

Media Freedom Status in Jordan **2006**



مركز حماية وحرية الصحفيين

Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists

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Note: The all report is available in Arabic.. Please visit our website : www.cdfj.org



No Progress in Freedom of Media in Jordan!

Five years after the issuance of the media freedoms report in Jordan and after more than 17 years of the return of parliamentary life and termination of the martial laws, it is necessary for us to stop and ask: What have we achieved? Where do we stand now with regard to the freedom of journalism and media?

One does not feel optimistic after reading the indicators included in the opinion poll conducted among journalists on the media freedoms, examining the violations, and listening to the media people's opinions about the details of their daily life and what they face. On the contrary, after all of this, one gets the impression that all talk about the freedom of media is nothing more than slogans which have not been implemented on the ground. Journalists and those concerned with media issues now believe in this saying: "Much ado about nothing!"

Five years after the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists issued its report about media freedoms, we can say that no progress has been achieved.

We are not moving forward and no radical reforms to legislations have been made. On the contrary, there have been setbacks and retreat. Government and security interference have dwindled on the surface. True, cases of summoning for interrogation have decreased, but prior censorship remains like a phantom that controls the media scene, especially the weekly press.

This report, which coincides with the international day for the freedom of the press, seeks to reveal the status of media freedom in Jordan as it is without cosmetics.

We do not want this report, which seems to be shocking, to spread frustration. We want to launch a dialogue about the means of overcoming this stagnation. We believe that this can be achieved only through an accurate consideration of the situation with all its negative and positive aspects.

We seek to interact with all those concerned to answer the key question: How can we move so that the freedom of media will move forward? How can we stop talk which casts doubt on the seriousness of political reform in Jordan? Shall we remain satisfied with mere talk or take action to achieve progress in freedoms?

Every year, we seek to avoid the mistakes that were done in the previous year's report. We made efforts to develop the opinion poll. We tried to adopt more accurate mechanisms for documenting violations and use a clear scientific approach based on clear-cut definitions.

We listened to the opinions of media experts about the problems and media freedoms. Dialogue could reveal details which cannot be explored in opinion polls.

We shed light on controversial issues affecting the freedom of media and which cannot be ignored in a fast-paced world.

The report on the status of media freedoms for 2006 was divided into the following sections:

- * First Section: Survey of the status of media freedoms in Jordan in 2006.
- * Second Section: Violations of media freedoms in Jordan in 2006.
- * Third Section: How do media experts view the status of media freedoms on Jordan in 2006.
- * Fourth Section: Status of media legislations in 2005.
- * Fifth Section: Studies and research.
- * Sixth Section: Media freedoms in Jordan in local, Arab, and international reports.

Once again, we do not claim that this report surveys the status of media freedoms in the optimal manner. The problem does not lie in our work methodology, which is developing, or in the mechanisms used in our survey, but rather in the fact that the majority of media people are still not inclined to reveal the violations to which they are subjected.

We will continue to call on journalists to "hit the tank," as Ghassan Kanafani said in his "Men Under the Sun" novel. We should not remain silent when our freedom is violated and when we are silenced.

The report is in your hands. We hope that we will listen to the remarks of all so that we will avoid weaknesses and build on the strengths in the next year's report.

This year, the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists will complete its ninth year, bringing us closer to a decade of work, determination, and defiance.

I must admit that these were the most difficult and stressful years in my life. I must also admit that it has been an exhausting journey which I would not have been able to endure had it not been for the friends in Jordan and the world, who gave us support and from

whose determination we derived strength to go ahead in defending the freedom of media. We express our appreciation and respect for all these friends and pledge to them that we will continue to move forward regardless of the difficulties.

Nidal Mansour

President

Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ)



Executive Summary

One can safely say that Jordan has not succeeded in the freedom of media test in 2006. The situation remained as it is. Despite government promises to support the freedom of media, the government, the security agencies, and the Parliament moved in the opposite direction.

It is not a coincidence that the opinion poll conducted by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists [CDFJ] as part of the report on media freedoms in 2006 revealed that 91.1% of media people are not satisfied with the status of freedom and assert that it did not witness much progress.

The media freedoms report for 2006 -- which the CDFJ has issued for the fifth consecutive year on 3 May, the world day for the freedom of the press -- clearly shows that the optimism which prevailed among media circles in 2005 has relatively receded. A feeling of frustration and anger prevailed after the majority of media people felt that no progress has been achieved with regard to reform and that legislations supporting the freedom of the press were disappointing as they did not include radical amendments.

The media freedoms report for this year consists of 185 pages and includes six sections which shed light on the various details of the Jordanian media scene.

Opinion Poll:

The first part of the report is the opinion poll which was conducted among 250 media persons. Only 3.3% of the journalists said that the freedom of media in Jordan can be described as excellent.

61.6% of the media persons said that the legislations restrict the freedom of the press, and 94.2% said that the publications and publishing law and the penal code are the most dangerous to and restrictive of media freedoms. Some 42.9% of the journalists criticized the Press Association law, saying that it constitutes a constraint. This shows the growth of the opposition after the independent and private media have gained strength.

98.7 % of the journalists warned that detaining journalists in publication-related cases according to the criminal court procedures and the State Security Court's law were the most restrictive of media freedoms. Another 98.7% said the same about detaining journalists according to the penal code.

87.7% said that high fines according to the publication law were part of the means of pressure and restrictions on the press.

The worrying thing is the increase in the number of media people who expressed their dissatisfaction with the role of the new media institutions, which were expected to support press freedoms.

78% of those polled said that the Higher Media Council has no influence on the freedom of media. The more serious thing is that 5.2% of the respondents said that the Higher Media Council plays a negative role and that it led to retreat in freedoms.

Such figures should prompt the Higher Media Council to reconsider the mechanisms of its work and its policies. The media people believe that the government has contributed to marginalizing the role of the Council and restricting it to giving pieces of advice which are often ignored.

76.9% said that the Council contributed to fragmenting the media terms of reference and that its role in solving conflicts and monitoring professional ethics is absent. 44.7% said that the Council was run in a bureaucratic manner.

Doubtless, the expected role of the Higher Media Council is still under debate especially in light of the government's control of the major aspects of the media and the society's opinion leaders' belief that the government should remain the guardian of the press and media.

In the same context, the cancellation of the Ministry of Information, which was done by the government in 2003 to assert that it wants independent media, was not given attention by the media people.

56.4% of the media people believed that the cancellation of the Ministry of Information had no impact on the freedom of media. 28.4% said that canceling the ministry led to a regression in media freedoms.

This issue sheds light once again on the current debate over the cancellation of the ministry as this decision has not clearly impacted on the freedom of media, an opinion which was frankly and boldly expressed by the journalists.

Therefore, the government should revise its policies which lead to creating new facts. The cancellation of the Ministry of Information should have been followed by other measures to achieve the goals of the decision.

The most important thing is that canceling the ministry led to establishing media bodies and independent institutions which sought to inherit the legacy of the ministry and build bureaucratic agencies. This has not led to supporting the freedom of media.

The media people's confidence cannot be boosted through building new institutions. The majority of media people are not satisfied with the role of the Press Association in terms of defending journalists. 64.8% described its role as fairly effective, poor, or ineffective. On the professional level, 80.8% said that its role was fairly effective, poor, or ineffective.

This poses a challenge to the Press Association, which was established more than 50 years ago and which has failed to assume a distinguished role in defending journalists and developing the professional performance. This is basically related to the Association's independence and ability to be an incubator for the media people.

The same thing applies to the Jordanian Media Center, which was established by the government to express its policies, as 71.6% believed that it does not contribute to boosting the freedom of media.

61.6% of the respondents said that establishing radio and television stations was the most representative element of the freedom of media. The strange thing, however, is that there is a decline in this indicator as the percentage was 74% in 2005.

One cannot pass conclusive judgments in this regard. Observers, however, can see that the majority of radio stations are FM radios centered in Amman and the majority of these are music and entertainment radios.

Certainly, entertainment radios have a very limited impact on the freedom of media; hence, the decline in the media people's conviction that such radios will contribute to promoting media freedoms.

Away from the evaluation of media institutions, 98% of the journalists said that they were not detained, while only 2% said that they were detained.

80% of those detained said that they were detained upon decisions made by the civil prosecution while 20% said that they were detained based on orders from the General Intelligence.

Figures show that detention cases have declined in the recent years. However, if we focus in the poll on a sample of journalists from independent institutions, then the

percentage of those who were detained will increase. This is because journalists in official media institutions are not detained or tried because what they publish or broadcast is subject to prior censorship.

94% of the media persons said that they did not stand trials in connection with media-related cases last year, while 6% said that they stood trial.

The new and interesting thing in this regard is that the government was the side which filed the biggest number of lawsuits against journalists in the past. The situation has changed as citizens now top the list with 53.3%, followed by 20% for government officials, 13.3% by the Publications and Publishing Department, and only 6.7% of the lawsuits were filed by the security agencies.

When asked about the charges that were brought against them, 66.7% of the media persons who were sued said that the charges were slander and libel, 26.7% said the charges were lack of balance and objectivity, 13.3% said the charges were failure to adhere to publishing the truth and violating the values of the Arab and Islamic nation, and 6.7% said the charges were contesting a judge or a public prosecutor, slandering an official or government agency, straining relations with Arab or foreign countries, and violating the press code of honor.

The poll showed that 33.3% of those who were tried, a total of 15 media persons, were given non-final sentences while 66.7% are still being tried.

Asked about the sentences passed against them, the journalists, a total of five, answered as follows:

- A Three-month imprisonment sentence that was appealed.
- A One-month sentence and a 7,500-dinar fine.
- A 1,600-dinar fine.
- A three-month sentence and a 700-dinar fine.
- No answer.

20% of the journalists who stood trial said that a final sentence was issued against them while 80% were given non-final sentences which could be appealed.

In addition, journalists in Jordan are still facing harassment and pressure according to 27.2%. The percentage was 30% in 2005 and 40.6% in 2004.

According to 58.8% of the media people, the most prominent pressure to which they were exposed was the withholding of information. Clearly, the increasing awareness of journalists of their right to have access to information and the current talk about the draft law on safeguarding the right to access to information have increased the media people's desire to speak about the withholding of information.

51.5% said that the most prominent pressure was the interference of the chief editor or the owner. This raises a question to those interested in freedoms: Is the interference of the chief editor considered a violation?

Chief editors believe that this is a professional right in the whole world. They also note that the legal responsibility stipulates that they should have the say as the justice does not absolve them from responsibility.

50% said that they were exposed to threats, 45.6% said that their reports and articles were banned, and 33.8% said that they were exposed to prior censorship.

It should be noted that the Jordanian laws do not allow prior censorship under any circumstances. However, this is the most common violation according to the chief editors of weekly newspapers.

The list of interference and pressure reveal details and various cases. It seems that direct security interference has declined although the percentage of summoning and interrogation by security agencies is still high.

As for interference, 61.8% of the media people said that the harassment was exercised by influential figures while 47.1% said that it was practiced by ministers and government officials.

25% admit that the security agencies stand behind the harassment and pressure while advertising agencies account for 14.1% of interference cases.

The ironical thing is that the media people said that the parties are responsible for 8.8% of the interference and the tribes are responsible for the same percentage. 5.9% said that the House of Representatives started to interfere after arguments with journalists. 4.4% said that the unions interfere and 1.5% attribute interference to unknown persons.

Thus, violations against journalists are not committed by the government and its security agencies alone. Jordan could be distinguished in that most of interference cases come from influential figures, a broad term which includes former statesmen, ministers, and politicians. The strange thing is that the democratic institutions -- parties, unions, and the Parliament -- joined those who exercise pressure. This shows that changing the status of

freedoms needs a society-level effort and not only government and security decisions. It also needs an environment conducive to the freedom of media.

In the same context, 24% of the journalists asserted that their reports and articles were banned in 2006. The strange thing is that 93.3% of the respondents, 60 journalists, said that their articles and reports were banned because they allegedly contained insults to religions.

Journalists revealed that 75% of publication ban cases were attributed to the decision of desk editor or chief editors. 55% percent said that their articles and reports were probably banned for criticizing the government, 38.3% said they were banned for criticizing institutions and companies that had interests with the newspaper, while 18.3% attributed the ban to criticizing other countries. 13.3% said that their articles were banned because they criticized the Parliament and only 11.7% said that the ban was because the reports and articles criticized security agencies. 5% believe that the ban was due to the clash between their articles and reports and social habits and traditions.

The government interference in the media did not recede despite the promises that were made. 60.8% of the media people believe that the government interferes in the media's affairs and coverage. Only 36.6% of journalists oppose this opinion, 2.8% said that they did not know, and 0.8% said refused to answer.

The situation is not different from that in last year as 61.3% said that the government interferes in the media, compared to 59.4% in 2004.

These figures show the size of interference at a time when His Majesty King Abdallah II asserts that the ceiling of the freedom of media should be the sky. Accordingly, the government should stop these violations as soon as possible, respond to reform calls, and boost the freedom of media.

92.8% of the journalists said that the government interferes in the media because it wants to lead the public opinion according to its policies and stands. 88.8% believe that its interference is part of its keenness on keeping the media under its control while 80.3% said that it does so because some mass media are not independent and are affiliated with it.

In the evaluation of the freedom of the Radio and Television, 89.2% of the media persons said that they were not satisfied with the level of freedom in this institution, 33.2% said that the level of freedom is fair, 27.6% said it was poor, 28.4% said that its absolutely has no freedom, 1.6% said that they did not know, and 0.4% refused to answer. 8.8% said that the Radio and Television enjoys a great deal of freedom.

The situation of the Jordanian News Agency is not different from of the Radio and Television. The majority of media people are not satisfied with its level of freedom. 86.4%

of those polled said that it has fair, little, or no freedom at all. 10.4% of the journalists said that the news agency enjoys a great deal of freedom, 2.8% said that they did not know, and 0.4% refused to answer.

Monitoring Violations

The second part of the report was a survey of the violations committed against journalists and their media institutions in 2006.

The problem which increased the difficulty of this mission was that many violations take place and journalists prefer to remain silent about them.

The other thing is that there is no definition for violations. Some consider the trials of journalists as violations while others disagree, saying that litigation is a guaranteed right for all. Thus, the team of the report sought to establish a scientific approach for documentation. It devised an index for defining violations. The process of surveying and documenting was conducted along these lines.

During 2006, 31 violations were monitored. These violations included arrest, threat, ban on publication and filming, summoning by security agencies, exerting pressure, detention, confiscation of a newspaper, and withholding of information.

The strangest violation was that committed against press cameramen inside the Parliament. Al-Dustour Cameraman Muhammad al-Kiswani told the team of the report: "They confiscated our cameras after we filmed a brawl between two deputies. They took the camera off my neck and insulted us. They said: Go out, dogs."

This incident provoked the journalists and prompted the dailies to boycott the House of Representatives. However, the speaker of the House of Representatives came to the headquarters of the Press Association and made an apology. The dailies then ended their boycott of the Parliament, but maintained their boycott of the deputies who attacked the press cameraman.

What happened with colleagues Jihad al-Mumani and Hashim al-Khalidi is not less serious. They were both arrested, threatened, and slandered in front of the public opinion against the backdrop of their republishing of cartoons deriding the prophet.

Al-Mumani said in his testimony: "In order to secure popularity, the government arrested me and Al-Khalidi and brought four charges against us. We were also exposed to a large amount of instigation, which developed into grudges, death threats, and calls for punishment according to the Islamic law. We did not appear before courts; we were tried by the people through the government...which exercised the ugliest forms of psychological warfare against us. My family and I were exposed to danger."

Journalist Thamir al-Simadi from Al-Sabil newspaper said that he was beaten by security men during his coverage of a rally held by the Islamic Movement in Ajloun. He said: "While I was filming the rally, four security men approached me and carried me although I showed them my press identity card. They took me to the police directorate. While I was in their car, they beat me up and insulted me although I asserted to them that I was a journalist and that I was doing my job. In the Ajloun Police Directorate, they tried to pressure me into signing a pledge not to publish a report about the rally. They confiscated my camera, deleted the pictures that were taken, and confiscated the report. I refused to sign the statement. I left the center after two hours."

Amir al-Tall, chief editor of Al-Wihdah weekly, said: "Al-Wihdah weekly was exposed to frequent censorship cases in 2006 due to its publishing of some news and articles which the government thought were targeted against it."

Omar Kullab, chief editor of Al-I'lam al-Badil newspaper said: "I was threatened by unknown persons. I received SMS messages, including: Bin Ladin will cut off your head. I also received threats through telephone at home after I wrote an article criticizing the deputies who visited the mourning tent held for Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. This was part of a psychological war against me."

Fahd al-Rimawi, chief editor of Al-Majd newspaper, said that he was detained at the General Intelligence from 12 noon until 0830 in the evening after publishing a report citing the prime minister about accusations to Hamas Movement of smuggling weapons. He said: "I was released in the evening after the intervention of the head of the Press Association, who I earlier told about my summoning, and after I pledged to publish a report that would be later sent by the Office of the Media Advisor of Prime Minister denying the earlier report."

