

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.

Many characteristics of the Moroccan media remain unchanged from last year. The print media include outlets in Arabic and French that are party-owned, privately owned, government-critical, and state-friendly. However, total circulation is still no more than 300,000 and is centered in the major cities. Though elite-oriented, the press greatly influences public opinion, and sparks fruitful social discussions in political circles.



MOROCCO

Many characteristics of the Moroccan media remain unchanged from last year. The print media include outlets in Arabic and French that are party-owned, privately owned, government-critical, and state-friendly. However, total circulation is still no more than 300,000 and is centered in the major cities. Though elite-oriented, the press greatly influences public opinion, and sparks fruitful social discussions in political circles. Independent newspapers appear to be heightening their impact in light of the continued regression of party-controlled media. Problems persist with political control over the judiciary in trials targeting independent newspapers' criticism of state policies.

In the broadcast sector, the public media are still subject to ever-increasing political control, and remain greatly influential. On the other hand, new conditions have emerged, such as the establishment of the High Authority of Audiovisual Communication (HACA) to regulate and monitor broadcast media, especially in the areas of political pluralism, program ethics, and public information. In 2006, for example, ten radio stations and one television station were given licenses to air live broadcasts.

The government's financial support has been used primarily to empower and promote independent newspapers, whereas previously this support was given solely to state and party newspapers. On the other hand, the past year witnessed numerous consultations between the Ministry of Communication, the Press Syndicate, and the Publishers Federation to review and improve the Press Law of 2003. Yet these consultations did not come up with anything positive by the end of the year. In October 2007, demands surfaced for a law that would secure the right to access information. This demand is no longer solely called for by the National Press Syndicate, but also by other nongovernmental organizations such as Transparency Maroc, Association ADALA, and even a political party (the Socialist Union).

In general, compared with last year, participants had more negative ratings concerning Objectives 1, 3, and 4 (Free Speech, Plurality of News, and Business Management). This is partly because of the way licenses are issued by HACA. The majority of participants maintained that editorial activity is dominated by consumer and political considerations. Also, the low ratings of some objectives are connected to what participants see as unfair governmental support of the media, in addition to fears that public television programs and program preparations are coming under more political control. As with last year, panelists felt that Objective 5, Supporting Institutions, was the strongest segment in the media sector.

MOROCCO AT A GLANCE

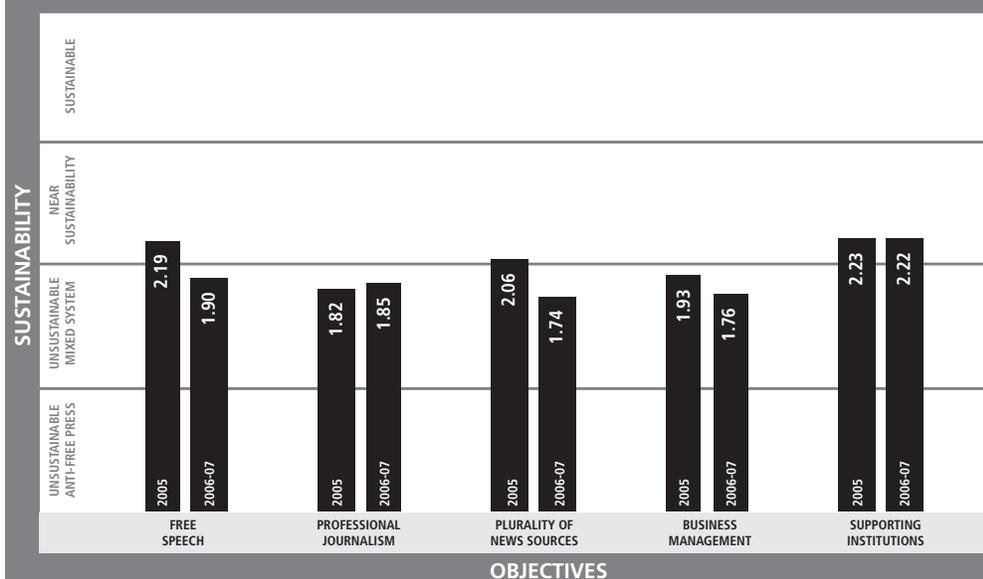
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 34,343,219 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Rabat
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Arab-Berber 99.1%, other 0.7%, Jewish 0.2% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 98.7%, Christian 1.1%, Jewish 0.2% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Arabic (official), Berber dialects, French often the language of business, government, and diplomacy (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$65.79 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$3,860 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 52.3% (male 65.7%, female 39.6%) (2004 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** King Mohamed VI (since July 30, 1999)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 398 newspapers (285 Arabic, 90 French, 9 Amazigh); Radio: 13; Television Stations: 4
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** 300,000 total daily
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** The Maghreb Arabe Presse
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** \$262 million (2005 estimate, Ministry of Communication web site)
- > **Internet usage:** 6,100,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MOROCCO



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

Morocco Objective Score: 1.90

This Objective's score fell to 1.90 this year from 2.19. Freedom of expression is greater in the print media. The independent press is more frank but subject to some oppressive laws, such as some articles of the criminal law or the Press Act of 2003 broadly banning any activity "against" the monarchy, Islam, or national unity. These laws are enforced by a judicial system that lacks elements of independence, especially in cases brought by authorities against "annoying" journalists. Moreover, the public broadcast media remain under political influence and try to appeal to the broadest audience in terms of news coverage and production. Broadcast licensing and access to information retain government restrictions. As a result, panelists rated Indicators 5 and 7, preferential legal treatment for public media and access to information the lowest of the nine indicators, each slightly more than a half point below the overall objective average. On the other hand, Panelists gave much higher scores to Indicators 8 and 9, media access to, and use of, foreign news sources and entry into the journalism profession. All other indicators received scores relatively close to the overall average.

