MEDIA
SUSTAINABILITY
INDEX
2006/2007

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

IREX

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2006/2007

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 MSI panelists described a situation where figures in government work against press freedom, whatever their publicly presented positions may be, and an unfinished legal environment throws the media sector into confusion. The panel contends that although Iraqis now are informed about dissenting voices and disagreements among political parties and other groupings, in fact much more information is kept secret or covered up.

IRAQ

IRAQ

Iraq was the deadliest country in the world for the media for the fifth straight year in 2007. According to the Iraqi Journalist Rights Defense Association's annual report, Violations of Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Expression in Iraq for 2007, 54 journalists were assassinated during the year. In addition, 31 journalists were arrested, 10 were abducted, and 10 media outlets raided. These statistics stand in grim contrast to the image of a free press burgeoning across Iraq unfettered by repressive government controls. Iraqi leaders say that the media has become independent, that access to information is open, and that widely ranging news reports are now available to Iraqis. However, according to this year's MSI assessment, the reality is that the media's ability to gather and communicate information, if not their very survival, is imperiled.

The MSI reflects this deteriorating situation. The overall country score for Iraq this year is 0.92, down from 1.16 for the 2005 report, and indicating that media freedom is actively opposed, professionalism is low, and media industry development is weak.

The MSI panelists described a situation where government figures work against press freedom, regardless of their publicly stated positions on the issue, and an unfinished legal framework further confounds the media sector. The panel contends that although Iraqis now are informed about dissent among political parties and other groups, much more information is in fact concealed from public view. The panelists contrast the pre-2003 situation, when media was politicized and focused only on glorifying the regime, with the current politicized and fragmented media landscape. This fragmentation reflects the often conflicting dictates of politicians, religious leaders, media owners, and advertisers. This means that Iraqi society lacks a professional and responsible media, and that the prospects for reaching this goal soon are few.

Moreover, the panelists said, there are no legal protections for media professionals who seek to work in the spirit of free expression. Although the Constitution ensures the media's independence establishes freedom of expression, new laws implementing these principles are not yet in place. Remaining on the books, however, are laws with the potential to take a journalist to the gallows.

Despite the lower MSI scores this year, some positive trends were noted. Discussion of media independence was seen as more vigorous than before, and panelists observed an increasing number of free press support groups. They also said more websites convey factual information and reserve space for citizens to voice opinions and make comments—and that the public has a lower tolerance for media outlets working only to justify the actions of special interests. Panelists also described a higher degree of awareness about the concept of public broadcasting as a system that should work in citizens' interests without being politically influenced.

IRAQ AT A GLANCE

GENERAL

Population: 28,221,181 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

Capital city: Baghdad

Ethnic groups (% of population): Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%-20%, Turkoman, Assyrian, or other 5% (*CIA World Factbook*)

Religions (% of population): Shi'a Muslim 60%-65%, Sunni Muslim 32%-37%, Christian or other 3% (*CIA World Factbook*)

Languages (% of population): Arabic, Kurdish (official in Kurdish regions), Turkoman (a Turkish dialect), Assyrian, Armenian (*CIA World Factbook*)

GNI (2006-Atlas): N/A

GNI per capita (2006-PPP): N/A

Literacy rate: 74.1% (male 84.1%, female 64.2%) (2000 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

President or top authority: Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (since May 20, 2006)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations: Print: 30 regular newspapers (15 daily, 15 weekly), 300+ irregularly printed papers; Radio: 84 local and regional stations; Television Stations: 25 terrestrial and satellite channels

Newspaper circulation statistics: Exact circulation not available, the top paper, *al-Sabah*, has an approximate daily circulation of 30,000

Broadcast ratings: Top 3 TV stations: *al-Iraqiya*, *al-Sharqiya*, *al-Hurriya*

News agencies: National Iraqi News Agency

Annual advertising revenue in media sector: N/A

Internet usage: 36,000 (2004 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: IRAQ

SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABLE

NEAR SUSTAINABILITY

UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM

UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS

FREE SPEECH	PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM	PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES	BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS
2005: 1.27	2005: 1.18	2005: 1.25	2005: 1.02	2005: 1.06
2006-07: 0.89	2006-07: 1.00	2006-07: 0.94	2006-07: 0.70	2006-07: 1.04
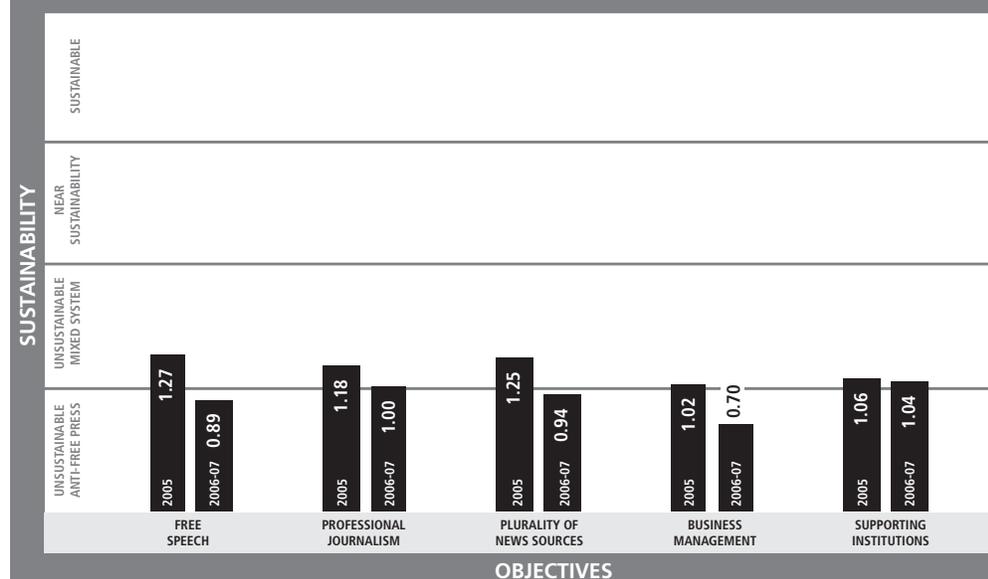
OBJECTIVES

