prisoners to enact their citizenship (Anderson, 2012).

Alternative media also plays a crucial role in shedding light on grassroots movements of solidarity with prisoners. This in turn strengthens transnational solidarity that facilitates communication between prisoners and human rights activists who campaign to expose and improve prisoners' living conditions. A key part of transnational solidarity is to share prisoners' stories and testimonials, which helps in fostering advocacy for prisoners' rights. Additionally, it transcends emotional solidarity that manifests itself in postcards and letters that reach prisoners from different corners of the world (Hearman, 2016). As the number of the global prison population continues to rise along with issues of overcrowding and staff shortage (Penal Reform International, 2021), it becomes of more importance to shed light on transnational solidarity which provides a global dimension to fight oppression (Collins, 2002; Easley, 2011; Hearman, 2016).

Considering the growing number of alternative media in the MENA region all of whom claim their independence from government interference (Douai & Moussa, 2016) and building on the role of alternative media in facilitating an alternative discourse, this study also examines how alternative media in the MENA region framed prisoners struggles during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RQ 3: How did alternative media cover prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic in the MENA region?

RQ 4: Were positive or negative frames applied in covering prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic?

RQ 5: How can alternative media production empower prisoners through future crises?

3.5 Restrictions of Communications in Prisons

While media have a bigger role to play in reporting criminal justice issues, it is important to acknowledge the restrictions of communication flow related to prisons. Correctional institutions allow limited access to prisons and security is often the main reason used to restrict media's interaction with prisoners (O'Sullivan, 2001). Brown & Wilkie (2002) argued that legislators do not want to see media glorifying crime and as such, raise the level of restrictions to limit prisoners access to media coverage. This denial of media access is another way of dehumanizing prisoners, cementing them as invisible agents with no rights (Garland & Sparks, 2002). In Australia for example, media are not allowed to interview or get recorded interviews or statements from prisoners without former approval. Some journalists have faced charges for obtaining interviews from prisoners without the required permissions (Anderson, 2012). In the United States, the situation is not much different. Media access to prisons is governed by paperwork and a process that takes a very long time (Brunt, 2000). On the other hand, Britain and Canada have seen prison reforms that includes granting prisoners' permission to talk to media if deemed necessary (Stem, 2002; Hamilton, 2007 as cited in Anderson, 2012).

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa, however, is much more complex. Assessment of prison conditions is often delayed by governments' refusal to allow independent monitoring or access to information (Human Rights Report, 2020). In Lebanon, prisons suffer from many challenges such as administrative corruption, inadequate staff training, overcrowding and outdated regulations (Nashabe, 2009). This includes access to

information stipulated by the law. Prisoners are banned from receiving daily newspapers and are allowed limited access to books and magazines. TV sets however are accessible with limited number of channels while communication with media is governed by laws and restrictions on a case-by-case basis (Lebanese Center for Human Rights, 2008). Interestingly, it is a common practice in prisons to frame radio and television as a privilege which prisoners can lose as a punishment for misconduct (Brown & Wilkie, 2002). Research shows that access to communication with the outer world is often used as a tool of manipulation to maintain control over prisoners (Garland, 2002; Anderson, 2012).

Historically, prisoners have had access to two types of prison media. These are traditional journalism and autobiography (Anderson, 2012). Traditional journalism takes the form of an internal publication such as a magazine or a newspaper that is censored and controlled by prison management. However, lack of funding, overcrowding and change in media consumption habits have resulted in the gradual loss of newspapers (Martin & Sussman, 1995). Autobiographies on the other hand, are stories of silenced voices narrating their struggles to reach a wider audience. While autobiographies are often manipulated by editorial factors, they present a discourse that challenges a dominant discourse that labels prisoners by their crimes (Morgan, 1999). Research shows that autobiographies with wide public attention often relate to famous political prisoners (Morgan, 1999; Summers, 2004). Nevertheless, prisoners' resort to writing to maintain a sense of their identity and to feel the power of representation (Gready, 1993). In more recent years community radio stations and prisoners' rights activists have played a crucial role in introducing prisoners' radio programs of participatory and information-based nature. These programs allow prisoners to voice their struggles and help in reshaping the distorted image built around prisoners. However, these

programs are still low in numbers given the complexity of the laws governing access of media to prisoners (Anderson, 2012).

The exclusion of prisoners from communicating with the outer world increases psychological damages. Prisoners' sense of isolation and alienation grows, making it more difficult to bond with family and friends post-release (Garland, 2002). As such, this study examines the shortfall of current prisoners' media in Lebanese prisons and demonstrate the role of prisoners' radio in creating an alternative public sphere for prisoners living in an environment with restricted information flow. By doing so, this study also builds on Freire's (2001) major writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, advocating for education and research to further social justice and the protection of minorities and marginalized groups.

RQ 6: What communication tools do prisoners have access to in Lebanon?

RQ 7: What are the constraints and opportunities for prisoners' media in Lebanon?

RQ 8: What format of prisoners' radio could be introduced in Lebanese prisons?

3.6 Prisoners' Radio as an Alternative Discourse

As outlined earlier in this study, prisoner's radio is a form of alternative media that aims to connect prisoners with the larger community to enact their voice and citizenship. Prisoners' radio mainly exists under the community radio framework given their non-commercial nature which allows for prisoners' programs. This however does not mean that prisoners' radio belongs solely under community radio or that mainstream media cannot produce programs that focuses on prisoners' issues. It just means that community radios, which are independent platforms that are mainly focused on community issues, are better equipped in dealing with prisoners' issues (Anderson, 2012). Community media are

public resources aimed at creating an alternative sphere that makes it possible for prisoners to have a voice (King, 2007). The goal of prisoners' radio is to empower prisoners to practice some of their lost rights in an alternative public sphere by facilitating access and participation (Meadows et al., 2007). Providing this access in a dominant public sphere creates alternative public spheres that exclude the voices of the majority in favor of minorities like prisoners (van Vuuren, 2006). This framework was also reinforced by Mouffe (1992) who stressed the importance of an alternative public sphere to push for a radical change to achieve equal representation. As such, prisoners' radio enables the representation of prisoners in an alternative public sphere to exercise their rights and engage with the outside world (Murdock, 2005).

It is important to remember that there is a lack of awareness about prisoners' struggles which leads to misguided images and stereotypes of prisoners. While prisoners' radio cannot reach the entirety of the public, it is a participatory tool that allows prisoners to voice their concerns and engage in a public forum with a larger audience. This engagement benefits the prisoners, but more importantly facilitates an open dialogue about prison systems and laws to push for a much-needed change (Anderson, 2012). Without change, prisoners will always be viewed as outcasts. Instead, prisoners should be viewed as individuals who have been removed from society and deprived of their human and civil rights which imposes a serious threat on their ability to reintegrate in society post-release (Morgan, 1999). Brown & Wilke (2002) argued that while international laws protect prisoners' rights, these rights remain abstract within the frame of prisons. It is only through practicing the sense of citizenship, which prisoners are deprived from, can we preserve the dignity of prisoners.

While prisoners' radio that broadcast to a wider community outside prisons is gradually becoming a recognized tool globally, it is yet to be widespread in prisons in the Middle East. *Prisoners' Radio* in occupied Palestine, is one of the only known platforms in the Arab region and yet hardly any information can be found about it (Anderson, 2012). On the other hand, both Morocco and UAE launched prisoners' radio stations in 2018. However, the Moroccan station *Idmaj* which translates to "integration" and the UAE station *Studio Al Amal*, which translates to "Studio of Hope" broadcast only within the confines of prisons with plans for the former to broadcast to a larger community outside prisons in the future (Kasraoui, 2018). While *Idmaj and Studio Al Amal* are internal radio stations, they are still significant initiatives that reiterate the importance of prisoners' radio in educating, involving, and preserving the identity of prisoners (Al Jazeera, 2018; Aghaddir, 2018). Thus, this study aims to examine how international prisoners' radio of different genres covered prisoners struggles during the Covid-19 pandemic and the role they play in empowering prisoners voice their struggles.

RQ 9: How did prisoners' radio programs internationally cover prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the healthcare pandemic?

RQ 10: How can prisoners' radio empower prisoners to voice their struggles in Lebanon?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative mixed methods design. The two qualitative data collection methods applied were Media Framing Analysis (MFA) and in-depth interviews. With this approach, this study examined how two different methods can be paired to reveal a more in-depth analysis of media coverage and experts' position on prisoners' struggles. Additionally, having both these methods enabled a richer and a more comprehensive assessment around the benefits and the potential approach of introducing prisoners' radio to Lebanese prisons (O'Reilly, Kiyimba, & Drewett, 2021).

4.1 Method 1: Media Framing Analysis (MFA)

To examine how Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media in the MENA region and international prisoners' radio covered prisoners' struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic, this study conducted Media Framing Analysis (MFA). MFA is a systematic approach specifically used for an in-depth analysis of media texts. MFA consists of five key steps in the examination of key features in a story. These are, the placement of a story (mapping out where the article appeared), examining the characters (who was quoted in the article and why), narrative and reader's identification (identifying the hero, victim, villain, neutralized actor, or any other character the story emphasizes or deemphasizes), language categories (phrases and words used to define the main characters) and generalization (reoccurring themes). Additionally, this

method helps in establishing whether positive or negative framing was applied in the texts examined (Giles & Shaw, 2009).

The purposive sample included a total of 20 stories and 9 prisoners' radio programs that were published between February 2020 and April 2022. This timeframe covered the day Covid-19 pandemic was officially announced in Lebanon (Farhat, 2020) and was extended to cover the latest global update during which this study was written confirming that 64% of the world's population has taken the vaccine, at least the first dose of it (Ritchie et al., 2022).

Specifically, the search covered 10 prominent Lebanese online news outlets. These are *Annahar*, *L'Orient Today*, *Addiyar*, *Bint Jbail*, *Anbaa*, *Al Joumhouria*, *Lebanon24*, *National News Agency*, *Al-Manar News* and *Al Tayyar* in Lebanon. These news outlets were selected as they ranked amongst the top read news outlets according to Media Landscape (2021) and All You Can Read (2021).

Additionally, 10 alternative media outlets covering the MENA region were also included for the examination. These are Pan Arab's *Middle East Monitor* and *Raseef22*, Egypt's *Madamasr*, Jordan's *7iber.com* and *Al Ghad*, Lebanon's *Daraj*, Palestine's *Electronic Intifada*, Morocco's *Lakome*, Algeria's *Nawaat* and Yemen's *Al Masdar*. These outlets were searched for manually covering the MENA region and the criteria for selecting them was based on the outlet's funding. The most credible alternative outlets covering the MENA region are those that are not funded by authoritarian governments and their affiliates (Douai & Moussa, 2016). Additionally, such outlets encourage participatory media-making covering a diverse audience, ultimately challenging monopoly of communication by those in power (King, 2021).

All the above outlets selected for this study provided free access to search their online database. The chosen articles were found by entering keywords in the search engine of each outlet's online archive. Keyword search included the following words and phrases in both Arabic and English: Prisoners + Covid-19, Prisoners struggles during Covid-19, Prisoners + pandemic, Prisoners and Corona virus; Prison measures during Covid (المساجين (والكورونا, عذاب المساجين مع كورونا, السجن والكورونا, اجرات السجن في ظل الكورونا). The first story that appeared on prisoners' struggles and conditions during the pandemic was selected for review. A detailed list of all the articles selected in Lebanese mainstream media and alternative media in MENA region is included in Table 1 under the results section.

Moreover, the search covered nine prisoners' radio programs globally. Originally, this study was set to examine South-to-South coverage of prisoners' radios. This meant looking at developing countries that could provide a much similar experience of what could be achieved in Lebanese prisons. However, following a detailed manual search, this approach proved unsuccessful. While a few prisoners' radios programs were identified in South-to-South countries, they could not be included due to the language barrier and blocked access to their websites and archives. Instead, this study was extended to cover global prisoners' radio stations or programs that broadcast within prisons or to a wider community outside prison walls, offering participatory and information-based programs to prisoners. Such programs empower prisoners by giving them a voice and allowing them to connect with the outer world (Anderson, 2012; Bedford 2016; Braisby, 2021).

Additionally, examining these programs set a benchmark and provide further knowledge of what could potentially be achieved in Lebanese prisons over the short and long term. As such, the study examined Australia's *Beyond the Bars*, Canada's *Prison Radio Show*,

France's *Through the Walls*, UK's *Secret life of Prisons*, and US's *Uncuffed, Prison Pipeline, Dispatches from Prison Nation, With(in)*, and *Police Prisons*. The details of the radio stations and selected programs are outlined in Table 2 below under the results sections.

While MFA was used to examine the coverage of the selected radio programs, step one of this process which is the placement of the story (covers details of the story published), was adapted to cover the program title and segment on the radio stations selected for examination, ensuring that all the steps of MFA were accurately applied. Steps two to five of the MFA process remained as is. These are examining the characters (sources quoted in the programs), narrative and reader's identification (identifying the hero/victim and the villain of the story), language categories (phrases and words used to define the main characters) and generalization (reoccurring themes).

While some of the selected radio programs (*Beyond the Bars, Uncuffed, The Prison Radio Show*, and *Through the Walls*) were accessible via the radio stations website archives, this did not apply to all 9 radio stations selected. As such, selected radio stations without a visible archive were contacted to ensure access to the relevant episodes and information required for the analysis. An email was also sent to all 9 radio stations explaining the purpose of the study and to obtain access (if needed due to lack of visible archive) to the episodes of the programs outlined above specifically covering Covid-19 in prisons. The email script is included in Appendix A.

In short, the purposive sample selected for MFA covering Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media covering the MENA region, and international prisoners' radio aimed to document, explore, and describe how these outlets covered and represented

prisoners during the Covid-19 pandemic in the absence of enough mediums voicing their ongoing struggles. This is particularly important in Lebanon and the wider MENA region, known for not providing acceptable living standards for prisoners (Global Detention Report, 2018). Specifically, the research questions (RQs) that addressed the coverage and representation of prisoners are RQ 1 – 4 and RQ 9.

4.2 Method 2: In-depth Interviews

This study looked at how prisoners' radio can empower prisoners through giving them a voice and a purpose while serving their sentence. Additionally, this study examined the current constraints and opportunities for introducing prisoners' radio in Lebanon and the potential format that could be introduced in Lebanese prisons. To address these research questions, the study interviewed a convenience sample of journalists, social and political activists, criminal justice and human rights analysts, government authority figures, representatives of human rights and non-profit organizations (NGOs) in addition to ex-prisoners and prisoners' radio programs hosts from international markets.

A total of 10 interviews were conducted. The interviews were either held face-to-face or via zoom calls depending on the interviewees' preference and geographical location. During the first contact with the participants (email and phone script included in Appendix B), the study author explained the purpose of the study, its potential publishing date and asked for written consent. The consent included the participant's approval to participating in the study while ensuring their identities remained anonymous. With this in mind, participants have been categorized below (table A) under their occupation instead. Additionally, some of the participants agreed to be recorded during the interviews while other opted for notetaking only. In principle, the author asked for a one-hour interview and

a follow-up interview if required. The participants were contacted a day ahead of the interview to confirm their availability based on the agreed date and time. The interviews were completed between September 2022 and December 2022.

Table 1 – Assigned Codes and Details for Interviewees

Assigned Codes	Category	Country
Interviewee 1	Prisoners' Radio	United States
Interviewee 2	Prisoners' Radio	Australia
Interviewee 3	Prisoners' Radio	United Kingdom
Interviewee 4	Human Rights & NGO	Lebanon
Interviewee 5	Human Rights & NGO	Lebanon
Interviewee 6	Human Rights & NGO	Lebanon
Interviewee 7	Legal – Prisons and Corrections	Lebanon
Interviewee 8	Government Official	Lebanon
Interviewee 9	Government official	Lebanon
Interviewee 10	Ex-prisoner	Lebanon

The interview questions were based on 12 open-ended questions (see appendix C). All the questions spoke to how prisoners' radio improves the lives of prisoners behind bars. The questions covered prisoners' poor living conditions and limited access to communication (Bedford, 2016) that amplify a sense of isolation making it harder for prisoners to integrate post-release (Murdock, 2005), reinforcing the need for an alternative participatory tool to facilitate communication that makes a real difference (Atton, 2002; Anderson, 2012).

Once all the interviews were completed and transcribed, the data was organized, analyzed, and synthesized. Using inductive analysis, the data was categorized into five salient themes that were derived from repeated patterns of belief, salient topics, language, and ideas from the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). These themes were also in line with the theoretical framework and the literature reviewed in this study on how

prisoners' radio can enable prisoners to enact their suspended citizenship. These are (1) current prison conditions, (2) mainstream media coverage, (3) alternative media role in providing an alternative sphere, (4) benefits of prisoners' radio, (5) format of prisoners' radio that could be introduced in Lebanese prisons. Specifically, the research questions (RQs) that address the production and facilitation of prisoners' radio are RQ 5 – 8 and RQ 10.

In summary, this study includes two methods: part one examined the representation of prisoners and their living conditions in Lebanon's local media, the MENA's alternative media and international prisoners' radio utilizing MFA. Part two on the other hand studied how to apply prisoners' radio in Lebanon utilizing in-depth interviews. While these are two separate methods, they are complimentary to the same research problem concerning the communication rights of prisoners by a) documenting the representation of prisoners and b) advancing prisoners' radio as indicated in this section above.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part, one summarizes the findings of the MFA technique applied on all 20 media outlets and 9 radio stations (Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media in the MENA region and international prisoners' radio) while part two summarizes the findings of the 10 in-depth interviews conducted with international and local Lebanese representatives.

5.1 MFA Findings

The MFA results detailed here provide a comprehensive analysis and evidence on how Lebanese mainstream media reinforced the narrative of the authorities, while alternative media covering the MENA region held the authorities accountable for their incompetence in protecting prisoners during the healthcare pandemic. International prisoners' radio on the other hand addressed the struggles of prisoners during the pandemic and reinforced the importance of communication with the outer world. Overall, the data shows that the majority of the Lebanese media outlets provided predominantly positive stories endorsing the measures taken by authorities to combat Covid-19 in prisons while alternative media in the MENA region and international prisoners' radio presented negative stories highlighting the lack of enough measures or the need to do more to combat healthcare risks and increased isolation of prisoners. A more detailed summary of the analysis of the 20 articles and nine programs based on the five MFA steps is included in Appendix D.

5.1.1 Placement of Story

The table below arranges and analyzes the headlines according to the first step of the MFA technique, which is to identify the placement of a story or the section in which the story appeared. The table shows that the majority of stories were published in the main news sections in both, the Lebanese mainstream media and the alternative media outlets in the MENA region. Other placements include the local, political and variety sections. In prisoners' radio stations, the majority of the programs (eight out of nine) focused on conducting interviews while France's *La Clé Des Ondes* read an open letter from prisoners.

Table 2 - List of Lebanese online outlets and alternative media in MENA region for MFA examination.