Osama al-Sharf, former chief editor of Al-Dustour newspaper, said: "I do not remember that I personally exercised censorship on some topics. However, as a chief editor, I sometimes used my right to fine-tune and tone down the language of some articles."

He added: "As for the ban on the publication of some materials in newspapers, I would like to say that this never happened in Al-Dustour. At times, we might be criticized or alerted to something in the press material after publication, but before that nothing significant happens. He asserted that "during my term of service as a chief editor, none of the journalists or members of the Editorial Section who work for Al-Dustour was subject to security questioning."

What Do Experts Say?

The third section of the report was devoted to a seminar in which journalists and media specialists discussed the status of the media freedoms in Jordan in 2006.

The participants pointed out that the prior censorship of the media in Jordan is not only imposed by the government and its security services, but what is yet more serious is what the chief editors do in compliance with different pressures.

They noted that there are two kinds of censorship in our media: The prior censorship that can be documented. This mode of censorship is illegal and illegitimate. The second mode is the professional censorship which can be viewed as self-censorship. The latter can be divided into two kinds: Reasonable censorship that is intended to be knowledgeable of the information and reports that the newspaper receives, thus correcting them if necessary; the other kind of self-censorship develops as a result of security pressures or the interests of those in charge of the newspaper, be they publishers or chief editors or others.

The experts unanimously noted that prior censorship is most evident during the videotaping activities by satellite channels when restrictions are imposed on them to prevent them from filming certain events freely and independently.

As regards the licensing of radio stations and satellite channels, the participants complained about the high fees that the government levies on the licenses. This is in addition to many other restrictions and long formalities in the licensing process of radio stations and satellite channels, let alone the discouraging clauses in the licensing agreement which often drive them away from establishing such projects.

As for the right to access information, the participants mentioned a host of problems and obstacles which prevent journalists from accessing information and obstruct their relentless quest for publishable facts. Despite the endeavor to activate the network of the government's media spokespersons, yet this experience has not achieved the success we were expecting, to say nothing of the lack of cooperation of some others.

The participants stressed the importance of endorsing the law on the right to access information. Some even maintained that endorsing this law, though of prime importance, is not be enough if it is not followed by other supportive moves, such as amending the law on protecting the state's secrets and documents and the State Security Court's law.

Some participants dwelt on the question of labeling information as classified and unclassified, saying that the criteria for this classification are vague and are solely left to the government's discretion.

Some participants referred to subjectivity in giving information to journalists, in addition to other negative aspects such as selectivity, inaccuracy, and discrimination between foreign and local journalists.

The participants touched on the issue of security interference in the media and cited several examples, saying that such interference is almost a daily happening in media outlets and is often channeled through the chief editor as he/she is directly in contact with the editors.

The legislation milieu of the media figured high on the participants' discussions. Media experts asserted that the media legislation in Jordan is generally based on incrimination, punishment, and prevention, not on permissibility and the vision of free media.

Some participants underscored the need to amend the laws and legislation in a manner that would render them harmonious with the international conventions and agreements.

Some experts criticized the multiplicity of open-ended legal texts in the Jordanian laws and legislation, which makes them subject to different interpretations and traps that could lead journalists to law violations.

The participants underscored the need to educate journalists on the legal aspects of the press profession and commended the positive step that has been taken by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists when it established the Legal Aid Unit which takes upon itself the duty of defending journalists before courts and providing them with prior legal consultations.

When asked to evaluate the professional status of the Jordanian media, several participants noted a noticeable development in training press cadres, in which the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists plays a pioneering role, and called for supporting this effort.

As regards the negative effects on the professional status of the media, the participants mentioned a host of factors, most notably of which are: The poor media education at the Jordanian universities; the mentality of the security agencies that deal with the journalists; the unjustified generosity in granting licenses to weekly newspapers and the lack of desire on the part of these weeklies to train their cadres which eventually weakens their professional status; and the rampant corruption in the press domain.

The Status of Legislation

The fourth section addressed the status of the media legislation in Jordan in 2006, noting that the legislation in that year did not witness drastic changes as the case was in 2005.

The study of the media legislation in 2006 focused on the laws of the press and publication and access to information which were submitted by the government to the Parliament last year.

The study aimed to highlight the restrictions enshrined in the media legislation on those who work in the media domain and the policy of incrimination and punishment.

As part of the study's evaluation¹ of the draft laws of the press and publication and the right to access information, the following observations were noted:

First: In Terms of the Media Draft Laws Submitted by the Government to the Parliament

1. The Jordanian legislator still insists on imposing restrictions on the exercise of the press profession. The membership of the Press Association is still a main condition that should be fulfilled by those who want to work in this sector, contrary to the international standards. Additionally, the legislator even added to the unjust requirements on the part of journalists by deeming the ethical track record, which does not enjoy the status of legislation -- as a part of the press and publication law, contrary to the procedures and fundamentals of legislation.
2. The legislator curtailed the pre-censorship imposed on the media dispatch received from abroad as well as the printing of books. However, the restrictions on the specialized publications have been kept in place.
3. The legislator enlarged the scope of incrimination in the press and publication law by adding a new incriminatory clause that did not exist before. The new clause consists of four paragraphs that include vague phrases with no specific reference. The same clause also exists in the Penal Code.
4. The legislator tried to spare journalists appearance before the State Security Court by revoking the court's specialty in press and publication cases. However, the legislator did not amend the law of the State Security Court which has priority over other laws when it comes to implementation and which places some media-related cases within the jurisdiction of the court.
5. The legislator did not revoke the imprisonment penalty in the press and publication cases, nor did he use a clear-cut legislative phrasing to prevent the apprehension of journalists in press and publication cases. Rather, he used legal clauses that do not obstruct the enforcement of other penal laws which deem apprehension as permissible.
6. The legislator raised the financial penalties up to 20,000 dinars in some crimes.

¹ The study was conducted on the draft laws before being endorsed by the Parliament

7. The legislator did not revoke the restrictions imposed on the right to access and circulate information in the two draft laws. Rather, the legislator imposed further restrictions on the right to access information that never existed in the current Law on protecting the state's secrets and documents which views the secrecy of information as the rule without any exceptions. The categorization of information as classified or non-classified is still controlled by the administrations of government agencies without enough justification.

Second: In Terms of the Current Status of Media-Related Laws

1. The incrimination scope is still very large through the diversity of the punishable criminal acts which run counter to the principle of people are innocent unless proven otherwise.
2. The incriminatory policy adopted by the Jordanian legislator resorts to vague and fuzzy phrases that can never be measured by normal standards, which is contrary to the principle of clarity of the legislation of crimes and punishment.
3. The government still controls the administration of the Jordan Television and Radio Corporation. The financing of the corporation is one the most effective tools used by the government to control the corporation. One cannot assume that the corporation enjoys the transparency required for the freedom of media, especially in view of the censorship being exercised on its activities.
4. The audio and visual media law imposes shackles on the licensing and transmission by censoring the editorial board and rendering it non-independent and linking the programs with the general policy governing the Jordanian media. Moreover, the way licenses are granted does not contribute to the societal diversity of all shades, especially given the hefty fees levied on the news and political programming.

Studies and Research

In the fifth section, the report team decided to concentrate on controversial studies and reports that are closely linked to the media freedom and the circumstances affecting it.

In this context, Usamah al-Sharif, former chief editor of Al-Dustour daily, provided an account of the impact of information technology on the Jordanian society. To this effect, he provided a brief historical review of the Jordanian society's approach to the communication and information technology. He also linked this to the accompanying political developments and discussed how the Jordanian citizens used the new technologies to express themselves. This led to the pivotal question of how the individual can enjoy a maximum

level of democracy and personal freedom on the internet while he/she is deprived of that freedom and democracy in everyday life.

In his second study, Al-Sharif shed light on the experience of blogging under "Bloggers: Newcomers to the Media Arena." He began his lecture by discussing the experience of blogging, saying that the number of blogs has reached 60 million operating in a free atmosphere and in the absence of any sort of censorship, except for the personal censorship which is represented in the ethics of the bloggers themselves. Al-Sharif reviewed through a background paper the rise of blogs and their entry into the Arab World. He also touched on the use of blogs in the media domain and their emergence as a competitor with the tradition media, particularly in view of the margin of freedom and easy access that they enjoy.

The third study addressed the escalating crisis between the Parliament and the Press. The chief editor of Al-Bawabah website discussed the crisis in a study titled "The Lower House is in Race with the Government over Restricting Freedoms." Omar described the year 2006 as the worst in view of the deputies' desire to take revenge on media freedoms. In addition to tracking the volatile relationship that marred the previous year and the confrontation between parliamentarians and media people on several occasions, Muhammad Omar tried to analyze the reasons that prompted the Parliament to go to extremes and insist on outpacing the government in undermining the media freedoms for the first time in the history of Jordan. Omar also cited reactions by the media institutions which deplored the measures which were taken by the Parliament and which were described as revengeful against media.

Omar also reviewed the crisis which signaled the climax of the Parliament's wrath when deputies assaulted journalists while doing their job under the Parliament's dome. Although Omar did not provide reasons for the ulterior motives of the deputies' acts against the media, he gave the whole truth of an entire turbulent year that placed the Jordanian media between the government's hammer and the Parliament's anvil.

Fateh Mansour, chief editor of Al-Hadath weekly, concluded the section of studies by discussing the college education of media between success and failure.

He tried to go deep into the crisis of the academic training and instruction received by those working in the media domain. Despite the long history of the Jordanian media, yet the media institutions that offer specialized academic studies in the media are few and lack the necessary potential to develop the caliber of their graduates and brace them to contribute to creating active and efficient media outlets.

Media training is still a new concept in Jordan and is barely eight-years old. The complaint that we often hear from media institutions about the poor professional

performance of the graduates of media faculties will remain as long as those graduates do not get sufficient training.

Mansour did not only review and discuss the crisis, but also cited proposals pertaining to amending the study plans and skills that should be covered by the academic institutions to enable their graduates to join the media institutions as qualified cadres, both academically and professionally.

In the sixth section, the report reviewed the status of media freedoms in Jordan as cited in local, Arab, and international reports.



Analytical Reading Survey the Media Freedom Status

Introduction:

Around 91.1 percent of media people in Jordan have expressed their dissatisfaction with the status of media freedoms.

An opinion poll conducted by the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists has revealed that an overwhelming majority believes that media freedoms have not achieved a great deal of progress. 50.4 percent said that the media freedom in 2006 was low or acceptable while only 3.2 percent said that it was excellent.

The results of the poll show an increase in dissatisfaction with the freedom of the media in 2006 compared to 2005. In 2005, some 84 percent expressed their dissatisfaction with the media freedom while in 2006 this percentage rose to 91.1 percent. In addition, 3.3 percent said the freedom of the media was excellent in 2005 while 3.2 percent held the same opinion in 2006.

It seems that the optimism which prevailed in media circles in 2005 has relatively receded although the indicators remained almost close.

The opinion poll was conducted by the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists in the period 15th May, 2007 to 21st May, 2007 on a class sample of 250 journalists. The sample included (195) of the Press Association members until 31 December 2006. The records of the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists were used for (55) media people from outside the Press Association.

The position on the impact of media legislations remained as it is as 61.6 percent said that they restrict the freedom of the media and 94.2 percent said that the Publications and Publishing Law and the Penal Code are the most restrictive of and the most dangerous to press freedoms.

This year's poll sought to overcome the problems which faced the team that conducted the previous poll, especially when it comes to open questions. Analysis showed that there

were many ambiguous answers. Accordingly, these questions were replaced with multiple-answer questions.

Some questions which were not expected to draw accurate answers, like those on the censorship on the Internet and the press, were replaced with a panel discussion of media people to shed light on these aspects.

In sum, it can be said that the media reform initiatives have not produced results either because they were frozen, like the recommendations of the National Agenda Committee on the media, or because of the ongoing discussions on legislations which have only increased frustration.

Laws and Legislation:

The majority of media people still believe that laws and legislations restrict the freedom of the media. 61.6 percent said that these laws and legislations are a constraint while 15.4 percent said that they contributed to the progress of freedoms. The percentage of those who believed that these laws had no impact rose to 26 percent compared to 19.3 percent in 2005.

The discussions which took place at the Parliament over the publications and publishing law certainly cast their shadow on journalists' stands in the poll.

This year's poll managed to present more accurate statistical indicators regarding the laws which are considered the most restricting of media freedoms. As for the most harmful and dangerous laws, 94.2 percent said that these are the publications and publishing law and the Penal Code, 83.8 percent said that it is the State Security Court Law, 67.5 percent said it was the law on protecting the secrets and documents of the state, 60.4 percent said it was the law on violating the sanctity of courts, 51.9 percent said it was the law on audiovisual media, 42.9 percent said it was the law on the Press Association, and 1.3 percent said that it was the anti-terrorism law. 154 media persons answered this question.

The new thing in the 2006 poll is that it gave those polled multiple choices of the laws that have the biggest impact on the freedom of the media. In the 2005 poll, the media people were asked to determine the most restrictive laws. The results were inaccurate as the media people still have limited awareness of the laws.

The percentage of those who believed that the law of the Press Association imposed constraints rose to 42.9 percent compared to 20.7 percent in 2005. This reflects a growth in opposition after the increase in the size and power of the independent and private media.

Some 98.7 percent said that the legal text which is the most restrictive of the freedom of media was that on detaining journalists against the backdrop of publications cases in the Criminal Procedures Law and the State Security Court law. 95.5 percent said that the most restrictive legal text was that on imprisoning journalists according to the Penal Code. 87.7 percent said that high fines stipulated in the publications law restrict the freedom of media, and the same percentage said forcing the journalist to attend trial procedures restricts the freedom of media.

The interesting thing is that 84.4 percent believe that the penalties imposed on exchanging information according to the law on the state documents and secrets are a big constraint. 66.2 percent said that banning journalists who are not members of the Press Association from working as journalists was another constraint.

46.1 percent said that the prior license for issuing a newspaper was another constraint. 44.2 percent said that obligating the specialized publication to stick to its specialty was another constrain on the freedom of media.

This year's poll shows there is awareness of the problem of high fines after the surge in civil compensation lawsuits filed against journalists. There is also awareness of the penalties imposed on the exchange of information in light of the increasing talk about the law on the right to access to information, as well as of the problems facing the private media, especially if its staff are not members of the Association.

The Higher Media Council:

The percentage of those who think that the Higher Media Council has no impact on the freedom of media rose to 78 percent compared to 76 percent in 2005 and 58.3 percent in 2004.

This requires the administration of the Council to think about new means and mechanisms to augment the confidence of media people in its role and influence. This drop also shows that it must restudy its policies. 12.5 percent said that the Council plays a role in supporting the freedom of media compared to 16.7 percent in 2005 and 24 percent in 2004. 5.2 percent believe that the Council contributes to the regression in media freedom.

On the reasons that made the Council have no influence on the freedom of media, 87.2 percent believe that its role in developing legislations is limited, 80.5 percent believe that it has no executive authorities, 65.5 percent think that the government marginalized its role, 65.1 percent said that its weakness stemmed from its desire to appease all sides, 61 percent believe that it does not defend journalists, 60 percent think that it did not achieve the goals for the sake of which it was established, 44.7 percent said that he Council is run

in a bureaucratic manner and that it has no qualified staff, and 1 percent said that it does not cooperate with the Press Association and journalists.

Thirty eight journalists, 15.2 percent, believed that the Council supports the freedom of media. 97.4 percent of these journalists said that it supports freedoms through its positive role in endorsing legislations that support the freedom of media, 92.1 percent said that it does so through holding training workshops to develop the profession, and 73.7 percent said that it is independent from the government and monitors the ethics of media.

Thirteen media persons, 5.2 percent, said that the Council contributed to the regression of the freedom. 100 percent of them said that the Council is not independent from the government, that it is used to peddle the government's policies, and that its role is consultative and that its decisions are not adopted. 76.9 percent of them said that it contributed to fragmenting the media's point of reference, that it undermined the role of the Press Association, and that it has no role in resolving conflicts and monitoring ethics. 53.6 percent said that its training activities are unsuccessful and do not develop the profession and 30.8 percent said that the Council took the role and place of the Ministry of Information.

The results of the poll show that the media people are frustrated with the status of the Council. Jordan had hoped to send clear signals that it supports the freedom of media through forming this Council. These results impose challenges to the Council's new administration.

Canceling the Ministry of Information:

The government decision to cancel the Ministry of Information was given little attention by the journalists. Thus far, 56.4 percent of the media people believe that canceling the ministry has no impact on the freedom of the media. The percentage of those who believe that canceling the ministry contributed to the regression in the freedom of the media rose to 28.4 percent while 15.2 percent said that canceling the ministry led to progress in the freedom of media.

