

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

2006/2007

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



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

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USAID

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

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

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

MEPI

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

UNESCO

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

IREX

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

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

Algerian media is distinguished by strong state-owned radio and television, as well as a news agency. Attempts at ending the government's ban on private investment in broadcast media have not been successful. However, a strong and influential private sector coexists in the print media, both in Arabic and French, mostly in the form of politically focused daily newspapers.



ALGERIA

In Algeria, the media scene has not changed significantly since the events of October 1988 and the adoption of a new constitution in February 1989, when for the first time in Algerian political history, political, labor union, and media pluralism was allowed. From the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, several social groups, including journalists, exercised these freedoms.

Algerian media is distinguished by strong state-owned radio and television, as well as a news agency. Attempts at ending the government's ban on private investment in broadcast media have not been successful. However, a strong and influential private sector coexists in the print media, both in Arabic and French, mostly in the form of politically focused daily newspapers.

Despite improvements in the security situation since the 1990s, several terrorist attacks in 2007 targeted government institutions and the UN headquarters, resulting in the deaths of dozens of Algerians and foreigners. Al-Qaeda's Committee in the Islamic Maghreb and the Salafi Group for Da'wa and Fighting claimed responsibility for the bombings.

Despite these bombings, the country's financial situation improved significantly due to rising oil prices, although the purchasing power of workers in many professions, including journalism, has decreased at the same time. This has led unions in the service sector—including those representing health workers, educators and others—to organize several protests and strikes. The situation has spurred significant social upheaval including theft, kidnappings and emigration of youth to Europe.

The year 2007 witnessed parliamentary and municipal elections that were largely ignored by Algerian citizens and did not significantly impact the national political landscape. Participation rates were estimated at 35.6 percent in the parliamentary elections and 44 percent in the municipal elections. The campaigns for these elections focused on everyday social issues facing citizens as well as combating increased corruption.

Algeria changed little over the past year in terms of media sustainability, and its score of 1.50 places it in the middle of the "unsustainable mixed system" classification. Most objective scores were close to those posted last year, the sole exception being Objective 5, supporting institutions. The increase in this objective score is the main reason that this year's score increased from 1.40. Some of the key obstacles panelists felt were holding back media sector development include: 1) the dichotomy between media freedoms in Algerian law and the discouraging reality of daily practices; 2) the duality of a state-owned broadcast sector and a privately owned, more unfettered print sector, while specialized, local and party media have a poor presence; 3) the longstanding deterioration of the political and media scene in Algeria, and; 4) the shrinking purchasing power of the working middle class, including journalists, who have not been able to form powerful syndicates to defend their rights.

ALGERIA AT A GLANCE

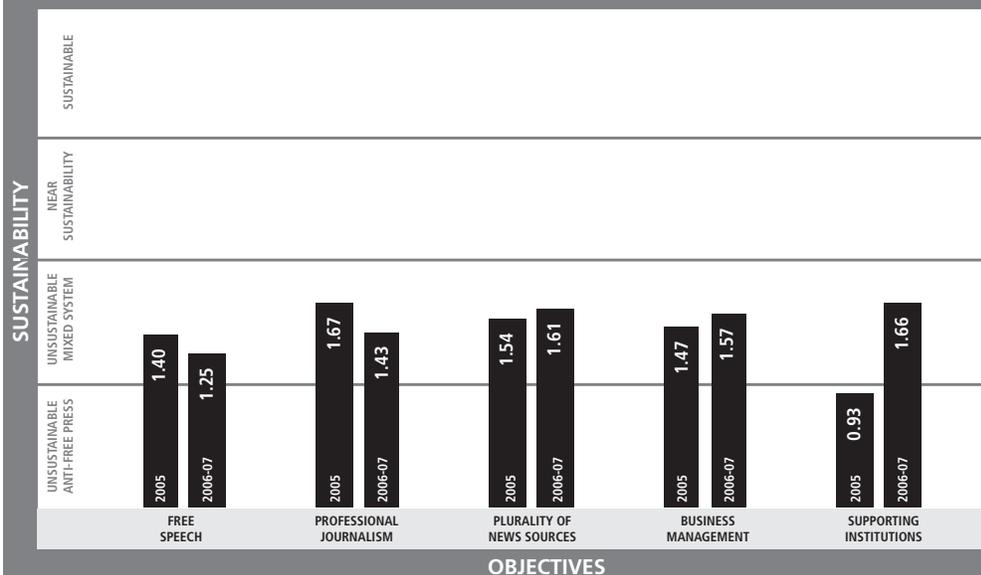
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 33,769,669 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Algiers
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Berber 99%, European less than 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Sunni Muslim (state religion) 99%, Christian and Jewish 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Arabic (official), French, Berber dialects (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$101.2 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$5,940 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 69.9% (male 79.6%, female 60.1%) (2002 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (since April 28, 1999)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: N/A; Radio: 37 (5 national, 32 local); Television stations: 3 (all three are state-owned)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Algeria News Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** None
- > **Internet usage:** 2,460,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: ALGERIA



