

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.

Several changes to laws governing the media were made in 2007, with mixed results. Although authorities finally passed an access to information law, it contained crippling articles that hamper the right to publish the information. Journalists scored victories with the new Press and Publication Law that abolished pre-censorship on newspapers and effectively lowered minimum capital requirements for newspapers.



JORDAN

The press landscape in Jordan changed little in 2007. The same ambiguous language dominated the scene as journalists found themselves squeezed between restrictive legislation and religious edicts, tribal and street taboos. While the authorities maintained their pledges to safeguard the freedom of press, practice and legislation proved otherwise.

Since the introduction of the Press and Publication Law in 1953, only two journalists received prison sentences. But many journalists fear the “detention” sword wielded by the State Security Court, a tribunal formed by the prime minister consisting of two military judges and one civilian judge. Since April 2007, when the former Parliament amended the Press and Publication Law by barring the detention of journalists, the judiciary has refrained from detaining journalists in press-related cases.

A ray of hope came from King Abdullah II. In his speech from the Throne in early December 2007 he said “It is not acceptable to send a journalist to prison for a difference in opinion on a public issue, as long as this opinion does not entail abusing the rights of others, their freedoms, honor or dignity.” He has also cautioned time and again, “The safety of journalists is a red line.” After columnist Jamil Nimri was attacked by three assailants the king stepped in immediately: police rounded up three suspects and one of them was charged with the attack. However, another assault on a journalist occurred in early 2007, when a reporter from *Al-Rai* daily newspaper was beaten up by a policeman and an angry citizen while covering a public event.

Amman’s court of justice recently sounded a positive note on journalist safety. In acquitting Fahad Rimawi, editor-in-chief of the opposition *Al-Majd* weekly, of slander charges leveled against him by the former government, it ruled that “the press has the right to criticize the executive power as part of the democratic process.”

Several changes to laws governing the media were made in 2007, with mixed results. Although authorities finally passed an access to information law, it contained crippling articles that hamper the right to publish the information. Journalists scored victories with the new Press and Publication Law that abolished pre-censorship on newspapers and effectively lowered minimum capital requirements for newspapers. The law also included an article that preserved the confidentiality of news sources, and fines for penalties were reduced. Journalists, however, underscored the necessity of free press legislation as key to expanding an international media zone, free from government intervention and attractive to foreign investors.

JORDAN AT A GLANCE

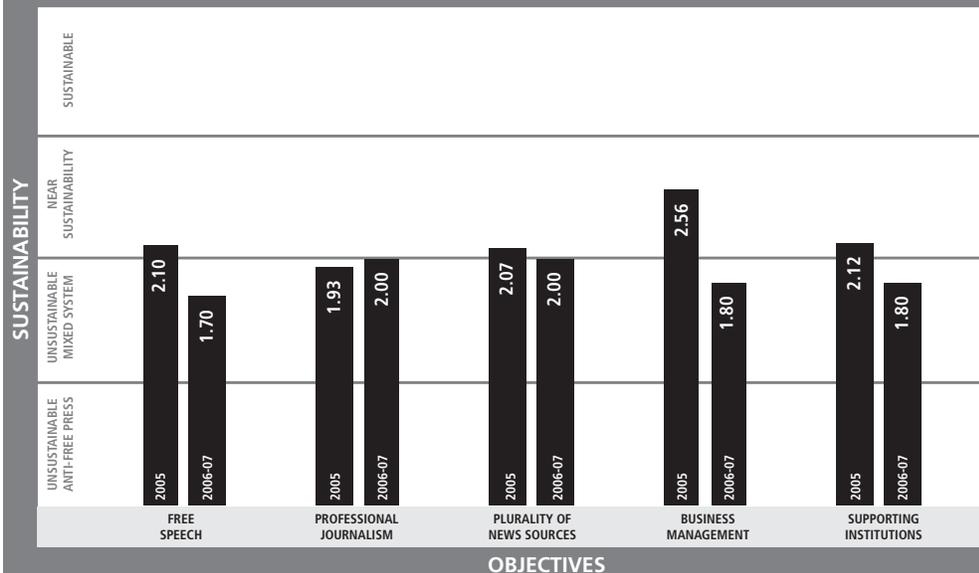
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 6,198,677 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Amman
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Arab 98%, Circassian 1%, Armenian 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Sunni Muslim 92%, Christian 6%, other 2% (2001 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Arabic (official), English widely understood among upper and middle classes (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$14.65 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$4,820 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 89.9% (male 95.1%, female 94.7%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** King Abdallah II (since February 7, 1999)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 7 daily newspapers, 25 weekly, 10 magazines; Radio: 19; Television Stations: 1 public and 3 private
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top 3 by circulation: *Al Madina* (circulation 200,000), *Al Rai* (circulation 100,000), *Amlak* (circulation 90,000)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Quds Press News Agency
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 796,900 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: JORDAN



