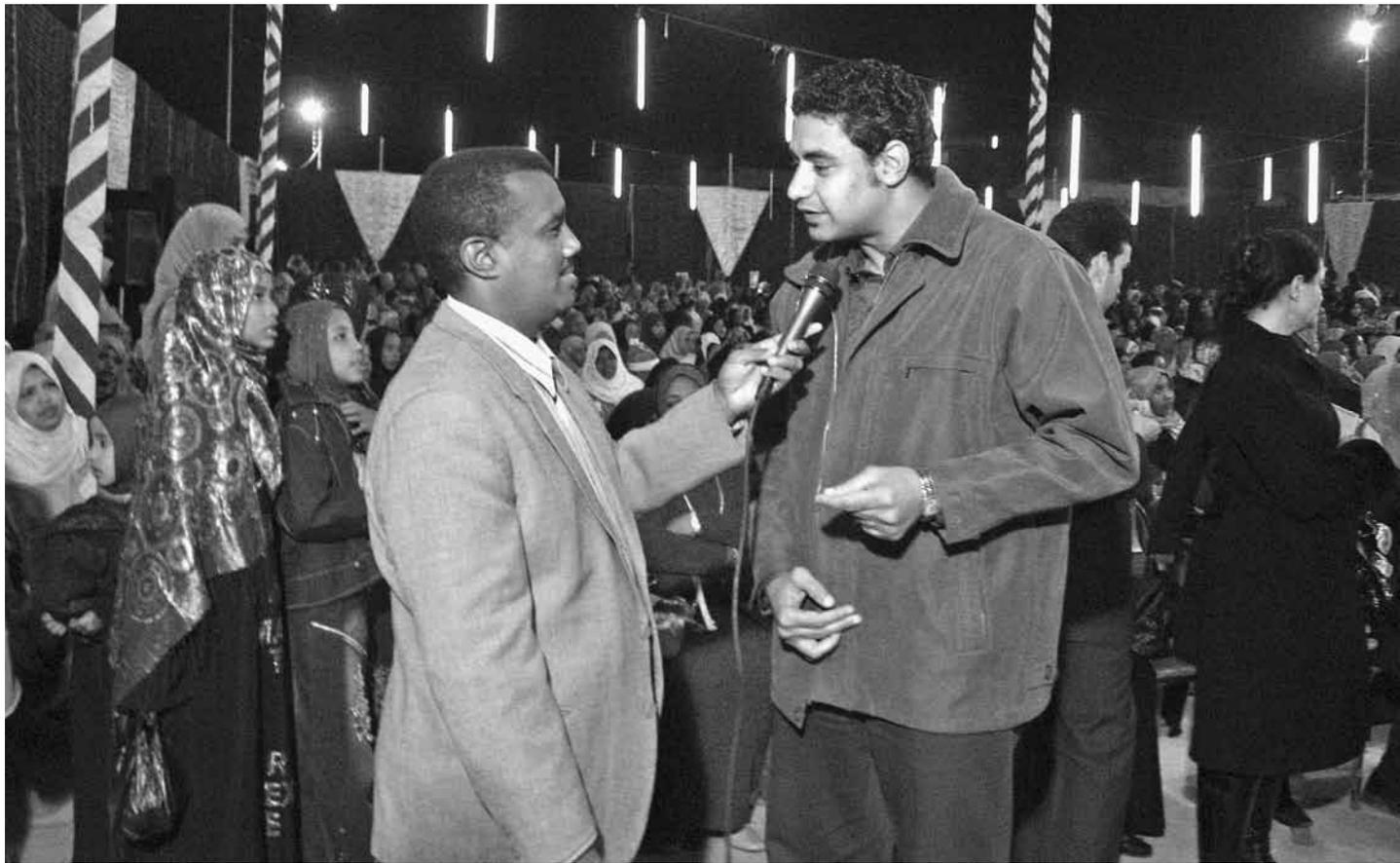


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*The blogging phenomenon took center stage this year, with Egyptian blogs reaching 160,000 as of April 2008. This represents 30.7 percent of all Arab blogs and 0.2 percent of total blogs worldwide.*



EGYPT

The year 2008 saw several significant developments that affected the Egyptian media sector. May was particularly eventful: May 3 was the International Day for the Freedom of the Press, Internet activists called for a strike on May 4, and the extension of the state of emergency ended on May 27.

For the first time in Egypt's history, activists, legal professionals, and opinion leaders met to demand the overturning of laws that violate the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, and peaceful assembly. The laws include Emergency Law 162 of 1958, Assembly Law 10 of 1914, the Meetings and Demonstrations Law 14 of 1923, the Publications Law, and the Journalism Regulation Law.

The Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate (EJS), a union headed by President Makram Mohammad Ahmad, was quite active in serving its constituency. It formed a committee that will implement the Journalism Honor Code; supervise dialogue between representatives of the Higher Journalism Council and constitutional and government bodies as they revise restrictive publication laws, and; within a framework of mutual respect, address the problem of journalists sentenced to imprisonment. In addition, the union granted the right to journalists to demonstrate without prior approval on the stairs of the union building.

Internet usage for news and information in Egypt has gained prevalence. Many newspapers and various media outlets have added Internet research to their traditional tools, and media fora that rely primarily or entirely on the Internet have been established. On March 24, The Arab Network for Human Rights Information launched "Cases" (<http://qadaya.net>), a new website that allows researchers, journalists, and lawyers to track human rights cases before the Egyptian courts. The site serves as a reference for important judicial rulings that support human rights, and specifically freedom of opinion and expression and; Arab laws, constitutions, and samples of human rights cases and pleadings.

The blogging phenomenon took center stage this year, with Egyptian blogs reaching 160,000 as of April 2008. This represents 30.7 percent of all Arab blogs and 0.2 percent of total blogs worldwide.