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

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

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

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

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Algeria Objective Score: 1.25

Most of the indicators received scores somewhat below the overall average score. Indicator 2, broadcast licensing, received a score almost a full point lower, reflecting the government's total control of broadcasting. Only Indicators 8 and 9, media access to international news sources and government control of entry into the journalism profession, scored moderately well (each about a point higher), thus keeping the average from falling below 1.

The main focus of the panel members was Algeria's constitutional guarantees of citizen freedoms. While these are acceptable on paper, this framework is actually not applied, according to Hemida Ayashi, manager and owner of the daily newspaper *Algeria News Daily*. According to Ayashi, existing legal frameworks are relatively positive but social and political obstacles turn them into formalities that do not foster an atmosphere of media freedom.

Agreeing with this was Mohamed Bouazdi, editor-in-chief of *El-Khabar* weekly. Freedom of expression is a key requirement for Algerian society, one that is protected by the constitution, he said. However, the political regime interprets the constitution in a deeply negative way. Such contradictions create a type of "sick double practice," which is accepted by many. "On the one hand, we have a perfect constitution and on the other hand there is a catastrophic adoption of such a constitution," Bouzadi said. Abdelaziz Boubakir, professor at the Media Institute, agreed and added that the largest obstacle to putting constitutional freedoms into practice remain the judiciary's subordination to political authorities.

Mostafa Boushahi, a law professor and president of the National Association of Human Rights, also believes that the Algerian constitution guarantees freedom of expression. However, the media law of 1990 does not stipulate the protection or encouragement of journalists, spelling out instead a litany of penalties. Rabeh Helis, a project director at Radio Algeria, said that the legal situation deprives the media of maneuverability; they remain totally subject to the regime's logic in everything from editorial policy to the appointment of staff positions.

Because the state controls all broadcasting, panelists did not discuss the mechanisms or transparency of licensing such outlets. Panelists did say that licensing of newspapers is handled non-transparently by the government, but noted that there was no change from last year in terms of new licenses: they are based on political or other connections and given out infrequently. Law professor Mostafa Boushahi

said that in addition to the media law's existing flaws, the government often disregards it altogether. For example, establishing a media organization requires a license from the Ministry of Justice, even though the law only requires notifying the relevant regional attorney general of the intent to establish one.

The difficulties facing Algerian journalism are not limited to the relationship with the government. According to journalist Samia Belkadhi, the Algerian economy remains entrenched in bribery and organized crime, making it difficult for journalists to investigate stories without bumping up against these twin obstacles. According to her, these conditions are responsible for kidnapping, abuse and threats to reporters by organized crime. One example is the 2002 case of *Al-Watan* reporter Abdelhaï Beliardouh who reported on connections between a militant group and Saad Garboussi, the head of a local chamber of commerce. Beliardouh was beaten and later committed suicide after being directly threatened by Garboussi.

