

MEDIA

SUSTAINABILITY INDEX—

MIDDLE EAST AND

NORTH AFRICA



MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2005

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

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Printer: Kirby Lithographics Inc.

Acknowledgment: This publication was made possible through support provided by UNESCO, the United States Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Cooperative Agreement No. #DFD-A-00-05-00243 (MSI-MENA) via a Task Order by the Academy for Educational Development.

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ISSN 1546-0878

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.

OVERALL, 2005 WAS A MIX OF ADVANCES AND SETBACKS FOR THE MEDIA. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, THE GENERAL INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT PROMISED TO ELIMINATE PRE-CENSORSHIP, AND A GOVERNMENT DRAFT LAW ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION WAS PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT.



Jordan's leadership continues to struggle with balancing calls for democratic reform against what it sees as the conflicting need for security in an unstable region. A small country with limited natural resources, Jordan is keenly aware of Iraq on its eastern border, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to its western side.

In 2005, King Abdullah II commissioned a royal committee to draw up a National Agenda, the country's 10-year blueprint for reform. The National Agenda was presented as a process to guide the country to greater press freedom, judicial independence, political pluralism, and a modernized society. Of particular interest to proponents of a liberalized media sector was a recommendation to end mandatory membership in the Jordanian Press Association for journalists and editors. However, the proposal infuriated the syndicate leadership, which waged a newspaper and television campaign against it as a threat to the sovereignty of Jordan and its media. By most accounts, the suggestion was put on hold.

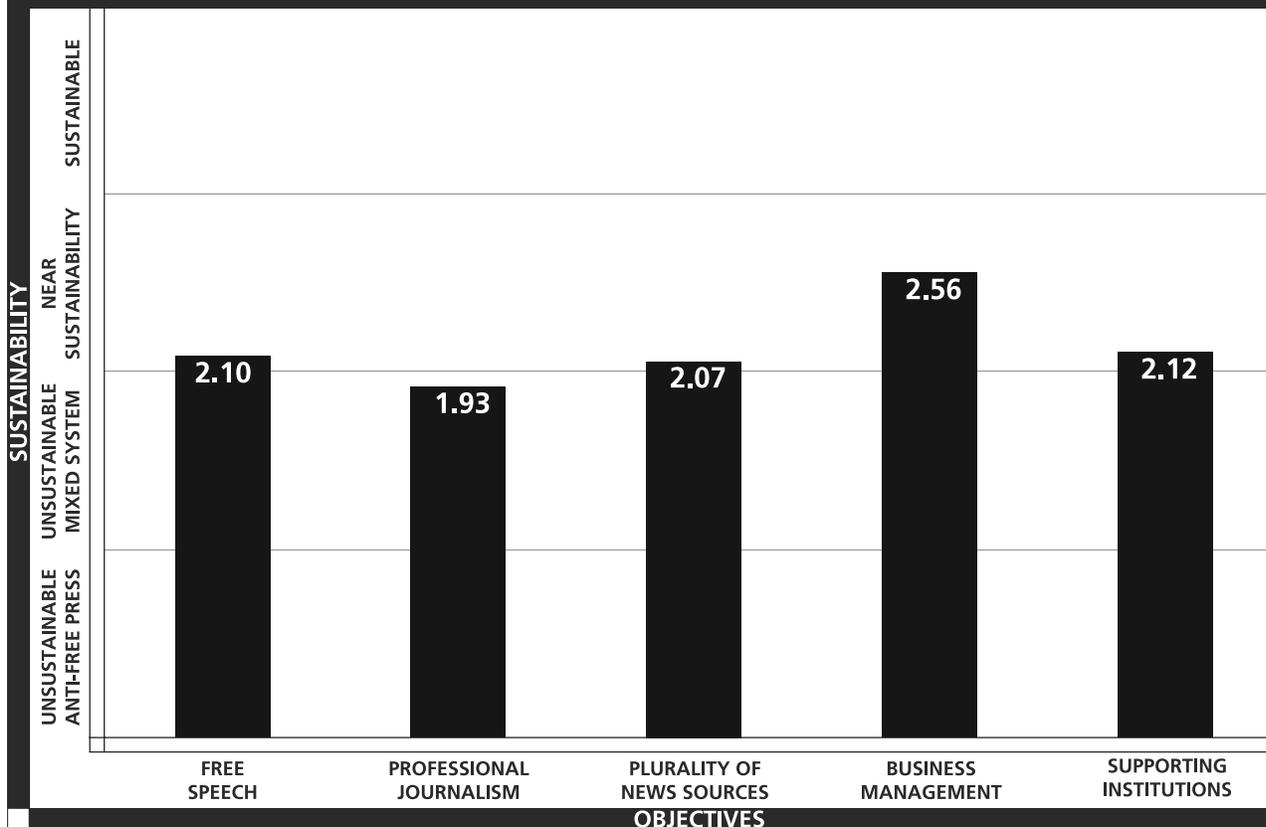
The entire National Agenda reform process itself appeared to be fading. Jordan's sense of being one of the safest countries in the region was shattered by three hotel bombings on November 9, 2005, after which the king appointed Marouf Al Bakheet as prime minister and gave him the green light to adopt tougher security policies. There was fear in some quarters that a crackdown on freedoms would come under the pretext of a war against Muslim militancy.