The 2005 poll showed that 69.3 percent thought the canceling the ministry would not have any impact, while the percentage was 62.5 percent in 2004. In 2005, 19.3 percent thought the decision contributed to regression in the freedom of media while the percentage was 18.8 percent in 2004. 11.3 percent thought that canceling the ministry contributed to supporting the freedom of media in 2005 compared to 14.6 percent in 2004.

The results of the poll raise an important question about the reasons that make more than half the journalists see no impact for canceling the ministry, a step which the government had taken to support the independence and freedom of the media, while only 15.2 percent of the media people believe so.

The Jordanian Press Association:

There has been no noteworthy change in the media people's vision of the role of the Association although there has been little improvement. The majority of journalists are not satisfied with the Association's performance in terms of defending journalists. 64.8 percent of the journalists said that its role ranges from medium, to weak, to ineffective at all.

On the level of developing the professional aspects, 80.8 percent described its role as moderately effective, weak, or completely ineffective.

34 percent said that the Association plays an effective role in defending freedoms compared to 31.3 percent in 2005. On the professional aspect, 16.8 percent said that it is highly effective compared to 16 percent in 2005.

The slight progress in the Association's role could be attributed to its efforts against the publications and publishing law. The percentage did not change radically, however, as the majority of journalists are not satisfied and expect it to play a more effective role and take more initiatives that could produce tangible results.

Jordan Information Center:

Clearly, the opinion poll shows a clear fact that new media entities are not appealing for journalists. 71.6 percent said that the Jordan Information Center does not contribute to supporting the freedom of media, 20.8 percent said that it contributed to the progress of freedom of media, and 4.4 percent said that it contributed to the regression of freedom.

The percentage of those who believe that the Center has no influence has risen after it was 68.7 percent in 2005. The percentage of those who think that the Center supports the freedom of media also increased slightly after it was 22 percent in 2005. The percentage of those who thought that it contributed to the regression of freedoms dwindled slightly after it was 22 percent in 2005.

Establishing Television and Radio Stations:

The issue of establishing radio and television stations remains the most representative of the freedom of media in Jordan. 61.6 percent believe that establishing radio and television stations contributes to the progress of the freedom of media. This support has dwindled as the percentage was 74 percent in 2005. This shows there is a 13 percent retreat in this indicator.

It can be said that the great progress in the audiovisual media was restricted to launching a number of FM radios which are mainly based in Amman and the majority of which are music and entertainment channels. This did not reflect positively on the status of freedoms.

37.6 percent said that establishing radio and television stations did not contribute to developing the freedom of media.

68.8 percent of the media people said that establishing the Audiovisual Media Commission did not have an impact on the freedom of media compared to 58.7 percent in 2005. 22.8 percent said that establishing the Commission contributed to progress in the freedom of media and 2.8 percent said that it contributed to regression in this freedom.

Detention:

The media people are clearly dissatisfied with the freedom of media. Violations have not decreased significantly. The poll showed that 98 percent of journalists were not detained in 2006 and 2 percent only said that they were detained. 1.3 percent said that there were detained in 2005 which means a 0.7 percent increase. This percentage is similar to that in 2004.

80 percent of those detained said that the side which detained them was civil prosecution while 20 percent said that they were detained at the orders of the General Intelligence.

Five out of a sample of 250 media persons were detained in 2006.

Asked about the reasons for their detention, 40 percent said that they were detained against the background of publications and publishing cases, 20 percent said that the measures were taken against the backdrop of publishing reports in newspapers, 20 percent said that the detention was done according to the desire of the sides that detained them to be informed in advance, and 20 percent refused to answer.

Despite the limited number of detention cases, they are considered a violation and restriction of the freedom of media and some of them take place outside the legal channels.

If we exclude the journalists from official and semi-official media, who are subject to prior censorship on what they write and say, the detention percentage seems high.

Trial:

94 percent of the media people said that they were not tried against the backdrop of media-related cases since 2006 while 6 percent said that they stood trial. Fifteen media persons who stood trial said that various sides were behind their prosecution. 53.3 percent said that lawsuits were filed against them by ordinary citizens, 40 percent said they were sued by private companies, 20 percent said they were sued by government officials, 13.3 percent said they were sued by the Publications and Publishing Department, 6.7 percent said that they were sued by security agencies, and another 6.7 percent said they were sued by semi-official sides.

It is worth mentioning that the Television and Radio Corporation and the News Agency are government media institutions and they are rarely sued for media-related issues.

Thus, if we exclude the government media from the sample, then the percentage of those who stood trial will go up. Had the poll been restricted to weekly newspapers, the percentage would increase significantly.

When asked about the charges brought against them, 66.7 percent of the media persons who were prosecuted said that the charges were slander and libel, 26.7 said the charges were failure to adhere to objectivity, 13.3 percent said that the charges were not publishing the truth and violating the values of the Arab and Islamic nation, 6.7 percent said the charges were influencing judicial procedures, 6.7 percent said the charges were insulting an official or government agency and disturbing relations with an Arab or foreign country, and 6.7 percent said the charges were violating the press code of honor.

The poll showed that a verdict was issued against 33.3 percent of those who stood trial, a total of 15 media persons, while the cases of 66.7 percent were still being looked by courts. The percentage of those against whom a verdict was issued was 25 percent in 2005.

Asked about the verdicts issued against them, the five media persons' answers were as follows:

- Three-month imprisonment sentence which was appealed.
- A one-month sentence and a 7.500-dinar fine.
- A 1,600-dinar fine.
- Three-month sentence and 700-dinar fine.
- No answer.

20 percent of the journalists who stood trial said that a final sentence was issued against them while 80 percent said that the verdicts issued against them were not final and could be appealed.

In 2005, the percentage of those against whom final verdicts were issued was 2 percent. The final verdicts handed down to three journalists were as follows:

- A 1,000-dinar fine.
- Non-responsibility.

-- Innocence.

Pressure and Harassment:

27.2 percent said that journalists in Jordan are still exposed to harassment and pressure compared to 30 percent in 2005 and 40.6 percent in 2004.

The basic problem with regard to pressure and harassment is the definition of a violation and interference in the freedom of media. Thus, the team which prepared the report put an index to define the term "violation."¹

58.8 percent of the media people said that the most prominent form of pressure to which they were exposed was withholding information. The journalists' increasing awareness of their right to have access to information -- which coincided with talk about the draft law on guaranteeing the right to access to information -- has augmented the media people's desire to talk about the withholding of information.

51.5 percent said that the second type of pressure was the chief editors' or owners' pressure and interference. This raises a question for those concerned with freedom: Is the interference of the chief editor considered a violation? Chief editors consider this a professional right acknowledged in all the world. They also say that the legal responsibility requires them to intervene and to have a say as the law does not absolve them of responsibility. The third type of pressure is threat as 50 percent said they were exposed to such pressure, followed by deleting some reports and articles with 45.6 percent, and prior censorship with 33.8 percent.

It should be noted that prior censorship is not allowed by Jordanian laws under any circumstances. However, it is the most common violation which the chief editors of weeklies speak about and which was emphasized by the media experts at the discussion panel on media freedoms in 2006.²

The opinion poll shows the current percentages regarding pressure and interference:

- Banning from coverage 30.9 percent
- Banning from writing 22.1 percent
- Administrative detention 22.1 percent
- Summoning by security agencies 13.2 percent
- Investigation by security agencies 11.8 percent
- Banning satellite or television transmission 8.8 percent

¹ See the section on violations.

² Discussion panel of media experts.

- Post-printing confiscation 5.9 percent
- Arbitrary dismissal 4.4 percent
- Arrest 2.9 percent
- Assault by beating 1.5 percent
- Transfer from place of work 1.5 percent
- Canceling subscription in newspapers 1.5 percent

The list of interference and pressure reveals various details and forms. It seems that security inference has receded although the percentage of summoning and investigation by security agencies is still high.

When instances of interference are scrutinized, media people disclose that 61.8 percent of the harassment cases were initiated by influential figures while 47.1 percent attributed such acts to ministers and government officials.

25 percent acknowledge that the security agencies stand behind these harassments and pressures while the advertising companies account for 14.7 percent of them.

The striking thing that media people noted is that parties have a share of 8.8 percent of these acts of interference and the tribal chieftains with a similar percentage. This year the Lower House accounts for 5.9 percent of these acts in the aftermath of the altercations that erupted with journalists, followed by the professional unions with a share standing at 5.9 percent and unidentified persons with a share of 1.5 percent.

In short, the abuse of journalists is not only initiated by the government and its security agencies. Rather, Jordan might be notorious for the fact that most acts of interference are attributed to influential figures, which is an over-generalization that probably includes statesmen, former ministers, politicians, and all the political class in the country. It is equally striking that democratic institutions, such as the political parties, professional unions, and the Parliament, joined hands with those who apply pressures. This emphasizes that boosting freedoms and changing their current stature requires a society-wide effort, and not only decisions by government and security agencies, and a ground that nurtures the freedom of media.

In the same context, 24 percent of the journalists assert that their reports and articles were banned from publication in 2006.

More interestingly, for the first time 93.3 percent of the respondents to this question, totaling 60 journalists, attributed this ban to reports and articles that were deemed offensive to religions.

The journalists also revealed that the desk editors and chief editors account for 75 percent of the cases of banning publication. 55 percent, however, attributed the ban of publication to their critical writings and articles on the government, 38.3 percent said their writings were banned from publication because they included remarks that were deemed critical of institutions and companies that have joint interests with the newspaper, and 18.3 percent attributed the ban on their writings to their criticism of other countries.

13.3 percent of the journalists said that their articles were banned because they criticized the Parliament, while 11.7 percent said their writings were banned because of their criticism of the security agencies.

Only 5 percent of the polled journalists believed that their writings were banned as they were deemed contradictory with the norms and traditions.

Government's Interference:

Government's interference in the media did not go down despite all promises and statements that have been made. Thus far, 60.8 percent of the journalists believed that it interferes in the affairs and coverage of the media. Only 36.6 percent of them oppose that, while 2.8 percent said they don't know, and 0.9 percent refused to answer this question.

This situation does not seem to be different from the past year when 61.3 percent of the polled journalists said that the government interferes in the media against 59.4 percent in 2004.

These figures reveal the extent of interference at a time when His Majesty King Abdallah II has stressed that the sky is the limit of media freedom, which makes the government responsible for halting these violations as soon as possible so that it can be responsive to his majesty's calls for reform and media freedom.

92.8 percent of the polled journalists said that the government interferes in the media because it wants to shape the public opinion in a manner that would be harmonious with its policies and stands. 88.8 percent believed that the governments interferes in the media in order to keep it under its control, while 80.3 percent said it does that because some media outlets are not independent and are affiliated with it.

The Television and Radio Freedom

The survey also reveals that 89.2 percent of the journalists are not satisfied with the freedom of the radio and television stations. 33.2 percent described the freedom margin in the TV and radio stations as moderate, 27.6 percent said it is meager, and 28.4 percent said that they do not enjoy any margin of freedom at all. Only 1.6 percent said they don't

know and 0.4 percent refused to answer the question. By contrast, 8.8 percent said the official radio and television stations in Jordan have a large margin of freedom.

A comparison between the surveys conducted in 2006 and 2005 shows that the figures are almost identical. In 2005, 28.7 percent said they do not enjoy any margin of freedom at all, 31.3 percent said they enjoy a small margin of freedom, 33.3 percent believed that they have a moderate level of freedom, and only 6 percent said they have a large margin of freedom.

Reading the answers given by 105 journalists who believed that the official radio and television stations enjoy a large or moderate margin of freedom and who represented 42 percent of the total number of polled journalists, the survey shows that 76.2 percent believed that the two outlets are independent and belong to the state with all its shades. 70.5 percent said the two outlets are free because they present different viewpoints. 59 percent believed that the radio and television stations are not subject to the monopoly of the advertising companies, while 51.4 percent answered so because they believe that the two sources are professional run.

Ironically enough, some journalists who described the margin of freedom in the radio and television stations as moderate or large provided negative answers that do not go in line with their voting and selection.

56 percent of the polled journalists believed that the level of freedom in the radio and television corporations is low or non-existent. 93.6 percent of those 56 journalists said so because, according to them, the two sources are not independent and are affiliated with the government.

80 percent said that government and security officials interfere in their affairs and dictate their policies on them. 71.4 percent said the two sources don't have any level of freedom because they are not being run in a professional manner, while 59.3 percent said the radio and television corporations do not allow non-official viewpoints to be aired through them.

Jordan News Agency:

The Jordan News Agency is not in a better position than the Radio and Television Corporation. Most journalists are not satisfied with the media freedom at the official news agency. 86.4 percent of the polled journalists said the news agency does not enjoy a moderate or even a low level of freedom or does not enjoy any level of freedom at all.

10.4 percent believed that the Jordan News Agency does enjoy a high level of freedom, while 2.8 percent said they don't know and 0.4 percent refused to answer this question.

The results of the 2005 survey showed that 12 percent believed that it enjoys a large margin of freedom, 12.3 percent said that it does not enjoy any level of freedom at all, while 26 percent said it enjoys a mall margin of freedom and 38.7 percent said it enjoys a moderate level of freedom.

Among the reasons provided by 38.7 percent of the polled journalists who said that the Jordan News Agency enjoys a large or a moderate level of freedom are the following:

- 87.3 percent said it is independent because it belongs to the state with all its shades.
- 73.7 percent said it is being run in a professional manner.
- 66.9 percent said it presents varying viewpoints.
- 66.9 percent said it is not subject to the monopoly of advertising companies.

By contrast, 49.2 percent of the polled journalists who believed that the Jordan News Agency has little or no freedom at all gave the following reasons:

- 90.3 said it is not independent and belongs to the government.
- 79 percent said government and security officials interfere in its affairs and dictate their policies on it.
- 66.1 percent said it does report the non-official viewpoints.
- 58.1 percent said it is being run in an unprofessional manner.



I. Violations of Media Freedoms in 2006 (Documentation)

Introduction:

The Problem of Monitoring Violations...Between Definition and Disclosure

We cannot talk about the status of media freedoms in Jordan without discussing violations against journalists and media institutions. This was the biggest challenge over the past years. The question was: How can we do that? How can we make sure that what we have documented represents the real status of the media and that we have not overlooked anything?

The problem of monitoring violations was deeper than the issue of documentation as it raises the more important question: What violations should we monitor and how can we do that if there is not agreement on defining concepts?

For example, should we include lawsuits filed against journalists in the violations or is filing lawsuits part of human rights in a country where law is enforced?

The controversy is still going on and there is confusion between abstract concepts and implementation on the ground.

In order to reach solutions and a methodology for this report, we created an index in a bid to define violations. Based on that, we embarked on our mission of monitoring and documenting violations.

The violations monitored by the report's team of authors do not represent the full picture. The problem lies in the fact that the majority of media people in Jordan do not disclose the violations to which they are subjected. Only a few cases became public opinion cases.

The stories of prior censorship of the weeklies in particular and banning satellite channels from broadcasting their reports are heard on a daily basis from chief editors and correspondents. However, one cannot document such cases either because these people do not want to make bigger problems or because censorship orders are invisible and thus

cannot be proved. Such orders are made under the pretext of technical justifications and not government or security considerations.

Suffice it to say that Al-Majd Chief Editor Fahd al-Rimawi told us that "all issues of his newspaper were subject to prior censorship."

The other dimension is that the efforts exerted by civil society institutions concerned with monitoring human rights violations are still "embryonic". Thus, the media people do not feel the necessity of resorting to such institutions to protect them from bigger and more violations.

Another issue that has not been settled yet is the difference between prior censorship as a violation of freedom and the chief editor's exercise of his right to professional censorship.

Much can be said in this regard. Journalists speak about prior censorship exercised by the chief editors in response to pressure exerted by government or security agencies, advertisers, and personal interests. These pressures, however, are exerted under the cover of professional censorship. Chief editors usually deny this and consider what they are doing a professional thing as they, in the final analysis, are responsible in front of the law.

In this section, we monitored 31 violations. We were keen to listen to the testimonies of the media persons who were subjected to violations. Following are the details:

Overview:

Year 2006 witnessed many violations, including beating, assaulting, and summoning journalists; banning articles; confiscating journalists' equipment; imposing fines; detaining and threatening journalists; and other practices which curbed the freedom of media people. The same year also witnessed a debate over the publications and publishing law between the media people on one hand and the Parliament and government on the other. The debate focused on the article pertaining to the detention and imprisonment of journalists who commit crimes according to the publications and publishing law and the referring of journalists to justice and penal councils. The same year also witnessed a marked progress in issuing newspapers and launching new Jordanian radios and satellite channels.

Observers believe that the status of legislations is the main reason for violations, especially with regard to the right to access to information, in the absence of specific criteria regarding the protection of state secrets and documents. Others believe that the weakness of the professional status of journalism is one of the main reasons for curbing freedoms.

