

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

2006/2007

**The Development
of Sustainable
Independent Media
in the Middle East
and North Africa**



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The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in the Middle East and North Africa

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USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency that provides economic, development, and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States. The agency works to support long-term and sustainable economic growth and advances US foreign policy objectives by supporting economic growth, agriculture, and trade; global health; and democracy, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance.

USAID provides assistance in four regions of the world: Sub-Saharan Africa; Asia and the Near East; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Europe and Eurasia.

With headquarters in Washington, DC, USAID's strength is its field offices around the world. They work in close partnership with private voluntary organizations, indigenous organizations, universities, American businesses, international agencies, other governments, and other US government agencies. USAID has working relationships with more than 3,500 American companies and over 300 US-based private voluntary organizations.

MEPI

The United States Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative provides tangible support to reformers in the Middle East and North Africa so democracy can spread, education can thrive, economies can grow, and women can be empowered. In four years, this presidential initiative has devoted \$293 million to more than 350 programs in 15 countries and the Palestinian territories to support the aspirations of those working to build a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East. Examples of the initiative's work includes campaign schools, independent media training, civic education, entrepreneurship skill building, youth leadership development, trade transparency promotion, business hubs for women, and judicial and legal reform training.

UNESCO

UNESCO, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, maintains a Communication and Information (CI) sector that is guided by the principles of freedom of expression and freedom of the press as basic human rights. Since 2003, the CI sector has supported the Iraqi people in their transition to democracy. Among other projects, UNESCO facilitated initiatives to develop a national media policy and provided practical guidance for journalists and civil society prior to the elections. Training and networking opportunities were made available to more than 550 media workers and professionals.

IREX

IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development.

Founded in 1968, IREX has an annual portfolio of \$50 million and a staff of over 500 professionals worldwide. IREX and its partner IREX Europe deliver cross-cutting programs and consulting expertise in more than 50 countries.

There has been little improvement in the development of independent media since the publication of the last edition. Freedom of speech laws that exist are not enforced and dissenting opinions critical of the government are often violently suppressed. Advertising is controlled by the government and spending clearly favors government-friendly outlets, stymieing the growth of independent media.



TUNISIA

On July 25, 2007, Tunisia celebrated the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic. During a speech celebrating the occasion, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali boasted that the government had “enriched the information and communication landscape and offered opportunity for the expression of different opinions,” according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Much like the speech, the laws claiming protecting freedom of speech and “different opinions” exist in name only. In reality, the year 2007 marked a further deterioration in press freedoms and access to information as independent journalists continued to be harassed by government authorities and news from foreign press continued to be blocked in any way possible.

There has been little improvement in the development of independent media since the publication of the last edition. Freedom of speech laws that exist are not enforced and dissenting opinions critical of the government are often violently suppressed. Advertising is controlled by the government and spending clearly favors government-friendly outlets, stymieing the growth of independent media. NGOs and other organizations advocating free speech are either closely monitored or denied the right to form.

There have been a few positive developments. In January 2006, Ben Ali eliminated a process known as *dépôt legal*, which forced all printed material to receive government approval before publication. Access to the Internet has become easier and cheaper, and the number of people using the Internet has also grown. However, this development is tempered by the fact that Tunisia has one of the most aggressive Internet filtering programs in the world.

The continued weak environment for independent media and increased crackdown by the government on dissenting voices resulted in a drop of 0.27 in Objective 1, free speech. Other objective scores remained essentially the same as last year, and the overall MSI score dropped slightly. Tunisian media still operate in an “unsustainable, anti-free press” environment and journalists and media outlets that cover stories putting the government in an unfavorable light face severe challenges doing their job and reaching a wide audience.

Due to the repressive environment in Tunisia, IREX did not conduct a panel for Tunisia. This chapter represents research conducted on the situation and discussions with various professionals knowledgeable about the situation in Tunisia. The names of those contacted will not be published to protect their personal security. This chapter therefore provides a summary of the state of media in Tunisia.

