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# Media Freedom Status in Jordan 2005



مركز حماية وحرية الصحفيين  
Center for Defending  
Freedom of Journalists

## A Public Opinion Survey Reveals 84% of Polled Journalists Not Satisfied with Media Freedoms in Jordan in 2005

- 54.7 percent of the polled journalists describe media freedom of Jordan as low or acceptable; 70.7 percent believe existing laws restrict media freedom.
- 62 percent believe that the Penal Code most negatively affect the media freedom; 35.1 percent believe that jail sentences are the most stringent shackles of media freedom.
- 76 percent do not believe that the Higher Media Council has impact on the media freedom; 69.3 percent say that canceling the Information Ministry did not affect the media freedom.
- 57.3 percent believe that the role of the Journalists Association plays a modest or poor role in defending the media freedom; 84 percent say dissatisfied with its professional role.
- 74 percent of the polled journalists assert that establishing private channels is an indication of the development of the media freedom; 58.7 percent believe that the Audio-Video Media Commission has no impact on media freedoms.
- Drop in the number of journalists who faced trial compared to past years; 30 percent of the polled journalists suffered harassment.
- 61.3 percent believe that the government interferes in the media; 68.7 percent believe that the advertising companies affect the media policies and use them to serve their interests.
- 14 percent of the polled journalists believe that newspapers and magazines were denied entry into the kingdom; 33.3 percent believe that some Jordanian newspapers were censored.
- 53 lawsuits were filed against newspapers in 2005; Al-Wihdah newspaper was forced to cease publication twice; the publication of Al-Majd weekly was delayed several hours.
- Six instances of banning the publication of articles or press materials in daily and weekly newspapers were monitored; four instances of banning journalists from covering official conferences and ceremonies were monitored in 2005.

The annual report issued by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists [CDFJ] has revealed that the status of media freedoms in Jordan did not witness any development that would reflect the calls for reform that have been reported for years now. It also revealed that the status of the media freedoms in 2005 remained unchanged despite all the government's promises to elevate the ceiling of freedoms.

An opinion poll attached to the annual report showed that most journalists in Jordan are still not satisfied with the status of media freedoms; around 84 percent of the polled journalists said that the status of media freedoms are modest or even below. The field monitoring survey conducted by report-drafting team disclosed that the different violations of the media freedoms have yet to stop, as evidenced in the apprehension of journalists, interference, harassment, prior censorship, trials, and others.

CDFJ Chairman Nidal Mansour said that "the survey conducted by the center for the four year in a row clearly shows that the media freedom in Jordan remained standstill and that it is not on the

list of priorities of the successive governments despite the honey-coated promises to support the media freedom they have been customarily unleashing.”

He added that “figures can tell the whole story; 54.7 of the polled journalists described the status of media freedom in Jordan as low or acceptable while only 3.3 percent said it was excellent. This is a clear indication to this unsatisfactory state despite the slight improvement it achieved in comparison with the outcome of the 2004 survey in which 62.5 percent of the polled journalists then described the media freedom as low or acceptable.”

He went on to say that “the most striking thing in this regard is that despite all the efforts that have been made to improve the legislation streamlining media freedoms in Jordan, yet the overwhelming majority of the polled journalists believe that the legislation in Jordan restrict media freedom; 70.7 percent of the polled journalists said that the existing laws shackle the media freedoms, which proves that there is still pressing need to amend and overhaul the legislative system which impacts and streamlines media in Jordan.”

The media freedom report issued annually by the center on the World Press Freedom Day aims to survey the media status in Jordan.

This year’s report which was published by the center came in 186 pages distributed in six chapters that contain an opinion poll of journalists on the status of media freedoms in Jordan in 2005 and reports on the violations of media freedoms and the current status of media legislation in the kingdom.

The report also includes an analytical reading of the status of media freedoms from the viewpoint of media experts and leaders in Jordan provides an account of the debate over the mandatory and option membership of the Journalists Association, in addition to a review of the local, Arab, and international reports and information on the press status in Jordan in 2005.