The Press Act of 2003 protects freedom of expression, but leaves the media vulnerable to government retaliation in the name of protecting the three "fundamentals": the monarchy, Islam, and national unity. The judiciary shows no independence in such cases. Morocco's "anti-terrorism" policy also allowed increased control over the media in the name of protecting the nation.

In 2007, national security provisions of the criminal law were applied to a newspaper that published two documents obtained from a soldier that related to security precautions against expected terrorist attacks. The journalists, from *Al Watan Alan* newspaper, were detained and ultimately prosecuted in an attempt to coerce them into revealing their sources. One journalist's wife was also arrested—with her baby—and detained in a room next to his for nearly 24 hours, forcing him to listen to his child's cries all night. He ended up disclosing his sources to the authorities, and the soldiers who provided the information were prosecuted before the military court of Rabat.

In another case, 50,000 copies of *Direct* weekly were confiscated and a similar number of the francophone *Tel Quel* weekly were destroyed after they published editorials critiquing a speech made by King Mohamed VI. This destruction caused the two newspapers a financial loss of more than MAD 1,000,000 (about €100,000), according to their

directors. This punishment, executed by law enforcement and judiciary, was outside the bounds of the law.

To further intimidate the press, authorities interrogated Ahmed Bin Shamsi, the director of both newspapers, for about 20 hours. Throughout this time, he was neither allowed to leave the police station nor use his phone to calm his family, even though he was not officially detained. Bin Shamsi was finally charged with "not duly respecting the King."

Mohamed Hafiz, a young pioneer in the independent press and chief editor of *Al Hayat* newspaper, raised another case of official harassment of the media. Referring to a radio station fined for a call-in show that discussed topics including rape, homosexuality, and drugs and alcohol, he said, "Hit Radio was fined MAD 100,000 by HACA because of things said by the citizens [calling in to the program] and not by media people."

Said Al-Salimy, director of the Center for Media Freedom in the Middle East and Northern Africa (CMF MENA), said that "Freedom of expression is sometimes challenged by society and no media education is given at school or in the media, especially the value of tolerance."

Gamal Muhafiz, from Maghreb Arabe Presse and a member of the National Press Syndicate, said, "Sometimes it seems that freedom is expanding just to relapse suddenly. There seems to be a state of hesitation." He added, "A 70-year-old man is in prison just because he expressed his point of view." This refers to Mohamed Bougrine from the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, nicknamed "The Three Kings' Prisoner" for having been jailed under King Mohamed VI, his father Al-Hassan II and his grandfather Mohamed V. He was most recently imprisoned for chanting slogans against the monarchy in May Day demonstrations. One of the slogans that upset the authorities was "No more taboos. We need more freedoms."

Independent journalist Bashir Al-Zanki said, "Nothing has changed. The judicial system has not changed. Some newspapers such as *Al-Ayam* were prosecuted for publishing a report on the Royal women. As for *Le Journal*, prosecution followed another path; that is, not banning but crippling them by excessive fines and damages."

Mohamed Al-Awny, journalist at the National Radio, said, "Morocco assumes a negative ranking in the region compared to other Arab states such as Tunisia, surprisingly, because there is a hesitation in enforcing legal guarantees. Several laws include provisions that enable the prosecution of freedom of expression. The criminal law, in particular, includes the crime of transgression of a Muslim's beliefs, and

the crime of hiding things obtained from a crime, as is the case with the *Al Watan Alan* newspaper [see above].”

Idris Al-Waly, director of *Sada Taounate* in Taounate, noted, “A distinction can be made between freedom of expression in major cities and small towns. If what is published by national newspapers is published by local newspapers (about the monarchy, sex, etc.), it will cause problems, even if you write only about a town governor or the so-called pasha. In 1998, we published a newsflash about the demolition of a citizen’s house. A legal judgment was issued against the governor of [the town of] Taounate, and we published the judgment with no comment. The result was great suffering: we had a large nighttime party with groups and syndicates invited, but the electricity was deliberately cut off and the party was ruined.”

In the print media, there is a generally open-minded system for permitting as organized by the Press Act of 2003. The authorities which receive licenses, however, can hinder the establishment of any newspaper by refusing to give the licensee a receipt for the license. This receipt is necessary for initiating press operations. Though rare, such unlawful practices do occur. At the writing of the present report, Hassan Ahrath, publication director of a prospective newspaper titled *Facts of the North*, and Said Al-Shawy, the paper’s editor-in-chief, posted a news report on the Internet complaining that the authorities were withholding their receipt of licensing. They accused regional authorities of trying to restrict the paper’s operations because it purported

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.

to shed light on conditions in Morocco’s marginalized northern region.

In the broadcast media, there is not much transparency in granting licenses by the On May 10, 2006 HACA issued 11 licenses to a public satellite television called Medi 1 Sat, in addition to 10 local and regional radio stations. A number of insiders confirmed that political considerations governed the licensing process. Also, most licenses were given to radio stations more concerned with entertainment such as music and chat or economy. Additional licenses will be given in 2008 to new radio stations and perhaps television stations.

Although the law makes print media permitting easy, financing is the problem. Al-Zanki complained, “I suffered personally from the market, as I engaged in a venture. The problem of finance is strongly present in the press. It causes the rich to become richer, and it does not promote pluralism.”

