

SEPTEMBER 2019



MEDIA INFLUENCE MATRIX: JORDAN

Government, Politics and Regulation

Author: Ian Graham
Editor: Marius Dragomir

About CMDS

The Center for Media, Data and Society (CMDS) is a research center for the study of media, communication, and information policy and its impact on society and practice. Founded in 2004 as the Center for Media and Communication Studies, CMDS is part of Central European University's (CEU) School of Public Policy and serves as a focal point for an international network of acclaimed scholars, research institutions and activists.

CMDS ADVISORY BOARD

- *Clara-Luz Álvarez*
- *Floriana Fossato*
- *Ellen Hume*
- *Monroe Price*
- *Anya Schiffrin*
- *Stefaan G. Verhulst*

About the authors

Ian Graham is a researcher for the Center for Media, Data and Society in Budapest, where his research focuses on media regulatory policy and philanthropic support for independent journalism. He has supported initiatives promoting democracy, free expression, and academic freedom worldwide through work at Scholars at Risk in New York and the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington DC. Ian holds M.A. degrees in Public Policy and Nationalism Studies from Central European University and a B.A. in History from Utah State University.

Marius Dragomir is the Director of the Center for Media, Data and Society. He previously worked for the Open Society Foundations (OSF) for over a decade. Since 2007, he has managed the research and policy portfolio of the Program on Independent Journalism (PIJ), formerly the Network Media Program (NMP), in London. He has also been one of the main editors for PIJ's flagship research and advocacy project, Mapping Digital Media, which covered 56 countries worldwide, and he was the main writer and editor of OSF's Television Across Europe, a comparative study of broadcast policies in 20 European countries.



Hungary, 1051 Budapest, Nador u. 9.
Tel: +36 1 327 3000 / 2609
Fax: +36 1 235 6168
E-mail: cmds@ceu.edu

The Media Influence Matrix Project is run collaboratively by the Media & Power Research Consortium, which consists of local as well as regional and international organizations. The consortium members are academic institutions (universities and research centers), NGOs, journalism networks and private foundations.

MEDIA INFLUENCE MATRIX ADVISORY BOARD

- Special Advisor: Dean Starkman
- Media Management and Economics: Philip M. Napoli
- Research and methodology: Amy Brouillette
- Research and advocacy: Susan Abbott, Minna Aslama
- Civil Society & Technology: Kate Coyer
- Policy: Francesca Fanucci
- Data: Attila Batorfy, Jessie Labov

CMDS TEAM

- Director: Marius Dragomir
- Editorial consultant: Tom Popper
- Research: Eva Bognar, Roni Dorot, Dumitrita Holdis
- Design and outreach: Robert Nemeth
- Coordinator: Mihaela Groza

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOVERNMENT, POLITICS AND REGULATION

Legal Overview	4
Regulatory Authorities	6
Operational Aspects	7
Broadcast Media and Frequency Spectrum	7
Print Media Regulators	10
Internet Regulators	11
Data Protection Regulators	12
Decision-Making Process	13
Key Decision-Makers	13
Transparency of Decision-Making in Media Regulation	15
Impact of Regulators on News Media and Journalism	15
Influencers	16
Local Influencers	16
Semi-Governmental Organizations	16
Industry Players	17
Civil Society	18
External Influencers	20

LEGAL OVERVIEW

Jordan's constitution and its signatory status on various international agreements have long signaled a dedication to press freedom that has often fallen short in practice. In 1975, Jordan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states that all citizens possess the right to seek, impart, and receive information and ideas through any form of media without government restriction.[1] Jordan's constitution contains a similar provision, with the 15th article holding that it is the duty of the state to uphold freedom of the press.[2] Despite these guarantees, the constitution permits limited press censorship during national emergencies and under martial law.[3]

Similarly, the Jordanian monarchy has instigated numerous media reform processes over the past thirty years that have yielded only meager gains in press freedom. In the early 1990s, the monarchy pledged support for limited democratization and press freedom reforms as a response to large-scale protests over economic conditions in the country.[4] In the 2000s, initiatives such as the Jordan First campaign (2002), the National Agenda (2005), and the We Are Jordan campaign (2006) all articulated a commitment to streamlining media reform and modernization within larger governance reforms.[5] More recently, as a response to the Arab Spring, the monarchy promoted the

creation of a new National Media Strategy (2011-2015) which aimed to establish an “independent and contemporary Jordanian media rooted in principles of responsible freedom, pluralism and professionalism.”[6]

Despite the lofty aims articulated by the monarchy in public, legislation enacted throughout periods of reform often had the effect of replacing the most blatant forms of state censorship with subtler bureaucratic restrictions on press freedom. For example, although the 1993 Press and Publications Law (PPL) ended the state's de facto monopoly on printed news media, amendments to the law passed five years later forced many newly-formed outlets out of business by creating onerous financial requirements for licensing.[7] In a similar fashion, while the 2002 Audiovisual Media Law officially ended the state monopoly on broadcast media, accompanying licensing procedures have prevented many private television broadcasters from launching operations. On the web, amendments made to the PPL in 2012 required all news websites to obtain licenses, and a cybercrimes law implemented in 2015 codified strict forms of punishment for various forms of online speech. In 2018, Jordan endorsed recommendations submitted through the UN's Universal Periodic Review system to reform the PPL and its cybercrimes law.[8]

[1] See more details at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=_en (accessed on 25 April 2019).

[2] Constitution of Jordan, Article 15.2-4.

[3] Constitution of Jordan, Article 15.5.

[4] Naomi Sakr, “The stop-go transition,” in *Media Reform: Democratizing media, democratizing the state*, (ed. Monroe E Price), Routledge, 2001), 110.

[5] Naomi Sakr, “‘We cannot let it loose’: Geopolitics, security and reform in Jordanian broadcasting,” in *National broadcasting and state policy in Arab countries*, (ed. Tourya Gaaaybess), Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 101-102.

[6] UNESCO, “Assessment of Media Development in Jordan” (Jordan: UNESCO, July 2015), 12, available online at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002344/234425e.pdf> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[7] Naomi Sakr, “The stop-go transition,” 115, cit.

[8] UN Human Rights Council, “Report on the working group on Universal Periodic Review of Jordan,” 7 January 2019, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/001/49/PDF/G1900149.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed on 1 August 2019); see more details at https://www.upr-info.org/database/index.php?limit=0&f_SUR=86&f_SMR=All&order=&orderDir=ASC&orderP=true&f_Issue=All&searchReco=&resultMax=300&response=&action_type=&session=&SuRRgrp=&SuROrg=&SMRRgrp=&SMROrg=&pledges=RecoOnly (accessed on 1 August 2019).

