

MAPPING DIGITAL MEDIA: JORDAN



Mapping Digital Media: Jordan

A REPORT BY THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

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Mapping Digital Media

The values that underpin good journalism, the need of citizens for reliable and abundant information, and the importance of such information for a healthy society and a robust democracy: these are perennial, and provide compass-bearings for anyone trying to make sense of current changes across the media landscape.

The standards in the profession are in the process of being set. Most of the effects on journalism imposed by new technology are shaped in the most developed societies, but these changes are equally influencing the media in less developed societies.

The **Mapping Digital Media** project, which examines the changes in-depth, aims to build bridges between researchers and policymakers, activists, academics and standard-setters across the world. It also builds policy capacity in countries where this is less developed, encouraging stakeholders to participate in and influence change. At the same time, this research creates a knowledge base, laying foundations for advocacy work, building capacity and enhancing debate.

The Media Program of the Open Society Foundations has seen how changes and continuity affect the media in different places, redefining the way they can operate sustainably while staying true to values of pluralism and diversity, transparency and accountability, editorial independence, freedom of expression and information, public service, and high professional standards.

The Mapping Digital Media project assesses, in the light of these values, the global opportunities and risks that are created for media by the following developments:

- the switch-over from analog broadcasting to digital broadcasting;
- growth of new media platforms as sources of news;
- convergence of traditional broadcasting with telecommunications.

Covering 60 countries, the project examines how these changes affect the core democratic service that any media system should provide—news about political, economic and social affairs.

The **Mapping Digital Media** reports are produced by local researchers and partner organizations in each country. Cumulatively, these reports will provide a much-needed resource on the democratic role of digital media.

In addition to the country reports, the Open Society Media Program has commissioned research papers on a range of topics related to digital media. These papers are published as the **MDM Reference Series**.

Mapping Digital Media: Jordan

Executive Summary

With high levels of education and literacy and a youthful population, Jordan is well-placed to explore the opportunities of digital media. Momentum for political reform was catalyzed by the regional uprisings in 2011, prompting modest concessionary measures by the authorities but also a reactionary crackdown on media freedom, with a particular focus on the internet. This is not surprising, given that social networking is increasingly the platform of choice for activists and reformers, and that independent online news services provided the only sustained and relatively extensive (compared with mainstream print outlets) coverage of Jordan's "Friday demonstrations" in 2011.

Television, however, remains the only universal medium in Jordan, and the past decade has seen a dramatic shift in favor of satellite as the dominant viewing platform. This has brought regional and global news providers (such as Al Jazeera), along with hundreds of other free-to-air channels, into over 90 percent of households.

Digital switch-over will have little impact against this backdrop. This may explain why the authorities have been slow to prepare for the transition. At the time of writing there are still no publicly available plans for switch-over, despite Jordan's international commitment to turn off analog signals by 2015.

Elsewhere, there are signs that digitization is changing traditional media consumption patterns. The proportion of households owning conventional radio receivers nearly halved between 2005 and 2008, while computer ownership almost doubled. The proportion of the population that regularly accesses the internet reached 56 percent by the end of June 2012.

The mode of access has also shifted, with both mobile (especially smartphone, since 2010) and fixed home connections growing at the expense of internet cafés. But the cost of access remains prohibitive for many. The limited range of Arabic-language content online also slows the rate at which Jordanians go online.

Significantly, however, online news readership now exceeds that of printed newspapers, despite press circulations remaining stable. Online news consumption has shifted in favor of alternative pure-play providers in recent years, away from global networks such as Al Jazeera and the BBC. Recent survey data suggest that the appeal of online news consists in its perceived independence and, increasingly, its opportunities for participation via comments, despite concerns over the professionalism and integrity of journalism. The lagging behind of newspaper brands in the race to capture online news audiences is a consequence of their lack of independence and slow progress in developing multimedia and interactive services.

The net effect has been a significant injection of pluralism and diversity into the overall news offer, at least for the connected half of the population. This has built on the expansion of satellite television which not only diversified television news but also prompted terrestrial broadcasters to increase attention to local issues and appeal to viewers outside the capital, in order to sustain ratings.

Indeed, the digitization of Jordanian newsrooms in general has coincided with a shift in focus from regional and international news to more localized reporting, in an attempt to fill the gaps left by the foreign networks. The development of audiovisual content on digital platforms has been hindered by a lack of multimedia skills among journalists. At the same time, there are concerns that the growth of online news is precipitating a de-professionalization of the sector.

Such concerns have partly fueled new spaces for investigative journalism, particularly in the university sector, based on digital tools of production and dissemination. This has helped to challenge taboos and red lines around social, economic, and health issues. In particular, the abuse of vulnerable people in institutions—including children and the disabled—has received prominent attention in recent years thanks to the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ).

Despite these signs of journalism opening up, mainstream news outlets continue to steer well clear of serious political scrutiny. Such a task is left to the burgeoning social media sector where the boundaries between news, comment, and activism have been dismantled. Even prior to the uprisings in 2011, social media had begun to demonstrate their potential as platforms for dissent. Numerous Facebook pages and profiles emerged before the 2010 elections, for instance, calling for a boycott of the polls on the basis that political reform had stagnated.

There have also been successful digital campaigns on environmental and social issues, including an online petition in 2011 to save over 2,000 trees, marked for felling to make way for a new military academy. The campaign postponed the project and saved most of the trees. In doing so, it became a symbol of the empowering potential of digital activism, especially when combined with offline initiatives and actions. But digital divides and state repression remain significant obstacles to building outreach and awareness.

What seems clear is that since 2011, the media reform movement has become embedded in the wider struggle for political change. Inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, journalists at the government-owned *Al Rai* newspaper protested for several weeks in early 2011, demanding greater freedom, enhanced

professionalism, higher salaries, and an end to editorial interference by the state. In September 2012, online journalists took to the streets, holding placards declaring “There can be no reform without press freedom.”

Journalism is also increasingly under pressure from advertisers. There are concerns among organizations such as the Jordan Press Association (JPA) and ARIJ that online advertising is being used by companies and political figures to obtain favorable coverage. This reflects the enduring influence of advertisers over the print press, which receives 72 percent of all advertising spend.

Both the press and radio benefitted from a marked reduction in the share of advertising absorbed by television—down from 28 percent in 2000 to just 7 percent in 2008. The economic downturn caused only a small drop in advertising revenues in 2010, and the share of digital advertising is now growing rapidly, up from 1 percent in 2009 to over 11 percent in 2013.

The most prominent new entrant in the news market over recent years has been *Al Ghad*. Established in 2004 as the second independent national newspaper, it rose quickly to rank among the largest titles in terms of both circulation and online readership. But the owner’s attempts to launch a commercial television service foundered in 2007 when the Audiovisual Commission (AVC) unexpectedly halted its transmission shortly after launch. The AVC then withdrew the channel’s license, claiming it had failed to complete the necessary licensing paperwork.

This incident demonstrated the limits to spectrum liberalization which began with the Audiovisual Law in 2002. The state’s enduring influence and control were underlined in 2012 when Josat TV, one of two terrestrial competitors of the state-run channel, lost its license over opinions expressed by a guest during a program. Charges against the broadcaster included incitement against the regime and undermining the king’s dignity. The program’s host, Rula Hroub, was elected as an MP in January 2013 but she still faces trial over the incident.

While liberalization has produced several new independent radio stations, the licensing framework privileges entertainment formats over news and politics. At first this was due primarily to a levy of 50 percent on top of the license fees of stations which featured news and politics. Although the levy was abolished in 2012, new entrants still face significant cost barriers as a result of the state’s monopolization of antennae and transmitters.

Some goals set forth in the 2003 Radio Frequency Allocation Plan have been accomplished in regard to developing mobile markets and ending Jordan Telecom’s monopoly in the fixed-line sector. There have also been moves to establish the independence of the Telecommunications and Regulatory Commission (TRC), which is expected to assume the licensing work of the AVC in the near future as part of regulatory convergence.

Regulatory independence is largely cosmetic, however, given the system of appointments and licensing approvals which remain in the government’s hands. In a similar vein, the state’s attempts to promote transparency have lacked substantiation. A 2007 freedom of information law (the first in the Arab world) has proved toothless as public bodies and institutions can ignore applications with impunity.

Meanwhile, repressive legal measures have been adopted, with the aim of curbing internet freedom. A proposed law in 2010 would have enabled authorities to search and seize property, as well as access computers from online publishers without prior approval of the state's prosecution agency. The outcry from journalists and human rights groups succeeded in limiting the scope of the law's application to more clearly defined cybercrimes such as identity theft and fraud.

In June 2013, the government blocked access to more than 250 news websites under new legislation which has proved even more controversial. In September 2012, a royal decree amending Jordan's media law drastically restricted freedom of speech online. According to the amended law, Jordan's news websites are required to register with the Ministry of Commerce and obtain a license from the Ministry of Culture's Press and Publications Department. The law's broad definition of internet website means that blogs and webpage managers are subjected to the same restrictions as news sites. Moreover, to obtain a license to operate, a news website needs to pay a fee of some US\$ 1,400. Despite strong opposition from journalists, the law was adopted and is being implemented. This latest development in digital media regulation represents the most blatant move to restrict freedom of speech.

Such measures have been accompanied by a rise in extralegal interference since the closing of Al Jazeera's Amman office in 2002. Violent attacks on journalists have increased since 2011 when police attacked reporters covering a pro-reform demonstration in Amman, injuring more than a dozen people and breaking cameras. International assessments of Jordan's media freedom have, accordingly, become less favorable since 2011.

Although there is evidence to suggest that self-censorship among journalists has waned, there is also evidence that it may be spreading among citizen journalists, bloggers, and online reporters. The 2011 uprisings certainly highlighted the issue of editorial independence, and the struggle for media reform and freedom has gathered momentum since then. But it confronts a tide of reactionary measures by the state, one which shows little sign of receding.

Context

Until 1918, the territory of Jordan was under Ottoman rule. In 1921 it became an independent constitutional state under British rule, and remained so until 1946, when it gained full independence as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is a country rich in human capital but poor in natural resources. It occupies an area of over 90,000 km² with a population of just over 6 million, nearly half of them living in the capital, Amman.

Over 70 percent of the population is urban; less than 6 percent of the rural population is nomadic or semi-nomadic. Jordan is bordered by Syria in the north, Iraq in the east, Saudi Arabia in the south, and Israel and the occupied West Bank in the west.¹ Arabic is the official language; English is widely spoken and understood.

Most Jordanians are Arabs. However, the population includes small communities of Circassians, Armenians, and Kurds. The population has doubled more than seven times since the 1950s, due to natural growth and immigration resulting from regional conflicts. According to the United Nations Organization (UN), there were approximately 2 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan in 2008.²

The king is authorized to approve amendments to the constitution, declare war, command the armed forces, and dissolve Parliament. Constitutional amendments were made after protests swept the region in early 2011; they included limiting the king's ability to postpone elections indefinitely. Otherwise, his powers remain intact; he still appoints and dismisses the prime minister and the Upper House of Parliament. After the Arab Spring, for the first time the king promised to consult Parliament when choosing a prime minister. The Lower House of Parliament—formerly 120-strong, now with 150 members—includes a number of seats reserved for minorities and women. Deputies are elected for a four-year term. The king appoints the 55-member Senate—the Upper House—for a four-year term. The Cabinet is accountable to the deputies on matters of general policy and may be forced to resign by a two-thirds vote of no confidence.³

1. See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html> (accessed 15 December 2010).

2. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA), "UNRWA Statistics," 13 July 2008, at <http://web.archive.org/web/20080713042517/http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/index.html> (accessed 2 May 2013).

3. See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html> (accessed 15 December 2010).

The powers of the legislative bodies have been under debate since the Arab Spring swept the region. Under a newly revised election law, the electorate would be able to vote for individual candidates in their own district and also for a political party or national coalition. The number of seats reserved for women would be raised from 12 to 15, and the total number of seats in Parliament increased from 120 to 150.

Jordan is classified by the World Bank as an “upper middle income country.”⁴ However, almost 14 percent of its population of just over 6 million lives below the poverty line.⁵ Like other countries in the region, unemployment is high, especially among women and young people. According to Jordan’s official Department of Statistics, overall unemployment stands at 12.5 percent, but the rate among people under 30, who comprise nearly 70 percent of the population, is more than double that.⁶

Education and literacy rates at over 90 percent remain high compared with other countries with similar incomes. While pursuing economic reform and increased trade, Jordan’s economy will continue to be vulnerable to external shocks and regional unrest. Without stability in the region, Jordan will not achieve its potential for growth.

4. See <http://data.worldbank.org/country/jordan> (accessed 14 June 2013).

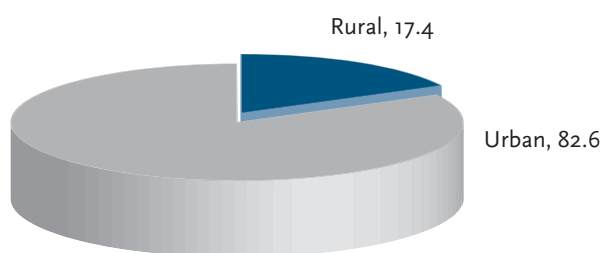
5. “Jordan Country Page,” World Bank, at <http://data.worldbank.org/country/jordan> (accessed 14 June 2013).

6. Department of Statistics (DOS), at http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/index.htm (accessed 19 September 2013).

Social Indicators

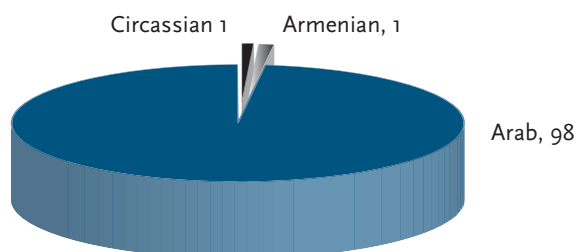
Population: 6.3 million (2012)
Households 1.15 million (2011)

Figure 1.
Rural–urban breakdown (% of total population), 2012



Source: Department of Statistics (DOS), 2012⁷

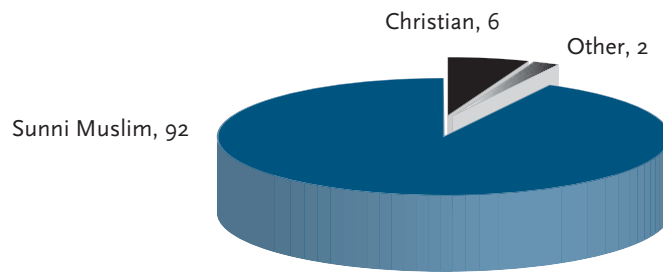
Figure 2.
Ethnic composition (% of total population), 2013



Source: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), “World Factbook,” at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html> (accessed 8 February 2013)

7. See http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/Demography/2012/2-3.pdf (accessed 8 February 2013).

Figure 3.
Religious composition (% of total population), 2001



Note: The majority of Christians are Greek Orthodox, but there are also Greek and Roman Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestants. The category “Other” includes several small Shi’a Muslim and Druze populations.

Source: CIA, “World Factbook,” at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jo.html> (accessed 8 February 2013)

Economic Indicators

Table 1.
Economic indicators, 2005–2013

| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 ^o | 2013 ^f |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| GDP (current prices, US\$ billion) | 12.58 | 15.05 | 17.11 | 21.98 | 23.84 | 26.44 | 28.88 | 31.35 | 33.84 |
| GDP (current prices, US\$), per head | 2,300 | 2,688 | 2,989 | 3,757 | 3,986 | 4,326 | 4,618 ^o | 4,901 ^f | 5,172 |
| Gross National Income (GNI), (current US\$), per head | 4,450 | 4,870 | 5,350 | 5,690 | 5,880 | 5,810 | 5,970 | n/a | n/a |
| Unemployment (% of total labor force) | 14.8 | 14.0 | 13.1 | 12.6 | 12.9 | 12.5 | 12.9 | 12.9 | 12.9 |
| Inflation (average annual rate, % against previous year) | 4.1 | 7.4 | 5.0 | 9.0 | 2.6 | 6.1 | 3.2 | 4.3 | 4.1 |

Notes: ^o: outlook; ^f: forecast; n/a: not available

Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF) (GDP, unemployment and inflation data); World Bank (GNI data)

1. Media Consumption: The Digital Factor

1.1 Digital Take-up

1.1.1 Digital Equipment

Television is the quasi-universal media device, with almost 100 percent coverage of Jordanian households. Household ownership of conventional radio receivers fell from 71 percent in 2005 to 38.7 percent in 2008.⁸ It seems likely that some of this fall is due to platform convergence, and that Jordanians still listen to radio, but in new ways, i.e. online.

Due to government initiatives aimed at increasing the affordability of becoming wired, household computer ownership grew from 23 percent in 2005 to 36.3 percent in 2009.⁹ Additionally, the rising competition between the three leading telecommunications companies in Jordan (Orange, Zain Jordan, and Umniah) has led to more affordable rates of connectivity through different types of internet subscription and speed rates, but not substantively. In 2011, Jordan regressed to 91st place globally (compared with 84th in 2010) and 10th regionally in the information and communications technology (ICT) Price Basket (IPB), which tracks and compares the cost and affordability of ICT services worldwide. “Countries that ranked ahead of Jordan in the IPB have a higher income for individuals. The IPB measures affordability while taking into account the income of individuals in each of the countries polled,” said Jawad Abbassi, founder and general manager of the Arab Advisors Group, a consultancy company.¹⁰

8. Department of Statistics (DOS), 2008, at http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/linked-html/jordan_no.htm (accessed 19 September 2013).

9. DOS, 2009, at http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/linked-html/jordan_no.htm (accessed 14 June 2013).

10. See <http://jordantimes.com/jordan-10th-regionally-in-affordability-of-ict-services> (accessed 8 February 2013).

PC ownership and internet subscription rates do not, however, reflect the total wired population, as many people access the internet from work or public internet cafés.¹¹ The number of internet users accessing the internet at home jumped from 40 percent to 49 percent between 2009 and 2010. In contrast, internet cafés lost ground: they were used by 25 percent of internet users in 2010, down from 36 percent in the previous year.¹²

Table 2.
Households owning equipment, 2005–2011

| | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 ¹³ | | 2010 | | 2011 ¹⁴ | |
|--------|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| | No. of HH ¹⁵ ('000) | % of THH ¹⁶ | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH |
| TV set | 980 | 96.8 | 1,037 | 97.0 | 1,060 | 97.1 | 1,104 | 97.4 | 1,137 | 97.6 | 1,152 | 98.9 | 1,157 | 98.9 |
| Radio | 1,013 | 71.0 | n/a | n/a | 1,059 | 47.8 | 1,083 | 38.7 | n/a | n/a | 398 | 34.2 | n/a | n/a |
| PC | 232 | 23.0 | 256 | 24.0 | 272 | 25.0 | 445 | 39.3 | 500 | 43.0 | 547 | 47.0 | 607 | 51.0 |

Note: HH: households; THH: total number of households; n/a: not available

Source: Calculations by OSF editors based on data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) unless stated otherwise

1.1.2 Platforms

Despite the abundance of communication platforms, analog television is still the most popular medium. According to the Department of Statistics (DOS), household television ownership was 96.8 percent in 2005. It grew slightly to reach 97.5 percent in 2009. Simultaneously, there has been a drastic increase in satellite subscriptions, from 50.5 percent in 2005 to 90.9 percent in 2008, and then 96 percent in 2009, suggesting that only a small percentage of the population only watch the state-run terrestrial television channel.

All indications point to a steady growth of the telecoms industry in Jordan. Mobile phone ownership stood at 118 percent in 2011.¹⁷ Although internet penetration is high, computer ownership and internet subscription rates remain low despite their steady growth in recent years, due—analysts say—to their high cost.

11. Strategies-Harris Interactive conducted the third independent Jordan Media Survey in March 2010. See http://aswatona.net/wp-content/files_mf/1336077330jordannewmediasurveyoffline20100606100606055215phpapp01.pdf (accessed 14 June 2013).

12. Strategies-Harris Interactive conducted the third independent Jordan Media Survey in March 2010. See http://aswatona.net/wp-content/files_mf/1336077330jordannewmediasurveyoffline20100606100606055215phpapp01.pdf (accessed 14 June 2013).

13. Data from the DOS for television and radio: see http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/linked-html/jordan_no.htm (accessed 14 April 2013).

14. Data from the DOS for television and radio: see http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/jorfig/2011/1.pdf (accessed 14 April 2013).

15. Total number of households owning the equipment: see http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/jorfig/2011/1.pdf (accessed 14 June 2013).

16. Percentage of total number of households in the country: see http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/jorfig/2011/1.pdf (accessed 14 June 2013).

17. See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS.P2> (accessed 15 June 2013).

Table 3.