Overall, 2005 was a mix of advances and setbacks for the media. On the positive side, the General Intelligence Department promised to eliminate pre-censorship, and a government draft law on access to information was presented to parliament.

Participants in the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) assessment noted that the media outlets generally are equipped with modern technology and have unrestricted access to international news and varied information sources, including the Internet.

However, as most MSI panelists agreed, self-censorship prevails. Proposed amendments to the Press and Publications Law presented to parliament in 2004 were not discussed during 2005, and panelists said a number of media-related laws continue to restrict press freedom.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: JORDAN



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.

It was a particularly difficult year for Jordan's weekly newspapers. King Abdullah II criticized their performance in August, saying they published rumors and lies at the expense of national interests. The Jordanian Press Association denounced them as outsiders to the profession. The situation worsened when then-Prime Minister Adnan Badran announced that government advertising and subscriptions would be authorized only through him personally. Some of the weeklies suffered financially, including *Al Mihwar* weekly, which lost about \$25,000 (or 60 percent of its profits), according to its editor-in-chief.

While the state's monopoly on broadcast media was lifted in 2002, most MSI participants said that the regulatory Audiovisual Commission does not encourage news-oriented radio stations to start up, requiring 50 percent more in license fees than for entertainment-only outlets.

Journalists' pay continued to be another obstacle for the media. Participants estimated the average income in the print media at \$500 monthly, and perhaps 20 percent more at the most profitable paper, the pro-government *Al Rai*. At the state-run radio and television, the average salary is between \$350 and \$500 monthly. As a result of these low wages, panelists said, talented journalists tend to leave Jordan to work with regional satellite channels or join foreign media outlets.

The MSI panelists gave Jordan's media sector an overall score of 2.16, considering it at the first stages of moving toward sustainability through law reform and business development. The panel ranked all objectives above the 2.0 threshold except the professionalism of the media, which lagged with a score of 1.93.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Jordan Objective Score: 2.10 / 4.00

The Jordanian Constitution declares freedom of expression and the press through Article 15: "The State shall guarantee freedom of opinion. Every Jordanian is entitled to freely express his or her opinion in words, writing, drawing, and other means of expression, within the mandate of the law. Also, the press and publications are free within the law." The key impediments to practicing freedom of speech arise from articles in other media-related laws, most MSI panelists agreed. Yahya Shukkeir, consultant to the Higher Media Council and an editor at the independent *Arab Alyawm* daily, said these other laws "do not reflect or guarantee the freedom provided by the Constitution."

There are nearly 20 statutes in Jordan that are related to the media, chief among them the Press and Publications Law and the penal code. Provisions in the penal code

allow authorities to detain, prosecute, and imprison journalists if they commit crimes against the internal or external security of the state. This includes publishing state secrets or material that damages national unity, harms Jordan's relations with other states, instigates sectarianism or racism, insults religions, or lowers confidence in the national currency. The Press and Publications Law prohibits journalists from publishing any material that contradicts principles of freedom and national responsibility or the values of the Arab and Islamic nation, or disparages the king or royal family, or relates in any way to the Armed Forces or security forces unless permission has been obtained

"The laws are politicized and controlled by the government, which has a strong relation with parliament, the latter representing a conservative power," Nidal Mansour said.

Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal/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 the offended party 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.

“Public access is very restricted,” said Daoud Kuttab. “Census information, especially dealing with the origin of citizens, is a state secret. Confusion also has been felt with the issue of unemployment figures.”

from those forces. It also requires journalists to become members of the Jordanian Press Association in order to practice the profession.

The government reviewed amendments to the Press and

Publications Law in 2004, the seventh time this had been done since 1993. The proposed changes could be expected to raise the ceiling of freedom by easing content restrictions and providing journalists with legal access to information, but no action was taken on them during 2005. A draft law on freedom of information, also with parliament, would grant the public access to public documents and records unless they are classified as state secrets, and allow journalists to appeal to the Higher Court of Justice if their requests were turned down.