Lebanon Local Online News Sites					
Publishing Date	Media Outlet	Country	Headline	Headline Translation to English	Section
March 17, 2020	<i>Anbaa</i>	Lebanon	لجنة الرعاية في السجون اجتمعت في بيت الطبيب وناقشت اجراءات مواجهة الفيروس	Committee meets to discuss ways to fight Covid-19 in prisons	News Section
October 14, 2020	<i>Bint Jbail</i>	Lebanon	بعد تبين إصابة أحد القاصرين في سجن رومية - مبنى الأحداث...توضيح من الأمن الداخلي حول الإصابات الأخرى	Post a minor catching Covid-19; Internal Security Forces (ISF) provide more details on Covid-19 cases	Local News Section

October 26, 2020	<i>Addiyar</i>	Lebanon	«كورونا»: التفشي يُنذر كارثة... البيزري: الوضع حرج حالات الفيروس في السجون بالأرقام	Corona: Critical cases reveal a disaster. Prisons and Covid in numbers	News section
January 27, 2021	<i>Al Manar News</i>	Lebanon	قوى الامن تتابع الحالات المصابة بفيروس كورونا في السجون	Security Forces follow up on Covid-19 cases in prisons	News section – originally published in the National News Agency
May 24, 2021	<i>Tayyar.org</i>	Lebanon	عداد كورونا في سجن رومية يسجل صفر اصابة	Corona cases in Roumieh prison hit a zero	News section
May 24, 2021	<i>Al Joumhouria</i>	Lebanon	ما هو وضع الوباء في السجون؟	What is the situation in prisons with Covid-19?	News Section
July 6, 2021	<i>Annahar</i>	Lebanon	ما حقيقة اجتياح كورونا "دلتا" سجن رومية؟	What is the truth behind Delta cases in Roumieh prison?	News Section
December 28, 2021	<i>L'Orient Today</i>	Lebanon	COVID-19 cases in Roumieh prison significantly fewer than this time last year, physicians' syndicate head says.	NA	Covid News

December 28, 2021	<i>National News Agency</i>	Lebanon	أبو شرف: الإجراءات الصحية والوقائية في سجن رومية حدثت من الإصابات بالأمراض المعدية وكورونا والمستلزمات الطبية والوقائية باتت مؤمنة	Abou Sharf: Health measures in Roumieh prison provide medical support and precaution measures to fight Covid-19	Variety News Section
February 7, 2022	<i>Lebanon24</i>	Lebanon	صرخة وجع " من داخل سجن رومية	A cry for help from Roumieh prison	News Section
Alternative Media covering the MENA region					
March 2, 2020	<i>Al Ghad</i>	Jordan	ارتياح في الأوساط الحقوقية بقرارات الإفراج وإخلاء السبيل ودعوات لتوسيعها	Relief amid decisions to release prisoners during pandemic	Breakings News under Local News section
April 16, 2020	<i>7iber.com</i>	Jordan	الكورونا في السجون المصرية: لا نملك ما نقايط النظام به سوى الخوف	Corona in Egyptian prisons. Nothing except fear to fight the regime	News section
May 14, 2020	<i>Mada Masr</i>	Egypt	As detainees remain cut off amid pandemic, Alaa Abd El Fattah continues month-long hunger strike	NA	Politics/Prison Conditions
July 27, 2020	<i>The Electronic Intifada</i>	Occupied Palestine	Court denies Palestinian prisoners right to COVID-19 protection	NA	News Section – Rights & Accountability

August 14, 2020	<i>Daraj</i>	Lebanon	COVID-19 Saudi Arabia: Escalating Concerns Over the Wellbeing of the Political Prisoners in Saudi Arabia	NA	Main Section
December 18, 2020	<i>Nawaat</i>	Algeria	Prisons in Tunisia: prison overcrowding in the time of Covid-19	NA	Main Section
May 6, 2021	<i>Lakome</i>	Morocco	224 حالة في 2020.. تقرير ينبه لتفاقم الإضرابات عن الطعام في السجون المغربية	224 cases in 2020 – hunger strikes across Morocco's prisons	Main Section
August 11, 2021	<i>Middle East Monitor</i>	Regional	Egypt's prisoners are denied their rights and prison authorities appear to be above the law	NA	News Section
February 2, 2022	<i>Raseef22</i>	Regional	Infected with Coronavirus in a 6' by 9' prison cell in Egypt	NA	News section
April 17, 2022	<i>Al Masdar</i>	Yemen	Yemeni activists launch media campaign to free prisoners amid fears of COVID-19 spread	NA	News Section

Table 3 - List of prisoners' radio stations or programs for MFA examination.

Publishing Date	Media Outlet	Country	Title of program	Type of Segment
April 10, 2020	La Clé des Ondes Community Radio	France	Through the Walls	Open letter
May 1, 2020	Prison Radio Association - National Prison Radio	UK	The Secret Life of Prisons – The lockdown special	Lockdown Special with interviews
January 9, 2021	CKUT Community Radio	Canada	The Prison Radio Show	News briefs -Roundup of #SaskSolidarity Actions & Interview
February 8, 2021	KALW Public Media	US	Uncuffed	Interviews
February 22, 2021	KBOO Community Radio	US	Prison Pipeline	Interview
June 1, 2021	Prison Radio	US	Dispatches from Prison Nation	Interviews
June 10, 2021	3CR Community Radio	Australia	Beyond The Bars	Interviews
September 1, 2021	Inside Wire Prison Colorado Radio	US	With(in)	Interviews
January 19, 2022	Making Contact Radio	US	Police Prisons	Pandemic special - Interviews

5.1.2 Identifying Characters

The following Figure 1 shows the exposure given to prison authorities and government officials, medical experts, political and social activists, prisoners, prisoners' family members, ex-prisoners, and legal representatives. Investigating the characters

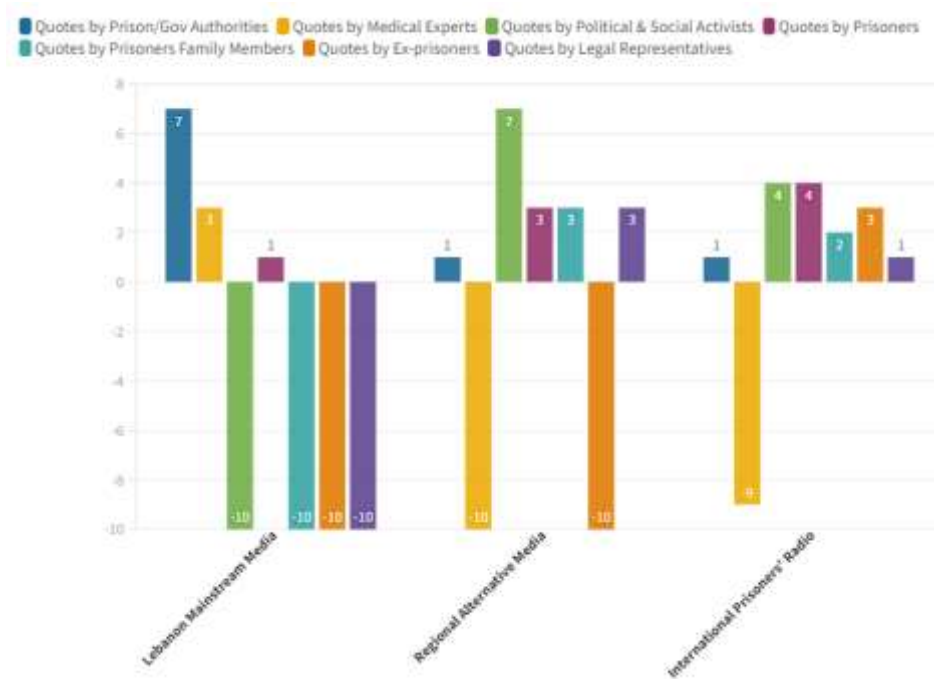
quoted in Lebanese mainstream media provides evidence that the news articles favor prison authorities and government officials (seven out of 10 stories quoted officials). On the other hand, only one article quoted a government official in the alternative media covering the MENA region. The same applies to the international prisoners' radio with US's *With(in)* being the only program that hosted the Correction Executive Director of the Colorado prison the only official interviewed in the segment given his reformist opinion. Three out of 10 articles in the alternative media quoted prisoners and their family members while only one article quoted a prisoner in the Lebanese mainstream media with no quotes from family members (labeled as -10 in the figure below). International prisoners' radio on the other hand, included a total of seven testimonies from prisoners or ex-prisoners while two programs included testimonies from family members. Lebanese mainstream media also included quotes from medical experts, mainly from the designated committee handling Covid-19 cases while none of the alternative media and international prisoners' radio quoted medical experts appointed by authorities (labeled as -10 or -9 in the figure below). A total of seven quotes from social and political activists were included in alternative media while four activists' testimonies were highlighted in prisoners' radio programs all of which focused on the struggles of prisoners during Covid-19. On the other hand, all 10 Lebanese media outlets did not include any quotes from activists (labeled as -10 in the figure below). Similarly, no quotes from legal representatives of prisoners were included in all 10 Lebanese articles while three quotes from legal representatives were included in alternative media outlets and one quote in prisoners' radio programs.

In sum, apart from *Lebanon24*, the quotes from Lebanese mainstream media supported the narrative of the government and prison officials, reinforcing that the

healthcare of prisoners was being taken care of during the Covid-19 pandemic. The same was not evident in the quotes included in alternative media and prisoners' radio, where the focus was on highlighting the concerns around healthcare and lockdown measures in prisons, urging the officials to do more and act faster amid the Covid-19 crisis.

Figure 1- Identifying Character.

The table ranges from -10 or -9 which is no coverage in all 10 articles/programs in the three categories listed below (Lebanese mainstream media, regional alternative media, and international prisoners' radio) to +10 or +9 coverage in all 10 articles/programs examined from each country.



5.1.3 Narrative Form and Reader Identification

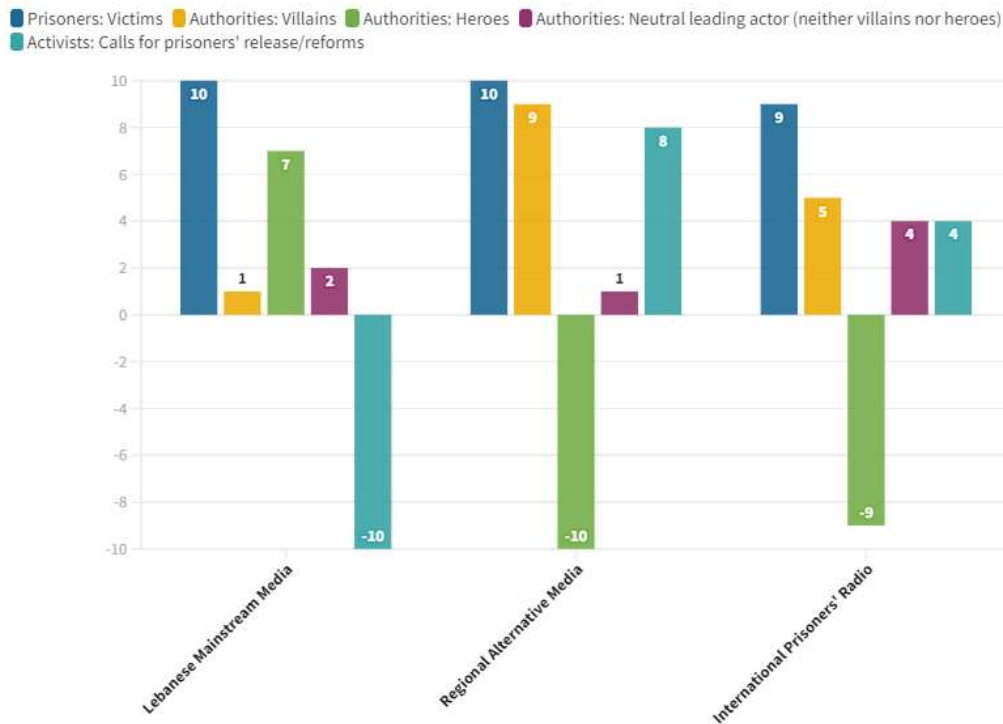
The next illustration, Figure 2, shows that all 20 articles and nine programs (29 in total) framed prisoners as victims of the global Covid-19 pandemic. As for the authorities,

seven out of 10 Lebanese mainstream media outlets framed the authorities as heroes with a narrative that reinforced the efforts and measures put in place, while two outlets framed the authorities as a neutral party doing their job and one outlet focused on prisoners struggles only. It is worth noting that in Lebanon's *Anbaa* and *Addiyar*, the supporting material did not even cover prison related news. The focus was on providing various Covid-19 updates covering different governorates. On the other hand, none of the alternative media covering the MENA region framed the authorities as heroes. On the contrary, nine out of 10 of these outlets framed the authorities as villains that according to Lebanon's *Daraaj* and Jordan's *7iber* ruled through an "autocratic leadership that disregards prisoners' lives" and ought to do more to support prisoners and fix the prison system. Similarly, none of the international prisoners' radio framed authorities as heroes. Five out of nine programs framed authorities as villains while four out of nine neutralized their role. Activists' efforts to highlight the struggles of prisoners during Covid-19 was not covered in any of the 10 Lebanese mainstream media (labeled as -10 in the figure below) while eight out of 10 alternative media and four out of nine international prisoners' radio programs covered their role and ongoing efforts. For example, Egypt's *Mada Masr* and Yemen's *Al Masdar* covered activists' campaigns to free prisoners during Covid-19. On the other hand, US's *Police Prison* hosted activists on their show that highlighted how prisons are the ideal sites for infectious diseases like Covid-19 due to overcrowding, lack of basic needs and proper healthcare. UK's *Secret Life of Prisons* along with other programs highlighted the strict Covid-19 measures that saw prisoners spending 23 hours in lockdown while guests of US's *Police Prisons* tackled the lack of transparency in "releasing proper information" related to prisoners' healthcare during Covid-19.

Overall, the narrative in Lebanese mainstream media invited the reader to identify with authorities and acknowledge their efforts while alternative media mainly focused on holding the authorities accountable. International prisoners' radios on the other hand were more focused on highlighting prisoners' struggles and increased isolation being behind bars during a pandemic.

Figure 2 – Narrative Form and Reader Identification

The table ranges from -10 or -9 which is no coverage in all 10 articles/programs in the three categories listed below (Lebanese mainstream media, regional alternative media, and international prisoners' radio) to +10 or 9 coverage in all 10 articles/programs examined from each country.



5.1.4 Analysis of Language Categories

Figure 3 shows the language categories examined within each article and program. This step in the analysis identified a total of six categories associated with the main characters (authorities, & prisoners) and the event (Covid-19). The breakdown is as follows: two categories were associated with authorities: 1) authorities who were incompetent in fighting Covid-19 in prisons and 2) authorities who were competent in fighting Covid-19 in prisons. Similarly, two categories were associated with prisoners: 1) prisoners who were victims of Covid-19 and poor living conditions and 2) prisoners who were victims of Covid-19 only. Two categories were also associated with the event: 1) Covid-19 lockdown & protection measures and 2) Covid-19 increased prisoners' isolation and connection with the outer world.

In all 20 articles and nine programs examined, prisoners were framed as victims, yet a detailed analysis of the languages shows that seven out of 10 Lebanese outlets framed prisoners as victims of Covid-19 while only three out of 10 outlets considered prisoners victims of poor living conditions in addition to Covid-19. On the other hand, all 10 alternative media outlets and nine international prisoners' radio programs adopted the latter in the narrative and language used to reinforce the increased concerns over prisoners' struggles during the pandemic. It is worth noting that framing associated with prisoners in international prisoners' radio referred to prisoners as "people living behind bars," "people with prison experience," "incarcerated people," and "residents of prisons" as a counter language to shift the negative framing associated with prisoners as "second class citizens" or "sub-humans unworthy of attention." To that end, US's *Within* highlighted the need to "humanize prisons" and start framing "offenders" as "residents" as part of the movement to make a real difference, ensuring prisons are not just "a place for punishment and loss of dignity."

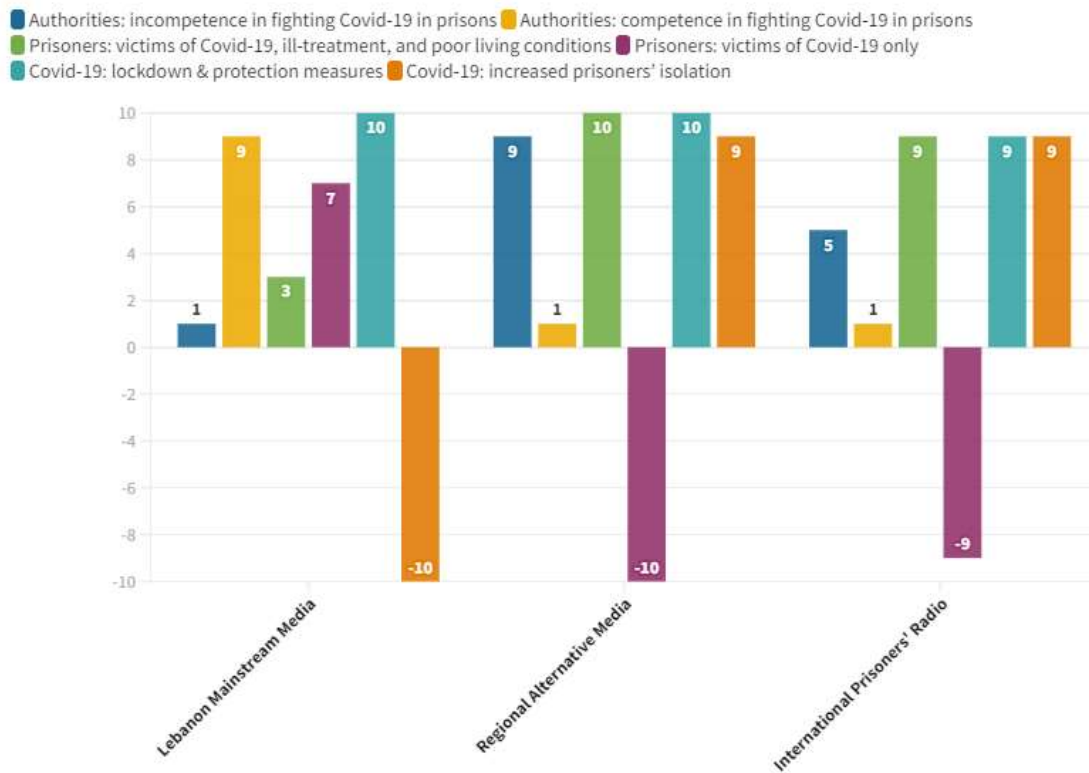
As for the authorities, nine out of 10 Lebanese media outlets framed the authorities as a competent body in fighting Covid-19 in prisons. The language and words associated with the authorities in Lebanese media described them as "working tirelessly," "ongoing support of prisoners' wellbeing," "constant follow up," "improved medical care." As for alternative media, nine out of 10 outlets framed authorities as incompetent in fighting Covid-19 in prisons. The description mainly focused on highlighting the poor living conditions to show the inadequacy of authorities in protecting prisoners. Words and phrases included "ineffective measures," "inhumane living conditions," "overcrowding," "isolation and no communication with family," "limited access to resources," "treated like

animals,” and “torture.” On the other hand, five out of nine international prisoners’ radio framed authorities as incompetent in fighting Covid-19 in prisons. The remaining programs neutralized the role of authorities, with the exception of US’s *With(in)* that acknowledged Colorado’s Department of Correction (CDC) efforts given the role its director plays in bearing responsibility for change in the system while also improving the living conditions of incarcerated people.

As for the language associated with the event itself, all 20 outlets and nine programs covered the lockdown and protection measures (labeled as +10 or +9 in the figure below). Additionally, both international prisoners’ radios and alternative media covering the MENA region focused on highlighting prisoners’ isolation during Covid-19. Words and phrases associated with prisoners’ isolation included “increase in poor mental health conditions,” “increase in death rates and hunger strikes,” “increase in suffering,” “exploitation amongst vulnerable groups,” and “physical and psychological damage.” On the other hand, none of the Lebanese media tackled this issue.

Figure 3 – Analysis of Language Categories

The table ranges from -10 or -9 which is no coverage in all 10 articles/programs in the three categories listed below (Lebanese mainstream media, regional alternative media, and international prisoners' radio) to +10 or +9 coverage in all 10 articles/programs examined from each country.