### **Opinion Poll**

The opinion poll attached to the report was conducted by the CDFJ between 3 April 2005 and 7 April 2005 on a sample of 150 media persons representing different media institutions. The sample was selected on the basis of a systematic random frequency according to the lists of the Journalists Association until 31 December 2005 and the CDFJ lists for the journalists who are not members of the Journalists Association.

The polled also revealed that the state of cautious optimism which prevailed among journalists in the 2004 poll toward the improvement in the media freedoms has continued, with 24.7 percent saying that it witnessed slight improvement, 31.3 percent saying that it witnessed fair improvement, and 9.3 percent saying that it witnessed significant improvement.

Only 4 percent of the polled journalists believed that it has significantly deteriorated, 4.7 percent said it dropped to some extent, while 22 percent said that the status of media freedom remained unchanged.

These results are very close to the results of the 2004 poll in which 55.2 percent said that media liberties witnessed slight progress, while 9.4 said they witnessed great improvement.

These figures indicate that journalists generally feel that attempts were made last year to improve the status of media freedoms in Jordan in line with the royal directives which support the media freedom and reject the apprehension and imprisonment of journalists.

Most likely, the ambitious national agenda project and the proposals and recommendations it tendered to enhance the media freedoms and independence of the media institutions has obviously contributed to augmenting the journalists' optimism toward a more open political climate for the media.

However, there is evident belief that the status of media freedoms remained unchanged, which indicates that a lot of key issues in the media did not undergo a drastic change.

As regards the media legislation, the poll showed that despite the efforts to improve the legislation streamlining the media activities in Jordan, the overwhelming majority of the polled journalists still believe that the existing legislation in Jordan poses an obstacle to media freedoms; 70.7 of the polled journalists said that the laws restrict media freedoms, 19.3 percent believe that the existing legislation has no impact, and 10 percent only believe that the existing legislation contribute to the progress of media freedoms.

It goes without saying that there is a significant drop in the journalists' assessment of the existing legislation in Jordan if we compare this year's poll with the one conducted in 2004. In last year's poll, 37.5 percent of the polled journalists believed that the laws restrict media freedom, 33.3 percent believed that they had no influence, while 26 percent believed that they enhance the media freedoms.

However, this might have a logical explanation as the report says. The government's promises to amend the legislation to support the media freedoms remained distant from implementation and contentious without any steps forward. In the meantime, journalists have grown more legally conscious of the impact of legislation on their profession.

The Penal Code continues to be the number-one law that negatively affects the media freedom according to 62 percent of the polled journalists. This is followed by the Press and Publication Law with 57.3 percent, followed by the State Security Court Law with 50.7 percent, followed by the Law of State Secrets and Documents with 44 percent, then the Audio-Video Media Law with 36.7 percent, and finally the Journalists Association Law with 20.7 percent.

The striking thing here is that despite the journalists' growing awareness that the laws impose shackles on their freedom, most of them are still unable to identify or pinpoint the legal texts that pose such shackles, which increases the responsibilities and priorities toward the importance of the journalists' legal awareness and the training in this field.

In addition to the imprisonment terms, the journalists also mentioned in their answers the penalties and fines which were most likely imposed on some journalists over the past year.

Some journalists also mentioned in their answers the mandatory membership of the Journalists Association as it constitutes a restriction on the media freedoms. This file was exhaustively debated over the past year especially after the National Agenda Committee recommended that it be rescinded.

### **The Higher Media Council and the Ministry of Information**

Most media persons still believe that the Higher Media Council has no impact on the media freedom with the percentage of those believing so markedly rising in comparison with the last year's poll; 76 percent of the polled journalists said that the Higher Media Council has no impact against 58.3 percent who believed so in last year's poll.