Documentation

January:**-- Ban on Publishing:**

-- 15 January 2006: The weekly Al-Wihdah newspaper said in its issue on 15 January 2007 that some employees at the Press Office at the Prime Ministry asked a number of chief editors not to publish some phrases and terms used by His Excellency Prime Minister Ma'rouf al-Bakhit during his address to students staging a sit-in at Mu'tah University.

-- Threat:

23 January 2006: Journalist Nasir Shadid received a number of threat calls from the secretary general of the Ministry of Health and the leader of the Jordanian Veterinarians Union after a television channel aired a report on bird flue. In a statement he sent to the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists, he said that they threatened to deprive him from his source of income.

-- Detention:

26 January 2006: The Jordanian authorities arrested the Chief Editor of Al-Mihwar weekly newspaper Hashim al-Khalidi and the Chief Editor of weekly Shihan Jihad al-Mumani against the backdrop of their republishing of cartoons mocking Prophet Mohammad on 25 January 2005.

February:**Referral to Penal Council and Dismissal From Newspaper:**

-- 3 February 2006: The Press Association's Council unanimously decided to refer the Responsible Chief Editor of the weekly Shihan newspaper to a penal council against the backdrop of his newspaper's republishing of anti-Prophet Mohammad cartoon in its issue, which was withdrawn from all newsstands on 2 February. The cartoons were originally published in a Danish newspaper.

The "Arab Printers" Company, which owns Shihan newspaper, shortly dismissed Al-Mumani, withdrew all copies of the newspaper, and threatened to take strict measures against all those involved in the issue. In an apology letter, Al-Mumani said that he did not mean insult when he republished the cartoons as part of an article titled "Islamic uprising against the Danish Insult to Islam."

The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists, CDFJ, issued a statement on 5 February 2006 in which it stressed its rejection of the detention of Jihad Al-Mumani, former

chief editor of Shihan weekly. The CDFJ said that "it opposes detention as a punishment which the journalists have been struggling for years to abolish because it imposes constraints on their work and contradicts with the international standards of the freedom of media."

The CDFJ said that addressing professional mistakes cannot be done through imprisoning journalists, but rather through developing the professional performance and asserting the importance of the professional and moral code of conduct. It clarified that it opposes the mass media's insult to religious beliefs, because such insults sow sedition and harm people's feelings.

-- Detention:

6 February 2006: Amman Public Prosecutor Sabr al-Rawashdah ordered the detention of journalists Al-Mumani and Al-Khalidi once again. Al-Khalidi was sent to Juweidah Prison after which he was taken to Al-Bashir Hospital due to his bad health condition. The arrest warrant was issued against Al-Mumani while he was receiving treatment at the Arab Center Hospital.

Summoning:

Colleague Ziyad al-Hur was summoned on charges of slander and libel in his article titled: "Why O Badran?" The article contained 10 questions to the prime minister. He was summoned by the security agencies but he was not detained.

March:

-- Pressure:

21 March 2006: The Head of the Freedoms Committee at the Press Association Ghalib Alawin tendered his resignation in protest against what he considered a marginalization of the Press Association Council of the committee's role. Alawin said that the role of the Freedoms Committee was weak. He criticized the absence of the role of the press in defending the rights of journalists. He described the managements of some newspapers as slaughterhouses of journalists' freedoms as they violate their moral and material rights.

-- Detention:

The State Security Court Orders Detention of Colleague Sakhr Abu-Anza

-- 26 March 2006: The State Security Court ordered the detention of colleague Sakhr Abu-Anza, publisher of Al-Shahid newspaper, at Juweidah Prison. The CDFJ learned that the head of the Press Association Salih al-Armouti was with colleague Abu-Anza when he was

detained. Journalists at Al-Shahid newspaper said that what happened to the owner of their newspaper was politically motivated in view of the newspaper's stands. They noted that there were attempt to give a legal and financial cover to the case.

April:**-- Detention and Arrest:**

13 April 2006: The Abu Dhabi channel's team was detained for one hour at Qafqafa Prison during its coverage of the incidents carried out by Islamist prisoners according to a letter sent by Nasir Shadid, the channel's correspondent in Amman, to the CDFJ.

Detention:

-- 14 April 2006: Izzeddine Ibrahim, editor at Al-Sabil newspaper, was detained after his return from a visit to Damascus during which he conducted a press interview with Khalid Mish'al, head of Hamas Movement's Political Bureau, in Damascus, at the request of the Al-Sabil newspaper.

18 April 2006: The CDFJ issued a statement in which it demanded the immediate release of colleague Ibrahim. The statement said "the detention of colleague Ibrahim contradicts with the government's pledges to maintain the freedom of media and stop exerting pressure on journalists."

Assault:

14 April 2006: Journalist Tamir al-Simadi was assaulted and detained for several hours by the security men during his coverage of a popular festival in Ajloun Governorate upon a request from Al-Sabil newspaper.

May:**Detention:**

8 May 2006: Fahd al-Rimawi sent a letter to the head and member of Higher Information Council and the head and members of the Press Association Council. Copies of the letter were sent to the National Human Rights Center and the Jordanian Bar Association, the CDFJ, and the Freedoms Committee. In the letter, Al-Rimawi said: "For the sake of documentation and evaluation of the level of press freedoms at this stage, I would like to note that I was summoned to the General Intelligence Department at 12 noon on 8 May 2006. I left at 0830 in the evening. I remained during the exhausting detention period without food, medicine, cigarettes, and was not allowed to call my family or the newspaper.

June:

Banning of Articles:

2 June 2006: Five articles written by colleague Omar Kullab were banned from publishing in Al-Anbat newspaper between May and June. Government sides called him to ask him not to publish another article which he refused to reveal. Another article by Kullab on the government account of the Hamas weapons case was also banned.

Detention:

8 June 2006: The security agencies arrested Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel's team during its coverage of reactions to the death of Abu-Mous'ab Al-Zarqawi. The cellular telephones and technical equipment were seized. This took place during a live interview with Abu-Qudama, Al-Zarqawi's brother-in-law, in Al-Zarqa city.

On 8 June 2006, the CDFJ issued a statement in which it expressed its condemnation of the security agencies' arrest of Yasir Abu-Hilalah. It also criticized the arrest of Al-Jazeera's team as a violation of the freedom of media which harm's Jordan's democratic picture and contradicts with the policy of media openness, reform, and democracy which the government seeks to pursue. The CDFJ said that the arrest of journalists contradicts with the frequent royal calls for not detaining journalists while carrying out their duty.

Confiscation of Newspaper:

20 June 2006: Al-Sabil newspaper accused unknown sides of buying all copies of issue number 648 of the newspaper from main centers in Amman and other governorates on 20 June 2006.

Al-Sabil, which issued a new edition of the issue that was withdrawn, issued a press release in which it noted that unknown sides bought all issues of the newspaper. It expressed astonishment at what it described as "an unacceptable act which tried to give legality to an illegal measure." It said that what happened was a "confiscation of the newspaper to prevent the citizens from knowing the other opinion regarding the recent crisis between the government and the Islamic movement."

July:

Filming Ban:

7 July 2006: Abu Dhabi Channel was banned from filming a rally held at the University of Jordan Mosque by the Islamic trend on 7 July 2006. The cameramen of Abu Dhabi and

Al-Jazeera channels were detained at a security center. The tapes were confiscated and the team was attacked with sticks.

Detention:

8 July 2006: Al-Jazeera cameraman Ali Abu-Hilalah, Abu Dhabi Channel's cameraman Ahmad Udeibat, journalist Tamir al-Simadi from Al-Sabil newspaper, and journalist Najib Abu-Mahfouz from the Muslim Brotherhood's Media Office were all detained at Northern Amman Security Center following the mass rally held by the Muslim Brotherhood in the capital on Friday. Al-Simadi's camera, mobile phone, and audio recorder were confiscated. He was released on bail on the same day.

The CDFJ issued a statement on 8 July 2006 in which it expressed its deep dismay at the detention, imprisonment, and beating of journalists and confiscation of their equipment.

The CDFJ called on the government to give sufficient guarantees that journalists will not be detained again in harmony with His Majesty King Abdallah II's call for making the sky the ceiling of the freedom of the press.

Detention:

10 July 2006: Journalist Ziyad al-Simadi from the Islamic Al-Sabil newspaper was insulted, beaten up, and detained by the security men. Al-Simadi's mobile phone and the cameras of some journalists were confiscated during their coverage of a speech rally held by the Islamic movement after Friday prayers inside the University of Jordan Mosque in protest against Israeli massacres in the Gaza Strip. The Press Association and the CDFJ asked the Public Security to investigate the incident.

August:**Confiscation of Equipment:**

4 August 2006: The security agencies confiscated a tape filmed by Abu Dhabi channel while security men were attacking activists who tried to demonstrate outside Al-Kaluti Mosque in Al-Rabiya, according to Abu Dhabi correspondent.

Pressure:

20 August 2006: The government filed a lawsuit against the Al-I'lam Al-Badil weekly newspaper to close it. The Publications Department accused the newspaper of violating its licensing conditions. The government argued that the newspaper was licensed as a youth newspaper but that it published topics outside its specialization.

October:**Withholding Information:**

27 October 2006: The Moral Guidance Directorate at the Armed Forces issued a circular to newspapers to stop publishing advertisements congratulating military personnel in their military capacity on promotion, marriage, or obtaining of certificates. In official letters, the Moral Guidance Directorate asked that this information not be published in newspapers.

Summoning:**28 October 2006:**

Journalist Shakir al-Jawhari posted an article on the Internet website of Al-Haqa'iq newspaper. After that, he received several threats by telephone. He was summoned by the security agencies after 20 days.

December:**Threats:**

10 December 2006: Colleague Fayiz al-Ajrashi, chief editor of Al-Ikhbariya newspaper received threats that he and his newspaper will be attacked after publishing a political portrait about the Speaker of the House of Representatives Abd-al-Hadi al-Majali. The source of the threats was not known.

Penal Council:

10 December 2006: The Chief Editor of the weekly Al-Ikhbariya newspaper Fayiz al-Ajrashi was referred to the Jordanian Press Association's Penal Council on 10 December 2006 after the newspaper published an article that was considered an affront to the Publications Law and the press code of honor. Al-Ajrashi said that the article did not aim to insult anyone. The Press Association interrogated Al-Ajrashi on 16 January 2007 at its headquarters.

Assault and Beating:

11 December 2006: Deputies Miflih al-Ruheimi, Ghalib al-Zou'bi, and Hatim al-Sarayra beat up and insulted three press cameramen -- Mohammad al-Kiswani from Al-Dustour newspaper, Mohammad Al-Rafai'ah from Al-Arab al-Yawm, and Osama al-Rifa'i from Al-Ghad newspaper – on 11 December 2006 at the House of Representatives. The deputies broke the cameras and confiscated the tapes of the satellite channels which contained footage of the attack. (Al-Ghad newspaper on 11 December 2006)

The cameramen were attacked while they were filming a quarrel between deputies Abd al-Thawabiya and Mohammad al-Udwan during which the deputies exchanged insults and threw water glasses at each other. The brawl erupted after announcing the results of elections.

Deputy Hatim al-Sarayra issued a statement in which he denied participation in the attack on the cameramen.

Ban on Filming:

13 December 2006: The security guards of the University of Jordan prevented the team of Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel from interviewing students about the results of an opinion poll conducted by the Strategic Studies Center, which showed a decline in the popularity of Prime Minister Dr Ma'rouf al-Bakhit. Yasir Abu-Hilalah could not conduct interviews after the university's security guards chased the channel's team.

Harassment:

21 December 2006: Ammoun news website was hacked by a group which the website's Chief Editor Samir al-Hiyari did not name. Al-Hiyari condemned the measure, which he considered violation of the freedom of expression and journalistic work.

Ban on Filming:

25 December 2006: Al-Jazirah newspaper said in its issue on 25 December 2006 that the Secretary General of the House of Representatives Fayiz al-Shawabka instructed the media official at the House of Representatives to ask press cameramen to leave the Parliament after taking one picture and not to let them stay as usual.

Pressure:**27 December 2006:**

Colleague Omar Kullab came under pressure after writing an article in which he criticized the Civil Defense's performance during the snow storm.

List of lawsuits which were filed against journalists in 2006 and entrusted with the Media Legal Aid Unit (Melad)¹

Case Number	Description	Court	Plaintiff	Outcome
2006/431	The public prosecutor has yet to issue a bill of indictment	Public prosecutor	Atif Atmah	Still under review
2006/540	1. Libel, vilification, and slander	Amman First Instance Court	Hashim Khalidi al-	Still under review
2006/987	1. Libel, vilification, and slander 2. Violation of Articles 5 and 7 of the Press and Publication Law	Amman First Instance Court	Hashim Khalidi al-	Still under review
2006/214	1. Libel, vilification, and slander 2. Violation of Articles 5 and 7 of the Press and Publication Law 3. Publishing a false report	Amman First Instance Court	Nasir al-Zu'bi	Still under review
2006/900	1. Insulting the religious sentiments in violation of Article 278, Paragraph 1, of the Penal Code	Amman Conciliation Court	Jihad Moumani al-	The Conciliation Court's judge indicted the journalist and sentenced him to two months in prison. The Court of Appeal, however, revoked the ruling for lack of specialty and transferred the case to the specialized court
2006/2541	1. Libel and vilification 2. Violation of Articles 5 and 7 of the Press and Publication Law	Amman First Instance Court	Hashim Khalidi al-	Still under review
2006/906	1. Libel and vilification 2. Violation of Articles 5 and 7 of the Press and Publication Law	Amman First Instance Court	Nidal Mansour	Claim for personal right has been rejected

¹ Melad is founded by CDFJ and it works under its umbrella.

2006/525	1. Violation of Articles 5 and 7 of the Press and Publication Law	Amman First Instance Court	Hashim al-Khalidi	The plaintiff was indicted and fined 100 dinars; an appeal was filed and the case is still under review
2006/1500	1. Violation of Articles 26 of the Press and Publication Law	Amman First Instance Court	Omar Kullab	The Amman First Instance Court acquitted the plaintiff, Omar Kullab; an appeal was filed by the Public Prosecution and the case is still under review
2006/901	Insulting religious sentiments in violation of Article 278, Paragraph 1, of the Penal Code	Amman Conciliation Court	Hashim al-Khalidi	The Conciliation Court's judge indicted the journalist and sentenced him to two months in prison. The Court of Appeal, however, revoked the ruling for lack of specialty and transferred the case to the specialized court
39402006/	The public prosecutor has yet to issue a bill of indictment	Public prosecutor	Al-Anbat Newspaper/Jihad Abu-Baydar	Still under review
2005/666	Insulting religious sentiments in violation of Article 278, Paragraph 1, of the Penal Code	Amman First Instance Court	Al-I'lam al-Badil/Omar Kullab	The First Instance Court ruled that it is not responsible for the case; the ruling was issued in 2006



II. Violations of Media Freedoms in 2006 (Testimonies)

Keeping track with the violations is never complete without listening to the testimonies of those who their target or those who experienced them closely. Their own voices can reveal the truth and highlight the problem more eloquently. In the following pages, the recounts are narrated by those who experienced them. We apologize for those who were subject to violations, but didn't know about them or contact them.

Ahmad al-Tayyib, Al-Bayda Newspaper

The year 2006 was one of the best for journalists, thanks to the government's understanding of the role of the press and the presence of ministers who are friends to the press. As for the violation that I experienced, I received two sentences, one of them is incontestable and the other has been appealed. The first was issued against me against the backdrop of publishing a report on KOLAG program and accusing the sponsors of financial corruption. Additionally, the program is originally a replica of a Russian show. After appealing the verdict, I was fined 15 dinars a month and the one-month prison sentence was replaced with a 100-dinar fine. The second sentence I received was issued against the backdrop of publishing a press report about Salman al-Ma'aytah. We accused him of job abuse and financial fraud amounting to one million dinars. Accordingly, I was fined 7,500 dinars, and the case is still under review by the Court of Appeal. Moreover, 14 subscriptions by the ministries of education, higher education, and awqaf were revoked against the backdrop of an article that I wrote and in which I criticized the performance of these ministries.

In this regard, I did not file any complaint although these sentences affected my performance. The slow process of litigation and procrastination in courts deplete my time as a journalist. A court session takes up at least five hours of my time. Moreover, I became more inclined to select documented issues that do not arouse any sensitivities for fear of prior censorship. This is particularly important since the newspaper undergoes prior censorship by the Press and Publication Department before its issuance at the behest of the General Intelligence Department and some other figures. The latter would ask you to

write off or cancel some press materials, mostly political or political-economic. When asked to do so, I am left with no option but to delete these materials in order to continue to cater for the expenses of my newspaper and avoid being deprived of the revenue of advertisements. Ideally, only self censorship should be applied as the sole standard.

In this context, I would like to cite his majesty's speech in which he established a synergy between two fundamental issues: corruption and the right to access information. I firmly believe that this is one of the most serious issues, but the king's intention was misunderstood by many who relentlessly try to obstruct journalists' access to information.