The complicated trajectory of reform and legislation has created a complex legal structure for the country's media sector that consists of more than 20 overlapping laws and regulations. [9] Many of these laws contain contradictory provisions and vague terminology that lend themselves to arbitrary enforcement by authorities. This, coupled with punitive measures contained within Jordan's penal code and anti-terror laws has made journalists reluctant to fully exercise rights to press freedom set out in the constitution. Annual surveys conducted by the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists have revealed that nearly all journalists in Jordan claim to practice self-censorship.[10]

Developments related to access to information legislation have largely mirrored other trends in press freedom. In 2007, Jordan became the first Arab country to pass a freedom of information law, and in 2012 the government promised to amend the law to bring it up to international standards articulated through the Open Government Partnership initiative.[11] Despite

this, non-Jordanians and legal entities continue to lack explicit rights to request and receive information from state agencies.[12] The law still does not require authorities to disclose the reasons for which requests are denied, and journalists and civil society have complained that insufficient resources have been dedicated to enforcing compliance with the law within government agencies.[13] Jordan recently committed to strengthening the legislative framework governing access to information in its 2016-2018 Open Government Partnership Action Plan.[14]

Jordanian law lacks any mention of rights to data protection. There is currently neither a data protection law nor a data protection authority in the country.[15] The Ministry of Information and Communications Technology issued a draft bill for data protection in 2014 and called for a public consultation regarding the bill in both 2016 and 2017.[16] Public discussions are ongoing.

[9] UNESCO, "Assessment of Media Development in Jordan," cit.

[10] Mohammad Ghazal, "Most media practice self-censorship in Jordan – CDFJ," The Jordan Times, 10 May 2018, available at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/most-media-practice-censorship-jordan-%E2%80%94-cdfj> (accessed on 1 August 2019).

[11] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "Jordan: National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership," (Jordan: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, April 2012), 7, available at <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/jordan-action-plan-2012-2013/> (accessed on 26 July 2019).

[12] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "Open Government Partnership: Jordan National Action Plan First Progress Report," (Jordan: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, February 2013), 6, available online at <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP%20first%20progress%20report%202012%20feb%202013%20%20final.pdf> (accessed on 1 August 2019); Mohammad Ghazal, "Access to information law needs further amendments to ensure transparency," The Jordan Times, 27 February 2014, available online at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/access-information-law-needs-further-amendments-ensure-transparency%E2%80%99> (accessed on 1 August 2019).

[13] Laila Azzeh, "Initiative aims to boost access to information in Jordan," The Jordan Times, 10 October 2016, available online at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/initiative-aims-boost-access-information-jordan> (accessed on 28 April 2019).

[14] See more details on Open Government Partnership's website <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/01-strengthen-legislative-framework-governing-access-information> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[15] Privacy International, "State of Privacy Jordan," available online at <https://privacyinternational.org/state-privacy/1004/state-privacy-jordan> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[16] More details about the public consultation are available on the Jordanian government website at <https://jordan.gov.jo/wps/portal/Home/questionnaire> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

In Jordan, the executive branch and important figures in the intelligence community play a leading role in shaping media policy. Their influence begins with the formulation of legislation and extends to decision-making at the Jordan Media Commission (JMC) and the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), the primary bodies tasked with regulating the country's media sector.

Key figures among the Council of Ministers (the prime minister's cabinet), the Royal Court, and the intelligence services exert tremendous influence in determining the content of pieces of draft legislation related to media and information. According to Jordanian law, the prime minister, appointed by the king, may refer proposed laws formulated behind closed doors to members of the country's only popularly elected house of parliament, the House of Deputies, who may approve, reject, or amend proposals.[17] Inside the House of Deputies, the major legwork of analyzing the merits of recommended media legislation falls to the Committee on Media and National Guidance.[18]

Currently, the JMC and the TRC represent the primary bodies regulating the media sector. Media regulators and their remits have evolved considerably over the past 20 years. The

government formed the sector's primary regulatory body, the JMC, in 2014 through a merger between two existing print and audiovisual regulators. The TRC has existed since 1995, but its duties and governing structure were changed in 2002 following the liberalization of radio and television media markets.[19] While the JMC and TRC have been styled as independent regulators, they are heavily influenced by the Council of Ministers through funding, leadership appointments, and various decision-making procedures.

In recent years, some of the fiercest debates about the powers of media regulators has centered around the mandatory licensing of media outlets in the country and the extension of regulation to online space. For years, free press advocates have argued that existing policies that require media outlets to receive a license from the JMC to legally operate in Jordan constituted a powerful form of prior censorship exercised by the executive branch. In 2012, the Jordanian government extended licensing obligations to all websites publishing information on current events and political affairs in Jordan. (*See Internet Regulators in this report*) Many critics argue this regulation has further contributed to self-censorship online.

[17] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "The legislative branch," available online at <http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/government3.html> (accessed on 1 August 2019).

[18] UNESCO, "Assessment of Media Development in Jordan," cit.

[19] Jordan in Freedom on the Net 2013, available online at https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/FOTN%202013_Full%20Report_0.pdf (accessed on 29 April 2019).

Operational aspects

Broadcast Media and Frequency Spectrum

Remit and Tasks

Jordan Media Commission (JMC)

The regulation of television and radio broadcasting primarily falls within the purview of the Jordan Media Commission (JMC) which was formed in 2014 through a merger of two regulatory bodies, the Department of Press & Publications and the Audiovisual Media Commission.[20] The JMC functions under two of the most important pieces of media legislation in Jordan — the Press and Publications Law and the Audio-Visual Law.

[21] In fulfilling its mandate to regulate broadcast media, the JMC's primary responsibilities lie in the **licensing** and **registration** of media outlets and in **monitoring** their compliance with Jordanian law.



Radio and television stations wishing to legally air content inside Jordan must obtain a broadcast license. Jordanian law tasks the JMC with receiving and studying applications for broadcast licenses. After reviewing relevant paperwork, the director of the JMC makes a recommendation on whether or not a license should be awarded to a given applicant. The JMC, however, does not have the last word in approving or rejecting licensing requests.[22] Instead, the Council of Ministers receives the JMC's recommendation and decides to either accept or reject an application through an internal vote. Without receiving a license, prospective broadcasters cannot open offices or obtain technical equipment.