16.7 percent said that the Higher Media Council contributes to the advancement of media freedoms against 24 percent who believed so in the 2004 poll, while 6.7 percent had contrary views saying that it contributes to the deterioration of media freedoms against 9.4 percent who believed so in last year's poll. Nonetheless, there are indications that the journalists' knowledge of the council's role has improved as evidenced in their answers to a question on the duties of the Higher Media Council.

In the same vein, most journalists still believe that canceling the Information Ministry did not positively impact the media freedom, with 69.3 percent of the polled journalists saying that canceling the ministry has not impact on the media freedom, a percentage higher than the 62.5 percent of last year's poll.

Obviously, canceling the Information Ministry did not succeed in convincing the journalists that there was improvement in the media freedoms, because this move resulted in establishing several media bodies which were labeled as new information ministries. Most importantly, canceling the Information Ministry was not interpreted into supporting the media freedom as the mentality of censorship over the media still in place.

### **Journalists Association**

The poll shows that a large percentage of journalists are still not satisfied with the role of their association both in defending the media freedom and developing the media profession, despite the slight improvement in the journalists' assessment of its role.

Around 57.3 percent of the polled journalists said that its role is fair or poor in defending the media freedoms while 11.3 percent said that it has no effective role at all and 31.3 percent said that its role is largely effective.

The journalists' dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the role of their association in developing the media profession seemed greater, with 68 percent of the polled journalists saying that its role is fair or poor, 16 percent saying that its role is not effective at all, and 16 percent of the polled journalist saying that its role is very effective.

Compared to the 2004 figures, we see an increase in the negative assessment of the role of the Journalists Association, with 57.3 percent of the polled journalists saying that its role is poor or acceptable in last year's poll, 7.3 percent saying that it has no role, 11.5 percent saying that its role is moderate, and 14.6 percent saying that its role is good. The percentage of those who said that its role is excellent stood at only 9.4 percent.

These results renew the importance of the debate among media circles over the mandatory membership of the association and over the different organizational frameworks which were raised years ago and highlighted after the National Agenda Committee announced its recommendations in this regard. This is in addition to the challenge encountering the Journalists Association with regard to the need to play a more effective role in training and developing the media caliber of the journalists in Jordan.

In the same context, it seems that most media persons have yet to sense the impact of establishing the Jordanian Media Center although it was established over two years ago; 68.7 percent of the polled journalists said that it has not effect on the media freedoms, a percentage higher than that of last year's poll which stood at 58.3 percent. However, the poll shows that the journalists have grown more aware of the role of the Jordanian Media Center.

### **Establishing Private Radio and TV Stations**

The overwhelming majority of the Jordanian journalists still believe that establishing radio and television stations in Jordan is an indication to the development of press freedom; 74 percent answered "yes" when asked whether the establishment of these stations is an indication to the development of media freedoms, which represents a substantial increase of last year's poll in which 49 percent said that establishing such stations is an indication of the development of media freedoms.

24 percent said that this does not constitute a positive indication and 2 percent said they do not know. These results indicate that private media is a major indication of the development of the media freedoms.

Nonetheless, most journalists do not view positively the Audio-Video Media Commission, with 58.7 percent of the journalists said that the Audio-Video Media Commission has no impact on the media freedom in Jordan; 24.7 percent said that it contributes to the advancement of media freedom against 9.3 percent who said that it negatively affects it; 5.3 percent said that they do not know while 2 percent said that they have no opinion.

These figures are very close to those of last year's poll. Despite the negative assessment of the commission, the poll reveals improvement in the journalists' knowledge of its role and duties.

### **Apprehending and Prosecuting Journalists**

The results of this year's poll disclosed that there was a drop in the number of journalists who faced apprehension against the backdrop of media-related lawsuits; 15.3 percent of the polled journalists said that they were apprehended in connection with cases related to the media before

2005 against 84.7 who did not face such apprehensions. In 2005, only 1.3 percent of the polled journalists said they were apprehended in connection with media cases, while 98.7 percent said they were not apprehended, the same percentage revealed by the 2004 poll, which indicates an improvement in the incidents of apprehending journalists in connection with media-related cases.