Here lies a problem that has to do with the journalists themselves, which is the fact that many journalists do not know much about the press legislation and laws. In this regard, I would like to thank the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists for its distinguished performance as the only center that provides training for journalists.

Usamah al-Rifa'i, a photographer in Al-Ghadd Newspaper

What happened on 11 December 2006 at the Parliament's premises, when deputies assaulted cameramen and photographers, was surprising. The story began when an altercation arose among deputies, which later turned into a fistfight and insults. At this time, my colleagues -- Muhammad al-Rafay'ah and Muhammad al-Kiswani -- and I began to record this with our cameras. Deputy Mifleh al-Ruhaymi was sitting far from the scene of the fight, but when he saw the cameramen and photographers, he started yelling at them. Deputy Al-Ruhaymi drew the attention of other deputies who rushed to seize the cameras for fear of scandals. When I heard him yelling at the other deputies, I rushed to my car and replaced the card and returned to the Parliament. At that moment, our cameras were seized and we were kicked out of the Parliament's premises. We had consultations with the Press Association and the chief editors, but the story was contained when the speaker of the Lower House paid a visit to the Press Association and offered his apologies. We were promised to have our cameras fixed, but we are still waiting for that to happen.

Usamah al-Sharif, former chief editor of Al-Dustour Newspaper

The situation in 2006 was not much different from the previous years in terms of the resourcefulness of the chief editor and his/her ability to address different issues. Personally, I don't recall that I applied censorship on certain issues, but I sometimes exercised my right as a chief editor to tweak and polish some articles or soften their tones.

During the Israeli war on Lebanon, we published several articles that praised Hizballah and we had a distinguished coverage of the events at the time. Here, I would like to note that the security agencies did not interfere in the views expressed by the different writers. The Jordanian public was also sympathetic with Hizballah. Therefore, no restrictions were imposed on both writers and citizens.

As for the ban on the publication of some materials in newspapers, I would like to say that this never happened in Al-Dustour. At times, we might be criticized or alerted to something in the press material after publication, but before that nothing significant happens.

As regards the legislative framework streamlining the work of media, I can say that there is confusion because there are several media quarters in charge with no clear-cut limits delineating their activities and duties. Apparently, all these quarters have failed to act in harmony. An example in point is the new press and publication law. All these quarters have failed to positively influence the deputies to maintain the achievements, especially those made in press freedoms.

As for the imprisonment of journalists, I believe this is a setback and a punishment that dates back to the Middle Ages and one that should not be enforced in Jordan as a civilized country. All this proves that the media quarters have failed to shoulder their responsibilities.

During my term as a chief editor, I tried my utmost to keep the ceiling of freedoms as high as possible, but not infinitely, for both our colleagues who cover the events and developments and the chairpersons of the various departments. The Editorial Board used to meet twice every day: A morning meeting to discuss the latest issue of the newspaper and an evening meeting earmarked for discussing the issue that will be published the next day. During the two meetings, we exchanged views and had discussions.

During my term of service as a chief editor, none of the journalists or members of the Editorial Section who work for Al-Dustour was subject to security questioning.

As for the professional aspect, we have to admit that the press profession in Jordan is suffering greatly for many reasons:

1. Training of Journalists: There are no programs whether inside or outside the press organizations to train journalists. Many journalists are subject to questioning or violations due to their ignorance of media laws and legislation.
2. A lot has been said about the Code of Honor which has yet to be enforced. There is no designated section at the press organizations in charge of monitoring violations of the Honor Code and bringing violators to account.
3. The professional journalists have left for other positions. There is no new blood in the press organizations. Some positions at the newspapers, such as the desk editor or the chief editor, are now subject to extinction due to the lack of qualified and competent people and the presence of a gap between two generations.

During my term of service as a chief editor of Al-Dustour, I instructed that all employees use the computer and avoid using paper and pencils so that all materials would be presented in an electronic manner. In doing so, we faced many difficulties because there was no systematic approach to compel us to eradicate computer and technological illiteracy.

Finally, I would like to say that the media institutions are responsible for correcting their course. Otherwise, there will always be some party that would dictate those responsibilities if they fail to do so.

Thamir al-Smadi, Al-Sabil Newspaper

The first incident occurred during my coverage of the Islamic movement's rally in Ajloun on Prophet Muhammad's birthday. After the rally, citizens and security forces engaged in squabbles. While videotaping the incident, four police men approached me and carried me although I showed them my press badge and took me to the Police Directorate. While in their vehicle, I was beaten, kicked and insulted although I assured them that I was a journalist doing his job. While in the Ajloun Police Center, they tried to pressure me not to sign a pledge not to publish a report on the rally. They seized my cameras and deleted the pictures and seized the report sheets. I refused to sign the minutes of the interrogation. Two hours later, I was allowed to leave the center.

In another incident, I was videotaping a rally organized by the Islamic Movement at the Jordan University's mosque in support of the Palestinian people in Gaza. Upon my departure from the mosque, a police force arrested and hit me. I was also insulted and taken in their car to a Police Station that I still don't know where it was along with a group of other journalists, including Habib Abu-Mahfouz from Al-Sabil weekly, the cameraman of Abu Dhabi Satellite channel, and the cameraman of Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel. Afterwards, we were handcuffed and placed with our faces against the wall. In the beginning, they prevented us from having ablution and performing prayer. We were kept from 1300 until 0100 the next day without food or drink. Afterward, they brought a number of interrogators who asked questions which we received with resentment, like what's your brother's name? What's your mother's name? What's the color of the gate of your house? What's your political affiliation?

In the evening, we were transferred to the Amman governor who showered me with insults and threatened to beat me and advised me not to publish what happened to me. He also asked me to sign a pledge not to cover any events that are not banned by the government. I refused to do so because what I was doing was legal. So, he threatened to transfer me to Al-Juwaidah prison facility, telling me: You will remain there for one month. Nonetheless, I insisted on not signing the pledge. At 0200, I was released without signing the pledge. Until this moment, my camera is still in their custody.

In view of all these experiences, I would like to highlight the role of my media organization which took the initiative of standing by me and following my case. It filed several complaints with the legal organizations that are concerned with the freedom of journalists.

I had then to file complaints with the Public Security Directorate, the Prime Ministry, the Lower House, the Press Association, and legal organizations.

The legal organizations and the Press Association deplored what happened and called on the government to interpret the slogans it raises about the press freedom into practical terms. As for the Public Security Directorate and the Prime Ministry, I believe that they will not do anything to put a halt to these violations.

Through this report, I would like to note that the security notes that I received had a two-pronged impact on me:

First: These notes enhanced my knowledge and anxiousness to perform my press duties professionally and competently. They also made me keep track with the media laws and legislation in terms of what is allowed and what is prohibited so that I can deal with such situations.

Second: I was disappointed with all the slogans that have repeatedly been raised by the government on respecting journalists' freedom and rights the so-called the fourth estate.

Jihad Abu-Baidar, chief editor of Al-Anbat Newspaper:

In 2006, we were exposed to violations from several sides, led by the Media Office at the Royal Court. Al-Anbat newspaper was not allowed to escort His Majesty the King in foreign official visits in which the chief editor of other dailies took part. In addition, as chief editor of Al-Anbat newspaper, I was excluded from His Majesty the King's meeting with the chief editors of other dailies. No convincing reasons were given. The newspaper's columnists were also excluded from similar meetings without any reason.

We also faced several problems. One of the problems was that deputies Fawwaz al-Zu'bi, Ghalib al-Zu'bi, and Hashim al-Dabbas filed a lawsuit against us on charges of insulting the House of Representatives. This came against the backdrop of the newspaper's publishing in its back page of a picture of dog cooking with the following comment: "I cook better than the deputies do." The deputies considered the picture an insult to them. I was summoned by the public prosecutor and I was interrogated. The Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists assigned lawyers to defend me.

The speaker of the House of Representatives strongly protested against the newspaper's banner headline after the attack on journalists inside the parliament. The banner headline

was: "Bullying in Parliament." The speaker considered the banner headline an insult to the House. He expressed his protest to the Press Association's Council.

Colleague Dr Roula Al-Huroub was sharply criticized by the General Intelligence Department for writing a number of articles in which, the department said, she referred in one way or another to security agencies which it did not specify.

The newspaper faced a fierce onslaught from various sides, which led to depriving the newspaper from commercials. It is believed that this was done on purpose. This impacted on the nature of work and the psychological and material conditions. Lack of advertisements and subscriptions led to reducing financial resources, which affected all employees one way or another.

As the chief editor, I filed complaints with three sides over my exclusion by the Media Office at the Royal Court. These are: The Press Association, the Higher Media Council, and the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists. Regrettably, none of these sides took any measure to resolve this problem although I verbally complained to these sides more than once. It should be mentioned, however, that the head of the CDFJ arranged a meeting between me and the director of the Media Office at the Royal Court. The meeting, however, produced nothing worth mentioning.

Jihad al-Mumani, former chief editor of Shihan, and publisher of Al-Nashmiyah Women Magazine:

Year 2006 was a bad one as far as I am concerned. The government failed in the media and political aspects of the crisis, which was religious on the surface and purely political in reality. Thus, it resorted to repression with the aim of securing popular support with regard to the issue of anti-prophet cartoons.

I was not tried according to the Publications and Publishing Law at all. I was tried according to the Penal Code. This was the first crime committed against me as a journalist. The evidence is that the Court of Appeals overruled the two-month imprisonment verdict issued by the Conciliation Court's Judge according to the Penal Code. The court returned the case to the Court of First Instance to look into it as a case pertaining to publications after one year of suffering, sessions, deliberations with lawyers and legal consultants, and personal losses on all levels.

In order to achieve something, the government arrested me and Al-Khalidi and pressed four charges against us. In addition, we were subjected to a large deal of incitement, which materialized in grudges, death threats, and punishment according to the Islamic law. We did not only appear before courts but were also tried by the people at the behest of the government. We were exposed to the worst forms of psychological war. My family and I were exposed to danger. I received direct threats from extremists who threatened to

liquidate me and target my family. A well-known scholar even threatened to separate me from my wife on the premise of apostasy. The worst and even more dangerous thing is that the Islamic Courts agreed to look into an apostasy case against me which is still under way.

The public prosecutor brought four charges against me in three different cases, one of which was looked into by the State Security Court. As I learned, a decision was made not to try me there. The other two cases ended and I was given two-month sentence in each one of them.

All of this has led to great psychological pressure on us. On the professional level, I was dismissed and replaced. The reason is that the government is the plaintiff and the judge. I was accused of many things which reflected on my reputation and social status. Psychologically, I was done great harm after I lost my job as journalist. I was even advised by some persons who I know to seek political asylum outside Jordan.

I had to move my family to outside Jordan to keep them away from danger. I also did not send my children to school. I gave them a compulsory two-week vacation after the shameful incident on 2 February 2006.

I would like her to note the welcoming I received outside Jordan as I was invited to many symposiums and several conferences. I explained my position as I was given the chance to do so, not like here in Jordan, where I was not allowed to explain the truth to people throughout seven month. Others were given the chance to level accusations against me and to blemish my reputation. I was asked to remain silent and accept the accusations leveled against me as a criminal who could not defend himself.

I resumed writing in Al-Ra'i newspaper as of August. However, I refrain from tackling domestic issues in order not to provoke the sick people against me. Due to frustration, I steer clear of controversial issues. I can say that I have turned to a peaceful journalist until further notice.

In the previous report, I explained that the Press Association's role was bad. In this report, I say that the Association has not improved its stand toward me at all. It never defended me at any stage. In its infamous statement after the black day, it hailed the press institution which decided to dismiss and refer me to a penal council on nine counts. Thus, it outdid the government in this regard. It even issued judgments before the court and the penal council where I refused to appear. A decision was made to dismiss me from the Press Association, but the Association's Council did not ratify the decision. This came after some colleagues at the Council refused to unjustly convict me.

The Association then changed its stand a little bit and contacted me to say that I could resume my journalist career without restrictions. Nevertheless, I feel that the Association

wronged me more than any other side given that it should have defended and protected me.

The CDFJ assigned a legal advisor to defend me. The advisor did a very good job in all stages of the trial. I feel that the CDFJ adopted my case as it issued several statements on the incidents I faced since the start of the case up until today. I can only thank the CDFJ and its legal advisor for their role and I also thank all the CDFJ's staff.

Khalid Fakhidha, Chief Editor of Fact International (Al-Haqiqah al-Dawliyah) Newspaper:

I was exposed to violations when I was in Shihan newspaper in 2006. I published a report about filming a "sex" movie in a hospital. The problem was raised because I used the word "sex." Had I used another word, like "pornographic" the problem would not have been raised. The Publications and Publishing Department sent a letter to the Press Association, which sent us a letter warning us to adhere to the press code of honor. No hospital took any action.

I believe that official sides were behind the filing of the lawsuit against the newspaper. The Press Association's stand was positive. I did not resort to any official side. I did not come under pressure or receive any threats by phone or any other means. My journalistic style was not affected.

Samir al-Hiyari, Director of Ammoun Website:

Ammoun website is a new media outlet which expresses all opinions. The website reports on all negative practices in Jordan, be they practiced by public or private institutions.

Ammoun website came under an attack from an unknown source which led to denying access to it by surfers. It was hacked for a temporary period. This is the first such attack against the website.

The possibility of the website's return to its normal situation was there. We did not know what technically happened exactly and we did not accuse anybody. At the same time, however, we say that those harmed by Ammoun's reports and articles stand behind the hacking of the website, which is the first electronic newspaper in Jordan. Those harmed by Ammoun sought to destroy the website locally as those outside Jordan were able to access it easily.

Based on what happened, the Higher Media Council and the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists called for stopping such attacks. They condemned what happened in statements they issued in this regard.

The website was not hacked again. Senior officials started to understand the websites duties and mission. We became a fact on the ground after struggle. We are now invited to all activities, even those held by the Royal Court.

I was also warned that I should choose either to be a full time staffer at Al-Ra'i newspaper, in which I have been working for 25 years, or work in the nascent Ammoun website, which is co-owned by me and colleague Basil al-Ukour. The website, which does not seek to make profits, is censored only by those who manage it. The ceiling of freedom at Ammoun website is higher than the sky, while the print dailies shoulder different responsibilities and their freedom is restricted. This is despite the fact that we received threats from more than one minister and directors general of Jordanian state institution that we would be sued if we published anything about them. We also receive many threat letters through the website considering that we harm the homeland, citizen, and Jordan's beautiful face.

I believe that censorship is carried out by all sides concerned with journalistic affairs. They are not afraid of our writing about the king, the regime, or security, but rather about the mafias and persons who have hidden powers and seek to curb freedom. That is why we termed the website as the organ of the silent majority and the voice of those who have no voice.

Shakir al-Jawhari, correspondent of Al-Arab Newspaper

On 28 October 2006, I published an article on the internet site of Al-Haqa'iq newspaper. Afterwards, I received several threats over the phone. Twenty days later, I was summoned to the security agencies because of that article. However, it turned out that there was nothing serious.

As for my career as a writer, I am still banned from writing for daily newspapers. I believe that prior censorship can be exercised by the publisher or the chief editor, and it does not have to do with what might violate the Press and Publication Law but with their interests and acquaintances.

I believe that apprehension is not a punishment but a preventive measure that governments used as a punishment, especially since they know that issuing a ruling to punish a journalist because he/she annoyed the prime minister or a minister is impossible. Of course, the apprehension was not in most instances based on a judicial ruling.

Finally, I would like to say that the pressures and threats that are available in the media arena never affected my writing style or morale as a journalist.

Amir Al-Tal, chief editor of Al-Wihdah weekly

In 2006, the newspaper came under several instances of prior censorship after publishing some articles and news reports which the government believed were slanderous. This censorship can affect the quality of the newspaper's reports and the ceiling of freedom allowed to its writers, thus negatively affecting the readership of the newspaper. Sometimes, the newspaper finds itself obliged to cross out some news reports and articles which the writers would expect to find in an opposition newspaper.

Apart from this, the newspaper, being an oppositionist, is subject to harassments when it comes to subscriptions and advertisements. A lot of official institutions refrain from subscribing to or advertising in Al-Wihdah, which negatively affects its chances of survival as a newspaper that represents the pan-Arab thought and the resistance culture against the distortion of the consciousness of the Arab readers and the Jordanians in particular.

This also affects the stability of the newspaper's cadres and staff. At times, we had to dismiss some or reduce the awards to some others, which, in turn, affects their familial and social well-being.

Several institutions informed us during 2006 that they cancelled their subscriptions. As for the advertisements and announcements, the idea of advertising in an opposition newspaper such as Al-Wihdah is totally rejected. An example in point is the cessation of the subscription of the Ministry of Culture and the refusal of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Municipalities to subscribe, in addition to some other governmental institutions.

By contrast, another weekly newspaper has a total of 7,000 subscriptions although it publishes only 3,000 copies.

We, in Al-Wihdah, do not cross out any material except if it runs counter to the political line of the newspaper. This is because Al-Wihdah is an opposition newspaper that embraces a specific political line.