TUNISIA AT A GLANCE

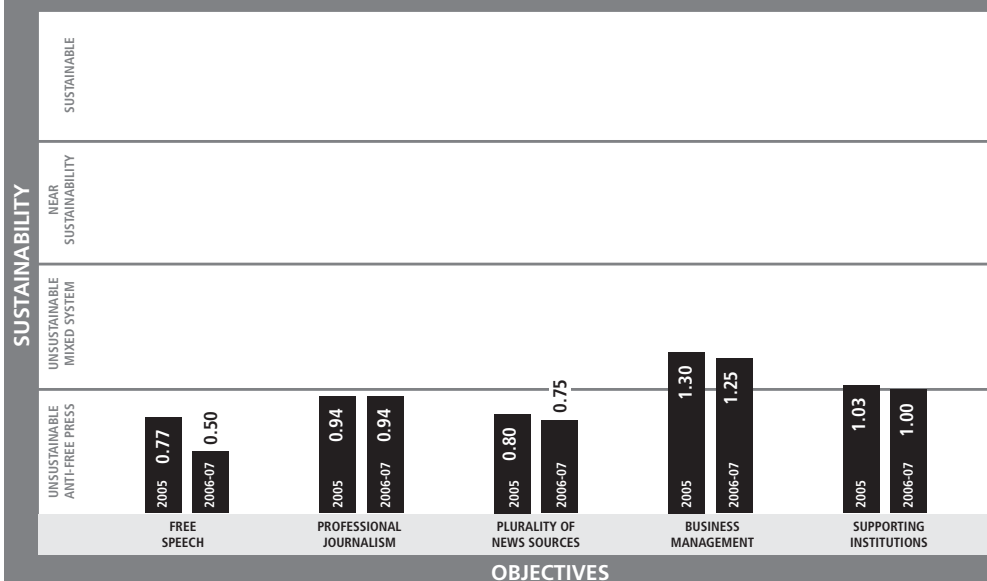
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 10,383,577 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Tunis
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Arab 98%, European 1%, Jewish and other 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 98%, Christian 1%, Jewish and other 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Arabic (official and one of the languages of commerce), French (commerce) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$30.09 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$6,490 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 74.3% (male 83.4%, female 65.3%) (2004 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali (since November 7, 1987)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 5 daily papers; Radio: 4 main stations; Television Stations: 2 main stations (1 public, 1 private)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** *Al-Chourouk* (private) and *La Presse* (ruling party affiliated) are the two most popular newspapers in Tunisia (SIGMA 2006)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top 3 television channels: Tunis7 (52.2 percent), Hannibal (21.5 percent), and LBC channel (14.9 percent) (SIGMA 2006)
- > **News agencies:** Agence Tunis Afrique Presse (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** \$63.2 (SIGMA 2006)
- > **Internet usage:** 1,295,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: TUNISIA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1): Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2): Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3): Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4): Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Tunisia Objective Score: 0.50

Freedom of expression is guaranteed through Article 8 of the Tunisian Constitution, stating that, "The liberties of opinion, expression, the press, publication, assembly, and association are guaranteed and exercised within the conditions defined by the law." Tunisia has also ratified numerous international human-rights treaties guaranteeing freedom of speech such as the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights. In reality, the freedoms of speech and the press are extremely limited. The press freedoms are among the most restricted in the Arab world. Countless reports by human rights organizations have been produced over the past 20 years observing the government's record of violations of civil liberties, freedom of speech, and due process.

Government policy and the judiciary are often identified as the main obstacles to the proper enforcement of Article 8 of the Tunisian Constitution. Although Article 65 of the constitution states that, "The judiciary is independent; the magistrates in the exercise of their functions are not subjected to any authority other than the law," in reality judges are heavily influenced when it comes to freedom of speech cases. Lawyers who defend journalists are also influenced through intimidation, harassment, and, sometimes, physical assault. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, on August 31, 2007, the office of Ayachi Hammami, a human rights lawyer defending journalist Omar Mestiri, was set alight by arsonists.

