

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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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.

THE NEWS MEDIA, BOTH NEWSPAPER AND BROADCAST, PRESENT A BROAD RANGE OF POLITICAL VIEWS, BUT IN MOST CASES THOSE VIEWS ARE THE ONES ESPOUSED BY FORCES, BOTH DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL, THAT OWN OR HELP BANKROLL THEM. MEDIA TECHNOLOGY IS ADVANCED, OFTEN STATE-OF-THE-ART, BUT MEDIA MANAGEMENT IS DICTATED BY POLITICAL AND FAMILY TIES.



In deadly and dramatic replays of some of the worst days of Lebanon's 1975–1990 civil war, 2005 saw the car-bomb assassinations of two of the country's most prominent newspaper journalists and the maiming of a popular television newscaster.

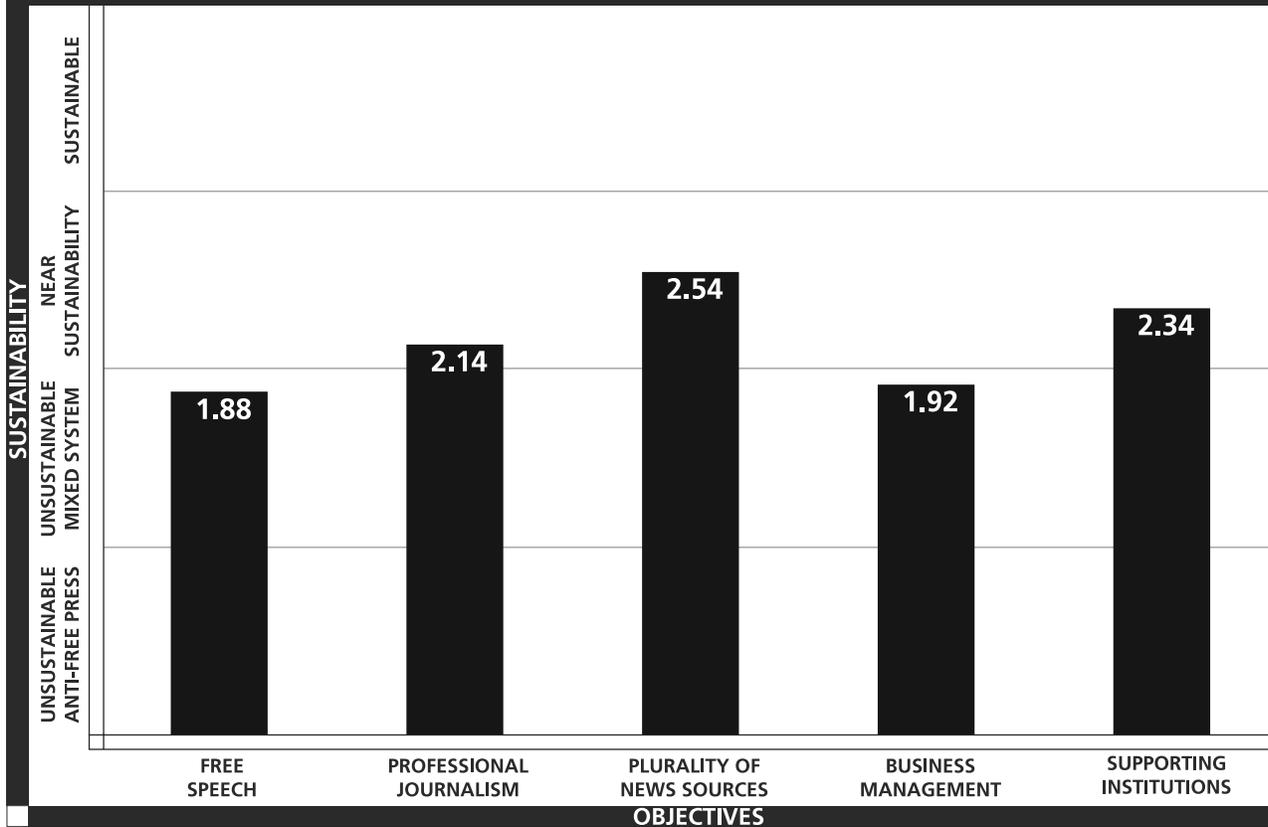
The attacks—which followed the car-bomb assassination of a former prime minister early in the year—spread fear among other journalists and served as a lethal reminder of the dangers that many had hoped had been consigned to history as the country plowed ahead with postwar reconstruction.