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

Iraq Objective Score: 0.89

Aspirations for media freedom after April 2003 were enormous. Some Iraqis came back from abroad to establish their own outlets. Others worked from inside Iraq, often influenced by examples from countries with mature independent media industries. Everybody saw great opportunity for change—before being hit by reality. An increasing gap formed between the media sector's expectations and aspirations and the reality of the weaknesses of the free press protections and the media law environment in practice. This has led to a significant lowering of the MSI panel's assessment for this objective, to 0.89 from 1.27 in 2005.

The reality, MSI panelists say, is that there is no protection for media professionals and little free press context in which to work. Iraq had not previously known an enterprising media seeking out news and information. It is not easy for the political forces to allow access; on the contrary, giving information out to journalists conflicts with their tendencies. Moreover, many of those who took over important positions in government and other institutions had no professional experience, educational background or personal understanding of free media. Rather than seeing the nurturing of free expression and provision of information to the media as part of their duties as public servants, they thought that the media should serve their interests and those of their political movements. The media had been used as propaganda for the totalitarian regime in the past, and now they wanted to impose their wishes on it and be served in the same way.

The constitution ensures freedom of expression in Article 38, but the weak legal system and the overall insecurity render this ineffectual, according to the MSI panel. It is possible to arrest—and even to assassinate—any journalist at any time and in any place. Additionally, important elements of the media regulatory structure are not yet in place, such as those governing public broadcasting. "It is true that the constitution is important, yet the laws that ensure the activation of its articles are more important, and so far, these laws have not been issued," said Adil Al-Thamiri, an academic from Basra University and chairman of Afaq Media Forum.

A mix of temporary statutes governs the Iraqi media: The National Communications and Media Commission was established by Order 65 of the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in March 2004 to regulate broadcasting, among other tasks. The commissioners were charged with coordinating use of the radio broadcast spectrum, regulating and licensing broadcast outlets, and developing regulatory policy for the government, although their duties also

extended to telecommunications and other areas unrelated to the media. The commission controls the licensing of radio and television stations, and does so largely without political interference, the panel concluded. No media license is required to open a newspaper.

The CPA's Order 66 of March 2004 established the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), including the Al-Iraqiya satellite channel, *Al-Sabah* newspaper, and radio stations, but its planned transition to true public service media run by a board of governors selected for their independence and insulated from the government and its political leaders is not complete. Another CPA order, No. 17 Part II, prevents arrests of journalists without approval of the prime minister.

"We are waiting for the laws on the media," said Adil Al-Thamiri. "For instance, many organizations worked on the Iraqi Media Network law. It was supposed to be the first law that deals with the media issues to see the light; and yet it has not been issued." He also noted that a draft law put forward by civil society to support freedom of expression was "lost in parliament," and other panelists noted that no access to information law has been formulated.

Articles of the 1969 penal code, which focus on media as related to national security, public morals, and the higher interests of the state are still considered in force. As a crime, libel can be punished according to the penal code's Article 434. The Civil Law No. 40 of 1950 also includes the possibility of judgments for damages from defamation. The law considers use of the media in cases of defamation as an aggravating circumstance, in response to which the courts should impose the harshest punishment, critics have noted.

In Kurdistan, a new press law was drafted with input from the Kurdistan Journalists Syndicate but the version that was approved by the region's parliament in mid-December was greeted by protests from journalists who said revisions had raised penalties and added restrictions that would limit press freedom. The president of the regional government, Masoud Barzani, refused to sign the bill when it reached his desk and sent it back to the regional parliament for further review. A new version was prepared and submitted for the Spring 2008 parliament session. In particular, MSI panelists noted that the bill as approved by the parliament significantly raised fines for a series of vaguely worded offenses such as disturbing security, spreading fear, or encouraging terrorism. "In a time in which we need balance, the government fires on us elastic terms such as 'national security,' 'public morals,' 'the security of the region of Kurdistan,' etc.," said Khidhr Domali, a reporter and human rights activist in the region. "We know nothing of these terms other than their generalities. Yet, we are threatened to be punished if we come near them," he continued.

MSI panelists identified the lack of regulations concerning access to information as one of the most significant challenges. A journalist may outline a reporting idea that interests him and satisfies his editors, yet not be sure whether he will be able to carry it out. Therefore, panelists said, the journalists are often very hesitant to plan even marginally ambitious reporting, knowing that officials can hide information whenever they like if they do not think its release would benefit them. Reporters are fearful of being misunderstood or abused by officials, and may be inclined to overlook most of the standards of professional integrity. They fear having what they wrote misinterpreted, or seeing it followed by a call, an arrest, a lawsuit, or worse, panelists said. The journalists know that their media outlets are too weak to stand beside them if they are arrested or sued. These outlets are mostly able only to condemn and denounce. And if journalists are detained or killed, owners of many outlets are not ready to pay any compensation, panelists said.