Some MSI participants were skeptical that these key legislative initiatives for press freedom would be ratified in the wake of the November bombings in Amman or the controversy that erupted over the cartoons depicting the Prophet, particularly because two Jordanian weeklies published them. “These incidents could be used as a pretext to restrict press freedoms,” said Jihad Al Mansi, senior reporter at *Al Ghad*, an independent daily that entered the market in 2004. Panelist Nidal Mansour, director of the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, a nongovernmental advocacy group set up in 1999, said that societal norms in Jordan are governed by tribalism, Islamists, and a security mindset that do not embrace press freedom. “The laws are politicized and controlled by the government, which has a strong relation with parliament, the latter representing a conservative power,” he said.

Others, including Yarmouk University journalism professor Mahmoud Shalabiyyeh, disagreed. He said, “The law allows for freedom of expression within limitations, (and) applying the law is necessary when it comes to issues pertaining to defamation and instigating discord. This would prevent harm, and ensure that people’s feelings are respected.”

A poll carried out by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists conducted in May 2005 showed that of the 100 journalists representing daily and weekly newspapers and the state-run Petra news agency polled, 37.5 percent of the participating journalists believe that

laws restrict freedom of the press, 33.3 percent believe that they have no influence, and 26 percent believe that they enhance press freedom.

Jordanian journalists do not feel the threat of physical crimes against them. What really intimidates journalists, some MSI participants noted, is when violations of the penal code law are handled by the State Security Court. Punishments range from three- to six-month jail terms and/or a fine of about \$7,000.

Libel and defamation are criminal-code cases, and prison terms of up to three months or fines are possible. In 2005, seven such cases were reported in the press, according to the government’s Press and Publications Department. Of these, five were filed by the Press and Publications Department, one by the Ministry of Environment, and one by a citizen. Lawyer Mohammad Quteishat, a consultant at the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, said such cases are more frequent than those listed officially. Most of the cases were resolved with findings in favor of the journalists, but at least one weekly was fined \$10,000 and one journalist was sentenced to up to two months in prison, according to editors and media lawyers.

Broadcast licenses are issued by the Audiovisual Commission, a government body set up in 2002 with administrative and financial independence. Its director is appointed by the Council of Ministers. According to the commission’s bylaws, the council may refuse to grant broadcasting licenses to any entity without stating the reasons for such rejection. In the view of MSI panelist Daoud Kuttab, director of Internet and radio broadcaster AmmanNet, this means “the commission’s procedures are not independent or transparent.”

Fees for licensing entertainment-only radio stations range between about \$21,000 and \$28,000, depending on the location. The commission asks an additional 50 percent in licensing fees for stations seeking to offer news. By the end of 2005, 14 independent FM radio stations had been licensed, most providing light music, advertising, and entertainment. AmmanNet Radio was the only one offering some news and public-affairs programming. There were recommendations among the panelists that the commission include independent members so that its decisions will not be influenced by the government. Other panelists called for stations that meet the public needs instead of focusing on entertainment. Mohamed Alayyan, the CEO of *Al Ghad* whose company also established ATV as Jordan’s first independent terrestrial and satellite station during 2005, recommended that there be regular broadcasting market research “in order to fill the gaps and help the market mature in a balanced way.”

Market entry for media outlets is governed by the financial conditions stipulated in the Press and Publications Law. The minimum capital requirements are \$700,000 for daily publications, \$70,000 for non-dailies, and \$7,000 for specialized publications such as monthly magazines or advertising weeklies.

Panel members also noted that there are custom duties levied on equipment, and 16 percent sales tax on all printing services.

Panelist Amjad Kadi, a professor of journalism at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Yarmouk University, argued “that some papers are purely investments and have nothing to offer for the freedom of expression, so it is not suitable for them to ask for exemptions.”

Jordan TV, Jordan Radio, and the Petra news agency are run by the government, which also owns 55 percent in the *Al Rai* daily and 30 percent in *Ad-Dustour*, another daily. Government ownership influences the editorial line as well as the appointment of the editors-in-chief, according to panel members. The state supports these papers by placing advertisements, in what Yahya Shukkeir compared to a “carrot-and-stick policy.”

“There is no equality between the private sector and government sectors in the media business,” added Hala Zureiqat, assistant director-general for training and development at the Jordan Radio & Television Corporation. “Only the Jordan TV took live footage from the scene of the bombings during the November attacks, and satellite channels used the same footage from Jordan TV. And only JTV was allowed to take footage of the would-be suicide bomber...while in state custody.”

MSI participants concluded that public information is not readily available. Access is restricted by articles of the State Security Court Law (1959), Contempt of Court Law (1960), Protection of State Secrets Law (1971), Elections Law of 2001, Environmental Protection Law (2003), Health Law of 2002, Misdemeanors Law (1968), and the Temporary Military Code Law (2002). “Public access is very restricted,” said Daoud Kuttub. “Census information, especially dealing with the origin of citizens, is a state secret. Confusion also has been felt with the issue of unemployment figures.”