The level of preferential legal treatment for state media remains unchanged from last year, even though panelists then said that there was no formal legislation granting advantages to any particular type of media. However, like last year's panelists, Abdel Kader Zegham, an *Al-Watan* reporter, stated that he believes that public media organizations and even some private newspapers are favored, depending on the subject being reported and the government's stand on it.

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

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

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

Rahmani stated that information is inaccessible to many. Journalists from some privately owned newspapers are denied access to public information while those from public media are granted it.

Fatma Rahmani said that legal and social conventions still legitimize the imprisonment of journalists, reporters and news publishers. In 2007, several journalists were convicted with suspended sentences and fines, and in early 2008 *Al-Watan* director Omar Palhoshat and journalist Shawki Ammari were sentenced to two months in prison and received a fine. Nazeir Ben Saba, a journalist and representative of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), noted that the government modified the Penal Code in 2001 to include libel, slander and similar lawsuits as felonies, which can lead to imprisonment, instead of incorporating them into the Media Law of 1990.

The internal security situation has become one of the polarizing points over the years between the authorities and journalists. The government is sensitive to coverage of various destabilizing elements that have plagued the country since the 1990s, such as terrorism and insurgency. Despite improvements in recent years, this topic still overshadows the continuously tense relationship between journalists and the government.

Rahmani stated that information is inaccessible to many. Journalists from some privately owned newspapers are denied access to public information while those from public media are granted it. In general, there is no legislation governing access to public information. A presidential decree on the subject dating from the 1970s, a time of one-party rule, is effectively ignored.

However, panel members awarded favorable ratings to international media and news sources in terms of information access. Journalists are able to access the Internet for international news, and Abdelaziz Boubakir, professor at the Media Institute, remarked that there is a margin of freedom when addressing security and international issues. However, as reported last year, Algerian newspapers may not reprint translations of foreign newspapers for local distribution.

Finally, while no license is needed to practice general journalism, correspondents must obtain a permit to attend government events.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Algeria Objective Score: 1.43

Although panelists did not agree on the exact level of professionalism within the Algerian media, the prevailing opinion was critical, as reflected in the objective's score of 1.43. Indicator 5, pay levels for journalists, scored a full point lower than the overall average. Otherwise, indicator scores were mostly near the average, with none exceeding a score of 2.

Professor Boubakir, based on his experience in the Media Institute at the University of Algeria and as a former editor-in-chief, said that in most cases a journalist will not verify the validity of information during reporting, so resulting articles often amount to commentary. Moreover, expert opinions are not used, and although ethical and professional standards are accepted in theory, they are neglected in most cases by media professionals.

Self-censorship was a big concern for panelists. Mohamed Bouazdi, editor-in-chief of the *Al-Khabar* weekly newspaper, said that self-censorship has emerged in the absence of official censorship, with private publishers and newspaper owners censoring media products. Abdelaziz Boubakir agreed with this and held the government responsible. In his view, self-censorship has become more intense due to official pressures. Adding to this is the economic dependence of journalists on their employers or on other sources of income if necessary. Many journalists often censor themselves due to pressure from their publishers or the parties they are covering. Consequently, training and professional ethics have little impact on this. Self-censorship has thus become a national sport for the press since 2004 in particular—for

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).

example, no Algerian newspaper can criticize the leading advertising organizations.

With regard to professionalism in general, Rabeh Helis said that the press does not embrace quality standards, and that performance remains deficient due to many factors including self-censorship, unavailability of information and poor journalist training. Most of the panel members shared this opinion. Nazeir Ben Saba stated that newspapers favored by authorities encourage these practices, despite the efforts of the Professional Ethics Council.