The common thread in the killings was that the victims were outspoken critics of neighboring Syria's heavy-handed political influence over its smaller neighbor. A number of arrests were made in the death of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, but a year later no one had been brought to trial. There was even less progress apparent in the investigation into the attacks on the journalists.

The deaths underscored the dichotomies in Lebanese journalism. The news media, both newspaper and broadcast, present a broad range of political views, but in most cases those views are the ones espoused by forces, both domestic and external, that own or help bankroll them. Media technology is advanced, often state-of-the-art, but media management is dictated by political and family ties. Lebanese universities teach students how to perform accurate and objective journalism, but the media they wind up working for often dictate the opposite.

The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) panel scored Lebanon's media sector at 2.16, just barely nearing sustainability. The strongest showing came in the availability of multiple sources of news, and the weakest was in the freedom to use that information. The panelists stressed the handicaps that politicized influences imposed on almost every indicator in the MSI survey, from licensing of media to editorial content.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: LEBANON



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: FREE SPEECH

Lebanon Objective Score: 1.88 / 4.00

In 2005, Lebanon once again became a dramatic—and sometimes lethal—battleground for freedom of expression. The right to free speech is guaranteed by the Lebanese Constitution, and MSI panelists agreed that the laws pertaining to freedom of expression tend to be pretty good. But what about enforcement? The MSI panel, which included representatives from across Lebanon’s political and religious spectrum, was fully agreed that journalists are not protected when they exercise their constitutional right to free speech.

Chilling evidence came with the twin assassinations, which targeted two of the country’s best-known journalists, both staunch critics of Syria. The first, in June, killed Samir Kassir, a columnist for *An-Nahar*, for decades the biggest and most respected Lebanese daily newspaper. In December, *An-Nahar* general manager Gebran Tueni, who regularly denounced Syria in his editorial columns and from his seat in parliament,

was killed, along with his bodyguard and driver. In between, in September, LBC-TV newscaster and popular talk-show host May Chidiac, another longtime critic of Syria, lost half her left arm and half her left leg to another car bomb.

“Most journalists working on internal political issues are feeling threatened,” said MSI panelist Tania Mehanna, senior correspondent for the Lebanese Broadcasting Company (LBC). “After this year and all the assassinations, everybody is taking extra precautions. If

“Most journalists working on internal political issues are feeling threatened,” said MSI panelist Tania Mehanna “After this year and all the assassinations, everybody is taking extra precautions. If you cannot park in a secured place, you cannot leave your car. We have to change our habits, change the places where we live.”

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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.

Though mainly known for his leadership of Lebanon’s out-of-the-ashes renaissance after the civil war, the most famous of 2005’s car-bombing victims, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, was a billionaire businessman who founded and owned Lebanon’s Future television station and *Al-Mustaqbal* newspaper. Hariri, too, was a longtime opponent of Syrian influence in Lebanon. Massive demonstrations following his February murder spurred withdrawal of the Syrian military, which had maintained an uninterrupted presence since initial deployment in 1976, ostensibly as a deterrent to civil war.

With arrests but no convictions in the Hariri assassination, and no arrests at all in the attacks on the journalists, the MSI panelists were skeptical about government willingness to protect the media. “At least 50 percent of ordinary crimes committed during the past 15 years have been solved, while justice is not even trying to pursue the murderers of journalists and media professionals,” said panelist Naji Tueni, deputy general manager of *An-Nahar* and a first cousin of the slain Gebran Tueni.

Freedom-of-expression issues permeate coverage, too. Several panelists cited a 1962 law banning publication of material that endangers national security, national unity, or international borders or insults high-level Lebanese officials or foreign heads of state. “We are

allowed to criticize but not to insult," said Imad El Kadi, president of the Media Association for Democracy Awareness (MADA). However, Imad El Kadi and other panelists said that the interpretations of the difference between "criticism" and "insult" fluctuate according to who is in power. At least two cases recently have come before the special Press Tribunal that handles alleged violations of the Press Code, which contains the ban on "insults." One case was filed in mid-2005 and the other early in 2006. Defendants in both cases are from *Al-Mustaqbal*, the Hariri-owned newspaper, and the charges involve insulting and defaming President Emile Lahoud by name or by inference.