Access to international media is not restricted, as most Jordanians have satellite dishes and the prices are within reach.

Article 16 of the current Press Association Law prohibits any news or media organization in the kingdom from employing a journalist who is not registered with the Jordanian Press Association (JPA). The 1999 Press and

Publications Law defines a journalist in Article 2 as a member of the JPA, and in Article 10 explicitly prevents people from practicing journalism or calling themselves journalists if they are not JPA members. However, there are an estimated 150 people practicing as journalists in Jordan who are not JPA members.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Jordan Objective Score: 1.93 / 4.00

MSI participants agreed that quality reporting is lacking and serious investigative reporting hardly exists. Apart from the laws that restrict the freedom of the press, they cited several reasons for unprofessional journalism: a prevailing culture of self-censorship, unskilled editors, government encouragement of obedient journalism, and low wages. This objective received the lowest score among the five MSI measures of the media sector.

Jordan’s weekly newspapers attempt to push the envelope further than other media organizations but generally lack credibility, according to panel members. Journalists often quote anonymous sources, and many cannot draw the line between news and views. Panelist Yahya Shukkeir said, “Quality reporting is rare. Objective reporting and providing the opposing views are not valuable principles among the majority of reporters. Sometimes objectivity is influenced by the

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).

journalists' own desire to become close to officials or it is subject to advertisers' pressures."

Journalists' pay poses another obstacle. There is no data available on media-sector incomes, but participants estimated that the average at the print outlets is \$500

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monthly, and 20 percent more at the most profitable newspaper, the pro-government *Al Rai*. At the state-run radio and television, the average monthly income stands between \$350 and \$500. The low wages promote a talent drain, encouraging top journalists to seek better opportunities at regional Arab

satellite channels such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. At the same time, said panelist Nidal Mansour, "it makes journalists prone to corruption, publishing materials, and accepting gifts in return."

The Jordanian Press Association, set up in accordance with a 1953 law, introduced a code of ethics in 2003. It prohibits journalists from accepting presents, financial

"Entertainment programming has more space than news coverage in radio outlets because of government restrictions on licensing," said Aktham Eltall, senior news editor at the government's Radio Francophone Jordanienne.

or material donations, or any aid of any kind without previous approval of its council. It also states that the journalist "should be committed in his professional behavior to the principles of honor, fairness, and honesty."

Journalists are prohibited from using "the profession for illegal personal gains." Nonetheless, panelists cited lapses. "Obviously we do have a serious problem in Jordan in adhering to internationally accepted ethical standards," said Osama Sharif, editor-in-chief of *Ad-Dustour*, one of the top three Arabic dailies. "Some in the media have committed serious violations by

accepting payments for articles they have printed. The government at one point encouraged such practice and patronized it." Panelists noted that obedient journalists are rewarded by becoming media consultants for ministers, with some maintaining their jobs as reporters or columnists and creating a conflict of interest that compromises their work.

Censorship of the media is allowed under the Martial Law of 1967 or during a state of national emergency. The government had for years tried to keep the media in check, but in 2005 the country's security apparatus set a precedent when then-chief of intelligence Samih Asfourah promised to eliminate pre-censorship. While most MSI participants agreed that state censorship has eased, they said journalists still exercise self-censorship. Journalists who fear upsetting officials, losing their jobs, or incurring the penalties possible under media-related laws simply edit themselves. "Self-censorship is by far worse than the state censorship," said Haitham Atoom, director of the foreign services at state radio. "It is exacerbated by the vaguely defined content restrictions in the media laws that hinder journalists from covering simple things. Writing about the Jordanian currency could be explained as harming the national interest; writing about the influx of Iraqis in the advent of the war could be explained as sparking sectarian strife."

Key editors closely affiliated with the government often act as unofficial censors as well, some panelists noted. "Even if journalists try to be objective, the restrictions and taboos discourage them from doing so," said Daoud Kuttab, director of AmmanNet. Due to self-censorship, said Tarek Mousa Al Khoury, assistant director at the state Petra news agency, "At times, we, the state agency, even get calls from newspapers who want to double-check if Petra was serious about a certain news item."

Panelists gave mixed responses about journalists covering key issues. "When you try to cover sensitive issues related to corruption, the information is withheld deliberately, and when you try, you find all the doors closed," said Jihad Al Mansi, senior reporter at *Al Ghad* newspaper. However, Mohamed Alayyan, the newspaper's publisher, said it covers sensitive issues. He mentioned as an example a front-page feature on the contamination of the Al Zarqa stream, considered an important irrigation source for crops in the country's main agricultural valley. Panelists also noted that investigative reporting requires financial support and training for journalists.