Additionally, unqualified individuals can easily obtain licenses, especially in the regional press. According to Idris Al-Waly, “Licenses are initially easy to obtain, but they have become unsatisfactory at the regional level. For example, a butcher can receive a license to open a newspaper, make visitation cards for his newspaper and sell them to others, showing through his ID that he is a newspaper director while really he is butcher! These dissatisfying conditions distort the image of the press. No criteria are applied (expertise, qualification, training, etc.). In Fez alone, there are 350 licenses!”

Ahmed Al-Bouz, editor of *Al Hayat*, stated, “Behind the appearance of pluralism, there are many incidents of monopoly and predominance, especially in the broadcast sector.” He wondered, “Is HACA independent? Regarding its regulations and Articles of Association, and regardless of its structure, its regulatory statute did not pass through the Parliament but was enacted by a royal decree based on Article 19 of the Constitution!”

While licensing limits market entry in general, media are subject to extraordinary taxes. However, panelists complained that there are no tax breaks for media and that the standard taxes, such as 20 percent VAT, taxes on revenue, etc., are nonetheless burdensome.

The expression “political censorship” best describes the reality of the public broadcast media. In regards to management and programming, the broadcast media is governed by the political authorities, especially the agencies favored by the Palace. It acts to legitimize policies and approaches, and leaves no space to present opposing views.

Al-Awny said, “The serious problem with the public media is that it is governmental, not independent. The broadcast

media is internally privatized. Its finances, paid by citizens, are granted to favored persons, advertisers, and private, non-professional production companies owned by television officials' relatives. The media workers have become surrounded by valueless productions (such as Ramadan entertainment programs, which are shared by the two main channels) in addition to the absence of freedom of expression on television and radio, as well as the existence of administrative inflation."

A media worker from the production department of the public television (who preferred to remain anonymous) stated, "In the broadcast media, we talk about the editorial policy. This is a kind of restriction of the freedom of expression. The editorial policy must be declared with transparency so that there remain no ignored values."

In Morocco, libel and defamation are criminally punished, as stipulated in the Press Act and the criminal law as well. The last legal action was the case of Foreign Minister Mohamed Bin Issa against a group of newspapers in 2000, 2001 and 2002, because they accused him of fraudulently selling Moroccan visas while he was Morocco's ambassador in Washington. The newspapers were convicted, although one of them, *Le Journal*, made serious efforts of verification, even in Washington. However, no thorough investigation into the newspaper's claims concerning corruption was conducted.

In Morocco, there is no legislation securing the right to access information. Over the past year Transparency Maroc persistently called for this right. It published a study and appended a draft law, based on the guidelines and recommendations of a number of groups calling for substantiating that right, such as Article 19 and Open Society, and with reference to the French law of 1978 and the British law of 2000.

The government for its part initiated the E-Government Development Project. On April 17, 2006, the prime minister announced the launch of the national Internet portal www.maroc.ma, which includes such categories as institutions, society and culture, investment in Morocco, top stories, etc. The site links to another site, service-public.ma, which is operated by the Ministry of Modernization of Public Sectors. However, other ministries of the utmost importance like the Ministry of the Interior do not have a web site. In 2002, it deployed a web site to disseminate information on the elections several months before they took place as evidence of its transparency. But that web site surprisingly disappeared on the day of elections, so the detailed results have never been published. Some laws stipulate publishing public transactions on the web, but a comprehensive law regulating access to information is still absent.

Al-Waly said, "It depends on your relation with the governor. If good, it will open up all the doors to public agencies with access to information. At the regional level, however, the situation is very difficult."

Regarding use of foreign news sources by Moroccan media, media are generally free to use and cite international news reports. Al-Bouz asserted, "The state's dealing with the web has been free except for the web sites of the Polisario Front of the Sahara. With YouTube, a new era has begun."

In most cases, prospective media professionals face no problems joining the field. Panelists noted, however, that key positions at public broadcast media come under political scrutiny. Journalists are required to obtain press cards from the Ministry of Communication in order to attend and cover official events and press conferences. Likewise, foreign journalists must be accredited by the Ministry of Communication. The decision to issue a press card could be affected by the minister.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Morocco Objective Score: 1.85

Participants in the discussion agreed that a lack of professionalism still prevails and that ethical principles are poor. They suggested that reporting is of poor quality, specialization is lacking, and investigative performance is weak. They noted that self-censorship is dominant in the public television and radio stations, which fall under the full political control of the Palace and the privileged. They also noted that outside control is increasing, particularly at both public television channels: advertising revenue is the top priority, pushing factors like good journalism to the sidelines, with program producers determining program types and even times based on advertising considerations. No indicator stood out as scoring particularly below or above the overall average.

Gamal Muhafiz, a journalist with *Maghreb Arabe Presse*, stated "Professionalism in interviewing sources is still lacking. Only one point of view is usually recorded; this has to do with the level of training. As for ethics, they are not observed by the majority, as seen in disrespecting personal images and publishing photos of accused persons. Even in the public media, descriptions like 'criminals' and 'terrorists' are used even before the trial of the relevant persons begins. The issue of ethics should be observed and regulated by professionals themselves, not by the state."

Mohamed Hafiz agreed, saying, "There are no ethical principles in regards to publishing true news, corrections,

or apologies, even if what has previously been published is proven to be wrong. A system of professional ethics is absent. Journalists differ in their fields of work, and ethics are used [as an excuse] sometimes to suppress the freedom of the press. Unfortunately, it is possible that the [proposed] Council of Journalism will mainly be concerned with professional ethics and issue penalties as harsh as dismissal from the profession." He continued, "The mission of the press is to communicate information, not to tell the 'truth,' which is a philosophical concept."