The panel members described a degree of "despair" among journalists, and a deteriorating profession. They also cited a certain double standard, with Iraqi officials giving foreign journalists more access to information and even allowing these reporters to publish news that annoys them without any retaliation. The Iraqi journalist, by contrast, will be exposed to the official's anger if he publishes something that disturbs the official, even if it is published quoting from a foreign source.

"Shortage in information does surely affect freedom of expression," said Ibraheem Al-Sarraji, chairman of IJRDA. "What is said is something and the actual reality is something else, and journalists are being abused especially after the increase in pressures and regulations on information gathering." He mentioned a May 2007 announcement by a Ministry of Interior official that journalists were no longer to be allowed immediate access to places where explosions had occurred. The decision was presented as a safety measure for journalists given the potential for additional explosions, but it was widely viewed as interference in coverage of violence. Shortly after the provision's announcement, it was enforced by police firing in the air to disperse journalists trying to reach a bomb scene in a Baghdad square. "The irony is that now any official can prevent the journalist's access to whatever he wishes," Ibraheem Al-Sarraji said.

Various new orders, some of them issued on the spot at an individual official's whim, hinder the movement of media professionals and their access to news events and information sources, panelists said. This emphasizes the absence of laws that protect journalists or ensure they can do their jobs. The MSI panel described a chaotic situation, and noted repeatedly that the journalist may turn into a victim at any moment—or become a number in a prison or a graveyard.

Many journalists have been detained by various authorities. Ala' Al-Haddad, head of Tawasul Company for Publications and Distribution, said that the tallies of journalists killed or detained are probably incomplete. "There are detainees who have not been registered in the arrest list; among whom is Abdul-Sattar Al-Sha'lan who was arrested by the Multi-National Forces more than a year ago," he said. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), US troops have taken in dozens of reporters, mostly Iraqis. Most have been released relatively quickly, but CPJ has documented more than a half-dozen cases where they have been held for weeks or months without having their cases adjudicated. One example is that of Bilal Hussein, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer for The Associated Press who has been held by the US military since April 2006, accused of being a security threat but without formal charges ever being filed. The AP, conducting its own extensive internal review, found no evidence to suggest wrongdoing (Hussein was released in April 2008 while the MSI was in production).

Abduction by unknown forces also is a threat. Ibraheem Al-Sarraji said the annual report of his organization, IJRDA, shows 23 journalists were abducted during 2007. "Most of them were killed, and six are still missing," he said. For example, Reem Zaid and Marwan Khaz'al al-Majidi, correspondents of the Al-Sumarriya satellite television channel, remained missing at the end of 2007 after being

abducted more than two years before. Extra-judicial cases also occur: "Moreover, 24 journalists suffered from different assaults including capital punishment judgments issued by courts that belong to radical groups. Militants destroyed completely two media institutions," Ibraheem Al-Sarraji said.

Impunity is rampant. "All these crimes were committed, and yet neither the Multi-National Forces nor the Iraqi security forces conducted investigations in spite of all the numerous statements and promises," Ibraheem Al-Sarraji said. "Moreover, the causes and facts behind the arrests were not uncovered. No explanation was given as to why they arrest this journalist or that one. The arrests are not even investigated quickly."

The panelists differed about whether the public is stirred by the dramatic statistics on journalists killed and abducted. Sa'diya Khaleel Taha Al-Tikriti, correspondent of Salah El-Deen TV and *Al-Khabar* newspaper, said, "I myself have seen and heard many people who feel compassion for the journalists who were assassinated." But Adil Al-Thamiri of Basra University differed: "The Iraqi community, in general, is shocked by everything that takes place in front and around it. I don't believe that the community is much touched by the assassination of a journalist. Not because it does not want to be, but because there is nobody who might, for instance, organize a demonstration or a protest parade to support the journalist. Have any one of you seen or heard of a demonstration that has gone on for the killing of a journalist?"

The MSI panel said the disorganized state of the country's statutory framework contributes to the media's problems. Some officials invoke inactive regulations from the Saddam Hussein regime as protection, seeking to take these laws out of the drawers and bring them back to life. One panel member, Hashim Al-Musawi, editor-in-chief of *Al-Safeer* newspaper and a legal specialist, said some laws that are in place are not used. "There are laws that are inactive, such as Order No.7, Part II, issued by (Coalition Provisional Authority head) Paul Bremer and which prohibits bringing proceedings against journalists except after obtaining the prime minister's approval. This law is still valid, but judges and the executive authority in Iraq do not want to activate it. Had it been activated, journalists would not have been arrested." He gave as an example the case of Ali Shareef, a journalist who was sued by the governor of Babylon after writing about allegations that the governor had engaged in corrupt activities and did not have a university degree, disqualifying him for the position. The case was dismissed on the basis of Order No. 7, according to Hashim Al-Musawi.

Gaining entrance to press conferences or even learning when they are held can pose an access-to-information challenge, panel members said. Those who provide approvals to attend

The reality, MSI panelists say, is that there is no protection for media professionals and little free press context in which to work. Iraq had not previously known an enterprising media seeking out news and information. It is not easy for the political forces to allow access.

press conferences may deal with the media according to their whims, the panelists said, based on the power of the party that owns the media outlet in question and according to political currents. Jameel Al-Rikabi, of the Al Diyar satellite television channel, described how government officials stand in the way of information-gathering: "In the Press Center of the Prime Minister, for instance, we were told one is not allowed to ask more than one question."