We filed a complaint and verbal notes to the Higher Media Council when the former director of the council, Ibrahim Izz al-Din, visited us at the newspaper. We put him in the picture of the harassments and prior censorship that we face. He expressed his astonishment at the continued prior censorship by some quarters despite his majesty's assertion that the ceiling of freedom is the sky.

In my capacity as the chief editor, I was summoned several times because of some articles and news reports published in the newspaper. We were even threatened if the newspaper continues along the same line. This is in addition to several phone calls. Moreover, some staffers in the newspaper received similar phone calls because of what it publishes. The newspaper has also been banned from attending any meetings with any official.

Abdallah al-Majali, editorial secretary of Al-Sabil newspaper

What happened to Al-Sabil weekly is unprecedented in the media arena. The newspaper 648th issue was fully withdrawn from the local markets by buying all the copies that were published in a dramatic and strange manner. In a pre-planned move, unidentified organs on 20 June 2006 toured the main distribution centers in Amman and the other governorates and bought all the copies of the newspaper's issue number 648. As a result, people could not have access to this issue.

The unidentified organs recruited dozens of buyers. We were told that the buyers are from different age groups and went to the distribution centers in the early morning. Those had prior knowledge of all major and secondary distribution centers and had even lists of the names of book stores and vendors.

We know what happened after 10:00 on the day of issuance when some owners of the distribution centers called the newspaper to report that unidentified persons bought all the copies of that issue upon their delivery to the distribution centers and before distributing them to the other stores and vendors.

In view of this, Al-Sabil printed a new issue of that same one in which it noted that unidentified persons bought the entire quantity of the newspaper's issue for that day.

Omar Kullab, chief editor of Al-I'lam al-Badil newspaper

The newspaper has come under ongoing pressures. Personally, I was subject to pressures and threats when two lawsuits were filed against the newspaper for the same charge; namely, changing the line of specialty of the newspaper in 2006. The lawsuit was filed against the newspaper's issue number 48.

First lawsuit: It was filed by the Press and Publication Department as a litigant in the lawsuit which was filed in 2005 and continued until 2006.

Second lawsuit: It was filed in April 2006 by the Press and Publication Department upon the government's request. The lawsuit was initiated by Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Marwan al-Mu'ashir upon a recommendation by Prime Minister Adnan Badran and Minister of Water Dr Mundher al-shar'.

The minister of water considered the publication of a news report about the water bill of the prime minister as a case of slander and libel against public personalities. The newspaper was acquitted, but the case was appealed by the public prosecutor. Additionally, Dr. Marwan Quteishat, director of the Press and Publication Department, told me that the department continually receives complaints against the newspaper.

In February 2006, a lawsuit was filed against the newspaper for slandering and vilifying the prime minister in a column titled "Why Are You Doing This, Badran?" The column included 10 questions addressed to the prime minister. In view of this, Ziyad al-Hurr was summoned but not apprehended.

Moreover, five articles written by me were banned from publication in Al-Anbat newspaper between May and June 2006. Among those who contacted me was a governmental agency which wanted me to desist from publishing an article which I don't want to go into its details. Another article was also banned in which I commented on the official account of the HAMAS weapons issue. In December 2006, I received pressures after publishing an article in which I criticized the performance of the Civil Defense during the blizzard.

Another lawsuit was filed against me by the Islamic Action Front, which later froze it although it was officially registered.

I received also threats by unidentified persons. Some sent me SMS messages saying that Bin Ladin will slaughter you. This is in addition to threats that I received via my home landline phone against the backdrop of a report in which I criticized the deputies who offered condolences on the death of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, which was part of a psychological warfare against me.

Those lawsuits and pressures have negatively impacted the newspaper's staff. Some of those working for the newspaper had to resign due to the lack of job security. For example, Ziyad al-Hurr, one of the newspaper's journalists, had to resign and leave the country because of these lawsuits and pressures.

As regards the impact of this on my performance as a journalist, I can say that the pressures that I faced have affected me. I have to be more watchful now lest the newspaper gets closed and to distance myself from problems and threats.

I can also say that the right to access information is being fought. The newspaper has been banned from covering the sessions of the Lower House by law because none of its staffers is a member of the Press Association.

The new law or the invisible censorship is all pressures on the press, to say nothing of the advertisements and government's subscriptions and absence of sound criteria for the equal distribution of public announcements and advertisements. I haven't filed any complained with the Press Association because the latter believes that the weekly press is not under protection and that the writers of the weekly press are not journalists by its definition.

However, the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists has been actively involved in defending journalists, both members and non-members of the Press Association. The center deputized a lawyer to defend me and others. I would also like to commend the center's training and rehabilitation sessions which help improve the profession and raise the journalistic awareness.

Fahd al-Rimawi, chief editor of Al-Majd weekly

On 8 May 2006, the prime minister was quoted in the newspaper during a dinner banquet on the issue of the smuggled weapons of the HAMAS Movement. On the same day, I was summoned to the General Intelligence Department at 1200 and could leave before 2030. I was kept there under detention throughout that period without food, medicine, or a smoking break or even a phone call with the family or the newspaper.

Although the interrogation was respectful, yet I believe that it was a flagrant violation of the Press and Publication Law and the supremacy of the civil judiciary. It was also a deplorable circumvention of the role of such institutions which are authorized to conduct that interrogation, such as the Press Association, the Higher Media Council, or the Press and Publication Department.

I was released at night following the intervention of the president of the Press Association who I informed beforehand of the GID's summoning and after pledging to publish a follow-up report that would be sent to me by the office of the media advisor of the prime minister refuting what was published earlier.

Based on this, I addressed a letter on 9 May 2006 to the director and members of the Higher Media Council, the president and members of the council of the Press Association, and a copy to the National Center of Human Rights, the Jordan Bar Association, the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, and the Freedoms Committee of the Professional Associations in which I told them what happened with me. I said in that letter: Summoning chief editors by security agencies to terrorize them and probably to humiliate them should be rejected by all those who are anxious to uphold the liberty of the press and Jordan's image both at home and abroad.

Al-Majd has for long come under prior censorship by security agencies. We always try to get done with the newspaper's press material as early as possible. We send it for printing at 05:00 and in most instances it gets delayed there. None of the newspaper's issues has escaped prior censorship.

Muhammad al-Kiswani, a photographer in Al-Dustour daily

What happened at the Lower House took us by surprise. Not only did they confiscate our cameras and assault us, but also they threatened to call the police.

They confiscated our cameras after videotaping an altercation between two deputies. They snatched the camera from around my neck and called us names by saying: You dogs leave. When we asked about our cameras, they told us to go check with the Lower House's security personnel who took out the memory cards.

I provided my account of that incident to the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists and I insisted on filing a lawsuit against the deputies who assaulted us, but my colleagues did not agree. I say that anyone who chooses to work in this domain should expect problems and assaults. That's why this incident did not leave imprints on my career.

Nasir Shadid, correspondent of Abu Dhabi Satellite Channel -- Amman

I am not used to filing complaints against the harassments or practices by government or security organs although I was banned, threatened, and even assaulted. I believe that the year 2006 was completely different from the previous years in the press domain. I saw that the level of freedoms shrinking. Following are some of the incidents that I have been through while covering some events in the country.

In the evening of 23 January 2006, I received some phone calls threatening me from the undersecretary of the Health Ministry and the president of the Veterinary Association after airing a report on bird flu in Jordan. They threatened to get me fired and to close the channel's office in Jordan.

The channel's team was also apprehended for one hour on 13 April 2006 near Qafqafa Prison while on our way to cover an incident in the aforesaid prison when Islamist inmates captured security guards. After allowing us to leave the area, we were stopped once again before arriving in Amman. We were taken to Ayn al-Basha Police Station and kept there for another hour. We could have stayed there longer had government officials and deputies not intervened to release us.

An incitement article against the channel and its correspondent was published in Al-Dustour on 22 June 2006, in which the writer said that the channel's reports "instigate hatred and squirt venom." The writer called on the UAE information minister to stop the reports that come from Amman claiming that they are biased in favor of the opposition. The writer of that article used a pseudonym, Dr Muhamamd al-Sadiq. It was a message from a security agency as evidenced in a sentence he wrote in that article, saying that "we turned a blind eye to these reports which the channel's correspondent has consistently been airing from Amman."

The channel's team was also banned by force from covering a rally organized by the Islamic Movement at the Jordan University's mosque on 7 July 2006. We were even threatened not enter the mosque. When we obeyed the orders, they arrested the channel's

cameraman for over four hours along with Al-Jazirah's cameraman in a police station although we told them that we are an Arab press team.

On 4 August 2006, a videotape for Abu Dhabi TV was confiscated and damaged under our nose in Al-Rabiyah area following the Friday sermon at al-Kaluti mosque. This happened after assaulting leftist activists who were staging a peaceful sit-in.

During the hearings of the State Security Court, media outlets, including the Abu Dhabi TV team, were banned from attending the first session in which three Islamic deputies were tried. The journalists were banned from entering the courtroom under the pretext that they don't represent Jordanian media outlets. During the second, third, and fourth sessions, were banned from attending or even standing outside the court's premises. In other words, they banned us from videotaping outside the court's premises, which could have provided an incomplete report on the trial proceedings.

Finally, the treatment of journalists has recently changed at the State Security Court. I believe that there is a lot of moodiness and subjectivity in doing so. They allow certain journalists to attend while others are banned.

Nasir Qamash, former chief editor of Al-Hilal newspaper

During 2006, Al-Hilal newspaper had to cease publication because in one article it criticized Prime Minister Ma'rouf al-Bakhit. The newspaper was allowed to re-publish only after removing that article and publishing an advertisement instead.

We also published a report indicating that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice ignored Foreign Minister Abd-al-Ilah al-Khatib during her visit to the kingdom. Although I was against publishing the report, the newspaper's publisher told me that he would bear full responsibility should the report trigger any consequences. After the issuance of the newspaper, he reneged on his promise and told me to bear responsibility for the report, which prompted me to resign from the newspaper.

There are also many other incidents of pressuring journalists into changing the content of some materials before sending the newspaper for printing, especially if such materials are opposed to government's policies and instructions. We cannot assume that there are specific criteria that govern this practice.

Hashim al-Khalidi, chief editor of Al-Mihwar newspaper

There are several ways of exercising pressure on the press. Advertisements are one manifestation of such pressures. Sometimes, weekly newspapers are fought through advertisements and this happens behind the scenes.


The newspaper never came under pressures or threats. However, two colleagues -- Ahmad Dahmous and Muhammad Badawi -- received death threats by unidentified persons via their cellular phones with private numbers. Additionally, unidentified person, with an Iraqi accent, came to Badawi's home and told his father that Muhammad needs to stop his activities.

The newspaper's subscriptions had never been terminated because we have good reputation and are committed to the laws. I also exercise self-censorship especially after the issuance of the new Press and Publication Law which includes financial penalties. I noticed that the ceiling of press freedom has shrunk dramatically and that there are some who do not want press freedom in Jordan. Besides, there are pressures to avoid writing on corruption. If the government doesn't want us to write about corruption and corrupt people, we prefer to withdraw because our battle will not then be between equals.

I earlier wrote about corruption. The result was that I had to pay 7,000 dinars and serve two months in prison. Now, I have not motive to write about any controversial issue. I have decided not to touch on the issue of corruption or any controversial issue in Al-Mihwar, and this is one way of protest. I will even write an article apologizing to the corrupt ones because they are the ones who are wanted to remain in the arena. There are calls, which I don't know their source, for muffling voices and terrorizing journalists.

I don't think that there is one single journalist who knows fully well the old and the new Press and Publication Law. I believe all of us were tricked into believing that the Senate prevented the imprisonment of journalists. This is not true. This is what I have discovered when the issue of the offensive cartoons of Prophet Muhammad was raised. Al-Mihwar was the first to discover the offensive cartoons in the Danish newspaper, four months before raising the issue. We started writing about that from a religious viewpoint with the participation of Islamists. We published the press material and received kudos for that material from different people. However, when the issue was raised at the Lower House -- after our colleague Jiahd al-Moumani re-published them, we became culprits. The Islamists who supported us and thanked us for publishing that material let us down.

This issue has left its bitter imprints on me and made me shun from defending Islam or any other cause for fear that things might turn against me and thus be placed on top of the culprits.

**Media Experts' Discussion Session
of the Status of Freedom of Media
in 2006****Summary:**

A team of media experts have asserted that censorship of mass media in Jordan is conducted not only by the government and its security agencies but also by the chief editors who cave in to various kinds of pressure, which is the most serious kind of censorship. Participants in a workshop held by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists within the framework of efforts to draft a report on media freedoms on Jordan for 2006 said that the prevailing legal and professional environment entrenches the culture of fear which haunts the writer, the chief editor, or the editor of the local page when they review the articles and press material presented to them.

The participants said that there are two types of censorship in our mass media. The first type is the prior censorship which can be documented and which is illegal and illegitimate. The second type is professional censorship, which is considered self-censorship. The second type of censorship can be divided into two subcategories. The first subcategory is the acceptable censorship the aim of which is to get acquainted with and correcting the information and materials coming to the newspaper, and the second is the censorship conducted due to security pressure or to preserve the interests of those in charge of the newspaper (e.g. the publisher, the chief editor, etc.).

The experts agreed that prior censorship usually takes place during the process of printing the newspaper, especially weeklies which do not have their own printing press.

Some participants said that prior censorship is manifested when satellite television stations film programs as they face constraints and are not allowed to take pictures of incidents freely and independently. In addition, the participants said that there is

discrimination among newspapers with regard to prior censorship as some newspapers are allowed to publish what other papers are not allowed to publish.

With regard to the issue of licensing radios and satellite channels, the participants complained of the high fees charged by the state, as well as of the numerous restrictions and long procedures needed for obtaining licenses. In addition, they said that there are conditions in the license agreement which do not encourage investors and often discourage them from starting such projects.

On the issue of the access to information, the participants cited many problems and obstacles which deny access to information to the journalist who diligently looks for facts to publish them in the mass media. Efforts to activate a network of government media spokespersons have not achieved the required success and some sides do not cooperate to ensure the success of these efforts.

The participants stressed the need to endorse the draft law on the right to access to information. Some participants said that although this step is important it is not sufficient if it is not followed by other supporting steps, like amending the law on protecting the secrets and documents of the state and the law of the State Security Court.

Some participants also focused on the issue of classifying information, noting that measures in this regard are ambiguous and are subject to the sole evaluation of the government.

Some participants noted that there is an unsystematic approach with regard to giving information to journalists and that this approach is characterized by selectivity, inaccuracy, and discrimination between foreign and local journalists. In addition, some officials use the information to set up their colleagues. They noted that this issue is wholly dependent on the relationship between the journalists and the official.

The participants also tackled the issue of the security agencies' interference in the media process. They cited several examples in this regard. They noted that such interference takes place almost daily inside the mass media and that it usually takes place through the chief editor, who is the direct channel with the editors.

The media legislations were also given great attention in the discussions which took place among the participants. The experts asserted that the legislations in Jordan are generally based on incrimination, penalties, and warning and not on freedom of the media. Some participants stressed the importance of amending laws

and legislations so that they can be in harmony with international agreements and covenants.

Some experts criticized Jordanian laws and legislations for including many loose texts which can be interpreted in several ways, which could lead the media people to violate the law.

The participants stressed the necessity of introducing journalists to legal aspects related to their profession. They highlighted the positive step taken by the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, which established a unit for extending legal assistance to media people and defending them in courts and giving them legal advice.

Evaluating the professional situation of the Jordanian media, many participants noted a significant progress in the training of journalists in which the CDFJ plays a pioneering role. They called for boosting this process.

On the negative influence on the professional status of the media, the participants mentioned a number of factors, chief among which are: Weak education level of Jordanian universities, the security mentality in dealing with journalists, the unjustifiable big number of weekly newspapers and the lack of interest on the part of many of them in training their staff which leads to their weak professional performance, and the spread of corruption in the journalistic institutions.

The three-hour workshop dealt with key questions with a view to presenting a more detailed and comprehensive portrait of the Jordanian media scene. Following is the minutes of the workshop, which was moderated by colleague Nidal Mansour, head of the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists:

First Axis:

Indicator: Prior Censorship and Self-Censorship

- How do media people feel prior censorship? - Is it practiced through the directives of the chief editor? - What is the method of prior censorship used with journalist and journalist institutions? - Which sides practice censorship? - Does the chief editor practice censorship at his own judgment or according to directives? - Does the journalist get informed that some of his articles are banned? - Do journalists practice self-censorship due to fear or threat of losing their jobs?

Omar Kullab, chief editor of Al-I'lam al-Badil Newspaper and a write at Al-Anbat Newspaper:

As far as this indicator is concerned, the real crisis is the inability to monitor, document, or confirm the extent and size of interference given that this comes through the chief editor, who is the first person to tell the journalist or writer whether his article is allowed or banned.