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

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

Near Sustainability (2-3):

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

Sustainable (3-4):

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

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Jordan Objective Score: 1.70

The Jordanian constitution guarantees freedom of speech and the press, but in practice those principles are not honored by authorities, according to Aktham Tel, an editor at Jordan Television and an independent writer. Osama Sherif, former editor-in-chief at the semi-independent *Ad-Dustour* daily newspaper, echoed Tel's remarks: "Implementation of the press law is subject to the moods of the Department of Press and Publications, especially when it comes to the weeklies." He also noted that "journalists still have difficulties in accessing information, and official bodies attempt to influence their respective writings."

Twenty-four statutes regulate the media in Jordan, chief among them the Press and Publication Law and the Penal Code. March 2007 amendments to the Press and Publications Law eliminated imprisonment as a punishment for violations. However, the amendments replace imprisonment with fines up to \$40,000. The king's declaration late last year that "no journalist should be imprisoned" contributed to improved immunity for journalists, but they still face the risk of detention under the Penal Code. Provisions in the Penal Code allow authorities to detain, prosecute, and imprison journalists for endangering the state's internal or external security, which includes publishing material that damages national unity, harms Jordan's relations with other states, instigates sectarianism or racism, insults religions or lowers confidence in the national currency. Revealing information classified as a state secret is similarly punishable.

During the discussions, panelists agreed that the Penal Code still restricts the freedom of speech, albeit indirectly. They argued that the authorities can always use any of Jordan's 24 media laws to detain any journalist. Instead of referring press-related cases to civil or military courts, panelists suggested the creation of an independent specialized commission.

According to Jawad Al Omari, senior editor at *Al-Ghad* daily newspaper, referring press and publications cases to the state security court is one of the shortcomings in the law. But Omari also blamed some journalists for failing to properly practice the profession. He called on journalists to know where to draw the line between the "right of publication and slander." "We should define the limits of freedom of speech and publication since we are not allowed to talk about everything, and even journalists should know their limits," he explained.

Tribal influence in this patriarchal society also affects the freedom of expression. For example, a recent feud between

columnist Jamil Nimri and a deputy with a key tribal affiliation precipitated an attack on Nimri.

The Audio-Visual Commission, established in 2002 as a governmental arm, is the body responsible for issuing broadcast licenses. According to its Web site, this body has licensed 19 local FM radio stations in different governorates across the Kingdom.

But most of those stations, barring two, have an all-entertainment format, according to the panelists. They complained that it is "easy to obtain a broadcasting license, but the problem lies in keeping it." And according to Haitham Shibly, former editor-in-chief and co-founder of Watan radio station, competition in the market is not fair. Many of the stations, he explained, are exempted from license fees and attempt to control the media and advertisement markets with reduced prices.

Panelists complained that these stations are in reality controlled by influential personalities operating behind the stations' nominal owners. "Two radio stations dominate this industry in Jordan, Fann and Amn FM, because they are supported by the government and exempted from any other fees, while we pay fees upon registration in addition to the yearly fees to the tune of JD 50,000 (\$70,000)," Shibly argued.