The poll revealed that 12 percent of the polled journalists faced trial before 2005 in connection with media cases. During 2005, only 5.3 percent of the polled journalists faced trial. However, these figures indicate only the number of journalists who faced trial but do not disclose the number of cases each faced.

The poll also revealed a drop in the number of journalists who faced trial compared with those of the last year's poll in which 16.7 percent faced trial in connection with media cases.

When journalists who faced trial in 2005 were asked about those who filed the lawsuits against them, they said that government agencies and officials of government and semi-government agencies were on top of those who filed lawsuits against them, followed by private companies and ordinary citizens. This is followed by the Press and Publication Department. It is worth noting that the security services were not among those.

As the results indicate, 25 percent of the polled journalists were issued inconclusive rulings in 2005. The rulings issued against them are of two kinds: 50 percent were given jail sentences and 50 percent were acquitted for irresponsibility. Only 2 percent of the polled journalists faced final rulings in 2005, with 33.3 percent of them acquitted for irresponsibility and 66.6 percent fined.

### **Pressures and Harassment**

Journalists in Jordan are still facing pressures; 30 percent of the polled journalists said that they were harassed during the year 2005 against the backdrop of their views and opinions or their reports and writings; 70 percent said they were not harassed. Despite the rise in harassment cases, yet they decreased in comparison with the percentage of the year 2004 when 40.6 percent said they suffered harassment against 57.3 percent who said they did not face any.

The journalists' answers showed that the most salient harassment they faced was the oral reprimand which accounted for 41.7 percent, followed by the dismissal or prevention of publishing or printing, or the imposition of internal censorship, with each accounting for 10 percent. This was followed by other manifestations of harassment such as denying information, while instances of beating were the least of these with a percentage not exceeding 1.7 percent.

When the journalists were asked to define the party that stands behind the harassment they suffered, they said that most of these harassments came from influential figures without naming them, 53.3 percent; ministers and government officials, 44.4 percent; security services, 28.9 percent; tribal leaders; 20 percent; parties, 8.9 percent; advertisement companies, 6.7 percent; professional associations, 4.4 percent. It is worth noting that the polled journalists were allowed to provide more than one answer.

These answers assert what has been mentioned earlier to the effect that the mentality of censorship over the media is still effective in a manner that affects the media freedoms, and that this censorship and interference in the media is not only by the security services but also by the government and non-government politicians, as well as the civil society organizations and advertisement companies.

During the year 2005, 22 percent of the polled journalists faced situations during which they were not allowed to publish their writings, reports, and articles, while 78 percent said they did not face similar instances. These figures indicate that there is still censorship and self-censorship over media outlets. However, when compared with the results of the 2004 poll, there is a significant improvement. The percentage of those who were banned from publishing their press works was 39.9 percent, which is a positive indication.

### **Interference and Banning Entry of Newspapers**

Most journalists still believe that the government interferes in the media; 61.3 percent said that the government interfered in the year 2005 in the media affairs, coverage, and reports and influenced their attitudes, while 36 percent said that it did not interfere. It seems that the journalist have grown more convinced that the government interfered in the media affairs in comparison with 2004 when only 59.4 percent said that the government interfered in the media affairs.

The polled journalists believed that most important reasons behind the government's interference lies in its desire to influence the public opinion and steer it in its direction; 37.9 percent said that this was the main reason while 29.8 percent said that it interfered to keep the media under its control.

It seems that the interference in the media or influencing them is not only confined to the government but reaches beyond that to include the advertisement companies. Polled journalists have become more convinced that these companies influence the media policies and use them to serve their own interests. The percentage rose from 56.3 percent in 2004 to 68.7 percent in 2005.

It is noticeable that those who believe that the advertisement companies interfere in the media are more than those who believe in the government's interference.