Platforms for the main TV reception and digital take-up, 2005–2012

| | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | | 2010 | | 2011 | | 2012 | |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH | No. of HH ('000) | % of THH |
| Terrestrial reception | 451 | 49 | 389 | 40.8 | 318 | 32.5 | 300 | 29.6 | 279 | 26.8 | 257 | 23.90 | 210 | 18.90 | 159 | 13.90 |
| – of which digital | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cable reception | 1 | 0.15 | 2 | 0.20 | 2 | 0.25 | 3 | 0.30 | 4 | 0.35 | 4 | 0.40 | 5 | 0.45 | 6 | 0.5 |
| – of which digital | 1 | 0.15 | 2 | 0.20 | 2 | 0.25 | 3 | 0.30 | 4 | 0.35 | 4 | 0.40 | 5 | 0.45 | 6 | 0.5 |
| Satellite reception | 834 | 90.6 | 858 | 89.8 | 872 | 89.0 | 941 | 93.0 | 992 | 95.0 | 1,065 | 98.9 | 1,095 | 98.5 | 1,126 | 98.1 |

Notes: Based on the Arab Advisors Group's surveys, terrestrial reception is in steady decline, and cable take-up is low, due to the increasing take-up of free-to-air satellite. The marginal drop in the percentage of TV households with satellite reception over the year to 2012 was due mainly to the influx of immigrants with no access to satellite reception.

Source: Arab Advisors Group

Internet penetration has increased rapidly over the past decade. According to the latest statistics from the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC), internet penetration reached 55.9 percent by the end of June 2012, with about 3.535 million users.¹⁸

There were 7.5 million mobile phone subscriptions (118 percent of the population) at the end of 2011, compared with 4.343 million in 2006.¹⁹ Umniah, which provides Umax wireless broadband services to 80 percent of the population, increased its market share in the wireless broadband market from 20 percent in 2010 to 28 percent by mid-2012. Overall, Zain Jordan seems to be leading the market, with a reported 38 percent market share, followed by Orange and Umniah with 33 percent and 28 percent respectively.²⁰ According to a report by the Open Net Initiative, the cost of computers and connectivity, as well as the lack of Arabic-language content on the web, are major obstacles to the growth of internet usage in Jordan.²¹

Table 4.

Internet penetration (total internet subscriptions as % of total number of households) and mobile penetration (total active SIM cards as % of total population), 2005–2012

| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------------------|------|
| Internet | 20.0 | 19.8 | 21.5 | 20.7 | 29 | 38 | 50.5 | 55.9 |
| – of which broadband | 11 | 23 | 38 | 59 | 83 | 57.4 | n/a | n/a |
| Mobile telephony | 57.0 | 78.0 | 86.3 | 94.2 | 96.5 | 97.6 | 98.1 ²² | 140 |
| – of which 3G | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.17 | 11.1 | n/a |

Note: n/a: not available

Source: ITU

18. See <http://jordantimes.com/internet-penetration-tops-55-by-end-of-june> (accessed 8 February 2013).

19. See <http://jordantimes.com/jordans-high-mobile-penetration-reflects-global-trend-statistics-show> (accessed 14 June 2013).

20. See <http://www.commsmea.com/12822-jordan-thrives-amid-change/#.UQz8rByR10E> (accessed 14 June 2013).

21. See <http://opennet.net/research/profiles/jordan> (accessed 14 June 2013).

22. See http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_a/main/cd_yb2011/pdf/Information_and_Communication.pdf (accessed 23 February 2013).

1.2 Media Preferences

1.2.1 Main Shifts in News Consumption

The introduction of digital technologies has given rise to new trends in media consumption in television, print, internet, and radio.

Given the high level of household television ownership, television remains the platform most widely accessed, despite the fact that digitization has not yet happened. The impact of new technology has been most evident in the ability of pan-Arab, free-to-air satellite channels to broadcast news programs offering regional political analysis. The effect of this change can be measured in the dramatic increase in satellite ownership over a short span of time, rising from 50.5 percent in 2005 to 96.9 percent in 2010. As far as the local television industry is concerned, new independent stations such as Roya TV and Nourmina TV have also become competitive alternatives to the government-owned Jordan Radio and Television Corporation (JRTV).

Since as far back as early 2006, internet services have offered Jordanians an alternative platform for news. Traditionally, newspapers suffer from limited readership and government control. In 2006, when internet penetration stood at 23 percent, AmmonNews was developed as one of the first news websites in the country, introducing a new trend in media consumption. Seven years on, hundreds of other news websites have emerged in Jordanian cyberspace, with offers that are seen as both less professional and also more independent from the government.

In June 2013, Jfranews.com managed to become the sixth-most visited news website in Jordan, according to Alexa.com, indicating the scale of public enthusiasm for this new platform. Further proving the prominence of this new media industry, the government imposed new censorship regulations on news websites in its 2013 amendments to the Press and Publication Law. The availability of news on the internet has opened a channel for Jordanians to share links, especially on social networks. There were some 2.2 million Facebook users and 59,726 active Twitter users as of August 2012.²³ Newspapers such as *Al Ghad* update their websites with breaking news around the clock. Readers now are also able to rate and comment on articles and express their opinions, adding an interactive dimension that was not available before digitization.

Despite various changes in radio licensing regulations, introduced by the 2002 and 2012 amendments to the Audiovisual Law, household radio ownership saw a staggering drop from 71 percent in 2005 to 34.2 percent in 2010. This could be explained by the different ways that Jordanians access radio stations today, whether in their cars, online, or via their mobile devices. Nevertheless, surveys show that the majority of the 20 radio stations are entertainment-based, featuring music and entertainment news.

Due to the absence of robust municipal elections and the consequent lack of accountability by public officials, Jordanians have turned increasingly to local morning radio shows in order to raise their concerns publicly over issues such as the lack of rubbish collection, water shortages, and road problems. In many cases

23. "Jordanians and Facebook," *Jordan Business*, August 2012, at <http://demos.mediaplusjordan.com/jb/cms/node/25> (accessed 2 February 2013).

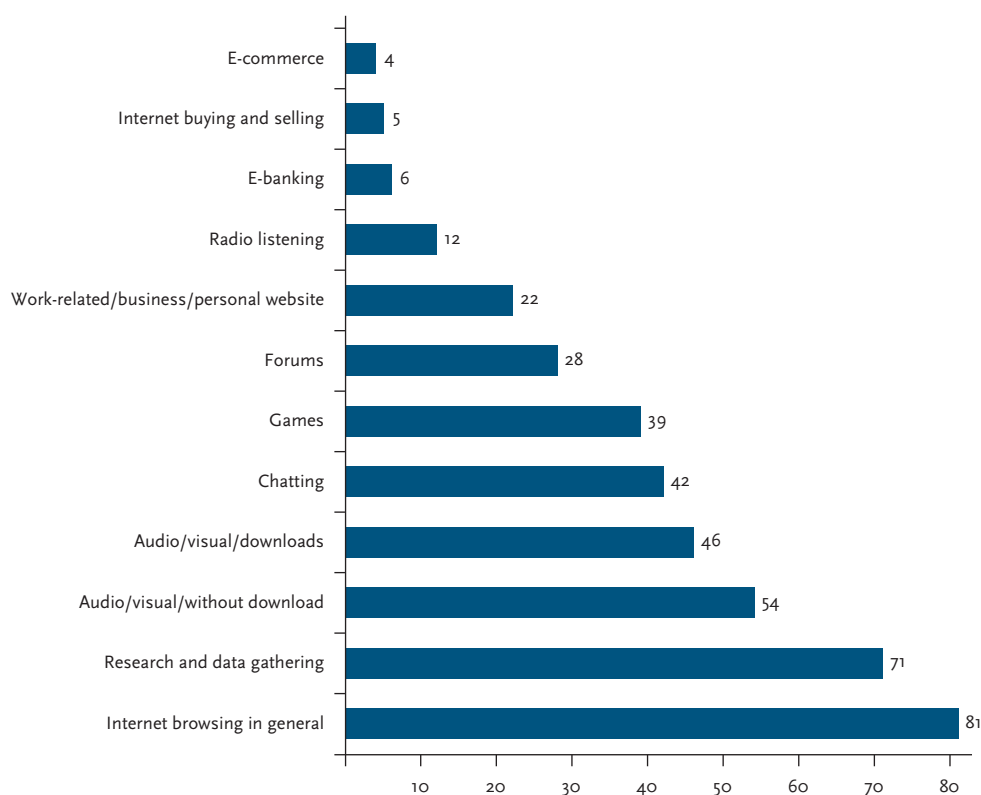
their voices are heard and the problems are addressed.²⁴ It has also become a centralized medium promoting dialogue on national controversies and facilitates access to international radio channels, such as BBC Arabic.

In August 2004, *Al Ghad*, a privately owned and independent daily newspaper, was established. Traditional newspapers have maintained a consistent rate of readership; *Al Rai* scores the highest circulation with 90,000 a day, followed by *Ad-Dustour* with 80,000, *Al Ghad* 60,000, *Al Arab Al Yawm* 24,000, and finally, Jordan's only English-language daily, the *Jordan Times*, with 12,000 a day.²⁵

AmmanNet, also broadcasting as Radio Al-Balad, has been dubbed the only community radio channel with news, information programs, talk-back, and request shows. The station was established in 2000 as an internet-based radio station broadcasting local issues. It began airing in July 2005, focussing on social and cultural issues. Its founder, Daoud Kuttab, a journalist and columnist, said his station's aim is to promote human rights and freedom.²⁶

Figure 4.

Use of internet services (%), 2010²⁷



Note: The horizontal axis refers to the percentage of the sample of 2,560 face-to-face interviews with an adult population aged 15+, with a booster sample of 320 households in each of Karak and Ma'an cities.

24. Muna Abu Hmour, "Engagement with Public Concern Increases Radio Listenership," *Al Ghad*, 28 January 2013, at <http://www.alghad.com/index.php/article/603874.html> (accessed 30 January 2013).

25. At <http://www.emediasearch.com> (accessed 8 February 2013).

26. Interview with Daoud Kuttab, founder of AmmanNet Radio Balad station, Amman, April 2012.

27. Strategies-HarrisInteractive conducted the third independent Jordan Media Survey in March 2010. See http://aswatona.net/wp-content/files_mf/1336077330jordannewmediasurveyoffline20100606100606055215phpapp01.pdf (accessed 2 February 2013).

1.2.2 Availability of a Diverse Range of News Sources

With greater reliance on the internet as a source of news, numerous news websites have surfaced during the past decade. The readership of online news now exceeds that of printed newspapers, according to Alexa.com. The two most widely read news websites are Jfrnews.com and Garaanews.com, which rank 6th and 10th respectively among the most visited websites in the country.²⁸

Social media, blogs, and increasingly news websites are also used as platforms for public discussion of national issues. The number and tone of comments on articles vary by topic on news websites and blogs.²⁹

Omar Koudsi, president of Jeeran.com, a website which provides Arab users with tools and creative means to communicate and interact online, said in an interview with *Arabian Business* magazine: “People are really beginning to understand the potential of online. People aged 12 to 21 do not spend much time in front of the TV anymore. They are online. Media campaigns are starting to reflect that. But we have to break down years of tradition.”³⁰

According to Alexa.com, in June 2013 Jordanians surfing the web chose pure-player news sites such as Jfrnews.com, Garaanews.com, Sarayanews.com, and Alwakeelnews.net to read about current events, rather than print newspapers that are online.³¹ This may be due to the more up-to-date coverage offered by pure-play services. Print newspapers have one edition a day. It is worth mentioning that unlike Western media, Jordanian news outlets have only just begun venturing into the field of multimedia reporting. JordanDays.tv, launched nearly two years ago, uploads videos covering local events as well as both local and international interviews. *Al Ghad* remains the only semi-interactive print news website that includes updates throughout the day on its website. Nevertheless, *Al Rai's* and *Al Ghad's* websites remain in the top 10 visited news websites in Jordan, according to Alexa.com.

In 2008, there was a high readership for websites such as Al Jazeera (66.5 percent), Al Arabiya (35.1 percent), and the BBC (18.4 percent).³² However, 2010 saw a clear shift, with Ammonnews getting 38 percent, Al Jazeera getting 32 percent, and Saraya News getting 24 percent.³³ Jordanians mostly use local websites to receive domestic news.

28. See <http://www.alexacom/topsites/countries/JO> (accessed 14 June 2013).

29. See <http://www.black-iris.com/2011/01/09/on-violence-in-jordan-lately/> (accessed 17 February 2012) and <http://bit.ly/lp9gs8> (in Arabic) (accessed 14 June 2011).

30. Strategies-HarrisInteractive conducted the third independent Jordan Media Survey in March 2010. At http://aswatona.net/wp-content/files_mf/1336077330jordannewmediasurveyoffline20100606100606055215phpapp01.pdf (accessed 2 February 2013).

31. See <http://www.alexacom/topsites/countries/JO> (accessed 17 February 2012).

32. Strategies-HarrisInteractive conducted the second independent Jordan Media Survey from 30 November 2008 to 15 December 2008, at http://www.irex.org/system/files/mdd-JMS_2009%20_ALL-Sections-Mar1.pdf (accessed 17 February 2012).

33. Alexa.com provides information about websites including Top Sites, Internet Traffic Stats, and Metrics, at <http://www.alexacom/topsites/countries/JO> (accessed 1 October 2011).

1.3 News Providers

1.3.1 Leading Sources of News

The diversity of the population's media exposure is partly a function of relatively high subscription rates for satellite television. With an assortment of transnational satellite channels such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, viewers are exposed to academic and political discourses across the Arab world and beyond. This has posed a significant challenge to the local government-run Jordan TV (JTV) in attempting to meet the raised expectations of the average Jordanian viewer.

Table 5.
Main media outlets in Jordan by audience³⁴

| Daily newspapers ³⁵ | Radio stations ³⁶ | Television ³⁷ |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Al Rai</i> (state-owned newspaper) | Ammanet (Balad FM) (first community radio in Jordan) | Jordan Radio and Television Corporation (JRTV) (state-owned television) |
| <i>Al Ghad</i> (first independent newspaper) | Rotana (music and morning talk-show) | Roya TV (Amman-based satellite channel) |
| <i>Ad-Dustour</i> (partly owned by government) | Amen FM (Public Security Department) | Nourmina (first privately owned satellite channel broadcasting from Amman) |
| | Hawa FM (Greater Amman Municipality, focussing on GAM projects) | |

1.3.1.1 Print Media

In the past five years, the circulation rates for the seven most read daily newspapers in Jordan have remained steady. The top two by circulation are *Al Rai* (70,000 a day) and *Al Ghad* (50,000–60,000).³⁸ The print sector accounts for 72 percent of the total advertising spend in the country. Newspaper advertising spend was estimated at US\$75 million in 2011. Today, 44 percent of Jordanians use the internet daily as a news source.³⁹ A poll by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) revealed that only 53.8 percent of Jordanians had read any news publication within the 30 days prior to the poll; 56 percent read daily newspapers, 15.4 percent read weeklies, and 15.7 percent read monthly publications.⁴⁰

34. See emediasearch 2011, at http://www.irex.org/system/files/MSIMENA08_Jordan.pdf (accessed 14 June 2013).

35. See <http://www.alrai.com>, <http://www.alghad.jo>, and <http://www.addustour.com> (all accessed 26 November 2012), and <http://www.alarabalya-wm.net> (accessed 14 June 2013).

36. See <http://ar.ammanet.net/>, <http://www.rotanaradio.jo/>, <http://www.amenfm.jo> (accessed 14 June 2013).

37. See <http://www.jrtv.gov.jo/>, <http://roya.tv>, <http://www.nourminatv.com> (accessed 14 June 2013).

38. At <http://www.emediasearch.com> (accessed 14 June 2013).

39. Arab Media Forum, at <http://www.arabmediaforum.ae/userfiles/EnglishAMO.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2013).

40. Jordan Press Foundation – Al-Rai (PRES), “Equity Research Report. Initiation of Coverage,” ABC Investments, Amman, July 2009, at [http://www.abci.com.jo/cms_files/Jordan_Press_Foundation_-_Al-Rai_\(PRES\)_-_Initiation_of_Coverage.pdf](http://www.abci.com.jo/cms_files/Jordan_Press_Foundation_-_Al-Rai_(PRES)_-_Initiation_of_Coverage.pdf) (accessed 17 February 2012) (hereafter, Jordan Press Foundation – Al-Rai (PRES), “Equity Research Report”).

1.3.1.2 Online

There are also news websites that continue to emerge. Although a chart comparing newspaper circulations during the past five years does not seem to be available, news websites were mostly created in 2010 and 2011.

On 2 June 2013, the Jordanian government blocked local access to about 290 news websites under a new law that caused outrage among human rights and media organizations, which denounced this as a step to quell critics of the government.⁴¹

The competition prompted by the rise in Jordanians' exposure to regional media has boosted the local media industry. In the past decade, various new local outlets, such as Roya TV and *Al Ghad* newspaper, have been established, providing an alternative source of information and news for Jordanians. The pressure of digitization and the so-called "age of information" have led to increased coverage of domestic, local, and community issues in the media industry in Jordan. Previously, print and broadcast stations had covered regional news and focussed more on Jordan's foreign policy.

Table 6.
Most visited news websites, by users, 2010–2013⁴²

| Rank Feb 2010 | Website | Rank Jan 2011 | Website | Rank Sep 2012 | Website | Rank Feb 2013 | Website | Rank Jun 2013 | Website |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 38 | Ammonnews.net | 9 | Sarayanews.com | 8 | Sarayanews.com | 8 | Sarayanews.com | 6 | Jfranews.com |
| 32 | Al Jazeera | 11 | Ammonnews.net | 9 | AlWakeelnews.com | 11 | Khaberni.com | 10 | Garaanews.com |
| 25 | Assawsana | 13 | Khaberni.com | 12 | Khaberni.com | 12 | Alwakeelnews.com | 11 | Sarayanews.com |
| 24 | Saraynews.com | 18 | Al Rai | 15 | Ammonnews.net | 13 | Ammonnews.net | 13 | Alwakeelnews.net |
| 21 | Jordanzad | 21 | Ad-Dustour | 18 | Al Rai | 19 | Al Ghad | 14 | Khaberni.com |
| 21 | Elaph | 22 | Al Ghad | 19 | Al Ghad | 20 | Al Rai | 21 | Ammonnews.net |

1.3.1.3 Radio

Radio listenership among those aged 30 and above accounts for 54 percent of total radio listeners, compared with 46 percent in 2007. In 2010, young people, aged 15–29 years old made up 46 percent of radio listeners as opposed to 54 percent in 2007, but this drop is offset by the growing trend of listening to the radio through mobile telephones and the internet.⁴³

41. "Jordan Blocks Access to News Sites," *New York Times*, 3 June 2013, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/04/world/middleeast/jordan-blocks-local-access-to-300-news-web-sites.html> (accessed 15 June 2013).

42. Alexa.com, at <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/JO> (accessed 23 February 2013); Strategies-HarrisInteractive conducted the third independent Jordan Media Survey in March 2010.

43. Strategies-HarrisInteractive conducted the third independent Jordan Media Survey in March 2010.

Nineteen percent of Jordanians aged 15 and above listen to radio through mobile phones and 7 percent through the internet, the poll revealed. While the traditional top radio stations have not scored any major gains since 2007, Amen FM 89.5, owned by the Public Security Department, has made great advances, increasing its penetration almost three times within one year. Smaller, Arabic- and English-speaking radio stations, in particular those that target greater Amman areas, have also made considerable gains, almost doubling their penetration.

1.3.2 Television News Programs

Until the 1990s, Arab television broadcasting was terrestrial in technology and reach. The introduction of satellite technology in the early 1990s marked a technological split in Arab broadcasting into pre- and post-satellite eras.⁴⁴ Although local channels such as Roya TV and Nourmina TV have recently been established, local television remains the only segment that has not developed, and most Jordanians (90 percent of the population have satellite reception) depend on the free-to-air sector, with close to 600 channels available free by satellite. Before the boom of free-to-air television, however, terrestrial television was the main source of entertainment and information. A study⁴⁵ conducted in 2008 found that 52.2 percent of Jordanians watched JRTV for news where the talk-show “*Yis'id Sabahak*” (Friday Morning Show), aired every Friday, was the most watched show, followed by the daily news broadcast at 8 p.m. The study also revealed that the population’s satisfaction with the programs on JRTV was 1.49 out of 3.

A private television channel, ATV, was set to be the first independent local television station, but its operation was suspended on 1 August 2007, the day of its official launch. According to *Jordan Business*, a monthly local magazine, the vision of ATV’s owner Mohammad Alayyan “clashed with that of the Government and other state bodies, and he was requested to sell the company back to the Government.” Mr Alayyan’s vision was to establish an independent and professional television station in Jordan. However, the government did not welcome a completely independent television station and his efforts were halted.⁴⁶

Jordanian television remains significantly underdeveloped. However, several satellite channels in the Arab world have been established. Arabs in various countries in the region, as well as Jordanians, found other sources of news and information, and viewers are relying progressively less on state-run television. In 2002, the government briefly closed Al Jazeera’s office in Amman for its political coverage of Jordan and criticism of the government.⁴⁷

44. Naomi Sakr, *Satellite realms: Transnational Television, Globalization and the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2001.

45. Qablan Abdou Qablan Harb, “Attitudes of viewers towards programs and news services in Jordan Television, 2008,” thesis at the Middle East University in Amman, Jordan.

46. *Jordan Business*, “The Death of ATV,” March 2010.