The Jordan Media City was set up in 2001 to encourage growth of broadcast and satellite media companies in Jordan. It is a private company set up under the free zones law, and media owners can negotiate to locate their media there; in addition to modern facilities, there are several tax advantages to operating there. However, to date this has not particularly helped the formation of new media outlets, particularly broadcast outlets.

Panelists criticized high licensing fees and taxes as the main hindrance to the birth of hard news stations, as opposed to the light music and entertainment radio such as Fann FM and Rotana. Shibly said: "Fees for licensing entertainment radio cost around \$21,000, while the audiovisual commission asks for an additional 50 percent for licensing news production. This led to having such a great number of entertainment radios as opposed to only one radio that focuses on news, which is Amman-Net radio, funded by international organizations."

As for licensing of new newspapers, although the law was changed to reduce minimum capital requirements to be inline with other industries, the current level of JD 70,000 (\$100,000) for a daily or weekly still keeps out new entrants. But Rasmi Hamzeh, a columnist at *Ad-Dustour*, believes that the high capital requirement is a good thing. "Such a minimum capital—especially for weeklies—should make them

think twice before they slander or publish rumors against any part of the society.”

Panelists categorize attacks on journalists as rare in Jordan, the early 2008 incident involving Jamil Nimri notwithstanding. In that case the government acted swiftly to investigate the case.

Public media do not receive preferential treatment under the law, according to panelists. On the contrary, they noted, the budget of Jordan Radio & Television was recently cut in half. In practice, editorial independence at media owned by the government is compromised.

The Press and Publications Law, according to Omari, still does not bar imprisonment of a journalist found guilty of certain violations. They include any form of degradation, defamation, vilification, or abuse of any religion protected under the constitution. (Islam is the state religion, and around four percent of the country’s 5.8 million Jordanians are Christians with full religious rights.) The second article includes any “defamation of prophets, whether in writings, illustrations, pictures, symbolism, or any other means.” Any action that represents an insult to people’s religious sentiment or beliefs, or instigates sectarianism or racism is the third violation, and the fourth covers slander or libel against individuals or their personal freedoms, as well as spreading false information or rumors about them. Needless to say, these articles are ambiguous and any magistrate could interpret its contents the way he or she wants.

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.

Panelists felt that not all journalists or media outlets have the same access to public information. A 1970 law on state secrets is still in effect in Jordan, which, according to panelists, hampers access to information. Further, panelists noted, media close to or owned by the government receive preferential access to breaking stories and information. To try and improve their ability to access information, reporters launched a campaign under the title “Faze’tko” (“Support Us”), which received the backing of civil society institutions across the country. However, the situation has not improved.

Media are not specifically restricted from quoting and using foreign news sources in preparing their news reports. Media in Jordan have relatively good access to various regional and international news sources.

Entry into the journalism profession is unhindered in most cases, except that joining the Jordanian Press Association (JPA) can be restrictive despite some recent efforts to open up membership. Under the Press Association Law, media may not hire journalists who are not members of JPA, and people may not refer to themselves as journalists unless a JPA member.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Jordan Objective Score: 2.00

MSI panelists agreed that reporting in Jordan lacks professionalism and is mostly biased, especially when it comes to sourcing and accuracy. Low pay, unskilled editors and lack of proper training were all named as shortcomings in the Jordanian media sector. Panelists mentioned some exceptions: they said that *Al-Ghad* has more comprehensive reporting and *Al-Arab Al-Yawm* a higher level of professionalism.

“Sometimes journalists write reports that highlight the opinion of a specific institution or person without taking other views into consideration,” commented Hassan Haidar, manager of Al-Quds Press Agency in Jordan. “This attitude will absolutely affect the professionalism of Jordanian media.” In addition, reporters commonly cross the line between opinion and news writing.

Unqualified editors are a particular obstacle to quality reporting. At almost all newspapers, unprofessional editors publish reporters’ pieces without proper editing. The lack of qualified editors hampers the development of high-caliber reporters.

Other participants believe that “lack of professionalism is related to the lack of specialized training that should be offered to newcomers.” Sharif added, “Journalists lack training and this is one of the main obstacles that editors-in-chief encounter in the daily papers.” Lack

of training also affects ethical practices, and panelists characterized journalists as understanding and following ethics only to a limited extent.