5.1.5 Generalization

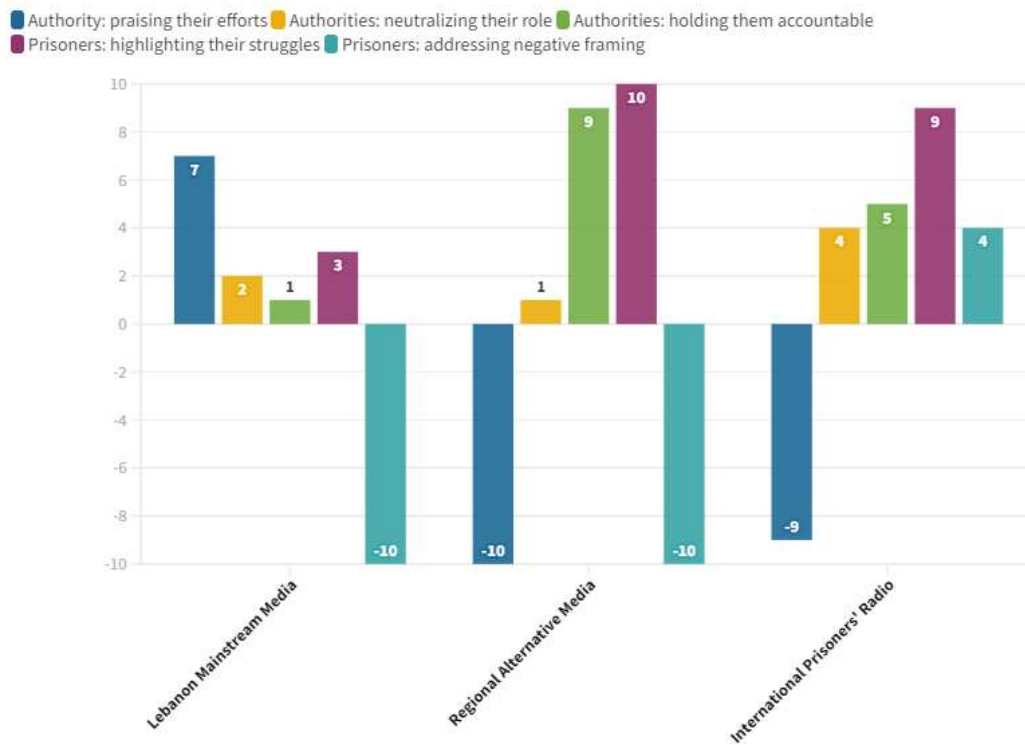
The final step in the MFA process is to summarize the reoccurring themes found across the 20 articles and nine programs examined. The generalization of the data analyzed shows that that a reoccurring theme in the majority of the Lebanese media (seven out of 10) focused on reinforcing the government's narrative, praising their efforts in fighting Covid-19 in prisons. Additionally, seven out of 10 outlets also marginalized prisoners

struggles by ignoring their increased isolation and ongoing poor living conditions pre, during and post Covid-19. The third and final reoccurring theme across all 10 Lebanese mainstream media was not addressing the negative framing of prisoners as “outcasts and murders” in an effort to humanize their struggles (labeled as -10 in the figure below). Instead the articles mainly focused on reporting numbers of positive cases in prisons with no mention of prisoners’ health conditions, recovery process, isolation measure, etc. As for alternative media covering the MENA region, the reoccurring theme across nine out of 10 publications was holding the government accountable for the poor living conditions of prisoners. Jordan’s *Al Ghad* was the only publication that talked about the need to do more to support prisoners while also acknowledging the government’s efforts to combat Covid-19 in prisons. These results mean that nine out of 10 of these outlets did not marginalize the struggles of prisoners, highlighting “poor living conditions,” “ill-treatment,” and “isolation.” It is worth mentioning however that none of the alternative media outlets addressed the negative framing of prisoners and still referred to them as “prisoners” (labeled as -10 in the figure below) while four out of nine international prisoners’ radio programs focused on the negative representation of prisoners and the need to stop framing them as “outcasts”, “second class citizens,” “murderers” that are “unworthy of care.” On the other hand, four out of nine of these programs neutralized the role of the government while the other five held them accountable. None of the programs, however, praised the authorities for the work done in prisons and stressed the need to do more. Additionally, none of the international prisoners’ radio programs marginalized the struggles of prisoners (labeled as -9 in the figure below). On the contrary, these programs focused on the importance of “humanizing prisons” and connecting prisoners with family, friends, and the outer world. This was evident in US *Uncuffed* that talked about the importance of reducing

prisoners’ isolation who are already treated as a “threat” to society. Additionally, Australia’s *Beyond the Bar* covered what it meant for prisoners to connect with family members via zoom calls and how it helped them cope while UK’s *Secret Life of Prisons* tried to bridge the gap through a “constructive conversation that questioned whether people’s experience with Covid-19 lockdown measures can be compared to the prison experience.”

Figure 4 – Generalization

The table ranges from -10 or -9 which is no coverage in all 10 articles/programs in the three categories listed below (Lebanese mainstream media, regional alternative media, and international prisoners’ radio) to +10 or +9 coverage in all 10 articles/programs examined from each country.



5.2 In-depth Interviews Findings

This section starts with an overall summary of the results followed by a detailed breakdown of these results covering the five themes derived from this study. These are 1) current prison conditions and barriers, 2) mainstream media coverage, 3) alternative media benefits in providing an alternative sphere, 4) benefits of prisoners' radio and 5) format of prisoners' radio to be introduced in Lebanese prisons.

Results revealed that Lebanon's healthcare measures to deal with Covid-19 were successful, enabling authorities and prison services to deal with future crisis of similar nature. That said, prisoners' wellbeing beyond basic healthcare needs were ignored with strict lockdown measures that only increased their sense of isolation. All 10 interviewees raised concerns about prison conditions and concluded that prison reforms are not a priority. On the other hand, eight out of 10 interviewees concluded that mainstream media did not do enough to shed light on prisoners struggles during Covid-19 while all 10 interviewees highlighted that media generally do not do enough to cover crime and prison which are a fundamental part of society. It was also concluded that quite often media coverage revolves around sensational headlines and stories that sell. Alternative media benefits were also acknowledged by all 10 interviewees who stated that such a platform helps in the rehabilitation of prisoners who end up reintegrating in society. Additionally, all three interviewees working in prisoners' radio highlighted the important role of alternative media production in keeping people behind bars informed and connected to the outside world, specifically in a crisis, which was evident during the Covid-19 lockdown. When it comes to Lebanon's prisons, all seven Lebanese interviewees reinforced the current economic crisis, overcrowding, and outdated laws amongst the key constraints that

make it difficult to propose new projects. Additionally, five out of seven Lebanese interviewees concluded that the introduction of any prisoners' media project will face resistance because authorities do not want prisoners to have a voice. When asked about prisoners' radio, six out of seven Lebanese interviewees acknowledged the benefits of introducing prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons as a means to reaffirm part of prisoners lost identity while six out of 10 interviewees recommended starting with a pilot program, broadcasting only on the inside.

5.2.1 Current Prison Conditions and Barriers

All 10 interviewees raised concerns about the prison system in general and concluded that prisoners are not seen as a priority. In Lebanon, all seven interviewees concluded that prison conditions have never been up to standards before, during and post Covid-19. "If you have a building that was built to accommodate 200 people, yet you have 600 people inside it – what is negatively affected? Literally everything. Food quality, health, right to go outside, visitation, and security" (Interviewee 8, 2022). Results also revealed that outdated laws, the overall system, and overcrowding were key challenges that increase prisoners' struggles and hinder any introduced efforts to better their lives while in prison. "When you suffer from overcrowding, it stands as an obstacle in the face of reforms and projects. Take as an example introducing a computer-based course on how to use excel or create a CV – you need 10 computers to teach 10 prisoners - so you also need 10 tables and 10 chairs and a teacher – but you need a space – find that space in an overcrowded prison" (Interviewee 8, 2023) concluded. Additionally, all seven interviewees cited the economic crisis the country is currently facing to be the biggest barrier to any improvements in prison conditions.

The major problem we are now facing is not the Covid-19 pandemic but the current economic crisis in Lebanon. It is important to remember that out of the 25 detention centers we have, only three are designed to be prisons while the rest are just old buildings. In a crisis this means that all plans, including minimal upgrades in prisons are difficult to achieve (Interviewee 9, 2022).

When asked about prison conditions during Covid-19 and how it affected prisoners' wellbeing, all 10 interviewees stated that governments focus was on saving lives while everything else was put on hold. This included the suspension of visitation rights and rehabilitation programs. Prisoners were locked in their cells for almost 23 hours which increased their suffering and caused further isolation. Five out of seven Lebanese interviewees concluded that Lebanon's plan and efforts to fight the spread of Covid-19 in prisons was a success and resulted in minimal number of deaths.

On the health front – the situation was handled but the same cannot be said on the rehabilitation side which saw strict lockdown measures that affected the physical and mental health of prisoners across prisons in Lebanon. We consider ourselves to be the Internal Security Forces (ISF) partners, yet it must be said that while we managed to reduce number of deaths, rehabilitation programs were completely disregarded. Isolation is a huge problem prisoners suffer from and unfortunately if we face another pandemic, I do not feel things will be different. I am not sure people in power believe that our work makes a difference and that is ugly. Feedback from beneficiaries (prisoners) is very different from that of our partners who do not believe in what we do” (Interview 4, 2022).

On the other hand, two out the seven Lebanese interviewees concluded that the efforts were not sufficient, including the healthcare of prisoners (Interviewee 5, 2022; Interviewee 6, 2022). “Since Covid-19 and everything that followed, prison conditions are further deteriorating. In Baabda prison, which consists of five rooms only, there are 110 women residents. So there are 22 residents in each room and of course they do not all have beds, and the conditions are terrible. We had to provide fans in summer to ensure prisoners can get through the day with hardly any electricity and restrictions on ACs even when the electricity is available. The financial crisis makes it terrible to provide the very basic needs of prisoners” (Interview 5, 2022).

5.2.2 Mainstream Media Coverage

All 10 interviewees concluded that media in general are more interested in a scoop or a story that sells. This means that when it comes to prisoners struggles and living conditions, media are more likely to be interested in covering specific events, riots, violence, or scandals related to ill-treatment or misconduct. As for Covid-19 coverage, the two senior Lebanese officials interviewed said that statements released during Covid-19 were covered (Interviewee 8, 2022; Interviewee 9, 2022). “Media do cooperate with us and cover our statements, which was the case during Covid-19. Yet most journalists tend to exaggerate. They seem to focus on the negatives and are always on the look for a scoop to sell news. We have useful data that they can use, and it is not always bad. Why not also highlight the positives and areas that can improve how society looks at prisoners, the prison system and those managing it. Whenever a prisoner illegally phones a media outlet to complain or when they get a scoop on contaminated water as an example, they do not

take our word. It is only when organizations like WHO confirms that the water is clean that such stories die” (Interviewee 9, 2022).

On the other hand, eight out of 10 interviewees stated that media did not do enough during Covid-19 to shed light on the struggles of prisoners ranging from strict lockdown measures to lack of visitation rights. Interviewees linked this problem to the current prison system.

The problem is the prison system that is designed to separate and isolate people. The media has a responsibility that they are not fulfilling and that is to reinforce that people behind bars are citizens, fellow humans, neighbours, relatives whose lives and whose journeys, cares and fears impact us whether or not we realize that. So have media done enough during Covid-19? my answer is absolutely not. The focus should be on telling the story of what is really happening and that does not always have to be ugly stories. Prison life is much more complicated than we think. I feel like I have been witnessing how the media consciously or not keep trying to reinforce an inaccurate image in public’s imaginations about what happens in prisons” (Interviewee 1, 2022).

Additionally, all 10 interviewees also stated that there is a lack of understanding of the prison system. This was seen as a universal phenomenon partially due to the high security surrounding prisons and the limited access media have.

Coverage during Covid-19 was not enough. Media are bound to their editorial agenda and have limited understanding of prisoners struggles but then again, they do not have enough access to prisons. The problem is that there is not enough concern about prisoners. The coverage is often sensational and revolves

around violence or riots for prisoners' stories to be newsworthy (Interviewee 3, 2022).

5.2.3 Alternative Media Benefits in Providing an Alternative Sphere

All 10 interviewees reinforced the significant role of alternative media in providing an alternative sphere for prisoners. Amongst the benefits cited is the ability to give prisoners a platform that makes them feel that their voice matters when their struggles are not a priority to the outside world. Additionally, interviewees stated that providing alternative prisoners' media is an opportunity to unify efforts aimed at prisoners' rehabilitation, ensuring that they come out of prisons as better individuals.

It does not matter who you are and what your attitude to people in prison is.

Almost all prisoners end up coming out. So, do you want them to get out angrier and better equipped at committing crimes or do you want them to come out with better knowledge of themselves and understand the impact of the crimes they committed on themselves, their families, the victims they affected and the society as a whole? Prisons ought to be a place where there is an opportunity for people to change and develop. It is about creating an environment where they can live a better life inside prison and ultimately, outside. That is what alternative media offers. It ensures prisoners feel they matter, engaging in useful activity and content that helps them learn and improve" (Interviewee 3, 2022)

On the other hand, eight out of 10 interviewees highlighted the role of alternative media in shifting the narrative and stereotyping of prisoners while the three interviewees working in prisoners' radio concluded that this starts with a language that frames prisoners as "prison residents, people living in prisons, people with prison experience" instead of

“prisoners, convicts, and murderers.” When it comes to Lebanon, all seven interviewees concluded that more effort and work is required to push for change in Lebanese prisons, starting with giving prisoners the chance to engage in meaningful experiences.

A busy prison is a safe prison. In Lebanon, NGOs are trying to create activities that provide a source of security to prisoners and alternative media can achieve that and a lot more. It is indeed an opportunity to enhance life behind bars. It is not the guns or barbwire that make a difference. It is imperative that people behind bars feel productive and that happens when you keep them busy in sports, arts, theatre. They need to create or build something that they can share with the world and feel proud. This also allows us to fight the negative stereotyping of prisoners which is very important as most of prisoners end up reintegrating in society” (interviewee 2, 2022).

Additionally, two out of the seven Lebanese interviewees reinforced the importance of allowing prisoners to have a voice and a platform to tell their stories (Interviewee 4, 2022; Interviewee 6, 2022). “Prisoners want to feel that their voices are heard. They appreciate the work of NGOs and realize that it is not our fault that their voices are not heard and that is why an alternative media platform will be a great benefit to our work with prisoners. They are eager to talk, write, and paint about their world and lives. They want to connect with the outer world to feel that they matter and that their voices matter, which becomes more attainable through alternative media” (Interviewee 4, 2022).

While interviewees cited various opportunities summarized above about the benefits of alternative media and prisoners’ media, all seven Lebanese interviewees reinforced that

the current prisons conditions and barriers in Lebanese prisons (summarized under theme 1) are the key constraints that hinder the introduction of prisoners' media projects.

When asked about the role of alternative media production in empowering prisoners through future crisis, all three prisoners' radio executives interviewed from international markets highlighted the important role of alternative media production during a crisis when prisoners' isolation is heightened (Interviewee 1, 2022; Interviewee 2, 2022; Interviewee 3, 2022). This was acknowledged by the remaining seven Lebanese interviewees, including government officials.

Before the pandemic, I thought of alternative media as a tool that offers a lifeline to people on the inside because it provides practical support and information about the services available to them. This ranges from entertainment, such as music all the way to holding discussions, interviews, and debates. It acts as a kind of escapism. When the pandemic happened, we realized that we have a more important role to do, because communication was zero. There were no direct ways of communicating with people on the inside with no internet access and limited phone access. We became the center of information and the bridge between people on the inside and people on the outside. Families, NGOs, and various partners relied on us to communicate with prisoners through the hotline we introduced. We also started a weekly program focused on interviewing the head of the prison service who would answer questions sent to us by people in prisons – and it was tough questions that revolved around contacting families, access to the phone system and much more. We were able to put the tough questions forward to authority and that is

the role of alternative media and good journalism. Ultimately, we elevated the pain and ensured prisoners were well informed and could still virtually connect with the outside world” (Interviewee 3, 2022).

Use of technology was also highlighted as a key focus area to ensure that prisoners have a window to the outside world in a crisis (Interviewee 1, 2022; Interviewee 2, 2022; Interviewee 3, 2022). “During Covid-19, prison services introduced iPads with limitation on its usage, allowing prisoners to reach out to their families, access information and email the prison system. The system was transformed to allow prisoners to zoom call their families and have access to information which has never happened before and revolutionized prison communication. Before Covid-19, it was letter writing, phones and landline and this change provided a conduit for various services such as health services, payments, and legal aids. As producers of alternative media, we also ensured we have a space on this platform through a link accessible to people in jail. This meant that 11 thousand people could listen to us. To ensure we are better equipped to deal with future crisis, we are still sorting out technical problems given the high security associated with providing such type of access through an iPad, but we are not far off” (Interviewee 2, 2022).

5.2.4 Benefits of Prisoners’ Radio

All seven Lebanese participants interviewed expressed concerns over introducing prisoners’ radio in Lebanese prisons. Amongst the reasons cited were security, lack of staff, space, and a general lack of interest in prisoners need. That said, six out of the seven interviewees acknowledged the benefits of such a project in enhancing the life of prisoners

behind bars while one participant dismissed the project citing “security” as the main reason why a radio cannot work.

Prisons are not a priority – not just in Lebanon but in general. People see prisoners as outcasts who committed crime and deserve the punishment, even of this punishment is harsh and the conditions are inhumane. In a country like Lebanon where we have problems in electricity and almost every basic human need such as access to water, education, social welfare, prison reforms and projects take a back seat. This however is a serious and dangerous problem. The authorities do realize that the main challenge we are facing is that recidivism is very high, and many released prisoners are reengaging in crime. This means that prisons are not correcting behavior but in fact they are increasing the criminal behavior of people given the lack of rehabilitation programs and a specialized body to run prisons. We need new practical laws; alternatives sentences and a project like prisoners’ radio that focus on reforms and the wellbeing of prisoners especially that almost 90% of prisoners end up reintegrating in society” (Interviewee 7, 2022).

Additionally, the three interviewees engaged in prisoners’ radio provided valuable insight on the benefits of such a platform in making a real difference (Interviewee 1, 2022; Interviewee 2, 2022; Interviewee 3, 2022). “Prisoners’ radio educates prisoners on what life in prison is like and how to navigate it; how to access the different services available, how to survive and hopefully how to thrive in prison and use prison as an opportunity to better themselves” (Interviewee, 3, 2022). Additionally, all three interviewees reinforced the importance of presenting content that prisoners enjoy and benefit from.

Prisoners' Radio is phenomenal for people behind bars. It is a tool that allows prison residents to have a voice. It helps them feel important as they too, can do a service because they are allowed to talk about their experience and their learnings, and it makes them feel that they matter. In one of our programs, one of my guests (a prisoner) talked about his wife and how they used to do drugs together and he kept going back to listeners saying that if you are listening and if you really do want to do drugs, although of course we say you should not, do not use on your own – make sure that you have someone with you. He wanted to save lives and knew he could reach people in prison because he is one of them and these things do make a difference” (Interviewee 2, 2022).

All three interviewees engaged in prisoners' radio also highlighted how radio can help deliver quite often sensitive and hard to listen to information because it is delivered to them by prisoners (Interviewee 1, 2022; Interviewee 2, 2022; Interviewee 3, 2022). “There is a sense of a communal shared experience about prisoners' radio. It is one of the most powerful ways to humanize prisons and recognize them. Living their day to day is not always going to be about the issues and that is very important for everyone to realize. Our listeners come for the music and stay for the features, conversations, and the dialogue. Music has an important role to play, and I think that we strike a balance between programming about issues and programming about life and what it means to be a human being living behind bars. This means that our content is made by prisoners and for prisoners. They are our main target audience” (Interviewee 1, 2022).