Said Al-Salimy stated, "For the broadcast media, there exists a system of ethics, specifically a list of responsibilities. HACA intervened in many cases, while the Independent Authority for Journalism Ethics [which the National Press Syndicate co-established in 2002] remained hampered although the Syndicate uses them in some cases."

Ahmed Afzaran, director of *Al Khadraa Al Gadida* newspaper in Tangier, remarked, "Some newspapers play on excitement and address the reader as a consumer, not a citizen." Idris Al-Waly said, "The press does not comply with professional and quality standards. On the other hand, ethics are connected to basic training. There are not many training courses in the media field."

Mohamed Hafiz had questions about the ethics of the international press. He wondered, "Some parts of foreign newspapers are purchased and assigned for governmental propaganda. French magazines issue Morocco-specific copies such as *L'Express*, *Jeune Afrique* and *Paris Match*. Every first week of the month, *L'Express* publishes a report on Morocco. If the issues are distributed only in Morocco, who then funds them?"

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).

Generally speaking, the independent print media are more daring and less likely to practice self-censorship than party newspapers and public broadcast media. A journalist from public television (who preferred to remain anonymous) stated, "In TV, professionalism is absent because the hierarchy controls officials who do what is dictated to them, and the editorial lines are called 'taboos.' Ethics are absent because of the pressing need for livelihood. Self-censorship was initiated in the years of guns [the period of repression in Morocco from 1959 to 1990]." The journalist continued, "A journalist would say, 'I just perform my job apart from any societal role,' even with cultural programs that are based on entertainment, and would avoid reporting in-depth."

Ahmed Al-Bouz discussed the reasons for current self-censorship in the context of the May 16, 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca: "What is new is the return of self-censorship. I have a story of a director of a weekly newspaper who gathered journalists and told them: 'There are pre-16-May and post-16-May conditions.'" But fear of trouble with the government is not the only reason for self-censorship. Al-Bouz continued, "Self-censorship is not only associated with the fear from authority, but also fear from advertisers. Now you can criticize the King but you cannot criticize Ahizoune, the Director of Maroc Telecom."

Key events are covered by the independent print media and even party-run newspapers, but public television excessively presents entertainment shows, such as music and romantic series.

The above-mentioned television journalist said, "A media worker does not choose programs based on specific criteria. What counts is no longer the program or the journalist. The program producer is the one who determines the timing depending on advertising requirements. There are producers from private companies but no journalists or professionals. The expert staff that have been trained and are experienced in television, their work is ignored, and the upper hand is now for production companies."

Developments of a couple years ago that promised to improve the working conditions of journalists have yet to reach the entire profession. On December 14, 2005, after difficult negotiations, the National Press Syndicate (the representative body of journalists) and the Moroccan Publishers Federation signed a framework agreement on professional journalists. Among the most important items of the agreement were setting the minimum net monthly pay of a professional journalist at MAD 5,800; taking seniority into consideration in personnel issues; offering a paycheck for a 13th month each year; specifying annual vacation

periods; mandating that employers pay into government insurance funds to ensure eligibility of employees; stipulating a journalist's right to training, and; defining journalistic commitments in relation to the media outlet.

However, many media outlets still have not adopted this framework agreement, and many journalists at new newspapers do not even receive employment contracts or social insurance. The government has helped in this regard to some degree, as it includes the existence of a framework agreement in the conditions required for the media outlet to receive public support.

Hafiz pointed out that paychecks "vary widely depending on the type of media and the journalist," and Al-Zanki noted, "Rich newspapers offer journalists high paychecks." Participants noted that the francophone newspapers provide higher salaries compared to Arabic newspapers. Idris Al-Waly said, "In terms of paychecks, discrimination is practiced based on language, and the situation is even worse for the regional press. In the national newspapers, correspondents' allowances are poor but they make three times more than their paychecks by putting ethics aside."

As for the broadcast media, which is financed by the government and advertising revenues, employee paychecks are better than those of the print media workers, with Channel 2 being more lucrative than Channel 1. At the latter channel, participants remarked that administrative responsibilities absorb much of the budget without any payoff. However, on April 4, 2006, a code for the employees of the Société Nationale de Radio et de Télévision (SNRT, the National Company for Radio and Television) was signed, with the goal of bringing its financial matters in line with those of Channel 2, including relative salaries.

A television journalist said, "As to the paychecks in TV, there are high paychecks earned by the administration but not the media producers. The company's hierarchy is designed to grant some persons privileged positions; some managers are useless! The apportionment of the budget causes heavy burdens; one third of the budget is taken by just seven persons [out of 500 employees]."

There was a consensus that entertainment shows receive more focus than news and information programs. One television journalist said, "Public TV is just like a daily nightclub lineup. It is full of variety shows, amusement, and dance programs. They adopt the mentality and techniques of private TV stations and ignore the real mission and practices of a public TV to serve society. Media professionals are absent because they work with private companies, and we only have a small share. The News Department lacks editors-in-chief and production is mechanized."

Al-Bouz said that "the elections [in September 2007] were not followed by any talk shows except *Trends* and *Special Interview*. For the public media, the elections finished on Election Day!"

According to Mohamed Al-Awny, after HACA complained about the low level of comedy programs distributed in Morocco, "the SNRT started to provide envelopes for the broadcast critics in the press."