Alongside studying applications for licensing, the JMC also monitors broadcasters' compliance with licensing agreements and Jordanian law more broadly. The JMC has extensive powers to suspend broadcasters who endanger national security or display pornographic images and can otherwise note infractions of law and breaches of licensing agreements.[23] Similar to procedures for granting licenses, however, the Council of Ministers metes out punishments for infractions of the law noted by the JMC and can determine the magnitude of related fines.[24] Despite its limited authority over punitive proceedings, the JMC does have the power to resolve complaints against content produced by licensees through a "Committee of Experts." [25]

[20] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Audiovisual Media Law, No. 26 for the Year 2015" (UNESCO, April 2016), 19, available online at <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/updatedjordan.avl-analysis.16-05-18ls.pdf> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[21] Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities, "Media Commission," available online at <http://www.rirm.org/en/mc-media-commission-2/> (accessed on 25 May 2019).

[22] UNESCO, "Assessment of Media Development in Jordan," cit.

[23] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Audiovisual Media Law, 19, cit.

[24] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Audiovisual Media Law, 19, cit.

[25] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Audiovisual Media Law, 20, cit.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Committee (TRC)

Alongside the JMC, the Telecommunications Regulatory Committee (TRC) also plays a role in the regulation of broadcast media. Formed in 1995, the body is significantly older than the JMC, but plays a much smaller role in broadcast regulation. The TRC is responsible for managing and planning the country's frequency spectrum allocation and establishing conditions for telecommunications services and radio frequencies.[26] The TRC is also an important gatekeeper in broadcast regulation because it alone can issue the frequency license that prospective broadcasters must hold before submitting an application to the JMC for a broadcast license.[27] Additionally, the body sets conditions for the issuance and use of various types of technical equipment needed to broadcast radio and television programming.[28]

Board Composition

Jordan Media Commission (JMC)

Many in the Jordanian government heralded the formation of the Jordan Media Commission in 2014 as progress towards independent regulation of the broadcast and print media sectors. The legislation that established the Jordan Media Commission (JMC) defined the new body as an independent corporate entity separate from any particular government ministry.[29] Despite its legal separation from other government bodies, the JMC is not immune to influence from political forces in part because of the rules governing appointments for the body's director general.

Executive functions of the JMC are carried out by a singular director general. Unlike media regulators in many other countries, the JMC has no governing board and legally consists of only the director general and the organization's executive staff.[30] The director general of the JMC is appointed by a vote of the Council of Ministers following an initial nomination by the prime minister.[31] As the ministers are directly appointed by the prime minister who is in turn appointed by the king, a direct line of influence runs from the monarch and executive branch down to the JMC.

The terms of employment for the director general and the selection criteria for the position further foster the JMC's dependence on the executive branch. There are few stipulations limiting who can be appointed director general of the JMC. Candidates must hold a college degree and "experience in the field of communication," but there are no specific criteria to judge selections or any language limiting potential conflicts of interest.[32] Additionally, the Council of Ministers determines the

[26] Fabio Del Alisal, "Assessment of Media Legislation in Jordan," MedMedia, 2015, 8, available online at http://www.med-media.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/MEDMEDIA_JORDAN.pdf (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[27] For more information, see the government's website at <https://jordan.gov.jo/wps/portal/Home/GovernmentEntities/Ministries/Ministry/Ministry%20of%20Information%20and%20Communications%20Technology/Telecommunications%20Regulatory%20Commission?current=true&nameEntity=Telecommunications%20Regulatory%20Commission&entityType=sub> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[28] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Audiovisual Media Law, 15, cit.

[29] Catherine Smadja-Froguel, "Report on the Jordanian legal framework for broadcasting," May 2016, UNESCO Amman Office, available line at <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/finalreport-on-the-jordanian-legal-framework-for-broadcasting-and-broadcasting-licenses-accepted-changes-final-1.pdf> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[30] Catherine Smadja-Froguel, "Report on the Jordanian legal framework," cit.

[31] Catherine Smadja-Froguel, "Report on the Jordanian legal framework," cit.

[32] Catherine Smadja-Froguel, "Report on the Jordanian legal framework," cit.

director general's terms of employment.[33] There are no limits on the term length of the director general, and decisions about hiring and firing are largely left to the discretion of the Ministers.[34] Mohammed Qtaishat most recently held the position of director general of the JMC but resigned in April 2019. Izzeddin Anaswah was appointed as the temporary acting director general in May 2019.[35]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Committee (TRC)

The system of appointments for the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) resembles that of the JMC in many regards. The decision-making apparatus of the TRC consists of a five-member board headed by a chairperson. Similar to the rules for appointments to the JMC's director general position, the prime minister nominates individual board members and the chairperson of the TRC. These nominations are either confirmed or rejected by a final vote of the Council of Ministers.[36]

In contrast to appointments to the JMC, there are rules governing term lengths and somewhat clearer criteria for selecting board members and the chairperson of the TRC. For example, the legislation that created the TRC attempted to bar conflicts of interest by stipulating that board members and their spouses may not have investments in the telecommunications sector.[37] Additionally, term lengths for TRC board members are fixed and appointments staggered. Three board members are selected to serve four-year terms, while two other members serve two-year terms.[38]

Board Members of TRC, May 2019

- Ghazi Salem Al-Jobor (Chairman)
- Al Ansari Mohammad Al-Mashagbah
- Joma Al Tayeb
- Riad Al-Bataineh

Funding

Jordan Media Commission (JMC)

The JMC derives its funding almost exclusively from an annual budgetary appropriation. Each year, the Council of Ministers agrees on a sum of money that will be dedicated to the JMC from Jordan's general budget. Like many media regulators across the globe, the JMC also collects money from services rendered, including licensing fees and fines. Under Jordanian law, however, this money returns to the state's general budget.[39] The JMC can receive grants, gratuities, and

[33] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Audiovisual Media Law," 1, cit.

[34] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Audiovisual Media Law," 1, cit.

[35] "Anasweh assigned acting director of media commission," The Jordan Times, 8 May 2019, available online at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/anasweh-assigned-acting-director-media-commission>

[36] The Telecommunications Law (no.13) of 1995, Jordan, Art. 8, available online at <http://www.trc.gov.jo/Pages/viewpage.aspx?pageID=794> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[37] The Telecommunications Law (no.13) of 1995, Jordan, Art. 9, cit.

[38] The Telecommunications Law (no.13) of 1995, Jordan, Art. 8, cit.