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"We have laws, but they are not adapted to the reality of today's media," said Ghayath Yazbeck, general manager of Arabic News Broadcast (ANB-TV). "If they were accurately and evenly applied by the judiciary,

the law would provide the minimum required in terms of justice. But in Lebanon, justice is politicized and corrupt. Through a corrupted judiciary, the Lebanese government has repeatedly violated media freedom."

Tony Francis, columnist for the new, youth-oriented *Al-Balad* newspaper and a veteran of both newspaper and broadcast journalism, noted that "Lebanese laws guarantee freedom of speech. However, media's private ownership puts limits on this freedom."

The vast majority of Lebanese media is in private hands. The government has a small national news agency, a television channel, and radio station. In both news and entertainment, they are eclipsed by the half-dozen privately owned television stations and more than a dozen private radio stations. With few exceptions, privately owned media reflect the views of individual politicians or their political blocs and receive direct or indirect financial aid from internal and external powers. Some strive for acceptance as impartial sources of news, while others unabashedly serve as their masters' mouthpieces.

The distribution of television licenses is frequently cited—by politicians, civil society advocates, and the general public, as well as by the MSI panel—as one of the most blatant abuses of political power. "The

licenses are given on a sectarian basis," said Wadih E. Haddad, assistant general manager of the Voice of Lebanon, a radio station born in the Christian heartland in the early years of the civil war but listened to across Lebanon's religious sects and political blocs.

The sectarian distribution has to do with the power and influence of various groups, panelists said. Within Lebanon's Shiite community, for example, there is a split between Hezbollah, which has its own television station, and the more secular and older Amal party, whose leader, parliament speaker Nabih Berri, has NBN-TV.

"To open a TV station or any of the media, you have to have a balance between the board directors, based on religious affiliation," added Tania Mehanna of LBC-TV, which also has grown from its Christian-sector roots to become a national station.

"The problem is that the cabinet is the one distributing the licenses in Lebanon. This is a mistake. It should be the National Audio-Visual Media Council," said Ibrahim Farhat, public relations manager for Al-Manar TV, an affiliate of Hezbollah, the Shiite Muslim militia that became a political party with a key bloc in parliament. Ibrahim Farhat referred to a 1994 law mandating that the government-appointed media council handle license applications and submit its decisions to the cabinet for final approval.

In the print sector, it is almost impossible to obtain a brand-new license, so anyone seeking to start a new newspaper must dig around for unused licenses originally awarded to newspapers that have stopped publishing. A 1953 law limits the number of daily newspapers in Lebanon to 25, of which a maximum of 15 can be in the Arabic language. Currently, newspapers also are published in English, French, and Armenian.

MSI panelists also considered the taxation situation unfair. Naji Tueni noted that newsprint is exempt from customs duties, but newspapers must pay their full electricity bills while industrialists are given rebates as high as 50 percent.

Radio and television stations are subject to taxes according to how much time they spend on the air. "We are paying exorbitant taxes, like airtime tax, and we're paying full rate for electricity, and, to be honest, I don't think advertising will be able to cover such expenses," Wadih E. Haddad said. Tania Mehanna explained the airtime tax: "Taxes are estimated according to the loss of profit of state-run TeleLiban, which has lost its monopoly. Therefore, huge taxes are imposed on all the broadcasters—who are trying to find means not to pay them."

Panelists showed less concern over laws regarding libel, which is a criminal offense though handled by the Press Tribunal applying the penal code, and access to information, which is hindered mainly by incompetence. Both print and broadcast media have unhindered access to international news services; most restrictions on use lie with the politics and policies of the individual outlets.

However, ANB-TV’s Ghayath Yazbeck noted: “The access to public information, as in state information, is difficult—especially when we compare the local situation with the ability of journalists in France or Britain to get what is considered public information, especially when it comes to political or corruption issues.” He suggested that there might be change with the Syrian withdrawal. “We need to wait and see what will happen. But there are sensitive issues—religious ones—that cannot be tackled, such as an article or video attacking or targeting a specific religious community.... Any foreign production or media related to Israel also will not be allowed entry.”