Panelists agreed, however, that private media reports are produced more professionally than state-run media because they are free from government intervention.

Generally speaking, self-censorship dominates the lives of many Jordanian journalists, especially when the topic is politics. Panelists like Hassan Haidar agreed that even without state pre-censorship, which was abolished in 2005, "many journalists still restrict themselves with self-censorship." "Editors and journalists still practice self-censorship because they are afraid of losing their jobs or upsetting some officials," Haidar said.

Key events relating to the state and the king are covered by all public and private media, according to panelists. But issues such as prisoner abuse and human rights remain absent in pro-government media outlets.

"Conferences pertaining to human rights reports are not covered by *Al-Rai*," said Omar Assaf, senior editor at *Al-Rai*, the widest circulation daily in the Kingdom. "In addition, we refrain from covering topics related to strikes in some governorates or at prisons." For example, Jawad Al Omari cited the 2007 poisoning of a village near Zarqa, 25 kilometers northeast of Amman. "When many students were poisoned as a result of food given to them at schools, JTV covered only the visit of the prime minister to the poisoned students, without mentioning the reasons or the party responsible for this mistake," he recalled.

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).

Unofficial estimates put the average payroll in the print media sector at \$550 per month, though the figure soars by 20 percent at the most profitable newspaper, the pro-government *Al-Rai*. According to Haytham Etoum, former editor-in-chief of *Al-Watan*, the average monthly income at state-run radio and television is \$400, while it stands at \$700 in the private sector.

Low wages work as a drain on talent, encouraging top journalists to seek better opportunities at regional satellite channels such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiyya. At the same time, said panelist Omari, "it renders journalists prone to corruption." According to panelist Osama El Sherif, "Most professional and top journalists move to work in other Arab countries or regional satellite channels in pursuit of higher wages."

Panelists noted that low wages encourage journalists to violate the JPA code of ethics. The JPA introduced a code of ethics in 2003, prohibiting journalists from accepting presents, financial or material donations, or any aid of any kind without previous approval of its council. "But that does not prevent journalists from receiving gifts from different parties, including the authorities," said Assaf.

All participants agreed that entertainment programs eclipse news and information at almost all broadcasters. Government-run JTV airs between eight and 10 newscasts from 7 a.m. to midnight. Private radio stations have a different perspective. "Private radio stations have concerns about including more news and information programs because they are afraid of losing advertisers who seek entertainment," explained Haitham Shibly.

According to Muhannad Mubaideen, a columnist at *Al-Ghad* daily newspaper, the problem lies in human resources. "We don't have newscasters able to attract viewers and listeners, and that's why the JTV loses most of its viewers," he said.

Daily newspapers are equipped with state-of-the-art computers and offer computer training courses. Although JTV purchases the most sophisticated technology, its staff remains technically and professionally under-qualified, the panelists said.

Quality niche reporting and programming exists in some places. For example, most newspapers include stories on cultural, business, economics, and finance. There are a number of English language publications in Jordan. However, in-depth investigative reporting is uncommon.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Jordan Objective Score: 2.00

Almost all the panelists agreed that Jordanian citizens have access to international, regional and local news resources. Regional Arab news stations like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiyya, Western news outlets, and the Internet guarantee Jordanians a plurality of public and private news.

There are six daily Arabic newspapers and one English daily newspaper in Jordan. Twenty-one weeklies and two bi-weeklies are also published, including an English weekly and two political party newspapers: the Islamic *Al-Sabil* and the pro-Syrian *Al-Majd*.

According to a survey conducted by Ipsos-Stat between October and November 2007, 43.7 percent of those sampled watch the sole local television station, especially the 8 p.m. local news. But panelists questioned the results; in fact, many believed that local television has lost its appeal, especially given that regional satellite television stations attract the majority of Jordanian viewers. "I believe such surveys are carried out to please the party that asked for the survey," said Assaf. "And most of the results are not trusted."