Article 1 of the constitution states that Islam is the national religion, yet the state has focused on suppressing "militant Islam." The government often politicizes this issue and uses it as an excuse to curtail political freedoms and civil liberties. The 1993 "anti-terrorism" law has been interpreted quite liberally and used to criminalize peaceful opposition activities. In September 2006, the International Press Institute reported that an edition of the French daily *Le Figaro* was banned in Tunisia because it contained an "opinion piece addressing the response to remarks made about Islam in the 12 September address of Pope Benedict XVI and containing commentary on the Prophet Mohammad."

The government uses the Press Code of 1975 to stifle critical reporting, as the law gives significant leeway to prosecutors to fine or imprison those guilty of "subversion" and defamation. Article 13 of the Press Code requires authorization from the Ministry of the Interior for issuing publications. Investors in the press are still denied the right

to own publications. The government tightly controls the circulation of both domestic and foreign publications.

The one positive development was the end of *dépôt legal*, what amounted to a system of prior restraint. This was welcome news for the opposition press because they were the most affected by this procedure, which delayed or banned distribution or required that articles be removed and the publications reprinted.

The January 2004 Telecommunication Code regulates the licensing of radio and television. The government tightly controls domestic press and broadcasting. The Agence National des Frequences (National Agency for Frequencies) has the legal authority to issue licenses for public and private broadcasts and is under the control of the Ministry of Telecommunications. According to the BBC Tunisian country profile page, "until late 2003 the state had a monopoly on radio broadcasting. The state-run Tunisian Radio and Television Establishment (ERTT) operates two national TV channels and several radio networks." The licensing system is heavily politicized. Those granted licenses are typically close to the family of the president. There are many cases of individuals who have applied for radio licenses but are still waiting for responses from the relevant authorities. Filing complaints against the Higher Communications Council is rarely effective.

Print media do not need to be licensed, but they are required by law to obtain from the Ministry of Information a copyright registration, which is valid for one year. In practice,

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

The government uses the Press Code of 1975 to stifle critical reporting, as the law gives significant leeway to prosecutors to fine or imprison those guilty of “subversion” and defamation.

authorities have consistently blocked the registration of new, independent print outlets. Registration is often denied to people deemed a threat by the government. A few examples of this are Sihem Ben Sedrine of *Kalima*, Mohamed Talbi for his review *Maqassed*, Nadia Omrane for *Alternative Citoyenne*, Noura Boursali for *Maghrebine*, and Abdellatif Fourati for *Al-Adib*.

According to Article 14 of the press code, the Ministry of the Interior also has the power to decide which licensed publications can be authorized to print and distribute. Printing houses are prohibited from printing publications that are not licensed, as well as those with a license that cannot show the authorization to print and distribute. This is typically only applied to the opposition press.

The government intimidates those it considers to be dissidents, and this can include journalists, human rights activists, or members of the opposition political parties. Pressure comes in many forms, such as stifling police surveillance, arbitrary searches and arrest, travel bans, and loss of jobs. Family members may be subject to similar harassment. The government also will restrict access to press conferences of those it finds inconvenient.

There were countless incidents of harassment of journalists. A partial list includes Hamadi Jebali and Adballah Zouari, members of the now-defunct Islamist weekly newspaper *Al-Fajr*, Lotfi Hajji, president of the independent Tunisian Journalists Syndicate, Neziha Rejiba and Omar Mestiri, editors of the blocked online magazine *Kalima*, and Mohamed Fourati, former contributor to *Al-Mawkif*.

The violations of free speech do not receive any coverage in the media controlled by the government, public or private. Only the few existing opposition outlets and the communiqués of human-rights groups highlight these violations. Persecuted journalists have real no support within Tunisia except in very limited circles. There is no real desire to advocate for these types of rights within Tunisian society. As a result, journalists often feel unsafe in their work and this leads to self-censorship.

The press law does not discriminate between state-owned media and private or partisan media. In practice, all the privileges are afforded to both the state media and the private outlets that support government policies. These privileges include higher salaries for journalists and editors, higher volume of advertising, facilities of distribution, and better access to government news and information.