Journalist Malika Malak said, "There is no accountability system applied to the public channels for spending public finances on such poor programs. Important questions arise: Have we liberated the media? Are we serving the general public?"

Afzaran concluded, "In Morocco, there is an ignored minority in the media: the Moroccan people. They do not find subjects of interest or serious and professional programs. The only exception is the independent newspapers which lack information sources, whether from the government or influential politicians. For instance, a news headline reads: 'Public Park Financed by Buildings,' without specifying the information source."

A television journalist said, "Television is being transformed from a body responsible for a list of responsibilities to a 'diffuser,' whose sole duty is to broadcast. The dominant opinions are those of promoters, who impose their choice of programs to market their production. Advertisement financing companies force TV to focus on certain programs and celebrities or they threaten that they will not pay for the production!"

However, public broadcasters do rely on up-to-date equipment. The government supports public channels to modernize equipment and produce programs in order to meet the competition of foreign channels. However, tough competition is inevitable in view of the citizens' awareness of the political censorship, and the excellence of professionalism and pluralism in rival channels such as Al-Jazeera.

The print media takes advantage of the Internet, computer-based editing, and high-tech presses, though these are concentrated in Casablanca and Rabat. Afzaran goes so far as to say that "99 percent of the Moroccan territories are deprived of printing presses."

There are good investigative reports in independent newspapers like *Al-Ayam*, *Al Watan Alan*, *Le Journal*, and *Tel Quel*, especially when dealing with issues of corruption, bribery, government decision-making, the Royal circles, security problems, the judicial system, the army, and urbanization. In public television, there are some valuable reports on Channel 2. Effective techniques are used, but such programs are few, typically one per month.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Morocco Objective Score: 1.74

The score for this objective dropped somewhat compared to last year as panelists gave a harsher assessment of available local news sources. Only Indicator 2, access to news and information, scored above the overall average, and did so by a margin of more than three-quarters of a point. All other indicators scored at or below the average, considered by panelists to represent a mixed, unsustainable state of affairs.

Moroccan newspaper circulation is about 300,000, primarily in major cities. According to the Ministry of Communication, 398 newspapers were published in 2006, of which 285 newspapers were in Arabic, 90 in French, and nine in the Amazigh language. The privately owned press constitutes 85 percent of total publications, while state-owned and political party-owned newspapers represent the remaining percentage.

In 2007, the broadcast media sector included two state-owned broadcast companies: SNRT and Channel 2 (2M). Under the SNRT there is national radio, national television (the Moroccan TV), and 3 satellite channels: the Moroccan Channel (a project executed jointly with Channel 2 to serve Moroccans abroad), Channel 4 (an educational channel), and Channel 6 (a religious channel). There is one regional station in Al-Oyoum city, the Western Sahara. Channel 2 established M Radio. However, Moroccans are increasingly watching foreign satellite channels, particularly Al-Jazeera.

Internet service provision is centralized. The main service provider is Maroc Telecom, owned by the French company Vivendi Universal (53 percent) and the Moroccan state (30 percent), with the rest owned by private shareholders. In 2006, subscriptions to the Internet services of Maroc Telecom reached 391,000, most of which are ADSL users. In addition to Internet services, Maroc Telecom provides telephone and mobile services.

The second and far smaller Internet service provider is WANADOO, owned by Méditel. In 2007, a new telecommunication company entered the market called WANA, which was established by ONA, owned largely by the royal family.

Panelists said that not many people use the Internet for the purpose of gaining information or reading news. Rather, they said, it is mostly used for communication, amusement, and other services. Families use it to keep in touch with relatives abroad, and youths use it to communicate with the outside world, looking for jobs or relationships that may lead to marriage or immigration. The Internet is also used as a means

to uncover bribery or to protest by employees who do not have a syndicate, such as the police.

Most Moroccans depend on television and radio for their news and entertainment. Al-Salimy said that Morocco's broadcast media is popular "in remote territories where newspapers are not available." In cities, television enables many to watch foreign satellite channels. In this regard, Malak noted that "public TV no longer addresses the citizens' concerns, so they express their concerns by turning to satellite channels."

However, access to the media is a problem for many. The majority of Moroccans cannot afford to buy newspapers because of poverty—one newspaper equals two pieces of bread—and many, particularly in rural areas, are illiterate. Internet usage is still low due to the illiteracy and poverty of most people in the cities and the rural areas; as with newspaper purchases, Internet cafés and requisite computer equipment are expensive. Panelists did note, however, that there are no special restrictions on Internet access except for the web sites of some opposing Islamic political groups or the separatist Polisario Front.

In discussing distribution, media coverage, and printing capabilities in remote territories, Idris Al-Waly said, "Newspapers arrive too late in many areas. In the Western Sahara, for example, they arrive after 24 hours. In the middle parts of the nation, newspapers arrive just about midday. Coverage of regional activities is absent on television, even though the [remote] TV units are called and the officials are responsive. Finally, there is the absence of regional printing presses."

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.

There are no restrictions on the distribution of international newspapers, but their prices are not affordable for the majority of people. It would be possible to reduce prices if they were permitted to be printed in Morocco, but for that the Press Act requires written permission from the prime minister, whose decisions are sovereign and cannot be questioned. Al-Bouz said, "There is a continual refusal to license some international newspapers to be printed in Morocco, such as *Al-Quds* and *Le Monde*, and some international magazines are banned because of the types of issues they cover, which may criticize the so-called 'taboos.'" These taboos include the royal family, Islam, and territorial issues. Al-Zanki tied international media's limited access to the Moroccan market to "administrative" issues instead of "institutional procedures that are governed by the law."