Finally, Ibrahim Issa, chief editor of the daily newspaper *Ad Dustour*, received the 2008 Jubran Tweini Award, granted annually by the World Association of Newspapers to honor a chief editor or journalism publisher in the Arab region. (This award honors the memory of Jubran Tweini, the Lebanese journalism publisher and WAN board member who was the victim of a car bomb in Beirut on December 12, 2005.) A Decision of the Republic was issued in Cairo on October 7, 2008 to pardon Issa, who was sentenced to two months imprisonment by a misdemeanor court in the case known as the "President's Health."

# EGYPT AT A GLANCE

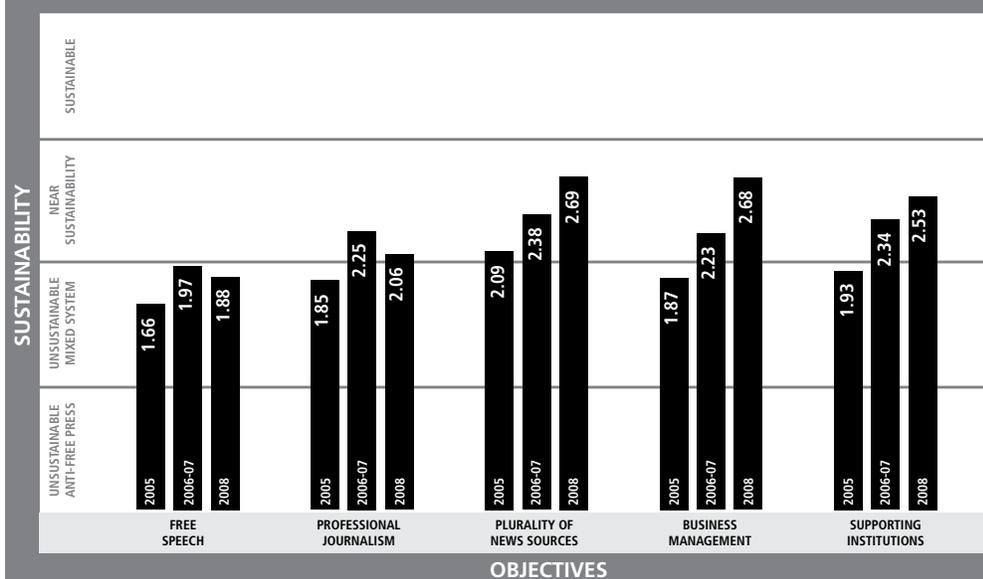
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 83,082,869 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Cairo
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Egyptian 99.6%, other 0.4% (2006 census)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim (mostly Sunni) 90%, Coptic 9%, other Christian 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** Arabic (official), English and French widely understood by educated classes (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2008-Atlas (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009))**
- > **GNI per capita (2008-PPP):** \$5,460 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **Literacy rate:** 71.4% (male 83% female 59.4%)(2005 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak (since October 14, 1981)

## MEDIA SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 18 primary newspapers and periodicals; Radio: 59; Television Stations: 98 ([www.pressreference.com](http://www.pressreference.com))
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** 53.9% of households subscribe (2004 *Egypt Human Development Report, UNDP 2008*)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Middle East News Agency
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 11.414 million (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: EGYPT



### 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.

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## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Egypt Objective Score: 1.88

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Freedom of the press, expression, and access to information are guaranteed in Egypt, and newspaper censorship is banned. These freedoms are articulated in Article 47 of the constitution, in accordance with international human rights conventions signed by the Egyptian government. But according to panelist Hani Hussein Mobasher, a journalist at Akhbar Al Yawm Institution, the constitution has many provisions that restrict its own stated freedoms.

Panelist Hanan Farid El Dib, a member of the Bar Association and program host on Dream satellite channel, said that Egyptian media has improved markedly, and media workers have acquired a new importance. They now have great ability in influencing the community. However, their prominence has led to the regime's awareness of their impact. The government has started to attempt to regulate media output, and has been careful to codify this control, El Dib said.

In 2008, the National Body for Regulating Audio and Visual Broadcast Bill was proposed. The bill outlines all that the state considers violations of the set media framework. It defines broadcasts as any radio transmission or availability of any written or videotaped media material in any format, including the Internet. The bill calls for the establishment of a monitoring body, chaired by the minister of information and made up of representatives of the National Security Commission and the ministries of interior, foreign affairs, and culture. The mandate of this body is to monitor the content of all broadcast messages from television stations, radio stations, and Internet sites.

Panelist Majdi Sanad, journalist and department head of the Rosa Il Yousif Institution, said that the freedom to exchange information in Egypt is still incomplete. "Information is the right of every citizen, and therefore there is a need to work on passing an information disclosure law and explain its role in enhancing the freedom of expression and the right to knowledge, on the basis that accessing information is a basic right and a requirement in the democratic process," he said.

He added that President Mubarak promised a law to guarantee the freedom of the press and cancel imprisonment sentences for lawyers, and everyone is still waiting.

Panelist Hala Hashish, president of Nile News Channel of Egyptian Television, said that Egyptian law grants journalists many powers, to the extent that it has prompted citizens to call for a law to defend themselves against journalists covering their private lives.

According to Hashish, media freedom in Egypt is high as compared to other Arab states and as proven by the number of newspapers sold by merchants and the immense number of satellite channels. The problem is that the workers in the media field do not appreciate the level of freedom that is granted to them, he said.

The Government of Egypt has received several requests from the regional and international community to revise all its legislative articles that restrict the freedom of opinion and expression in general and the freedom of the press in particular. The government was asked to address the articles pertaining to prison sentences in opinion cases, and apply procedures that will guarantee the safety and the life of bloggers, journalists, and all media professionals and protect them from oppression and detention. All these rights are stipulated in international human rights conventions and the constitution of Egypt.

Panelist Amina Jamil Khairi, a journalist with *Al Hayat* newspaper, spoke of the growing popular belief in the value of the freedom of expression, as evident in the reaction to the Ibrahim Issa case. However, she said, this does not mean that the media market is witnessing unprecedented openness.