No laws protect the editorial independence of state media. In fact, the ruling party and businesses close to the president interfere in the editorial content of both state and private media. The government appoints editors, managers, and journalists at public media organizations. This alliance results in the protection of public figures from criticism and accountability.

Defamation of a public official is a criminal offense, according to the Press Law most recently updated in 2006. The penalties include a minimum of one year in prison and a fine of TND 120. Prison sentences are stipulated in the Press Law under Articles 49, 51, and 52, among others according to OpenNet Initiative. Criticism of the president or his family is especially taboo. In July 2007, human rights lawyer Mohammed Abbou was released after two-and-a-half years in prison. He was originally jailed for writing opinion pieces on the domestically blocked website Tunisnews criticizing President Ben Ali's autocratic rule, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. He is still closely monitored and harassed by authorities however. In December 2007, well known Tunisian blogger Slim Boukhdhir was sentenced to eight months in prison for criticizing the president and the first family.

There is no law guaranteeing citizens and journalists the right to access public information that would allow for scrutiny of the performance of the government and the administration. Public officials are rarely accessible to journalists. The news about the activities of the president circulates through a special broadcast unit and the national news agency, the Tunis Afrique Press (TAP). Ministers hold a monthly press conference with selected journalists to show their programs, which are rarely challenged. Information given to journalists through the official channels is disseminated without any questions asked. The international news is filtered on the Internet, and what is well matched with the government guidelines is published.

Journalists who work for foreign media may be denied press accreditations by the government sponsored Tunisian External Communication Agency (ATCE). A commission within the Ministry of Communication determines accreditation of Tunisian journalists. The commission consists of representatives of the Association of Tunisian Journalists and the editors' association. Some journalists have been denied press cards on the grounds of their political opinions.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Tunisia Objective Score: 0.94

The Association of Tunisian Journalists (ATJ) adopted a code of ethics in 1975. The code requires journalists to, among other things, defend the freedom of the press, refuse any assignment contrary to the honor of the profession, and refrain from writing advertising articles in the form of news information. Most importantly, they should respect the views of their colleagues and refrain from disparaging them. This code, however, has no practical use because it is not enforced and the association itself disregarded it when it ceased defending journalists and instead supported the president and the government.

Journalism in Tunisia generally is not well sourced because it is dependent on the government view transmitted by the state news agency and the presidential broadcast unit. The media is therefore biased in their treatment of the opposition and certain civil-society groups. It is also unbalanced in its coverage. According to the Tunisia Monitoring Group's April 2006 fact-finding mission, "While in some small-circulation newspapers there is now an unprecedented amount of balanced reporting on local issues, the larger circulation official press continues to lack balance." There are many suspect practices among journalists in Tunisia, including the mixing of advertising and news, the accepting of gifts from officials and private business, and the launching of slander campaigns against opposition journalists and human-rights activists.

Salaries of journalists are low compared with those of other professions, and the turnover rate within the media sector

is high. For journalists working at private print media, the average salary is less than working at the ruling party-owned press. At the partisan opposition press, the average monthly salary is even less for the few permanent staff, as these kinds of outlets rely mainly on volunteers. At the public and private broadcasters, the average salary is a bit higher for journalists. For professionals in other sectors, such as banking and insurance, the average salary is comparatively higher.

Self-censorship is widespread because editors and journalists are fearful of losing their jobs. Daily media content is largely limited to the activities of the president and the government and some international, cultural, and sports news. Discussion of corruption and human rights is taboo. Other important topics that are not covered include demonstrations and strikes by workers, civil-society activism, and political Islam. National security, including anti-terrorism activities, and the work of the secret services, are not discussed.