Additionally, the three interviewees highlighted the power of prisoners' radio in reaching a larger audience in prisons which is a huge benefit in the absence of enough rehabilitation programs (Interviewee 1, 2022; Interviewee 2, 2022; Interviewee 3, 2022).

Prisoners' radio can make a real difference. It helps disseminate information, promote education, and help with all the positive interventions that are happening in the prison by giving the people running these interventions a voice on the station. And instead of reaching 20 people at a time, we can reach 80,000 people at a time. We also have clear editorial guidelines and regulations that govern what we can and cannot do – the includes the use of language. For example, we do not play gangster rap that glamourizes violence and is misogynistic; it is not appropriate to do it. All our programs are aimed at supporting people get through their sentence so our focus is on prison advice, support, comfort, and information that will help them navigate the prison system (Interviewee 3, 2022).

5.2.5 Format of Prisoners' Radio to be Introduced in Lebanese Prisons

Six out of 10 interviewees recommended starting with a pilot program, broadcasting only on the inside. Among the reasons cited were gaining prison authorities trust, less security requirements, budget, and staff. Additionally, the four remaining interviewees stated that while the aspiration should be to broadcast from inside to outside, it is better to settle for broadcasting on the inside if it risks pulling off the project. When asked about current communication tools prisoners have access to in Lebanese prisons, all seven Lebanese interviewees concluded that prisoners have TV sets which could be used to broadcast prisoners' radio programs in prison cells.

It does not matter what format you use; inside to outside or just on the inside. What matters is to focus on prisoners need and more importantly, to develop a reputation of not being political. It is important that you make it clear that your job is not to make the corrective services look bad. We rely on them to get us inside and you need their trust and approval to run your programs. Controversial content needs to be well researched and presented. Ultimately, we are not a regular radio provider, and we work with a vulnerable group, so it is always better to leave the sensational stories for the likes of *BBC* and other TV and radio stations (Interviewee 2, 2022).

Lebanese interviewees also stated that prisoners' radio programs can be broadcasted through the TV sets available in cells across Lebanese prisons. "In Roumieh, the broadcast mic, which is currently used for internal memos and messages, can also be utilized" (Interviewee, 8, 2022). That said, all seven Lebanese interviewees highlighted the resistance a prisoners' radio project could potentially face from various bodies in Lebanon.

It will be very difficult to get the Lebanese authorities to accept this project, especially if you start by pitching inside to outside. They are not specialized and will get paranoid. You need to develop strong editorial guidelines aligned with their security guidelines, but this might only be possible if you start on the inside. It will also help if you collaborate with an NGO with existing access to prisons. The aim should be to help people learn about the different services, how to improve their lives, how to access information, how to survive and how to thrive in prisons - you can help in creating real opportunities to make a positive difference (Interviewee 7, 2022).

To that end, the majority of the Lebanese interviewees concluded that prisoners' radio should probably broadcast on the inside, at least during the first six months, and focus on educating prisoners on how to survive in prison. "The radio could be used to remind us of our court hearings, what to expect, how to dress and how to talk at hearings. We also need more information on how to seek medical help and what services are available to us in prison and outside prison if any. It should also be used for music dedications, family messages, and rehabilitation programs. Also, maybe to create a bond with prison wardens because they have the most power over our day-to-day life so maybe, we can have group discussions" (Interviewee 10, 2022).

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

This study examined how Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media covering the MENA region and international prisoners' radio framed prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the study explored the current communication and media restrictions in Lebanese prisons and examined how prisoners' radio could potentially be introduced to Lebanon's prisons. Specifically, RQ 1 – 4 and RQ 9 addressed the coverage and representation of prisoners using MFA while RQ 5 – 8 and RQ 10 addressed the production and facilitation of prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons utilizing in-depth interviews. This chapter analyzes and places the results under two sections starting with the results of the MFA method followed by the results of the in-depth interviews.

6.1 MFA

The results offer clear evidence of the lack of representation of prisoners struggles in Lebanese mainstream media and a dominant narrative that praised the efforts of the government for the healthcare measures rolled out in prisons during Covid-19. While prisoners were framed as victims across all 10 Lebanese outlets, the majority of the articles framed them as victims of the Covid-19 pandemic only without any mention of the strict lockdown measures and increased isolation prisoners suffered from. For example, both *Addiyar* and *Al Manar* quoted official government statements reinforcing prisoners' ability to communicate with family members through phones and the government's Facebook page without questioning whether these measures were being implemented.

Further, with the exception of Lebanon 24 who quoted prisoners cry for help over poor living conditions during Covid-19, none of the remaining Lebanese outlets included quotes from prisoners, ex-prisoners, activists, family members, or legal representatives of prisoners. These results demonstrate that coverage of Lebanese mainstream media still does not present challenging views to the Lebanese government officials, which is also highlighted in the literature section that presents a common trajectory of the framing of prisoners and their struggles. Studies often show that media rely heavily on government sources and thus, refrain from questioning government policies (Mason, 2007). This type of hegemonic media coverage means that even when media frame events outside the status quo, in most cases, these frames document how elites go about restoring order (Gans, 1979).

Similar results were also evident in the in-depth interviews when interviewees were asked about mainstream media coverage. Results indicated that mainstream media are more interested in covering scoops and sensational stories. This reinforces previous findings stating that correction issues and criminal-justice policy reforms rarely ever make a lead story unless the story is framed around prison scandals or riots (Gest, 2010). Additionally, in-depth interview results revealed that mainstream coverage of prisons often demonstrates a lack of understanding of the prison system. It is not often that media institutions focus on hiring criminal justice journalists or have a dedicated beat for prison news and as a result, prison issues get covered on specific occasions like passing correctional bills or prison riots (Gest, 2010). On the other hand, Lebanese government officials interviewed confirmed that statements issued during Covid-19 were often published by media, which if compared to the results of the 10 Lebanese outlets examined

above, reinforce that even when media are granted relative power, they ultimately project the ideology of the dominant power (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016). The results presented in both, the in-depth interviews and the 10 Lebanese media outlets examined, support the need to address the quality of coverage related to prisoners and prison conditions (O'Sullivan, 2001).

Framing of prisoners struggles over healthcare and lockdown measures in alternative media covering the MENA region provide different results. The data offer a dominant narrative that highlights the incompetence of governments in fighting Covid-19 in prisons, which saw increased isolation that affected the physical and mental healthcare of prisoners. Further, except for Jordan's *Al Ghad*, none of the alternative media outlets quoted government officials. In addition to being victims of Covid-19, prisoners were also framed as victims of poor living conditions, strict lockdown measures and increased isolation measures. For example, Jordan's *Ziber* directed readers attention to the "autocratic leadership that disregards prisoners' lives, which translated to ill-treatment even during Covid-19 when the only precaution measure taken was the spraying of common areas." Additionally, the majority of the articles covered the efforts of political and social activists who were applying pressure on governments to release a larger number of prisoners. These results demonstrate that coverage of alternative media outlets present challenging views to those in power, which was also evident in the literature section that highlighted the growing number of alternative media in the MENA region. The growing number of alternative media platforms that emerged following the Arab Spring has helped in constructing a new mode of media practices that challenge hegemonic media coverage (Douai & Moussa, 2016). Media outlets, not funded by those in power, play a crucial role

in covering sensitive and controversial issues in the absence of adequate mainstream media coverage (Downing, 2001). This in turn provides a different narrative to a misguided public by giving a voice to minorities and marginalized groups (Rodriguez, 2001).

As for international prisoners' radio, the data show that the focus was on highlighting prisoners struggles during Covid-19. The dominant narrative was one that empathized with prisoners who were subjected to 23 hours of lockdown while governments and prison services were held accountable for an overall system that requires much needed reforms to "humanize prisons." Further, all programs hosted guests that talked about prisoners increased isolation amid strict lockdown measures. This included activists, ex-prisoners, prisoners, academics, family members and legal representatives. For example, Australia's *3CR* drew attention to prisoners' experience with prolonged quarantine measures that lasted for fourteen days sometimes, limited communication with family and suspended activities. Further, US's *With(in)* focused on giving people behind bars "hope, reminding them that they mattered." The program also highlighted the need to change the current system of prisons to be "a place for restoration and not a place for punishment and loss of dignity." As such, prisoners were not only framed as victims of Covid-19 but also, victims of poor living conditions, strict lockdown measures and increased isolation measures. Additionally, the majority of the programs talked about the need to shift the narrative and stereotyping of prisoners as "murderers, outcasts and 2nd class citizens" to "individuals with prison experience" in an effort to make a real difference. These results demonstrate that coverage of international prisoners' radio presents a different perspective that focuses on prisoners' wellbeing, which is also

highlighted in the literature section that defines and details the benefits of prisoners' radio. The goal of prisoners' radio is to empower prisoners to practice some of their lost rights (Meadows et al., 2007). It is important to remember that there is a lack of awareness about prisoners' struggles which leads to misguided images and stereotypes of prisoners. Prisoners' radio gives prisoners a platform to engage in a public forum with a larger audience. This engagement benefits the prisoners, but more importantly facilitates an open dialogue about prison systems and laws to push for change (Anderson, 2012).

As for Covid-19, it was framed as a global pandemic that required strict protection measures in all articles and programs. The narrative deployed across Lebanese media outlets focused on issuing press releases and statements by the government mainly focused on reporting numbers of positive and negative cases in prisons. On the other hand, alternative media in the MENA region used the pandemic to highlight discrimination against prisoners because of corrupt systems that disregard the lives of prisoners. For example, Morocco's *Lakome* highlighted the increase in health issues and suicide rates during Covid-19, reinforcing the need to introduce new reforms to the current penal system. As for international prisoners' radio, while the language deployed held the authorities responsible for prison reforms, the focus was on an open dialogue to better understand how Covid-19 affected prisoners and why it is important for them to stay in touch with family and friends. More importantly, the programs highlighted tangible measures that could be adopted in prisons during Covid-19 to improve prisoners living conditions. This narrative reinforces the goal of prisoners' radio to address the isolation prisoners suffer from by allowing them to engage in conversations and content of relevance to them (Rodriguez, 2001; Anderson, 2013). As an example, UK's *The Secret*

Life of Prison focused on questioning whether people's experience with Covid-19 lockdown could be compared to the prison experience which allowed guests (ex-prisoners) to explain that nothing could be compared to being confined to a prison cell for 23 hours a day. Additionally, this type of coverage transcends emotional solidarity with prisoners from different corners of the world (Hearman, 2016) and strengthens transnational solidarity which provides a global dimension to fight oppression (Collins, 2002).

6.2 In-depth Interviews

Looking beyond Covid-19, in-depth interview results show evidence of how alternative media production could empower prisoners in the MENA region through future crisis. All interviewees agreed that for people in prison to exercise some of their rights, they need access to information, which is already difficult in normal circumstances and becomes more difficult in a crisis. Thus, when prisoners' isolation is heightened as a result, alternative media has the power to engage prisoners as citizens in a wide range of information that is of relevance to them. For example, one of the interviewees described alternative media production during Covid-19 to be "the most important job of a lifetime because they had to get information to people in prison and were the only platform capable of doing so" (Interviewee 3, 2022). Additionally, prisons were described as one of the most private institutions in the world and "security" is often used as an excuse to prevent access to information, activities, and projects. These imposed measures which make reintegrating back in society even more challenging, make it vital for prisoners to enact part of their suspended citizenship. As such, access to information and media production were reinforced amongst the few ways to facilitate that. The same was evident in the literature review section that addressed the considerable damage the denial of rights

creates on prisoners' ability to connect with their families and fit in society post-release (Baker, 1994). Thus, alternative media becomes an alternative public sphere activity that provides prisoners with visibility and a space to voice their struggles (Jacob, 1999).

Additionally, and in the context of Lebanon, results revealed various constraints and opportunities for prisoners' media in Lebanese prisons. The biggest constraint revolved around Lebanon's prison conditions that do not meet the international standards of how prisoners should be treated. Additionally, the economic crisis the country is facing, overcrowding and the outdated laws governing the criminal justice system makes the introduction of any project extremely challenging. It was also established that prisoners' needs are not a priority in Lebanon and in general across the world. The same was evident in previous research highlighting prisoners struggles in prisons across the world suffering from overcrowding, lack of trained staff, and limited access to health services (Benyounes, 2021). Additionally, and as part of their punishment, prisoners have limited access to communication (Bedford, 2016). Similarly, results from this study revealed that prisoners in Lebanon only have access to TV sets in cells with limited number of local TV and radio channels. The poor living conditions prisoners suffer from amplify their sense of isolation and disconnection to the outer world (Bedford, 2016). On the other hand, results also revealed that amid deteriorating prison conditions and increased rates of recidivism, the introduction of prisoners' media could be seen as a real opportunity. Interviewees stated that almost 90% of prisoners in Lebanon end up being released and officials do realize that more efforts are required to address recidivism. Thus, if pitched as a rehabilitation project that aims to educate prisoners and broadcast on the inside, at least during the first stage, facilitating a prisoners' media project and more specifically prisoners' radio could be possible.

To that end, results also offer clear evidence of how prisoners' radio can empower prisoners voice their struggles and enact their suspended citizenship in Lebanese prisons. Interviewees concluded that while prisoners' radio cannot change the poor living conditions, it can significantly reduce prisoners' isolation by offering them a chance to produce and engage in content of relevance to them. Additionally, prisoners' media executives reinforced the importance of the type of content prisoners' radio offer. Ultimately it is content produced by, and for prisoners ensuring that they can participate in an alternative public sphere through meaningful citizens' media. For example, interviewees reinforced the importance of ensuring programs strike a balance between information-based, educational, and entertainment-based programs, all of which help prisoners enact their citizenship. In Lebanon specifically, results show that prisoners' radio can help promote education by giving people running positive interventions a voice on the station. So, "rather than reaching a small group of prisoners due to lack of space, trained staff, and budget, you can reach a much larger database" (Interviewee 3, 2022). Additionally, prisoners' radio can help prisoners maintain a connection with family especially with the sharp increase in fuel prices that force unprivileged families to cut down on visits. This in turn, reduces the isolation prisoners suffer from. On the other hand, results also show that prisoners' radio can offer a counternarrative to address the dominant media narrative which dehumanizes or neutralizes prisoners' struggles. These results were also evident in the international prisoners' radio programs examined under MFA assessing coverage during Covid-19 (four out of nine prisoners radio programs highlighted the importance of addressing the negative framing of prisoners). The same was also evident in the literature review section that addressed the power of prisoners' radio in facilitating the

engagement of everyday people in the production of media content that challenges dominant narratives, thus, allowing prisoners to have a voice (Anderson, 2012).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Prisoners' radio contributes to a discourse that advocates for the rights of prisoners who are stripped of their rights while serving their sentences and have limited communication to the outside world. The trajectory of the argument offered in this study documents a gap in the prison coverage and representation of prisoners in Lebanon and the MENA region despite clear resolutions that stipulate prisoners' communication rights to access information in addition to being listened to by those in power (WACC, 2016). It also builds on a theoretical framework that demonstrates the importance of giving prisoners a voice by allowing them to engage in media production, demonstrating how prisoners' media contribute to their wellbeing. This study also contributes to social justice advocating for the need to act against oppression through a new lens that centers praxis as a mean to facilitate a plan of action to introduce prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons. The results demonstrated that coverage of mainstream media in Lebanon frame prisoners negatively by marginalizing their struggles. Lebanon's media outlets are often associated or controlled by major political parties or sectarian coalitions. This approach translates to framing in mainstream media that reinforces the government's narrative (Dajani, 2013). Indeed, these results demonstrate how the relationship between media and power impact prisoners' representation in Lebanon offering new findings that future research can build on. These results also reinforce the latest World Press Freedom Index report, indicating that Lebanon's ranking has fallen considerably in 2022 in light of political pressure and media's affiliation to political parties (Keuchkerian, 2022). Additionally, these findings

and results are consistent with previous research on prisoners' representation, confirming that mainstream media often neutralize or marginalize prisoners struggles (Hog & Brown, 1998; Gest, 2010; Cheliotis, 2010). The silencing of prisoners' voices was evident in the language and narrative used in the articles examined, all of which amplified the Lebanese government's efforts during Covid-19. *Anbaa*, *Bint Jbeil* and *Al Manar* directed reader's attention towards the "endless efforts" of the committee to provide prisons with all the required tools in the fight against Covid-19. On the other hand, *Addiyar*'s choice of supporting material covered the decision of various public institutions across Lebanon to shut their doors during the pandemic instead of highlighting prisoners struggles and increased isolation. More importantly, while prisoners were framed as victims, they were framed as victims of Covid-19 only. The majority of the articles also quoted prison authorities, government officials, and medical experts assigned by the government and refrained from quoting prisoners' family members, social or political activists. This type of coverage which represents prisoners inhumanly is intended to steer the public away from penal policy debates that could push for much needed reforms (Cheliotis, 2010).

On the other hand, the results of alternative media outlets and international prisoners radio demonstrated that the status quo preserved in mainstream media was challenged through a narrative that highlighted prisoners struggles and reinforced the need to reassess the entire prison system. This is in line with research that explored the growing need of a public sphere activity that exists outside mainstream and hegemonic media to offer an alternative public sphere under which alternative media operates (Habermas, 1989; Downey & Fenton, 2003; Fraser, 2021). As a result, the language and narrative deployed supported prisoners needs beyond basic healthcare measures during Covid-19. Algeria's *Nawaat* framed prisons in the region as "repressive and lacking in reforms," and

highlighted tangible solutions that could be adopted by authorities. On the other hand, prisoners were framed as victims of Covid-19 in addition to poor living conditions and increased isolation measures. The majority of the articles also quoted prisons, ex-prisoners and activists who advocated for prisoners' rights and release during Covid-19. However, the main difference between the coverage of alternative media in the MENA region and international prisoners' radio is that the latter was more focused on humanizing the prisoners experience while the former was more focused on linking the struggles of prisoners to the incompetence of the authorities. These results offer new findings on the difference of frames deployed by two alternative media formats covering prisoners' struggles which future research can further investigate.

The introduction of prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisoners was framed as a challenge. This is due to a system that has historically presented and labeled prisoners' needs as less important in society (Gest, 2010; Nashabe, 2003; Davis, 2011; Anderson, 2012). While interviewees recognized the benefits of such a project, the stigma associated with giving prisoners an alternative channel to enact their citizenship was seen as something that requires a change in knowledge and mindset. These findings offer new insight on life behind bars in Lebanese prisons and demonstrate the need for a media project that contributes to better living conditions. Additionally, the results are consistent with previous research included in this study showing that despite evidence showing the need for prison reforms, prisoners are forgotten members behind bars (Gest, 2010; Anderson, 2012). That said, interviewees highlighted that the opportunity lies in the need to address the treatment of prisoners in a way that recognizes their worth. This presents an opportunity to pitch prisoners' radio as a project that offers a meaningful community

engagement that is beneficial for prisoners and the wider audience. As such, an action plan is included with this study that offers best practice guidelines and mechanics to the introduction of prisoners' radio in Lebanese prisons (see appendix E). Providing a plan of action is in line with Freire's educational theories and major writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that includes praxis, which is putting theory and research into action to empower change in the name of social justice (Freire, 2001).