Most participants concluded that entertainment programming eclipses news and information. "Entertainment programming has more space than

news coverage in radio outlets because of government restrictions on licensing,” said Aktham Eltall, senior news editor at the government’s Radio Francophone Jordanienne. However, there are eight newscasts aired on Jordan state television between 7 am and 11 pm.

Technical facilities are available, but not for all the media outlets. Only four daily papers have their own printing press. All newspapers are equipped with computers, but the ratio varies from one paper to another, with *Al Ghad* having one computer for each journalist. The state radio’s Arabic, English, and French sections started modernizing equipment during the past four years.

Many specialised magazines, mainly English-language, have sprouted in Jordan recently, including *Business Today* and *Jo*, which offers an array of features. *Sharqiyyate* is an Arabic magazine dealing with women’s issues. Most Jordanian papers have a features department, and pages dedicated to the economy, local and political news, sports, culture, and lifestyle.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Jordan Objective Score: 2.07 / 4.00

Most MSI panelists agreed that there are regional Arab and Western news outlets that guarantee Jordanians the plurality of public and private sources of information in print and broadcast. Yet the content of domestic media and the issue of affordability were raised.

There are six Arabic newspapers and one English daily newspaper. There are 21 weeklies and two biweeklies, and that category includes an English weekly and two political party newspapers. The government owns shares in two dailies through the Social Security Corporation—55 percent in *Al Rai* and 30 percent in *Ad-Dustour*. Newspapers are distributed across Jordan, including rural and urban areas. They are sold at slightly over 30 US cents each.

Pan-Arab papers such as *Al Hayat*, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, and *A Quds Al Arabi* are also sold in Jordan at nearly 45 US cents for each edition. Foreign international publications also exist, but their reach is limited to English-speaking Jordanians and the prices are a barrier.

Panelists noted declining readership amid rising competition from satellite channels and the pricing implications of the high cost of newsprint due to sales taxes. “Those who used to buy three newspapers before cannot do it anymore with the decline in the purchasing power,” said Mohamed Alayyan. University Professor Amjad Kadi disagreed, saying, “The prices are

not the problem, but the content of the papers is very similar and they do not have much to offer, and that is why people don’t buy papers.”

Some panelists said many Jordanians lost faith in the local press due to the perception that the government retains control, turning instead to regional satellite and foreign channels such as Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera, CNN, and BBC to get their news. As panelist Aktham Eltall put it, “The Jordanian media

University Professor Amjad Kadi disagreed, saying, “The prices are not the problem, but the content of the papers is very similar and they do not have much to offer, and that is why people don’t buy papers.”

has lost its lustre, and that is why it is losing readership, and the same applies to the local (state) TV station. People are heading towards other satellite stations, where they can find news and enjoy programs that our local channel does not offer.”

A survey conducted by Ipsos-Stat in 2005 showed that 67 percent of Jordanians have satellite dishes, which

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.

cost an average of \$100 and are affordable to many. Internet is available, although the price is considered a barrier. Ipsos-Stat's 2005 survey of 2,400 Jordanians over the age of 15 showed that 25.5 percent use the Internet; of those, only 8.3 percent are subscribers.

When it comes to investigative reporting, however, one editor said, "We are in the infancy stage."

Internet Service Providers in Jordan pass through a state company. Despite Jordan's liberal take on the Internet,

authorities install firewalls and censor sites considered linked to terrorism or extreme fundamentalism. In 2005, the state security court handled an unprecedented "electronic Jihad" case in which a man was convicted of threatening the intelligence through the Internet.

Discussants said that the state and the public media reflect government views extensively, and that alternative perspectives are marginalized. Also, there are no independent news agencies. A study conducted by the Higher Media Council between June and September 2005 showed that opposition views in Petra, the official news agency, stood at 0.44 percent. For its part, however, state television introduced in 2004 a daily program that offered a venue for criticism of the government. During the hour-long show, called "Happening Today," the presenter takes on the views of citizens and questions ministers and senior officials about pressing issues.

Panelist Jihad Al Mansi said that the "the papers and state TV do not give the opposition space to express their views. Alternative views are often attacked by the government. The security does not want the opposition to express its opinion. When it comes to major issues like increasing the fuel prices, most papers—private and public—have similar headlines, stories, and opinion pieces that justify the government's measures." It is even difficult to talk about independent media when the private papers are even becoming more conservative than government papers, he added.

From the establishment of the Audiovisual Commission in 2002 until the end of 2005, 14 private FM radio stations licensed. However, only one, AmmanNet, provides its own news and public-affairs programming. The rest offer mainly entertainment music, save for one broadcast that presents Islamic teachings. One community radio station, sponsored by the British Council, was licensed in Ma'an, 220 kilometers south

of the capital. Jordanians also tune in to international radio stations such as the BBC, Radio Monte Carlo, and MBC for news, which is rebroadcast locally.