Because of these restrictions, entertainment tends to eclipse news content. Approximately 70 percent of television and radio programming is entertainment, with an overabundance of music, games, and sport programs. These are safe to report on and get high ratings since they are not political.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Tunisia Objective Score: 0.75

Because of their need to be near the center of power, the national media are concentrated in the capital and the major cities. The concerns of outlying areas may be limited to broadcasts about rural issues for a few hours a week. However, 99 percent of the population is covered by the state broadcasters, while the newly established private broadcasters each cover different parts of the country. Radio Mosaïque, an FM station owned by MED TELECOM and launched in November 2003, covers greater Tunis and the North of the Cap Bon for 18 hours per day. Al-Jawhara FM radio began broadcasting in July 2005 and covers the region of the Sahel. Private television station Hannibal, which started in February 2005, can be watched through Arabsat and Nilesat. A new private FM station dubbed, "Ezzeitouna for the Holy Koran," was launched in September 2007. According to the BBC Tunisia Country Profile, "Egyptian and pan-Arab satellite TV stations also command large audiences. Two London-based opposition TV channels can be received via satellite; Al Mustaqillah TV and Zeitouna TV."

Domestic radio and television stations are entirely state-controlled, as are several of the largest daily newspapers. Access to foreign press sources is heavily

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

Self-censorship is widespread because editors and journalists are fearful of losing their jobs. Daily media content is largely limited to the activities of the president and the government and some international, cultural, and sports news.

regulated. Foreign newspapers that are critical of the Tunisian government are available, but only a few can afford to buy them. The Minister of the Interior regulates entry of the foreign press to the Tunisian market. His authorization can be denied under the press code for publications that contain articles critical of the government.

Internet usage within Tunisia is on the rise. Internet access is relatively cheap and costs are continually dropping, however computers remain expensive for the average citizen. Therefore, "The primary means of going on-line for Tunisians are the 'Publinets,'" according to OpenNet Initiative.

All forms of media, both domestic and international, are heavily restricted. The domestic outlets that are most often targeted are those of the political opposition. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, *The Muwatinoon Weekly*, the publication launched by the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties in January 2007, was harassed by authorities. Article 19 reported that the Tunisian Progressive Democratic Party, and their official newspaper, *Al-Mawkef*,

was evicted from their offices in Tunis in October 2007, an office they had occupied for 15 years.

Foreign publications are heavily censored and the Ministry of Information frequently bans editions critical of the president or ruling party. Foreign editions are also regularly seized. According to the International Press Institute, in 2006 both *Al Mara'a Al Youm* magazine from Dubai and the French daily *Le Monde* had some of their issues confiscated for being critical of the government. In October 2006, the Tunisian government actually suspended diplomatic relations with Qatar because of an interview Al-Jazeera conducted with Moncef Al Marzouki, a leading human rights activist in Tunisia. According to IFEX, issues of *Le Monde* and fellow French publication *Le Nouvel Observateur* were seized because they published articles by Tunisian journalist Taoufik Ben Brik that were critical of Tunisian government.

Despite these efforts to stymie access to international news sources, Tunisians get international radio broadcasts and satellite television in cities as well as rural areas, and this access compensates for the lack of international news in the national media. Private tabloid newspapers such as *Al-Bayane*, which puts out 140,000 copies per week, are popular because of their sensational news and sports coverage. Partisan opposition newspapers such as *Al-Mawkef*, which provide alternative news, can only reach the small urban elite.

Tunisia has one of the most determined Internet filtering regimes in the world. The government invests heavily in telecommunications infrastructure and has passed modern telecommunications legislation. In 1996, the Tunisian Ministry of Communication formed the Tunisian Internet Agency, giving the government complete control over Internet filtering. A May 2007 survey by OpenNet Initiative placed Tunisia alongside Burma, China, Iran, Syria, and Vietnam as the worst politically-motivated filtering offenders. Websites containing political issues or reports of human rights abuse are the most susceptible to filtering. Discussion forums are also heavily monitored. According to the International Press Institute, "Authorities use sophisticated methods to limit access to Web sites, launched inside and outside the country, and often act with great speed, blocking sites just hours or days after they have been launched." Websites of the opposition parties are often blocked as well.