Overall, the results presented in this study reveal the difference in the frames, narrative, and language used in Lebanese mainstream media, alternative media covering the MENA region and international prisoners' radio. However, the data covering prisoners' radio may have been different if South-to-South countries that could provide a much similar experience of what could be achieved in Lebanese prisons were included. This, however, was not possible due to the lack of information and the language barrier; thus this is an area for future research. In addition, the establishment of two prisoners' radio in the MENA region (Morocco's *Idmaj* and UAE's *Studio Al Amal*) both of which broadcast on the inside indicate another area for further study, investigating how these stations operate, their limitations and benefits in comparison to the framework of prisoners' radio presented in this study. Future research should also examine current efforts to strengthen transnational solidarity aimed at improving prisoners' living conditions. This was evident in this year's International Criminology Conference that included a session on prisoners' radio, exploring global approaches and practices (International Criminology Conference, 2022).

Indeed, this study reinforced the benefits of alternative media in promoting an alternative dialogue around law and policy and demonstrated the empowering nature of prisoners' radio as an alternative platform that gives prisoners a voice. It also provided

tangible insight on the different prisoners' radio genres, programs and the type of content that works best. Additionally, it introduced valuable insight to the constraints and opportunities for prisoners' media in Lebanon and is probably the first study to tackle the importance of introducing a media project targeting the prison population in Lebanon, which future research can build on. This adds to the body of knowledge on the role of prisoners' radio in aiding prisoners, which is an underdeveloped research area with limited resources.

Additionally, this research is the first (to the best of the author's knowledge) to document and analyze prisoners' struggles during Covid-19 utilizing the MFA technique. Another contribution of this research is adopting the MFA method, commonly used to analyze news reports and feature articles, to radio programming. This study also provides an initial catalogue of alternative media in the MENA region. Future research should examine coverage of these platforms on prison reforms and prisoners' struggles beyond Covid-19. Additionally, the action plan included in this study builds on prisoners' radio best practice, with tested guidelines and processes, currently deployed by leaders in the field. In terms of limitations, this study only examined mainstream media outlets in Lebanon without including prominent local TV stations which could have yielded different results. On the other hand, in-depth interview should have been extended to cover activists and prisoners' radio producers in the MENA region, which could not be secured at the time the study was conducted, thus an area for future research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: EMAIL TEMPLATE

Email template to proposed radio stations requesting access to prisoners' radio programs outlined in Table 3 of this study.

Dear [insert name of station] team,

Allow me to start with a quick introduction. My name is Dalia Attar, and I am currently completing my thesis proposal for the degree of Master's in Arts and Multimedia Journalism.

My thesis tackles prisoners' radio. Through this study, my goal is to demonstrate the importance of prisoners' radio and its ability, as an alternative media platform, to enhance the lives of prisoners behind bars. This study will reinforce the power of prisoners' radio in providing an alternative platform that allows prisoners to connect with the outer world to enact their suspended citizenship and sustain relationships with family and friends. It is worth mentioning that Dr. Heather Anderson, author of *Raising the Civil Dead* is on my committee while Dr. Gretchen King, an advocate of prisoners' radio is my advisor.

I am touching base because I am hoping to get access to your renowned [insert name of program] which specifically sheds light on prisoners' struggles [add more information about the show – see table 2 for details on each show]. By granting me access to the program's archives, you will allow me to examine the content of the program to reinforce how your prisoners' radio program helps improve the lives of prisoners behind bars by allowing them to engage with information of relevance to them. I am specifically looking for episodes that addressed prisoners struggles and increased isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are no known risks involved in this research and a copy of the analysis can be shared with you if required.

I am happy to provide any further information you need. To continue this conversation, you may contact me via email, or we can schedule a zoom call depending on your availability.

I look forward to your feedback.

Regards,

Dalia

APPENDIX B: INVITING PARTICIPANTS TEMPLATE

Hi [insert name],

Allow me to start with a quick introduction. My name is Dalia Attar, and I am currently completing my thesis proposal for the degree of Master's in Arts and Multimedia Journalism.

I would like to invite you to participate in my thesis study which tackles prisoners' radio. My goal is to demonstrate the importance of prisoners' radio and its ability, as an alternative media platform, to enhance the lives of prisoners behind bars. This study will reinforce the power of prisoners' radio in providing an alternative platform that allows prisoners to connect with the outer world to enact their suspended citizenship and sustain relationships with family and friends.

Participating in this study will take approximately an hour of your time with a possible follow-up interview, if required. The collection of data will take place in September 2022, and you will be given the choice to review the data transcribed, if required.

There are no known risks involved in this research. Kindly confirm your interest so we can book an appointment with you to discuss your consent and participation. I am available to communicate with you in English or Arabic. Thank you.

I look forward to your feedback.

Dalia Attar

APPENDIX C: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS

The below open-ended questions will be asked to participants. This list is subject to additional questions if a follow-up interview is required depending on the answers and expertise of the person being interviewed.

Proposed questions for in-depth interviews:

- 1) Can you tell me more about yourself, your role at [name of institution], how long have you worked there and why?
- 2) Do you think media institutions are doing enough to support prisoners shed light on their struggles behind bars?
- 3) What else can journalists do to support prisoners?
- 4) What are the main barriers journalists face when covering prisoners and prison conditions?
- 5) What is the role of alternative media and how can it be utilized to support prisoners?
- 6) Do we have enough alternative platforms in Lebanon and the MENA region supporting prisoners voice their concerns?
- 7) As journalists working in alternative media outlets, how will you support prisoners deal with future crisis?
- 8) What are the main laws governing prison communication in Lebanon and what are the types of communication prisoners have access to in Lebanese prisons?
- 9) What are the current restrictions and opportunities to introducing prisoners' media in Lebanese prisons?

- 10) What is the role of prisoners' radio and how can it support prisoners in Lebanon enact their citizenship?
- 11) How was production of prisoners' radio effected during the Covid-19 pandemic? What are the key learnings and how are you preparing to face future crisis and respond fast?
- 12) What format of prisoners' radio and type of content can be introduced in light of the restrictions and which prisons could be a good start?

APPENDIX D: MFA DETAILED ANALYSIS

This section provides a detailed analysis of the MFA technique applied to all the 20 outlets and nine programs examined. Step 1 of the process (the placement of a story) is not included below given that it was included in the paper above as is.

Step 2: Identifying Character

Study #1. Anbaa. Three people were quoted. These are the Roumieh prison correctional officer; a doctor from the Lebanese Order of Physicians and another Doctor representing the ministry of health. The other characters included were those that attended the Committee's meeting to discuss ways to fight Covid-19 in prisons. This included lawyers, physicians, government representatives and corporate companies. Prisoners, social and political activists were not quoted in the story. No details were provided in any of the quotes as to how the measures will support prisoners and dates of implementation were not revealed.

Study #2. Bint Jbeil. The article was mainly a response statement from the General the Internal Security Forces (ISF) defending the work being done to protect prisoners. Three main characters were highlighted. These were: the Security Forces team, Roumieh prisoners and medical staff taking care of prisoners testing positive.

Study #3. Addiyar. One person was quoted. This was the Head of National Committee on Covid-19 vaccines. Additionally, 11 statements were included from different parties talking about their efforts or needs to fight Covid-19. This included the General Directorate of the ISF, Ogero Telcom, seven municipalities, Director General of Political Affairs and Refugees at the Ministry of Interior, seven Municipalities across Lebanon and

the Ministry of Health. Particularly, the statement from the ISF covered number of positive cases in prisons and number of recovered cases while the rest of the statements covered cases across Lebanon and measures taken to limit the spread of the virus.

Study #4. Al Manar. The article was mainly a statement update from the General Directorate of the ISF on prison cases. The two main characters were the Security Forces team giving an update on prisoners Covid-19 cases.

Study #5. Tayyar. The article was mainly a statement update from the General Directorate of the ISF on prison Covid-19 cases. The two main characters were the Security Forces team giving a positive update about Roumieh prisoners' being healed from Covid-19.

Study #6. Al Joumhouria. The article was mainly a statement update from the General Directorate of the ISF on prison Covid-19 cases. The two main characters were the Security Forces team providing an update on Roumieh prisoners' Covid-19 cases.

Study #7. Annahar. The article was mainly a response statement from the General Directorate of the ISF on Delta cases within Roumieh prison. Three main characters were highlighted. These were the Security Forces team, Roumieh prisoners and those spreading fake and negative news about prisoners' conditions in Ruomieh prison.

Study #8. Le'Orient Today. One quote was included. This was from the head of the physicians' syndicate. The article provided an update on the Covid-19 cases in the Roumieh prison. It also covered the poor living conditions prisoners suffer from. The other characters covered were the prisoners, additional doctors assigned to the prison and the International Red Cross role.

Study #9. National News Agency. One quote was included. This was the head of the physicians' syndicate. The article provided an update on the Covid-19 cases in the Roumieh prison. The article called upon social activists and non-profit organizations to support prison needs. The other characters were the prisoners, additional doctors assigned to the prison, and the International Red Cross.

Study #10. Lebanon 24. Two people were quoted in the story, and these were prisoners crying for help considering poor living conditions. No other characters were included. The focus was on the prisoner's testimony.

Alternative Regional Media

Study #11. Al Ghad_Jordan. Five people were quoted. These were the Minister of interior who covered the prisoners release plan as part of the government's strategy to deal with Covid-19. Additionally, four social and political activists were also quoted talking about the need to keep updating laws and regulations to support prisoners. The other characters included were the prisoners and other political detainees.

Study #12. 7iber_Jordan. A number of Egyptian prisoners were quoted yet an exact number was not provided. The two characters dominant in this story were the government/system and the prisoners. The testimonies all spoke to the suffering and inhumane living conditions behind bars.

Study #13. Mada Masr_Egypt. Two people were quoted. These were a prisoner's mother and the Prosecutor General defending a prisoner spending a five-year probationary sentence. The other characters included were two other prisoners on hunger strike because of the poor living conditions and the extreme isolation as part of the pandemic measures.

Additional characters were the government, public prosecution, the Supreme Judicial Council and the autocratic Egyptian system.

Study #14. The Electronic Intifada_Occupied Palestine. Three activists/organizations were quoted. These were the Palestinian legal Advocacy Group, Addameer and Defense for Children International Palestine representatives all of whom reinforced the struggles of Palestinian prisoners amid Covid-19. The other characters included the Israeli state judiciary system and rules discriminating against Palestinian adults and children alike even during a global pandemic.

Study #15. Daraj_Lebanon. Two people were quoted in the article. These were a family member of a prisoner and a critic of the Saudi regime and government. The other characters included in the story were the ruling family pre and during the ruling of prince Mohammad bin Salman, Saudi activists, international human rights groups, and prisoners.

Study #16. Nawaat_Algeria. The only person quoted in the article was a representative of a non-governmental organization. The other characters included were the prisoners, the government, fourteen non-governmental organization petitioning for more to be done in prisons in the fight against Covid-19, and the judicial system and its representatives.

Study #17. Lakome_Morocco. Representatives of the National Human Rights Council were quoted without revealing their names. The article provided a summary of the 2020 report by the National Human Rights Council. The characters included in the story were the prisoners, the government, judicial and penal system representatives, prison staff and management, Ministry of Health, and law officers.

Study #18. Middle East Monitor_Regional. This article included quotes from two prisoners, various family members in addition to 11 lawyers of prisoners. It also included a summary of a statement by the Egyptian Front for Human Rights, a quote from the Director of the Legislative and Judicial Reform Project at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) and the Executive Director of Committee for Justice. The other characters included in the story were the prisoners, the government, judicial and penal system representatives, prison staff and administration, The Egyptian Coordination Committee for Rights and Freedoms, Human Rights Watch, the Public Prosecutor, and the Ministry of the Interior.

Study #19. Raseef22_Regional. This article quoted one prisoner and covered prisoners suffering and poor living conditions that were only heightened during Covid-19. The other characters included were the prisoners, prison staff and administration and security forces.

Study #20. Al Masdar_Yemen. This article quoted an activist taking part in a campaign to release prisoners during Covid-19. The other characters included in the story were the prisoners, activists, media institutions, authorities, local and international humanitarian organizations.

International Prisoners Radio

Study #21. 3CR Australia_Beyond the Bars 2021. The two podcasts analyzed were segment 2: “Covid & Zoom visits” and segment 4: “Covid & prison life”. The podcast quoted the men and women inside prisons talking about prison precautions and alternative measures taken across Victorian jails to allow communication with family and friends.

The other characters included in the podcast were the family members of incarcerated people and prison management.

Study #22. CKUT_Canada_Prison Radio Show. Abby Stadnyk, a journalist working in an alternative outlet, Perilous Chronicle was hosted on the show to talk about the resistance in Saskatchewan jails considering mounting cases of Covid-19 in the prisons. The other characters included in the story were the incarcerated people, prison authorities, correctional services, governments, families of incarcerated people, wider community, indigenous people and women, activists, journalists, media outlets, and nongovernmental organizations.

Study #23. La Clé des Ondes _Through the Walls_France. The open letter quoted detainees suffering from increased Covid-19 risks. The other characters included in the story were the prison administration and officers, ministry of justice, government, and the regional intervention and security team.

Study #24. KBOO _Prison Pipeline_US. Juan Chavez of the Civil Rights Project of the OJRC was hosted on the show to provide an update on Covid-19 vaccinations, provide a lawsuit update and cover how people were keeping up one year into the pandemic at Oregon state prisons. The other characters were the governor, scientists and health experts, the Oregon Justice Resource Center that provided legal services to prisoners, correctional officers, and the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC).

Study #25. KALW Public Media_Uncuffed_US. This podcast recorded during the pandemic focused on bringing the voices of loved ones to those behind bars. 12 people (ex- incarcerated people, family members, and friends) shared their letters. The other

characters were people behind bars describing what it feels like to receive letters and hear the voices of their loved one during isolation, especially with the Covid-19 restrictions.

Study #26. Prison Radio_Dispatches_US. This podcast recorded during the pandemic focused on exposing the lack of adequate healthcare and struggles of incarcerated people during Covid-19. Incarcerated correspondents shared their testimonials from within prisons and described the “oppressive structure” of prisons. The other characters were the correctional authorities, prison guards and staff, and family members.

Study #27. Inside Wire Prison Colorado Radio _With(in)_US. The podcast, recorded during the pandemic focused on sharing the experiences of incarcerated co-hosts Denise Presson and Andrew Draper and how Covid-19 affected them. Additionally, an interview between Producer Terry W. Mosley Jr. and Colorado Department of Corrections’ Executive Director Dean Williams was included covering the work done to produce Season 2 of With(in) with a focus on “humanizing prison”. The other characters were soundbites from a lineup of interviews to come. This included 21 people ranging from the With(in) executive producer, shoutouts from different members of the show excited about the reveal of season two of the show, members of correctional authorities, prison guards and staff, incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals, survivors, academics, nurses and doctors.

Study #28. National Prison Radio _The Secret Life of Prisons_UK. Presenters Phil Maguire and Paula Harriott discussed how the lockdown impacted people in prison, and what people on the outside could learn about prison having experienced the Covid-19 lockdown. They also hosted journalist Raphael Rowe, who served more than a decade in

prison before his conviction was overturned, and Michaela Booth who received a four-year sentence in 2011. Also poet Mr. Gee, who conducted regular workshops at prisons joined the show's discussion. The other characters were those in power, correctional authorities, incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals, community, and vulnerable people.

Study #29_ Making Contact Radio _Police Prisons_US. Host Salima Hamirani invited seven guests (Public Health Practitioner of Alliance of South Asians Taking Action; formerly incarcerated people; Deputy director of UCLA Law COVID-19 Behind Bars Data Project; State Campaigner at Ella Baker Center for Human Rights; Field Director at Ella Baker Center for Human Rights; Thomas Miller Professor of Law at the University of California Hastings College of the Law; and Professor of Sociology, McMaster University) to discuss how COVID-19 has torn through prisons and how organizers were trying to push state and local governments to release incarcerated people in order to contain the spread of the pandemic. The other characters were those in power, correctional authorities, incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals, community.

Step 3: Narrative Form and Reader Identification

Study #1. Anbaa. To analyze the narrative and the main characters that the readers are meant to identify with, includes examining the headline. The headline was intended to highlight the efforts of the designated committee to protect prisoners from Covid-19. No subheading was included. The reader's attention was directed towards the "endless efforts" of the committee to provide prisons with all the required tools in the fight against Covid-19. One image accompanied the article of the committee members in attendance of the meeting. The choice of supporting material at the end of the article included

information not related to prisons or prisoners struggles. The information reinforced the efforts of the committee and its members in its support of the Lebanese hospitals and community, which meant to distract the readers from the main issue being tackled. In conclusion, the narrative framed the committee members as heroes working tirelessly without any mention of the prisoners suffering. Thus, prisoners suffering was neutralized.

Study #2. Bint Jbeil. The headline highlighted a case of a minor inmate who tested positive. No subheading was included. An image of what seemed to be a prisoner inside Roumieh prison was included with no caption. The reader's attention was directed towards the statement from the ISF which was summarized. The narrative and framing focused on the efforts of the ISF to ensure all prisoners received PCR tests and that negative cases were isolated and treated. The article ended by reinforcing that all prisoners with Covid-19 were receiving the medical care required under the supervision of the World Health organization. In conclusion, the narrative was one-sided focusing on the achievements of the ISF who were framed as heroes. Such framing reinforced the government's narrative that prison conditions were under control during Covid-19 and that prisoners received the medical attention they required. Prisoners suffering was neutralized.

Study #3. Addiyar. The headline directed attention to the dangerous situation in Lebanon and Lebanese prisons with increased numbers of positive Covid-19 cases. The reader's attention was first pointed towards prisons but that changed as the story unfolded. No subheading was included while one image of a sign at a hospital entrance stating the way to PCR tests was included. The introduction started with an update on Covid-19 cases which was followed by an update on prisoners' health. The focus was on the number of recovered cases and highlighted prisoners' ability to communicate with family members

through phones and the Facebook page of the ISF. Nothing about communication restrictions and lockdown measures was included. The remainder of the article covered Covid-19 updates from different municipalities, with a special focus on Saida that suffered from an increased number of positive cases. The choice of supporting material covered the decision of various public institutions across Lebanon to shut their doors during the pandemic. In conclusion, the framing started with a focus on prisoners which quickly changed to an update on Covid-19 cases and measures from various institutions which does not serve the dire situation of prisons as highlighted in the headline of the article. The ISF were framed as the heroes doing their job. Prisoners suffering was neutralized.

Study #4. Al Manar. The headline highlighted the ISF efforts to combat Covid-19 inside prisons. No subheading was included. The reader's attention was directed towards the efforts of the ISF. No images were included. The information reinforced the number of recovered cases across seven different prisons in Lebanon and highlighted prisoners' ability to communicate with family members through phones and the Facebook page of the ISF. In conclusion, the narrative was one-sided, focusing on the achievements of the ISF who were framed as heroes. Such framing reinforced that prison conditions were under control and that prisoners were receiving the medical attention they require. Framing of prisoners was neutralized so they were not victims nor villains.

Study #5. Al Tayyar. The headline directed the reader's attention towards Roumieh prisoners who were Covid-19 free. One image was included of the Roumieh prison exterior facet. The information reinforced that the ISF ran over 4,000 PCR tests and confirmed that all 1,088 positive cases across four prisons tested negative post treatment. The statement from the ISF also mentioned that 10 new cases irrupted in another prison

with no further details regarding the health conditions of these prisoners. In conclusion, the narrative was one-sided focusing only on recovery of prisoners. The framing represented the ISF as heroes. Prisoners suffering was neutralized.