Poor training received by university students was also criticized by the panel. Nazeir Ben Saba noted that training requirements in the institutes and universities are outdated with respect to technological advancements. Hemida Ayashi said that poor journalism training is reflected in the final media product. Media objectivity exists to some extent, but it lacks the strict respect for journalism due to the poor training of new graduates and the lack of qualified personnel capable of providing on-the-job training.

The indicator related to journalists' salaries received the lowest rating within this objective. There was agreement that poor journalist salaries lead to practices that violate professional ethics, in addition to negatively affecting the quality of reporting. Samia Belkadhi stated that since a journalist's average monthly salary is 20,000 dinars at most (about €200), it is hard to guarantee the objectivity or professionalism of reporting. Often, a journalist is forced to neglect professionalism and credibility in exchange for financial considerations or outright bribes. Furthermore, many panel members asserted that journalists publicly demanding salary increases face harassment that can lead to imprisonment for slander.

Kamal Zayet, a journalist for the *Al-Khabar* daily newspaper, was circumspect on this point. He said that it is difficult to generalize about the press because of the differences between media outlets. He noted the different character of public and private media or newspapers that have sufficient financial resources and those that are interested in advertising as a primary objective.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Algeria Objective Score: 1.61

Indicator scores in this objective varied greatly. Indicators 1 and 2, plurality of news sources and the ability of citizens to access them both scored well above the average. However, Indicators 3 and 5, state media reflect points of view from across the

The state's monopoly control of broadcast media and the official news agency was considered by the panelists as one of the elements undermining Algerian media. At the same time, private print media enjoy reasonably free expression as well as a remarkably critical viewpoint.

political spectrum and private broadcasters produce their own news, both scored a point or more lower than the average.

Such extreme differences in the panel's ratings are understandable. The state's monopoly control of broadcast media and the official news agency was considered by the panelists as one of the elements undermining Algerian media. At the same time, private print media enjoy reasonably free expression as well as a remarkably critical viewpoint. In fact, private outlets dominate the print media sector.

However, Algerian society still faces an illiteracy problem, among rural women in particular, which increases the influence of broadcast media. Abdel Karim Hamoush, manager of a public printing company, further noted that the print media guarantee pluralism in news sources when widely distributed, but that the limited national distribution network undermines access to diverse news sources for those in small cities and villages. The high proportion of youth in Algerian society and the relative popularity of the French

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.

Mostafa Boushashi, a human rights activist, put it clearly when he said that all citizens have access to the national and international press, but that the state-owned media, whether broadcast or print, never accepts opinions that oppose those of the regime.

language are all factors that benefit satellite channels, and even the international press and Internet in both Arabic and Amazigh languages. Despite Algeria's vast area, which hinders distribution of national and international print media, especially in the southern desert areas, residents typically have access to broadcast and satellite media.

Rabeh Helis, the former news director of the Algerian Radio and a project manager, said that in Algeria the issue of news source pluralism is conflicted. On the one hand, the use of receivers (antennas and encoders) and the Internet are free, while on the other hand, internal broadcast media are monopolized by the state.

Hemida Ayashi, director and owner of the daily Arabic-language newspaper *Algeria News*, says that pluralism of media sources is available to some extent, in that citizens feel free to buy their favorite newspapers. However, this only applies to economic and social news, while pluralism is almost nonexistent in security and political news related to government affairs. Kamal Zayet noted that only some of the independent newspapers try to deliver reasonably balanced coverage but their finances do not always make this possible, even if they enjoy a greater margin of freedom. Belkadhi noted that local newspapers suffer from these same kinds of problems.

Mostafa Boushashi shared his opinion that the private media has been penetrated by a group of financial and ideological interests, causing inherent bias. Rabeh Helis, a journalist at the national radio, partly agreed with this opinion. He stated that the ownership of the press and print media is not transparent. "We don't know who owns what," he said.

According to Samia Belkadhhi, a journalist at the *Al-Khabar* weekly newspaper, the ambiguity clouding the Algerian media landscape does not impede the pluralism of news sources, especially via the Internet, which enables access to a large amount of data, studies, statistics and international news.