The Publinets, as Internet cafés are known, are heavily regulated. Owners of the Publinets are required by the state to monitor their customers. In 2004, a group known as the "Zarzis seven" was sentenced to 19 years in prison for allegedly viewing terrorist websites, according to the International Press Institute. They were seized during a police raid on one of the Publinets in Zarzis. They were later released in 2006.

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

State media are certainly biased toward government news, and the opinions of opposition figures are not broadcast, even during election campaigns. Private broadcasters are limited under Article 62 of Law No. 2003-58 of August 2003, which amended the electoral code. It says that during elections, it is forbidden “for any person to use a private radio or television (national or foreign) or broadcast from abroad with the aim of inciting to vote for a candidate or for a list of candidates.” Editors and journalists at state media help perpetuate this problem because they do not perceive their role as serving the public interest.

TAP distributes news to all print and broadcast media that subscribe to its services. Only a few international news agencies are present in Tunisia; AFP has a bureau in Tunis, and Reuters and AP have correspondents, but the news reports from these agencies are disseminated by TAP.

The newly established radio and satellite television broadcasters produce their own programs, but are mainly restricted to the area of entertainment, including music and talk shows with artists. The private television station Hannibal often uses the archives of the national channel TV7. It does not broadcast news bulletins. State television produces a variety of programs in the domain of culture, art, nature, economy, and tourism as well as children and youth entertainment. Controversial social issues are either avoided or covered in a way to show that the government is working to solve them.

Media concentration is not an issue in Tunisia. This is mainly because of Article 15 of the press code, which limits ownership to two publications of the same frequency that should not exceed 30 percent of the overall newspaper distribution in the country. However, since the government or those close to the president operate a preponderance of the media, effectively ownership is concentrated.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Tunisia Objective Score: 1.25

Advertising continues to flourish, although ATCE, a powerful state organ responsible for external communications, controls it. The government uses the agency as a means of pressure against opposition media. Government-friendly public and private media receive most of the advertising while the opposition press receives little, stunting its growth.

According to available data by the media market research group SIGMA, the advertising revenue for 2006 amounted to \$82.2 million, a 12 percent increase over 2005. Of that total, \$34.7 million went for television, \$21 million for the press, and

\$7.5 million for radio. Ten of the top companies operating in Tunisia spent approximately \$18 million advertising.

The absence of published annual accounts by newspapers makes it impossible to evaluate the proportion of advertising in their revenues. However, with an average 70 percent of the space of most newspapers dedicated to advertising messages, it is believed that the revenue could be substantial. Some of the tabloid press received a significant portion of their revenue from circulation as well.

In addition to public advertising, the state grants subsidies to private media to cover some of the cost of the purchase of newsprint and journalism training. Newspapers of the political parties represented in the parliament receive 60 percent of the cost of their newsprint from the government.

Four private firms, SIGMA Conseil, MediaScan, MedNews, and Tunisimétrie, the last being owned by the French firm Metric Line and its Tunisian partner Prodata, produce audience surveys and market research. According to SIGMA, Tunisian television channels have 46 percent of the audience, Pan-Arab satellite television has 45 percent, and French television channels have 4 percent. The top 10 television channels most watched by Tunisians in 2006 as recorded by SIGMA were Tunis7 (52.2 percent), Hannibal (21.5 percent), LBC channel (14.9 percent), Rotana Cinema, which is owned and chaired by Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal (10.3 percent), Al-Jazeera (9.0 percent), MBC2 cinema channel (5.3 percent), Rotana music channel (4.1 percent), Abu Dhabi TV, (3.7 percent), and finally the French TV channels, M6 and TF1, with 3 percent each. The private newspaper *Al-Chourouk* and the newspaper of the ruling party, *La Presse*, are the two most popular newspapers in Tunisia.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Tunisia Objective Score: 1.00

The Tunisian government is actively hostile to professional organizations and NGOs supporting independent media. It is very difficult to form an association within Tunisia. There is an association of newspaper editors called the Association Tunisienne des Directeurs des Journaux (Tunisian Association of Newspapers Editors). It purports to defend the interests of newspaper owners and editors, but it is under government control. As a result of its ties to the Tunisian government, it was expelled from the World Association of Newspapers in 1997.