47. John F. Burns, “Arab TV Gets a New Slant: Newscasts Without Censorship,” *New York Times*, 4 July 1999.

1.3.3 Impact of Digital Media on Good-quality News

News quality can be assessed in terms of freedom and censorship; interactivity and accessibility; professionalism and ethics; and relevance to local audiences.

By 2012, the internet had become a more popular source for news and information than newspapers (see section 1.2.2). This profoundly affected the state's capacity to control the media agenda. "Despite the challenges we face today in Jordan, the introduction of news websites and community radio stations has been able to push the envelope and provide freedom that did not exist in traditional print and broadcast media," said Mohammad Shamma, a correspondent covering human rights issues for Radio Al-Balad and AmmanNet.

However, the news media in Jordan continue to face severe restrictions on free speech. Assessments of media freedom in Jordan have gone down: Freedom House's ranking fell from "Partly Free" in 2009 to "Not Free" in 2010, and it ranked 120 out of 178 countries in the Reporters Without Borders' "Worldwide Press Freedom" table for 2010.⁴⁸ In 2012, Jordan was again ranked "Not Free" by Freedom House,⁴⁹ and it slipped six places to 134 out of 178 in the 2013 "Worldwide Press Freedom" table.⁵⁰ Media freedom has declined mainly due to additional restrictions in the press and publication laws, restrictions on internet freedom, surveillance, and indirect pressure on certain journalists and editors.⁵¹

More Jordanians are turning to the internet for their news and using it as a tool to express their views on matters small and large. According to the 2010 Jordan New Media Survey, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Jordanians are visiting news websites both for the opportunity to view news that is less subject to government control (less than print and state-run television), and for the opportunity to comment on what is posted online: 44 percent of Jordanians rated the opportunity to comment and interact as a reason for visiting news websites, compared with 41 percent the year before (2009).⁵²

The media are adapting to such trends and to the growing demand from news consumers to use digital media as platforms for public discussion and interaction. Much of this demand has been stimulated by competition from regional satellite broadcasters and the explosion of online news sources. "Newspapers have been forced to focus on feature stories, demand action and provide analysis in Jordan because of satellite television, social media and local news websites that focus on national coverage, including in areas that were once ignored," said Ashraf al Rai, a journalist formerly with *Al Ghad*.

48. "Freedom in the World 2010: Global Erosion and Freedom," January 2010, at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1120> (accessed 9 February 2013).

49. See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/jordan> (accessed 26 September 2013).

50. See <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html> (accessed 9 February 2013).

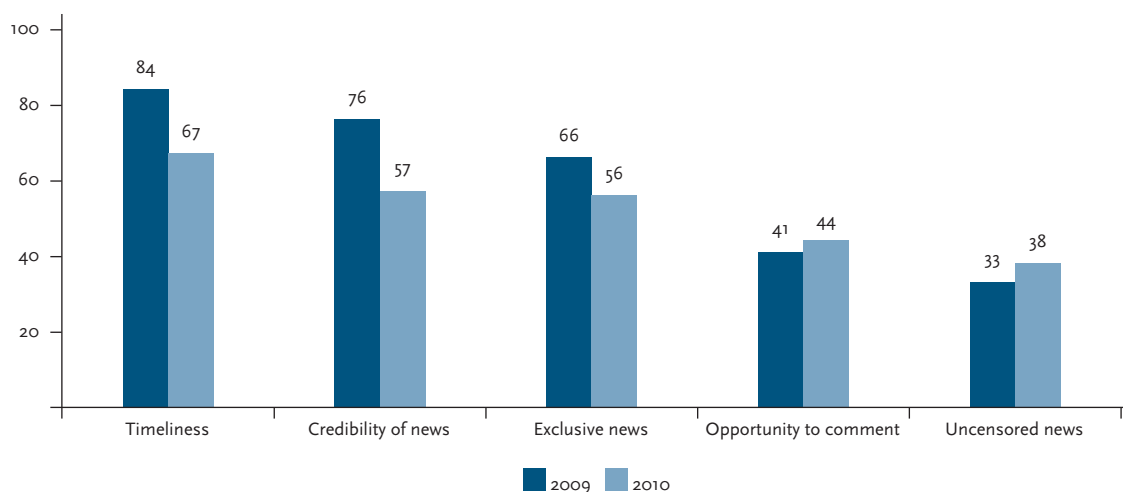
51. See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2012/jordan> (accessed 15 June 2013).

52. Strategies-HarrisInteractive conducted the third independent Jordan Media Survey in March 2010. At http://aswatona.net/wp-content/files_mf/1336077330jordannewmediasurveyoffline20100606100606055215phpapp01.pdf (accessed 26 September 2013).

That said, concerns are rising that the proliferation of news websites and other electronic media outlets are giving rise to a dilution of professionalism among journalists, making their work less credible. Mr Shamma of Radio Al-Balad and AmmanNet said: “News websites contributed to freedom of the press, but they also pose problems for us in terms of professionalism and ethics because sometimes they present only one side of a story, or run a story based on rumors or even personal interests.” Echoing that view, a study by the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) concluded that “beyond any doubt” the journalism sector in Jordan “is experiencing a serious and severe crisis from the professionalism point of view.”⁵³

With Jordan’s population comprising mostly young people—nearly 37 percent are under 15⁵⁴—and the increased use of the internet, print newspapers will need to adapt to the digitization of the industry but also find creative ways to tell stories, if they are to compete with online news websites.⁵⁵

Figure 5.
Reasons for visiting news websites (% of sample), * 2009–2010



Note: * Total sample of 2,560 adults (aged 15+), interviewed face-to-face

Source: Strategies-Harris Interactive, Third Independent Jordan Media Survey, March 2010⁵⁶

53. Interviews with journalists Mohammad Shamma, Amman, 23 November 2011, and Ashraf al Rai, Amman, 9 April 2011.

54. At http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/egm-adolescents/p06_roudi.pdf (accessed 26 September 2013).

55. Jordan Press Foundation – Al-Rai (PRES), “Equity Research Report.”

56. See http://aswatona.net/wp-content/files_mf/1336077330jordannewmediasurveyoffline20100606100606055215phpapp01.pdf (accessed 27 April 2013).

1.4 Assessments

All indications point to a steady rise in digital media take-up. More than 100 percent of Jordanians own mobile phones (some people have more than one), and over 97 percent of households have a television set; of these, 90 percent have satellite reception.⁵⁷ These statistics affect the choice of news consumption for many Jordanians. Despite a steady increase over recent years, internet home subscription remains low, perhaps due to the high cost of connection. However, there seems to be a clear gap between the low number of internet subscriptions and internet penetration in the kingdom, which is much higher. Although waning, internet cafés are still popular. Many users also access the internet at their place of work and, increasingly, through mobile devices.

Although there has been rapid infrastructure development, media reform continues to be shaped by domestic as well as regional political and societal dynamics. Lack of press freedom, authoritarian media legislation, professionalism, and self-censorship among journalists themselves remain obstacles to truly robust and comprehensive media. Digitization, however, has made it difficult to prevent Jordanians from seeking stories and news content about their community and country from social media and online news. By using Facebook to interact and join groups, Twitter to join debates and find links and having relatively free access to internet sites across the world, it is now nearly impossible to prevent Jordanians from gathering news and information.

Digitization has also put pressure on local media to improve their quality. Surveys cited in this study indicated that Jordanians saw local news websites as constituting less restricted sources of news and having more credibility than print and state-run television.

57. According to the DOS, at http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/jorfig/2011/1.pdf (accessed 15 June 2013).

2. Digital Media and Public or State-administered Broadcasters

2.1 Public Service and State Institutions

2.1.1 Overview of Public Service Media; News and Current Affairs Output

When the satellite boom took place during the 1990s, Jordanians began turning away from JRTV to pan-Arab news channels like Al Jazeera and others. JRTV continues to face major financial problems but despite this, it was forced to change some staff and improve its programs. In addition, it was faced with criticism from citizens and media experts that it was lagging behind other Arab networks in performance and capabilities.⁵⁸

Nearly all news bulletins and most programs broadcast on JRTV are in-house productions. Some entertainment programs are commissioned from local independent production companies.⁵⁹ The channel covers mostly local and regional news but also briefly international news with a daily summary at 7:30 p.m. and the main newscast at 10:00 p.m.

In April 1968, television transmission in Jordan began in black and white from one studio, with three hours of programming each day. In 1972, JTV, as it then was, became the first station in the region to operate a second channel, Channel 2, which specialized in foreign programs, including a news bulletin in English.⁶⁰ Launched in February 1993, the Jordan satellite TV Channel began transmitting on average 20 hours per day, of which 80 percent were locally produced programs. JRTV airs via satellite and reaches all the Arab countries, the southern parts of Europe, Turkey, West Iran, North America, and several countries in northern Africa.⁶¹

58. Alia Shukri Hamzeh, "Jordan Television Seeks to Boost Viewership With Diversified New Lineup," *Jordan Times*, 21 January 2007 (hereafter, Hamzeh, "Jordan Television Seeks to Boost Viewership").

59. See [linktv.org/mosaic](http://www.linktv.org/mosaic/broadcasters/jordan) <http://www.linktv.org/mosaic/broadcasters/jordan> (accessed 27 January 2011).

60. MediaME.com, at http://mediame.com/country/jordan/jordan_tv (accessed 27 January 2011).

61. See [linktv.org/mosaic](http://www.linktv.org/mosaic/broadcasters/jordan) <http://www.linktv.org/mosaic/broadcasters/jordan> (accessed 27 January 2011).

According to Ipsos-Stat, JRTV's viewership, including terrestrial and satellite, dropped from 59.1 percent in 2005 to 44.7 percent in 2006. The survey revealed that terrestrial viewership dropped from 32.3 percent to 25.0 percent between 2005 and 2006. Satellite channel viewership went down from 26.80 percent to 21.10 percent. An Ipsos media executive, Mohammad Dahleh, said the rise in the number of satellite stations providing more attractive entertainment and better programming, including news, made people lose interest in watching JRTV. "This should make the people in charge change and improve the programs to keep attracting an audience," Mr Dahleh said in an interview with the *Jordan Times*.⁶² According to an Arab Advisors Group survey in September 2011, the highest general local television viewership figures were recorded in United Arab Emirates (96 percent), Jordan (95 percent), Saudi Arabia (95 percent), and Tunisia (95 percent).⁶³

Some of the more popular local JRTV programs include "Yawm Jadeed" (Morning Show), broadcast six days a week at 7 a.m. JRTV aims to increase public awareness of social issues, health, and religion, with for example "Yis'id Sabahak," featuring events around the kingdom, with interviews, and "Is'alu Abl al Thikir," a religious talk show which concentrates on Islam and social affairs.

In 2011, an independent local channel was launched, Roya TV, which broadcasts local news, dramas, and a variety of political, social, and economic programs. Jordanians perceive it as more professional than JRTV, and as a channel which is slowly pushing back the limits of freedom in the country's television sector.

Local government and independent newspapers have also created websites where readers can interact and react to articles posted. Many of these channels and news media have Facebook pages and Twitter accounts that post headline news with links to the website followed by comments from readers and viewers. Perhaps more important, regional news channels that broadcast by satellite (see section 1.2.1) have led the state media to focus more on local and domestic news. Shifting audience trends have forced state television to focus on areas that they never used to cover. "People outside the capital are watching the state channel more, while those in the capital receive their news from regional channels and the internet," said Ashraf al Rai, a journalist formerly with *Al Ghad*,⁶⁴ "but state television has lost its national appeal."

The state retained a monopoly in radio broadcasting until the 2002 Audiovisual Law, which created the legal framework for licensing private broadcasters, including for terrestrial television. This ultimately made it possible for several new radio stations to emerge. They are mostly entertainment-focused due to restrictions on airing news content (see section 5.1.2).

62. Hamzeh, "Jordan Television Seeks to Boost Viewership."

63. See http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-t/oth/06/5B/T065B0000060043PDFE.pdf (accessed 8 February 2013).

64. Interview with Ashraf al Rai, journalist, Amman, 9 April 2011.

In September 2012, however, the Audiovisual Commission (AVC) lifted the extra fees on the broadcasting of political content in order to “encourage political programs and news reports in line with what benefits the local society, and to stimulate it, instead of these fees that limit the possibility of tackling what is important and positive and resorting to entertainment programs and ones that are not serious.”⁶⁵ In place of such formal restraints on news broadcasters, the state appears to be maintaining its control through the courts. On 25 July 2012, the AVC filed a lawsuit against Josat TV, a local privately owned television channel, over opinions expressed by a guest on a program hosted by Rula Hroub. Following this incident, the AVC suspended the channel’s license to broadcast. Josat TV was charged with incitement against the regime, undermining the king’s dignity and the status of an official institution, and violating Article 22 of the Audiovisual Law. Ms Hroub, who also faced charges, was elected as an MP on 29 January 2013. As the lawsuit was filed prior to her appointment, she was denied parliamentary immunity and will have to stand trial.⁶⁶

2.1.2 Digitization and Services

JRTV is a state rather than a public service broadcaster. However, this fact has not prevented it from building an online presence. This includes individual websites hosting live streams from the main state-run television and radio outlets as well as Roya TV (see section 2.1.1). There are also exclusive state-run online channels such as Jordandays.tv, and independent online websites that broadcast live events online, including Parliament sessions, news conferences, and street protests demanding political and economic reform after the Arab Spring. After the 2011 ban on unregistered news websites, Jordandays.tv was blocked; today it uses YouTube as well as social media applications.

2.1.3 Government Support

The process of digitizing terrestrial platforms in Jordan has not taken place yet, nor are there any publicly accessible plans in place.

2.1.4 Public Service Media and Digital Switch-over

It cannot yet be determined if the digitization switch-over will hinder or help state media to increase their reach and influence. JRTV broadcasts on YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/JRTVChannel), where it has so far achieved a few thousand hits.

65. See <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleno=130839> (accessed 8 February 2013).

66. At <http://jordantimes.com/article/mps-trial-to-go-forward-despite-immunity> (accessed 8 February 2013).

2.2 Public Service Provision

2.2.1 Perception of Public Service Media

Osama Salameh, author of a 2009 thesis at the University of London entitled “Jordan Television Today: Broadcasters, Programming, and Audiences. A Case Study on West Amman Youths’ Viewing Culture of Jordan Television’s Political Programs,” found that 25–35-year-olds in Amman were frustrated by JRTV’s lack of independence and by the slow pace of reform in the broadcast field, unlike other forms of media in Jordan, which have made progress.⁶⁷

“The 2002 Audio Visual Law officially ended the government monopoly on broadcasting and established the Audiovisual Commission (AVC), to license and regulate private radio and television outlets,” said Yahia Shukier, a journalist with *Arab Al Yawm* newspaper.⁶⁸ “That is a good thing but we still adhere to the press and publication laws and that impacts on freedom of the press and reform.”

Although Jordanians have limited access to local news programming, 90 percent of the 97 percent of households in the kingdom with a television set have satellite reception.⁶⁹ As a result, political discourse and regional revolutions across the Arab world and beyond have reached viewers. Networks like Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, which have broadcast coverage of the Arab Spring, pose a challenge to local government channels in the region, including JRTV, which is government-owned and whose director is directly appointed by the government.

“There also needs to be accountability in the media, and transparency, and we don’t have reform in the local government TV channel or radio,” said the editor in chief of *Al Ghad*, Jumana Ghneimat.⁷⁰

No specific public service obligations are imposed on commercial media. The broadcast license is granted on condition of respecting the press and publication laws, and the 2002 Audiovisual Law. However, these laws are restrictive, and carry such Articles as “prohibiting any material that may promote provincialism, contradict the values of the Arab Islamic nation, spread false news, shake confidence in the national currency, incite hatred or degrade any religion.”⁷¹

2.2.2 Public Service Provision in Commercial Media

The reality is that there are no substantive rules for public service provision in either the state or commercial media. While there is some provision of public service content by state media, media regulation aims

67. Osama Salameh conducted interviews with Jordanians living in West Amman. This is not a quantitative assessment and is not necessarily reflective of Jordanians living in other areas in Jordan or all classes. See http://www.projectcarousel.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Osalameh_Dissertation-21.pdf (accessed 15 June 2013).

68. Interview with Yahia Shukier, journalist with *Arab Al Yawm*, Amman, 11 April 2012.

69. According to the DOS at http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_a/jorfig/2012/1.pdf (accessed 21 September 2013).

70. Interview with Jumana Ghneimat, editor-in-chief of *Al Ghad*, Amman, 28 March 2012.

71. “Senate Passes Press and Publication Laws,” 1998, <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/081898002.htm> (accessed 9 February 2013).

principally to protect the interests of the ruling elite: “Laws change in Jordan with every government; does this mean that every year and a half the public will change? These laws represent the will and benefit of the ruling elite of Jordan, not the people of Jordan,” said Yahia Shukier, journalist with *Al Arab Al Yawm* daily since 1997.⁷²

2.3 Assessments

Sine there has been no digital switch-over of territorial platforms, the gains and losses of switch-over cannot be determined. However, due to the rise of new media and the emergence and growth of regional satellite channels, the state media have been forced to make their news services more interactive and relevant to local audiences. JRTV, which realized that it could not compete with Arab satellite channels due to tight government regulation and budget issues, has instead opted to focus more on its core audience, consisting mostly of Jordanians living in villages and governorates outside Amman.

Internet penetration continues to rise; as it does so, more people will get their information from internet-based broadcast news and new media platforms. JRTV recently added live streaming to their website to try to attract and connect to the population.

72. Interview with Yahia Shukier, journalist with *Al Arab Al Yawm*, Amman, 11 April 2012.

3. Digital Media and Society

3.1 User-Generated Content (UGC)

3.1.1 UGC Overview

Surveys indicate that most Jordanians use the internet for general browsing purposes, followed by research, audio and video consumption, and chatting.⁷³ The most visited websites in Jordan include user-generated (UGC) websites as well as news websites. According to Alexa.com, the top 10 most visited websites in February 2013 were (in descending order): Facebook, Google.jo, YouTube, Google.com, Yahoo!, Windows Live, Blogspot.com, Sarayanews.com, Kooora.com, Twitter.com.⁷⁴

Kooora.com is a popular sports entertainment website and Sarayanews.com leads the pack in terms of news websites, followed by Ammonnews and *Al Ghad* online (Alghad.com). Of these, only Alghad.com is the electronic version of an established newspaper. Another popular website not quite in the top 10 is Maktoob (recently bought by Yahoo!), founded in 2000, which was the world's first free Arabic/English web-based email service. It also created one of the most successful Arab online communities in the region.

Over the past five years, the popularity of multimedia UGC websites (not news) has increased considerably in Jordan, exemplified by the rise of global content-sharing sites such as Facebook and YouTube. The significance of YouTube for popular culture is illustrated by “*Bath Bayakha*” (Silly Broadcast), a Jordanian online comedy show which went viral on YouTube within a few days. In August 2011, Mada and D1g.com became the official sponsors of the series, which was broadcast daily during Ramadan on Roya TV. According to Johnny Dabeet, the series' co-creator and co-executive producer, “YouTube and new media were at the start the single, most influential factor in the show's success. We had approached TV stations but to no avail. We are now playing on local and regional networks; we are the first and only Jordanian show to air on OSN. Online, we got people's attention; they rated, interacted with us, and gave us direct feedback.”⁷⁵

73. See Harris Interactive, Jordan Media Survey: New Media, May 2010, at <http://www.slideshare.net/muinkhoury/jordan-new-mediasurveyoffline20100606> (accessed 21 September 2013).

74. See <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/jordan> (accessed 23 February 2013).

75. Interview with Johnny Dabeet, co-creator and co-executive producer of “*Bath Bayakha*,” Amman, 22 June 2012.

Prominent blogs by Jordanians include Black-iris.com, started by Naseem Tarawnah in 2005, and listed in 2011 among CNN's 10 must-read blogs from the Middle East.⁷⁶ According to Mohammad Omar, chief editor of the Albawaba.com portal, "From 2005 until the end of 2008, the number of Jordanian blogs increased significantly to around 10,000." He noted, however, that only about 1,000 of those blogs are active.⁷⁷ Indeed, as social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have grown, the popularity of blogs appears to have decreased. There are no statistics specific to the activity of blogs in Jordan, but the recent closure of the blogging platform hosted by Maktoob (following its merger with Yahoo!) indeed suggests that blogging activity is on the wane: "As part of Yahoo!, Maktoob's commitment to delivering the web content and tools that matter most in your online life, Yahoo! Maktoob Blogs will officially shut down on 31 March 2013."⁷⁸

The rise of UGC in Jordan has provoked political debate about the ethics and legitimacy of online news. Some parliamentarians have been heavily critical of both the quality of news websites and the fact that readers were able to comment on news items and opinions. According to a prominent member of parliament, Abdul Karim Dughmi, speaking in 2011, "Certain news websites and TV channels directly or indirectly instigate social violence by allowing people to anonymously post on comment sections attached to stories and news reports."⁷⁹

3.1.2 Social Networks

As of early 2013, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn were the most popular global social networking sites in Jordan.⁸⁰ According to the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), there were 2.653 million Facebook users in Jordan at the end of March 2013. Around 58 percent of this total are male, according to the website. Around 41 percent of the users are aged 18–24, while those aged 25–34 accounted for 26.4 percent of the users.⁸¹ By the end of 2012, Jordan had the second-highest Facebook penetration in the Arab world after Saudi Arabia.⁸² However, it was ranked among the low-penetration countries for Twitter. At the end of June 2012, there were 59,726 active Twitter users in Jordan—under 1 per cent of the population.⁸³

The Jordanian-based Arab version of Twitter, WatWet, was launched in 2008. By 2009, WatWet had 25,000 users (mostly in Jordan) with a high growth at a time when Twitter had only 12,266 users from Arab countries.⁸⁴ Just like Twitter, the Arabic-language WatWet offered the 140 characters limit and enabled the "follow" and "unfollow" feature. In July 2011, however, WatWet announced that it was closing down because it could not compete with Twitter.⁸⁵

76. See <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/04/14/bloggers.middle.east/index.html> (accessed 23 February 2013).