Study #6. Al Joumhouria. The headline was framed as a question asking about the situation in Lebanese prisons amid Covid-19. An image of prisoners inside Roumieh prison accompanied the article. The information reinforced that the ISF ran over 4,000 PCR tests and confirmed that all 1,088 positive cases across four prisons tested negative. The statement from the ISF also mentioned that 11 new cases have irrupted in two other prisons with no further details regarding their conditions. In conclusion, the narrative was one-sided focusing only on recovery of prisoners without any details regarding those affected and the type of medical care they were receiving. The framing represented the ISF as heroes. Prisoners suffering was neutralized.

Study #7. Annahar. The headline was framed as a question asking about the truth behind Delta cases spreading in Roumeh prison. An image of Roumieh prison accompanied the article. The information included highlighted the response of the ISF stating that Delta cases spreading in Roumieh prison was a rumor and that there was only one case of Delta which was handled, and the prisoner was taken to an isolated room. The statement from the ISF also mentioned that rumors about drinking water being contaminated was incorrect as drinking water undergoes regular tests by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The statement also warned about the danger of spreading fake news. In conclusion, the narrative was one-sided highlighting the narrative of the ISF without any quotes or testimonies from prisoners or activists. The framing represented the ISF as heroes. Prisoners suffering was neutralized.

Study #8. Le'Orient Today. The headline highlighted the drop of Covid-19 cases in Roumieh prison in comparison to cases reported the year before (2021 versus 2020). An image of Roumieh prison with a caption that reminded the reader that the prison housed three times more inmates than its capacity was also included. The article highlighted that the medical care in prison was improving while the number of Covid-19 cases were dropping with additional doctors being assigned to work four hours a day at the prison. In addition to an update on Covid-19 cases, the article highlighted the skin disease scabies that circulated from within prison and was covered by activists to highlight poor living conditions. The head of physician stated that this was a result of polluted water yet confirmed that that this water was tested regularly and supervised by the International Red Cross. The article ended with a reminder that the prison housed 4,000 prisoners, which is three times over capacity and that prisoners opted to self-harm to protest the poor living conditions. In conclusion, while the narrative highlighted the positive progress done with regards to Covid-19 cases, it also highlighted the suffering of prisoners who lack basic needs. Prisoners were framed as victims of poor living conditions while the ISF representation was neutralized and limited to doing their job (neither heroes nor villains).

Study #9. National News Agency. The headline highlighted the decline of Covid-19 cases in Roumieh prison as a result of improved medical service. An image of Head of the Physicians' Syndicate Charaf Abou Charaf accompanied the article. The story highlighted that the level of medical competence was improving in prison while the number of Covid-19 cases were lower with additional doctors being assigned to work four hours a day at the prison. In addition to an update on Covid-19 cases, the article highlighted the skin disease scabies that affected 100 prisons yet confirmed that this was

not a result of polluted water which was tested by International Red Cross but a result of poor hygiene, dirty mattresses, cloth, and lack of cleaning products. The article ended by urging activist and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) to provide further support to prisons. In conclusion, while the narrative highlighted the positive progress with regards to Covid-19 cases and highlighted the suffering of prisoners, it did not hold the government directly accountable and instead called upon NPOs to act. Prisoners were framed as victims of poor living conditions while the representation of ISF was neutralized and limited to doing their job (neither heroes nor villains).

Study #10. Lebanon 24. The reader's attention was directed towards the prisoners suffering from the headline which was a cry for help from inside Roumieh prison. An image of the Roumieh prison accompanied the article. The article highlighted the story of prisoners reflecting on how Covid-19 and the economic collapse affected life in prison. According to the testimony a prisoner quoted, the food offered was "no better than dog food" while prisoners must pay for medicine and medical care. Another prisoner stated that water was contaminated due to all the diseases. In conclusion, while the article shed light on the struggles of prisoners, it could have been longer and included other quotes from activists on possible solutions. Nevertheless, prisoners were framed as victims of poor living conditions while the government's role was neutralized.

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Study #11. Al Ghad Jordan. The headline was intended to highlight the Jordanian's government's efforts to release a number of prisoners to fight Covid-19 while also highlighting activists calls to do more. No subheading was included. An image of The National Centre for Human Rights accompanied the article. The article started by

revealing the plans of the government to release up to 5,000 detainees. These detainees would undergo different release conditions based on their cases. Some were to pay a fine while others were granted temporary release as part of the government's plan to fight Covid-19. The remainder of the article covered quotes from different social and political activists who welcomed the decision yet urged the government to release a larger number of prisoners, introduce electronic monitoring bracelets for home arrest, reevaluate some of the laws that prosecute people for freedom of expression on social media channels, and the need to rely more on financial settlements and good prison conduct to release prisoners. In conclusion, while the Jordanian government's efforts were highlighted, the narrative was more focused on voicing activists' calls urging the government to do more by shedding light on tangible actions that could be adopted to support prisoners and help in releasing a larger number to fight Covid-19. Prisoners were framed as victims of poor living conditions while the role of the authorities was neutralized and limited to doing their job amid calls to do more (neither heroes nor villains).

Study #12. 7iber_ Jordan. The headline was intended to highlight the fear that cripples' prisoners inside Egyptian prisons even during a global pandemic. No subheading was included. An image of a monitoring tower of a prison accompanied the article. Throughout the article, the reader's attention was directed towards the poor living conditions of prisoners, the incompetency in dealing or introducing precaution measures to fight Covid-19, the complete isolation of prisoners from the outside world and the autocratic system that disregard prisoners' lives, labeling political detainees as "terrorists". In addition to complete isolation from the outer world, prisoners suffered, even during Covid-19, from overcrowding and ended up taking shifts to sleep while many suffered

from various skin diseases because of poor hygiene. The only preventative measure taken was the spraying of common areas and guards' offices. Each unit was also given one cleaning product while prisoners had to buy other products. In conclusion, the narrative was one that focused on prisoners' struggles, highlighting a corrupt system that disregarded the lives of its people. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #13. Mada Masr_Egypt. The headline highlighted the isolation of Egyptian prisoners during the pandemic but more importantly was intended to shed light on the case of political prisoners held in detention and were on hunger strike. No subheading was included. An image that included a hashtag "free_Alaa" accompanied the article. The article questioned the statements released by Egyptian authorities confirming that they have taken all precautions in prisons to deal with Covid-19. The author covered the extreme isolation measures that resulted in prisoners not being able to see or communicate with family members for months. Alaa, the prisoner this article focused on went on hunger strike to protest the living conditions and his sentence which was renewed along with hundred other prisoners in the absence of their lawyers during Covid-19. Alaa's family members were constantly refused at prison gates yet were given an official report documenting his hunger strike after two months. The article also mentioned that video conferencing was being considered as an option in courts as part of the Covid-19 precaution measures. In conclusion, the narrative highlighted the suffering of prisoners, especially political prisoners and shed light on the isolation measures that were heightened during the pandemic. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #14. The Electronic Intifada_Occupied Palestine. The headline was intended to reinforce the Israeli state discrimination against Palestinians even during a global pandemic. No subheading was included. An image of protestors crying for support to a Palestinian prisoner suffering from both cancer and Covid-19 accompanied the article. The article questioned the “absurd” rules of the Israeli government that opted that Palestinian prisoners do not need any precaution measures in dealing with Covid-19 as they were all “family members living in the same house”. The same applied to children who also suffered from complete isolation from family and friends. The author also narrated that amid pressure from activists, children were allowed to make one phone call every two weeks but even that was not applied in all prisons. In conclusion, the narrative underlined the suffering of prisoners, including children and highlighted the ill-treatment and discrimination the Israeli state used against Palestinians. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #15. Daraaj_Lebanon. The headline was intended to draw the reader’s attention to the increased concerns over prisoners’ health during Covid-19 in Saudi prisons. No subheading was included. An image of current ruler prince Mohamad Bin Salman accompanied the article. The article questioned the measures taken to protect prisoners during Covid-19 amid reports of affected prisoners being released to die at home so the government would not be held accountable for prisoners’ safety and health. Additionally, the article highlighted that during Covid-19, the restrictions and isolation measures were increased and after a lot of pressure some prisoners were given access to a few minutes phone call every few weeks. There was no hope for prisoners, especially political prisons to be released, even those suffering from bad health, as they were framed

as “terrorists and enemies of the government”. Leaked reports showed that prisoners were subjected to torture and deprived from basic human needs. The article also covered and criticized the ruling system and referred to it as “absolute totalitarian regime”. In conclusion, the narrative highlighted the suffering of prisoners behind bars, yet it must be mentioned that this was not the only focus of the article. The author intended to direct more of the reader’s attention towards the Saudi ruling and system which were criticized heavily as mentioned above. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #16. Nawaat_Algeria. The headline was intended to draw the reader’s attention to issues arising from prison overcrowding during Covid-19 across Algerian prisons. The subheading reinforced the same message representing prisoners as “the most vulnerable categories” highlighting the need for more reforms. An image of a prison transport van being sanitized accompanied the article. The article covered the efforts of fourteen non-governmental organizations and the petition submitted urging the government to introduce more reforms. The narrative focused on highlighting the “systemic overcrowding and the poor living conditions preventing the criminal law to play its role which is the rehabilitation”. Additionally, the article highlighted that while the government responded with the release of prisoners with minor felonies to combat Covid-19 in addition to introducing preventative measures in prisons, more needed to be done in the long run. This included the need to limit preventive detention and adopt new codes of criminal procedures that respect human life, reduce overcrowding, and ultimately save government money and resources. The current system was framed as “repressive and lacking in reforms”. In conclusion, not only did the article highlight the suffering of

prisoners during Covid-19 but tackled the need for reforms, introducing tangible solutions that could be adopted by authorities. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #17. Lakome_Morocco. The headline was intended to draw the reader's attention to the number of positive Covid-19 cases in Moroccan prisons in addition to the hunger strikes protesting poor living conditions. No subheading was included. An image of a prison with prison wardens was included. The article provided a summary of key findings and recommendations by the National Human Rights Council. The narrative focused on the need to introduce new reforms to the current penal system. The death sentence was condemned while the need to ensure vulnerable prisoners with disabilities, health or mental problems receive required care was reinforced. Additionally, the article highlighted the importance of allowing lawyers access to prisoners during Covid-19 to appeal their sentences. The increase in number of death rates was also highlighted due to Covid-19, health issues and suicide, reinforcing the need to reassess the current system. Hunger strikes and torture were also included with concerns about their impact on prisoners. In conclusion, not only did the article highlight the suffering of prisoners during Covid-19 but tackled the need for prison reforms. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain. It is worth noting however that the government was not directly attacked and instead, the facts of poor living conditions were highlighted with the need to address them.

Study #18. Middle East Monitor_Regional. The headline was intended to draw the reader's attention to the ongoing violations against prisoners in Egyptian prisons while accusing prison authorities of being above the law. No subheading was included. An

image of inmates inside a prison cell accompanied the article. The article mainly focused on the ill-treatment of prisoners, especially the ongoing denying of their rights to see family members. During Covid-19, these measures were heightened and even prisoners on death beds were refused visitation rights. Family members who received court orders to see prisoners were also denied that right under “security reasons or precaution measures during Covid-19”. Others who protested these decisions outside prison gates were “beaten up” and sentenced to prison for “spreading false news”. Although denying prisoners visitation rights is unconstitutional and various local and international organizations have urged Egyptian authorities to act, nothing changed during Covid-19. Prisoners who went on hunger strikes were tortured and ill-treatment of prisoners continued to go unnoticed. In conclusion, not only did the article highlight the suffering of prisoners during Covid-19 but tackled the need to hold the government accountable. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #19. Raseef22_Regional. The headline was intended to draw the reader’s attention to prisoners suffering during Covid-19 in Egyptian prisons. No subheading was included. An image of a prisoner behind bars accompanied the article. The article covered the ill-treatment of prisoners, who were deprived basic human needs during Covid-19. A prisoner’s quote described prison as “the lowest standards of humane life, with no toilets inside the cells, and no running water to use when going to the bathroom. The space in the cell, which six people are condemned to live in, does not exceed 2 x 3 meters” which meant that overcrowding was the main reason for contracting Covid-19. Prisoners were also denied any communication with family members, and it was only after many prisoners contracted the virus and went on a hunger strike did the authorities run PCR tests

and started taking critical cases to hospitals. In conclusion, the article documented the ill-treatment of prisoners and the inadequacy in employing precaution measures to protect prisoners from Covid-19. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #20. Al Masdar_Yemen. The headline was intended to draw the reader's attention to a campaign that called for the release of prisoners in Yemeni prisons amid increased Covid-19 threats. A subheading reinforced the same message drawing attention to the hashtag of the campaign #SaveYemeniPrisoners. An image of the hashtag also accompanied the article to encourage readers to use it. The article covered the poor living conditions of prisoners behind bars and the lack of basic human rights which only escalated during the pandemic. The activists quoted referred to the prisons as "lacking in essential health and sanitary facilities". The three-day campaign was framed as a campaign to put pressure on those in power to act and free prisoners amid a global crisis. In conclusion, the article was intended to increase awareness of the poor living conditions prisoners suffer from. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

International Prisoners' Radio:

Study #21. 3CR Australia_Beyond the Bars 2021. Both segments were meant to draw attention to incarcerated people's experience during Covid-19. The host intended to ask about communication means during Covid-19 and how it felt to them. Inmates talked about zoom calls that replaced in-person visits with family members. While the experience was not the same, many felt the calls had positive attributes as incarcerated people could talk to more than one family member at the same time and see their pets and their homes.

One individual stated, “my daughter was able to share with me her homework which was very nice.” Calls lasted for up to half an hour and inmates were entitled to two calls per week. When asked about Covid-19 precautions measures, inmates stated that they missed the activities that were put on hold in addition to the educational classes and trainings. Incarcerated people also talked about the quarantine periods which lasted for fourteen days sometimes, a day after a court hearing if it was in person and sometime half days depending on the vaccines taken. Part of the positive measures taken by prison management included reducing a day of prison sentence for everyday lockdown, which was encouraging for many individuals. In conclusion, incarcerated people talked about the struggles of isolation and the importance of connecting with family members through zoom during such difficult times. Prisoners were framed as victims while the representation of authorities was neutralized (neither heroes nor villains). That said, the focus of this segment was on prisoners’ experience only as part of a longer show that included 27 segments in total.

Study #22. CKUT_Canada_Prison Radio Show. The headline was intended to draw listeners attention to the #SaskSolidarity Actions in support of people behind bars hunger striking and rioting against the lockdown conditions imposed by jail administrations. The narrative focused on highlighting the struggles of incarcerated people and the resistance movement in Saskachewan jails. Incarcerated people lacked basic needs such as masks and cleaning supplies while overcrowding remained a key concern. As a result, they wrote open letters to government figures, yet no responses were received. After a Covid-19 outbreak that affected almost 150 people (prisoners and prison staff), more open letters were written that were still ignored by government officials.

Incarcerated people went on hunger strikes yet mainstream media did not pick the story, especially women hunger strikes as they do not receive the same attraction. Framing of government officials reinforced their “ignorance of people inside prison” suffering from poor living conditions. Indigenous women and family members gathered in solidarity outside prison walls and over 1,600 people and 40 organizations signed letters raising concerns about prisoners’ conditions during Covid-19. Framing focused on the “anticolonial aspect and not just the systematic racism” within the prison system that is specifically used against “indigenous people”. It is also worth noting that the guest framed prisoners as “people in jail, vulnerable groups, women and men in jail” as opposed to using a language that reinforced words like “prisoners or detainees”. In conclusion, the guest highlighted the suffering of the prisoners and reinforced the need to support them financially and through familiarizing ourselves with the educational resources available to us all of which help in the fight against injustice. The government and prison authorities were put under the spotlight urging them to take action to support “people in jail” and end “racism and injustice”. Long term planning was also emphasized to “defund and dismantle the current prison system and look for alternatives”. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #23. La Clé des Ondes _Through the Walls_France. The headline was directed to the Minister of Justice who was framed as the person “who will have emptied prisons but in coffins”. The narrative focused on highlighting the struggles of prisoners and the inadequacy of prison administration and Ministry of justice in protecting prisoners during the spread of Covid-19. The containment measures included isolating prisoners from the outside world and confining them to their cells for 23 hours a day. Screening was

slow while prison staff did not wear gloves and masks putting prisoners, especially vulnerable groups, at a higher risk. Additionally, hydro-alcoholic gel was refused on the grounds that alcohol was prohibited in prison. Physical and moral violence increased while prisoners were moved from one prison to another with minimal information being shared with them. A comparison with Iran was included to make a point stating that “Iran, released 85,000 detainees” while in France the numbers do not even get close. Prison sentences in some cases were also extended causing more overcrowding in prisons. Treatment of prisoners was framed as “barbaric” while the Minister was framed as the person who will be remembered for “killing prisoners”. In conclusion, the open letter highlighted the suffering of the prisoners and reinforced the need to improve living conditions during Covid-19. The government and prison authorities were held responsible for the death of prisoners and their ongoing suffering. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #24. KBOO _Prison Pipeline_US. The headline clearly framed the podcast as an update on Oregon’s prison conditions a year into Covid-19. The narrative focused on highlighting the inadequacy in dealing with prisoners struggle during Covid-19. “3,000 incarcerated individuals were infected with the Covid-19 and 42 dead”. The guest also explained that the tragic part of this unfolding disaster was that much of it was avoidable if the Governor had followed the advice of scientists and health care professionals who highlighted the required measures to ensure social distancing in Oregon's prisons. As a result, the Oregon Justice Resource Center filed lawsuits for the damage inflicted on people in prisons. In conclusion, the podcast described the situation in prisons and reinforced the framing of incarcerated people as “2nd class citizens” and “criminals” who

did not deserve attention. The government and prison authorities were held responsible for the death of prisoners and their ongoing suffering. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #25. KALW Public Media_Uncuffed_US. The headline of the podcast drew attention to the importance of enabling prisoners to communicate with the outer world. The narrative focused on highlighting how difficult it was for incarcerated people to cope with Covid-19, testing positive, and enduring 23 hours of lockdown. Additionally, the mental effect of knowing that 200 people died in California prison, not being able to reach recording equipment or be part of in any prison activity also increased the suffering of incarcerated people. As a result, Uncuffed recorded a special podcast with messages of love from the outside world. These messages were framed by people inside prison as “Christmas gifts, affirmation that we matter, ability to go on, hope”. Individuals previously incarcerated also talked about the struggles of being on the outside and how they were seen as a “threat” and still felt that part of them was in prison. Others talked about the power of friendship and how it helped them stay strong. In conclusion, this podcast reinforced the power of prisoners’ radio in providing an alternative platform that allows prisoners to connect with the outer world to enact their suspended citizenship and sustain relationships with family and friends. Prisoners were framed as victims while the representation of authorities was neutralized (neither heroes nor villains). The latter was because the show was focused on enabling prisoners’ communication with the outer world.