The results indicate that 14 percent of the media people believe that newspapers and magazines were denied entry into Jordan in 2005, while 66.7 percent said there is no ban and 19.3 percent said they do not know.

However, 43.5 percent of those who believed that newspapers and magazines were denied entry could not name any newspapers that were truly banned while 8.7 percent gave names or refused to answer.

Asked about the reasons behind banning the entry of these newspapers, 47.8 percent said because they published report that slander Jordan; 34.7 percent said they do not know or remember the reason; 13 percent refused to answer the question. This indicates that most

journalists do not have reliable information on instances of banning the entry of newspapers or the reasons behind that.

### **Pre-Censorship**

The results showed a noticeable rise in the percentage of those who believed that there was not pre-censorship over the Jordanian newspapers compared with the 2004 poll. They also showed a slight drop in the percentage of those who believed in the presence of this pre-censorship.

48 percent of the polled media people said that Jordanian newspapers were not pre-censored, against 21.9 percent who believed so in 2004. 33.3 believed that some newspapers were pre-censored in 2005 compared with 39.6 percent in 2004. The percentage of those who answered "I do not know" dropped to 18.7 percent compared with 38.5 percent in 2004.

In their answers, the polled journalists mentioned a number of Jordanian weeklies, but not dailies or other media outlets, which came under pre-censorship. On top of the list of the newspapers they mentioned was Al-Majd weekly, 34.3 percent; Shihan weekly, 13.4 percent; Al-Wihdah, 11.9 percent.

### **The Freedom of the Radio and Television Corporation and the News Agency**

Despite the efforts that were exerted in the domain of the visual and audio media, most journalists still believe that the radio and television do not enjoy freedom or have a small margin of freedom. 28.7 percent said that they do not have freedom at all; 31.3 percent said this freedom is limited; 33.3 percent said that this freedom is fair and only 6 percent said that their margin of freedom is large.

Compared with the results of the 2004 poll, one can see a slight improvement; only 2.1 percent believed that they enjoy large freedom while 41.7 percent believed that they enjoyed low freedom and 7.3 percent said that they enjoyed a fair margin of freedom.

As for the Jordan News Agency (Petra), the polled journalists had a better assessment of the margin of freedom it enjoyed in 2005 compared with previous years. Those who believe that it enjoys a large margin of freedom rose from 5.2 percent in 2004 to 12 percent in 2005, while the percentage of those who believe that it does not enjoy any freedom at all dropped to 21.3 percent in 2005 compared with 37.5 percent in 2004. Additionally, 26 percent said that it enjoys a small margin of freedom against 21.9 percent in 2004; 38.7 percent said that its freedom is fair against 35.5 percent in 2004.

### **Internet Censorship**

The results also showed a significant rise in the percentage of the journalists who believe that the internet was censored in Jordan in 2005 in comparison with previous years; 42.7 percent of media people believe that the internet sites were censored in Jordan in 2005 against 22.9 percent who

believed so in 2004; 46 percent said that the internet was not censored against 38.5 percent in 2004.

It was noticeable that overwhelming majority of those who believed in the presence of censorship could not provide examples on instances of censorship; 29.8 percent said they do not know or recall any specific instances while 42.6 percent said there are sites that were banned without naming them; 12.8 percent mentioned the closure of the site of Arab Times as an example.

When asked who exercise censorship on internet sites, 52.2 percent of the polled journalists said that the security services; 40.3 percent said they do not know; 3 percent said the Press and Publication Department; 3 percent said the internet service providers; 1.5 percent said that the Audio-Video Media Commission exercises this censorship.

The figures indicate a rise in the percentage of those who believe that the security services exercise censorship compared with only 13 percent in 2004; 26.1 percent said in 2004 that the government exercises censorship.

### **Tracking Violations of Media Freedom**

The report sought to track the violations of media freedom in Jordan in 2005 within a framework that defines such violations and the instances that occur in Jordan and their categorization in accordance with specific criteria. This is followed by a documentation of the instances that did occur in Jordan in 2005.