Panelists noted that Jordanians do not trust local media, especially the pro-government outlets. "There is a shared feeling among journalists that the government manipulates the news to its favor," said Suha Ma'ayeh, a freelance journalist. "That's why Jordanians tend to watch other

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.

TV outlets." "Citizens lost faith in local media owned by the government. They shifted their interest to regional and international outlets," added Osama Sharif. "In the meantime, private sector broadcast, radio, and news web sites mushroomed. And they are considered a threat to traditional Jordanian media."

Jawad Al Omari backed this opinion. "The Internet has become one of the main news sources for the younger generation, as long as they can afford an Internet connection," he said.

Over the past year, private websites and blogs ballooned in Amman. Independent news web sites like Ammonnews.net, Sarraynews.com, Marayanews, and Rum Online have attracted a large number of Jordanians. Many people post comments on these sites, which often turn into debate platforms on, for example, the parliamentary elections in November 2007. These sites are not subject to direct censorship, but site editors complain that government officials sometimes ask them to remove "sensitive" news.

The reliance on regional news sources, such as satellite, and the Internet are a result of the lack of depth in local broadcast news. One reason for this is the difficulties in licensing, discussed in Objective 1, above. However, the recent events surrounding ATV, slated to be Jordan's first private terrestrial and satellite television broadcaster, are also telling.

A day before its first scheduled transmission on August 1, 2007, the Audio-Visual Commission prevented ATV from going live, saying it had failed to officially inform the commission of its plan to start transmission at least one week in advance, and needed to meet "other technical requirements in order to obtain clearance from the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), prior to transmission, as per the TRC Law."

"ATV was supposed to provide the AVC with its uplink and downlink frequencies, in addition to the contract signed with the Jordan Media City," said Sufian Nabulsi, from AVC. Moreover, the RF link established between the station and the Jordan Media City had not been licensed per the TRC law.

Former ATV Chairman Mohammad Alayyan, however, had announced on July 31 that ATV had completed all necessary preparations and had supplied AVC with all the documents it requested. According to ATV, it was ready to go on air after completing a three-month test transmission period.

Officials have remained tight-lipped, but insiders claim that ATV had amassed financial losses in the run-up to its initial broadcast due to overspending on furnishing the "six-star" headquarters and on administrative mismanagement, including offering unprecedentedly high salaries at the

expense of money allocated for programming. Overspending had made it impossible to sustain running costs after it started broadcasting.

Two months later, a previously unknown company, Al Ajayeb (Arabic for "miracles"), set up with JD 30,000 operating capital, announced it had become the new owner of the ATV after buying the all of the shares owned by Alayyan. The new company is still looking for local partners, as most foreign investors refuse to inject funds into a satellite station without the right to control news content, insiders say.

Most ATV employees have been retained, and are getting their salaries but often days late. The Al Ajayeb company remains a puzzle, with many media officials and insiders saying it is a front for the state, which felt embarrassed by the fact that Alayyan, once a trusted confidante of the government, had spent most of at least \$36.5 million on unnecessary technical items and salaries to top media professionals he handpicked from media operating in the Gulf. The situation with ATV remains unresolved.

Accessing media is not an obstacle for most Jordanians. Newspapers are distributed across Jordan, including rural areas. They are sold at slightly more than \$.35 each. Pan-Arab papers such as *Al-Hayat*, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, and *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* are also sold in Jordan at nearly \$.50 per issue. Other foreign publications also exist, but their audience is limited to English-speaking Jordanians and their prices remain a barrier. According to a 2007 report by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, about 80 percent of Jordanians have satellite dishes at a per-unit cost of JD 70 (\$100).

As Omari noted above, the main obstacles to Internet use are high connection fees and taxes. The government levies a 16 percent tax on Internet service. "High Internet connection fees decrease the percentage of people who can access the web, especially those living in rural areas," commented Samir Barhoum, editor-in-chief of the English daily *The Jordan Times*.