Journalists who work at media outlets owned by parties with numerous seats in parliament and government are better provided for than others in terms of access to information generally, and learning when press conferences are, specifically. Moreover, such journalists may get pre-written reports that contain the information intended to be released, panelists said. Reporters working for outlets whose owners are not part of the inner circles are regarded as having doubtful loyalty, with the easiest path being to accuse them of being financed by foreign entities. Journalists from media published or broadcast from abroad and viewed as in opposition have no opportunity to access information themselves, according to panel members, and thus they depend on foreign news agencies. Journalists from state broadcaster IMN have better access, and the favoritism by government officials is readily apparent, according to panel members.

The status of IMN and public media in general was the focus of concern for the MSI panelists, who noted that a permanent law to replace CPA Order 66 remained before parliament. Meanwhile, panelists said, IMN's work is in limbo, hindered because the professional journalists at the network's outlets are counterbalanced by others who either act as if they are spokesmen for government and political parties or use IMN for personal interests. As a result, IMN outlets all have been stamped as biased toward government, panelists said. "Iraqiya satellite channel broadcasts the government and its officials' viewpoints," said Jameel Al-Rikabi. "If it wants to prove its independence, it needs to interview an opponent to the government who lives abroad."

Mohammad Al-Juboori, editing secretary of the Murasiloon News Agency website, placed responsibility for the

deteriorating media sector elsewhere: "The parties, especially the strong ones, stand behind everything. They influence the government and parliament. I can say that an official at an influential party pressed a media outlet owner to repeat a complete article and change it because of one word in it, and the journalist agreed and did what he wanted."

Abdul Rasool Ziyara, head of the Iraqi Journalists Union and editor-in chief of *Al-Sharq* newspaper, said journalists themselves are to some degree responsible for the partisanship in the media. "Yes, partisan trends do overwhelm the media nowadays, and they deprive it of its independence," he said. "Still, we should not blame the government or the parties alone. We are not united journalists, but rather divided among ourselves. Had we unified, we could have had the ability to pressure the government or even the parties."

The government does not license journalists and does not seek this power.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Iraq Objective Score: 1.00

Even if only a relatively limited number of the hundreds of newspapers that emerged after April 2003 survive today, the fact that so many were published reflects a degree of capacity on the part of the journalists and editors. But pressures from political and sectarian forces, the agendas of the media owners, and the dangers of being a journalist have done significant damage to the professionalism of those working in the media, the panel concluded. Journalists work increasingly cautiously out of fear: fear of losing their jobs, fear of drawing the ire of powerful people, and fear of losing their freedom or their lives. The MSI panel scored Iraq at 1.00 for this objective measuring the professionalism of the media, compared with 1.18 for the 2005 report.

With most newspapers and satellite channels financed by political parties or persons with political interests, journalists at all levels are exposed to the financiers' influences. This is

true to such an extent that journalists may find that their stories appear containing material that they did not report or write. "In many instances, the stories are changed and thus they become less precise, losing their most important characteristic," said Dhuha Sa'ad, news editor and a recent journalism graduate who works for an independent newspaper. "Since many work to win their bread, they are forced to approve all the practices of the owner or financer of the media outlet they work with."

"Do we have a professional journalism?" wondered Hashim Al-Musawi, editor-in-chief of *Al Safeer* newspaper. "After the political changes, journalism has emerged quickly and achieved freedom of work, but not the freedom of the profession. Many who were the bosses and backers came with foreign agendas. After 2006, that has led to enormous setbacks, such as the loss of journalistic standards and the imposition of those agendas on the professionals."

"I shall not talk here about complete professionalism, but a scratched version," added Awatif Hashim, correspondent of *Al-Shabaka Al-Iraqiya* magazine, one of the IMN media outlets. "The professional journalists who were in Iraq before 2003 are still following the same path. The new ones, however, are looking for excitement and for promoting specific things they want."

"Journalism is not to be judged by quantity, but by variation," said Ala' Al-Haddad of the Tawasul Company for Publications and Distribution. "All over the world there are famous and internationally known newspapers that readers cannot do with out. In the same countries, there are unknown newspapers which have limited influence. In Iraq, there are now newspapers that are financed and subsidized

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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).

but there is neither professional journalism nor widely circulated newspapers that ensure returns. Also, there are names known as professional journalists but there are no media outlets that have attained high professionalism. The political, economic and security events in Iraq since 2003 represent the best evidence. These events fill international journalism, and yet there is no single media outlet in Iraq that has succeeded in producing reports on them at international standards."

Journalists engage in a degree of self-censorship, in part because of the high level of politicization and government officials' lower level of experience in dealing with media, panelists said. "Our officials give us many problems," said Hashim Al-Musawi, describing how representatives from a political party or government bloc may make statements to the media one day and deny them the next, after being blamed by their factions for the positions they took publicly. "They mostly deny their statements and shoulder us with the responsibility. Now we fear scoops and avoid them."

Despite subsidies from various backers of news outlets, said Nahla Ghazi Al-Lowzi, head of Free Media Organization in Babel in south central Iraq, the working conditions for journalists may be very poor: "Some of the media outlets have huge financing but the journalist working in them lacks the simplest requirements, including training and equipment."