77. See <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=19610> (accessed 23 February 2013).

78. See <http://zohoorareef.maktoobblog.com> (accessed 23 February 2013).

79. Omari Raed, "MP's Call for Professionalism, Regulations in Online Media," *Jordan Times*, 7 January 2011.

80. See <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/jordan> (accessed 23 February 2013).

81. See <http://jordantimes.com/41-of-jordanians-use-facebook> (accessed 26 September 2013).

82. See <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm> (accessed 26 September 2013).

83. See <http://jordantimes.com/facebook-penetration-high-and-growing-in-jordan----report> (accessed 23 February 2013).

84. See Arabcrunch.com, at <http://twurl.nl/en263f> (accessed 1 February 2011).

85. See <http://arabcrunch.com/2011/07/arabic-twitter-competitor-watwet-pulls-the-plug.html> (accessed 21 September 2013).

The key role played by social media in the Arab Spring political movement has helped to encourage the growth of online start-ups across the Arabic-speaking region. Young entrepreneurs say that creating businesses that employ people and contribute to social change can be just as revolutionary as marching in demonstrations. “It’s an alternative path for us to have an impact on economies and societies which is not tied to the government,” said Omar Christidis, 29, the founder of ArabNet.me, an online service that keeps digital professionals and entrepreneurs abreast of industry news and events like conferences. “No one can stop you,” he added. “Through this, you can empower yourself and it’s an open opportunity.”⁸⁶

From 19 March to 10 April 2012, the Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project surveyed a cluster sample of 1,000 adults from Jordan’s 12 governorates.⁸⁷ According to the survey, 68 percent of respondents used social networking sites for music and movies, 80 percent to discuss community issues, 68 percent for sports, 60 percent for politics, and 62 percent for religion.

3.1.3 News in Social Media

A number of avid Jordanian bloggers have surfaced and have attracted national and international attention, such as 7iber, The Black Iris (see section 3.1.1), Natasha Tynes, Batir Wardam, Hareaga, And Far Away, 360 East, Arab Crunch, and several others. Most of these blogs are in English, hence addressing a wider international audience, and cover—among other topics—culture, society, technology, and national and international politics. Most posts receive comments from readers. Bloggers usually accompany their entries with visuals. The Black Iris, for example, always incorporates relevant caricatures by a famous Jordanian artist, Emad Hajjaj, who created a cartoon character called Abu Mahjoob, who embodies the average Jordanian citizen.⁸⁸ Ikbis is a platform where users upload videos created by them or borrowed from other sites. However, the country’s media laws, which were recently amended to cover electronic news, are being applied, even to blogs like 7iber.com.

While they do address issues that are not usually covered by mainstream media, Jordanian bloggers also base their entries on topics covered by mainstream media, often adding their point of view on a specific topic.

According to the Third Annual Asda’a Burson-Marsteller Arab Youth Survey, some social media users who access social media to consume news have indicated that there has been a “shift in digital attention.”⁸⁹ Social networking is used much more frequently in Jordan today than writing or even reading blogs. More than 67 percent of those surveyed said they use social media networks, while 16 percent read blogs, and only 9 percent write them.⁹⁰ Jordanians post news articles on these social media networks and Twitter has several hashtags that bring the Jordanian community on Twitter together for sharing information, posts, and activism. Some

86. Interview with Omar Christidis, founder of ArabNet.me, Amman, 3 June 2012.

87. See <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2012/12/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Project-Technology-Report-FINAL-December-12-2012.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2013).

88. See <http://www.black-iris.com/2011/01/27/emad-hajjaj-caricatures-on-the-arab-world-lately> (accessed 23 February 2013).

89. See <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=19610> (accessed 23 February 2013).

90. See <http://www.slideshare.net/BMGlobalNews/third-annual-asdaa-bursonmarsteller-arab-youth-survey> (accessed 23 February 2013).

of these hashtags include #JO, #ReformJO, #Amman, and #Jordan. Thus, the rise of social media in Jordan has demonstrated the blurring of distinctions between news, citizen journalism, and activism. Most local news websites such as JO24, Khaberni, Ammonnews, and others also have Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and accounts where they post photos, videos, and links to the content appearing on their news websites. This has contributed to interaction and discussions on the content on the social media websites as well.

3.2 Digital Activism

3.2.1 Digital Platforms and Civil Society Activism

Increasingly, Jordanians are using social networking websites to increase awareness of various issues. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, they were used by some civil society groups to raise awareness and motivate young voters to take part in the elections. “Through our group [the Facebook election campaign group], we seek to encourage people to elect the best to represent us and serve the kingdom,” said Mohannad Alhami, a college student and activist who believes that young Jordanians can change the country if they participate in the elections.

“Maybe candidates do not have Facebook accounts. But their children, nephews, or young relatives do have accounts, so they can make use of this tool. In one click, we can inform thousands of Facebook users about the elections, candidates and news,”⁹¹ said Ahmad Rousan, who created a group called “Jordan Elections 2010,” to inform people about the candidates. Although the 2013 elections produced an unexpected high turnout rate of 56 percent across the kingdom, voter turnout in the capital where the majority of the population lives was lowest at 43.2 percent.⁹² Due to discontent with the lack of change in the electoral process, Jordanians including youngsters have created Facebook pages and profiles that call for boycotting the elections.

91. See <http://www.sahafi.jo/arc/art1.php?id=39d528651922bbe804c8efa82d510c533b397031> (accessed 26 September 2013).

92. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11725725> (accessed 23 February 2013).

The Halt Ajloun Deforestation Campaign

In early 2011, the cutting down of 2,200 trees in a forest in Jordan's northern Ajloun was scheduled in order to build a military academy on the site. Environmental activists launched an online petition, with 452 signatures, which was presented to the health and environment committee of the Lower House of Parliament on 18 January 2011. A "SaveAjlounTrees" Twitter account and a Facebook page soon followed, garnering over 5,000 supporters. In addition, protestors carried out street protests and were active on the ground, raising awareness and interacting with others.

The campaign managed to halt the project, pending environmental assessment, which eventually led to amendment plans for the military academy, which would entail cutting down 300 trees instead of 2,200.⁹³

The Ajloun campaign became a symbol of the power of social media in mobilizing people to engage in street protests and voice concerns to the authorities.⁹⁴ Jordanians continue to use social media to publicize environmental issues by mapping nature reserves, filming construction violations, and recording the large quantity of trash in a vegetable market, among other concerns.⁹⁵

During the Egyptian protests in January and February 2011, the Twitter community in Jordan sent tweets about locations of protests in Amman in support of the Egyptian people and calls for reform and development in Jordan. Political parties are generally absent in Jordan, due to former election laws and a system that discouraged political parties by means of obstacles to licensing and limited access to parliamentary seats. They also have low visibility on social networks. However, civil society organizations use Twitter, Facebook, and even news websites to express their concerns and causes.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have also played a role in equipping citizens with the skills needed to join the political dialogue. For example, Leaders of Tomorrow (LoT), an NGO that aims to advance youth development, has invested in involving Jordanian youngsters in conferences and different activities that address sociocultural and politically sensitive topics, among others. One of their initiatives, called #Fadfed ("Speak out" in Arabic), allows people to write their opinion about certain political or social themes, and their comments are then posted on Twitter under #FadFed.

93. <http://www.greenprophet.com/2011/05/trees-cut-down-jordan-ajloun-forest> (accessed 15 June 2013).

94. See <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/01/19/jordan-social-media-combats-deforestation-project> (accessed 14 June 2013).

95. Jennifer Hattam, "Tweeting Their Way to a Better Future: Young Jordanians Use Social Media to Help Protect the Environment," *Treehugger.com*, 24 September 2010.

In the context of the recent revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, informed Jordanian youth have joined a movement for reform in Jordan. Online news websites provided sustained reporting of the “Friday demonstrations” in Jordan during January and February 2011. JordanDaysTV provided live streaming of the demonstrations, supplemented by interviews with citizens taking part. Jordanian Facebook and Twitter users avidly followed up this coverage, regularly uploading photos, videos, and reporting on developments. Near the end of February, a group of young men and women addressed a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nasser Judeh, requesting an official statement on behalf of the government and people to condemn the atrocities faced by the people of Libya.⁹⁶

Jordanians make increasing use of social networking sites as venues for debates on social issues and to influence public opinion. Since the surge of the Arab Spring across the Middle East, Jordanians have created a hashtag on Twitter, “#Reformjo,” dedicated to debating the country’s reform process.

Social networking websites such as Facebook have also empowered women in garnering support for their campaigns online. Nima Habashna, a Jordanian married to a Moroccan, started a Facebook page called “My Mom Is Jordanian and Her Citizenship Is My Right.” The page, which advocates the right of Jordanian women to pass their citizenship to their children, had nearly 3,000 members before it was hacked in November 2011.⁹⁷ On the Facebook page, Mrs Habashna shares articles on Jordanian women passing on their citizenship to their children, posts satirical animation photos, announces upcoming events, and posts poll questions such as, “Do you support refusing a case on any writer or a website that publishes a column where women married to non-Jordanians are attacked?”

3.2.2 The Importance of Digital Mobilizations

Although digital mobilization has not become fully mainstream, those who do use social media tend to be heavily active. They are influential leaders as well as ordinary citizens, journalists, employees, civil society organizers, university students, and others. Issues that are raised on Twitter or Facebook in the Jordanian community (on environment, protests or other issues) sometimes get picked up either by online media or print media, radio stations or magazines where they reach mainstream society.

For example, in 2011, a video surfaced of a six-year-old boy, Ahmad al-Saket, standing in front of a large classroom chalkboard crying, shaking, and pleading for mercy. In the video, a teacher carrying a wooden stick in her hand is seen scolding the student in front of his classmates for writing the number nine incorrectly (see section 4.2.3). Several print and online news websites reported on the incident, as readers and the public demanded an investigation.⁹⁸ *Al Ghad* newspaper also featured an interview with the father of the six-year-old. The video went viral online and on social media, and sparked a public outcry. Jordanians sent numerous tweets and letters online to protest and demand an investigation into the matter.

96. See <http://www.alghad.com/?news=562074> (accessed 23 February 2013).

97. Interview with Nima Habashna, women’s rights activist, Amman, 25 November 2011.

98. See <http://www.khaberni.com/more.php?newsid=48818&catid=1> (accessed 13 June 2013).

While some social media campaigns have galvanized enough support to be dubbed success stories, many have trickled down to inactive pages of abandoned causes. The determining factor in the success or failure of a campaign, social media experts say, lies in the balance between online and offline activity. “I advise all #JO [Jordanian] candidates to start [the] conversation online and take it offline for human interaction,” tweeted a Jordanian social media expert, Khaled El Ahmad, as candidates started gearing up for the parliamentary elections.⁹⁹

In Jordan, media development—or the lack of it—continues to reflect the struggle for political reform. Inspired by the Arab Spring revolutions and the easing of restrictions on public assembly in February 2011, journalists at the government-owned *Al Rai* newspaper protested for many weeks in February and March 2011, demanding more freedom, enhanced professionalism, increased salaries, and an end to state interference in written and published material. This was the first protest in the newspaper’s history.¹⁰⁰

With the Arab uprisings, a layer of fear has been lifted in Jordan. More people now express their political views and demands for reform. Increased participation in politics will surely require an amendment to the Press and Publication Law and the Anti-Terrorism Penal Code. If not, the reform process will continue to be inadequate.

Revolutions in the region, as well the introduction of satellite television and the internet, will make journalists, viewers, and readers in Jordan demand more of the fast, up-to-date reporting that we are beginning to see today. Through social media, readers will increasingly debate, share, and comment on reports published by media outlets.

3.3 Assessments

There is no doubt that digitization has contributed to the overall news offer, including improvement in the diversity and participation of readers and viewers in the new media. Despite this, there is still a debate in Parliament over the regulation of new media and a number of parliamentarians have slammed some news websites for spreading harmful news and tarnishing the reputation of parliamentarians.

Citizens more than ever are taking the opportunity offered by new media for civil and political activism. Facebook and news websites have acted as platforms for activism whether for reform protests or other social and environmental issues. In 2010 and 2011, the foreign minister Nasser Judeh conducted live Twitter question-and-answer sessions. However, the number of Twitter users remains low (with 59,726 active Twitter users).¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, they are influential, and many of its users are active in NGOs and are community volunteers, intellectuals, journalists, students, company and organization managers, and employees.

99. See <https://twitter.com/Shusmo/status/287513472974061569> (accessed 15 June 2013).

100. “Jordanian Journalists Call for Press Freedom,” *Washington Post*, 8 March 2011, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/07/AR2011030704540.html> (accessed 15 June 2013).

101. See <http://demos.mediaplusjordan.com/jb/cms/node/25> (accessed 23 February 2013).

The low internet penetration still prevents local communities from utilizing social networking as a tool for positive change. However, the social media tools are powerful. Mostly there have been calls for social and environmental changes, but after the Tunisian and Egyptian protests, Jordanians using digital media have been more vocal on the need for political reform. On Twitter, Jordanians have created #ReformJO when writing their thoughts about how Jordan should reform. Mostly, these social networks have removed a certain fear that is prevalent in print and broadcast media. They are many more vocal expressions of discontent and criticism is no longer absent whether from reader comments on websites (which have sometimes been criticized for using hate, racist or personal attacks) or social media.

4. Digital Media and Journalism

4.1 Impact on Journalists and Newsrooms

4.1.1 Journalists

Despite the recent establishment of local channels like Roya TV and Nourmina TV, local television remains the only segment that has not developed; most Jordanians (96.5 percent of whom have satellite) depend on free-to-air reception, with close to 600 channels available free on satellite. Broadcast stations such as Radio Al-Balad use social media networks both as news sources and as platforms for dissemination.

Digitization has had a profound impact on journalism in Jordan, most acutely in speeding up the dissemination of broadcast and print reports; broadening the breadth and depth of topics covered in the news; and increasing participation by viewers and readers in the news. The most notable change in the newsroom, due to digitization, has been the shifting focus from regional and international news to domestic news. Newspapers have been forced to focus on feature stories and provide analysis in Jordan because of the presence of satellite television, social media, and local news websites that focus on national coverage, including areas that were previously ignored.

Jordanian television stations, such as JRTV, have had to focus on the audience they still have, consisting mostly of Jordanians living in villages and governorates outside the capital of Amman. Before the boom of free-to-air satellite and cable television, terrestrial television was the main source of entertainment and information.

With the extended coverage of Jordan's latest parliamentary elections, digital media enabled the public to consume, contribute, and share opinions to a degree unprecedented in previous elections. For instance, an online streaming website, JordanDays.TV, broadcast local district meetings with candidates, where viewers had the opportunity to hear them speak and candidates could take questions from voters.

Blogs and online news sites have also become popular sources of news on local, social, and taboo subjects that the traditional media have long not dealt with. In this process, news audiences play an increasingly important role in both supplying and verifying content. Issa Mahasneh, a blogger, wrote in a post that AmmonNews had published an article about snowstorms on their website without any recent photos of the snow in Amman.

Instead, they created an “Upload your own pictures” corner. “The difference here is clear, the article is ‘open’ and everyone can enrich it and even modify it if some parts are proven wrong.”¹⁰²

There is a debate, however, on the role of bloggers and citizens in the creation of news. Some observers believe that bloggers and social media users have become an actual part of the media, while others view comments and stories by bloggers and social media activists as opportunities for professional journalists to pursue issues they had previously ignored. Examples include Jordanian social media activists launching a campaign (that began online but also offline) against plans to build a military academy in Ajloun Forest nature reserve in north-western Jordan (see section 3.2.1). This led to coverage by local and even some international outlets.¹⁰³ Other examples include the detention of activists which were highlighted on Facebook or Twitter and led the local media to cover it, or YouTube videos,¹⁰⁴ child abuse cases,¹⁰⁵ or parliamentarians caught on camera making statements that spread on the internet and were picked up later by the mainstream media.¹⁰⁶

The recent revolutions in the region have added fuel to the fire sparked by satellite television and the internet, stirring demand for real-time, round-the-clock, and on-the-ground reporting.

One important consequence has been a reliance on text-based reporting, as the time spent on news-gathering, fact-checking, and editing becomes increasingly squeezed. Part of the problem in Jordan is that many journalists still lack multimedia skills and as a result, online news often lacks audiovisual content, although there are signs this is beginning to change. The website of *Al Ghad* newspaper has noticeably expanded its audiovisual content in recent months.

But the primary concern is that both the speeding up of news and the increased participation of audiences is diluting professionalism among journalists, making their work less credible, as Mr Shamma suggests.¹⁰⁷

An opinion poll on the status of press freedom in Jordan for 2010, conducted by the CDFJ,¹⁰⁸ revealed that 81 percent of the 505 surveyed journalists believe that online media have contributed to enhancing press freedom, 77 percent said they contribute to defending freedoms, and 60 percent consider they contribute to improving the profession. This was a noticeable increase in positive responses to online media compared with results from the 2009 survey, but there were still concerns about the implications of UGC for professional standards and ethics (see section 4.1.2).

102. See <http://jordanopensource.org/blog/lets-open-source-jordanian-journalism> (accessed 23 February 2013).

103. See <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/conservationists-battle-jordan-government-over-plan-to-axe-2-200-trees> (accessed 22 June 2013).

104. See http://youtu.be/bs_HRjA2bB4 (accessed 22 June 2013).

105. See http://youtu.be/y0V72Gz_4-s (accessed 22 June 2013).

106. See <http://alghad.com/index.php?news=565098> (accessed 22 June 2013).

107. Interview with Mohammad Shamma, correspondent for AmmanNet and Radio Al-Balad, Amman, 23 November 2011.

108. Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ), *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010, at <http://www.cdfj.org/look/PDFs/Media%20Freedom%20Status%20in%20Jordan%202010-EN.pdf> (hereafter, CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010) (accessed 26 September 2013).

This balance of perspectives was reflected in the CDFJ’s conclusions: “We are saying that news websites have a long way to go in terms of professionalism, but it is very important that freedom of expression is protected and—if information published is incorrect—then to rectify it,” said Nidal Mansour, head of the CDFJ. “A person who is affected by incorrect information can take legal procedures as in any democratic country, but to punish and detain journalists is not acceptable.”¹⁰⁹

4.1.2 Ethics

There are strong concerns among journalists regarding the ethical implications of UGC. According to the survey mentioned above, 73 percent of journalists believe that reader comments should be monitored by website management; more than 80 percent believe news websites themselves are liable and responsible for comments; and 66 percent support the development of standards for comments, including compulsory disclosure of the commentator’s identity.¹¹⁰

In the same survey, approximately 70 percent of journalists expressed support for issuing a law that specifically regulated online journalism, while 28 percent opposed this proposal. Of those opposed, 51 percent called for regulating online journalism in accordance with the existing codes of professional conduct, 33 percent believed it should be subject to the Press Law and 13 percent to the Penal Code.¹¹¹

4.2 Investigative Journalism

4.2.1 Opportunities

ARIJ is the only organization in Jordan focussing on investigative journalism. Although Amman-based, its regional outreach is an important commodity in countries that lack both training and freedom for journalists in a traditional sense, but where multimedia training and digitization are just beginning. “Digitization in general has helped investigative journalists to improve their work because of the dissemination and amount of information available,” said Rana Sabbagh, the executive director of ARIJ. “It is easier to search and come across crucial data [through digital platforms] but it is not the only way.”¹¹² Reporters in Jordan working on investigative reports mainly analyze public records with spreadsheets and statistical programs, sometimes conduct interviews by email, and find in-depth background information on their topic through the web.

Journalists are also trained in internet-related tasks including methods to protect their computer files and documents. Digitization has enabled journalists to carry handheld or even hidden cameras to broadcast, for example, child abuse at orphanages and handicapped facilities. Mobile phones were used to document verbal and physical abuse at some handicapped centers during an undercover investigation this year in Jordan in

109. Interview with Nidal Mansour, Amman, 28 August 2011.

110. CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010.

111. CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010.

112. Interview with Rana Sabbagh, executive director of ARIJ and columnist at *Al Ghad* newspaper, Amman, 13 September 2012.