Journalists do not need licenses to work. The government imposes no restrictions and does not influence hiring, the panel concurred.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Lebanon Objective Score: 2.14 / 4.00

Many Lebanese journalists are capable of meeting high standards of professionalism, but their reports are often biased to reflect the politics of media owners and advertisers, the MSI panel agreed.

“Since licenses to broadcast were given mainly to political personalities or parties, media cannot avoid subjectivity and are subject to political interferences. While journalists do cover key events, they are not sufficiently paid to avoid corruption, and, very often, they have to occupy several jobs in order to survive,” said Voice of Lebanon’s assistant general manager, Wadih E. Haddad.

The MSI panel’s consensus was that reporting ranges from excellent to terrible when it comes to accuracy and objectivity, depending upon the individual journalists and the politics of their employers. Most journalists are grossly underpaid, forcing them to take second jobs or making them vulnerable to accepting gifts, favors, and sometimes outright cash from the people they’re covering, several panelists said. This “makes the journalist a mere writer who does exactly what he is told,” MADA President Imad El Kadi said.

Lebanon has no industry-wide code of ethics for journalists. Over the years, attempts to instate one have run into opposition from the newspaper publishers’ syndicate and the journalists’ syndicate. MSI panelists and other media specialists said syndicate leaders had portrayed such codes as attempts to limit press freedom, but their real motive was seen as their efforts to preserve their own power.

MSI panelists said some journalists routinely reject presents from newsmakers, while others take whatever they can get.

“Many journalists are involved,” said Naji Tueni, *An-Nahar’s* deputy general manager. “One can call it a connection.... It is a way of give and take. It is giving something (in exchange for) something: a gift, important information, or money.”

Self-censorship is widespread, instigated by the politics of media owners or by journalists’ fear for their lives—a fear that accelerated after the attacks on journalists in 2005. Several senior editors were assassinated during the early years of the 1975–1990 civil war, but the targets later were primarily politicians and militia leaders. “Journalists do practice self-censorship.

Tania Mehanna, LBC-TV senior correspondent, said: “Many journalists will have to deal with two or three jobs to make ends meet.”

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).

They live in total paranoia, and they fear losing their jobs and their lives,” said Ghayath Yazbeck, general manager of ANB-TV.

Lebanese are generally aware of the slant of a media outlet, saying they read certain newspapers to see what the Syrian line is on a particular issue or what message they think Damascus wants to send. Similarly, people may switch to a television station identified with a faction because they think the station will be better informed on a specific event or issue because of its access to the geographical area or to the key players.

“In flat periods when nothing is happening, people will go to entertainment and will be sick and tired of listening to political talk shows and political issues,” Tania Mehanna said. “But when there is an assassination, the population switches to news 100 percent.”

In general, however, the panel said that journalists cover key events and issues, including security matters.

Salary levels for journalists generally are too low, a complaint also heard in other occupations in a country where

the official minimum wage is \$200 a month. Ghayath Yazbeck said \$500 or \$600 is considered a good monthly salary for journalists. Tania Mehanna, LBC-TV senior correspondent, said: “Many journalists will have to deal with two or three jobs to make ends meet.”

Imad El Kadi, who has worked for LBC-TV and other news media in Lebanon and abroad, said there was a big disparity between pay levels for internationally broadcast satellite channels and local channels, even if both are based in Lebanon. “Whoever works in pan-Arab media...in Beirut is better paid than the person who has the same job for local media,” Imad El Kadi said. “At LBC at the satellite department, we were paid three times what others were paid at (the local channel of) LBC for the very same job.”

The MSI panel considered the balance between television news and entertainment to be good. “In flat periods when nothing is happening, people will go to entertainment and will be sick and tired of listening to political talk shows and political issues,” Tania Mehanna said. “But when there is an assassination, the population switches to news 100 percent.”

Technology for both print and broadcast journalism is up-to-date. Distribution is more old-fashioned but still

efficient. Since Lebanon is a small country, it is relatively easy to reach everyone.