Salaries are low for most journalists, both at outlets that are struggling financially and at those where financing is from a special interest to promote an agenda. "In general," said Al-Sarraji, "the problem lies in the relation between the financing bodies and the editor-in-chiefs. I know an editor-in-chief who receives a huge financing, and yet she does not pay for the article more than 1,500 Iraqi dinar, that is $1 or a little more. She went to the extreme of placing a list of prices to the articles and reports at the entrance of the newspaper building. I also know of a newspaper that has a staff of five workers only, yet the registered number is 20. The reason behind this is that the editor-in-chief gets the salaries of 20 workers and pays only five of them."

Several panel members pointed to the lack of binding work contracts and the toll that the insecurity resulting from this takes on professionalism. "I know an old journalist who has taken hold of a newspaper and, to please his financers, he fired 73 journalists," said Al-Sarraji. "The greatest problem in working in our profession nowadays is that is it loose: there are no working contracts that bind both parties. Contracting takes place orally." Panelists mentioned that more experienced journalists may be fired to be replaced by a new graduate who is willing to accept any pay level. Moreover, the graduate may win a job opportunity only due to having a university degree in journalism, they said.

Dhuha Sa'ad, news editor and a recent journalism graduate who works for an independent newspaper said "Since many work to win their bread, they are forced to approve all the practices of the owner or financer of the media outlet they work with."

Salaries generally do not exceed $100 a month, and often are not paid on time. Media owners may say they do not have enough money to both publish and pay salaries, and choose to produce the newspaper, panelists said. This leaves some journalists continuing to work without pay in the hope they will eventually receive their salaries. Others are paid by the piece, creating a financial incentive for them to sacrifice quality for quantity.

"There are journalists nowadays whom we call copy-and-paste journalists," said Mohammad Al-Juboori. "Their mobile phones enable them to contact each other to get news from each other. A journalist of a newspaper contacts a journalist from another newspaper to exchange the pieces of news he has gained. This takes place even in press conferences so that both get the highest number of news articles. I know a colleague who works in a news agency. She calls this journalist or that one to increase the number of articles she sends to her agency irrespective of the quality of the article or what it is."

In these circumstances there are significant challenges to maintaining ethical standards, the MSI panel concluded. For example, according to panelists, there are cases when journalists seek to stay ahead by bribing an information officer for a ministry or other institution to provide them exclusively with information and hide it from all others making inquiries. There have been several initiatives concerning ethics codes supported by civil society organizations, international support groups and, in some cases, media outlets. One drafting process, launched by a range of Iraqi broadcasters with support from UNESCO in October 2007, seeks to unify media ethics principles and raise the credibility of television and radio reporting. In another initiative, begun in 2006, IMN managers commissioned a special committee led by the editor in chief of *Al-Sabah* newspaper that produced an ethics code eventually signed by representatives of 32 media outlets. However, panel members said the agendas imposed by political blocs backing some media houses, financial conditions, and other factors conflict with ethics codes, and therefore many journalists do not comply with them. For example, Nahla Ghazi Al-Lowzi said

journalists may be required to bring advertising business to their newspapers. Panelists described how journalists conduct interviews with government officials and then tell them that their views will not be published unless their institutions buy advertisements or subscribe to the publications.

Most panel members agreed that while it is appropriate for media outlets to be commercial entities, this often is pursued at the expense of professionalism. At some outlets where finances are weak, or the drive for profit takes precedence, owners are dispensing with journalists altogether and resorting to lifting material from the Internet, panel members said. This also produces newspapers that look very similar to each other.

Generally, niche reporting and programming has not developed significantly. In part, panelists said, this has to do with the lack of time and financial resources required by journalists to produce in-depth reporting. Fear and self-censorship also contribute to shortfalls in this area.

Lack of equipment at media houses also was noted as reducing professionalism. Most newspapers do not have their own presses, forcing publishers to use private printing houses that have outdated equipment and lack the capacity for producing multiple daily editions. Consequently, the newspapers are issued as if they were copies of each other. There also are satellite channels that do not have all the equipment they need, at times renting sets from production companies to execute their work.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Iraq Objective Score: 0.94

The newspaper industry that expanded so rapidly in 2003 and 2004 continues to constrict. Where hundreds of titles were sold from sidewalks and kiosks, now the most prominent newspapers number less than 10. The number of satellite channels and Internet resources is growing, and access to them is broadening steadily. However, the MSI panel noted that even now not all Iraqis are reached

by media, and that the still-substantial number of outlets does not correspond with a great variation in the subjects covered and the views expressed, as would be expected. The panelists also said the impact of larger numbers of media outlets is tempered somewhat by suspicions about their credibility. The panel ranked this objective at 0.94, down from 1.25 in 2005.

Newspapers are issued in Baghdad, with the leading titles including *Al-Sabah*, *Al-Mada*, *Azzaman*, *Al-Sabah al-Jadeed*, and *Addustoor*. Newspapers also are issued by some governorates. In Kurdistan, for example, the Ministry of Culture records 800 licenses for periodical magazines and newspapers, including in the main cities of Erbil, Sulaymaniya, and Duhok. However, panelists said circulation is very low, and that the copies of the top newspapers circulated in the three governorates, with a population of about 5 million, total little more than 15,000 copies. Residents of governorate centers and some towns can obtain a range of publications. They are not available, however, in some districts and in villages and rural areas. "In Basra, some of the newspapers reach the city, but they do not go out of the center," said Adil Al-Thamiri of Basra University. "You will not find a single newspaper in Abu Al-Khaseeb district," which is on the outskirts of Basra.