2012. “It was crucial to have my mobile phone with me because the content that was on it served as evidence when the report came out,” said the journalist chiefly involved, Hanan Khandakji. “Thanks to this evidence, there was a big response by society and the Government.”¹¹³

4.2.2 Threats

Digitization has not affected or created threats directly to journalists in Jordan, but Ms Sabbagh explained that in general, using a computer was not safe and training on encrypting files for journalists is needed. But political investigations have yet to take place to assess whether there would be security or political repercussions. “We have not gone inside serious political corruption cases, for example, but rather socio-economic and health issues that reveal a breakdown or lack of systematic implementation.”¹¹⁴

Although journalists publish investigative reports and the country has a law guaranteeing the right to access public information, journalists have still been prevented from publishing: they practice self-censorship, or face punishment—direct or indirect—for their work.¹¹⁵

4.2.3 New Platforms

Blogs in Jordan are mostly platforms for opinion and dissemination of information already available on the web.¹¹⁶ There are blog sites like 7iber that offer UGC, but they are more about news aggregation, sharing links, and commentaries, than producing original, informative, and investigative news.

Social media sometimes act as platforms that spark in-depth investigations. In 2011, a video of a teacher beating a child at a public school went viral on the internet (see section 3.2.2). Jordanians used Twitter to inform Queen Rania directly of the incident and demand protection for children. The National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) investigated the case further, and the teacher was expelled.¹¹⁷ Digital tools have also helped to foster new spaces for investigative journalism in the university sector. The Jordan Media Institute (JMI), which has a graduate program on online media, has created a website for its students called Aqlamjmi.com, where students upload articles, videos, and other work.¹¹⁸ It is also a place for research and interaction between trainers and professors and their students. ARIJ held a workshop in Amman in 2011 for 15 professors from three Arab countries to look into the possibility of integrating investigative journalism practices into their media curricula.¹¹⁹

113. Interview with Hanan Khandakji, Radio Balad journalist and investigative reporter, Amman, 4 January 2012.

114. Interview with Rana Sabbagh, executive director of ARIJ and columnist at *Al Ghad* newspaper, Amman, 9 March 2011.

115. The suspension of Josat TV is an example of indirect punishment, where the government allegedly pressured the TV satellite company NileSat to drop the channel. See <http://en.rsf.org/jordan-dismay-after-government-approves-30-08-2012,43300.html> (accessed 14 June 2013). Direct punishment was practiced against online websites when the government amended the Press and Publication Law in late 2012, leading to the blocking of more than 250 news websites. See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/04/jordan-rescind-order-block-websites> (accessed 14 June 2013).

116. Jordan Blogs at <http://jordanblogs.com>; Itoot, at <https://itoot.net> (accessed 23 February 2013).

117. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/26/world/middleeast/jordan-struggles-to-protect-children.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed 1 July 2013).

118. See <http://www.aqlamjmi.com> (accessed 23 February 2013).

119. See http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31210&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 26 September 2013).

“Since the creation of ARIJ five years ago, we have used a bottom-up approach to promote investigative journalism among individual journalists and through specialized units being set up at several existing Arab media,” said Ms Sabbagh. “We now hope to inspire universities to train the future generation of media professionals in investigative journalism in order to ensure greater accountability and transparency.”¹²⁰

4.2.4 Dissemination and Impact

Investigative reports about social, economic, and health issues are today more commonly seen in newspapers and radio stations across Jordan. Although they do not yet cover serious political issues, the reports have shed light on important cases of child abuse, health mismanagement, and academic failures, sometimes prompting officials to intervene or the government to open an official investigation. The most widely publicized investigation in Jordan so far was the one conducted by Ms Khandakji on systematic abuse at private handicapped center, in which she was supported by ARIJ (see sections 4.2.1 and 4.3.1).

Another recent investigative piece by ARIJ on orphanage abuse was picked up by local news websites and subsequently tweeted,¹²¹ re-tweeted, and posted on Facebook. This attracted intense commentary and fostered a public debate. This sort of thing also crosses borders and journalists are able to respond to and interact with international readers. Digital media have also helped to break down barriers between outlets, enabling stories like the orphanage abuse case to inform and inspire competing journalists and titles to conduct their own investigations into the topic. After this story was broadcast, two Arabic regional news channels picked it up and conducted their own in-depth reports on this issue.¹²²

The more recent breakthrough investigation on abuses at private centers for the handicapped in Jordan by Ms Khandakji led to her cooperation with BBC Arabic on a documentary that caused public outrage. Jordanians tweeted and posted the video, which then went viral. A day after the documentary was aired on television, the king visited the centers and demanded an investigation and punishment for those responsible.¹²³ News websites have also continued to follow the outcome of the investigation and readers respond.

4.3 Social and Cultural Diversity

4.3.1 Sensitive Issues

Statistics suggest that 98 percent of Jordanians are Arab, with the majority having made their way to the country through influxes of refugees from Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, and Sudan. As a melting-pot of Arab identities, Jordan’s social fabric is sensitive and fragile. Since the independence of Transjordan, the government has been acutely concerned with preserving and promoting national unity, not least through the media.

120. See http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31210&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 26 September 2013).

121. There is a Twitter community in Jordan using the hashtags #JO, #Jordan, #RefomJO, and #Amman.

122. See <http://www.i-m-s.dk/article/jordan-media> (accessed 2 March 2013).

123. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18073144> (accessed 23 February 2013).

Jordanian society is constrained by numerous red lines around issues that are considered taboo and are not discussed in public or in the media. One of these is child abuse, one of the major problems faced in Jordan and a recurrent predicament that plagues the society. Though it has been considered a major taboo for decades, in 2004, a conference on “breaking the silence” on child abuse in Jordan was held, bringing together delegates from 17 different countries and the media.¹²⁴ “There is a big number of abused victim cases that exist in society and the victims suffer in silence because they do not speak out and do not know where to turn to,” said Hani Jahshan of the National Institute for Forensic Medicine. He gave statistics indicating the sharp rise in abuse cases, which is attributed to better awareness and more complaints on the part of the victims.¹²⁵

In May 2012, BBC Arabic investigated conditions in care homes for the mentally disabled in Jordan. The investigation ended with the uncovering of an abuse story involving a 12 year-old boy whose father had brought him from the UAE for treatment. The British news outlet also reported on allegations of sexual abuse at a private care home. The government responded: “Even if there are only a small number, they are severe in terms of their significance because it is a matter of human rights. It is the disabled who need to be protected and therefore we have red lines. Even if the abuse is done by an employee we will not tolerate it and the court will have its say.”¹²⁶

As the CDFJ survey, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010, suggests, most of the red lines in Jordan are vague and unclear, except for some entrenched ones related to the king and the royal family, the army, national security, and religion.¹²⁷ These lines have become entangled amid ethnic tensions. For instance, a fight broke out in 2009 at a football match between the fans of two local teams: Al-Faysali (representing Jordanians) and Al-Wahdat (representing Jordanians of Palestinian origins). A 2010 Wikileaks cable indicated that the match revealed the “ugly side of Jordanian ultra-nationalism,” where fans of Jordanian non-Palestinian origins denigrated both Queen Rania and the crown prince.¹²⁸

Jordan hosts a great number of migrant workers mainly coming from Egypt, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Observers such as Human Rights Watch have condemned the violation of these workers’ rights outside their home countries by Jordanian employers. “The Labor and Interior Ministry officials are failing in their duties under Jordanian law and toward these Sri Lankan workers,” said Christoph Wilcke, senior Middle East researcher at Human Rights Watch. “They should immediately waive any responsibility for these fines for the domestic workers and vigorously pursue the actual law breakers.”¹²⁹ However, government efforts to improve their conditions in Jordan have been noted. Since 2010, migrant workers have been allowed to join trade unions, vote in union elections, and participate in enterprise-level worker committees.¹³⁰

124. See <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Conference+'breaks+silence'+on+child+abuse.-a0183497052> (accessed 23 March 2013).

125. See <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/jordan-to-confront-shame-of-child-abuse> (accessed 23 February 2013).

126. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18073144> (accessed 23 February 2013).

127. CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010.

128. See <http://www.haaretz.com/news/sports/clashes-in-jordan-after-palestinian-soccer-victory-leave-250-injured-1.330011> (accessed 23 February 2013).

129. See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/04/08/jordan-abused-domestic-workers-stranded> (accessed 23 February 2013).

130. See http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_195584/lang-en/index.htm (accessed 1 July 2013).

4.3.2 Coverage of Sensitive Issues

The government does not scrutinize the English-language newspapers in Jordan as much as it does the Arabic-language papers. This is because the readership of newspapers in the English language is limited and with not much reach among the broader public. This permits journalists to work on issues other newspapers shy away from. For example, the *Jordan Times* journalist, Rana Hussein, regularly reports on honor killings, following stories of victims and legislative reform.¹³¹ In general, though conservative in their coverage of taboos, newspapers are providing coverage on child abuse, and there has been continuous follow-up on this topic for the past few years. *Al Ghad* is fighting to maintain coverage of social issues and communicating with the people, according to Ms Ghneimat (*Al Ghad's* editor-in-chief).¹³²

The CDFJ survey, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010, revealed that 97 percent of a group of 505 Jordanian journalists avoided writing or broadcasting about the armed forces. Discussing the judiciary authorities and security agencies ranked as the second-most avoided topic, with 84 percent of journalists admitting self-censorship. In the same context, 81 percent said that they avoided discussing religious issues, 85 percent said they avoided criticizing tribal leaders, and 80 percent avoided criticizing religious figures. The survey also indicated that 79 percent of the surveyed journalists avoid criticizing Arab leaders, and 76 percent avoid discussing sexual issues.

Against this backdrop, the *Ad-Dustour* columnist, Osama Al Sharif, was quoted in the CDFJ survey as follows:

The basis of red lines is unchangeable, but the problem lies in the gray area that witnesses constant changes and developments that do not usher in stability, which makes them unclear, in addition to having several legal points of reference that govern the freedom of expression such as the press and publication law, the Penal Code, the state security code, secret documents law and the right of access to information law, in addition to many others that might cause ambiguity and negatively affect the freedom of expression.¹³³

Al Ghad's former Chief Editor, Musa Barhouma, agrees and adds that red lines in the Jordanian press can be changed according to the political conditions.¹³⁴ He mentions that in such situations, editors in chief should be flexible and write without compromising professional standards while also finding ways to carry out their work and obtain information by using their journalistic skills. They are generally able to do this, he says, and still find a secure way. The columnists Jihad Momani and Mr Barhouma agree that sometimes

131. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/28/rana-husseini-jordanian-j_n_246534.html (accessed 23 February 2013).

132. Interview with Jumana Ghneimat, editor-in-chief of *Al Ghad*, Amman, 28 March 2012.

133. CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2009, at <http://www.cdfj.org/look/PDFs/Media%20Freedom%20Status%20in%20Jordan%202009%20EN.pdf> (hereafter, CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2009) (accessed 26 September 2013).

134. CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010.

the media create their own red lines and fail to push the envelope far enough. “The media blame sources for their helplessness, lack of courage and even of competence in addressing serious journalistic issues and topics that are considered [the main work] for a free press,” Mr Momani was quoted as saying in the CDFJ’s *Media Freedom Status* report, 2009.¹³⁵

4.3.3 Space for Public Expression

Jordanians are turning to the internet not only for their news, but as a tool to express their views on matters of minor or major importance. According to a 2010 Jordan New Media Survey, funded by USAID, 44 percent of Jordanians rated the opportunity to comment and interact as a reason for visiting news websites, compared with 41 percent in 2009.¹³⁶ Though many of the comments on articles include hate speech and racist comments, these websites have become a vital platform for interaction and the expression of opinion. With such a young population and high literacy rates—92 percent, according to World Bank figures—internet penetration in Jordan reached 55.9 percent by mid-2012. There are also about 2.2 million Facebook users and 59,726 active Twitter users. Jordanians increasingly use social networking sites as venues for debating social issues and trying to influence public opinion. Since the Arab Spring began across the Middle East, Jordanians have begun to debate the situation in their own country.

Not only has digitization had an impact in the faster dissemination of broadcast and print reports; it has also increased participation by viewers and readers. At times, it affects politics in the country as well. As noted above, broadcast stations like Radio Al-Balad use social media to disseminate information and even garner tips and concerns from ordinary citizens.

Digitization has contributed to the discussion of taboo subjects as well—religion, the military, the royal family, ethnic issues. While this may be a positive development in many respects, the lack of editorial moderation of comments that include slurs or attacks on minorities or other religions on news websites has undermined the credibility of the outlets in certain cases.

4.4 Political Diversity

4.4.1 Elections and Political Coverage

A month before the 2010 parliamentary elections, the government welcomed media representatives to cover the elections, offering more support and collaboration. Photographers, journalists, and international observers were seen at election booths across the country. “We are very much interested in engaging the media in the election process and will provide all possible means to help them do their work with utmost freedom. We want them to reflect the true image of the elections,” an elections spokesperson, Samih Maaytah, told the

135. CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2009.

136. IREX, “Jordan Media Survey New Media—Offline May 2010.” See powerpoint summary at http://aswatona.net/wp-content/files_mf/1336077330jordannewmediasurveyoffline20100606100606055215phpapp01.pdf (accessed 12 July 2013).

Jordan Times.¹³⁷ For the government, the January 2013 elections were key in promoting the process of reform, and the coverage of the elections was seen as a boost in that direction.

A study evaluating the coverage by 10 news websites and five community radio stations revealed that they provided equal access to all political parties and candidates.¹³⁸ Four of the community stations were covering elections for the first time, and their content was deemed balanced. Radio Al-Balad ranked first in terms of overall coverage, and also received the highest rating in covering issues related to different parties. The report also found that extended and positive coverage of women and the disabled was provided.

4.4.2 Digital Political Communications

With the extended coverage by news websites during the 2010 elections, Jordanians were able to express their opinions on the electoral process and engage in public debate through online commentary. Candidates also used the internet to reach voters in a more interactive way. Tarek Khoury, for example, gave an indication why this platform was now seen as a crucial channel of communication: “I think that the importance of exposure to the public is paramount. The statistics show that there are more than 800,000 Facebook users in Jordan that are 18 years old and older.”¹³⁹ Mohammad Hawamdeh, managing editor and co-owner of Khaberni online news agency, said some 25 candidates had bought advertising on his news website, adding that his site’s daily traffic stood at some 300,000 hits. “We offer some things a newspaper cannot. Candidates can advertise for the whole month and it provides them with an interactive experience. Candidates want the feedback.”¹⁴⁰

On the one hand, online campaigns enabled readers to easily access background information, including candidates’ profiles, and so increase their awareness before voting. On the other hand, some considered that the use of political advertisements online marked the development of “an unhealthy relationship” between candidates and voters, and compromised the integrity of the digital press. “If a candidate places advertisements in most of the websites and does something wrong,” said a media and political analyst, Mohammad Abu Rumman, “I do not think they will report it, at least not directly. This is preventing us from having a strong debate.”¹⁴¹ Mr Khoury was among those who felt compelled to advertise on several sites to avoid a smear campaign by other news websites. He said he was forced to place ads on other websites “to avoid their barking.”¹⁴²

Despite widespread public discontent, the January 2013 parliamentary elections managed to produce a 56 percent turnout, nearly 4 percentage points higher than the 2010 parliamentary elections.¹⁴³ The All Youth

137. See <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/new/newsarchive/2010/09242010004.htm> (accessed 23 February 2013).

138. See http://www.achrs.org/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=267&catid=23&Itemid=63 (accessed 23 February 2013).

139. See <http://www.jo-property.com/aDetails.aspx?aid=318> (accessed 23 February 2013).

140. See <http://www.alarcheef.com/articles/details.asp?articleID=14279&word=> (accessed 23 February 2013).

141. Taylor Luck, “For online media, campaign ads raise an ethical dilemma,” 19 October 2010, at <http://en.ammonnews.net/print.aspx?articleno=10075> (accessed 26 September 2013).

142. Taylor Luck, “For online media, campaign ads raise an ethical dilemma,” 19 October 2010, at <http://en.ammonnews.net/print.aspx?articleno=10075> (accessed 26 September 2013).

143. See http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/31/world/middleeast/in-jordan-progress-in-small-steps.html?_r=0 (accessed 23 February 2013).

Commission, linked with initiatives taken by King Abdullah (known as royal initiatives) and sustained by the King Abdullah Fund for Development, carried out extensive campaigns across the country to encourage youngsters to participate. They posted messages on their Facebook pages, uploaded YouTube videos, and published photos and media articles about their campaign, to encourage young people to register to vote.¹⁴⁴

Although social media have a wide reach in raising awareness, they do not always prompt action. Shibli Haddad, a candidate for the Christian seat in Madaba district, was able to reach out to voters thanks to his 30,000 “likes” on Facebook, but it did not bring him electoral success. On the day when the results of the January 2013 elections were announced, Mr Kuttab (founder of Radio Al-Bahad) tweeted: “Social media takes a nose dive in Jordan. Candidate Shibli Hadad had 30,000 likes on his Facebook page but only 20 votes as he lost badly.”¹⁴⁵ His low voter turnout could be attributed to various reasons, including the nature of the electoral system, which allows the residents of a district to vote only for candidates running in that district.

4.5 Assessments

Digitization has influenced the manner in which a journalist gathers information, creates story ideas, and researches background information. It has also forced newspaper journalists to focus on more analytical and feature-style writing due to the continuous online coverage of news that traditional media cannot compete with. Daily newspapers like *Al Ghad*, *Ad-Dustour*, and *Jordan Times* have had to turn to localization, placing importance on investigative, well-researched local stories. “We now employ more writers on special topics, for example sports and IT,” said Sami Barhoum, chief editor of the *Jordan Times*. “That way we can offer a range of content. We have to because otherwise people know they can get that information elsewhere.”¹⁴⁶

Due to satellite channels that cover general, nationwide issues, social media and community radio stations have sharpened their focus on local issues neglected by the mainstream media. Blogs and online news websites have become platforms where people look for more local, social, and taboo subjects that the traditional media have long ignored. The debate continues, however, on the role of bloggers and citizens in the creation of news and the extent to which they are complementing or redefining the role of professional journalists.

Investigative journalism has also benefitted greatly from digitization thanks to the training in internet skills and file sharing, computer assisted reporting (CAR), and the dissemination of the final product to a wider audience through social networks. The sharing contributes to the debate—and at times outrage—that can affect policy and even social change (as in the case of horrific abuses in orphanages). Citizens participate online by posting photos and uploading videos through YouTube or other websites.

144. See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/98576740144> (accessed 23 February 2013).

145. See <https://twitter.com/daoudkuttab/status/294323143701573632> (accessed 23 February 2013).

146. Oxford Business Group, “The Report: Jordan, 2011,” at http://books.google.jo/books?id=lmPVOL9_r7MC&pg=PA18&clpg=PA18&dq=Oxford+Business+Group,+%E2%80%9CThe+Report:+Jordan,+2011,%E2%80%9D&source=bl&ots=1c3ZOBOYMo&sig=pKLSMuLnL5ThPRPAK6Mu19F_JFw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=WpNDUt_OGlemAbH8oDoAg&ved=0CD0Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Oxford%20Business%20Group%2C%20%E2%80%9CThe%20Report%3A%20Jordan%2C%202011%2C%E2%80%9D&f=false (accessed 26 September 2013).

With the extended coverage of Jordan's latest (2013) parliamentary elections online, Jordanians were given the opportunity to engage in a more meaningful political debate than in the past. This is also due to the reduction of Jordanians' fears of expressing their political views after revolutions swept the region more than two years ago. Candidates and citizens used digital media to convey their messages but journalists still lacked the skills to profile candidates and parties comprehensively. The coverage also lacked an investigative approach to the candidates and the election process as such, although Al-Balad radio and Roya TV covered the election day extensively. Digital media provided updated information about results and numbers of voters but not so much about the process and the candidates.

Although the digitization process has clearly contributed to more freedom and diverse opinions, concern remains about how it has affected the fundamentals of journalism: objectivity, fairness, and analytical and well-sourced reporting.

5. Digital Media and Technology

5.1 Broadcasting Spectrum

5.1.1 Spectrum Allocation Policy

The TRC is responsible for the management and use of the radio spectrum. The TRC's board of commissioners sets the plan for the assignment of radio frequencies and reviews and amends such plans when necessary. Spectrum management includes the planning and allocation of frequency bands, individual licensing and assignment of frequencies, national and international coordination of frequencies, international representation, and administration, including the setting of regulations as well as cost recovery charges. Meanwhile, the AVC adheres to the framework determined by the TRC in the licensing of frequencies required for broadcasting in and outside the country, as well as implementing the technical rules for the equipment used for broadcasting stations and monitoring broadcasters' adherence to license conditions. Under the Telecommunications Law, the TRC is also responsible for allocating telecoms spectrum, which may be assigned to a legal entity or to any group or individual. Mobile phone services constitute one of the most significant and increasing uses of both mobile and fixed-link radio spectrum. Wireless communications are also being used to provide broadband access to the internet. The TRC continues to study the possibility of licensing radio spectrum for mobile broadband wireless access services.¹⁴⁷

According to the Telecommunications Law,¹⁴⁸ the TRC has the responsibility to regulate telecoms and IT services in Jordan in accordance with the established general policy "to ensure quality telecommunications and information technology services to beneficiaries at reasonable prices."¹⁴⁹

According to the Statement of Government Policy 2007 on the Information, Communications and Postal Sectors, the TRC has to adopt prices for spectrum in accordance with market demand, using auctions and

147. Interview with Yara Abdel Samad, director of policies and strategies at the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Amman, 12 April 2012. See also www.trc.gov.jo (accessed 26 September 2013).