Fatma Rahmani, a reporter at the *Ech-chorouk El-youmi* newspaper, said that foreign magazines are now distributed

in Algeria after years of being banned. Access to the Internet and other media sources is allowed but is conditioned on the financial and social status of citizens, so those with less purchasing power have less access to these sources, especially in remote areas.

Meanwhile, state media are not permitted to report on stories in depth and mostly work to serve the existing political regime, according to Abdelaziz Boubakir. Mostafa Boushashi, a human rights activist, put it clearly when he said that all citizens have access to the national and international press, but that the state-owned media, whether broadcast or print, never accepts opinions that oppose those of the regime.

Similarly, Algeria's primary news agency, Algerian Press Service, is also government-controlled. The privately owned Algerian Information Agency concentrates on business news but this is a limited market. Media do have access to international news services.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Algeria Objective Score: 1.57

Panelists scores for this objective reflect a media sector that has achieved a modicum of sophistication in terms of management and business orientation. In fact, an extreme view posed by Samia Belkadhhi was that private media organizations have become so business-oriented that money controls their every action. Since Algerian media still lack the financial strength and depth of funding sources to assert independence in terms of editorial policy, her opinion may well be correct. The scores for Indicators 1 and

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.

4, management practices and percentage of advertising amongst all revenue sources, both received scores of about three-quarters of a point higher than the average for the objective. However, Algerian media still lack important supporting elements such as reliable market research and unbiased audience or circulation measurement; Indicators 6 and 7 received scores well below the average.

Mostafa Boushashi said that the majority of independent media are well managed and the media are considered the most powerful arm of civil society with the ability to contribute to political development. However, after a decade and a half of independent media experience, the media landscape has only a few organizations that can compete and survive, with *Al-Khabar* and *Al-Watan* as the leaders. According to Nazeir Ben Saba, these two organizations are the only ones to have developed an actual management plan let alone a development strategy. Further, these have managed to create an integrated business environment to support publishing a daily newspaper, such as distribution companies and printing presses, and even a project to establish a school to train journalists in collaboration with the University of Lille in France.

Public and private sector advertising contribute to the financial stability of several private media organizations. Abdelaziz Boubakir added that some private media organizations have made large profits. But despite this, private media in general have not yet managed to produce better working relationships between editorial staff and journalists than those prevailing at public sector organizations. For example, owners tend to be journalists who did not have management experience before establishing their newspapers.

Many private media organizations still have not achieved financial stability, making them desperate to obtain advertising, the main source of income in the face of poor distribution and low circulation. In addition, they suffer the effects of being dependent on government printing presses and private distribution networks now that the public distribution agency has been disbanded.

Rabeh Helis was skeptical about media management at private newspapers. He noted the political situation prevents them from fully controlling their income and advertisements. The number of advertisers and other income sources is simply not enough to allow for complete freedom, even at the best managed private newspapers. Furthermore, he noted, market principles do not drive the placement of advertisements, causing other factors to be considered, such as the newspaper's editorial policy. The most important sources of advertising come from the public sector, but other

sectors have become increasingly important, such as the communications and automobile industries.

Kamal Zayet, a journalist at *Al-Khabar* daily newspaper, said that advertising remains the key to private media's survival. Newspaper sales remain a secondary source of income. Nazeir Ben Saba notes that the advertising market has no governing laws. Although the Minister of Information suggested a draft law in 2000, the current president withdrew it. Private newspaper publishers took advantage of this to avoid following articles of the media law that prevents them from exceeding 35 percent advertising content in a 24-page newspaper.

With respect to financial support provided to media organizations, Boubakir said that the specialized press is theoretically the only sector qualified to receive government support, but in most cases this does not happen. On the other hand, state media receive multi-faceted support from the government in the form of access to government printing presses on flexible financial terms and preferential treatment for receiving advertisements from government and public institutions.