Study #26. Prison Radio_Dispatches_US. The headline of the podcast did not reveal much except that the podcast covered incarcerated people’s experience with Covid-

19. The narrative focused on framing “prison care as death care”. The podcast highlighted stories of incarcerated people to show the true function of the US carceral system which upholds an oppressive structure. An incarcerated correspondent framed the situation saying that “The US claims it has no political prisoners, but in a prison system that upholds not justice but violence, all prisoners are political.” To do so, the podcast covered some historical facts of ill-treatment and illegal testing done on human subjects in prison, mainly black people, who continue to face discrimination in prisons. The narrative framed the system as a system controlled by “white supremacy seeking to expediate white health through the exploitation of marginalized people and bodies”. Medical abuse was not something new to incarcerated people, but it only got worse during Covid-19. Lack of medical care, wrong diagnosis, lack of precaution measures, isolation that reached 23 hours, coercion to take vaccines or lose communication rights to connect with family were all used against prisoners. In conclusion, this podcast revealed the struggles of incarcerated people who were abused by the system and only remembered when “shocking numbers” such as “high death rates” were exposed. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Study #27. Inside Wire Prison Colorado Radio _With(in)_US. The narrative focused on introducing Season 2 of With(in), "The Way Back", its goals and what it meant to incarcerated people. More importantly, the team talked about creating Season 2 of With(in) virtually and during the Covid19 pandemic, across three prisons in the Colorado Department of Corrections. This gave people behind bars “hope and reminded them they mattered”. The narrative focused on the need to change the current system of prisons to be “a place for restoration and not a place for punishment and loss of dignity”. Working

during Covid-19 was framed as another important milestone to work within a community “those that live there and those that work there” and become “better humans” that “care and want to make a real difference in the world”. Then, incarcerated co-hosts Denise Presson and Andrew Draper delved into their personal lives over the last two years and talked about how being part of this show helped shape their lives, which is the true power of prisoners’ radio. Colorado Department of Corrections’ Executive Director reinforced the need to continue the “movement” to “humanize prisons” while co-hosts ended by talking about the small shifts and changes in looking at “offenders” as “residents” and what such a narrative means to the representation of prisoners and the current system. In conclusion, this podcast revealed the importance of prisoners’ radio and how it helps give people behind bars a chance to enact their citizenship and feel that they matter. Prisoners were framed as victims and authorities were held responsible for change in the system. It is worth noting however that the role of CDC was acknowledged given the important the role he plays in improving the living conditions of incarcerated people.

Study #28. National Prison Radio _The Secret Life of Prisons_UK. The narrative focused on questioning whether people’s experience with Covid-19 lockdown can be compared to the prison experience or life behind bars. The hosts, one of whom was a prisoner and the guests all confirmed that the experience was not the same and focused on highlighting incarcerated people’s struggles during Covid-19. People behind bars were confined to their prison cells for 23 hours a day and could not visit the bathroom and had to use a bucket instead. All types of activity and family visits were suspended, and phone calls were scarce given the lack of enough phones to serve prisons. Nevertheless, the guests looked at Covid-19 as an opportunity to bridge the gap of the outside world’s

perception of what it is like to live behind prison bars. Covid-19 was framed as “a potential start for a conversation to show the outside world that people serving in prisons deserve their respect too” as they continue to suffer from “institutional power over them that people on the outside could never comprehend”. The show also asked the question of what happens if Covid-19 or something similar hits again and what was being done to prevent the death and suffering of prisoners. Journalist Raphael Rowe talked about a new project “Captive” that looked at innovation and how it could support prisoners. This included looking at infrastructure, technology, internet, and innovative ways to ensure prisoners do not suffer the same isolation they suffered from during the Covid-19 lockdown. In conclusion, this podcast highlighted the importance of better understanding what it meant to be locked in prison and how it could never be compared to life on the outside, even during a pandemic. The narrative and framing focused on the need for “social change” to bridge the gap and help build a more “constructive” conversation around the prison system. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were neutralized.

Study #29_ Making Contact Radio _Police Prisons_US. In this podcast the host focused on the state of California for having one of the highest rates of Covid-19 cases in its prisons. San Quentin prison was discussed as the perfect environment for infectious diseases, especially for a disease like Covid-19. That was because of overcrowding, old buildings, poor design, and lack of proper healthcare. One of the inmates quoted on the show described the prison cell as “living in a small bathroom”. The narrative focused on showing the inadequacy in containing the spread of Covid-19 in prisons. Involuntary transfers without testing caused a major spike in positive cases which was when prison

authorities started testing in masses. The spread of Covid-19 in prisons was seven times higher than the rest of the population. California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation pushed against the release of prisoners supported by officials who advocated for prison expansion to lock away “offenders and criminals”. The guests also highlighted how secretive prisons were about releasing information and that data was not accurate even when shared. Covid-19 positive cases and death rates were higher than what was reported. Guests also talked about how guards used punishment to control behavior. This led to many prisoners not reporting their cases till they fell very ill in fear of being locked in solitary confinement. Measures to control the spread of Covid-19 focused on introducing masks, expanding testing, faster turnaround of results, reducing non-essential movement, and safer transfer protocol. Yet all this was not enough in the absence of a plan that allowed the release of prisoners. In turn this led to more people inside and outside prisons getting infected. In conclusion, this podcast highlighted the need to reassess the current system and introduce change, if not the abolition of prisons. Prisons were framed as places to “contain people” which created the “perfect environment” for the spread of Covid-19 in addition to the involuntary transfers of prisons which only made things worse. Prisoners were framed as victims while the authorities were framed as the villain.

Step 4: Analysis of language categories

Study #1. Anbaa. Examining the language applied to define the main events and people featured, three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the heroes, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners and the entire Lebanese community that should be protected in the fight against Covid-19. The language associated with the heroes being the designated committee to protect prisoners

included (ongoing efforts, working tirelessly). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 crisis, protection measures).

Study #2. Bint Jbeil. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the heroes, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners that have tested positively and receiving the required medical care. The language associated with the heroes being the ISF included (necessary care and treatment, ongoing support of prisoners' wellbeing). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures).

Study #3. Addiyar. Similarly, three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the heroes, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners and the entire Lebanese community that should be protected in the fight against Covid-19. The language associated with the heroes being the ISF included (running PCR tests and isolating all positive cases). Additionally, the poor conditions of public hospitals working with minimal support and equipment were highlighted, urging the government to do more. As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 crisis, protection measures).

Study #4. Al Manar. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the heroes, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners that were (recovering and being taken care off). The language associated with the heroes being the ISF included (necessary care and treatment, ongoing support of prisoners' wellbeing). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures).

Study #5. Al Tayyar. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the heroes, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners that have recovered from Covid-19. The language associated with the heroes being the ISF included (constant follow up, ongoing efforts). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures).

Study #6. Al Joumhouria. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the heroes, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners that have recovered from Covid-19 and the other prisoners that were framed as (positive cases). The language associated with the heroes being the ISF included (constant follow up, ongoing efforts). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures).

Study #7. Annahar. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the heroes, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners and all those affected by the spreading of fake news around poor prison conditions (ISF). The language associated with the heroes being ISF included (constant follow up, ongoing efforts). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures, Delta).

Study #8. Le'Orient Today. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, leading actor, the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners exposed to Covid-19 also suffering from poor living conditions and reverted to (self-mutilating to protest poor living conditions). The language associated with the leading actor being the Lebanese authorities included (additional staff, medical and

preventive supplies, improved medical adequacy). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures, Pfizer vaccines).

Study #9. National News Agency. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, leading actor, the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners exposed to Covid-19 also suffering from poor living conditions and skin scabies (poor hygiene, cloth, mattresses, cleaning products). The language associated with the leading actor being the Lebanese authorities included (additional staff, medical and preventive supplies, improved medical adequacy). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures, Pfizer vaccines).

Study #10. Lebanon 24. Two categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners exposed to Covid-19 also suffering from poor living conditions and diseases (poor food and basic human rights). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, inadequate medical service).

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Study #11. Al Ghad_Jordan: Three categories have been identified. These were the victims or those affected by Covid-19, leading actor, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (prisoners, detainees) being released from prisons as part of the Jordanian's government (leading actor) preventative plan against Covid-19. As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures). It is also worth highlighting the language associated with the political and social activists' work that included (the need for rehabilitation programs, responding to emergency crisis, reducing overcrowding).

Study #12. 7iber_Jordan: Three categories have been identified. These were the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villains, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (detainees, terrorists, political prisoners) suffering from poor living conditions (total isolation, overcrowding, lack of basic needs, inhumane living conditions). The language associated with the villains being Egyptian authorities included (rule with fear, autocratic leadership, ineffective prison measures). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, protection measures, global pandemic).

Study #13. Mada Masr_Egypt: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (prisoners, detainees) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation and no communication with family members). The language associated with the villain (government) included (protect detainees, precaution measures). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, pandemic).

Study #14. Electronic Intifada_Occupied Palestine: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (prisoners, political detainees, vulnerable children) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, no communication with family members, limited access to resources of hygiene routines). The language associated with the villain (the Israeli state) included (failure to provide prisoners with basic precautionary measures, held on food and hygiene products from prison commissaries). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, global pandemic, coronavirus outbreak).

Study #15. Daraj_Lebanon: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (prisoners, political detainees, terrorists, and enemies of the government) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, no communication, limited resources, torture). The language associated with the villain (Saudi ruling) included (violations through arrests, murder of officials, hiding detainees and releasing no information using Covid-19 as an excuse). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, global pandemic, protection measures).

Study #16. Nawaat_Algeria: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (one of the most vulnerable categories in society, fragile prisoners) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, overcrowding, lack of training and resources). The language associated with the villain (government and judicial system) included (repressive, lacking in resources, counterproductive). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, health crisis, global pandemic, protection measures). It is also worth highlighting the language associated with the political and social activists' work that included (more needs to be done to respect human life).

Study #17. Lakome_Morocco: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (prisoners, detainees, prisoners with disabilities, health, or mental problems) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, torture, death sentences, poor resources). The language associated with the villain (government and judicial system)

included (concerns over current practices, need for reforms). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19 virus, preventive measures, positive Covid-19 cases). It is also worth highlighting the language associated with the work of the National Human Rights Council (end hunger strikes and torture, reduce death rates).

Study #18. Middle East Monitor_Regional: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners and their family members (prisoners, detainees, beaten family members) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, torture, poor resources). The language associated with the villains (government and judicial system) included (administrative decisions, visit bans, security reasons and terrorist threats). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Covid-19, pandemic, lockdown). It is also worth highlighting the language associated with the activists and human rights organizations that included (calling for the release of prisoners, end of torture, unconstitutional measure).

Study #19. Raseef22_Regional: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (prisoners, detainees, political detainees) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, lack of basic human needs, poor resources). The language associated with the villains (authorities and prison staff and guards) included (ill-treatment, visit bans, isolation measures). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Corona virus lockdown, lockdown procedures, pandemic).

Study #20. Al Masdar_Yemen: Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story

were the prisoners (prisoners, detainees) suffering from poor living conditions (lack in essential health and sanitary facilities). The language associated with the villains (immediate action, humanitarian cause, cease fire). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (Corona virus pandemic, Covid-19). It is also worth highlighting the language associated with the political and social activists work that included (campaign #SaveYemeniPrisoners).

International Prisoners' Radio:

Study #21. 3CR Australia_Beyond the Bars 2021. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the authorities, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners trying to cope with Covid-19 behind bars (isolation, lockdown, lack of activity and educational training, connect with family through zoom calls). The language associated with the authorities (prison staff and management) included (reducing sentences, evacuation plans, half, or full day work). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (pandemic, Covid-19, lockdown, quarantine).

Study #22. CKUT_Canada_Prison Radio Show. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (vulnerable groups, indigenous people) suffering from poor living conditions (overcrowding, torture, racism, treated like animals). The language associated with the villains (prison authorities, government) included (system needs to be improved, ignorant and gross response to open letters, colonial system, segregation). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, Covid-19 outbreak). It is also worth highlighting the language associated

with the political and social activists work that included (efforts to support the indigenous people suffering from injustice).

Study #23. La Clé des Ondes_Through the Walls_France. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (vulnerable groups, prisoners, detainees, sub-humans, scapegoats) suffering from poor living conditions (overcrowding, torture, physical and moral abuse). The language associated with the villains (prison authorities, government) included (barbaric treatment, lack of interest, hatred). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, prevention measures, Covid-19 virus).

Study #24. KBOO _Prison Pipeline_US. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (incarcerated people, 2nd class citizens, murderers, vulnerable people) suffering from poor living conditions (overcrowding, anxiety, fear, pressure). The language associated with the villains (prison authorities, government, courts, ODOC) included (inadequacy, biases, lack of interest). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, prevention measures, Covid-19 virus, Corona virus). It is also worth highlighting the language associated with the political and social activists work that included (fighting the current system to protect prisoners' rights, especially The Oregon Justice Resource Center which was framed as being the forefront of public dialogue and litigation to protect incarcerated people during this pandemic).

Study #25. KALW Public Media_Uncuffed_US. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, leading actors, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (incarcerated people) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, Covid-19, and post Covid symptoms). The language associated with the leading actors (previously incarcerated people, family members and friends) included (waiting for you, love you, stay safe, we will be together soon). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, Covid-19, Coronavirus).

Study #26. Prison Radio_Dispatches_US. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were prisoners (incarcerated people, political prisoners) suffering from poor living conditions (isolation, Covid-19, ill-treatment, coercion). The language associated with the villains (correctional facilities management, authorities, prison guards and staff) included (exploitation, inadequacy, lack of care, slow rollout of vaccines). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, Covid-19, Coronavirus).

Study #27. Inside Wire Prison Colorado Radio _With(in)_US. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, leading actors, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (incarcerated people, residents of prison) enabling and educating themselves to become better (responsibility, redemption ownership, education, hope and helping others). The language associated with the leading actors (correctional facilities authorities, prison guards and staff) included (becoming a community, changing the current system, working together, humanizing prisons). As for

the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, Covid-19, lockdown).

Study #28. National Prison Radio _The Secret Life of Prisons_UK. Three categories have been identified. These are the victims or those affected by Covid-19, leading actors, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (incarcerated and vulnerable people) suffering from poor living conditions (physical and psychological damage, fear, and no communication). The language associated with the leading actors (prison authorities, government) included (changing the system, changing the narrative). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, lockdown, Covid-19). It is also worth highlighting the language associated with the social and political activist work that included (those fighting the current system to protect prisoners' rights and looking at preventative measures for the future).

Study #29_ Making Contact Radio _Police Prisons_US. Three categories were identified. These were the victims or those affected by Covid-19, the villain, and the event itself. Victims in the story were the prisoners (incarcerated people) suffering from poor living conditions (overcrowding, lack of proper healthcare, punishment). The language associated with the villains (prison authorities, government) included (changing the system, lack of transparency in releasing data, resistance to releasing prisoners). As for the language associated with the event itself, the description included (global pandemic, lockdown, Covid-19, disease, virus).

Step 5: Generalization

Study #1. Anbaa. There were no quotes from any prisoners. A reoccurring theme revolved around reinforcing the efforts of the committee to protect the prisoners. This

included plans beyond protecting prisoners from Covid-19, yet no details were revealed. The generalization here was that prisoners' struggles were marginalized, especially as the article ended with a different angle not related to prisoners. The author opted to end the article with highlighting the committee's projects beyond prisons.

Study #2. Bint Jbeil. There were no quotes from any prisoners. A reoccurring theme revolved around reinforcing the efforts of the ISF in handling and containing positive cases. The generalization here was that prisoners' struggles were sidelined or neutralized by focusing on recovered cases only while no information was released as to how prisoners, especially minors, which the headline mentioned were coping with Covid-19 measures and isolation.

Study #3. Addiyar. There were no quotes from any prisoners. A reoccurring theme revolved around reinforcing the efforts of the ISF and highlighting the number of recovered cases inside prisons. The remainder of the article was not related to prisons or the suffering of prisoners from increased isolation measures. The generalization here was that prisoners' struggles were sidelined or neutralized by focusing on recovered cases while other statements highlighted the need to do more to help the Lebanese community. The same was not evident when talking about prisoners.

Study #4. Al Manar. There were no quotes from any prisoners. A reoccurring theme revolved around reinforcing the efforts of the ISF and highlighting the number of recovered cases inside prison walls. The generalization here was that prisoners' struggles were sidelined or neutralized by focusing on recovered cases only and prisoners' ability to communicate regularly with family members.

Study #5. Al Tayyar. There were no quotes from any prisoners. A reoccurring theme revolved around only releasing positive news about prisoners. The statement mainly highlighted recovery cases and included a one-liner about prisoners who tested positive. The generalization here was that prisoners' suffering, and health conditions were dismissed to focus on positive news only. Again, prisoners were sidelined or neutralized.

Study #6. Al Joumhouria. There were no quotes from any prisoners. A reoccurring theme was the heavy focus on recovered cases of prisoners with a one-liner only about prisoners who tested positive and no mention of their health conditions or how they were being treated. The generalization here was that prisoners' suffering, and health conditions were dismissed to focus on positive news only. Again, prisoners were sidelined or neutralized.

Study #7. Annahar. There were no quotes from any prisoners or activists to provide a different perspective. A reoccurring theme was the dismissal of the poor living conditions in Roumieh prison while international reports have confirmed this to be true. The generalization here is that prisoners suffering, and health conditions were covered up with a narrative that focused on the danger of spreading fake news. Again, prisoners were sidelined or neutralized.

Study #8. Le'Orient Today. While there were no quotes from any prisoners, the article highlighted the suffering of prisoners from Covid-19 and beyond. A reoccurring theme was to emphasize the poor living conditions in Roumieh prison and expose the skin scabies disease the prisoners endure because of polluted water while neutralizing the role of the authorities.

Study #9. National News Agency. There were no quotes from any prisoners or activists. A reoccurring theme empathized the skin scabies disease not being a result of polluted water but poor basic needs. The generalization here was that prisoners suffering, and poor living conditions did not prompt the author to ask the more important questions as to why prisoners should live under such inhumane conditions and instead opted for a solution that required NPOs to do more instead of clearly asking the authorities to bear this responsibility.

Study #10. Lebanon 24. Unlike other articles, Lebanon 24 included a quote from a prisoner openly talking about prisoners suffering behind bars. A reoccurring theme empathized the poor living conditions and the lack of basic needs resulting in diseases such as the skin scabies disease. The generalization here was that while Lebanon 24 did quote a prisoner, more could have been done to ensure that the narrative clearly stated the government's responsibility to protect prisoners and provide them was basic human needs to survive inside prisons.

Regional Alternative Media

Study #11. Al Ghad_Jordan. While there were no quotes from prisoners, the article included four quotes from social and political activists advocating for prisoners' rights. A reoccurring theme revolved around the need to do more by considering long-term plans to reduce overcrowding and limit the number of people behind bars. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the article focused on highlighting the government's role to do more and ended with a note that underlined how current laws did not allow the Prime Minister to revoke judiciary decisions even during a crisis such as Covid-19.

Study #12. 7iber_Jordan. The article focused on highlighting the suffering of prisoners and exposing the corrupt system. A reoccurring theme revolved around providing details on how prisoners live behind bars and the complete isolation they suffer from. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the article focused on highlighting the government's incompetency in providing basic human needs to prisoners, even during a global pandemic.

Study #13. Mada Masr_Egypt. The article focused on highlighting the suffering of prisoners and exposing the corrupt system. A reoccurring theme focused on showing the impact of the Egyptian autocratic leadership on its citizens. This included detaining anyone who opposed the government for years. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the article focused on highlighting how the Egyptian government treated its prisoners, especially political prisoners.

Study #14. Electronic Intifada_Occupied Palestine. The article focused on highlighting the suffering of prisoners and exposing the Israeli state's discrimination against Palestinian prisoners. A reoccurring theme reinforced the ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners, adults, and children alike. This included withdrawing some hygiene products away from prisoners during the pandemic. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the article focused on highlighting the suffering of Palestinian prisoners and the heightened isolation measures taken against them during Covid-19.

Study #15. Daraaj_Lebanon. The article focused on highlighting the suffering of prisoners and criticizing the Saudi government. A reoccurring theme reinforced the ill-treatment of prisoners that included torture of prisoners. The article did not include

generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the article focused on highlighting the suffering of prisoners, yet the bigger focus was on condemning the government and its ruler on all levels including human and prisoners' rights.