Tahani Jabali, judge and vice president of the Higher Constitutional Council regulatory body, said that the idea of dealing with legal traditions—whether they protect, encourage, or restrict the freedom of expression—is considered risky in Egyptian society, because the legal structure is a reflection of the circumstances of society and an indication of its negative or positive movements.

Jabali explained the role of the Higher Constitutional Council: "The principles established by this court in its direct rulings are in accordance with the law and the constitution, and enjoy an absolute power for individuals and the three branches of the state legislative, executive, and judicial... I believe [these] ruling principles relate to much of what is debated daily in the areas of freedom of expression, and the misunderstandings surrounding the responsibilities of each side."

She pointed out a lack of awareness of the rights and duties associated with the freedom of expression in all its forms, including the media. She wondered why all the journalists in Egypt do not read the section in the Egyptian constitution on the authority of the press. Awareness must exist from the very beginning for there to be a form of dialogue between those demanding freedom of opinion and expression and from the legislative authority, she said.

"There should be some regulating entity to protect the principles of the constitution and the authority of the press," Jabali said. "The problem in Egypt is that we waste what has already been codified and accomplished, and we are

still arguing and debating about whether the authority of the press is codified in the constitution or not and what its dimensions are and the forms of protection granted to it.”

In addition, she said that there is some confusion at times between the constitutional articles and the legal rules in the press authority law or other related laws. The conflict ends either with the judge or the judged violating the constitution. She said that she sees a need for the law to comply with the principles in the constitution.

Cairo University Professor of Political Science Mustafa Alawi said that the problems with freedom of expression start in the law, not the constitution. The constitution has an important chapter on press freedom and authority that is similar to the constitutions of other countries, he said, but the laws related to the press—most importantly, the publications law and the penal code, and the provisions within them from 78 years ago—are very dangerous. Several articles prohibit publication of a number of issues, including military affairs. Egyptian laws even give a type of indirect protection for violations that are not described by provisions of the constitution, thus negating the important articles in the constitution, he said.

Jabali said that she fears that under the power of its publications law, the government is extending its restriction of freedom of expression to Egypt’s average citizens as well. “The monitoring of texts is not directed at journalists, but rather directed at the freedom of expression. It is easy to apply [the law] to citizens who write their opinions in any newspaper, and they may be punished for the publication,” she said.

#### 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.

Jabali added that private newspapers published in accordance with foreign licenses do not have absolute autonomy and are also subject to the monitoring of the publications law, which includes punishments of prohibition and closure. “Everyone should know that the journalist is a product of society and culture, and therefore we must maintain the framework of freedom granted to the journalist,” she said.

The Egyptian press is licensed and governed by the Higher Journalism Council, under the auspices of the Shura Council (parliament). The Higher Journalism Council consists of:

- Shura Council president
- Presidents of the boards of directors of national press institutions
- Chief editors of national newspapers, provided each institution, in case of plurality, is represented by one chosen by the institution’s board of directors
- Chief editors of party newspapers published in accordance with the party law; if one party has several publications, the party chooses the chief editor to represent it
- The president of EJS and four former presidents of the union, chosen by the Shura Council
- President of the Press, Media and Publications Workers Union, and four former presidents of the union, or union members, chosen by the Shura Council.
- Two journalism professors from Egyptian universities, chosen by the Shura Council
- Two legal professionals chosen by the Shura Council
- A number of public persons interested in journalist affairs, representing various public opinions chosen by the Shura Council, provided they do not exceed the number of members detailed in the earlier paragraphs

The Higher Journalism Council grants licenses for newspaper publications through Egyptian stock companies. However, union members do not have the right to own shares in private or independent newspapers, and none of their relatives can own more than 10 percent of the newspaper’s shares.

Panelists said that the Higher Journalism Council interferes in the sector through the powers granted to it by Egyptian law.

The process of issuing licenses is problematic as well. Although there are no clear criteria for granting licenses, the council is strict in issuing licenses to newspapers and places financial and security restrictions on them, which violates all the rights and goals previously mentioned.

Panelist Hanan Fekry, a journalist with the Watani Institute, experienced firsthand those restrictions. “The most recent [example] in this regard was my attempt to ask about the rules of the council so that I could publish a periodical specializing in human rights,” she said. “I was met with absolute rejection and was warned against publishing it, so as not to be subject to two years imprisonment for publishing a newspaper without licensing.”

The length of the licensing process depends on the orientation of the publication, according to panelist Islam Al Jundi, a journalist with the Akhbar Al Yawm Institute. The time period is short if the publication is state-owned; otherwise, the process is long, he said.

Asma Ismat Mohammad of *Al Ahrar* newspaper said that the council is not fair in all cases; the proof being that in spite of the license granted by to the private *Al Shuroouq* newspaper, it was stopped, and its license was suspended for several months for suspicions of political affiliations against the regime. The council then granted it a license once again. The publication of the *Al Shaab* newspaper was also suspended.

Panelist Faiza Mohammad Amin Al Gambihi, a journalist with the Akhir Sa’a Institution In Al Buheira, pointed out several problems. She said that selection of the licensing officials is subject to the government, and therefore politicized; there are no appeal procedures for those whose request for a license has been denied; and there are clear differences in dealing with the various media outlets, as state-owned media outlets receive preferential treatment.

Journalist Nabil Zaki said that the council does not have the authority to hold journalists accountable, because that is the role of the union. Most complaints coming from the reports of the Higher Journalism Council concern the publications of private newspapers with licenses from abroad (Cyprus, England, etc.).

Because Egypt has witnessed unprecedented freedom in the volume of satellite channels and their licensing, Duriah Sharafuddin called for the council to make a priority of setting and reviewing regulations for satellite broadcasts. “In the last three years, we have seen a completely different media world, which needs a review of the laws governing [satellites]. Satellites are controlled by no one, they are not specifically monitored, and the percentage of private channels has expanded compared with governmental channels. The question is: ‘Who monitors who?’ The simple answer is: ‘No one!’” he said.