State-run radio has five FM bands, including medium and short waves. The French and English FM and the Arabic AM bands provide news in addition to talk shows and entertainment. The news bulletins cover government activities extensively.

While the state monopoly on the broadcast media has been lifted, panelist Daoud Kuttub believes that the government does not encourage private news-oriented radio. "It seems that the government prefers media as a way of bringing investments to the country and not as a message of political and social development. There are obstacles for the radio stations that have political programs that lie in the licensing fee. The commission charges 50 percent more than the fee required for licensing entertainment," he said.

No Jordanian laws ask media outlets to disclose their ownership. But such information can be obtained easily from the Companies Controller at the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Article 22 of the Press and Publications Law stipulates that the name of the publisher and editor-in-chief be listed in newspapers.

Panelists were divided on the issue of whether media cover a broad spectrum of social interests. Some said there are reports on issues once considered taboo, such as honor killings, domestic violence, and prisons. When it comes to investigative reporting, however, one editor said, "We are in the infancy stage." Some referred to the Press and Publications Law that has vaguely outlined content limitations, while others pointed out that issues relating to sex and religion are taboo due to social and religious customs rather than media restrictions.

A study on media content conducted by the Higher Media Council, a government body that monitors the print media, showed domestic political issues had less coverage in comparison with regional and international political issues. The study, which examined seven daily papers between June and September 2005, revealed that domestic political coverage stood at 24 percent of the content, regional political issues at 39 percent, and international political issues at 37 percent. But domestic economic issues had ample coverage, with 58 percent of the economic news content. Regional and international economic coverage stood at 17 percent and 25 percent, respectively. Social issues had the biggest share of coverage in the local media, with 64 percent, and the cultural issues at 37 percent.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Jordan Objective Score: 2.56 / 4.00

Of 23 weeklies and seven dailies, only four daily newspapers have their own presses. *Al Ghad*, which entered the market in 2004, has state-of-the-art equipment. Smaller papers such as *Al Anbat*, which started publishing in 2005, print on the *Al Ghad* press. *Ad-Dustour* uses its equipment to print another daily, *Addiyar*, and a number of weeklies.

The MSI panelists agreed that the 20 percent tax and custom fee levied on newsprint is a burden for the industry. There is a 16 percent tax on ad sales, in addition to 1 percent paid to the Jordanian Press Association from advertising revenues. There is no state monopoly on distribution. Most papers, including weeklies, distribute through Aramex, a provider of transportation services in the Middle East and Indian subcontinent that acquired the Jordan Distribution Agency, a private company that used to distribute over 4,000 publications, including newspapers. Some papers, including *Ad-Dustour* and *Arab Alyawm*, an independent Arabic newspaper, have their own in-house distribution systems.

Advertising is the primary source of income for newspapers, and it remains closely linked with the papers' circulations. There is no law in Jordan that

specifies the ratio of advertising to other content, and not all follow the customary 40 percent advertising consistent with international standards. Some panelists said media outlets cannot necessarily depend on ads, as the government at times pressures ministries not to advertise in media outlets they dislike. In the largest pro-government paper, *Al Rai*, and at *Al Ghad*, advertising constituted about 70 percent of the paper's revenues in 2005. Other sources of income for the print media

come from sales, subscriptions, and printing. Ads in *Ad-Dustour*, one of the three main papers, constitute 35 percent of the revenue with the main source of revenue coming from printing other papers, weeklies, and school curricula.

Advertising is a key revenue source for

private broadcasters, but not so much for state radio and television. Some panelists suggested that the state broadcasting system, now facing tough competition from private broadcasters and regional satellite channels, did not develop quickly enough with regard to the ad market. In private broadcast, advertising and sponsorship cover 100 percent of the revenue, and the portion of broadcast programming time for ads is in line with international standards, the MSI panel agreed.

The advertising sector in Jordan has witnessed five consecutive years of significant growth, driven by liberalization of key industrial sectors such as telecommunications in addition to the launch of new private newspapers, magazines, and broadcasters. According to the Jordan Chapter of the International Advertising Association (IAA), the year 2005 registered a record high in advertising expenditure of \$162 million, up from \$121 million in 2004.

The print media, and the dailies in particular, claimed the biggest share of ads, based on figures compiled by Ipsos-Stat. In 2005, \$129.5 million was spent on press advertising, amounting to 80 percent of the total advertising expenditure. Between 2004 and 2005, print advertising expenditure grew by 31 percent. Radio witnessed the highest increase—130 percent—totaling

“At Al Ghad, we built a strategy which consisted of having distribution as the main factor to be able to get advertisements and make more profit. For the media companies to become independent, they need to be able to survive without the help of the government,” said Mohamed Alayyan.