[39] Provisional Law for Audiovisual Media no. 71 for the year 2002, http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/fileLibrary/PDFs/AVC_Law_en.pdf (accessed on 1 August 2019), p. 8

donations to run programs such as media trainings with approval from the Council of Ministers. There are few legal guidelines to help determine which grants or donations should be allowed by the Ministers.

In 2019, the general budget allotted to the JMC was roughly US\$ 1.8m (JOD 1.3m).[40] This sum of money has not fluctuated significantly in recent years as the JMC also received roughly US\$ 1.8m (JOD 1.3m) in the 2016, 2017, and 2018 general budgets.[41] Jordan's budget for the Council of Ministers has also regularly set aside anywhere from US\$ 140,000 to US\$ 270,000 (JOD 100,000 to 190,000) to support JMC projects and programs each year.[42]

The Telecommunications Regulatory Committee (TRC)

The TRC possesses more diverse sources of funding than the JMC and is not dependent on Jordan's general budget for funding. Each year, the TRC's board members draw up a budget detailing estimated costs for the upcoming fiscal year that is submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. The TRC rarely requires any money from the general budget to finance its approved spending due to the fact that it is allowed to keep some of the funds it collects from services rendered, licensing fees, and fines. Because of this, there is rarely any provision allotting money to the TRC in the general budget. Instead, the TRC transfers its surplus funds to the state for use in other departments.

In 2016, the TRC spent just over US\$ 15.5m (JOD 10.8m), but brought in excess of US\$ 110m (JOD 78m). The remaining US\$ 96m (JOD 68.2m) came back to the state for distribution in the general budget.[43] The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a Geneva-based UN body, claims that the TRC derived over 98% of its budget from license and spectrum fees in 2017.[44]

Print Media Regulators



Print media in Jordan remains subject to significant regulation under the JMC. Print publications must receive licenses to operate legally in Jordan. The JMC is responsible for studying licensing applications, but the body does not ultimately hold the authority to approve or reject individual applications. Instead, the Council of Ministers votes on whether to issue a license to a given applicant. [45]

[40] "MPs, gov't discuss official media budget allocations," The Jordan Times, 20 December 2018, available online at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/mps-govt-discuss-official-media-budget-allocations> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[41] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "Summary of Expenditures for the Prime Ministry 2014-2018," Program 0320, available online at <http://www.gbd.gov.jo/GBD/en/Budget/Ministries/general-budget-law-2018> (accessed on 26 July 2019).

[42] Ibid; The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, "2019 Budget for the Prime Ministry," available online at <http://www.gbd.gov.jo/GBD/en/Budget/Ministries/general-budget-law-2019> (accessed on 26 July 2019).

[43] TRC Independent Audit Report for 2016, available online at <http://trc.gov.jo/EchoBusV3.0/SystemAssets/PDF/EN/FinancialStatements/Financial%20Statment%202016.pdf> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[44] International Telecommunication Union (ITU), "Jordan 2018 Profile."

[45] Fabio Del Alisal, "Assessment of Media Legislation in Jordan," 7, cit.

Regulation and licensing comes with financial implications for prospective print outlets. Producing news or specialized content in print form without a license carries a fine ranging from US\$ 1,400 to US\$ 7,000 along with the possibility of the JMC confiscating property. Additionally, Jordan's Press and Publications Law includes provisions for paid-in capital requirements that are as high as US\$ 700,000 (JOD 500,000) for daily newspapers.[46] Start-up fees collected by the JMC are about US\$ 2,000.[47]

The JMC monitors the conduct of publications that are able to clear the licensing process. According to the Press and Publications Law, the director general of the JMC monitors publications' compliance with the terms of their license. The JMC also seeks to ensure that outlets do not produce content that violates vaguely defined values such as "public liberties and respect for the private lives of others" or "freedom or national responsibility." [48]

Beyond the JMC, the Jordan Press Association (JPA), a government-dominated industry body tasked with overseeing the profession of journalism, performs important functions that have a significant impact on individual journalists and publications alike. The JPA can sanction individual journalists who have been deemed to have violated the journalistic standards outlined in the Print and Publications Law or the JPA's own "Code of Honor." [49] Current laws require a publication to have an editor-in-chief who has been a member of the JPA for at least four years in order to receive a license from the JMC.[50]

Internet Regulators

A 2012 amendment to Jordan's Print and Publications Law made online news media subject to the same rules and regulations that govern print media. Upon its formation in 2014, the JMC became the body tasked with overseeing online news media. Under current laws, the director general of the JMC determines which websites are considered news media with little if any criteria for reference. [51] Websites have 90 days to apply for a license from the JMC once they have been officially designated as news media.[52] Once licensed, owners and editors-in-chief of online news outlets are legally responsible for all content on their websites including third party comments according to the 2012 amendment to the PPL.[53]



Licensing entails burdensome obligations in terms of cost and staffing that many websites and current affairs blogs can ill afford. In the first place, licenses cost the equivalent of US \$1,400, no small fee in a country with a high cost of living and an average monthly salary of around US \$600. [54] According to 2012 legal changes, online news outlets must hire an editor-in-chief who has been a

[46] Toby Mendel, "Assessment of Media Regulation in the Southern Mediterranean Region," MedMedia, 15, available online at http://stmjo.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MedMedia-Regulation.final_.pdf (accessed on 30 April 2019).

[47] UNESCO, "Assessment of Media Development in Jordan", 119, cit.

[48] Print and Publications Law of Jordan, Articles 4 and 5.

[49] Toby Mendel, "Assessment of Media Regulation in the Southern Mediterranean Region," cit.

[50] Fabio Del Alisal, "Assessment of Media Legislation in Jordan," 7, cit.

[51] Ibid, 6.

[52] Ibid, 7.

[53] Toby Mendel, "Analysis of the Press and Publications Law, No. 8 for the Year 1998 as Amended (UNESCO, April 2016), 3, available online at <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/updatedjordan.ppl-analysis.16-05-18ls-1.pdf> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[54] Jordan in Freedom of the Press 2015, available online at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/jordan> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

member of the JPA for at least four years to receive a license. The JMC expanded this requirement in 2017 by declaring that news websites would be required to employ at least five full-time JPA-certified journalists to operate legally in Jordan.[55]

The introduction of regulation for online media led to financial hardship for many outlets and a mass blocking of sites unable or unwilling to comply with new rules. Following the amendment of the PPL in 2012, some independent online news portals including the online magazine 7iber refused to license out of principle.[56] In 2013, the Jordanian government blocked over 250 websites that had not received licenses. Some of these websites, including 7iber, have since been un-blocked after receiving licenses from the JMC.[57]

Beyond regulation by the JMC, laws curbing online speech have created new perils for those producing online news media. In 2010, Jordan passed a cybercrimes law that tightened defamation and slander laws for online speech. Among other things, the law made the publication of previously unreleased information pertaining to foreign affairs and national security punishable by fines and even imprisonment.[58] The law has been used on multiple occasions to punish journalists and online media outlets for the content of their work. In 2013, for example, the editor-in-chief of Jafra News was arrested for endangering Jordan's relations with Qatar.[59] The threat of prosecution and imprisonment has further bolstered practices of self-censorship among media professionals in Jordan.