“Lebanese media are considered modern, with few exceptions. They follow new technology and keep track of developments and improvements in the Arab and European countries,” said Kamal Zebian, managing editor of *Ad-Diyyar* daily newspaper.

Ibrahim Farhat, public relations manager for Al-Manar TV, noted: “The Lebanese economy is built on a free market and not on a planned economy. Therefore, there are no restrictions on importing the equipment required for journalism.”

The panel split on the quality of niche reporting and investigative journalism, with some declaring Lebanon to have a high level of specialized news reporting and others saying there was a major lack of it. The critics said that what is considered “investigative journalism” in Lebanon often is little more than feature stories.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Lebanon Objective Score: 2.54 / 4.00

Lebanon has many sources of news, both at home and from abroad. The catch is in how they are used, given the partisan ownership of much of the media, the MSI panelists said. Readers and viewers know which politicians or political blocs own or bankroll specific media outlets, although official records may list someone more obscure as the titular owner. But the Lebanese are long accustomed to checking a variety of news sources if they want to learn what is happening on their country’s assorted geographical and political turfs.

In addition to nine Arabic daily newspapers, there are two Armenian-language dailies and one each in English and French. The total circulation of all the dailies is estimated at under 150,000 daily. *An-Nahar*, considered the largest daily, says it distributes 45,000 copies a day within Lebanon and 5,000 abroad. *As-Safir*, *Al-Balad*, and *Ad-Diyyar* are considered the next largest papers.

Newspaper prices are supposed to be regulated by the publishers’ syndicate, which also dictates such matters as whether newspapers can publish on certain holidays. The syndicate was roundly attacked by several MSI panelists. “If a newspaper wants to start printing and wants to sell copies at 500 pounds (33 U.S. cents), they will have problems with the syndicate,” said Imad El Kadi, president of MADA. “This should be the law of the market, to regulate itself. Why should the syndicate intervene in the pricing of copies?”

Naji Tuani, deputy general manager of *An-Nahar* newspaper, said: “We (*An-Nahar*) are far more expensive than other standards around the world. We...ask the readership to be stakeholders in one way or another. By buying the newspaper for 2,000 pounds (\$1.33) instead of 1,000 pounds (67 cents), they are participating in the freedom of press of *An-Nahar*.” He added: “The syndicate, in a way, is trying to say ‘for this number of pages, you should put this cost.’ This is something not very intelligent. We should let the market put the price.”

There is one government television station, TeleLiban, and the privately owned stations include LBC, Future, NTV, ANB, NBN, Al-Manar, and Tele-Lumiere. There is one government radio station, Radio Beirut. Voice of Lebanon is considered the most-listened-to of the 14 privately owned radio stations with newscasts.

Internet access is unrestricted, with no blocking of sites by the government. Many of Lebanon’s 13 daily newspapers are available for free online. But this is an expensive option for many people. A recent university graduate is considered lucky to find a job for \$500 a month, and the government’s monthly minimum wage is \$200. High-end Internet service costs about \$50 a

Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.

<p>PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 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.
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month, while Internet cafés typically charge \$1 per hour. The government does not block sites.

The MSI panel agreed that a broad spectrum of political views is available in Lebanon’s media—because ownership is extremely partisan. “Local TV channels are controlled by political parties....This is where money plays a major role, as it hampers reliable and objective news transmission,” said Kamal Zebian, managing editor of *Ad-Diyyar*, a daily newspaper widely seen as sympathetic to Syria.

Ghayath Yazbeck said the state media do not present the full spectrum of opinion: “State or public media are partisan, do not serve the public interest, and are biased. There is no equivalent here to the [French broadcasting regulatory body] CSA that would control broadcasts and has norms that require space for educational, cultural, and awareness programs. The [Lebanese Audio-Visual Media] Council here has a repressive role only.”

Lebanon has two small national news agencies, and panelists described them as affordable and useful but not independent. They said the government agency simply adjusts to power changes, while the privately owned one tends to be biased.

A wide variety of social issues is tackled, but some topics—notably involving sex and religion—remain taboo. Several MSI panelists noted that the most controversial issues remain the almost exclusive domain of the French- and English-language magazines and newspapers, because their audiences are limited.