Mobasher agreed that the council needs to make changes. “If the Higher Journalism Council is the official body mandated with granting licenses, there is a need for enacting new rules

to grant licenses and refraining from placing obstacles before them,” he said.

Other panelists had ideas for improving the council. Howaida Fathy, a journalist in the Akher Saa Alexandria office, suggested licensing newspapers by means of a notification to the official entities only, without involving the Higher Journalism Council and its governmental affiliations. Alawi suggested that private newspapers be represented on the council through their editors-in-chief.

Hashish was a dissenting voice on the panel. He said that there are no cases in which priority is granted to certain media outlets, except in matters related to politics. The process of granting licenses in Egypt is transparent, he said, and the legal framework in Egypt guarantees that the media industry may enter the competitive market without legal restraints. The restrictions are rather moral and intellectual, he said.

The media is burdened by taxes similar to other economic activities. Tax breaks are given to national newspapers only—not to private or party newspapers.

According to Mobasher, often media outlets do not pay their taxes. “[This] makes them accumulate debt, causing the outlets a lot of economic problems,” he said. “This also applies to government newspapers and party and independent newspapers that do not submit clear budgets on the volume of their spending and their income—which thereby negates the existence of independence in them.”

Few assaults on media professionals were reported in 2008, although minor harassment was not uncommon. Further, government harassment in the form of raids or legal proceedings against media outlets continued as in 2007. For example, the Committee to Protect journalists reported that the Cairo News Company (CNC) was subject to a police raid after Al Jazeera aired footage it purchased from CNC that showed protests in Mahalla al Kobra.

Panelists pointed to the case of the newspapers that covered the Duweika events and the collapse of part of a mountain over an impoverished area. Security forces prohibited the presence of journalists on the site, and it got to the point where journalists were even dismissed from the area.

State-owned press and television stations can be considered without exaggeration to be the tools of the ruling party. Their staff members enjoy freer access to information, especially from sovereign ministries and bodies. No laws provide for their independence from politicians.

The Egyptian court system is used also to thwart media freedom. Judicial rulings are made against journalists in cases of libel against officials. In addition, journalists who

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make reporting errors sometimes face penalties, including imprisonment and fines, if any mistakes are proven. But these rulings are criticized and condemned by Egyptian citizens.

Egyptian journalists are demanding their exclusion from criminal trials and the referral of complaints to the EJS committee for a ruling, since a law was enacted stating that responding is a basic right for those subject to criticism or mentioned in the newspapers.

EJS President Ahmad has called on all Egyptians to work for media reform: To swiftly end the detention penalties in publication cases; to hold legally accountable those who withhold information from journalists, whether government or public entities; to prohibit restrictions on freedom of information, without undermining the requirements of defense and national security, and; to halt any discrimination in granting information to various newspapers.

Libel and related insult cases are handled may result in criminal penalties plus civil compensation. Basha said that rulings against journalists and media workers should be passed down only after a trial before the civil courts.

The panelists agreed that the press cannot perform its role if journalists do not enjoy the right to access information from sources, especially since the press plays an important role in forming and directing public opinion. However, political information is difficult to access for journalists and is unfairly disseminated. Access depends mainly on the journalist's affiliation with a governmental media body or a personal relationship that may be based on a principle of exchanging interests.

Fathy said that the right to access information is considered essential to enhancing transparency in the decision making process, which helps build citizen confidence in the work of the government. This right also complies with international conventions and agreements signed by Egypt. Access to information is also a prerequisite for increasing the ability of the people to participate in the democratic process, she said.

Panelist Hiba Mohammad Basha, a journalist for *Nisf Al Dunia* magazine, Al Ahram Institution, said that the law provides no real protection for access to information, and there is a lack of legal text that grants journalists the right to demand information. There are also no real criteria that apply to publishing independent newspapers, he said.

Egypt has laws that impose publication bans in some cases on the exchange of certain information in the media. There are mechanisms and legislative laws that force the government to disseminate information, but implementation is lacking. Zaki, Jabali, Alawi, Sharafuddin, and media worker Sana Mansour stated that the obstacles facing the freedom of opinion and

expression in Egypt are due to the lack of an information law that would allow freedom in the work of media personnel. Zaki said that the information law has been promised for a while, but no actual steps have been taken.

Panelists said that it is not easy for all journalists to obtain public information from legitimate channels, as opportunities range according to the type of media outlet (private/public) and there are no preventive legal measures. This is also a problem for independent journalism. The absence of information leads to a lot of journalistic guessing.

Hashish, however, said that journalists can easily obtain information—not due to the law, but through institutions. Some information reaches the private media before it reaches the state media, and there are no restrictions on the work of the correspondents and the agencies.

Fathy called on civil society institutions and associations to play a role in demanding the correction, updating, and auditing of information, in order to ensure confidence and credibility. She said that since we live in the age of the information revolution, governments cannot withhold information or prevent access because various other sources are available in order to obtain the information.

The Internet is available to everyone for news, at reasonable prices, and the media outlets are even allowed to use foreign news programs and news agencies to obtain news. According to Basha, there are no restrictions of any kind on freely accessing international news through the Internet, although the Egyptian government imposes restrictions on certain reporters—specifically, editors of party and independent newspapers.

The government grants special privileges to certain journalists through EJS, which governs union membership. Generally, a journalist can write freely and join any newspaper without necessarily being a member of the union; however, membership does facilitate entry to various events.

As for correspondents, the restrictions imposed on them are limited to registration with the media center of the Information Committee, which does not grant any benefits. There are no prior approvals necessary for writing specific reports, with the exception of those pertaining to international national security. There are no restrictions in joining faculties of journalism, and the government does not interfere in determining the identity of the journalist, with the exception of the conditions to joining the Journalists Union.