In 2018, the Jordanian government announced proposed amendments to the cybercrimes law that would further loosen definitions of hate speech and establish harsher punishments for violations of the law. Rights groups including the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a New York-based NGO, and Amnesty International, a London-based activist group, blasted drafts of the new law, and the government later stated that it would reconsider its move.[60]

Data Protection Regulators

Jordan currently does not have a data protection law or regulatory body.

[55] Laila Azzeh, "Jordan Media Commission's new law on websites draws controversy," The Jordan Times, 28 July 2017, available online at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-media-commission%E2%80%99s-new-law-news-websites-draws-controversy> (accessed on 1 August 2019).

[56] "Jordanian news website 7iber blocked again under licensing law," IFEX, 3 July 2014, available online at <https://ifex.org/jordanian-news-website-7iber-blocked-again-under-licensing-law/> (accessed on 14 June 2019).

[57] "7iber is unblocked after getting licensed," 7iber, 14 December 2014, available online at <https://www.7iber.com/2014/12/7iber-is-unblocked-after-getting-licensed/> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[58] Jordan Information Systems and Cyber Crime Law, Article 11, available online at https://www.unodc.org/res/cld/document/information-systems-crime-law_html/Jordan_Information_Systems_and_Cyber_Crime_Law.pdf (accessed 6 August 2019).

[59] "Jordan" in Freedom on the Net 2018, available online at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/jordan> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[60] "Jordan: Government should withdraw amendments to cybercrimes law ahead of UN review," Amnesty International, 7 November 2018, available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/jordan-government-should-withdraw-amendments-to-cybercrimes-law-ahead-of-un-review/> (accessed on 30 April 2019); Ignacio Miguel Delgado Culebras, "Changes to Jordan's hate speech law could further stifle press freedom," The Committee to Protect Journalists, 20 February 2018, available online at <https://cpj.org/blog/2018/02/changes-to-jordans-hate-speech-law-could-further-s.php> (accessed 30 April 2019).

Decision-Making Process

Key Decision-Makers[61]

The Royal Court and the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) dominate decision-making in Jordanian media regulation and policymaking, both possessing important allies and clients in the halls of media regulatory agencies and legislative bodies. The two organizations do not often share a common approach to managing Jordan's media landscape. In fact, the two entities regularly compete for influence over various regulatory bodies and media outlets.

Largely, the GID has preferred harsher policies of censorship and repression that have often been at odds with the Royal Court's preference for subtler forms of influence and control. Although both bodies experienced a change in leadership following the appointment of a new government in 2018, this has done little to offset decades-old institutional approaches to managing the media sector.

The most influential political figures in the field of media regulation continue to be closely tied to the interests and approaches of the intelligence services and the Royal Court in a way that leaves little room for individual discretion. Despite a heavily institutionally-driven system, however, there exists a small number of administrators and policymakers who have made bold stands for greater media freedom.

Political Stalwarts

Youssef Issawi (on the right) currently serves as the chief of the Royal Court, a position he has held since June 2018. Mr Issawi previously served in government in numerous capacities including as the secretary general of the Royal Court, as an adviser for the implementation of numerous royal initiatives, and as an officer in the Jordanian Armed Forces. His predecessor in the position of chief of the Royal Court, **Fayez Tarawneh** (on the left), was a driving force behind efforts to amend the Press and Publications Law in 2012 that resulted in new licensing requirements for online news media.[62] Little



Source: rhc.jo



Source: World Economic Forum / Norbert Schiller

is known about Mr Issawi's stances on media regulation and press freedom before he became chief of the Royal Court. In 2017, however, he indicted six journalists for violating the country's cybercrimes law for publishing a story about his alleged involvement in corruption.[63] The journalists were subsequently imprisoned and fined. Under Messrs Issawi and Tarawneh, the Royal Court has cultivated influence with journalists at more independent publications such as Al Ghad, promoted the creation and growth of a new state-funded broadcaster called Al Mamlaka, and courted influence in media organizations such as the JPA and the JMC.

[61] The content in this part of the report is based mostly on interviews with Jordanian journalists and experts carried out for this report (See *Methodology in Media Influence Matrix: Jordan*)

[62] Daoud Kuttab, "Jordanian Media Licensing Law Shuts Down 300 Websites," Al-Monitor, 6 June 2013, available online at <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/jordan-internet-blackout-licensing-law-protest.html> (accessed on 29 April 2019).

[63] Mohammad Ersan, "Jordanian journalists face prison for exposing corruption," Al-Monitor, 11 December 2018, available online at <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/12/jordan-journalists-cybercrime-law-freedom-expression.html> (accessed online 6 August 2019).

Major General Ahmad Husni has served as the head of GID since May 2019. While little is publicly known about his views on media, Mr Husni has worked in the intelligence services since the 1980s and is thus well acquainted with the institution's approach to media management. The GID is an influential force behind the formation of legislation that impacts media, often preferring harsher legal strictures on journalists such as those contained in the 2015 cybercrimes law. The GID has reportedly carried out an influence campaign throughout the media industry and has often been accused of bribing journalists and other media professionals.[64] The organization allegedly holds significant influence in media regulatory bodies like the JMC and in state media outlets such as JRTV.