Let us ask: Is the article banned by the chief editor for considerations related to his mood or by the chief editor's superiors? I was personally told three times by the chief editor of Al-Anbat newspaper that other sides banned my article. He told me that he banned my articles two times so that we will not cause problems with these sides.

So, the measures, legislations, the prevailing situation, and prior censorship have strongly succeeded in making self-censorship stronger. Accordingly, the real crisis lies in how we can prevent the interference of upper sides in the work of the chief editor, who is the person we directly deal with. What is required is to document this crisis because it does exist.

We can easily document any censorship case or violation. It is important to focus on the issue of violations.

Yahya Shuqeir, journalist from Al-Arab al-Yawm Newspaper:

The indicators can be divided into two types:

First -- Prior censorship: Does it really exist? The answer is yes. Can we document it? The answer is yes. The more important question is: Is it legal censorship? No, it is illegal and illegitimate as it is a violation of journalists' rights.

Second: Professional censorship: Is the chief editors' censorship of the material presented to his newspaper considered part of self-censorship? Yes, the chief editor has the right to have a look at what is published in the newspaper, given that he is person in charge in front of the law. So, this censorship in this form is acceptable, especially if it seeks to have a look at and correct the information coming to the newspaper and to see whether it contains inaccurate accusations against a certain person or side.

-- Mansour: Away from the professional aspect of the chief editor, do you, as a member of the editorial kitchen, believe that there is censorship that is related to the content or depends on relations and pressure?

-- Shuqeir: Yes, a specialized person can tell when a prior censorship took place on a daily basis through the "output" and "input" of the newspaper. A case in point is the issue of the female employee at the House of Representatives who accused three deputies of harassing her. I will not tell you what happened at my newspaper, because I do not have the right to reveal this. However, by examining the "output" of the newspaper and analyzing the content, we find that the newspaper did not write about this issue. However, weeklies and Al-Anbat newspaper wrote about this issue. We ask: Is this due to professional censorship or self-censorship? Is this against the principle of the freedom of the press?

-- Hilmi al-Asmar, former chief editor of Fact International newspaper and a journalist at Al-Dustour newspaper:

When one ponders this issue he immediately thinks of the legal environment and the prevailing professional standards, which basically entrenched the culture of fear which affects the journalist or writer when he writes and even the chief editor or the editor of the local section when they receive articles or press materials.

I had a long experience in this regard. I used to present my material and they apologized for not being able to publish it in the newspaper. The journalist faces many social, religious, and social taboos. There is also a fear of the misapplication of the loose law, which contains loose paragraphs that can be misused. If we focus on creating a sound legal environment where the minimum level of freedom is available, then the feeling of prior or self-censorship will fade away.

As for professional censorship, I agree with colleague Shuqeir that that law does not give anybody the right to censor you in advance. However, there are paragraphs in the Jordanian law which make prior censorship a catastrophe for the writer because he is afraid of the misapplication of loose paragraphs in the penal code or the publications law.

-- Mansour: Since you had worked as the editor of the local news section at Al-Ra'i newspaper, do you think that you had red lines that were clear to journalists or was it you who decided to ban publishing some materials?

-- Al-Asmar: I have already spoken about unwritten taboos, negative codes of conduct, and great fear of the tribe. For example, if you publish a story about the issue of sexual harassment at the House of Representatives, the tribe of the person involved will consider it something that affects the entire tribe.

I also believe that there are social taboos in addition to the security taboos. These taboos are provided for in the penal code. The most important point is the open-ended legal texts in the publications and publishing law and in the penal code, especially the last point which they added to the law; namely, harming the prestige of persons and individuals and laws. This generates self-censorship on the part of the writer and makes him afraid of expressing his opinion.

-- Mansour: If the article is banned or if parts of it are deleted, do they inform the writer of the reasons or does the chief editor or editorial director just say that the article is unacceptable?

-- Al-Asmar: The writer of the article is often not told the real reason. The problem is that you do not know if it has to do with security concern or a fear for the chief editor's "interests" or fear of someone's anger. So, censorship is open and we cannot just blame it for fear of the intelligence, security, or arrest. What is worse is the personal relationships, interests, and the newspaper's relations with advertisers. These all constitute a big network which we can term as the fear network which increases the impact of prior and self-censorship.

Bassam Badarin, journalist and director of the London-based Al-Quds al-Arabi Newspaper's Office in Amman:

I believe that it is difficult to document or prove facts in prior censorship. I had a personal experience when I was preparing reports on freedoms. I interviewed chief editors of Jordanian dailies and weeklies. After conducting the interviews, most of them admitted that there is prior and self-censorship. Colleague Osama al-Sharif, former chief editor of Al-Dustour newspaper, expressed an interesting opinion as he said: "Of course, there is censorship. I practice it personally on a daily basis. Sometimes, I interfere in expanding the scope of materials I want to monitor. I do not conceal that I live in schizophrenia. In addition, there is interference from all sides -- including influential people, tribes, capitalists, advertisers, and others."

The situation is difficult. If we want to address this issue, which is the most important in the media freedoms file, then we as journalists should admit that there is both prior and self-censorship and that we should deal with both types. I daresay

that if a poll had been conducted among all journalists and chief editors and editorial directors, then none of them would admit that there is prior or self-censorship although they practice it.

-- Mansour: During your work as director of Al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper's office in Amman, were you subjected to any sort of prior censorship and how did you deal with it?

-- Badarin: Yes, I was exposed to that and I dealt with the situation as part of the need to adopt a balanced stand. In June, I was questioned by the intelligence officers about a press material in the newspaper. I had to talk to the director of intelligence, who said: You are right, nobody has the right to question you about that." Thus, I assert once again that censorship has to do with us as journalists.

-- Mansour: Do you know about cases in which measures were taken against a journalist by the chief editor, the security agencies, or others?

-- Badarin: Yes, there are many cases. But, as you know, in Jordan nobody is targeted for his person. There is a type of punishment that is practiced in another indirect way. For example, at the beginning of our work in journalism, we were punished by not being given important information; by not allowing us to enter important state institutions, like the Parliament and the Royal Court; by not allowing us to attend important meetings; or by being boycotted by the official media. This means that there are various penalties not stipulated in the law. Thus, I assert that conscience is a basic element in this regard. I we want to address the issue of prior and self-censorship, we should work with ourselves and with our colleagues to raise the level of their culture and to admit that censorship exists.

-- **Muhammad Omar, director of Al-Bawaba website:**

Speaking about prior and self-censorship, I can assert to you that I was not exposed to any penalty or questioning during my work in electronic media and private radios although I break many special and economic taboos. Some 3 million visitors access the website every month. The intelligence should have censored and interfered in my work more than others because a huge number of readers access my website on a daily basis. I attribute this to independence and the professional mentality.

-- **Nasir Shadid, correspondent of Abu Dhabi Channel:**

From my experience in Abu Dhabi Satellite Channel, I do not feel that there is prior censorship on what we write and broadcast. However, my colleagues and I feel that self-censorship imposes on us what to write and not to write. You have a fear of a censor who might or who might not exist.

I had worked at Al-Jazeera Net website. In electronic websites, if you write a material then you can transmit it without any obstacles from the chief editor, which is not the case in newspapers which is sent to the printing press. There are probably people who read what you write and if they do not like a certain thing, then they will invent excuses to prevent its publishing, like saying that there is a technical failure or power outage.

-- Mansour: Is there censorship on filming too?

-- Shadid: Yes, there is. There are many obstacles in the field that face the process of filming.

-- Badarin: I know a writer whose articles are frequently published on the front page. If you ask him whether there is censorship on what he writes, he will immediately say no. My explanation is that this writer addresses topics in which he expresses no clear-cut stands that could irritate anybody.

Dawoud Kuttab, director general of Amman Net Radio:

We have to differentiate between the reasons of self-censorship and whether they are related to financial pressure or intellectual terrorism. This is because all Arab mass media and chief editors are subjected to prior and self-censorship. I believe that the extreme concern of the journalist and chief editor for his financial status is the biggest motive for censorship. The important thing is not to talk about the problem but rather to look for solutions. We mean here the financial situation of the journalist which should be addressed.

-- Shuqeir: There is a big difference between the rule of law and rule through the law. In many cases, if we write something in the Jordan Times newspaper, which has a high ceiling of freedom, then nobody questions what we write. When a report published by the Jordan Times was translated and published in Al-Ra'i newspaper, the writer was referred to court. My explanation is that the readership of the Jordan Times includes embassies and foreigners while the readers of Al-Ra'i are different.

If a story is published in a weekly then the writer is questioned. If the same story is posted on the Internet, then the writer is not questioned.

-- Nasir Qamash, director general of Al-Hadath Newspaper and former chief editor of Al-Hilal newspaper:

I believe that weeklies are the most censored mass media especially during the process of printing the newspaper. For example, Al-Majd weekly was banned for publishing a story about an official who was given a 2.5 million house as an end-of-service reward.

From my personal experience when I was the chief editor of Al-Hilal newspaper, the newspaper was banned for publishing an article about the prime minister. So, the issue does not have to do with professionalism. I believe that weeklies will continue to be censored unless they buy their own printing press, which costs at least 2 million dinars.

-- Basil al-Tarawinah, director general of the Jordanian Media Center:

The official must be able to keep abreast with sound communication mechanisms. I would like to refer to the issue of filming licenses as a sample of freedoms. I am in charge of giving licenses and facilitating the missions of colleague journalists. I have never tried to deprive any side or individual of a license. A case in point was the Amman bombings. From the first minutes, many satellite channels and media persons were allowed to take pictures and enter the sites they wanted to enter despite the difficult security conditions at the time. Shooting was not allowed in some locations as a precautionary measure.

When some prisoners detained some security guards, we could not allow media people to enter cameras and other equipment into the prison out of concern for their safety.

As for censorship, we cannot generalize the individual cases. I believe that the cases that were mentioned are individual in light of the general atmosphere. Evidence is what was said by Badarin about his meeting with the director of intelligence, who said that he did not agree to prior censorship. So, there is nothing worse than self-censorship, which usually gives priority for the interests of the newspaper and the chief editor. What Mr. Shuqeir said about what happened in Al-Arab al-Yawn newspaper with regard to opting not to publish a certain story is an internal issue that has to do with the newspaper's general policy.

-- Kullab: Is the rule that I can film anything or that I should be allowed by a certain side to film?

-- Al-Tarawinah: What happens is that we facilitate measures for giving licenses for journalists. It is difficult for the journalist to go to more than one institution to get a permit to film. We facilitate measures. I believe that this does not undermine public freedoms.

-- Kullab: The real problem lies not in censorship but rather in discrimination in censorship. There is strict censorship on political issues while the authors of cultural, economic, and social stories are not questioned if they make small violations.

Second Axis:

Indicator: Licensing Private Radios and Satellite Channels:

- Are some reports and news not given to private radio stations? - Are there any censorship conditions on private radios and satellite channels? - What is your evaluation of the ceiling of freedom of radios? - Do the conditions for licensing radios boost the freedom of the media? Are there demands to amend or reduce these conditions?

-- Mansour: **What are the pros and cons of this indicator? How does the existence of radios affect the professional work and professional status of journalists?**

-- Kuttab: First of all, I would like to discuss two main issues. The strange thing is that Jordan is the only country in the world which asks any radio that wants to present news and political programs to pay 50% as additional fees. I believe that this is counterproductive as any radio that presents news does in fact serve the homeland and citizens in all walks of life, including doctors, farms, and businessmen. The fees imposed on such radios should be less and not more.

The other thing is the fees imposed on commercial or societal radios. As is known, there are three types of mass media in the world: Government or official media, which represents then homeland; commercial media; and social media, which is citizens' media.

If you want to establish a small radio station in a village in the Jordan Valley for example, you have to pay 23,000 dinars. I believe it is necessary to cancel high fees which are in the interest of commercial radios, which mainly broadcast music and pay less fees.

On the issue of licenses:

First, the state should look at the media as a means of development and not as a source of income. Political and cultural development can be achieved through incentives and not through pressure.

Second, audio and visual media are still focused in the capital; there are 17 radio stations in Amman and no channels in other cities. This is illogical.

The General Intelligence Directorate interfered in our work only twice. They did so in a calm way. The first time was when we broadcast a program about the Human Rights Watch's report on the intelligence and the second was when we broadcast a short report on the pressure exerted on Amman Municipality for naming a street after a Jordanian prisoner. The interference had no significant consequences. There was no prior censorship. We broadcast the report and posted it on our website and we did not change our policy. Nobody questioned us about the report we broadcast about the harassment issue at the Parliament.

Mohammad Omar: The government has become smarter than before. True, it is generous in granting licenses, but it interferes more through establishing radios affiliated with it under various headers. I believe that the government is free to do what it wants but not at the expense of public funds or by competing with independent radios through exerting pressure on advertisers and monopolizing commercials.

Al-Tarawinah: Every government and state has the right to establish radio and television stations. In the audio medial field, the government applied for a license for one radio; namely, Amn (security) FM. This radio gives daily information about official issues of concern to all citizens. The other radios that were established were civil society radios and university radios, like Al-Yarmouk Radio, which was established by the Al-Yarmouk University and Al-Hussein Radio at Al-Hussein University, which play a pioneering role in society.

Kuttab: The Radio and Television Corporation charges 1 JD on each electricity bill, but this money does not go to the radio and television. Thus, they have to resort

to commercials and compete with the private sector. Additionally, the television makes a serious thing when it broadcasts quiz programs to earn money through calls at a time when it does not announce the price of the call.

Muhammad Quteishat, lawyer and advisor at the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists:

First, the law imposes many restrictions on licenses and on broadcast programs. These restrictions include prior censorship and many taboos, like national security and morals.

Second, as for licenses, the law gives the Council of Ministers full authority to reject giving a license without explaining the reasons. If it agrees to grant a license, then there are many procedures and discouraging paragraphs in the license agreement which prompt the investors to escape.

Third Axis:

Indicator of the Right to Access to Information:

- Have you taken cognizance of the draft law presented by the government on the right to access to information? - Will the proposed law enable the media people to improve their media performance, and raise the ceiling of freedoms? - How do you evaluate the mechanisms of the government and parliament's dealing with the journalist's right to access to information?

Mansour: Can the journalist or media person access the information he wants? Are there real guarantees for this right?

Osama al-Rantisi, director of the local news section at Al-Ghad newspaper:

We face many problems with regard to this issue as many officials refuse to cooperate with us as journalists by not giving us sufficient information about a certain subject. We in the newspaper resolved this problem by noting in the report that we talked to x and he refused to give any information about the topic.

Mansour: Did any official ever give you inaccurate or misleading information and how did you deal with it?

Al-Rantisi: Yes, we receive such information on many occasions. If we are in doubt about the truth and accuracy of the information, then we do not publish them in the newspaper. Another thing is that many institutions refuse to give information except through the first official or the media spokesman. Thus, on many occasions we asked the chief editor to intercede with the minister or official to give us information. Our newspaper has published several reports on the need to guarantee the right to access to information.

Al-Tarawinah: We always build bridges between the media institution and other institutions with the aim of resolving problems. However, there were complaints against some ministries that they do not cooperate by not giving sufficient information to the press, like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I would like to note that there is a protocol aspect regarding the schedule of foreign officials' visits. Security measures do not allow giving information about the visitors' itinerary.

As a government official, I assert to all that we have activated 60% of the network of official spokespersons. A circular has been distributed among all mass media that the journalist should ask for information from the Media Center if he cannot get it from any institution. There are government instructions to give information to journalists and media institutions. However, there are spokespersons who do not make statements. On the other hand, there are spokespersons who give information sufficiently and periodically.

Shuqeir: Everybody agrees that state institutions tend to keep information secret. This exists in all countries of the world. Endorsing the draft law on the access to information alone will not guarantee the flow of information. The developed countries have realized the importance of the right to access to information and issued many laws safeguarding this right. As part of this trend, a draft law was presented to the House of Representatives on the importance of conveying information. This shows that the government and the deputies realize the importance of this right in society. Endorsing the law will be the first step forward. However, endorsing the law alone will not be sufficient. Thus, a second more important step should be taken; that is, amending the law on protecting the secrets and documents related to the security of the state. We recall that the Audit Bureau used this law in order not to reveal the truth and give information to journalists. Therefore, I say that the right to access to information is not sufficient and should be protected by law. In addition, other laws, like the law on protecting the secrets of the state and the law of the State Security Court, should be amended.

Quteishat: The way information is classified is not clear. The Publications and Publishing Law and the laws on protecting the documents and secrets related to the security of the state are not clear with regard to defining what is classified and what is not.

I daresay that 50% of the publications and publishing cases I handled during the past five years were based on the information concealed by the first in each ministry and institution which prompted the journalist to search for other sources, like an employee who gives unreal and inaccurate information that lead to imprisoning and fines. A reading of the draft law shows that the government owns the information while it should only keep the information which is the property of the people.