Algeria lacks independent institutions that survey public opinion and verify distribution and media consumption rates. Mohamed Bouazdi, editor-in-chief of *Al-Khabar*, said that government advertisers distribute their advertising according to political priorities because they have little information upon which to base placement decisions. Hamid Ayashi, manager and owner of *Algeria News*, said the Algerian media need people with such expertise to catch up with foreign media.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Algeria Objective Score: 1.66

Discussions among the panelists covered several topics of concern in this objective. There was almost a consensus about poor qualifications of students graduating from the media institutes at the University of Algeria. They also agreed that on-the-job training is poor despite experiments performed by some major newspapers and the journalists syndicate in collaboration with some international organizations. The role of civil society organizations and unions was not a point of consensus for the panel members. Some members supported those organizations, yet were critical of them for their poor representation and activity. Other supporting organizations, including private distribution organizations and government presses, have been the target of criticism from panel members due to their unprofessional and sometimes politicized practices. Overall, all indicators scored more or less the same,

Panelists leveled many criticisms at the Syndicate of Journalists. Samia Belkadhi said the journalism profession has not managed to organize itself well and its only syndicate has not attracted many members.

and none received a score exceeding a half-point above or below the overall average.

A Publishers Association exists and focuses on commercial aspects of the industry. However, it does not delve into advocacy for press freedoms or attempt to improve professional or management standards.

Panelists leveled many criticisms at the Syndicate of Journalists. Samia Belkadhi said the journalism profession has not managed to organize itself well and its only syndicate has not attracted many members. She thought that the lack of involvement could be related to the professional instability at present in the journalism profession. Abdelaziz Boubakir said that journalists are inefficiently represented by the syndicate and that they do not exert pressure as a professional group. Fatma Rahmani added that the syndicate does not protect the profession against different political and professional pressures. Mohamed Bouazdi said the syndicate is not active in real terms, while international NGOs do not care about Algerian journalists.

Regarding other NGOs that might support the media, Rabeh Helis said such organizations do not work for the best interests of the independent press. Organizations

are generally not present, but when they are, they are pressured by the authorities and "underground" powers. Fatma Rahmani noted that political parties do not care to protect freedom of expression unless it is during their political campaigns.

Mostafa Boushashi, a human rights activist, dissented. He said that the Syndicate of Journalists protects the material and moral interests of its members. Moreover, he said, different human rights organizations (whether specialized or general) support and help journalists, especially in lawsuits.

Regarding academic training, Nazeir Ben Saba exhibited frustration and said that he does "not wish to speak about journalist training at the university, as this is an outdated practice with no relation to reality." Abdelaziz Boubakir added that the journalist training institutes provide poor and inappropriate programs. Training in the media institutes is provided free of charge as part of university education in Algeria.

On-the-job and other in-service training received a similarly poor review. Mohamed Bouazdi of *Al-Khabar* shared his opinion that the interests of private publishers are the only thing that matter. Journalists neither benefit from training during their careers, nor do they enjoy good working conditions or any other privileges. Nazeir Ben Saba said that the Syndicate of Journalists, of which he is a member, makes good efforts to improve professionalism through organized training cycles for journalists; otherwise, there is no structure for such training by other parties. Fatma Rahmani agreed that there is still a lack of high-quality professional training. Even the private training schools, she said, are managed by persons with no relationship to the media and communication sciences.

Despite the growth of private printing companies, many printing presses are still under the state's control, making them a tool to pressure private print media who do not have ready access to alternative printing facilities. Abdel Karim Hamoush, manager of a government press, thought that business organizations and employers represent their owners' interests, which, in his opinion, is seeking profits. As the printing industry becomes more market-oriented, printing may indeed become less politicized.

The state monopoly on broadcasting includes control over transmitters and satellite relays. The newspaper distribution sector is totally under private sector control, but panelists described it as "chaotic."

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

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

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