Basha said that the Egyptian governmental bodies do not recognize journalists unless they submit proof of membership in the Journalists Union to verify their identity, although this is not a prerequisite to obtaining information or practicing the freedom of the press.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Egypt Objective Score: 2.06

Quality in preparing reports is linked to the editorial characteristics of the channel or the newspaper. The more neutral the media outlet, the higher the quality and the more thoroughly investigated the report, especially those covering important events in the country. Mohammad said that the journalist who tries to appease his or her conscience writes a report professionally, collecting the largest amount of information from the parties relevant to the story. He said that this is the case for 70 percent of journalists, while the rest resort to making up information.

All staff in media channels try to be credible when preparing news reports, according to Hashish. The slogan of the channel that she runs is “river of truth.”

Ismail agreed that reporters always seek to find the truth, but said that objectivity is impossible because of the difficulty in accessing information. He advised media workers to conduct research in order to investigate the issue that is the subject of discussion. Shukur also has seen that some journalists do not check what they publish, many of them resort to publishing without documents, and others are not objective or do not make the necessary preparations for writing.

Randa Fouad, president of the Arab Forum for Environment and Development, stressed that the private sector has a social responsibility towards the community. Businesspeople and the private sector can contribute to the increase of satellite channels and should have specific strategic goals to separate personal interests and the policy of the channel itself, similar to that which is applied abroad.

Compared to government channels with limited budgets, independent channels have a greater ability to produce more attractive and professional reports because they have the financial support to constantly purchase news stories. However, El Dib said that independent outlets still have many shortcomings, especially when covering the topics that are of interest to society. There is harshness in the terms and phrases, specifically on the first pages of newspapers, to attract the attention of the reader. Newspapers and the media even play the role of the judge and executioner even before the investigations are over on any topic that is the center of attention, El Dib said.

Zaki pointed to another problem related to the proliferation of media freedom in Egypt. He said that some are abusing their privileges to attack the honor of people, invade their personal lives, contribute to the dissemination of inaccurate news, and

ignore the need to verify information before publication—all of which represent a violation of the profession.

Panelists agreed that abiding by the professional and ethical criteria of quality within the journalism sector differs according to the type of newspaper (government, independent, party, Internet).

Egypt has a journalism honor code in place; however, violations do occur. Baraka said that many newspapers do not comply with the criteria, as they are focused on provocation and attracting the attention of readers.

Hashish said that all correspondents and staff in the media field must abide by the policies of the institution along with international conventions. Audience members seek media outlets that follow ethical criteria, she said, and thus the Egyptian media must commit themselves to honesty, objectivity, and credibility in addressing topics. However, the majority of outlets do not consistently abide by accepted ethical standards. “What we lack is the commitment to the journalistic and media honor code criteria,” she said.

Khairi said that for most Egyptian journalists, committing to professional criteria will require various changes: increased wages; access to modern technologies, such as the Internet; opportunities to travel abroad and learn foreign languages, acquire expertise, and learn from the experiences of other institutions, and; gain access to sufficient information to produce high-quality reports.

Ismail affirmed that self-censorship is an Egyptian journalist’s first line of defense. He said that journalists’ fear of offending those in political circles, and the restraints placed on chief editors, are weapons that threaten journalism. On the

### 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).

other hand, Khairi said that with the increase in private newspapers, the issue of self-censorship has been reduced, with relationships and interests taking its place. She said that censorship more often occurs because of the policy of the media outlet or pressure from chief editors, which manifests in journalists covering events and main issues with the general slant of the outlet.

Some newspapers cover events completely, while others aim to sell to the market, regardless of the coverage of the event. For these publications, the first concern is to bring in advertisements as a result of the event.

Panelist Faiza Mohammad Amin said that most media outlets cover local and national news, but some newspapers always lack the appropriate column space for local news coverage. Some of the regional newspapers in the governorates cover all news.

Journalists suffer from severely low wages at all levels compared with other professions. Journalists from opposition and private newspapers especially suffer from the low salaries. Panelist Islam Al Jundi said that the low wages of journalists results in them resorting to selling advertisements or working for businesspeople, causing them to lose their neutrality and professionalism. Khairi said that working other jobs forces journalists to divide their concentration and time.

Moreover, the wages of journalists and chief editors of the written, visual, and audio press vary, and even the wages of journalists within the same newspaper vary. EJS has been working to obtain additional income for journalists through training allowances paid for by the state, but journalists are still being forced to leave the profession in search of better pay, or turn to corruption.

Special incentives given to journalists are subject to the personal whims of their bosses and are not a reflection of quality of work. This reality prompts many journalists to bring in advertisements to receive a commission.

Mansour said that the low wages of journalists, especially those at the junior level, have led to low-quality reporting in newspapers. These young journalists have no financial incentive to go to the source, which causes laziness in the search for information and replaces in-depth research with the use of the phone. She added that she believes that the real problem is that the bosses look after themselves at the expense of discovering talent. "The boss who cannot train people to be second or third in command is worthless," she said.

Egyptian media is split between entertainment and news programming, with the time allocated for news programs decreasing, especially among government media outlets. Ismail said that entertainment shows make up 70 percent of Egyptian television programming.

Panelists had differing opinions on where public interest lies. Some said that they believe that news is more popular because citizens want to hear and discuss issues in more detail. Fekry said that news programs have a higher percentage of viewers, as the awareness among the public is growing and there is a greater need for knowledge. But Khairi said that entertainment has more interest among viewers. The main problem lies in the quality of news programs that are often classified as "boring," she said.

Mansour said that most private and satellite channels aim to make commercial profits and not social reform. She said that the small minority of channels seeking to influence the public are "credited with moving the stagnant waters of the Egyptian media. More importantly, these influential channels must have sufficient freedom of expression, or at least a clear agenda related to the citizen and not security."