In discussing the plurality of views present at public broadcast outlets and their provision of public service, panelists echoed comments from elsewhere in the discussion. Public television plays the role of serving the ultimate decision-makers. Malak remarked, "Since 2005, the public sector has intervened in the editorial process. But control has increased and only one editorial policy has been adopted for many years. The TV covers royal activities and visits at the beginning of each newscast. Even the order of the news seems as if it is dictated by one official. There is some kind of strict censorship. Sure, there are new channels (e.g. the Qur'an, Channel 4), but multiple channels do not mean real pluralism."

The High Authority of Audiovisual Communication cannot always guarantee political and ideological pluralism, despite the complaints submitted to it. Ahmed Al-Bouz said, "Some decisions of HACA use double standards, and its Articles of Association do not give individuals the right to be heard by HACA, although it is possible to criticize it in some programs. Political pluralism is restricted to the parties represented in the Parliament and there are no opposing opinions from those that refuse to participate in the elections or the political game. In fact, TV discussions target some political movements without giving an opportunity to those groups to participate in the discussions."

Abdul-Ilah Ibn Abdul-Salam from the Moroccan Human Rights Association gave the example of his boss, Amin Abdul-Hamid, who was told that he would appear on Channel 2, "and then they called him and apologized for canceling the arrangement."

There are 18 foreign news agencies represented in Morocco. The only local news agency is the state-run Maghreb Arabe Presse in Rabat, which has 12 regional offices as well as 18

foreign bureaus. It distributes the news in Arabic, French, English, and Spanish. Moroccan newspapers enjoy a 30 percent discount for the agency's services.

Although the employees of the Maghreb Arabe Presse are professional, it is controlled by the state. It is selective in distributing certain news items, and sometimes modifies them. Gamal Muhafiz, an employee of the agency, said, "There are no independent news agencies. The Maghreb Arabe Presse was established in 1959 and nationalized by the state in 1977. But it is governed by outdated laws dating back to 1971 along with internal Articles of Association. Even the Berlin Wall was removed, but such old laws still cripple the agency and bind it to the control of the government. Despite journalists' efforts to diversify the news, open it up to the Parliament, parties, and human rights agencies, improve professionalism, and focus on the news, the political and legal obstacles remain in place. The board of directors is like a government headed by the Prime Minister. The agency needs reform to enhance professionalism."

Television and radio stations produce their own news programs, but, in the opinion of the panelists, HACA forces them to make royal activities the first priority. Terrestrial television broadcasting is controlled by the state and only Medi 1 operates a radio station and satellite television privately. Privately produced, independent broadcast news programming is severely limited.

There is no transparency of private print media ownership. Most publications do not reveal the names of their owners, although the law stipulates that the holder of the most shares shall manage the publication. Banks, insurance companies, and companies working in other sectors own shares in many newspapers, especially the francophone publications. Al-Zanki said that "as for the ownership of newspapers, we do not know the real financiers. There is no transparency."

There is no minority in the conventional sense, i.e. a community of the population with a distinctive religion, language, or lifestyle that differs from that of the rest of the population. Rather, there is a movement to recognize and promote the Amazigh language and culture, the language of the ancient inhabitants of Morocco. In response, the King established the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture in 2001. On October 13, 2006, after a meeting of a joint committee of the Ministry of Communication and the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture, the project of an Amazigh Channel was declared in cooperation between the Ministry, the Institute and SNRT. There is also an Amazigh radio channel that broadcasts 16 hours per day.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Morocco Objective Score: 1.76

The score for this objective fell slightly from 1.93 last year because, as panelists noted, political interventions in newspaper editorial content by business partners, the wasteful financial practices by the public media, and advertisers' role in controlling programs. Most indicators received scores close to the overall average. However, Indicator 5, government subsidies for private media, finished as the high scorer, about a half point higher than the average; Indicator 6, covering the use of market research, finished a half point below.

Over the past year, new independent newspapers emerged that turned a profit from sales and advertising revenues. These included *Le Soir*, *Le Matin*, *Al Watan Alan*, and *Ahdath* newspapers, as well as *Direct* weekly, which is associated with *Tel Quel* weekly. But a level playing field is compromised by the state's selectivity in supporting some newspapers and even some recently licensed radio institutions. Malika Malik added, "There are conflicting interests: persons holding responsibilities in the Prime Ministry also have their own companies that work in TV production, and officials in the two main channels whose wives own TV production companies."

Government budget appropriations also support public broadcasters, partially in response to competition from foreign satellite channels. But television's financial allocations are largely not spent wisely, according to many participants.

Newspapers receive their income from four sources: advertising, government support, sales, and support from other private sources (this support may be from voluntary individual contributions or persons acting on government suggestions). Ahmed Al-Bouz pegged advertising as 80 percent of newspapers' income and sales as 20 percent. "Advertising involves a lot of problems: it is francophone; it faces competition from the widespread public broadcast media, and; political considerations," he said. "The institution in which I used to work no longer receives advertisements from Maroc Telecom (the biggest advertiser in Morocco) since 2000 because of its editorial policy."

In broadcast media, the revenue sources of the SNRT consist of the state's support, the license fees of television sets (taken as indirect taxes and added to the value of electricity bills paid by citizens), and the extra income of the independent agency for advertising. The state granted the station MAD 2.5 billion (€250 million) in from 2006 to 2008, divided into MAD 1.7 billion (€170 million) from the governmental budget,

and MAD 556 million (€55.6 million) from the Broadcast Production Support Fund.