Source: jordanembassyus.org



Source: Facebook / Amman TV

Mohamed Qteishat (on the left) served as the executive director of the Jordan Media Commission from the body's founding in 2014 until his resignation in April 2019. Mr Qteishat previously had a lengthy career in civil society as the head of the legal defense program at the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ), where he represented journalists facing legal threats. When he became the executive director of the JMC, he was seen as a figure who could both help the Jordanian state with his technical expertise in the field of media law and promote measures aiming to achieve greater press

freedom. Interviewees for this project have stated that Mr Qteishat ceased to be a reliable press freedom advocate during his tenure at the JMC. Following Mr. Qteishat's resignation, **Izzeddin Anaswah** was appointed as acting director general of the JMC on a temporary basis.[65]

Jumana Ghunaimat is the current head of the Ministry for Media Affairs, where she has served as the Jordanian Government's official spokesperson since 2018. She began her career as an economics reporter for the popular newspaper Al Rai and later moved to the outlet Al Ghad. At the beginning of her tenure at Al Ghad, the newspaper gained a reputation for its independence in a heavily state-dominated print media sector. In 2012, Ghunaimat became the editor-in-chief of Al Ghad, at which point the newspaper allegedly became closer to the Royal Court and often displayed a tendency to publish stories criticizing minor government officials while largely avoiding negative reporting on senior government officials. Outside her official duties as the government's spokeswoman, many interviewees have stated that Ghunaimat is an important link between Jordan's executive branch and the media industry given her extensive contacts.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Progressives



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Wafa Bani Mustafa is a progressive member of the Jordanian Parliament and a member of the Islamic centrist parliamentary block Al-Wasat Al-Islami. Hailing from the governorate of Jerash, Ms Mustafa has served on the Jordanian Parliamentary Women's Caucus, the Parliamentary Committee on Order and Conduct, and the Committee on Women and the Family. She has gained a reputation for being a reliable advocate for progressive causes ranging from women's issues to press freedom. As a practicing lawyer and a member of the Jordanian Bar Association, Ms Mustafa has gained a reputation

for being particularly skilled at drafting legislation. While she has reportedly often lacked support from fellow lawmakers in promoting her progressive causes, she has become a pioneering figure in the Jordanian public sphere because of her ability to leverage media attention to shine a light on the issues she cares about.

[64] "Jordan" in Freedom of the Press 2016, cit.

[65] "Anaswah assigned acting director of media commission," The Jordan Times, 8 May 2019, available online at <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/anasweh-assigned-acting-director-media-commission> (accessed 10 July 2019).



Source: conf2015.arij.net

Yehia Shukair is a media law expert, the former head of the JMC's Complaint Committee, and a press freedom advocate. Despite his progressive views, more conservative elements within the Jordanian government have allegedly often turned to him for advice and assistance because of his reputation as one of the country's foremost technical experts in the field of media. He has been able to open dialogue through these interactions even if they have not always resulted in tangible gains in press freedom. He has consistently made himself available to those seeking to liberalize the media sector from both inside and

outside of the government and regulatory bodies.

Transparency of Decision-Making in Media Regulation

Decision-making related to media regulation in Jordan generally lacks transparency. The Royal Court and intelligence services heavily guide the development of regulatory policy in settings far from the public's view. Both institutions remain essential for basic operations and decision-making at the JMC and TRC. They also influence the formation of media legislation both before and after its introduction in the Jordanian parliament in ways not always visible to the public.

Impact of Regulators on News Media and Journalism

Recent regulatory decisions made by the JMC have largely perpetuated decades-old trends that reinforce self-censorship and impose barriers to entry into the media sector.

In 2016, the JMC issued a memo to media outlets stating that the publication of news about the king or the royal family was forbidden unless the source was an official statement from the media unit of the Royal Court. The memo further stated that those who violated the order would be "subject to liability," without specifying the types of penalties journalists and outlets could face.[66] The announcement came following a two-year period between 2014 and 2016 when 15 gag orders had been issued for journalistic work on a variety of issues including the army, the king, religious authorities, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).[67] As such, many journalists have seen the JMC's move as contributing to an overall trend of public officials pushing policies of enhanced censorship and self-censorship within the country's media sector.

In 2017, the JMC unveiled a regulation requiring all new online news sources to employ five journalists to be able to obtain a license.[68] Officials at both the JMC and the JPA expressed their belief that the policy was necessary to combat hatred and false reporting stemming from small, unprofessional news websites. Critics have stated that the regulation appears to represent yet another measure designed to restrict entry to the media sector.

[66] Sherif Mansour, "Mission Journal: Gag orders make Jordan's journalists skeptical of reform," Committee to Protect Journalists, 31 August 2016, available online at <https://cpj.org/blog/2016/08/mission-journal-gag-orders-make-jordans-journalist.php> (accessed on 1 August 2019).

[67] Izz al-Din al-Natour, "Prohibition of publication: A judicial necessity or a narrowing of the media," 7iber, 17 August 2016, available online at <https://www.7iber.com/society/news-embargo/#.V8RihfkrKuN> (accessed on 7 August 2019).

[68] Laila Azzeh, "Jordan Media Commission's new law..." cit.

INFLUENCERS

Outside of politics, the influence of the Royal Court and the GID extends to important semi-governmental organizations and industry bodies that make decisions that hold significant implications for the way journalists practice their craft on a daily basis.

Despite the dominance of these two institutions in the field of media, however, there remain important figures who have proven capable of promoting their own interests inside the media sector. Progressive voices remain in semi-governmental organizations and have engaged more conservative political forces in dialogue about media legislation and liberalization.

Powerful, commercially-minded media magnates lobby the government for regulations and legislation to increase their advertising revenues, while other media owners drive innovations in journalism and entertainment that are changing the Jordanian public's expectations for media content.

New public interest media outlets and media watchdogs are producing cutting-edge research on media freedom in Jordan and are becoming increasingly vocal actors in conversations about media reform because of their bravery, persistence, and connections with international organizations committed to promoting transparent governance.

Local Influencers

Semi-Governmental Organizations



Source: Facebook / Jordan Press Association

Rakan Saaydeh is the president of the Jordan Press Association (JPA) and the editor-in-chief of Al Rai, one of the country's most influential daily newspapers. Mr Saaydeh is allegedly close to the intelligence services and is known to be conservative politically. His role as the JPA's president makes him a highly important gatekeeper in the media industry. This is because only members of the JPA are legally considered "journalists" whose work is afforded tangible rights and protections under the law.[69] Mr Saaydeh's ability to impede or advance membership requests and his discretion in

ushering in new conditions for membership have implications for every media professional in the country. In summer 2018, Mr Saaydeh boldly attempted to bolster this power by demanding that government officials only speak with members of the press who are JPA members.[70]

[69] "Jordan's Online Media Freedom at Stake," 2015 IPI Press Freedom Mission to Jordan, available online at https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Jordan-Online-Media-Freedom-at-Stake_OK1_19112015.pdf (accessed on 30 April 2019).

[70] "Press syndicate seeks to ban non-members from practising journalism," Roya News, 22 July 2018, available online at <https://en.royanews.tv/news/14710/Press-syndicate-seeks-to-ban-non-members-from-practising-journalism> (accessed on 1 May 2019).