Study #16. Nawaat_Algeria. The article highlighted concerns over prisoners' health during Covid-19. A reoccurring theme reinforced the need to introduce new reforms that respect human life and ultimately help prisoners reintegrate in society. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, while the author welcomed the measures taken by the government in the fight against Covid-19, the article was more focused on long term reforms required to support prisoners.

Study #17. Lakome_Morocco. The article highlighted key findings and recommendations to improve living conditions in prisons. A reoccurring theme reinforced the need to introduce new reforms that addressed the need to reduce death rate, torture, and ill-treatment of prisoners. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the government was held responsible for the current situation in prisons and was urged to do more.

Study #18. Monitor Middle East_Regional. The article highlighted the suffering of prisoners and their innocent family members as a result of the government's decisions to ban visitation rights. A reoccurring theme reinforced the importance of communication to prisoners and the need to ban torture and ill-treatment of prisoners. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the government was held responsible for the current situation in prisons, accused of being above the law.

Study #19. Raseef22_Regional. The article highlighted the suffering of prisoners fighting for the lives during the pandemic with minimal medical attention. A reoccurring theme reinforced the inadequacy in introducing measures to protect prisoners from contracting the virus and improve their living conditions. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the government was held responsible for endangering the lives of prisoners.

Study #20. Al Masdar_Yemen. The article highlighted the suffering of prisoners fighting for their lives during the pandemic and shed light on the campaign aimed at releasing prisoners. A reoccurring theme reinforced the inadequacy in protecting prisoners and the poor living conditions they suffer from. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the government was held responsible and was called upon to free prisoners.

International Prisoners Radio:

Study #21. 3CR Australia_Beyond the Bars 2021. The podcast was meant as a free space that allowed prisoners to talk about their experience with Covid-19. A reoccurring theme reinforced the importance of connecting with family members and how zoom helped keep them in touch. Prisoners, like everyone else in the world, felt the pain caused by Covid-19 and knowing their families were safe was crucial to their wellbeing behind bars. The podcasts did not include generalization that undermined neither prisoners nor prison management or authorities.

Study #22. CKUT_Prison Radio Show_Canada. The podcast highlighted the suffering of prisoners amid increased risks of Covid-19 outbreaks. A reoccurring theme reinforced the need for the government to do more to protect the indigenous people and

improve living conditions. Solidarity from the wider community supporting prisoners beyond Covid-19 was also highlighted. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the government and correctional authorities were held responsible and were called upon to defund and dismantle prisons, look for alternative solutions and end racism.

Study #23. La Clé des Ondes _Through the Walls_France. The open letter highlighted the suffering of prisoners amid increased risks of Covid-19 outbreaks. A reoccurring theme reinforced the inadequacy of authorities and particularly the ministry of justice in protecting prisoners. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the government and correctional authorities were held responsible and were called upon to protect prisoners and improve living conditions behind bars.

Study #24. KBOO _Prison Pipeline_US. The interview highlighted the suffering of prisoners a year into Covid-19. A reoccurring theme reinforced the need for the government to do more to protect prisoners and stop treating them as “2nd class citizens” and “murderers” unworthy of receiving the same care as the rest of society. The article did not include generalization that undermined prisoners and their rights. On the contrary, the government and ODOC were held responsible while “biases” towards prisoners were seen as the main reason driving prison policies.

Study #25. KALW Public Media_Uncuffed_US. The interview highlighted the suffering of prisoners a year into Covid-19 and the power of prisoners’ radio in keeping them connected with the outer world. The article highlighted some of the generalization

prisoners suffer from on the outside as well as on the inside as they are branded as a “threat” which makes it harder for them to fit in society.

Study #26. Prison Radio_Dispatches_US. The podcast highlighted the oppressive system that governs prisoners in the US which manifested itself in poor health care. This podcast also reinforced some of the generalization incarcerated individuals deal with (forgotten members of society, criminals, lack of empathy and care towards them). Additionally, the government and prison authorities were held responsible for holding oppressive structures and punishing resistance.

Study #27. Inside Wire Prison Colorado Radio _With(in)_US. The podcast highlighted the experience and pride of producing the (With)in show from inside prison walls and what it meant to incarcerated people, how it shaped their lives and allowed them to enact their citizenship. The podcast highlighted the need to change the current prison system which would in time help shift the current perception and generalization of prisoners as “outcasts” and help make the world a better place.

Study #28. National Prison Radio _The Secret Life of Prisons_UK. The podcast highlighted the struggles of people living behind bars and touched on the importance of changing the current system and the generalization that “prisoners deserve this” and they are “worthless”. The podcast highlighted the need to bridge the gap by shedding light on prisoners struggles that the outside world has tasted a very small portion of with the Covid-19 lockdown.

Study #29_ MakingContactRadio _Police Prisons_US. The podcast highlighted the struggles of people living behind bars with the spread of Covid-19 that could not be contained in prisons. The need to end the generalization against prisoners framed as

“murderers, violent offenders” was also tackled and highlighted as a “myth” in many cases used by authorities to avoid releasing prisoners. The podcast also called for the reassessment of the prison system.

APPENDIX E: ACTION PLAN

Establishing Prisoners' Radio in Lebanon

It is important to mention that the guidelines and policies outlined in this plan are based on established guidelines shared with the author of the study as part of the global support to strengthen prisoners' radio in the world (anonymous, 2022). The below guidelines are currently used by international players whose names will remain anonymous for the purpose of this study. Some of the laws mentioned below can be amended to reflect the Lebanese constitution at a later stage.

What is Prisoners' Radio

It is a radio that operates for, or by, prisoners which makes it an alternative media platform. It exists under different formats yet the most common are:

- Under the community radio context
- Within the confines of prisons
- From inside prison to a larger community on the outside

Broadly, two types of prisoners' show exist: those that play dedications and requests and those that mainly focus on providing information on prisoners and their issues.

Why Prisoners' Radio

Prisoners are one of the most isolated populations in the world. This means that they have minimal opportunity and access to voice their ideas and concerns, which increases isolation causing considerable damage on their psychological and mental health.

Additionally, over 90% of prisoners end up reintegrating in society which makes it crucial that prison time is used to rehabilitate prisoners which prisoners' radio can play a part in.

Prisoners' radio enables prisoners to stay connected with their families and the larger community. It also provides them with an opportunity to engage and produce media that is of relevance to them. This allows prisoners to enact their suspended citizenship and learn new skills, reminding them that despite the restrictions of living in prison, they can still be part of a community and have a voice.

The Mission for Prisoners' Radio in Lebanese Prisons

To broadcast news, stories, music, and entertainment. To develop programs that are created by and for people living on the inside, all of which contribute to the rehabilitation of prisoners. Prisoners' radio will ensure trained media producers in prisons uphold high journalistic standards as they amplify the voices and creations of those living and working behind walls.

The Vision

To provide companionship, hope, and the potential for positive change, for creators and audiences alike inside prison. To reach listeners in their cells and units by sending a broadcast signal on a closed-circuit television network.

The Mechanics

To start with a six-month pilot program at a women's prison assigned by authorities. The radio will be established to broadcast inside prison only during this period. After the trial period, the prisoners' radio management team and designated officials can further discuss

and map out how to expand the borders of prisoners' radio to broadcast outside prison walls.

Policies and Procedures for Producers, Hosts, Writers, and Guests

1. Familiarize yourself with the following policies and procedures and follow these with integrity.
2. Engage in a tour of radio studio and/or equipment, guided by the assigned radio's core team, prison staff, and ISF staff or collaborators.
3. Respect all Lebanon's ISF and Department of Corrections rules, guidelines and regulations that are designed to protect residents and staff.
4. Cultivate and affirm an inclusive environment of collaboration and production, rejecting any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, national origin, sex or sexual orientation.
5. Sustain respect and care for the core radio team(s), for potential radio staff, for ISF staff and collaborators, and for Prisoners' Radio equipment. This includes:
 - a. Recognizing that our work is intensive, time-pressured, highly collaborative... and vital.

We stay engaged with fellow producers, even during periods of challenge or disagreement, in order to uphold our commitment to listeners.
 - b. Refraining from entering designated studios without an appointment.
 - c. Refraining from entering designated studios if not accompanied by the core radio team(s), by radio staff, and/or by ISF staff and collaborators.
 - d. Refraining from adapting or removing any equipment from radio studios at any time.

- e. Refraining from placing food or drinks at editing or recording stations, or within 10 feet of production equipment.
- f. Refraining from removing any audio / digital content from studio computers, except for official use.
- g. Refraining from adding any audio / digital content to studio computers, except for official use.
- h. Recognizing and agreeing that visitors/guests in the studio will always be accompanied by core team producers. Producers shall not leave guests / visitors unattended in the studio.

Recruitment, Assessment and Compliance of Content:

Recruitment: The project starts with recruiting and assigning a (GM) General Manager/Senior Producer to manage this project, working from within the prison. The GM will probably recruit one or two other producers for support that will also work from within prison. All these candidates will need to be cleared by ISF before they are recruited. Part of their job will be to recruit incarcerated people to work at the radio station based on the guidelines outlined in this document. These guidelines can be further amended at a later stage to meet the requirements of ISF. The hired incarcerated people will be trained for a period of time and then be assigned positions and roles at the radio station.

Assessment and Compliance of Content: These guidelines apply to all audio content related to prisoners' radio. This includes material recorded for broadcast within facilities; or in the future, material for broadcast publicly; and material shared with media partners if and when required.

Areas of assessment include 1) Security; 2) Reputational Risk; and 3) Legal Obligations.

Security

1. Live broadcasting is not permitted.
 - a. All recorded material audio will be reviewed by the station's GM before broadcast to check that it follows these editorial guidelines.
 - b. Reviewers will be mindful of the potential of radio programs for passing coded messages or networking, and for bullying and harassment. Potentially problematic material will be referred to facility staff and to law enforcement, where appropriate.
2. Procedure for clearing audio for transmission on Prisoners' Radio.
 - a. The incarcerated producer leading an audio project will sign a Compliance Form stating that the audio complies with these editorial guidelines.
 - b. The audio is then reviewed by the station's GM, and/or other permitted staff members of ISF before broadcast.
 - c. If necessary, the station's GM will request further review by ISF staff before broadcast.
3. Access to equipment and studios.
 - a. Designated staff will maintain a system to manage access, and control of recording and data storage equipment.
 - b. Any means of broadcasting audio, or posting audio or other data online, will not be accessible to incarcerated residents, without prior express consent from ISF leadership.
 - c. The radio team(s) shall check the equipment periodically and maintain it. They will alert facility staff, and the station's GM, as needed.

4. Storage of audio content.

- a. The Radio Station shall save recorded audio after broadcast, for a minimum of 90 days, in case of a query about its content or its compliance.

Reputational Risk

1. The leadership of the Radio Station, both inside and outside facilities, will make every effort to ensure that confidence in the Station and ISF is not undermined.
 - a. Incarcerated Producer Participation: ISF prison staff and radio staff are collaboratively responsible for deciding who contributes to radio broadcasts with regard to the factors set out below.
 - b. Compliance Forms: All content must be accompanied by a signed Compliance Form (see 2a, above). Signers of this form certify that the material is suitable for broadcast according to these editorial guidelines.
 - c. No content shall be recorded or produced in the studios, including training exercises and equipment checks, if it would not comply with these editorial guidelines.
 - d. Awards, recognitions, and press: Before the station submits content for audio awards, radio staff will consult with ISF leadership.

Legal Obligations:

1. The Radio Station will be subject to Lebanese law, including copyright and licensing laws.
 - a. Licenses: The station's GM will ensure that correct licenses are held for the station.

- b. Logs: All radio producers shall maintain logs of aired content, frequency, and air times, in order to maintain license compliance.
- c. Contributors Release Form: All contributors who are invited to be interviewed, guest host, perform, or make any other contribution to a program, including those who have offered a written contribution (such as a poem) or a musical composition, must give their written consent before their contribution is broadcast. Contributors should be asked to sign the Contributor Release Form before they record their contribution. By signing the Contributor Release Form, contributors confirm that they understand:
 - I. What signing the form means.
 - II. Why they are being invited to contribute and where in the programming their contribution(s) may appear.
 - III. The context and other contributors/content in the programme or discussion.
 - IV. How this contributor will be described / introduced.
 - V. That they, the contributor, retain ownership of their original creative work.
 - VI. That they, the contributor, revoke all rights to compensation for the broadcast of their original work, and also for the publication of the same in the station's accompanying publications if any exist.
- d. No Sponsorship or Advertising
 - I. The station is a non-commercial media initiative. No sponsorship or advertising shall appear on the programs, without prior mutual consent of ISF and the station's leadership.

Editorial Guidelines:

1. All programs shall advance the mission and vision of the station.
2. The Radio Station shall abide by the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ): Minimize Harm; Be Accountable and Transparent; Act Independently; Seek Truth and Report It.
 - a. Minimize Harm.
 - i. Avoid labels and identifiers that engage assumptions and stereotypes; describe people in terms of traits such as age, disability, etc only when it is relevant to their story.
 - ii. Be aware of holy days and religious festivals. On these days material which would usually be acceptable may cause offense. Refer the station's GM, if in doubt.
 - iii. Screen songs before air. Do not rely on a 'radio edit' to be suitable for broadcast, as these may mask specific words while retaining inappropriate or discriminatory sentiment.
 - iv. Ensure that you understand all the words within a program before you sign it off as compliant. If any part of a program is in a language other than Arabic, or includes any slang terms, are you certain you understand what is being said?
 - v. Do not permit recorded material that encourages, glamorizes, or condones harmful or potentially harmful behaviour, including illegal drug use, misuse of alcohol, bullying, violence and self-harm.

- vi. Share content related to trauma with great sensitivity, including the topics of death, suicide, and self-harm.
- vii. Be sensitive and judicious with portrayals of extreme emotional situations, including family break-ups and deaths.
- viii. When producing content that addresses sensitive subjects, inform listeners about where they can seek support and more information. Refer to ISF staff and/or the station's GM, for suggestions.
- ix. Programming may not celebrate criminal activity or undermine the judicial process.
- x. Consider at all times the possible viewpoints of listeners who are victims.
- xi. Ensure that all contributors are not currently participating in active legal proceedings. Contempt of Court is the body of law which protects the integrity of the legal process from outside influences. Broadcasting a person's previous convictions (or other information) while that individual is participating in active legal proceedings, for example as a defendant, a witness or a claimant, could result in legal proceedings for contempt of court, or could prejudice current or future legal proceedings.
- xii. Do not broadcast speech or content that may engage in defamation - damage to the reputation of an individual, company, or organization. An individual can sue for damage to their reputation caused by a broadcast.

b. Be Accountable and Transparent

- I. Actively encourage and welcome ongoing listener participation in decisions concerning program content, duration, and schedules.
- II. Invite ongoing interaction with listeners, including welcoming and engaging constructively with listeners' comments and critique of programs.
- III. If you receive a listener complaint, document it. Pass the complaint and all documentation to the station's GM.
- IV. If you receive a media inquiry, do not attempt to respond directly. Refer them to the station's GM.
- V. Cultivate opportunities for listeners to engage in producing programs and contributing in other ways.
- VI. Anonymity: anonymity shall not be granted to producers or contributors.

c. Act Independently

- i. Reflect a wide range of opinions and explore a range of views.
- ii. Avoid being "hoaxed". Do not take one person's word as the truth and take particular care with contributors who may be unreliable or may fictionalize.
- iii. Calls to action: If your program encourages listeners to take any particular action, (for example, calling a helpline number, seeking a referral to a particular service, or contacting an NGO), please name this clearly in the Compliance Form.

d. Seek Truth and Report It

- I. Take extreme care to ensure that all material is factually correct.

- II. When engaging in journalistic broadcasting, maintain fair and balanced reporting.
 - III. Clearly distinguish opinions from facts.
 - IV. Be alert to contributors stating an opinion as fact, or inventing statistics or other evidence in an attempt to justify an opinion.
3. With some provisions, the Radio Station shall uphold producers' and contributors' freedoms of speech and expression, abiding by Lebanon's constitution.
4. However, the radio station will also include some provisions to the freedoms of producers and contributors. These provisions align with the Lebanese defamation laws and publications law. Under these provisions, programming will be rejected if it includes... *(the below to be amended as and where necessary)*:
- a. Obscene content. Obscene material that is not protected under the Lebanese constitution and cannot be broadcast at any time.
 - b. Indecent content. Indecent programming is defined as "language or material that, in context, depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory organs or activities."
 - c. Profane content. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has defined profane material to include language that is both "so grossly offensive to members of the public who actually hear it as to amount to a nuisance" and is sexual or excretory in nature or derived from such terms.
 - d. Any terms used to degrade a person based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

Next Steps

1. Identify a reputable NGO partner such as Dar Al Amal with existing presence in prisons (*important step based on insight received from interviews conducted as part of this study*)
2. Identify source for fund or grant (*American embassy in Lebanon already trains ISF members and provides grants for prison initiatives*).
3. Identify a potential prison facility for the pilot program.
4. Identify a potential GM and producer with the right skillset and experience to run the station.
5. Arabize the above plan and run by a lawyer or criminal justice expert for any required amendments to ensure it reflects key clauses of the Lebanese constitution and laws.
6. Schedule a meeting with interested high officials to take the plan forward.

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL OF RESEARCH



NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL

To: Mr. Dalia Akbar
Dr. Ghazi/Neil King
Assistant Professor
School of Arts & Sciences

APPROVAL DATED: 24 August 2022
EXPIRATION DATE: 24 August 2023
REVIEW TYPE: EXTENSIVE - INITIAL

Date: August 24, 2022
IRB #: LAU/SAS/GES/24/Aug/2022
Protocol Title: Prisoners' Rights: Giving a Voice to Lebanon's Prisoners

The above referenced research project has been approved by the Lebanese American University Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This approval is limited to the activities described in the Approved Research Protocol and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. **Enclosed with this letter are the stamped approved documents that must be used.**

APPROVAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU APPROVED HUMAN RESEARCH PROTOCOLS

LAU Research Process & Procedures: All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies & Procedures. PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research-related activity prior to IRB approval date or after the expiration date.

PROTOCOL EXPIRATION: The LAU IRB approval expiry date is listed above. The IRB Office will send an email at least 45 days prior to protocol approval expiry - Request for Continuing Review - in order to avoid any temporary hold on the initial protocol approval. It is your responsibility to apply for continuing review and receive continuing approval for the duration of the research project. Failure to send Request for Continuation before the expiry date will result in suspension of the approval of this research project on the expiration date.

MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS: All protocol modifications must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Notification of Project Completion: A notification of research project closure and a summary of findings must be sent to the IRB office upon completion. Study files must be retained for a period of 5 years from the date of completion of project completion.

IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE IRB ADMINISTRATORS IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB APPROVAL CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANCE ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at irb@lau.edu.lb



The IRB operates in conformance with the national regulations pertaining to research under the Lebanese Minister of Public Health's Decision No.141 dated 27/1/2018 under LAU IRB Authorization reference 2016/3786, the International guidelines for Good Clinical Practices, the US Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP) and the Food and Drug Administration (21CFR312), LAU IRB U.S. Identifier as an international institution (PAA000471) and IRB Registration # IRB20060504-LAU/IRB/01

Dr. Joseph Stephan
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:

IRB Initial Protocol Application	Received 11 August 2022
Research Protocol	Received 11 August 2022
Email phone invitation template	Received 11 August 2022
Informed Consent for interviews	Received 11 August 2022
Interview Questions	Received 11 August 2022
IRB Comments sent: 18 August 2022	PI response dated: 18 August 2022
CTI Training - Ghazi/Neil King	Cert # 10202643 (dated 1 February 2019)
CTI Training - Dalia Akbar	Cert # 33407200 (dated 23 December 2018)



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