“When tackling homosexuality, the articles are mainly preaching.... We don’t trust our audience but [instead]

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give them ready-made things to think. Why don't we give them information and let them make their own opinions?" Imad El Kadi asked.

"Issues like cohabitation or single mothers cannot be tackled," Ghayath Yazbeck said. "Even if I decided as a journalist to tackle these issues, I will not find anyone from the public to talk about them. The issue now is who is going to dare first: the society that will then be followed by the media, or the opposite? And can the media take the responsibility for such an initiative?"

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Lebanon Objective Score: 1.92 / 4.00

The MSI panel spent little time discussing the business capacity of the Lebanese media sector after making clear a consensus that politically inspired funds—not

"Everything goes back to the political belonging (allegiance) of the media. All these questions are answered by saying that each media has a political obedience," said Wadih E. Haddad, assistant general manager of Voice of Lebanon.

the results of good management or strategic planning—formed the primary revenue pillar of most media outlets in Lebanon. The main goal of many backers, panelists concurred, is not so much to run a profitable

business as to ensure a forum for their views and reporting of their activities and, in some cases, prevent the coverage of certain rivals.

"Everything goes back to the political belonging (allegiance) of the media. All these questions are answered by saying that each media has a political obedience," said Wadih E. Haddad, assistant general manager of Voice of Lebanon.

Kamal Zebian, managing editor of *Ad-Diyyar* daily newspaper, said journalism in Lebanon "relies on the financial support provided by local, Arab, or non-Arab businessmen. Historically, this has been a feature of Lebanese media. It was used by Arab parties on the one hand and international parties on the other hand to transmit their policies and activities."

However, advertising also is a strong source of revenue, primarily for the largest newspapers and the most popular broadcast stations, and—like politics—can

influence editorial content. Some panelists noted that anti-smoking campaigns are rare because tobacco companies are heavy advertisers. Panelists also said that much of the advertising placement was controlled by one media representation company—engaged by individual and often head-to-head rival media outlets—to negotiate with the ad agencies.

Haddad said there was "a profusion of ads...in an effort to cover the exorbitant taxes" levied by the government. The government provides no subsidies for privately owned media.

Market research exists but can easily be manipulated, the panel agreed. "The results are rarely trusted, as they usually reflect the interests of the party that initiated them," said Tony Francis, columnist for *Al-Balad* daily newspaper.

There is no centralized source for newspaper circulation figures. Some newspapers offer numbers for their own print runs, but there is no independent verification. The three or four dailies that are considered the largest claim daily circulations ranging from 30,000 to 45,000, but some media observers consider those numbers inflated. Informal estimates for the rest drop off sharply to as low as a couple thousand per newspaper.

Private research firms have conducted surveys on television viewership, but the panel—and other media

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.

observers—tended to distrust them. “In Lebanon, there are no guidelines. You don’t know what brings in an audience and what [repels] them,” said MADA president Imad El Kadi.

“What is badly needed is to build a business model,” Imad El Kadi said. “As long as this does not exist, we will always be considered as employees in media outlets. (Journalists) should be recognized in society legally and financially.”

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Lebanon Objective Score: 2.34 / 4.00

Lebanon badly needs professional institutions to support journalists and the media sector, but journalism education generally is good and there are opportunities for training and professional development, the MSI panel concluded.

Panelists were highly critical of the newspaper publishers’ syndicate and the journalists’ syndicate, echoing sentiments often heard in media circles in Lebanon. They accused the syndicates of hindering journalists and of taking the government’s side against media professionals. They noted that the presidents of both syndicates had held their posts for more than three decades and accused them of being more

concerned with preserving their own power than with helping journalists. In addition, broadcast journalists are not eligible for syndicate membership and have no national organization of their own.

“The journalists’ syndicate ought to defend the journalists’ rights, but this is a total fiasco,” said ANB-TV general manager Ghayath Yazbeck. “Today, we have something like 10,000 journalists in Lebanon. Only 100 are members of the syndicate.... They (syndicates) are the government’s closest allies.”

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So far, there are few alternative organizations. Panelist Imad El Kadi, president of MADA, noted that his organization is a very young one, still in a formative stage. Its goals include setting up a legal defense organization for journalists and offering health insurance.