148. The Telecommunications Law, at http://www.trc.gov.jo/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&cid=3&Itemid=164&pop=1&page=0&lang=english (accessed 23 March 2013).

149. Frequency Allocation Plan (TRC), at http://www.trc.gov.jo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&cid=1145&Itemid=1183&lang=english (accessed 23 March 2013).

possibly secondary trading where appropriate, and preventing the anti-competitive acquisition or hoarding of spectrum by dominant operators. The Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (MoICT) is responsible for ICT policy in Jordan.¹⁵⁰

The Jordanian Table of Frequency Allocations divides Jordan's radio frequency spectrum into a number of frequency bands and specifies the general purposes for which the bands may be used. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has specific definitions for terms and services used in its Radio Regulations. In most instances the definitions contained reflect the intent of the ITU definitions, although in some cases they have been restructured to align with Jordanian requirements, as defined in the Telecommunications Law.

The government recognizes that with the convergence of the fixed, mobile, and ISP sectors, licensing should be common across all types of services. As a result, the TRC introduced an integrated licensing system in 2007.¹⁵¹

In relation to broadcasting, the government approved the Audiovisual Law in 2003, which legalized the licensing of privately owned radio stations. However, it did not create a level playing field between prospective private and public licensees. In particular, spectrum allocation for broadcasting favors government-owned stations. According to Mr Kuttab (also director-general of Community Media Network), the army has its own radio station and the police have their own radio station and these stations use government-owned antennas and transmitters that are spread across the kingdom. If a private radio station wanted to have the same distribution and reach across the country, it would cost millions. This situation creates conditions of artificial market entry barriers and unfair competition.¹⁵²

5.1.2 Transparency

According to media experts, including Mr Kuttab (whose company runs Radio Al-Balad in Amman and the AmmanNet.net website), spectrum is not awarded in a transparent way and is in fact biased. The Audiovisual Law enacted in 2002 allowed the private sector to own radio and television licenses and this succeeded in creating a wide range of commercial, entertainment-focused stations. At the same time licenses for spectrum, according to the AVC, are given following Cabinet approval, but this can be refused with no reason given.

Mr Kuttab also pointed out that two radio station licenses he applied for were refused. The first was in the city of Zarqa during 2006 and the other was for the Jordan Valley during 2008. In both cases, he said, the AVC did not state a reason for the rejection. The case went to the Supreme Court of Jordan but still no reason for the rejection was given.¹⁵³

150. The Statement of Government Policy 2007. See also <http://www.moict.gov.jo/Portals/0/PDF/NewFolder/ADS/NewFolder/General%20Policy%20Statement%20to%20be%20sent%20to%20Cabinet%2025%20November%202012%20Approved%20by%20Cabinet.pdf> (accessed 21 September 2013).

151. See http://www.trc.gov.jo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1051&lang=english (accessed 23 March 2013).

152. Interview with Daoud Kuttab, founder of AmmanNet Radio Balad station, Amman, 9 April 2012.

153. Interview with Daoud Kuttab, founder of AmmanNet Radio Balad station, Amman, 9 April 2012.

The Audiovisual Law stipulated the addition of a 50 percent fee to the licensing of any station wishing to broadcast news or politics. The Cabinet had given waivers only to radio stations based in public universities, police, and the Amman municipality.¹⁵⁴ Driven by pressure on the government to move towards reform, and in preparation for the 2013 parliamentary elections, this law was dropped in September 2012, in order to “encourage political programs and news reports in line with what benefits the local society and to stimulate it instead of these fees that limit the possibility of tackling what is important and positive and resorting to entertainment programs and ones that are not serious.” Additionally, the commission decreased fees imposed on FM radio stations from JOD 5,000 (US\$ 7,000) to JOD 3,000 (US\$ 4,200) and agreed to increase the broadcasting capacity from 1 KW to 5 KW without imposing new fees on stations.¹⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the TRC claims that it adopts a neutral approach for spectrum licensing in view of its considerable discretionary powers. The Frequency Use and Planning Police rules state that current licensed spectrum bands are subject to any instructions or decisions issued by the TRC. The TRC prefers to award spectrum licenses by auction in the mobile markets, for example, arguing that this method is fair, transparent, objective, and economically efficient.

The TRC argues that it leaves the market to decide who will be assigned spectrum allocation. It rejects all arguments that spectrum auction has the potential for overpricing, speculative bidding for subsequent trading, and an inherent competitive advantage for big players with financial strength to outbid smaller players.¹⁵⁶ The MoICT is working on drafting a new telecoms law to tackle convergence issues.

While supporting the use of auctions, the TRC emphasizes that auctions should be held with “simple, understandable, non-discriminatory and transparent rules and no bidder should be permitted to hold more than one license while all available spectrum should be utilized.” It also states that the efficient outcome of this process would be licensing those parties with the best business plans. However, Zeid Uteibi, a legal regulatory consultant for the Jordan Telecom group, argues that the bidder with a better business plan in general will value a license more than a bidder with a weaker business plan. An auction will allow all bidders to compete fairly on equal terms. Mr Uteibi argues that the TRC’s proposal for a 3G tender won by Orange is “discriminating and providing preferential treatment” to the successful bidders for each of the two licenses (Class A and Class B) compared with existing 2G mobile operators.”¹⁵⁷

In January 2011, the Jordan Telecom Group filed a lawsuit against the government for allegedly violating the group’s exclusivity rights for the provision of the 3G service, asking for JOD 120 million (US\$ 169.49 million) in compensation for the damages it incurred through the award of its 3G license to another operator.¹⁵⁸

154. See <http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/news-articles/7216-jordans-lack-appreciation-public-service-broadcasting> (accessed 23 March 2013).

155. See <http://www.alrai.com/article/536658.html> (accessed 26 September 2013)

156. ‘The Introduction of 3G in Jordan’, at http://newsweaver.ie/altamimi/e_article001290090.cfm (accessed 23 March 2013).

157. Introduction of 3G in Jordan, at http://newsweaver.ie/altamimi/e_article001290090.cfm (accessed 23 March 2013).

158. Mohammad Ghazal, “Government rejects JTG accusations over 3G services license,” *Jordan Times*, 9 January 2011.

5.1.3 Competition for Spectrum

According to the MoICT, new entrants interested in entering the telecoms market have no restrictions to abide by and it is government policy to facilitate the rapid entry of new competitors in the ICT market and the rapid introduction of new services by those entities. There are now 24 individual licenses that are eligible to use spectrum, apart from broadcast licenses.

Jordan Telecom was a state-owned operator, with a monopoly status to provide telecoms services in the kingdom. In 1995, Fastlink (now known as Zain) became the first operator to provide mobile telecoms services through GSM technology. In 1999, MobileCom (now known as Orange) was granted a license to provide mobile cellular services in Jordan. In 2003, the Xpress company was granted the first license to provide radio trucking services and a year later another competitor entered the market, when Umniah was granted a license to provide mobile telephone services. By the beginning of 2005, the monopoly of Jordan Telecom in providing fixed telecoms services had ended and the fixed market was fully open.

Based on its assessment of needs in the telecoms market, the TRC claimed in 2013 that there is still demand for mobile broadband in Jordan, which now accounts for 63 percent of total internet subscriptions. By September 2012, mobile penetration had reached about 138 percent, with some 8.8 million mobile subscriptions. This number, said Dima Abu Gharbieh from the TRC, represents subscribers' penetration and not subscription penetration, as some people have more than one mobile set. It therefore launched a tender for an additional mobile operator in early 2013.¹⁵⁹ This move has been opposed by some actors in the industry, such as Orange Jordan's CEO, Jean-François Thomas. "Unfortunately, we all know that the Government is facing difficult financial conditions and may want to sell another license and get cash, but this is a short-term solution and a long-term nonsense," Mr Thomas said.¹⁶⁰

Since the government regulates the internet industry, it has encouraged fixed wireless broadband (FWB) providers to invest in governorates outside Amman by granting them conditional spectrum fee exemptions. According to Ms Abu Gharbieh, subscribers to FWB reached 105,000 out of 678,882 internet subscribers by February 2013, amounting to some 15 percent of total internet subscriptions. This service is lacking in the provinces, Ms Abu Gharbieh says, because FWB providers have focussed on crowded areas in order to recoup as much as possible on their investments. Although this behavior is legal, it resulted in a shortage in service supply in governorates other than Amman, Irbid, and Zarqa.¹⁶¹

In June 2006, the government decided to sell its shares in Jordan Telecom, amounting to 41.5 percent. These shares were sold to France Telecom and some local and regional parties, and the rest of the shares were listed on Amman Stock Exchange. However, the sale process did not fully succeed, and the government has

159. See <http://www.ameinfo.com/jordan-seeking-mobile-operator-321707> (accessed 27 March 2013).

160. See <http://jordantimes.com/orange-jordan-opposes-trc-plan> (accessed 27 March 2013).

161. Email interview with Dima Abu Gharbieh, director of media relations, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, Amman, 23 February 2013.

retained an 11.6 percent shareholding. Eventually, five companies were granted radio spectrum licenses to provide FWB services.

There have been no advances in the broadcasting sector in spectrum allocation, as digital licensing has not yet started.

5.2 Digital Gatekeeping

5.2.1 Technical Standards

There are no debates on the adoption of technical standards in digital broadcasting in television, since this issue is extremely underdeveloped. There is a plan for the transition from analog to digital broadcasting for JRTV, that is supposed to be implemented in between three and five years.^{162, 163} However, there are no public debates taking place on this issue or the engagement of civil society and media stakeholders.

5.2.2 Gatekeepers

Since Jordan has not started the switch-over to digital broadcasting, analog broadcasting arrangements have remained unchanged.

5.2.3 Transmission Networks

As mentioned above, despite the liberalization of spectrum policy in recent years, there have been instances of certain groups, such as universities and the military, being favored in spectrum allocation. This is possible given that current rules give the government the power to reject license applications without providing a reason.

To a lesser extent, regional broadcasting services also attempt to limit the broadcasting of local cable transmission companies, based on political or commercial motives. Following the Egyptian uprising in January 2011, for example, Jordan Media City (JMC) said it had been pressured by the Egyptian-based NileSat's management to drop the Al Jazeera satellite channel, which was covering the uprising extensively. Based on the contract between NileSat and JMC, there are receivers, each with the capacity of 14 frequencies, which the JMC could transmit through. "We transmit via our land transponders to the NileSat which in turn retransmits our frequencies to different parts of the world," said Radi Alkhas, CEO of JMC. However, when retransmissions were stopped, the JMC resorted to vacant frequencies on other packages to offset the frequency loss. "What the Egyptian broadcasting company did was unprofessional and jeopardizes the whole industry, as they used their capabilities to serve a political agenda of the Egyptian government," Mr Alkhas said.¹⁶⁴

162. Interview with Daoud Kuttub, founder of AmmanNet Radio Balad station, Amman, 9 April 2012.

163. Interview with Yara Abdel Samad, director of policies and strategies at the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Amman, 10 April 2012. See also www.trc.gov.jo (accessed 26 September 2013).

164. "Jordan Media City was 'under pressure' from NileSat," *Jordan Times*, 3 February 2011, at <http://www.mobilitytechzone.com/news/2011/02/03/5286849.htm> (accessed 23 March 2013).

5.3 Telecommunications

5.3.1 Telecoms and News

Competition in the mobile market in Jordan is intense between the three operators (Zain, Orange, and Umniah) and it has led to reduced consumer retail prices. The launch of 3G services in 2010 offered a new revenue growth path centered on mobile broadband, content, and applications.

In accordance with the TRC's "Strategic Plan through 2012," new technologies in both fixed and wireless services have been rolled out, along with the further development of other wireless technologies. When Umniah launched its 3G service, the two other mobile providers were already offering it to their users.¹⁶⁵ There has also been talk about Orange upgrading its 2G and 3G services to provide 4G by 2015.¹⁶⁶ The "Strategic Plan" also states that there is likely to be greater integration of fixed and mobile telecoms operations as more converged services come on to the market.

Telecoms in Jordan are enablers; they provide the electronic communication services through which considerable amounts of news and information are conveyed. Thus they have a great influence in terms of the means of delivery and availability of news services; on the other hand, they do not have a direct influence on the content in terms of quality or quantity, according to Yara Abdel Samad.¹⁶⁷

Mobile operators use SMS messaging services for entertainment and up-to-date news from popular networks such as Al Arabiya, the BBC, and Al Jazeera.¹⁶⁸ Increasingly, however, Jordanians are also receiving their news from social media websites such as Twitter and Facebook. For example, Info2Cell, a leading mobile service provider, announced in March 2013 that it will give subscribers updates on the most popular social media feeds twice a week via SMS. Subscribers will also be able to comment on the alert content and share it across social media networks.

"As mobile technology goes through this evolution, the speed of networks is getting higher, allowing us to offer different services, ranging from SMS, MMS, text, video, images to full scale images, videos and audio text which allows us to offer rich media services," said Khaled Nuseibeh, the marketing director at Zain.¹⁶⁹

5.3.2 Pressure of Telecoms on News Providers

There are concerns among journalism agencies such as the JPA and NGOs like the ARIJ, as well as some journalists, that online advertising by companies and individuals is sometimes used to obtain favorable

165. See <http://www.ameinfo.com/umniah-prepares-3g-launch-297775> (accessed 23 March 2013).

166. See <http://jordantimes.com/orange-preparing-to-provide-4g-services-after-3-years> (accessed 23 March 2013).

167. Interview with Yara Abdel Samad, director of policies and strategies at the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Amman, 10 April 2012.

168. See <http://www.jo.zain.com/english/entertainment/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed 29 March 2013).

169. Interview with Khaled Nuseibeh, marketing director at Zain, Amman, 11 April 2012.

coverage.¹⁷⁰ Other than encouraging the sales of smartphones and distribution of mobile broadband sticks at a fairly discounted price, the telecoms industry has influenced the media through advertising. Interviews with several employees working at telecoms companies, who did not want to be named, said that telecoms companies (specifically mobile phone companies) advertise and contribute heavily to news websites in return for favorable coverage. Although this allegation has been confirmed by several employees, there is no written or investigative reports that have been conducted that reveal to what extent this practice takes place.

5.4 Assessments

The TRC has spectrum-related regulatory responsibilities, thus separating the policymaking function of the government from the regulatory duties. Nevertheless, the granting, renewal, modification, and cancellation of licenses are subject to the approval of the Cabinet upon the recommendation of the director of the AVC.¹⁷¹ It is expected that the AVC will soon be placed under the TRC as part of a converged regulatory framework.

To date, the licensing framework for radio has favoured entertainment formats at the expense of news and politics. This is due to several factors, including high license fees in general, that cost between JOD 25,000 and JOD 100,000 (approx. US\$ 35,000 and US\$ 140,000).¹⁷² Moreover, until August 2012, the fees were 50 percent higher for radio and television stations that wanted to air news and political programming.¹⁷³ Although this barrier has now been removed, at least temporarily, would-be news broadcasters face additional hurdles, as they must submit a schedule and description of content with their license applications.¹⁷⁴ The current rules also permit the government to reject license applications without providing a reason.

In 2008, the TRC issued new guidelines relating to licensing the use of 3G Communications Technologies Radio Frequencies. Some of the companies applying for licenses supported the TRC's preference for allocating spectrum by auction, on the grounds that auction ensures an equal footing for new entrants to compete with existing operators, and thereby ensures effective competition. Others argued that auctions would be unfair and harmful to the public interest. In June 2013, the TRC announced a 4G auction; according to *Al Ghad* newspaper, only two companies applied for the bid, neither of them from the community of local mobile providers, who claim that Jordan is not ready for 4G.¹⁷⁵

170. Interviews: sources from companies, including online media companies that want to remain anonymous for fear for their job security or punishment.

171. See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2012/jordan> (accessed 23 March 2013).

172. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Arab Political Systems: Baseline Information and Reforms—Jordan," 6 March 2008, at www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Jordan_APS.doc (accessed 31 August 2012).

173. AVC law document provided by the AVC. According to Daoud Kuttab (AmmanNet and founder of Radio Al-Balad), the government cancelled these fees in August 2012. See "World Broadcasting for Community Radio Praise Amendment to Broadcasting Licenses," AmmanNet, 16 August 2012, at <http://ar.ammannet.net/news/168220#.UEZF-NZIRcT> (accessed 4 September 2012).

174. "Jordan Telecommunications Market Development," Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), at http://www.trc.gov.jo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=339&Itemid=506&lang=english (accessed 24 July 2012).

175. See <http://www.alghad.com/index.php/article/659935.html> (accessed 10 October 2013).

Some goals set forth in the 2003 Policy Statement of the Radio Frequency Allocation Plan have been accomplished in regards to mobile telecoms and Jordan Telecom's legal monopoly in the fixed-line sector was terminated at the end of 2004.

Although public interest is mentioned in strategic planning and strategy, due to the fact that the switch-over from analog to digital broadcasting has not taken place in Jordan, there has been no public debate or engagement of civil society with reference to the public interest.

6. Digital Business

6.1 Ownership

6.1.1 Legal Developments in Media Ownership

Ownership of any media outlet (broadcast, print, and now news online) must conform with the AVC laws and requirements, as well as with the press and publication laws.

Radio and television broadcast licenses must abide by the audiovisual communications laws and requirements. Print and online publication licenses are also issued according to press and publication laws. The AVC keeps a full list of all radio and television companies that are licensed in Jordan and the name of the owner or owners of the television or radio company.

A Press and Publication Law passed in 1993 included a stipulation that the government's ownership share of daily newspapers should not exceed 30 percent. However, in mid-1997, highly restrictive amendments were made to the law by Royal Decree,¹⁷⁶ and a new Press and Publication Law was approved in 1998, dropping the provision on government ownership of newspaper shares.

Today, more than 60 percent of Jordan's leading daily newspaper, *Al Rai*, is owned by the government, as well as more than 30 percent of shares in *Ad-Dustour* newspaper.¹⁷⁷ Several media groups have criticized the law and some drafted letters to MPs urging them to guarantee freedom of the press in Jordan by amending the press and publication laws.¹⁷⁸ *Al Arab Al Yawm* (established in 1997) and *Al Ghad* (established in 2003) are the only two independent newspapers in the country.¹⁷⁹

176. See <http://www.al-bab.com/media/articles/artic19c.htm> (accessed 23 March 2013).

177. Sa'eda Kilani, "Press Freedoms in Jordan," Arab Archives Institute, May 2002. Published by the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights and the Arab Archives Institute, at http://www.alarchief.com/studies/files/free/press_freedoms_book.pdf (accessed 23 March 2013).

178. See <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/jordan-press-law-letter.pdf> (accessed 23 March 2013).

179. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Communication/Documents/Media-statistics-pilot-survey-report.pdf> (accessed 22 March 2013).

6.1.2 New Entrants in the News Market

Hundreds of Jordanian news websites and blogs have been established over the past five years, in both Arabic and English.¹⁸⁰ The Jordanian blogosphere has seen an expansion matching the increase in internet penetration across the country. Bloggers write about political and social issues, some touching on topics generally considered taboo in Jordanian society. Independent media outlets, such as 7iber.com, provide platforms as well as training for citizen journalists. *Al Ghad* newspaper, Jordan's second independent newspaper, is the first interactive newspaper with an editorial team that has invested in innovative design and an interactive website.

In February 2007, Mohammad Alayyan, the owner of *Al Ghad* newspaper, announced the launch of ATV, Jordan's first privately owned terrestrial and satellite TV station. Involving the Royal Hashemite Court, the government, security bodies, and a number of Jordanian media experts, the station was set up to provide a combination of news and entertainment programs; what the owner referred to as a "channel for the entire family."¹⁸¹ But on 1 August 2007, as the channel broadcast its official launch on NileSat, the AVC unexpectedly halted its transmission and informed the channel's management that they had failed to complete the necessary licensing paperwork.¹⁸² In July 2008, after the course of over a year of fruitless anticipation, over 200 of the channel's employees organized a sit-in to demonstrate against the standstill they had suffered (see section 7.3.2).¹⁸³

6.1.3 Ownership Consolidation

Documents from the AVC include a list of owners of all broadcast (local and regional) operators and owners of radio stations based in Jordan. The documents include the date of registration of the stations and reveal a dramatic increase during the past five years of independently owned radio stations and regional satellite television channels following the liberalization of the licensing regime in 2003 (see section 5.1.1).¹⁸⁴ There have not been any major horizontal or vertical mergers in broadcasting or print media over recent years and the Audiovisual Law in 2002 has helped to foster some degree of diversity and choice for listeners, albeit mainly in entertainment genres (see section 5.1.2).

Nonetheless, there has been consolidation in the pay-TV market. In November 2007, there were over four providers, compared with only two dominated by OSN (a pay-TV network).¹⁸⁵ The first community radio station, AmmanNet, was also established. Although there is no evidence of broadcasters or publishers putting pressure on their journalists not to cover certain topics, there remains a great deal of self-censorship and

180. Rana F. Sweis and Jodi Rudoren, "Jordan Blocks Local Access to News Sites," *New York Times*, 3 June 2013, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/04/world/middleeast/jordan-blocks-local-access-to-300-news-web-sites.html> (accessed 27 July 2013).