A survey conducted by the Department of Statistics in July 2007 found that only 16 percent of families have Internet access at home. To alleviate this shortfall, the government has set up 140 "Knowledge Stations" that provide Internet access, especially in villages and remote or rural areas. Citizens may access nearly any web site in Jordan or around the world. Despite Jordan's liberal attitude toward the Internet, however, authorities still do erect firewalls and censor sites considered linked to terrorism or extreme fundamentalism, and Internet service providers access to the Internet is through a state company. For example, the web site ArabTimes is blocked. "This web site publishes rumors and many false stories; I believe the government has the right to block it," says Omar Assaf of *Al-Rai*.

Panelists said that the state media reflect government views, and that alternative perspectives are marginalized. There are no independent local news agencies, only state-run Petra. However, international news agencies operate freely in Jordan since they are covering regional and international affairs, according to Hassan Haidar, director of Al-Quds Press News Agency in Amman.

Media ownership information can be obtained through the Ministry of Trade and Industry. However, in general consumers are not able to easily judge the objectivity or potential bias of news that may be related to ownership. Media ownership is not necessarily concentrated in a few conglomerates, however, there is significant state control. In addition to Jordan Radio and Television, the government owns shares in two dailies: 55 percent in *Al-Rai* and 30 percent in *Ad-Dustour*. "The public stakes affect the level of freedom in these two dailies," asserted Osama Sharif, adding that *Al-Arab Al-Yawm* and *Al-Ghad* deal with sensitive issues in a better way because the government owns no shares in either of them.

Regarding coverage of a broad spectrum of social issues, there has been some progress in recent years. For example, taboo issues such as honor killings or domestic violence do receive coverage now. However, minority issues remain mostly uncovered; panelists did note that there have been no applications to start media focused on minority issues and any one minority group.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Jordan Objective Score: 1.80

Overall media operate as relatively efficient, profit making businesses in Jordan, but they still face a number of challenges. Panelists pointed out that a 20 percent tax and customs fee imposed on newsprint continues to burden the industry and squeezing profits. There is also a 16 percent tax on advertising sales in addition to the 1 percent paid to the Jordan Press Association out of advertising revenues.

Advertising remains the primary source of income for newspapers. Between January and September 2007, the advertisement industry recorded substantial growth of around 30 percent, according to the Jordan chapter of the International Advertising Association (IAA). The chapter president, Mustapha Tabbu, expects expenditures on advertising in Jordan to hit JD 200 million (\$280 million) in 2007, four times the figure from 2000.

Newspapers were rated as the number one choice of media for advertisers, controlling nearly 77 percent of the total

advertising market. Daily and weekly publications represented the lion's share, with television, outdoor, radio, and monthly magazines coming in second with close to a 5.5 percent share for each. Web sites also carved out a bigger slice of the advertising pie.

During the past few years, radio experienced huge levels of growth as an advertising medium, growing from \$403,000 in 2000 to \$11.7 million in 2006. The IAA attributed the growth to new radio stations entering the market and the fierce competition arising between them.

On the flip side, the flourishing advertising industry in Jordan still lacks the depth to insulate media from pressure. Osama Sharif questioned "the independence of the news." Sharif explained that advertising companies impose their conditions on publishers. "This affected the independence of editors and their ability to prioritize between news and ads," he said.

Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets. Advertising is the main source of income for private broadcasters, although media outlets like Amman-Net radio are mainly funded by international organizations.

The cover price of newspapers does not provide all the revenue needed to sustain operations. Other sources of income for the print media come from sales, subscriptions and printing. Advertisements in *Ad-Dustour*, one of the three main papers, constitute 35 percent of its revenues. The main source of revenue in *Ad-Dustour* comes from leasing its printing press to print other papers, weeklies, school curricula, and other customers. Jordan has no laws specifying the ratio of advertising to other content, and many papers

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.

do not heed the international ratio of 60 percent news to 40 percent advertising.

Panelists agreed that the government does not support independent media outlets with subsidies. Further, media outlets cannot depend on the government for advertising because it sometimes pressures its ministries not to advertise in media outlets it dislikes. For example, one panelist said that "*Al-Arab Al-Yawm* was deprived of government ads because it tends to push the envelope more than other papers."