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.

\$8.2 million in ads during 2005 as new radio stations entered the market. State television recorded a rise in advertising, which reached \$11.1 million in 2005, up from \$8 million the previous year. However, state television used to attract a much greater share—28 percent of the total advertising expenditure in 2001, compared with 7 to 8 percent now.

Panelist Nidal Mansour noted that the weeklies cannot survive on ads, and referred to a circular issued during 2005 by the then–prime minister asking ministries and semi-governmental agencies not to advertise in the weekly newspapers or subscribe to private papers unless authorized by him personally.

The government does not provide subsidies for private media, but it owns shares in *Al Rai* and *Ad-Dustour*. MSI participants differed as to whether the media can survive without the help of the government and can rely on good management and ads. Some participants contended they could, including

the publisher of *Al Ghad*, who said his newspaper receives the least number of advertisements from the government. “We do not need the government to make money,” said Mohamed Alayyan. “At *Al Ghad*, we built a strategy which consisted of having distribution as the main factor to be able to get advertisements and make more profit. For the media companies to become independent, they need to be able to survive without the help of the government. In fact, *Al Ghad*, which is relatively new, has more subscriptions than the three dailies with 34,000.”

Other panelists disagreed. Haitham Atoom said only the papers with which the government is satisfied receive an indirect push through subscriptions and ads. Panelist Nidal Mansour noted that the weeklies cannot survive on ads, and referred to a circular issued during 2005 by the then–prime minister asking ministries and semi-governmental agencies not to advertise in the weekly newspapers or subscribe to private papers unless authorized by him personally.

A few media outlets that conduct market research hire Ipsos-Stat as an independent third party to enhance their advertising revenue and formulate strategic plans. Ipsos-Stat is an independent company focusing on survey-based research, and its main headquarters is in Paris. It

specializes in advertising, customer loyalty, marketing, media, and public-affairs, opinion, and social research. “Ipsos works for the advertisers’ interest and they provide the best figures, and we do not have any other choice in Jordan,” said Osama Sharif of *Ad-Dustour*. State television conducts market research using Middle East Marketing and Research Consultancy in cooperation with the Strategic Center at Jordan University.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Jordan Objective Score: 2.12 / 4.00

The MSI panelists were mainly agreed that there are no fully mature and effective supporting institutions that function in the professional interests of the media, and those that exist have a mainly symbolic role.

There is an announcers’ union that was set up in 2002. The association groups 80 members, the vast majority from state media, and provides some services and training to members. It was registered in accordance with a Ministry of Interior law, and it does not have the authority to defend journalists. Another group, Media Without Borders–Jordan, was set up in 2005 as a nonprofit organization to foster a culture of dialogue and freedom of expression, but its performance has not been tested.

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 private, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

The Jordanian Press Association was established in 1953 and has nearly 650 members from the private and state sectors. It represents media professionals, including journalists, editors, employees at the state-run news agency and Jordan TV, and newspaper owners. The 1998 Jordan Press Association Law stipulates mandatory membership for those seeking to practice the profession, and a journalist who is not a member and practices journalism is subject to penalties and punishment. It is estimated that about 150 journalists in Jordan are not JPA members.

While the association offers privileges for its members, such as scholarships, loans, and special discounts, in the view of some panelists the JPA has distanced itself from defending press freedoms, particularly when the issue contradicts the position of the government. Nidal Mansour argued that several articles in the association's code of ethics restrict free speech by journalists. Yahya Shukkeir said that mandatory membership in the JPA contravenes international standards of freedom, especially Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. "Due to the mandatory membership and JPA fears of losing its clout, the association fights other NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] that work on protecting or training journalists," he said. However, MSI participant Tarek Mousa Al Khoury said the JPA role is essential because it defends journalists who were sacked from their papers and works to get their jobs back.

There should be an association representing private radio and television to help these outlets overcome expected challenges from the government, panelist Daoud Kuttab said.

There are several NGOs working in Jordan that support the freedom of speech and media. They also provide short-term training programs for journalists to improve their skills. These include the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, Arab Women Media Center, and AmmanNet. They are independent of the government, and their activities are funded in part by international donors and NGOs. The Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists acts a media watchdog, issues an annual report on media freedoms, lobbies for media law reform, conducts workshops for members of parliament, legal experts, and journalists, and provides volunteer lawyers to represent journalists.

An evaluation prepared during 2005 by the Higher Media Council, a government press monitoring body,

showed that training for journalists in Jordan is not systematic or continuous. Some newspapers have in-house training, but generally it is not part of the strategies and there is no budget earmarked for the purpose. Others said that while there are ample training programs, the restrictions imposed on papers by editors discourage journalists from applying what they learn. Panelist Hala Zureiqat of state television said this creates frustration. Another problem is the lack of adequate salaries, which means that journalists who get good training tend to leave for better stations abroad. The Higher Media Council has started training programs, mostly on legal protection and basic media skills.