The equipment used in collecting, producing, and broadcasting news in Egypt has advanced a great deal. But press companies still are not properly equipped, which affects the quality of journalistic performance. The technical capacities of the media institutions, and specifically the production institutions, vary from one to the other according to their budgets. Most journalists still do not own computers.

Panelist Hany Hussein Mobasher said that the improvement in equipment has not been accompanied by a development in the professional level of media workers, and this affects the reputation of Egyptian journalism in the media markets requesting news.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Egypt Objective Score: 2.69

Panelists said that Egypt has multiple public and private sources of news. Citizens can easily access local and international media, and they can follow foreign news. All publications are available to them, and there are no restrictions in force.

Khairi said that the Internet has made a quantum leap in terms of the news available to citizens. The Internet is now available to everyone, but the obstacle is the low number of those with access. Basha said that according to the estimates of the Egyptian Ministry of Communications, approximately 10 percent of the population of Egypt (approximately 8 million people) uses the Internet. That percentage is low, but should be viewed relative to the government's movement, which started only six years ago, in 2002. "The majority of the cultured and the educated now use the Internet," Baraka said.

Multiple factions of Egyptians are benefiting from the proliferation of the Internet. Chat rooms and email groups allow youth, media workers, and journalists to communicate and discuss topics ranging from religion to sports to art, and to debate all relevant political issues.

The phenomenon of blogs has also significantly changed the media scene, providing a forum for action and words of those without a voice. They have become a tool for anyone to publish their own “newspapers” and to write what is relevant to them on any subject, where the only judge is the audience. Although thousands of blogs emerged in 2008 covering a range of issues, political blogs took center stage. The hot topics they address, the seriousness in presentation and deliberation, and the clear professionalism that some have expressed in their blogs has led them to become true sources of news that many use and trust—some even beating traditional media in publishing news first.

Mobasher said that the rising number of Internet users and the immense development in the broadcasting outlets has made accessing news very easy. This has prompted many newspapers and publications to “restructure” the way they see events, and expand their coverage at the local or international levels.

Along with private newspapers, satellite broadcast channels have filled a huge informational gap for Egyptians. This accessibility has directly contributed to raising the awareness of average citizens, and equipped them with the self-confidence and ability to discuss problems publicly and communicate with officials.

#### 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.

Ismail stressed that the media coverage is usually focused on national issues, especially since 50 percent of the citizens in Egypt have the ability to only buy one daily newspaper.

The Egyptian rural population lacks media that discusses and adopts their concerns. They have no local popular media, the Internet is still limited, and the income levels prohibit access to Internet services and satellite receivers. They receive most of their news from radio.

Regional newspapers that operate through licenses from outside Egypt are widespread in the governorates. The marketing of publications to rural areas is difficult, however, and there is low demand for print news.

Panelists agreed that there are no obstacles preventing citizens from following international news. Buying any foreign publication or accessing it online is easy. However, there are boundaries in dealing with some issues that are related to national security.

Hashish said that the media outlets owned by the state are not independent in their message, but all media outlets base their ideas and proposals on public opinion. Ismat indicated that it is natural for the state media to show its viewpoint alone, and not all viewpoints.

According to Jamil, it cannot be said that Egypt has independent news agencies. Basha agreed, saying that the lack of independent agencies is the most serious detriment to professional journalism. However, independence in Egypt remains relative and reliant on the ownership of media outlets.

International news agencies are among Egyptian media’s main sources for information. Panelists said that Egypt does have the Middle East News Agency, which is owned by the state. The agency selects news reports and disseminates them to the major journalism and television institutions in accordance with their subscriptions. Newspaper companies also rely on the agency for their news; however, most newspapers cannot use a large number of agencies due to the high cost of subscriptions.

Ismail said that the visual media outlets produce their own programs, along with buying what complies with their goals. Approximately 70 percent of visual media outlets depend on programs produced by private companies. There are private media outlets that produce programs that differ from the trends of the state media, without reaching a level of conflict. There are also no real visual popular media outlets that meet local needs.

Panelists had different opinions regarding the transparency of media ownership. Some said that the media in Egypt is shrouded in mystery and that the majority of institution

owners are unknown, because there are no laws that govern media property disclosure. Others said that media outlets have some transparency, and most citizens know the owners of the media they consume.

Media monopoly is limited to state institutions only. Recently, the phenomenon of large commercial blocks owning private channels and newspapers has appeared, and this is reflected in the media performance of these institutions.

According to Mohammad, some private newspapers are said to be the voice of foreign entities and funded with large amounts by those they represent.

A large variety of social interests are presented by the media, but there are no media outlets specifically for particular minority or social interests.

Panelists were divided on whether the Egyptian media presents all points of view. Asma Ismat said that there are varied media outlets in Egypt that provide comprehensive coverage of all aspects of life. However, other panelists said that the Egyptian media lacks the presentation of all points of view.

Any television channel now has the right and the freedom to produce any program it wants. Some shows on national television attack the government's shortcomings and present the viewpoints of the parties and the opposition. Satellite broadcasts include opposition programs and several independent channels with liberalized content and programs have achieved great popularity due to the boldness of their hosts.

In spite of their low numbers compared to technical and entertainment programs, news and talk shows are the most popular and influential within Egyptian society, according to the panelists. They said that as these programs increase, more citizens become connected to the problems and issues of the community. Jamil said that the talk show programs on private channels have opened a window for citizens to the world of news, albeit a window that is somewhat local.

The panelists agreed that there is room allocated for covering local news within the national newspapers, along with much room for news at the national level.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

#### **Egypt Objective Score: 2.68**

After being restricted to newspapers and specific government outlets for years, the Egyptian media—especially the independent press and private stations—have started to prove their viability as businesses, achieving great financial returns. However, panelists pointed out some shortcomings.