The working team listed the following major violations of media freedoms:

- Preventing the publication of dissemination through prior censorship
- Banning the coverage of public events
- Suspending satellite transmission
- Summoning for interrogation by the security services
- Warning and indirect threat to jail or dismiss form work
- Imprisonment and apprehension
- Administrative obstacles
- Dismissal, arbitrary transfer from workplace
- Facing lawsuits

Within the effort to track the instances of media violations, the team faced the problem of lack of documentation, absence or lack of information, and hesitation of some journalists to provide full information. Yet, the team managed to unveil some violations of media freedoms in 2005.

The team identified two documented instances, during which Al-Majd weekly was forced to cease publication and another documented instance in which Al-Majd weekly was forced to delay its publication for several hours and was only allowed to public after deleting press materials. The report also monitored other instances during which weekly newspapers were forced to delay publication because their press materials were not dated.

The team also identified cases of banning the publication of articles and press materials in daily and weekly newspapers. Six cases were documented, mostly related to the issue of hiking the fuel prices. The team also identified four documented instances during which journalists were banned from covering conferences and official events by official or semi-official agencies.

The report also monitored several instances when official agencies refused to deal with journalists representing different media institutions under the pretext that they are not members of the Journalists Association. Those agencies capitalized on a circular issued by Prime Minister Adnan Badran to the government agencies ordering them not to deal with or invite the journalists who are not members of the Journalists Association.

One instance of suspending the transmission of a satellite channel occurred with Al-Mamnu' Satellite Channel despite the conflicting views over this issue. This is in addition to identifying a number of instances of summoning for interrogation by the security agencies against the backdrop of publishing articles or press materials. Two instances of summoning journalists were documented upon an official warrant issued by the public prosecutor of the Amman Court. The other instances were not identified either because they were not documented or because the journalists did not provide information on their dates or because they were based on oral information.

The team also identified one documented instance of issuing a warning of closure against the weekly newspaper Al-I'lam al-Badeel due to what was termed by the official letter issued by the Press and Publication Department as "the newspaper's violation of its license." The report also monitored instances of reprimanding and threatening journalists for publishing articles and press materials. In some instances, lawsuits were filed against journalists and in others they were reprimanded. In other instances, some journalists received unspecified threats. Some of these threats were made directly and others over telephone by officials or other persons from outside the government and its agencies.

The report also monitored the issuance of an inconclusive jail sentence in 2005 against a journalist. However, the jail sentence was not enforced. In another documented instance, one journalist was apprehended. In another, administrative obstacles were placed by official agencies when the Press and Publication Department refrained from responding to a request for licensing a specialized newspaper. Finally, the report monitored three cases of dismissal of journalists or arbitrary transfer.

The report also mentions the lawsuits that were filed against newspapers in 2005, which stood at 53 cases. The report obtained this information from the lawyers of the daily and weekly newspapers and from the Press and Publication Department.

### **The Status of the Media Legislation**

Regarding the media legislation, the report allocated a special section to review the change in the media legislation in Jordan in 2005 and discuss the status quo and the obstacles posed by the existing legislation to the media freedoms in Jordan.

The report concluded that the year 2005 witnessed changes in two files of media legislation: namely, the Press and Publication Law and the Law on the Right to Information Accessibility.

The special section on media legislation was divided into two parts: The first reviewed the legislative development of the legal structure of the pillars of the media freedoms and discussed the draft law of press and publication and draft law of the information accessibility, which were submitted by the government to the Parliament, as well as the mechanisms adopted by the CDFJ in dealing with these two draft laws.

The second part discussed the existing legislative restrictions on the press and media freedom by reviewing the legislation streamlining the media profession in Jordan and making some recommendations to develop the legislation on press and media freedom.

The report said that the Jordanian Government expressed its willingness to elevate the ceiling of press and media freedoms in 2005, noting that one of the gestures showed by the government to assert its approach in support of media freedoms is the initiative to put forward new legislation on press freedom, as represented in the draft laws of the press and publication and the information accessibility.