Panelists gave mixed views on the quality journalism degree programs. In Jordan, there are two universities that offer degrees in journalism, the public Yarmouk University and the private Petra University. There is a gap between the theoretical and practical aspects of the program, and while students are

prepared from an academic point of view, they do not have practical experience. Professor Amjad Kadi at Yarmouk noted that the curricula is revised regularly every four years, but the challenges include a shortage of professors, as they either leave on sabbaticals or for better opportunities. Professor Mahmoud Shalabiyyeh said there are no real training programs for students at media outlets, with opportunities available more through personal contacts than institutionalized arrangements. "Fresh graduates rarely have the opportunity to get on-the-job training," he said. "They are usually not welcomed in the newspapers and TVs. Older journalists already established in their papers with minimal educational degrees feel threatened by younger enthusiastic journalists, and stand in their way."

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MSI Participants

Mahmoud Shalabiyeh, associate professor,
Department of Journalism & Mass Communication,
Yarmouk University, Irbid

Osama Sharif, chief editor, *Ad-Dustour* newspaper,
Amman

Daoud Kuttab, director, AmmanNet, Amman

Mohamed Alayyan, CEO and publisher, *Al Ghad*
newspaper and ATV, Amman

Aktham Eltall, senior news editor–French news,
Radio Francophone Jordanienne, Amman

Yahya Shukkeir, consultant, Higher Media Council, and
local affairs editor, *Arab Alyawm* newspaper, Amman

Nidal Mansour, president, Center for Defending the
Freedom of Journalists, Amman

Haitham Atoom, director of the foreign services,
Jordan Radio, Amman

Hala Zureiqat, assistant director-general for training
and development and director of International
Relations Department, Jordan Radio & Television
Corporation, Amman

Dr. Amjad Kadi, professor of journalism, Department
of Journalism and Mass Communication, Yarmouk
University, Irbid

Tarek Mousa Al Khoury, assistant director, Petra news
agency, Amman

Jihad Al Mansi, senior reporter, *Al Ghad* newspaper,
Amman

Moderators

Sa'ad Hattar, BBC correspondent, Amman

Suha Ma'ayeh, media consultant, Amman

JORDAN AT A GLANCE

GENERAL

- **Population:** 5.473 million (Department of Statistics, 2005 census)
- **Capital city:** Amman
- **Ethnic groups:** N/A
- **Religions:** Islam; Christianity makes up over 200,000 (Selim Sayegh, Auxiliary Bishop and Latin Vicar General for Jordan)
- **Languages:** Arabic, English (widely used by middle to upper class)
- **GDP (ppp):** \$11.2 billion (World Bank Statistics)
- **GDP per capita (ppp):** \$2,140.00 (Department of Statistics until the end of 2004)
- **GNI:** \$11.6 billion (World Bank Statistics, 2004)
- **GNI per capita:** \$2,140.00 (World Bank Statistics, 2004)
- **Literacy rate:** 90% (Department of Statistics, 2005)
- **President or top authority:** King Abdullah II
- **Next scheduled elections:** Parliamentary 2007

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- **Active print outlets:** Seven daily papers, 22 weeklies, one bimonthly (Higher Media Council, a government body that monitors the print media)
- **The three largest papers (not in order):** *Al Rai*, *Alghad*, and independent daily *Ad-Dustour*. (Ipsos-Stat)
- **Broadcast ratings:** Top three (not in order) are Al Quaran Alkarim, Jordan FM 99 Arabic service, fann FM (an entertainment, Arabic social station). (Ipsos-Stat)
- **Radio stations:** One government, nine active private broadcast, 14 licensed (Audiovisual Commission)
- **Television stations:** Jordan State TV; privately owned ATV is expected to start broadcasting in 2006.
- **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** \$129.5 million was spent on advertising, amounting to 80 percent of the total advertising expenditure in 2005. Between 2004 and 2005, the print advertising expenditure grew by 31 percent. Radio witnessed the highest

increase—130 percent—totaling \$8.2 million in ads in 2005 as three radio stations entered the market. (Ipsos-Stat); state television has recorded a rise in advertising expenditure, which reached \$11.1 million in 2005, up from \$8 million the previous year.

- **Number of Internet users:** A survey of 2,400 Jordanians over age 15 revealed that 25.5 percent use the Internet. Of these, only 8.3 percent are subscribers. (Ipsos-Stat, 2005)
- **News agencies:** Government-owned Petra news agency
- **Significant foreign investment in the media:** N/A