Shahir Bak, general commissioner of the National Human Rights Center:

It is a positive thing to have a law on the right to access to information regardless of its content. I personally heard the prime minister asking the ministers to give information to journalists and establish public relations offices to give information to the mass media. I believe that there should be a classification of what is secret and what it is not.

Mansour: Have you received complaints against any side which refused to give journalists information and how did you deal with it?

Bak: Thus far, we have not received such complaints. Should we receive such a complaint, we will contact the side involved and ask about the reason and whether the information requested by the journalist is classified or not.

Kullab: Since there is no right to access to information then why is the journalist referred to court if he publishes inaccurate information? Another thing: If we assume that the Ministry of Labor has classified a certain piece of information as secret, then who should I complain to? Is there a judicial side that can arbitrate between me and the official side and decide whether the information is classified or not?

Let me frankly say that some official spokespersons lie and give inaccurate information.

Muhammad Omar: There is selectivity in giving information. This is similar to punishment and reward as the side that owns the information gives the information to those who it is satisfied with. On the other hand, the "poor" journalist has no

evidence that a certain minister declined to give information. If he complains against the minister, the latter might say that the journalist is lying. The access to information is also subject to the relationship between the journalist and the official. In addition, the official institutions decline to give information to the journalists who are not members of the Press Association.

Al-Asmar: The state has no database that can be relied on. Many official sessions are not archived. This means that there is no documentation of the information. Thus, it is natural to have selectivity and inaccuracy in the information given to the journalist. There is also discrimination between foreign and local journalists. There is clear openness toward the foreign journalist who is given information while the local journalist is marginalized.

Another thing is that in many cases some officials leak information against others as a part of "settling scores." Such information can be used in an ugly way in weeklies.

Fourth Axis:

Indicator: Government and Security Agencies' Interference

- Did the government and the security agencies have a role in media violations in 2006? - What are the forms of interference in and pressure on media people (e.g. pressure through calls, travel ban, harassment, arrest, threats, etc.) - Do the security agencies exert pressure on media institutions? What are the forms of pressure? - What are the methods of facing harassment? Do media people resort to professional organizations, human rights organizations, or courts?

***** Mansour: Is there a clear interference by the security agencies and how does the journalist deal with it?**

Al-Rantisi: I would like to read this 10-line story carried by the Jordanian News Agency on Tuesday. I do not know if you have seen it or not.

The report is titled: "A wanted person dies at Hittin Security Center." I would like you to focus on the language used in the report: "The media spokesman of the Public Security Directorate Major Bashir al-Da'ajah has said that a person wanted for the Eastern Amman Court died at dawn today at a security center belonging to Al-Ruseifah District Police. Al-Da'ajah said that that 26-year old wanted man was arrested by the judicial execution patrols during a routine tour in search of wanted

persons. He was detained at Hittin Security Center in order to be referred to the side to which he s wanted. He added: During his detention, the man claimed that he was sick and asked that he be sent to hospital. He was sent to Prince Faisal Government Hospital in Al-Ruseifah. He obtained a medical report [please pay attention to the language of the report] that he suffers from dizziness [which means that he was hit by something in the head] and that his condition is good. He was returned to the security center. In the morning, it turned out that he was dead. His body was taken to the hospital and the medical examiner issued a report in which he said that there were signs of sickness in the deceased's heart and lungs. Samples were taken for further examination." This report was carried in full by the news agency. As far as I know, all newspapers tried to get information about that claims of this person who died after eight hours but to now avail.

Nasir Shadid: I personally faced seven violations and various pressures in 2006, in addition to detention at Qafqafa Prison against the backdrop of my coverage of Islamist prisoners who detained prison security guards. On my way home, I was also detained at Ayn al-Basha Police Station for one hour.

We were also banned from taking pictures at the University of Jordan Mosque. The cameraman was held at the police station for four hours and the camera was seized. Al-Jazeera's cameraman Ali Abu-Hilalah was also detained in the incident. All tapes were confiscated and we were threatened and insulted.

In addition, a tape which I filmed in Al-Rabiyah area after Friday prayers at Al-Kaluti Mosque was destroyed. The tape contained footage of use of force against leftist activists who were staging a peaceful sit-in. Taking pictures is not allowed in the State Security Court and you cannot take a picture of a judge or defendant. Thus, some photographers tend to take picture of the building from outside. I filed several complaints about violations to various sides, including the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists, the Higher Media Council, and the National Human Rights Center.

Al-Asmar: I was once contacted by a senior official after I wrote about the dismissal of a senior advisor at Amman Municipality. He asked why I defended the advisor. During my work at a weekly, something invisible took place; that is, our mobile telephones were jammed. When we contacted the telephone company, they avoided giving an answer. I have no clue as to what happened.

Kullab: The publisher of Al-Anbat Newspaper Riyad al-Huroub told me that I could not continue my work as the editorial director of the newspaper based on to a

security request. I was also insulted by the Civil Defense when I criticized their performance during a snow blizzard.

Al-Rantisi: The chief editor interferes in our work on a daily basis. Sometimes he asks to write about this topic and not write about a certain topic in the form of an advice.

Fifth Axis:

Indicator: Legislative Environment of the Media

- What are the most common charges leveled against journalists? How do you view the set of laws imposing restrictions on the freedom of media?

- Are the media-related laws in harmony with international standards of human rights and freedom of expression? - Is legal protection for the freedom of expression guaranteed? What are the obstacles facing the implementing of laws? -- What kind of legal protection is available? -- Is there discrimination between private and public mass media? -- Does the government observe legal considerations with regard to the flow of information?

Mansour: Is the legislative environment -- that is, the laws which are the main issue for media and media people -- healthy and conducive for launching a free media?

Lawyer Quteishat: The legislative environment in general proceeds from incrimination, penalties, and warning are not from a vision for free media and journalism. When the state wants to restrict freedoms and the freedom of expression it expands the circle of incrimination and penalties.

There are numerous penalties and charges according to which the journalist is tried. For example, when Shihan and Al-Mihwar newspapers tackled the issue of the Danish cartoons, they were referred to Conciliation Court on charges of harming religious feelings. They were also referred to the Court of First Instance on charges of shirking national responsibility and not respecting the nation's Arab and Islamic values. They were also referred to the public prosecutor at the State Security Court for instigating sectarian sedition. Finally, they were referred to the Shari'a Court on charges of apostasy.

These four cases regarding the same press material give us several indicators including:

1. The legal text is loose and can be interpreted in different ways.
2. This shows the numerous types of penalties.
3. It shows the huge responsibility shouldered by the chief editor although he proved that he was not satisfied with and did not sanction this material.
4. Finally, this case shows us that the Jordanian law does not take the good intention into consideration and that it does not have clear criteria in this regard.

In any democratic country, there should be no law on publications and publishing. If such a law exists it should support the freedoms. The law imposes penalties and the new law even took some articles from the Penal Code.

Accordingly, I believe that this law contradicts with international laws and treaties. However, the judiciary regrettably cannot take any measure to stop the implementation of this law.

Bak: International treaties on civil and political rights should be implemented given that they are part of the proposed laws according to the Constitution. These are part of the official legislations. Thus, the judiciary should adopt them. We demand the formation of private and official legal committees to study and amend all legislations so that they can conform to international agreements and treaties.

Mansour: What are the mechanisms used by the journalist to confront legal problems?

Al-Rantisi: We have two lawyers at the newspaper who defend journalists although they are not quite familiar with the legal aspects of publications and publishing. Sometimes we resort to legal advisors.

Kullab: There is what might be termed as the legal reading. Despite the importance of this part, yet it is regrettably unavailable in our Jordanian press. In another sense, just as there are materials that are usually read by the chief editor and the managing editor, some media topics should as well be referred to the legal adviser for a legal reading.

The Jordanian press should realize the importance of the legal reading of press materials and activate its role so that the legal adviser can present his/her defense in an appropriate manner. The journalists' ignorance of the legal protection and lack of knowledge of media laws can be attributed to the absence of organizations that take upon themselves the duty of holding educational training workshops on the legal protection of journalists.

Al-Asmar: The question of the multiplicity of vague and open-ended legal clauses in the laws makes them flexible enough to be interpreted in different ways, thus set a trap for any journalist. In most instances, the referral of such cases to courts is for humiliation, and not litigation, purposes.

Mansour: There are several cases that I personally faced. For instance, a lawsuit that was filed against me in 1992 was only resolved in 2006. The second thing that I would like to note is that journalists themselves do not know at times the charges that are pressed against them, which underlines the lack of legal culture on their part. Besides, journalists are ignorant of the litigation procedures and even some basic principles, such as the good intention and the criticism of the public figure, which could be of help to any journalist and used as defenses before the public prosecutor.

Since January 2006, the center began to rebuild the Legal Aid Unit to help journalists. The unit will provide the service of defending journalists at courts and prior legal advice.

The center will begin to visit the media organizations to train their in-house cadres and host an expert who would meet with the editorial kitchenette and hold a three-hour session with them to lead them through the basic principles of how to read the material and how to extricate the legal bumps and deal with prior advice. The unit now consists of three sections:

1. A section for the documentation of cases.
2. A section for legal defense before courts.
3. A section for legal studies.

Sixth Axis:

Indicator: Professional Status

- How do you evaluate the professional status of Jordanian media?
- Was there any progress or deterioration?
- Does the professional problem lie in the poor training and capacity building, or are there other reasons?
- Do media organizations play their role in improving the profession?
- Are we to witness an improvement in the professional status in view of the interference and lack of independence?
- What are the fundamental programs that need to be implemented to develop the professional status?

Mansour: How do you evaluate the professional status of Jordanian media? Was there any progress or deterioration? What are the problems standing behind the professional problem?

Al-Asmar: There is obvious progress in the notion of training journalists, especially after the CDFJ has taken a pioneering role in this respect. Similar training workshops were held at the Higher Media Council and the Press Association in addition to some newspapers. We call for giving momentum to this effort because there are no specific criteria to define a journalist. Additionally, it is inconceivable to consider only those registered with the Press Association as journalists. I believe that this criterion is inaccurate and unjust and has led to the entry of those with modest qualifications and little know-how into the press domain. The idea of granting more licenses to issue weekly newspapers and the fact that most of them are not willing to train their cadres and even ridicule the idea in the first place has led to a deterioration in their performance and professional caliber.

Shadid: The main problem lies with the mentality of the security men who deal with the journalists and prevent them from performing their duties. This is in addition to the licenses issue which was raised by Basil al-Tarawinah. It is a problem in itself as it shackles the freedom of journalists. For example, if you need to make a request for photocopying material, you will have to go through an endless list of procedures to obtain a permit. Even after you obtain the permit, you still have to wait for hours until your request has been verified.

Al-Rantisi: There is a noticeable development in the professional status in the press. In this respect, I would like to affirm that there is no solution to the question of press freedom except by granting more freedom to the press. What prevents the professional development is the censorship. In addition, the government makes

things complicated, especially when it comes to the permits, let alone the poor instruction at the media and information faculties of our universities.

Kullab: I believe that the unjustified generosity in granting licenses is part of a conspiracy that aims to degrade the profession because most weekly newspapers that are given licenses are nothing but security filters and a stranger to the profession. The profession was also subject to unseen interference. In addition, there are no clear criteria for subscription in daily and weekly newspapers. Some newspapers have yearly, or monthly, or daily contracts with public institutions while some others are deprived of such subscriptions. Besides, the capital of the newspapers are kept under close monitoring and if some agencies feel dissatisfied with a certain newspaper, they will ask it to publicly announce its capital and the opposite is true.

Muhammad Omar: The press community is plagued by rampant corruption. The reasons for this corruption can be summed up in the following: -- The government, its interference, and repressive measures. -- The long period under which Jordan was governed by martial laws which nurtured fear among journalists from the government. This, in turn, prompted some journalists to cajole and try to win over the government.

-- The poor financial situation of journalists which compels them not only to turn a blind eye to the performance of government agencies but also to the private sector's institutions as they feel threatened if they dare criticize them. -- Bribing journalists, which is detrimental to their principles, constants, and professional ethics.

We can also see a professional defect in the daily audio, video, and print news bulletins. The reason for this is the professional weakness and not censorship. It's not important what you say but how you say that!

Conclusions:

Following is a recap of the most important ideas as noted in the minutes of the workshop:

-- Prior-censorship is not only linked to security pressures but to the interests of the chief editors as well.

-- There are two modes of censorship in the Jordanian media: Prior-censorship and self-censorship.

-- The high fees and long bureaucratic procedures involved in the process of licensing radio and satellite stations are a source of discouragement for investors in this sector.

-- Endorsing the law on the right to access information is a positive step. However, it is not enough if not followed by other steps such as the amendment of the law on protecting the state's classified information and secrets.

-- Labeling information as classified or non-classified is left to the government's discretion.

-- The process of giving information is largely defective. -- Security interference is a daily happening and is usually channeled through the chief editor.

-- The legislative milieu is grounded in the notion of incrimination and punishment, not in permissibility and free media.

-- The deteriorating professional status of the media despite the noticeable improvement in developing media cadres in which the CDFJ plays a pioneering role.



Summary of the Existing Legislation in 2006

The media-related legislation is usually linked to the government's view of the freedom of speech and the freedom of media. Whenever a government wants to raise the ceiling of the media freedom, it removes the legislative restrictions on the freedom of expression and speech and the opposite is true.

Here lies the importance of the legislative structure that streamlines the media freedom. This study briefly shed light on the media-related legislation and laws that have never been amended since 2005.

Moreover, it was essential to pinpoint to what extent the government's proposals for amending media legislation in 2006 were compatible with the international standards of the freedom of expression and the freedom of media and to what extent it abides by the signed international conventions pertaining to the media freedom in the related draft laws it submitted to the parliament.

Hence, we decided to divide this study into two parts: The first included a detailed account of the amended draft law of the press and publication and the draft law on the right to access information, in addition to the CDFJ's comments on the two draft laws and a comparison with the international standards of the media freedom. The government submitted the amended press and publication draft law and the draft law on the right to access information last year.

The second part of the study included a recount of the existing media-related legislation in terms of the restrictions on the exercise of the press profession as well as the incrimination and punishment enshrined in this legislation. A special section was devoted to the audio and visual media because the temporary law of the audio-visual media for the year 2002 has been submitted to the Chamber of Deputies and since this sector witnessed an increase in the number of radio and satellite channels.

After discussing the aforesaid topics, we came to the following conclusions:

1. The Jordanian legislator still insists on imposing restrictions on those working in the press sector. The membership of the Press Association is still a main condition that should be fulfilled by those who want to work in this sector, contrary to the international standards. Additionally, the legislator even added to the unjust requirements on the part of journalists by deeming the ethical track record, which does not enjoy the status of a legislation -- as part of the press and publication law, contrary to the fundamentals of legislation.

2. The legislator curtailed the pre-censorship imposed on the media dispatch received from abroad as well as the printing of books. However, the restrictions on the specialized publications have been kept in place.

3. The legislator enlarged the scope of incrimination in the press and publication law by adding a new incriminatory clause that did not exist before. The new clause consists of four paragraphs that include vague phrases with no specific reference. The same clause also exists in the Penal Code.

4. The legislator tried to spare journalists appearance before the State Security Court by revoking the court's specialty in press and publication cases. However, the legislator did not amend the law of the State Security Court which has priority over other laws when it comes to implementation and which makes some media-related cases within the jurisdiction of the court.

5. The legislator did not revoke the imprisonment penalty in the press and publication cases, nor did he use a clear-cut legislative phrasing to prevent the apprehension of journalists in press and publication cases. Rather, he used legal clauses that do not obstruct the enforcement of other penal laws which deem apprehension as permissible.

6. The legislator raised the financial penalties up to 20,000 dinars¹ in some crimes.

7. The legislator did not revoke the restrictions imposed on the right to access and circulate information in the two draft laws. Rather, he imposed further restrictions on the right to access information that never existed in the current Law on Protecting the State's Classified Information and Documents which views the secrecy of information as the rule without any exceptions. The categorization of information as classified or non-classified is still controlled by the administrations of government agencies without enough justification.

¹ As mentioned in the draft submitted by the government to the Parliament

Second: The current status quo of the media-related laws:

1. The incrimination scope is still very large through the diversity of the punishable criminal acts which run counter to the principle of people are innocent unless proven otherwise.

2. The incriminatory policy adopted by the Jordanian legislator resorts to vague and fuzzy phrases that can never be measured by normal standards, which is contrary to the principle of clarity of the legislation of crimes and punishment.

3. The government still controls the administration of the Jordan Television and Radio Corporation. The financing of the corporation is one the most effective tools used by the government to control the corporation. One cannot assume that the corporation enjoys the transparency required for the freedom of media, especially in view of the censorship being exercised on its activities.

4. The audio and visual media law imposes shackles on the licensing and transmission by censoring the editorial board and rendering it non-independent and linking the programs with the general policy governing the Jordanian media. Moreover, the way licenses are granted does not contribute to the societal diversity of all shades, especially given the hefty fees levied on the news and political programming.