The report noted that the role played by the Higher Media Council in drafting these laws to the government although the two versions provided by the council underwent a thorough review and a "surgery" on a host of their provisions by the government before they were submitted to the Parliament after a long "labor."

The report stressed that although "the two draft laws represent an advanced legislative version of the Press and Publication Law no. 8 for the year 1998 and its effective amendments, yet anyone observing closely the draft law of the press and publication would notice that it still adopts flexible incrimination and imposes exaggerated fines."

It added: "As for the draft law on the right to information accessibility, it reinvents the shackles imposed on the right to access information and documents which makes it very similar to the temporary Law on Protecting the State's Secrets and Documents for the year 1971."

The report noted that the CDFJ exerted prodigious efforts to back the attempts of "legislative reform" in support of media freedoms and worked closely and relentlessly with the Parliament and presented through specialized committees alternative versions of the draft laws of press and publication and information accessibility.

Concluding, the report said that despite the presence of the two draft laws, yet the legislative climate streamlining media affairs remained unchanged, inspired by the prevention and punishment philosophy and not tolerance. It added: "One can describe the incriminatory and penal policy adopted by the Jordanian legislator in relation with the freedom of expression in general and the press and media freedom in particular with different terms. First, it extends the span of incrimination by citing detailed instances of criminal acts, which runs counter to the principle of "all are innocent until proven guilty." Second, it relies heavily on the policy of vagueness and obscurity by using blurry, elastic, and unspecified terms that cannot be measured by the standards of an average citizen, which again runs counter to the principle of clarity of both crimes and penalties.

Third, the policy adopts firm penalties, which runs counter to the principle of proportion between the crime and punishment.”

The report also touched on the issue of canceling the Information Ministry, noting that the controversy is still heated and even mounting over the bodies and structures devised to succeed the ministry and undertake its roles and legislation, especially since the legislation streamlining the work of these media institutions did not prevent the interrelation and correlation of their duties and activities and did not prevent some for criticizing these bodies which turned into “different information ministries.”

### **Controversy over Mandatory Membership of the Journalists Association**

The report-drafting team also discussed in a special section the political and media debate which has markedly increased lately in 2005 over the issue of the mandatory and option membership of the Journalists Association and its linkage with the issue of media freedoms.

The report noted that this issue which was raised years ago has been raised again last year after the announcement of the recommendations of the National Agenda Committee set up by his majesty the king to devise national reform agenda for the next 10 years. The committee came up with 19 recommendations related to the media, including the abrogation of the mandatory membership of the Journalists Association.

The report kept track with the details of the controversy spared by this issue on the media level and reviewed the stances of different players and parties who support and/or oppose the mandatory membership.

The report provided the text of the recommendations of the National Agenda Committee and the need to review the existing media legislation in Jordan so that they will be in tandem with the international human rights standards and charters which are binding upon Jordan. It also discussed the mandatory membership in relation with the international charters of human rights.

### **The Status of Freedoms in Local, Arab, and International Reports**

The last section, no 6, provides an account of the status of media freedoms in 2005 in the date provides in local, Arab, and international reports issued by agencies and institutions concerned with the media liberties and the freedom of expression.

The data and reports provided in this section were listed in chronological order. Other relevant reports, which were issued in 2006 and which tackled the media freedom in Jordan in 2005, were also listed in this section.

The report noted that media in Jordan were assigned a large part of the attention of local, Arab, and international institutions which are concerned with defending press, the freedom of expression,

and human rights. A total of 12 reports and press releases on Jordan were issued on the local, Arab, and international levels and were reported by different media outlets.

This section enables researches and observers to generally learn about the status of media freedoms in Jordan from the viewpoint of those institutions that are concerned with media freedoms on the local, Arab, and international levels and which cite in their reports the violations of media freedoms in Jordan in 2005.