181. AMEinfo.com, "ATV gets tuned into making an impact in Jordan," 27 February 2007, at <http://www.ameinfo.com/111966.html> (accessed 26 September 2013).

182. *Jordan Business*, "The Death of ATV," March 2010, at http://test.jordan-business.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=354&Itemid=40 (accessed 26 September 2013).

183. Menassat.com, "Waiting for ATV," 8 July 2008, at <http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/news-articles/4099-waiting-atv> (accessed 26 September 2013).

184. Interview with Azroo Shams Aldin, information officer at the Audiovisual Commission (AVC), 22 January 2012.

185. Arab Advisors Group, "Insights into Arab consumers broadcast and online consumption habits," 20 September 2011.

restriction, in accordance with the press and publication laws that they must adhere to (see section 4.3.2). There has also been at least one case of pressure exerted on journalists by advertisers through newspaper owners. In 2000, the famous cartoonist Emad Hajjaj was forced to resign from his job at *Al Rai* newspaper, which is government-owned, after being accused of “harming its financial interests,” through a cartoon that criticized a private telecoms company that advertises heavily in the newspaper.¹⁸⁶

6.1.4 Telecoms Business and the Media

According to an interview with the AVC, which issues licenses for the media sector, there have been no mergers in the telecoms industry (specifically mobile phone companies) in recent years where these companies do not own any media outlets.¹⁸⁷

6.1.5 Transparency of Media Ownership

Ownership of broadcast media is generally transparent, as full details are provided by the AVC. However, with the rise of online news websites, the ownership of at least 150 news websites across the country is not always clear, nor is information available to Jordanians.

“In Jordan, the government still owns and controls the country’s main national radio and TV stations, owns 65 percent of the biggest-selling daily newspaper *Al Rai*, and 35 percent of another leading newspaper, *Ad-Dustour*.”¹⁸⁸

6.2 Media Funding

6.2.1 Public and Private Funding

Figures for 2011 announced by Ipsos showed a drop in total advertising expenditure in Jordan from US\$ 320 million (JOD 226 million) to around US\$ 290 million (JOD 205 million) over a single year (from 2010 to 2011). Although this is a drop in expenditure in over a decade, advertising expenditure grew from \$275 million (JOD 194 million) in 2007 to \$320 million (JOD 226 million) in 2010. In the first quarter of 2012, 60 percent of advertising spend went to newspapers followed by radio, television, and magazines.¹⁸⁹

186. See <http://www.albawaba.com/news/jordan's-top-cartoonist-says-paper-sacked-him-stand-privatization> (accessed 23 March 2013).

187. Interview with Azroo Shams Aldin, information officer at the Audiovisual Commission (AVC), 22 January 2012.

188. See <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/jordans-free-press-decade-ended-when-it-banned-my-news-site-and-212-others/article12630575/comments> (accessed 22 June 2013).

189. See <http://whoswho.mediame.com/Advertising&Media/2012/node/251> (accessed 26 September 2013).

Table 5.
Total advertising expenditure (US\$ '000), 2010

| Media | US\$ ('000) | % of total spend |
|------------|-------------|------------------|
| Newspapers | 217,775 | 68 |
| Radio | 41,948 | 13 |
| Television | 26,293 | 8 |
| Magazines | 16,924 | 5 |
| Outdoor | 16,855 | 5 |
| Total | 319,795 | 100 |

Source: Ipsos-Stat (Statex-Jordan), 2010¹⁹⁰

For the newspaper, online, and magazine industry, advertising is the main source of revenue. Local television channels remain government-controlled and have small audiences, and regional free-to-air channels have garnered greater popularity. A comparison of advertising expenditure shows that newspapers, magazines, and radio have increased their revenue at the expense of television, which declined from 28 percent of total advertising expenditure in 2000 to a mere 7 percent in 2008.¹⁹¹ The increasing popularity of online advertising and radio at the expense of print and television may be explained by the lower rates charged by websites and radio stations, according to Ali Kassay, the founder and CEO of Advanced Communications, Consultancy and Editing House (ACE House).¹⁹²

The Jordan Press Foundation, a public shareholding company that specializes in publishing, printing, editing, and distributing newspapers and magazines, experienced accelerated growth in revenue from 2004 to 2007, but revenue fell in 2008. That year, inflation in Jordan reached double-digit figures. Coupled with the global recession that has affected the economy since 2009, the result was a decline in advertising spend. *Ad-Dustour's* advertising revenues fell by 9.9 percent in 2008 alone.¹⁹³ Overall, however, the economic downturn caused only a small drop in advertising revenues in 2010, according to the Jordan Press Foundation – Al-Rai.¹⁹⁴ Advertising expenditure is relatively concentrated in print, at around 73 percent (68 percent for newspapers and 5 percent for magazines.) This reflects the conservatism of the media industry.

The government does not make information on its funding of the media available.

190. See <http://www.ipsos.com/sites/ipsos.com/files/2011-Ipsos-Annual-Report-English.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2013).

191. Jordan Press Foundation – Al-Rai (PRES), “Equity Research Report.”

192. Oxford Business Group, “The Report: Jordan, 2011,” at http://books.google.jo/books?id=lmPVOL9_r7MC&pg=PA189&clpg=PA189&dq=jordan+advertising+revenue&source=bl&ots=1c2-UvV_Kj&sig=namaKe6PtZQTW88a6NWuTEpnKgg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=wNrRUZSmN4K9OdWygNgL&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=advertising&f=false (accessed 1 July 2013).

193. Jordan Press Foundation – Al-Rai (PRES), “Equity Research Report.”

194. Jordan Press Foundation – Al-Rai (PRES), “Equity Research Report.”

6.2.2 Other Sources of Funding

NGOs and foreign aid agencies have sometimes contributed to the creation of online media outlets. One active participant has been the Jordan Media Strengthening Program (JMSP) funded by USAID through which community radio stations have flourished. Community radio is growing strong in Jordan and is low-cost. Student-operated stations, including the station of Yarmouk University, and others in the southern and northern parts of the country show citizens' willingness to access not only news about their local concerns but also to voice their concerns through these outlets.¹⁹⁵

All these initiatives count not only on advertising to sustain their coverage but also on foreign aid as well. The combination of both advertising and foreign aid until the media outlet can survive on its own can promote independence and professionalism, particularly at the local news level, provided that foreign governments and donors do not interfere in the editorial and content decisions of grantees. While advertising and aid contribute to these outlets' sustainability, they also threaten their independence.

6.3 Media Business Models

6.3.1 Changes in Media Business Models

All Jordanian newspapers have established websites accessible to connected readers, but the level of innovation in attracting readers varies greatly. *Al Ghad*, a daily Arabic newspaper with a circulation of 45,000–50,000, took the lead in establishing an online relationship with readers. It has by far the most interactive website (Alghad.newspaperdirect.com) with the most up-to-date content, including breaking news around the clock and multimedia reports. Readers can also rate and comment on articles and express their opinions, adding an interactive dimension that was not available before digitization. In these ways, *Al Ghad* was able to distinguish itself from other newspapers while maintaining its circulation.

It is clear that the newspaper is targeting new readers through its website and investing accordingly in its online presence. In October 2010, *Al Ghad* was ranked 10th among the 50 strongest online newspapers in the Arab world, by *Forbes Middle East* magazine.¹⁹⁶ Newspapers with online editions such as *Al Ghad* and *Al Rai* carry prominent advertisements, as do news websites, and projections indicate that digital advertising is growing rapidly, from 1.18 percent in 2009 to 11.16 percent in 2013.¹⁹⁷

According to *Arab Media Outlook 2011–2015*, digital advertising in Jordan was estimated at nearly US\$4.2 million in 2011, and is expected to reach US\$18 million by 2015. Nearly 44 percent of the population now uses the internet as a source of daily and global news.¹⁹⁸

195. "Community Radio Stations in Jordan Make Elections Matter," see <http://www.irex.org/news/community-radio-stations-jordan-make-elections-matter> (accessed 23 March 2013).

196. See <http://www.dot.jo/forbes-middle-east-ranks-alghad-tenth-strongest-online-presence-arab-world> (accessed 27 March 2013).

197. See <http://www.arabmediaforum.ae/userfiles/EnglishAMO.pdf> (accessed 27 July 2013).

198. See <http://www.arabmediaforum.ae/userfiles/EnglishAMO.pdf> (accessed 22 June 2013).

6.4 Assessments

Except for *Al Ghad*, *Al Arab Al Yawm*, and online news media outlets, the government still has a hold on the media, especially in terrestrial television where it retains a monopoly. Online news outlets are owned by a more independent and diverse group of people including former journalists, businessmen, and others.

The Audiovisual Law of 2002 has increased diversity through the licensing of independent radio stations and satellite channels (more regional than local). At the same time, a number of new entrants in news provision have emerged in the online sphere.

At least five broadcast stations were cancelled due to financial costs, according to an interview with an employee at the AVC.¹⁹⁹

Internet news websites continue to be well placed financially thanks to the low cost of content production and business costs compared with television, but they depend heavily—and sometimes solely—on advertising. NGOs and foreign-government funders such as USAID and UN agencies such as UNESCO have contributed to media development and funding, noticeably for community radio. This aid can contribute positively to sustainability, but at the same time makes it difficult for local media to generate income independently.

There is some evidence to suggest that advertisers have exercised editorial influence and indirect censorship over news outlets and there is no transparency in regard to state funding of the media.

199. Interview with Azroo Shams Aldin, information officer at the Audiovisual Commission (AVC), 22 January 2012.

7. Policies, Laws, and Regulators

7.1 Policies and Laws

7.1.1 Digital Switch-over of Terrestrial Transmission

7.1.1.1 Access and Affordability

At the Regional Radio Communication Conference²⁰⁰ held in 2006, countries across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East agreed that after 2015 analog terrestrial television frequencies would no longer be protected from interference from other services, meaning that analog television will no longer be available in the Middle East after 2015. However, no concrete confirmation about a specific date for the analog switch-off in Jordan exists. There seems to be a will to move in that direction,²⁰¹ but there are no provisions yet specifying access and affordability requirements that must be met before the analog signals can be switched off.

7.1.1.2 Subsidies for Equipment

Jordanians still depend on free-to-air television, with close to 600 free-to-air channels available on satellite. In fact, nearly 90 percent of the Jordanian population receives satellite reception.²⁰² Before the boom of satellite, terrestrial television was the main source of entertainment and information. Although no official statistics exist, counterfeit versions of Dreambox, a powered cable decoder set-top box with satellite and internet connections, are widely used. No subsidies have been planned to support the purchase of receiver equipment after switch-over.

7.1.1.3 Legal Provisions on Public Interest

There is no legal framework that includes provisions on the digital switch-over in Jordan.

200. See <http://www.itu.int/ITU-R/index.asp?category=conferences&trlink=rrc-06&lang=en> (accessed 23 March 2013).

201. Interview with Azroo Shams Aldin, information officer at the Audiovisual Commission (AVC), 22 January 2012.

202. Data from the DOS for television and radio: see http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/linked-html/jordan_no.htm (accessed 14 April 2013).

7.1.1.4 Public Consultation

Media experts at the beginning of 2011 said the role of the Media Sector Regulatory Commission has to be upgraded to keep pace with the latest technologies “rather than remain confined to regulatory affairs.”²⁰³ The entity, established by a Cabinet decision in March 2011, combines the Press and Publications Department and the AVC. The aim of the merger was to cut down public-sector expenses, as part of a government plan to combine several independent regulatory institutions with similar mandates into one body.

Mr Alkhas said that the audiovisual sector is vast and constantly changing and therefore it needs an up-to-date strategy for the switch from analog to digital television. He added that digital technology would facilitate centralized television reporting in the governorates, which would lead to more localized reporting in each of the country’s areas.²⁰⁴

There have been numerous media forums and conferences that have taken place in Jordan during the past 10 years, including the annual media and telecoms convergence conference and others that deal mainly with the freedom and development of the press. The 2007 Access to Information Law (the first in the Arab world) has proved useless, as public and semi-public governmental agencies have ignored requests for information. Local and international organizations, including Freedom House and the CDFJ, have published numerous reports concerning the press in Jordan as well as reports on the 2002 Audiovisual Law by the British media freedom organization, Article 19.²⁰⁵

However, the issue of digital switch-over has not engaged either civil society groups or the general public to date.

7.1.2 The Internet

7.1.2.1 Regulation of News Content on the Internet

The government amended the Press and Publication Law in 2012, prompting the censoring of news websites and blogs, which led to the blocking of more than 300 websites, including the popular citizen journalism website 7iber.com.

A set of restrictive laws was issued in 2010 that led to greater control by the government over the dissemination and consumption of information on the internet. The Press and Publication Law was amended and its provisions were extended to all content published on the internet, including news websites, blogs, and other online media platforms.²⁰⁶ The decision was met with fierce opposition in the Jordanian blogosphere. Free and alternative media were now to be under the same governing legislation that many believe brought Jordan’s traditional media to its supposed demise.²⁰⁷

203. “Media regulatory commission’s role should be expanded—experts,” Sahafi.jo, 13 March 2011, <http://www.sahafi.jo/arc/art1.php?id=dd7a3f4c10e93a31a88ef8586a9337a10adb515e> (accessed 23 March 2013).

204. See <http://www.mobilitytechzone.com/news/2011/02/03/5286849.htm> (accessed 26 September 2013).

205. See <http://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/analysis/jordan-audiovisual-media-law.pdf> (accessed 23 March 2013).

206. See <http://bit.ly/eU3XNZ> (accessed 23 March 2013).

207. See <http://www.7iber.com/2010/01/websites-and-the-publication-law/> (accessed 23 March 2013).

Later in 2010, the Information Systems Cyber Crimes Law was passed shortly before the November parliamentary elections. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned the government's action as it "came at a crucial time as the country prepares for parliamentary elections in November and citizens rely on local agencies for news."²⁰⁸ According to a report by the Arabic Network for Human Rights (ANHR), the Ministry of the Interior instructed internet café owners to install software that blocks gambling websites and websites which contain pornographic material and insults to religious beliefs, or promote the use of drugs or tobacco. Café owners were also instructed to use a device that records website information and browsed data for a period of no less than six months and keeps an electronic record of a visitor's name, national ID number, and the computer used.

Back in 2006, the Parliament had endorsed the first Anti-Terrorism Law that included vague provisions restricting the freedom of speech. Like the Press and Publication Law, the Anti-Terrorism Law provides for the imprisonment of people whose writings or speeches "undermine national unity, incite others to commit crimes, sow the seeds of hatred and division in society, disrupt society's basic norms by promoting deviation, spread false information or rumors, incite others to destabilize or organize demonstrations or strikes in contradiction to the law, or commit any act which undermines the dignity and reputation of the state." This should be seen against a backdrop of the 2002 18-month prison term of Toujan Al-Faisal, a former MP, for "tarnishing the Jordanian state," defamation of the judiciary, "uttering words" before another deemed to be "detrimental to his religious feeling," and "publishing and broadcasting false information abroad which could be detrimental to the reputation of the state," and inciting "disturbances and killings."²⁰⁹

As a result of the legal restrictions imposed on freedom of speech, self-censorship continues to be largely practiced on the internet by citizens, bloggers, and journalists writing for news websites. The 2011 uprisings that have swept the Middle East have raised the bar of crossing the red lines and writing about topics viewed as taboo in the Jordanian society like the royal family and the government. However, this is not to be considered an improvement in freedoms. On the contrary, Jordan has dropped 8 points on the Press Freedom Index since the Arab uprisings of 2011.²¹⁰

This is largely due to the recent legislation which is likely to have an adverse effect on access to free online media content. In September 2012, Parliament, the Senate and the king approved legislation that would give the government new powers to block domestic and international websites. Under the new legislation, editors would be held responsible for anything published on the websites, and local online media would be required to register and obtain licenses from the Press and Publications Department, at a cost of nearly US\$ 1,400 (JOD 791.20) in registration fees.²¹¹

208. See <http://www.cpj.org/2010/08/cpj-asks-jordanian-king-to-toss-out-cyber-law.php> (accessed 23 March 2013).

209. "Jordan: Sentence against Toujan al-Faisal a blow to freedom of expression," 16 May 2002, at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE16/008/2002/en/b15faf35-d83f-11dd-9df8-936c90684588/mde160082002en.html> (accessed 23 March 2013).

210. Hani Hazaimah, "Jordan drops 8 spots on Press Freedom Index," *Jordan Times*, 27 January 2012.

211. See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/10/jordan-move-censor-online-expression> (accessed 26 September 2013).

Jordanian bloggers and journalists showed their disapproval of these new legal provisions by blacking out many internet media websites on 29 August 2012. “Jordan is joining the clubs of enemies of the internet,” said Ms Sabbagh in an interview. “Eventually it will be unfair to hold owners of websites accountable for reader comments posted on their websites. There was a lot of blackmail, abuse and unprofessionalism with the news websites but you cannot punish the good ones just because you do not know how to handle the situation.”²¹² Human Rights Watch accused the government of going after “opponents and critics” through this legislation,²¹³ and said that the amendments to the Press and Publications Law were vague, particularly the definition of “electronic publications.” (The official definition of electronic publications is: “an electronic website on the internet with a fixed address that offers publication services.”)

The law requires such publications to register with the Ministry of Commerce and to obtain a license to operate from the Ministry of Culture. The latter will have the authority to block websites that are either unlicensed or deemed to be in violation of any law, and to close the website’s offices without providing a reason or obtaining a court order.²¹⁴

In September 2012, representatives of Jordanian new media held a protest near the offices of the main newspapers with a sign that read: “There can be no reform without press freedom.”²¹⁵ Sawsan Zaideh, a journalist and talk-show host at AmmanNet, said that there is no doubt the government is using fear tactics to try to stem mounting criticism of political and economic policies. “By blocking websites now and security agencies given the legal right to access IP addresses ... you cannot help but wonder if what the government is doing is trying to create a chilling effect and instill fear.”²¹⁶

Following a decision by the authorities on 2 June 2013, nearly 300 local news websites were blocked for failing to register with the Ministry of Culture, as required by the Press Law. Article 19 was one of many media freedom organizations to condemn the move: “Under its international commitments, Jordan is obliged to respect these standards in its domestic legislation.”²¹⁷

7.1.2.2 Legal Liability for Internet Content

According to the AVC, policies and regulations have yet to be enforced on internet content broadly.²¹⁸ However, temporary laws have been passed to regulate such content, such as the Cyber Crimes Law (also known as the Information Systems Crime Law), passed in August 2010. In an attempt to reduce legal liabilities of journalists and in response to criticism expressed by various legal activist and journalist defense groups, the

212. Interview with Rana Sabbagh, executive director of ARIJ and columnist at *Al Ghad* newspaper, Amman, 13 September 2012.

213. See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/10/jordan-move-censor-online-expression> (accessed 25 March 2013).

214. See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/10/jordan-move-censor-online-expression> (accessed 25 March 2013).

215. Interview with Dareen Alhiyari, senior software engineer, Amman, 17 September 2012.

216. Interview with Sawsan Zaideh, journalist and talk-show host, Amman, 16 September 2012.

217. See <http://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/3791/en/jordan:-website-blocking-order-must-be-revoked-immediately#sthash.7lvdOXdm.dpuf> (accessed 20 June 2013).

218. Interview with Azroo Shams Aldin, information officer at the Audiovisual Commission (AVC), 22 January 2012.

government endorsed an amendment to the law shortly after it had been passed. A former MoICT minister, Marwan Juma, said that major parts of the amendment addressed the protection of contributors to online media “at a time when electronic information is an important part of the formation of economic and social development.”²¹⁹ Nevertheless, human rights and journalist defense groups such as the NCHR, the CPJ, the Jordan Professional Associations Complex, news websites, and local bloggers continued to espouse criticism of the law that they claimed “provides authorities with sweeping powers to restrict the flow of information and limit public debate.”²²⁰

Mr Mansour (executive president of the CDFJ) said: “Journalism, and specifically online journalism, does not adhere greatly to taboos or red lines in their articles and interviews. We are starting to see news stories that we would never have seen before the revolutions and protests that have happened in the Arab world. At the same time, there has been an increase in press freedoms [in parallel with] violations such as assaults and death threats [on journalists].”²²¹

Under the legislation, editors would be held responsible for anything published on their websites.²²²

7.2 Regulators

7.2.1 Changes in Content Regulation

The legal framework for media content was set forth in the Audiovisual Law of 2002 and the Press and Publication Law (which has been amended several times, most recently in 2002 and 2010). In 2006, the first online Jordanian news website, Ammon News, was launched. Since then, a rapid increase has been witnessed in the number of online news websites, and this has been paired with a rise in regulations, especially those referring to digital content.

The Anti-Terrorism Law includes sections on freedom of speech both in conventional media and online media. The Press and Publication Law exerted further restrictions on online media by applying all its provisions to online content as well, hence pressuring journalists publishing their work online to practice self-censorship. The TRC, which operates under the oversight of the prime minister, was established as a financially and administratively independent entity (see section 7.2.2). Its many duties include establishing the basis for regulation of the telecoms and information technology sectors.