There are two associations of journalists. The Association of Tunisian Journalists (AJT) is legal and the oldest. The Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists was created in April 2004, but the authorities have refused to recognize it. It was meant to be an alternative to the state manipulated AJT, but is still being repressed by the government.

Four Tunisian NGOs exist to defend freedom of expression and the media. The only legal one is the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LTDH), and its activities are regularly banned. The LTDH publishes statements denouncing violations of freedom of expression and produces an annual report on freedom of the press in Tunisia. There non-legal ones include the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (CNLT), the Union of the Free Writers, and the Observatoire Pour la Presse, l'Édition et la Création. All are active in advocacy despite various methods of repression that targets their leadership.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

According to the International Press Institute, CNLT and LTDH, in particular, have faced relentless police and judicial interference. In November 2006, police blocked the entrances to the CNLT offices in Tunis, not allowing families of political prisoners to enter the premises.

International NGOs are also often denied access. In January 2006, the IFEX website was officially banned. In March 2007, "Members of the IFEX Tunisia Monitoring Group delegation visiting Tunisia were physically prevented from visiting imprisoned human rights lawyer and writer Mohammed Abbou." Article 19 reported in May 2006 that Yves Steiner, board member of International Amnesty Switzerland, who was visiting Tunisia, was expelled to France.

Journalism training is carried out by the Institute of Press and the Information Sciences in Tunis. It is a public institution supported by the Ministry of Education. It provides students with four years of theoretical and practical training with specialization in journalism or communications. Most graduates get their first jobs in the public media. However, this trend is changing due to various challenges faced by journalism education within Tunisia. Enrollment within journalism degree programs is increasing, but the amount of jobs available is decreasing. The refusal of the government to authorize the establishment of new publications and broadcast media reduce job opportunities for the journalism graduates. The amount of practical training is also limited in the degree program. Also, the political environment comes into play and the fact that freedom of speech is stymied discourages young would-be journalists.

There is a public institute for further training as well, called the Centre Africain pour le Perfectionnement des Journalistes et des Communicateurs (African Center for the Improvement of Journalists and Communicators). It was established in 1986 and operates under the guidance of the prime minister. It is financed by the state, European and foreign donors, and by a tax collected from the private media. The Center organizes short-term training with a focus on the technical aspects of media activities. However, the media do not often use the services of the Center because it is very difficult in the current political environment to incorporate the new training into their work.

There is also some limited training supported by international institutions like UNESCO and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, but their impact is widely regarded as minimal. Some students continue their higher journalism education abroad, mainly in France. However, when they return to Tunisia, they tend to take jobs in public relations or teaching rather than journalism.

Private companies operate the supply of newsprint, printing facilities, and distribution activities and are generally well-managed and profitable. Some of these companies receive subsidies from the state. The most important distribution company is the Société Tunisienne de Presse, partially owned by the French group Hachette and managed by people close to the government. This creates an environment where censorship of foreign publications is commonplace and opposition newspapers critical of the government are repressed.

Further, they are subject to the rules of the press code, which prohibits the printing or distribution of unauthorized publications. State-owned media and private media that support the government are always first to be serviced and partisan opposition newspapers are sometimes faced with delays in their printing or distribution. Kiosks are also privately owned and run by the same distribution companies. Their policy is that government newspapers should be better exposed to the public.

Broadcasting transmitters are under state control and managed by the Office National de la Telediffusion (National Broadcasting Corporation of Tunisia), which has the responsibility for broadcasting programs of all state and private broadcasters in addition to parts of the programs of the Italian public channel RAI-UNO.

List of Panel Participants

Due to the repressive environment in Tunisia, IREX did not conduct a panel for Tunisia. This chapter represents research conducted on the situation and discussions with various professionals knowledgeable about the situation in Tunisia. The names of those contacted will not be published to protect their personal security. This chapter therefore provides a summary of the state of media in Tunisia.