Basim Tweissi is an academic who heads the Jordan Media Institute (JMI), a nonprofit entity formed by Princess Rym Ali to focus on media education. Mr Tweissi is allegedly closely tied to the Royal Court. Originally from Ma'an, Tweissi has worked in government outside of Amman. He taught at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, where his research focused on journalism training, local media, and standards of professionalism for news media. The JMI is a hallmark of the Royal Court's more tolerant approach to the country's media. The institution produces research on various national and regional topics and also provides media trainings in the form of degree programs and fellowships.



Source: jmi.edu.jo



Source:
teacherskillsforum2019.sched.com

Bayan Al Tal is the director of the Media Literacy Program at the Jordan Media Institute (JMI). She has decades of experience working within government organizations and is widely regarded as a progressive voice at the JMI. In the past, she served as the manager for international media and communication at the Royal Court and was also JRTV's first ever female director general. In her role with the JMI, she has worked with international organizations like UNESCO to integrate media and information literacy into education at schools and universities across Jordan.

Industry Players

Mohammad Alayyan is the chairman of the Al Faridah for Specialized Publishing which produces the popular daily newspaper Al Ghad. When Al Ghad launched in 2004, it was heralded as a pioneer in Jordanian print media. The paper quickly gained a broad readership and a reputation for independence due to its pieces featuring human rights, civil society, and even critical commentary of some government officials. In 2007 Alayyan attempted to launch the country's first privately-owned television station, ATV, but was ultimately denied the necessary licensing when the station was scheduled to go live. In recent years, Mr Alayyan has allegedly become closer to the Royal Court, and this has had implications for the outlets he owns. While Al Ghad continues to touch taboo topics such as corruption, it allegedly often does so in a way that does not directly implicate royal officials. The success of Mr. Alayyan's semi-independent model for media has been replicated by a younger generation of media entrepreneurs and has largely become emblematic of the Royal Court's new approach to the media sector.



Source: YouTube



Source: YouTube

Fares Al Sayegh is the owner of Roya TV, Jordan's first privately-owned broadcast station. Mr Sayegh launched Roya four years after Mohammad Alayyan's failed attempt to obtain a license for ATV. Roya broadcasts local news, dramas and talk-shows about society, politics and a host of other issues. Younger than most media owners in the country, Mr Sayegh has recruited young local talent from online media, including YouTube celebrities, and has worked to cater to online viewers.[71] Many Jordanians, especially younger ones, consider Roya's content to be more professional, modern, and

independent, pushing the limits of what is possible in a country where state-run broadcast media held a monopoly for decades. Roya appears to have changed the expectations of Jordanian media consumers. This in turn has forced state-run and privately-owned outlets to adapt to remain relevant. It has also compelled decision makers in government to modify their own plans to retain their hegemony over the country's media landscape.

[71] Roger Field, "A vision for broadcast," DigitalStudioMe, 20 February 2017, available online at <https://www.digitalstudiome.com/article-10726-a-vision-for-broadcast> (accessed on 1 May 2019).

Fahed Al Kheitan is the chairman of the state-funded television broadcaster Al Mamlaka that began airing in 2018. Mr Kheitan is allegedly close to the Royal Court and is not popular with the GID. The Royal Court has entrusted Al Kheitan with overseeing the development of a new type of state media that tolerates discussion of topics that would be silenced on other state-funded broadcasters. The outlet is designed to resonate with Jordanians whose tastes and expectations for news and entertainment content have been altered by the emergence of media outlets like Al Ghad and Roya TV. Mr Kheitan currently receives significant financial backing from the state as Al Mamlaka reportedly had a budget of JOD 10m (roughly US\$ 14m) in 2018.[72] The results of his work at the network will likely have a significant impact on future state media strategies in Jordan.



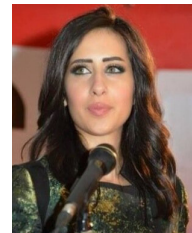
Source: memri.org



Source: ammonnews_net

Zaid Juma and his business partner **Muhannad Khalifa** (on the left) head the Al Kawn for Media and Advertising Group. The two own some of the most popular radio stations in Jordan including Rotana, Radio Energy, and Fann FM. These stations do not air much political content or news but instead focus on popular music. Mr Juma is particularly well-connected in politics and is a member of Jordan's royal family through marriage. Both men have incentives to influence politics in ways that could help them maximize the funds they are able to derive from the advertising side of their business.

Aya Alkam is the deputy manager of the Al Raya media group, an umbrella organization for media outlets operated by the Jordanian Armed Forces. In this capacity, Ms Alkam is the general director of three of the group's most popular radio stations: Bliss FM, Hala FM, and Army FM. While Hala FM does produce news, listeners to these stations allegedly come for less political content. For example, Army FM derives a significant number of listeners from its near monopoly on up-to-date news about traffic. Ms Alkam, like Messrs Juma and Khalifa, possesses significant incentives to influence politics in a way that allows her programming to become more profitable through advertising.



Source: Twitter



Source: journalismfestival.com

Lina Ejeilat is the editor-in-chief of 7iber, an online publication dedicated to promoting government accountability, human rights, and pluralism in Jordan. In 2014, Ejeilat was at the forefront of opposition to new regulations requiring online news outlets to obtain licenses from the JMC. At 7iber, Ms Ejeilat has worked to expand the scope of the outlet's multimedia content to include cutting-edge reporting and research on digital rights in Jordan. 7iber has also launched numerous trainings for independent journalists. She is well-regarded by international actors engaged in supporting democracy and press

freedom as evidenced by the fact that 7iber has received financial support from organizations including the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), the Embassy of the Netherlands, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

[72] "MPs, gov't discuss official media budget allocations," The Jordan Times, cit.



Source: Twitter

Rana Sabbagh is the executive director of the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), an organization dedicated to the promotion of investigative journalism across the Middle East and North Africa. Prior to her work with ARIJ, Ms Sabbagh was the editor-in-chief at The Jordan Times, making her the first woman in the Levant to run a daily newspaper, and she was also instrumental in establishing Jordan's first independent newspaper Al-Ghad. Ms Sabbagh's current work at ARIJ is supported by prominent media development donors including OSF, UNESCO, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), and multiple embassies.