Some media hire firms such as Ipsos-Stat to conduct audience measurements or market research. Such information is used in strategic planning, marketing toolkits, etc. However, this is not conducted in a systematic manner, and there are no measurements of circulation or audience that all media and advertisers can agree upon. Often, as indicated in Objective 3, above, results are viewed skeptically by third parties.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Jordan Objective Score: 1.80

Panelists noted that there are no trade associations actively supporting the media industry in Jordan.

However, the JPA represents media professionals, including journalists, editors, and employees at the state-run news agency and newspapers owners. It was established in 1953 and has 750 members from the private and state media, according to JPA vice president Nabil Gheishan. The 1998 Jordan Press Association Law provides for mandatory membership for those who want to practice journalism. Journalists who practice journalism without joining the JPA are subject to penalties. There are, however, dozens of journalists who are not members of the JPA. According to Gheishan, the JPA plans to amend its law to allow all journalists at international news agencies and private broadcasters to join the association. To this end, it has amended its bylaws to incorporate newcomers to the profession. Chief amongst the proposed amendments is to introduce classifications such as full membership and supporting membership in the syndicate. The JPA was also updating its bylaws to reflect the digital revolution and the birth of private television and radio stations.

Panelists believe the JPA does not defend press freedoms often, especially if a given issue brings it into conflict with the government. Its role is restricted to providing loans, discounts, and scholarships. "The only effective action the JPA has taken was in August 2007 when it tried to defend two journalists at *Al-Ghad* after they were arbitrarily sacked by the editor-in-chief," said JPA board member Majed Tobeh.

Accumulated pressure prodded the editor to rescind his decision.

Several NGOs in Jordan work in support of freedom of speech and media. They also provide short-term training programs for journalists. These include the Higher Council for Media, the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, the Arab Women Media Center and Amman-Net. They are independent of the government and their activities are funded in part by international donors and NGOs. The Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists acts as a media watchdog; issues an annual report on media freedoms; lobbies for media law reform; conducts workshops for members of Parliament, legal experts, and journalists, and; provides volunteer lawyers to represent journalists.

During the discussions, panelists said that graduates of university media programs were not up to the standards of the profession, and lacked proper training and qualifications. Omar Assaf referred to the two universities with faculties of media in Jordan: the public Yarmouk University and the private Petra University. "Neither university offers practical training for [students]. At best, training programs lack the minimum required standards," he said.

The pro-government paper *Al-Rai* "has also started to provide in-house training to empower its staff," said *Al-Rai*'s senior editor Assaf, noting that in February 2007 a group of graduates completed a refresher course on basic reporting.

The government does not control the printing industry. In fact, newspapers view presses that they own as a profit-generating asset; four out of six Arabic dailies own their own printing press. There is also one commercial printing press in the country. The weeklies and other papers

without their own printing facilities are printed by one of these other presses.

The government does not interfere in the distribution of newspapers. The private company Aramex is the country's only distributor of newspapers and magazines. In addition, a few papers like *Ad-Dustour* and *Al-Arab Al-Yawm* have their own in-house distribution systems.

List of Panel Participants

Osama Mahmoud Sharif, editor, *Ad Dustour* Newspaper, Amman

Omar Assaf, editor, *Al Rai* Newspaper, Amman

Jawad Al Omari, editor, *Al Ghad* Newspaper, Amman

Samir Barhoum, chief editor, *The Jordan Times* Newspaper, Amman

Haitham Shibly, owner, Watan Radio Station, Amman

Hassan Haidar, director, Quds Press News Agency, Amman

Muhannad Mubaideen, columnist, *Al Ghad* Newspaper, Amman

Aktham Al Tel, editor, JTV, Amman

Suha Ma'ayeh, freelance reporter, Amman

Rasmi Hamzeh, columnist, *Ad Dustour* Newspaper, Amman

Moderator

Saad Hattar, correspondent, BBC, Amman

Assistant

Khetam Malkawi, freelance reporter, Amman

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.