"If the newspapers do not reach Abu Al-Khaseeb," said Hoker Khidhr Ghareeb, correspondent of the Yekeker Kurdish radio station, "we have areas in Kurdistan to which neither newspapers nor television broadcasting, whether local or satellite, reach. If the radio broadcasting reaches them, reception will be distorted … There are villages and towns

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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.

situated on very high mountains … (or) in very low valleys or encircled by two mountains or several elevations."

Among broadcasters, leading radio stations include Republic of Iraq Radio (RIR), Dijla, Al-Mahaba, Al-Hurriya, Al-Nas, and Ur FM. Prominent television channels include Al-Iraqiya, al-Sharqiya, Al-Hurra Iraq, Al-Baghdadiya, al-Hurriya, and Baghdad. There are two prime times for all Iraqi satellite channels: between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., with the evening newscasts taking prominent positions at 7 p.m. or 8 p.m.

In northern Iraq, the MSI panelists pointed to the impact of factional control of the media. By far the majority of the media outlets in the Kurdish region of Iraq, including the three northeastern governorates of Erbil, Sulaimaniya, and Duhok, remain are under the domination of the two main political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). This is particularly true among the key broadcast media, although a few relatively independent newspapers and on-line news sites have emerged.

In the south, panel members discussed the influence of the government and political officials, religious figures, militias, tribal leaders, and business forces on the media. Al Marbid radio, a station receiving technical assistance from the BBC World Service Trust, is generating 12 hours a day of locally produced original news and entertainment programming. Its transmissions reach Basra, Amara, and Nassirriya and the station records high audience figures as well as significant official responses to issues raised by the its news and public affairs reporters. However, Al Marbid TV, the local television component of the project, closed in March 2007. The BBC and donors concluded the prospects were dim for developing sufficient advertising revenue to offset the costs of operating the station over the long term. Factors in the closing included the lack of economic development in the area and the continued partisan pressures on the media, challenges that MSI panelists said were true across the region's media market.

Satellite transmission has become increasingly important to media plurality, panelists said. There are now whole villages, towns, districts, and communes that depend entirely on satellite channels. Even in Baghdad, some of the neighborhoods are in this category. Panelists said this is in part because newspaper distribution depends on companies that are not well-informed about promotion and marketing and do not aggressively open new districts to sales, and there are no firms specialized in the market represented by more remote areas. The government-owned National Distribution Co. of the previous regime, which had efficient countrywide distribution but only for the very strictly controlled list of

> *"If the newspapers do not reach Abu Al-Khaseeb," said Hoker Khidhr Ghareeb, correspondent of the Yekeker Kurdish radio station, "we have areas in Kurdistan to which neither newspapers nor television broadcasting, whether local or satellite, reach."*

approved publications, has not been replaced. The current network of shops, kiosks, and distribution offices is vulnerable to disputes and conspiracies against certain publications, with bribery and even death threats used to prevent their distribution and destroy their business.

Also dampening market support for media plurality is the shaken trust of potential newspaper readers in Baghdad and in the governorates, panelists said. Sensationalism and lack of accuracy has caused audiences to give up on some Iraqi media outlets, they said, and turn—if they can afford it—to international media. The panel also noted that political party linked publications tend to have a narrow focus and lose audience and, therefore, revenues. Also hurting access to a wide range of media are electricity outages, which plague both remote areas and Baghdad. Panel members noted the impact of these interruptions on the "chain" of information, with news consumers missing out on developments in on-going news stories.

There are a limited number of news agencies, some providing news for free and others charging subscription fees. To date, their quality has not been such that they have convinced editors-in-chief to depend on them and do without foreign counterparts. "Officials participate in the weakness of the news agencies and the other media," said Santa Mikha'eel, correspondent of Voices of Iraq News Agency. "The official who may give a statement that does not appeal to the government or his party may later deny this statement, a matter that is reflected on negatively by the reader who is unaware of what takes place between the media outlet and the bodies it deals with."

"Personally, I depend on the foreign news agencies," said Hashim Al-Musawi, editor-in-chief of *Al-Safeer* newspaper. "They are impartial and their news articles are new and varied."

MSI panel members described the degree to which plurality of news sources does not mean there is extensive and varied information available. Many of the media outlets

carry similar information, some of it culled from the same Internet sources or the same journalists. Reporting does not tend to be in-depth, and is subject to distortion due to the wishes of those who run the media outlets. Not all owners of media outlets are known to the public because ownership is not transparent.

Language is another issue. "For us in the northern areas, the news resources are not multiplied," said Salma Hifdhi, correspondent of the Dijla satellite channel, "We neither know nor take the news of the middle and the south of Iraq. All the channels are Kurdish. We do not have a channel in Arabic." Diyala governorate has a mixed Arab, Kurdish, and Turkmen population and the panelist noted that the local television broadcaster does not reach Khaniqeen, a district that is on the road joining Kurdish- and Arabic-speaking areas. Newspapers do not reach Khaniqeen either; only a Kurdish radio channel reaches the town. Other panelists mentioned that Kurdish officials may decline to speak in Arabic when interviewed by correspondents for Arabic-language broadcasters, and that officials in Kurdistan require security service approval to distribute newspapers in the region.

Minority groups in Iraq such as Mandeans, Christians, Yezidis and others may find no place for their voices except in their own media, panelists said. Generally events involving these communities are not reported on in the national media, and panelists said that when they are, there often are distortions. An example cited from 2007 was the coverage of a young Yezidi woman who was killed, apparently for having embraced Islam and marrying a Muslim.