Several civil-society advocacy groups and local nongovernmental organizations include a free press among their areas of interest, but the panelists said their engagement and impact on media have been low-key so far.

The government’s Lebanese University offers an extensive journalism program, as does Lebanese-American University. Several other private colleges have one or more journalism courses. Several panelists considered journalism education in Lebanon to be quite good, although

“Not all media institutions meet the educational norms or have the latest technology,” Ghayath Yazbeck said.

some disagreed. “Not all media institutions meet the educational norms or have the latest technology,” Ghayath Yazbeck said.

Some short-term, post-graduate training programs exist, and several foreign governments and organizations

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.

offer fellowships or other training opportunities for Lebanese journalists.

But media management remains an unfilled hole in the educational and training process, MSI panelists said. Existing courses concentrate on the “how to” aspects of practicing journalism and on technical procedures.

Newsprint and printing presses operate on a commercial basis, free of government restrictions, as do the distribution systems for print media and transmission facilities for radio and television channels.

MSI Participants

Najat Charafeddine, journalist, Future TV, Beirut

Ibrahim Farhat, public relations manager, Al-Manar TV, Beirut

Tony Francis, columnist, *Al-Balad* newspaper, Beirut

Wadih E. Haddad, assistant general manager, Voice of Lebanon radio, Beirut

Imad El Kadi, president, Media Association for Democracy Awareness, Beirut

Tania Mehanna, senior correspondent, LBC-TV, Beirut

Naji Tuani, deputy general manager, *An-Nahar* newspaper, Beirut

Ghayath Yazbeck, general manager, ANB-TV, Beirut

Kamal Zebian, managing editor, *Ad-Diyyar* newspaper, Beirut

Moderator

Earleen Fisher, MENA MEDIA project director, IREX, Beirut

LEBANON AT A GLANCE

GENERAL

- **Population:** Estimates range from 3.5 million (United Nations Development Program, 2003) to 4.6 million (World Bank, 2004)
- **Capital city:** Beirut (est. 1 million, unofficial sources)
- **Ethnic groups:** Arab 95%, Armenian 4%, other 1% (est., unofficial sources)
- **Religions:** Muslim about 60%, Christian about 40%, spread over 17 officially recognized sects, with Shiites considered the largest Muslim sect and Maronite Catholics considered the largest Christian sect. (est., unofficial sources; absence of census makes the figures impossible to verify)
- **Languages:** Arabic universally spoken. Also French and English, with small minorities speaking Armenian and Kurdish. (no statistics)
- **GDP (ppp):** \$24.2 billion (World Bank)
- **GDP per capita (ppp):** \$5,074 (UNDP, 2003)
- **Literacy rate:** 80.3% (UNDP)
- **President or top authority:** President Emile Lahoud, Prime Minister Fouad Siniora
- **Next scheduled elections:** Parliamentary June 2009

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- **Newspaper circulation statistics:** There are no verified figures on total circulation, but estimates range from 100,000 to about 130,000 for all 13 dailies. Numbers provided by executives at the top four newspapers put their total between 100,000 and 125,000 a day. Using this as a base, an extrapolated estimate of the total circulation of all 13 dailies is under 150,000.
An-Nahar, which is considered the largest, says it distributes 45,000 copies a day within Lebanon and 5,000 abroad.
As-Safir, *Al-Balad*, and *Ad-Diyyar* are widely considered the next largest papers.
There are nine daily Arabic newspapers, two in Armenian and one each in French and English.
- **Broadcast networks:** There is no universally accepted rating system.
There is one government television station, TeleLiban.
Privately owned television stations include LBC, Future, NTV, ANB, NBN, Al-Manar, and Tele-Lumiere.
There is one government radio station, Radio Beirut.
Voice of Lebanon is considered the most-listened-to of the 14 privately owned radio stations with newscasts.
There are 17 non-news radio stations.

- **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** No reliable statistics.
- **Number of Internet users:** 300,000 to 400,000 (est., private industry sources)
- **News agencies:** National News Agency (government), Markazia (private)
- **Significant foreign investment in the media:** Widely assumed, from various political and financial powers in the region, but no reliable figures.