Gambihi said that the media outlets in their various forms are not administered well and most post losses because of mismanagement. Hashish said that businesspeople interfere in the finances of the private media, each according to their abilities. Mobasher added that experience has shown that the independent media outlets are profitable commercially, but they do not enjoy editorial independence. He provided the example of the many Egyptian sports channels that were created to generate profit from broadcasting sports activities, aided by specialized media agencies that bring in advertisements for them.

Basha explained that because the government does not offer financial assistance to independent media outlets, they must turn to advertisers to cover the costs of production and marketing. They must compete to attract audiences and thus sponsors.

Most broadcasters receive revenue from two sources: advertisements and the selling of their own programs. Media directors are forced to use advertisements because it is the main source of income. Subscriptions per se do not constitute a strong revenue source. However, they are an indication of the confidence of citizens in the publication, which can increase in the number of advertisements—necessary to ensure circulation and profit.

The state prohibits income for public media outlets except through advertisements. Mobasher indicated that the national media has known sources of income, whether governmental support or commercial advertisements, but the financial sources of the donor entities are unknown, as is the effect they have on decision making.

Panelists agreed that the advertisement industry in Egypt is advanced and produces immense profit for those working in it. Mohammad said that advertising agencies work efficiently with newspapers that have the highest distributions, and this is normal. The newspapers that have low distribution numbers do not have relationships with advertising agencies.

Basha said that agencies are increasing in number in both the print and broadcast sectors. The achievement of profit is measured according to the spread of the advertisement services in the major cities and the governorates. Most state-owned Egyptian media outlets have their own advertising agencies.

Ismail said that advertising agencies sometimes influence editorial policy—specifically the economic pages—for advertisements, which are developed to a great extent with professional methods. He said that advertising agencies seem powerful and in control of the media outlets in many cases.

Basha indicated that the reputation of a private channel or publication governs the amount of financing by advertisers.

The government media sector is subject to the state budget, which leads to government interference in those outlets.

According to Ismail, print and broadcast media directors alike feel that they need to use advertisements excessively, as they are the main source of financial return. Baraka said that the official media and governmental television channels receive returns from advertisements, and there is no proportionality between those returns and expenses. As for independent newspapers, circulation does not constitute any revenue value, and if advertisements do not cover expenses, they are threatened with closure.

The state supports the government media outlets. The independent media are subject to free market laws and do not receive government support except in rare cases, which influences the editorial line of these institutions.

“Egypt does not offer any financial assistance to the private media companies, and at the same time, we find that new companies wanting real development for the media are becoming widespread,” Fekry said. “I think that the state, whatever its policy, cannot stand before this wave.”

Ismail indicated that there are no institutions that monitor public opinion in the majority of media outlets, and those that do exist are not qualified and are inexperienced. Most newspapers, especially national publications and government media outlets, lack the staff to create marketing strategies and adapt to the needs of the audience. “We rarely find an office for market research in the media institutions,” Fekry said.

Market research is conducted mainly by large institutions, such as Al Ahram. In general, however, marketing research still suffers from a lack of attention by both the advertisers

and the public. Perhaps this is due to the weak culture of depending on scientific criteria in measuring market trends (although this is slowly changing, with new businesspeople who believe in scientific criteria entering the market).

Even in cases where evaluations exist, the results are not usually available to everyone and are characterized by confidentiality in their exchange. The available assessments are small measuring processes for limited sectors of the market, and are usually for advertisement purposes.

According to Basha, some civic associations measure public opinion on many issues and create assessments for the media outlets, and a small number of publications organize surveys or questionnaires, but these are not undertaken in an organized or practical manner.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Egypt Objective Score: 2.53

Members of the Egyptian media benefit from the work of some supporting institutions. One prominent organization is the Ahram Regional Institute for Journalism, which is part of the Al Ahram Institute. It started its activities in 1992 and has expanded to include various areas within the journalism industry, such as editorial work, administration, advertisements, information technology, and journalistic creativity. The institute cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EJS, and major media institutions in Europe and the United States of America, and attracts experts for training on the recent developments in the media industry worldwide.

The United Group, a firm established in 1941, has organized a number of projects concerned primarily with defending the freedoms of opinion and expression and the rights of assembly. Through a special arrangement with the group, pro bono legal services are available to members of the media. Sixty lawyers in the governorates of Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Al Gharbia, Al Daqhalia, Al Minia, Bani Sweif, Asyout, Al Fayyoun, Sohaj, Al Ismailiya, Al Sharqiyah, and Al Buheiro, work within a specialized unit to offer comprehensive legal support across Egypt. The group collaborates with a number of law offices in Egypt and other countries in the Arab world.

As part of the implementation of the “Towards Free and Responsible Journalism” project, the legal unit partnered with journalist institutions to organize one-day training courses for journalists from eight governorates. The courses were intended to establish a legal consultancy for the journalist institutions, assist in the legal procedures of establishing newspapers and magazines, offer brief legal counseling to journalists and media workers, provide legal assistance

## 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.

to journalists and media workers facing charges without representation, and general awareness of legal issues through field studies and research on the freedom of expression and the right to exchange information.

Several legal bodies have condemned the attempts of government and security bodies to monitor Internet cafés.

The panelists agreed that publishing and media unions are working to protect the rights of journalists, but they are unable to lobby the government and do not offer adequate strength, services, or protection. Jundi said that EJS has limited influence, and its effectiveness in resolving the problems of its members depends on the character of the union's president. The union is not independent from the government, and membership requires that the journalist work in a publication recognized by the state.

Professional journalism received a boost in 2008 through the work of EJS. The union formed of a committee to implement the Journalism Honor Code, and another to address the issue of journalist wages. That committee's goals were to creating a pricing list for journalist wages, setting a minimum wage for journalists that is appropriate to the profession, and to implement an agreement between the union president and the Egyptian prime minister regarding an increase in the value of compensation as part of a wage reform program.

In addition, EJS called upon Safwat Al Sharif, president of the Shoura Council and president of the Higher Journalism Council, to select a union journalist to join its disciplinary committee, as stipulated in the union's law and the Journalism Regulation Law.