While finance is an obstacle facing many newspapers, the Press Syndicate refused all forms of US support to newspapers because of US foreign policy in the Middle East. Mohamed Hafiz said, "In the independent press, there are experiences of newspapers that have become substantially profit-seeking projects (such as *Ahdath*, *Le Matin*, *Le Soir*, *Direct* and *Tel Quel*). This explains why particular subjects are keenly tackled. When proposed that US and foreign funds may be provided to assist some newspapers, the Press Syndicate and many others refused, though they depend on European support. The point is that foreign finance invokes many problems." As for ownership stakes, the law prohibits foreign financing of newspapers.

Most Moroccan companies do not advertise their own products. Foreign companies and 10 major national companies represent about 60 percent of the advertisement market on the two public channels. Régie 3 Company represents 76 percent of television commercials and more than 95 percent of radio commercials. The Independent Advertisement Agency monopolizes advertisements on Channel 1. In the print media, some participants noted that advertising agencies are governed by consumer demographics and that agencies take advertisements from companies and distribute them to newspapers that in turn target their consumers.

A higher percentage of print advertising goes to the francophone newspapers, given the relatively higher purchasing power of the few who read French newspapers as compared to Arabic ones. Al-Salimy said, "Advertisers focus on French readers because they have significant purchasing capabilities (advertisements for cars, houses, etc.). As for TV [in Arabic], advertising is focused on products like Tide and soap. Executives of advertising agencies are French-speaking, too." Echoing Al-Salimy's comments, panelists noted in particular the tough advertising market facing Arabic print media, which face competition in the Arabic-language advertising market from public broadcast media.

In its 2006 report on the media, the Ministry of Communication published a table of the advertisements placed in different media outlets, especially the print media. It suggested that old newspapers such as *Science* and its counterpart *L'Opinion* (both owned by the Independence Party) enjoyed the largest share: 2,298 for the former and 3,012 for the latter. Other party newspapers also received a significant number of advertisements.

An observer noticed that the distribution of some advertisements involved corruption. "Judicial advertisements are given for bribery," said Ahmed Afzaran. "The publication of an advertisement is compensated with MAD 200, of which MAD 50 is usually given as a bribe in courts for those who distribute judicial advertisements [thus the newspaper earns MAD 150]."

Finally, political considerations favor or work against some newspapers depending on their stances on politics or the major advertising institutions. In this respect, Malika Malak maintained, "Money has the upper hand over the press. For example, the large housing institutions (i.e., Al-Shaby Housing and Al-Doha) have provided some newspapers with advertisements for years. Some newspapers were punished for their political positions, so the large companies were affected by the state's position and stopped their advertisements in those newspapers."

As for government support of the media, an agreement was concluded in 2005 between the Ministry of Communication, the Press Syndicate, and the Moroccan Federation of Newspaper Publishers to provide print media with government grants. The program aims to enhance the professional qualifications of media workers, modernize and support media outlets, and cover necessary expenses such as paper, telecommunications, and international distribution. In 2006, the state granted subsidies to 50 newspapers for the total sum of MAD 43,000,000 (€3 million).

To receive a subsidy, a media outlet needs to be in good standing with the law; promotions or advertisements must not exceed half the space of the newspaper; it must hire a minimum number of journalists and employees depending on its type; it must open its bank records, and; the newspaper or press agency should sign a framework agreement with journalists securing for them a minimum level of rights.

But support is far from impartial when it involves official or privileged newspapers such as the *Almaghribia*, *Le Matin*, and *Maroc Soir* whose editorial policies resemble those of public television and radio, especially in the coverage of royal activities and news. Idris Al-Waly called government support "a big problem" that "lacks transparency." Al-Waly continued, "There is no respect to standards as regards distribution, especially the condition of having a framework agreement [for employees]. In the regional newspapers, support is inadequate, and the most support goes to the state newspapers, i.e. *Maroc Soir* and *Le Matin*, though they exceed the permissible 50 percent advertising space. The support should be reconsidered."

Ahmed Al-Bouz noted that "governmental support to newspapers is not based on the sales rate. There are newspapers that announce selling 20,000 copies to get more support. Also, standards are applied to private newspapers as if they were party-related. Official support should be reconsidered if there is to be an advertising market that is governed by business factors rather than politics."

Regarding audience statistics, on July 25, 2006 an agreement for compiling broadcast statistics was signed between the Marocmétrique Company and a trade association comprising the SNRT, Channel 2, Régie 3 Advertising Agency, the Morocco Advertisers Association, and the Communication Consulting Agencies Union. But some journalists doubt the credibility of the ratings for public television. A television journalist said, "For television ratings, superficial consultancies are made to confirm that viewing rates are high enough to prevent certain programs from being canceled."

In the print field, the Advertisers Society, Consulting Agencies Union, and the Editors Union established the Moroccan Audit Bureau of Circulation (OJD) in 2004, aimed at collecting distribution data. In 2005, with the help of the French OJD, the officials at the Moroccan OJD audited the distribution numbers for nine daily newspapers, 12 weeklies, and nine monthly or bimonthly newspapers. Advertisers now recognize the OJD as a trusted source for distribution statistics. Statistics of the two distribution companies, Sapress and Shospress, can now be verified.

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.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Morocco Objective Score: 2.22

Despite some problems described below, this objective received a score of 2.22, again this year the highest score of the five objectives and nearly identical to last year's score. This is largely due to the mobilization of the civil society against transgressions of freedom of the press, reflected in the fact that panelists rated Indicator 3, supporting NGOs, nearly a point above the overall average. While almost all other indicators scored close to the average, Indicator 5, short-term training opportunities, was the laggard with a score a little more than a half point lower than the average.