Civil Society



Source: Wikimedia

Daoud Kuttab is the director of the Community Media Network (CMN), a not-profit entity that aims to establish a more democratic society through news programming and community radio content. Originally from Palestine, Mr Kuttab is a celebrated journalist and an advocate of press freedom and freedom of expression in Palestine and Jordan. In 2000, he launched Jordan's first online community radio station, AmmanNet, which later became FM Radio Al Balad. Mr Kuttab has extensive connections with international donors, NGOs and journalists. He has been actively advocating for policy

changes that would allow more community and nonprofit radio stations to exist in Jordan. For several years, Mr Kuttab served on the board of the Media Program (today Program on Independent Journalism) of OSF, a grant-making organization founded by the Hungarian-American investor and philanthropist George Soros.[73] The board made decisions that impacted OSF's strategy to fund media across the globe.

Mohammad Shamma is the head of the Jordan division of Journalists for Human Rights (JHR), Canada's largest international media development agency. Mr Shamma began his career covering human rights topics for AmmanNet and Radio Al-Balad and has been active in running media training workshops for domestic and international organizations. He is well connected inside international human rights circles and has worked in cooperation with UN bodies in various capacities. Most recently, he led trainings focused on youth and human rights reporting in Jordan for UNESCO and also briefed the UN's Human Rights Committee on topics related to human rights in Jordan.[74] He has also been featured as a commentator on democracy and human rights issues in media articles published by outlets such as Al Jazeera and Foreign Policy.



Source: jhr.ca

[73] Full disclosure: The Center for Media, Data and Society (CMDS), publisher of this report, belongs to Central European University (CEU), a private school founded by Mr Soros. No funding from any Soros-financed entity was used to produce this report.

[74] Clara Tørsleff, "Does Jordan live up to the international standards of human rights?," Dignity, 14 November 2017, available online at <https://dignity.dk/en/blog/does-jordan-live-up-to-the-international-standards-of-human-rights/> (accessed on 1 May 2019).

Nidal Mansour is the executive president of the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ). Mansour and CDFJ have worked for two decades to document attacks against journalists and outline other major pressures that force media professionals to self-censor. CDFJ has documented press freedom violations in Jordan and across the Middle East and North Africa. CDFJ operates a legal defense fund to aid embattled journalists in Jordan and has also advocated for legislation and policy changes conducive to the formation of an independent and free press. Mansour's work on this front has seen him and his organization repressed by the state, most recently in 2017 when Jordanian authorities threatened to punish CDFJ for allegedly accepting illegal funds from foreign donors.[75]



Source: jhr.ca

External Influencers

The shifting interests of large foreign aid donors often influence Jordan's media sector and system of regulation. The Jordanian government derives 12% of its annual budget from grants awarded by foreign governments including the US, EU and Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia. In 2018, the United States pledged US \$ 6.375bn in foreign aid to Jordan over a six-year period.[76] The EU is similarly slated to spend as much as €410m in bilateral assistance to Jordan through the European Neighborhood Instrument, a program aiding countries neighboring the EU, between 2017 and 2020.[77]

Over the past decade, the EU and the US have earmarked significant funds for strengthening democratic reform, civil society and media freedom in Jordan. Following the Arab Spring, many donors in Europe and the US came to view the stability of Jordan as being linked to successful democratic reform. Between 2014 and 2018, the EU funded a multi-million Euro project called "Support to Media in Jordan" implemented by UNESCO in Amman. The first phase of the project analyzed Jordanian media regulation and proposed numerous legal and procedural changes. The following phase of the project forged new partnerships with local actors in government to build new local and community radio stations and improve journalism training and systems of media self-regulation.[78]

Despite these investments in media and civil society, US and European aid to Jordan has become increasingly securitized since the Syrian Civil War and the peak of the Syrian refugee crisis. Current US aid maintains existing funding levels for the Jordanian armed forces but also seeks to protect the state from pressures stemming from economic instability and a large Syrian refugee population. Similarly, in an attempt to relieve pressure stemming from an influx of migration to Europe from

[75] "CPJ urges Jordan to drop charges against regional press freedom group," Committee to Protect Journalists, 3 October 2017, available online at <https://cpj.org/2017/10/cpj-urges-jordan-to-drop-charges-against-regional-.php> (accessed on 25 July 2019).

[76] Ben Fishman & Ghaith al-Omari, "The Jordan Exception in U.S. Foreign Assistance," The Washington Institute, 7 March 2018, available online at <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-jordan-exception-in-u.s.-foreign-assistance> (accessed on 1 May 2019).

[77] See more details on EU's website at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/jordan_en (accessed on 1 May 2019).

[78] "Results of EU-UNESCO partnership to support media in Jordan presented in Brussels," EU Neighbours, 9 May 2017, available online at <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/results-eu-unesco-partnership-support-media-jordan-presented-brussels> (accessed on 1 May 2019).

the Middle East in 2015, EU programs for media in Jordan increasingly gravitated towards tackling refugee- and migration-related topics rather than those issues initially highlighted during the launch of the “Support to Media in Jordan” project.[79]

Jordan’s neighbors in the Gulf have also influenced the country’s media landscape through their significant financial assistance. In 2018, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait announced US \$2.5bn in aid to Jordan following protests against austerity measures and rising foreign debt and cost of living.[80] Jordan also finds itself included in a US-Saudi Middle East alliance that has pushed regional policies vis-a-vis Israel that have angered many Jordanians of Palestinian heritage.[81]

Partially as a result of these developments, the Jordanian government has increasingly utilized legislation such as the country’s cybercrimes law to clamp down on speech and journalism that could endanger relations with neighboring countries. Ironically, external aid that is supposed to strengthen the freedom is turning against the freedom of Jordan’s citizens.

[79] Interviews with Jordanian journalists and media professionals conducted for this report (*See Methodology for Media Influence Matrix: Jordan*)

[81] Suleiman Al-Khalidi, “Gulf states extend over \$1 billion to Jordan as part of aid package,” Reuters, 4 October 2018, available online at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-jordan-gulf-aid/gulf-states-extend-over-1-billion-to-jordan-as-part-of-aid-package-idUSKCN1ME0WT> (accessed on 1 May 2019).

[82] Abdullah Sawalha, “Jordan’s Shift Back to the Sunni-Israeli Coalition,” The Washington Institute, 13 July 2018, available online at <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/jordans-shift-back-to-the-sunni-israeli-coalition1> (accessed on 1 May 2019).



Tel: +36 1 327 3000 / 2609

Fax: +36 1 235 6168

E-mail: cmds@ceu.edu
cmds.ceu.edu

Postal address:

Center for Media, Data and Society
Central European University
Nador u. 9
1051 Budapest
Hungary



Attribution 3.0 Unported
(CC BY 3.0)