Internet access is increasing but still limited largely by expense. An hour at a private Internet café costs 2000 Iraqi dinar, or about $1.50. Internet cafes are not yet plentiful and often are clustered, therefore not reaching every neighborhood. Additionally, security conditions limit their opening hours.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Iraq Objective Score: 0.70

Media management continues to be weak in Iraq. Outlets work without prior planning or studied calculations. There is not a single institution to research the media market, help a potential new entrant understand whether it is possible to be profitable, or support the business strategies of existing outlets. The MSI panel rated Iraq's score with respect to this objective at 0.70, down from 1.02.

The lack of market research and other media business consulting capacity hampers the ability of the more credible and independent media to compete with those outlets subsidized to promote political agendas, MSI panelists said. Without support in their drive for sustainability, many outlets fall into a downward financial spiral or are forced to find patrons, as well. The subsidized media outlets get advertising not only from their backers but also from businessmen and other figures who are aligned with their political or sectarian interests. Panelists said there are ministers and government officials who limit the advertising from their departments to media that express their parties' viewpoints. Exporting of ads to foreign media also has contributed to weakening the more professional and independent Iraqi media, according to the panel.

Panelists described the mixed sources of revenue for Iraqi media outlets. Some have backers but not advertising such as the Al-Hurra Iraq satellite channel. Others have backers and advertising, including the Al-Iraqiya satellite television channel and Al-Hurriya. The same can be said about newspapers. For example, *Al-Sabah* has backers, advertising,

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.

and circulation sources of revenues due to being arguably the leading newspaper in Iraq. Even the type of backers for media outlets differ: Al-Iraqiya and Al-Hurra Iraq are backed by governments, while Al-Hurriya and Al-Sharqiya are backed by individuals.

In particular, the panel noted that IMN, which includes Al-Iraqiya satellite channel, *Al-Sabah* newspaper, and radio stations, receives an annual allocation in the state budget, and also takes in advertising revenue. Panel members noted that this policy is in place even though many commercial media outlets are floundering either financially or in terms of editorial independence.

Journalists frequently are turned into advertising agents for their outlets, violating the strict separation between news and business departments that contributes to media credibility. Some reporters choose to do this because it is more lucrative than continuing as a journalist uninfluenced by advertisers' interests. In other cases, editors-in-chief have informed their journalists that they must garner advertising for their newspapers or face losing their reporting jobs.

The advertising agencies themselves are not highly experienced and are seen as using any means to place the highest number of ads. Some newspapers resort to blackmail to get ads, making promises or threats to officials. Overall, the advertising industry is growing slowly because of the security situation and the hybrid nature of the market, with a large public sector, a weak and inexperienced private sector, and another politicized sector that mixes public and private interests, panelists said. Some media houses form their own advertising agencies, while others have a designated advertising department that works with advertisers and with advertising agencies. To the degree that the advertising market has been analyzed, television appears to receive the greatest share of ad revenue. Major advertisers include the government, which places public service announcements promoting tolerance, warning against terrorism and publicizing activities of the Defense and Interior ministries, and the mobile phone companies.

Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are not produced reliably although there has been some limited research done on audiences for television and print media by international and Iraqi groups including Tawasul Company for Publishing and Distribution and Eye Media Company.

Distribution systems also are not highly developed. Ibraheem al-Sarraji said that media companies do not analyze their circulation and production trends to optimize distribution. Ameera Al-Juboori, a publishing house owner, said that some distributors "do not pay the owners of some newspapers their shares from buying their newspapers. At the same time, they

Journalists frequently are turned into advertising agents for their outlets, violating the strict separation between news and business departments that contributes to media credibility.

do not return to them the copies that are not sold." Added Abdul Rasool Ziyara, "No single distributing company has appeared that is aware of … the mechanisms of distribution."

The deteriorated printing presses also contribute to weaker business performance, and the private printing houses tend not to have the financial resources to refurbish their equipment. Nor, panelist said, do the printing houses trust that if they invested in their production technology, their newspaper clients would be profitable or plentiful enough to provide return on the outlay.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Iraq Objective Score: 1.04

The Iraqi media sector does not have the full range of institutional supports to promote its sustainability, according to the MSI assessment. This is true for owners, who do not work together to lobby for their industry, and journalists as well. The organizations that could link Iraqi media to international trends and help keep pace with modernization also are largely failing to develop, the MSI panelists said. They rated this objective at 1.04, almost unchanged from 1.06 during the last period.

"Bosses and owners of the media do not sit together, as is the case in other countries, to form a specific organization that helps them to study their issues in a manner that serves their interests and the interests of the industry," said Mohammad Al-Juboori, a publishing house owner. The government-approved organization for publishers during the regime of Saddam Hussein has not been replaced by a legitimate industry association.

The unions and associations representing Iraqi journalists are still relatively weak, according to the panel members. The Iraqi Journalists Association and the Iraqi Journalists Union work as syndicates. The oldest is the Iraqi Journalists Association, established in 1958. In 1969, Saddam Hussein issued Law 178 and its amendments stating that it is the only association that represents Iraqi journalists. However, panelists said it has been unable to stand for journalists in

the new conditions of the industry, and therefore no one relies on it. The other syndicate, the Iraqi Journalists Union, was established after 2003, but the panel noted that the 1969 law still prevents the establishment of any other entity representing journalists officially as a trade union.