There is constant support from the Press Syndicate in support media freedom and members' rights. The Press Syndicate remains the only union organization that includes all Moroccan journalists. Many panelists praised the work of the Press Syndicate. A television journalist said, "The Syndicate helped mobilize the media in 1993 around the issue of ethics and was the main representative with the government. The Syndicate includes 1,200 members from all channels and newspapers, and contributed to trainings with IFJ."

However, there are criticisms from some journalists as to the performance of the Press Syndicate. Mohamed Hafiz said that, despite criticisms of the Syndicate, "Journalists do not want to establish another body. This Syndicate, though independent, was established initially by two parties. But so far, it has not put an end to the interchange of its presidency between the Independence Party and the Socialist Party." Malika Malak added, "The National Press Syndicate has often supported the journalists, though it can be said that there is some change in its treatment; it has become somewhat politicized. The Syndicate was interested in improving journalists' awareness, defending them, and protecting their interests within the institutions. But there has been a regression from this trend."

Thanks to the interventions of the Publishers Federation, according to Mohamed Hafiz, "the state's support to the non-party newspapers' has increased. In the last months, there has appeared a new federation for the owners of media agencies: newspapers, advertisers, and some radio stations. Initially, the Publishers Federation was nervous, but many joined this Federation and we now have pluralism even in the owners of media agencies. The new Federation participated in the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises."

Said Al-Salimy confirmed an active civil society working on behalf of the media. "The civil society advocates the freedom of journalists. Demands to access information come from professionals and other groups such as ADALA, Human

Rights, and Transparency Maroc," he said. "Great support was given to some newspapers, including *Al-Watan Alan*, *Direct*, *Le Journal*, and *Tel Quel*. Foreign support is also offered by organizations interested in the freedom of the press, such as the Center for Training Journalists in Paris, Reporters Without Borders, and Human Rights Watch. In 2007, the government began a dialogue between with Reporters Without Borders. But the government does not dialogue with all organizations. For example, in the reports of the Center for the Media Freedom, the government did not answer the demands for access to the officials of the Ministry of Communication or the prime minister's office concerning the right to access information."

The Higher Institute for Information and Communication, a public institute, provides training for journalists and enrolls students on a competitive basis. A student spends four years learning journalism both theoretically and practically, and fourth-year students train two days a week in a media institution. There are three private journalism institutes in Casablanca, but participants pointed to the poor linguistic abilities and practical skills of those graduates.

Idris Al-Waly called available training in Morocco "poor," and said that it negatively affected "ethics and the profession." Ahmed Afaziran said, "The training issue should receive much attention. Some newspapers hire as many as 60 journalists, but they do not properly train them. There are newspapers that were large and then became small; they did not sufficiently prepare even correspondents. The training costs should be shared by all those benefiting from the media activity: distribution companies, printing companies, etc. Training should be high quality and professional."

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.

However, some politically related obstacles still affect supporting institutions in Morocco. In 2007, the *Al Sahifa* daily was forced to cease activity after one printing company refused to print it at the last moment despite a signed contract, which caused a huge financial loss. The incident resulted from the newspaper's speculation of what the king might have earned for delaying the use of recently discovered oil fields. The newspaper apologized for the publication of the news because of the pressures exerted, while the king proceeded, unusually, to announce that he did not intend to stop the issuance of the newspaper. The newspaper's director, Mohamed Hafiz, said, "We negotiated for 10 days with *Maroc Soir* printing company and signed a contract. But after the first issue, we received a fax of an apology. We incurred losses, so we stopped."

Hafiz detailed other problems: "Printing is an obstacle to the distribution of the press. We specify the categories of the budget including paychecks, miscellaneous expenses (the headquarters, electricity, etc.), paper, and then the printing, which may take more than two-thirds of the budget." Also, printing presses are concentrated in Casablanca and Rabat.

There are two distribution companies, Shospress and Sapress. The latter distributes 21 daily newspapers, 72 weeklies and 320 Moroccan private magazines. These newspapers are available in all distribution outlets nationwide. Shospress distributes imported newspapers, magazines, and books. Ahmed Afzaran noted: "With regard to distribution, two companies monopolize the market, and thus they control distribution." Distribution focuses on Rabat and Casablanca.

List of Panel Participants

Shakib Ibn Omar, producer, Moroccan Public TV, Rabat

Bashir Al-Zanki, member, National Committee of the National Press Syndicate, Casablanca

Ahmed Afzaran, director, *Al Khadraa Al Gadida* newspaper, Tangier

Idris Al-Waly, director, *Sada Taounate* weekly newspaper, Taounate

Malika Malak, independent journalist, Casablanca

Ali Anozola, journalist, *Le Soir* newspaper, Casablanca and Rabat

Mohamed Hafiz, chief editor, *Al Hayat* newspaper, Casablanca

Ahmed Al-Bouz, editor, *Al Hayat* newspaper, Casablanca

Mohamed Al-Awny, national radio programmer, Moroccan TV and Radio, Rabat

Gamal Muhafiz, journalist, Maghreb Arabe Presse, Rabat

Said Al-Salimy, member, Center for Media Freedom, Casablanca

Ghafour Dahshour, journalist, *Al Hayat Al Gadida* newspaper, Rabat

Abdul-Ilah Ibn Abdul-Salam, human rights activist, Moroccan Human Rights Association, Rabat

Moderator

Abdelaziz Nouaydi, lawyer, Rabat Bar Association, Rabat