To complete the formation necessary to enact the Journalism Honor Code, EJS also requested that State Council President

Sayed Nofal appoint two state council members: one to join the investigation committee, referred to in article 36 of the Journalism Regulation Law number 96 of 1996; and one to join the disciplinary commission, as stipulated in article 37 of the same law. The Higher Journalism Council chose Jalal Dweidar, its secretary general, to represent it on the disciplinary committee.

Aside from EJS, Egypt has the Egyptian Publishers Union and the Arab Publishers' Union, chaired by Ibrahim Al Mualim. All unions active in Egypt try to elevate the profession but show few real results because they have insufficient financial support from members.

Mobasher said that the Journalists Union is the independent body that defends the interests of the journalists and offers them the facilities and the components necessary for them, within their limited capacities. But he said that the union's current work mechanisms must be revisited and they should be granted more vitality to provide them with the necessary financial resources to achieve their goals. Moreover, he said, the requirements for membership need to be reconsidered. Currently, membership requires a certificate from the journalist's employer that states that he or she is a permanent staff member, along with a written production outline to verify the journalist's abilities.

Alawi also called on the Journalists Union to make changes and fulfill their two most important duties: the ongoing training of journalists in the legal frameworks of journalism, and the protection and defense of journalists' rights.

Fekry said that Egypt has no unions for journalists, radio workers, or producers that are effective or concerned with defending them. He also said that several civic associations and organizations exist that range from those without value to those that are concerned with the rights of the members of the profession. But their diminishing number creates a gap between them and the journalists and media workers so large that it cannot be bridged, he added. Moreover, these organizations do not cover the complete continuum, such as bloggers and individuals working in the electronic press.

Egypt has NGOs that support the freedom of expression, such as the Egyptian Society for Human Rights. NGOs also collaborate with private media outlets to work as monitors. However, their roles during times of crisis are marginal, and they do not contribute in the review of media laws.

In November 2008, an Egyptian human rights organization began campaigning for an initiative that would designate an annual day for Arab satellite channels to discuss their various political, social, and moral influences. The aim is to enhance the role of satellite channels in promoting freedom, to study their effects on the family and the problems of youth, and to

#### 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.

propose solutions in coordination with the community and specialized governmental entities.

College degrees are available in the media field in Egypt, but even at private universities, the degree programs have severe shortcomings. The majority of programs cover theory only, and media outlets do not hire many graduates.

Many training courses are available to Egyptian journalists. For example, the National Council for Human Rights conducts courses on the practice of legal rights and promoting the human rights culture; and the National Women's Council organizes training courses to raise women's awareness of legal issues. Civic associations concerned with environmental affairs convene workshops in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment to develop journalists' writing skills in their areas of specialization. But the training period is limited in its practicality—participants only receive the information and do not participate in exercises.

Fathy said that the radio and television union and a group of CSOs offer training courses aimed at developing the skills of Egyptian lawyers and the journalistic writing skills of the trainees. These courses give journalists the opportunity to exchange expertise and opinions with local and international experts. The training covers various topics such as libel and reputation distortion, using real life examples.

Basha said that EJS offers educational courses on language and computer skills, but the quality of its service depends on the will of the elected union council. Training programs are conducted by the Higher Journalism Council also, but its trainers and graduates lack credibility.

The Arab Network for Human Rights Information offers a series of courses entitled, "Training Egyptian Journalists and Human Rights Activists on Internet Use." The one-year program trains Egyptian journalists on safe ways to use the Internet, the work of an Internet journalist, and the use of the Internet as a method to launch freedom of the press and freedom of expression campaigns. The long-term goal of the courses is to expand the coverage of important political and civil rights events, and the groups marginalized by the Egyptian journalists and develop overall Internet literacy.

Sanad told the panel of a course on legal protection for journalists, offered by the Center for the Protection and Freedom of Journalists in cooperation with the Free Voice Institute of Holland. The course was based on extensive research conducted by a team from United Group, led by the advocate Najad Al Bari, in 2005. The research project stressed the importance of focusing on training as a method to develop Arab journalism skills and overcome the challenges of recent developments in international media. The research also reiterated the need for Arab journalists and media workers

to increase their knowledge in subjects such as journalistic research, professional ethics, writing for electronic websites, and legal awareness and protection.

Printing supply is one of the largest and most complicated problems of the media industry, as these materials are imported with high taxes and the government does not allow a reduction in the tax amount. Paper supply is managed by private businesspeople, which places the newspapers under the mercy of price hikes and monopolies. All newspapers are printed on the presses of national publications. Kiosks and broadcasting equipment are managed neutrally.

## List of Panel Participants

**Alaa Ismaill**, sports script writer, Al Hayat (private TV network), Cairo

**Hala Hashish**, Head of News Channel, Egyptian TV, Cairo

**Hanane Farid El Dib**, lawyer, Cairo

**Islam Shalabi**, journalist, *Al Akhbar*, Cairo

**Hany Mobasher**, journalist, *Akher Sa'a*, Cairo

**Hossam El Amire**, journalist, *Nahdet Masr*, Cairo-Rapporteur

**Magdy Sanad**, journalist, *Rose Al Yousseff*, Cairo

**Hanan Fekry**, journalist, *Watany*, Cairo

**Reham Abd Elgwad**, journalist, Middle East News Agency, Cairo

**Asmaa Esmat**, journalist, *Al Ahrar*, Cairo

**Amina Khairi**, journalist, *Al Hayat*, Cairo

**Howaida Fathy**, journalist, Akher Saa Bureau, Alexandria

**Fayza El Gambihi**, head of bureau, Akhbar, Beheira

**Yara Hassan**, editor of youth segment, Beit Beitak, Cairo

**Tarek Mostafa**, journalist, *Rose Al Youssef*, Cairo

## Moderator

**Osama Mounir**, radio and television presenter, Nogum FM and Egyptian Satellite, Cairo

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