Other new groups, including the IJRDA and the Journalistic Freedoms Observatory, are more active but still not able to fully meet the needs for advocacy and support within the media sector, panelists said. JRDA monitors violations against Iraqi media and has offices in Baghdad and 10 Iraqi cities. It offers a legal advocacy program to defend detained journalists and published an annual report, *Violations of Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Expression in Iraq for 2007*. The Journalistic Freedoms Observatory works on freedom of expression advocacy by publishing declarations and lobbying. The work of both is assisted by a range of international organizations that are focused primarily on capacity building through training workshops and consulting, sponsoring conferences on media topics, and making grants.

The MSI panel rated the efforts of the organizations offering training to journalists as not yet fully fruitful. Panelists

said the training has reached only a restricted number of journalists who have been offered the opportunity by their newspapers and other media to join workshops and courses. In some cases, they said, these opportunities result from relationships that the media organization managers have with the organizations supporting or organizing the trainings. Some panelists criticized what they saw as bias in the distribution of opportunities abroad. They said NGOs erred in sending some journalists to international trainings in the same areas more than once, in exchanging coverage of their activities for training opportunities, or in the processes they use to select participants.

Certain organizations use specific criteria to fill their rosters, and these are viewed critically by some panelists as unduly subjective rather than objective selections. While such organizations may be selecting participants to encourage those who had been barred or not encouraged professionally during previous regimes, the comments indicated that there is suspicion within the journalistic ranks because training opportunities, particularly involving travel abroad, are not seen as fully fairly distributed. Santa Mikha'eel said that some journalists provided with international training are not known to her as working media professionals, and are suspected of having used personal connections to get nominated. She also said women journalists have greater opportunities to be trained but do not necessarily represent all the gaps in media professionalism. Hoker Khidhr Ghareeb said, "Even nationality has a role in getting training opportunities. The Kurds, for instance, number less than the Arabs who traveled abroad to be trained." Added Santa Mikha'eel: "I'll tell you something bad. I was nominated to attend a training course abroad. I was chosen because I am Christian, and not for any objective or professional standards. I was chosen to complete the image the international NGOs insist on communicating, namely the participants represent the entire Iraqi spectrum. This means that the quota has even reached to training. That is the greatest disaster."

University journalism programs are presented by academics who studied mass communication, not the practicalities of the profession in current conditions. "The graduates from the mass media institutions are not satisfactory," said Abdul Rasool Ziyara. "Some of these graduates know nothing about the media. Consequently, they end by working at the information offices of ministries." He added, "Some media had bitter experiences with graduates of the College of Information at Baghdad University."

The College of Information is the oldest and most important journalism education institution in the country. As a public entity, however, it is severely lacking in training equipment and largely unable to hold practical workshops for students,

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.

limiting the bulk of its courses to theoretical lectures. "Sometimes, a graduate does not know the components of a news article," agreed Ibraheem al-Sarraji. The college also is not currently contributing to the development of the media sector through research, forums and consultations, panelists said. Elsewhere in the country, there also are media education departments at Erbil Technical Institute, Sulaimaniya Technical Institute, and Emara Technical Institute.

There are state printing houses but they are as deteriorated as the private ones. Several of the more modern presses were looted or burned when the previous regime collapsed, and equipment that has been imported is used for government work only, the panel said. Printing equipment can be brought into the country freely but private investors do not risk the investment, in part because of a lack of expertise in running the newer technology. Newsprint is imported privately and prices fluctuate on the market, reflecting movement in international currencies and the demand among Iraqi publishers.

Kiosks are privately owned, although subject to political influence or interference by competing media houses. Internet providers are non-political and access is not restricted, other than by price.

List of Panel Participants

Mahir Al-Dulaimi, media lawyer expert and human rights activist, Al-Anbar

Salma Hifdhi, correspondent, Dijla Satellite TV Channel, Diyala

Sa'diya Khaleel Taha Al-Tikriti, correspondent, Salah El-Deen TV and *Al-Khabar* newspaper, Salah El-Deen

Ibraheem Al-Sarraji, chairman, Iraqi Journalist Rights Defense Association, Baghdad

Abdul Rasool Ziyara, head, Iraqi Journalists Union, editor-in-chief, *Al-Sharq* Newspaper, Baghdad

Ala' Al-Haddad, head, Tawasul Company for Publications and Distribution, Baghdad

Mohammad Al-Juboori, editing secretary, Murasiloon News Agency Website, Baghdad

Jameel Al-Rikabi, correspondent, Al-Diyar TV, Thi Qar[1]

Ameera Al-Juboori, owner, Rose Baghdad Publishing House, Baghdad

Awatif Hashim, correspondent, *Al-Shabaka Al-Iraqiya* Magazine, Baghdad

Hashim Al-Musawi, editor-in-chief, *Al-Safeer* Newspaper, Baghdad

Dhuha Sa'ad, news editor, *Rose Baghdad* Newspaper, Baghdad

Nahla Ghazi Al-Lowzi, head, Free Media Organization, Babylon

Adil Al-Thamiri, academic, Basra University, chairman, Afaq Media Forum, Basra

Santa Mikha'eel, correspondent, Voices of Iraq News Agency, Baghdad

Hoker Khidhr Ghareeb, correspondent, Yekeker Kurdish Radio, Erbil

Moderator

Kadhim Nazar Al-Rikabi, acting Iraq media programs director, IREX, Baghdad

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[1] It is with regret that IREX notes Jameel Al-Rikabi died March 11, 2008