219. Hani Hazaimah, “Government amends Cyber Crimes Law to ‘safeguard press freedom,’” *Jordan Times*, 30 August 2010.

220. “CPJ asks Jordanian king to toss out cyber law,” cpj.org, 17 August 2010, at <http://cpj.org/2010/08/cpj-asks-jordanian-king-to-toss-out-cyber-law.php> (accessed 26 September 2013).

221. “The Revolution Reporters,” *JO Magazine*, January 2012.

222. See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/10/jordan-move-censor-online-expression> (accessed 23 March 2013).

During a session on internet regulation and its implications on press freedom, speakers at the International Press Institute's 62nd World Congress, held in Amman in May 2013, said: "Official regulatory attempts at the local and international levels pose a threat to press freedoms."²²³

In all, the law provides authorities with sweeping powers to restrict the flow of information and limit public debate. Article 8 of the Cyber Crimes Law penalizes "sending or posting data or information via the internet or any information system that involves defamation or contempt or slander," without defining what constitutes those crimes. Article 12 penalizes obtaining "data or information not available to the public, concerning national security or foreign relations of the kingdom, public safety or the national economy" from a website without a permit. Article 13 allows for law enforcement officers to search the offices of websites and access their computers without prior approval from public prosecutors.²²⁴

Jordan's media environment continues to be dominated by state-owned newspapers and national radio and television stations. Although two large private newspapers do exist, "their owners largely cooperate—if not collude—with the government," wrote Mr Kuttab.²²⁵

7.2.2 Regulatory Independence

The Telecommunications Law was passed in 1995, providing a legal basis for reform. As a result, the TRC was established as an independent governmental organization regulating the telecoms and information technology in accordance with the Telecommunications Law. The TRC's board of commissioners consists of five full-time members appointed through a resolution of the Council of Ministers upon nomination of the prime minister based on the recommendation of the MoICT Minister. The members serve on this board for four years, renewable for a further four years. The membership of commissioners can be terminated by the Council of Ministers upon the recommendation of the MoICT Minister or due to term expiry, failure to attend three consecutive sessions of the board or six over a year without a valid excuse, forfeiture of any membership condition, crime or offense, or physical or mental incapability.²²⁶

In 2002, the TRC's mandate was slightly modified by temporary law no. 8 as an independent jurisdictional body tasked with regulating the telecoms and information technology sectors. The Ministry of Post and Communications became the MoICT. The 2002 Telecommunication Law underlined the independence of the TRC.²²⁷

223. See <http://jordantimes.com/regulation-of-online-media-should-come-from-within-sector> (accessed 23 June 2013).

224. See <http://cpj.org/2010/08/cpj-asks-jordanian-king-to-toss-out-cyber-law.php> (accessed 25 March 2013).

225. See <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/06/21/commentary/new-censors-of-web-media/#.UcYBqxb72fQ> (accessed 23 June 2013).

226. Sherine Shallah, "Arab Country Experience in Establishing Independent Regulatory Authorities. Lessons from the Telecom Sector," prepared for the Special Session of the OECD working party on Regulatory Management and Reform in the Framework of Good Governance for Development Initiative in Arab Countries, Paris, 28 September 2005, at <http://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/35553858.pdf> (accessed 26 September 2013).

227. See <https://sites.google.com/a/politicalscience.com.au/home/Home/chronologies/jordanian-chronology> (accessed 1 July 2013).

Although it is independent in administrative terms, the TRC's work remains explicitly intertwined with the MoICT. In 2012, for example, the TRC directed ISPs to block individual websites, although this did not happen. It was reported that the MoICT stated later that it was working with an Australian company to develop a more comprehensive system to censor pornography.²²⁸ Mr Juma (former MoICT minister) criticized the directives and was among many who expressed concern. "Very often harmless sites get blocked because they may contain words that are deemed offensive (such as women's health sites when they refer to 'breast' cancer for example)," he said.²²⁹ Although the effort to censor has so far been aimed at pornographic content, fears of more widespread censorship were validated in 2012, when the government amended the Press and Publication Law (see section 7.1.2.1).

7.2.3 Digital Licensing

Digital switch-over has not yet been initiated and therefore there is no digital licensing. In the past decade, broadcast licensing has seen major changes. Most significantly, the 2002 Audiovisual Law officially ended the government's monopoly on broadcasting and several privately owned radio stations were licensed as a result (see section 5.1.1).

Articles 18–25 of the Audiovisual Law outline the procedure for issuing broadcast licenses. The law gives considerable power to the TRC's director, who is not only responsible for the management of the Commission (Articles 6 (d), 8 (b)), but also fulfills a range of many other tasks including handling complaints against licensing decisions (Article 8j–k). According to representatives of the AVC, the most licensing delays by the government were in 2011. The government gave no reasons for the rejections of license applications in 2011. In 2009, the government had rejected 13 applications for radio stations.²³⁰

The director of the TRC refers to the government regarding the granting, renewal, amendment, and cancellation of broadcasting licenses. Article 16(b) of the Audiovisual Law also includes all the paperwork and forms that need to accompany the application, including a receipt proving the payment of application fees, a statement describing the applicant's technical and administrative capabilities, its financial situation, the types of services to be provided by it, the technology to be used and the geographical area to be covered, the names of individuals holding a share of more than 5 percent, and any other data required by the Commission.

After a license is approved by the AVC, it must then be approved by the TRC, and the Council of Ministers "may refuse to grant broadcasting licenses to any entity without stating the reasons for such rejection" (Article 18b).²³¹

228. See <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/08/201281519529205413.html> (accessed 1 July 2013).

229. See <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/08/201281519529205413.html> (accessed 26 July 2013).

230. Interview with Azroo Shams Aldin, information officer at the Audiovisual Commission (AVC), 22 January 2012.

231. See <http://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/analysis/jordan-audiovisual-media-law.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2013).

Some journalists and media owners, such as Mr Kuttab (founder and director of Radio Al-Balad and AmmanNet), claim that failed applicants for broadcasting licenses should have the right to know why their applications were rejected.²³²

7.2.4 Role of Self-regulatory Mechanisms

In December 2009, a media code of conduct was adopted which stated that “the government would not appoint” any journalist or media employee to any public position, including as a spokesperson or media consultant, or pay temporary or permanent allowances for journalistic services. Journalists already in positions with public agencies had to choose between their jobs with their media employers or with the government.²³³

This stern restraint by government was short-lived. According to an IREX Media Sustainability report in 2009: “A few journalists continued to have such privileges by virtue of their proximity to the authorities. Saleh Gallab, for example, was appointed chairman of the Television and Radio’s board of directors, without giving away his op-ed corner in *Al Rai*.”²³⁴

In 2011 media professionals expressed shock at the government’s decision to open the door for journalists to work in the public sector as media advisors, objecting that it represented an obvious conflict of interest. The Cabinet endorsed a code of conduct that regulates the government’s relationship with local media outlets where ministries, municipalities, and public institutions can appoint journalists when needed, but must first gain Cabinet permission to determine salaries according to the government’s pay scales.²³⁵

Taher Adwan, a journalist and former information minister, expressed dismay at the government’s media strategy, which he said was “traditional and [used] flowery language and [was not] practical and objective.”²³⁶

Media laws and regulations are numerous and do not leave too much space for self-regulatory practices on a national basis. The JPA is the core of established media accountability institutions. It drafted a law-like code of ethics in 2003 and runs ombudsmen committees (currently three) dealing with mishaps of the media, to protect journalists from legal liability. Although it has the statute of a professional body, the JPA is perceived by many journalists as an extended arm of the government. Until 2010 the association was not prepared to deal with private broadcasting and online journalists in the same way it does with the press and state-owned media.²³⁷

232. Interview with Daoud Kuttab, founder of AmmanNet Radio Balad station, Amman, April 2012.

233. See http://www.menafn.com/qn_news_story_s.aspx?storyid=1093406213 (accessed 27 July 2013).

234. See http://www.irex.org/system/files/MSIMENA09_Jordan.pdf (accessed 25 March 2013).

235. See <http://www.sahafi.jo/arc/art1.php?id=dedb4b74f512981913babd04e7cf0574d53e0801> (accessed 27 July 2013).

236. See <http://www.sahafi.jo/arc/art1.php?id=dedb4b74f512981913babd04e7cf0574d53e0801> (accessed 25 March 2013).

237. See http://www.mediaact.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/WP4/WP4_Jordan.pdf (accessed 27 March 2013).

7.3 Government Interference

7.3.1 The Market

Financial interference from government authorities has consisted in prohibitive license fees for broadcasters and an additional fee for radio stations offering news services, which was recently abolished (see section 5.1.2).

7.3.2 The Regulator

The most obvious and popular case that demonstrates interference by the government in the media through regulatory authorities was the ban of ATV by the authorities right on the day the station started to broadcast. AVC's representatives said in an interview for this report that the station was banned because their owners failed to pay the fee for the license usage. However, the former director of ATV, Mohannad Khatib, said there was no doubt that content was a factor in the cancellation.²³⁸

I think there are many elements; I am totally convinced that content has a lot to do with why they stopped us. We have been transmitting internally for six months, with news bulletins and shows, commercial breaks, promos, everything. I am sure that some entities got to know what we were broadcasting and did not feel comfortable with it. We were a bit more outgoing than they were used to, and we were definitely different from JTV. I hope we will never be like JTV, and if that is their standard then they will never let us air. We have quick, daring content and very good news coverage. We do breaking news. We have three Satellite News Gathering (SNG) cars that can go all over Jordan quickly and get a story from anywhere. If this does not suit them, let them say it straight out, let them say that they do not like the content. The details of this whole issue are even more disturbing: I get this letter ordering us not to broadcast, signed by Faisal Al Shboul, who is the general director of JTV. The head of engineering at the AVC is an employee at JTV, there is a clear conflict of interest. I do not understand how this can happen in a civilized country like Jordan when every day we hear high-ranking officials telling us about progressive free media.

An initial Cyber Crime Law was announced in August 2010, which would allow government authorities to search and seize property, as well as access computers, from offices publishing websites without any prior approval from the state's prosecution.²³⁹ Many journalists and human rights organizations were outraged and said the law was written in deliberately vague terms so that the government could interpret and implement the rules as it sees fit, said Mr Hawamdeh (managing editor and co-owner of Khaberni online news agency).²⁴⁰ These murky provisions raised criticism not only in Jordan but around the world. The vague provisions were removed, and the law now focusses on more clearly defined cybercrimes, like identity, theft, and fraud.

238. See <http://www.7iber.com/2007/09/jordans-atv-the-untelevised-revolution/> (accessed 27 March 2013).

239. See <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=40736> (accessed 27 March 2013).

240. See <http://www.cyberdissidents.org/bin/content.cgi?ID=471&q=1&cs=7> (accessed 25 March 2013).

However, criticism and outrage over the law in respect of media freedom continue unabated (see section 7.1.2).

7.3.3 Other Forms of Interference

Violent attacks on Jordanian journalists have increased since the Arab Spring in 2011, despite a slight decline in self-censorship, according to a study by the CDFJ. In 2010, 94 percent of Jordanian journalists surveyed said they self-censor.²⁴¹ In 2011, self-censorship among journalists declined to 86 per cent, a drop driven mostly by the Arab Spring, according to a recent study on the status of press freedom by Al Quds Centre for Political Studies, an independent research center. Self-censorship arises due to both a historical and current perceived or real risk of repercussions from the government.²⁴²

Media restrictions (not only financial) and control by the government continue to inhibit the political struggle for reform. A lack of press freedom, authoritarian media legislation, lack of professionalism, and self-censorship among journalists all remain obstacles. “It is impossible to speak about the path to democracy without a free and fair press and one that can flourish in an enabling political environment,” wrote Ms Sabbagh in her weekly column in *Al Arab Al Yawm*. “Will the Arab press be the force of change and help in establishing a new institution that is based on justice, democracy and good governance?”²⁴³

In July 2011, police attacked journalists covering a pro-reform demonstration in Amman, injuring more than a dozen people and breaking cameras. The JPA held a protest sit-in to denounce the attacks.²⁴⁴ “I feel like over the years, the so-called media reform process has gone backwards in Jordan,” said Ashraf al Rai, a journalist formerly with *Al Ghad* newspaper. “Press and publication laws restrict freedom, the psychology of fear leads to self-censorship, and the interference of the security services continues.”²⁴⁵

Shortly after the Tunisian revolution in January, journalists at Jordan’s *Al Rai* daily, which is owned by the government, staged their first ever protest, demanding higher salaries and more press freedom. A journalist standing in front of the newspaper building carried a placard reading, “You have suffocated us.”

Staff at *Ad-Dustour*, one of the largest dailies by circulation and partly owned by the government, erected a tent in front of the newspaper headquarters for several weeks in August 2011 and called for better working conditions and higher salaries. Mr Mansour and other leaders from the Islamic Action Front visited the tent, where the president of the Jordan Press Association, Tareq Momani, described the state of the press in Jordan as “deteriorating.”²⁴⁶

241. CDFJ, *Media Freedom Status in Jordan*, 2010.

242. See http://www.alqudscenter.org/english/pages.php?local_type=122&local_details=1&idd=258 (accessed 22 June 2013).

243. See http://www.alarabalyawm.net/pages.php?articles_id=17910 (accessed 10 February 2013).

244. See <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/jordan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo> (accessed 10 February 2013).

245. Interview with Ashraf al Rai, Amman, 9 April 2011.

246. “Jordanians Debate Role of Press,” *New York Times*, 14 September 2011, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/15/world/middleeast/jordanians-debate-role-of-press.html> (accessed 21 September 2013).

In a separate development, one of the first online news sites in Jordan, Ammonnews, accused the Jordan General Intelligence Department (GID) of hacking the website in February 2011. The website's editor-in-chief, Basil Okour, said the hacking happened when the website posted a statement from some of Jordan's tribes criticizing certain parties inside the government and alleging corruption. Mr Okour added that the website received direct threats from certain Jordanian security parties one day before the hacking occurred.²⁴⁷ The employees at Ammonnews staged a protest in front of the union complex in Amman demanding an end to interference by security services.²⁴⁸

In 2010, two Jordanian journalists were detained for criticizing the kingdom's cooperation with the United States in Afghanistan, but were released on bail. The two men took part in a television talk-show during which they criticized Jordan's intelligence cooperation with the United States in Afghanistan following a suicide attack at a U.S. base at Khost that killed seven CIA agents and a Jordanian officer. The NCHR intervened, as did unions and others.²⁴⁹

7.4 Assessments

Jordan has not yet made the switch-over from analog to digital broadcasting and therefore it is too early to assess issues such as licensing conditions, public participation or access and affordability requirements in the process. The 2002 Audiovisual Law officially ended the government's monopoly on broadcasting, which resulted in the licensing of several privately owned radio stations, including the independent channel, Roya TV. However, the licensing process is neither transparent nor accountable, largely because the law allows the government to reject licenses without providing a reason.

The level of interference by authorities in the media is still significant in Jordan, as is self-censorship. Digitization appears to have prompted a reactionary response from the state in terms of new laws restricting online journalism.

The Press and Publication Law was amended to apply all its provisions to online content as well, thereby threatening to foster self-censorship among online journalists as it has in the print domain. However, the 2011 uprisings have lowered the bar of crossing red lines and writing about topics viewed once as taboo. The explosion of online news and information sources as well as the development of UGC and interactive features have opened up a meaningful space for public debate over political issues for the first time.

247. See <http://arabcrunch.com/2011/02/jordanian-news-site-%E2%80%9Cammon%E2%80%9D-accuses-jordan-intelligence-of-hacking-its-web-site.html> (accessed 25 March 2013).

248. See <http://nz.news.yahoo.com/a/-/technology/8793937/top-jordan-website-back-up-after-hacking> (accessed 10 February 2013).

249. See http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/southasia/news/article_1533677.php/Detained-Jordanian-columnists-bailed (accessed 25 March 2013).

Alongside this, there have been numerous media forums and conferences that have taken place in Jordan during the past 10 years, including the annual media and telecoms convergence conference and others that deal mainly with the state of the press in Jordan, freedom of the press, and laws. New media educational institutions in Jordan provide an outlet for debate among students, in addition to workshops on social media, internet start-ups, and digital marketing. Debates have taken place on civil society issues through social media platforms.

There have also been numerous reports and recommendations published concerning the press as well as documents concerning the 2002 Audiovisual Law.

The amendment to the Audiovisual Law allowing for private broadcasting licenses has had a positive impact on pluralism. Privately owned radio stations including Radio Al-Balad, the first community service radio station, have brought diverse voices and have played a role in acting as watchdog in the 2007, 2010, and 2013 parliamentary elections. Some of the new stations also stream their broadcasts live online. Likewise, the online platform JordandaysTV broadcasts events live, including parliamentary sessions, local arts and cultural events, as well as internal political debates, for example on elections. Some legal provisions that affect broadcasting and general press freedoms—including the 2005 Anti-Terrorism Law and the Press and Publication Law—continue to restrict media and put pressure on journalists.

Nevertheless, media reform has regressed in recent years, overall, as reflected in a drop of 8 points for Jordan in the latest Press Freedom Index (as mentioned above).²⁵⁰

250. See <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html> (accessed 1 July 2013).

8. Conclusions

8.1 Media Today

Media development, or the lack of it, in Jordan continues to reflect the political struggle for reform. A lack of press freedom, authoritarian media legislation, lack of professionalism, and self-censorship among journalists all remain obstacles.

The last few years have seen certain developments. *Al Ghad* newspaper, an independent title, was established in 2004 and has created a healthy competition with other daily newspapers both in print and online. The decision by Parliament in 2002 to approve the Audiovisual Law resulted in the creation of radio stations such as Al-Balad, which have reported on news including parliamentary elections and sessions, and shed light on political and social issues. In addition, the establishment of the ARIJ and the JMI provide opportunities for Jordanian journalists to enhance their professionalism, receive training, and—in the case of investigative reports—shed light on important social issues. Moreover, social media and some online news outlets, as well as print newspapers' online editions, have provided an opportunity for readers to rate and comment on articles and express their opinions, adding a dimension of interaction that was not available before digitization.

Moreover, the fact that 90 percent of Jordanians now receive satellite transmission with over 600 free-to-air channels has given them the opportunity to view the news, entertainment, and so on from different regional perspectives and has fostered more diverse voices in television, compared with the state-controlled terrestrial platform.

The Access to Information Law of 2007 was a positive development for Jordan, making it compulsory for government institutions to disclose information to journalists and citizens (although implementation remains a hindrance).

However, with new restrictive amendments to the Press and Publication Law that will include censoring websites and stifling internet freedom, Jordanians are increasingly losing hope in media reform. And despite government pledges to protect journalists and promote a free and independent media, we continue to witness extrajudicial attacks and threats against journalists in addition to the formal legal restraints. The amended Press and Publication Law, in combination with other restrictions including the anti-terrorism penal code, remains a major hindrance to the development of robust, diverse, and professional media in Jordan.

Amid these restraints, self-censorship has been an issue for Jordan's journalists for many years. Although recent survey data suggest this has declined somewhat following the Arab Spring, some 86 percent of journalists still admit to practicing self-censorship. This may be due to fear of detention (or harassment), fearing personal repercussions from society when writing on taboo subjects, and lacking the will or the passion to cover issues in depth and for low wages.

Nevertheless, inspired by the Arab uprisings and the easing of public assembly restrictions, journalists at *Al Rai* newspaper protested for many weeks in February and March 2011, demanding more freedom, enhancing professionalism, and increases in salaries, and that state authorities should not interfere with what is published and what they write. This was the first ever protest in the history of the government-owned newspaper.

8.2 Media Tomorrow

The changing media landscape, like the whole of the Middle East, continues to reflect the profound uncertainty and the rapid transformation that are sweeping the region. For Jordan, this means that the government, journalists, and citizens will continue to adjust to new trends as technological advances promise alternative, more interactive ways of news consumption.

Ongoing social and political upheaval in the region, combined with new technologies of communication, is likely to fuel demand for real-time, round-the-clock, and on-the-ground news reporting, as well as for media reform. As more Jordanians go online, the new public sphere facilitated by social media is likely to expand, although it is threatened and will likely be inhibited by the new regressive amendments to the Press and Publications Law.

The government will need to urgently reform and lift restrictions on online journalism if the promise of a free and independent media is not to slip further out of reach. At the same time, state television and radio outlets will need urgent reform if they are to compete with expanding satellite and internet-based broadcasting services. Print newspapers have already begun making their websites more interactive with multimedia content, and this trend needs to continue and keep pace with technological developments if newspapers are to survive and prosper in the digital world.

Jordan remains committed, in accordance with international agreements, to switching off analog television signals by 2015. Managing the technical switch-over is likely to be a policy priority over the course of the next two years. However, since satellite services reach over 90 percent of households, the switch-over is unlikely to have a radical impact on audiences.

List of Abbreviations, Figures, Tables, and Companies

Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| ARIJ | Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism |
| ANHR | Arabic Network for Human Rights |
| ASMR | Arab Social Media Report |
| AVC | Audiovisual Commission |
| CDFJ | Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CPJ | Committee to Protect Journalists |
| DOS | Department of Statistics |
| FWB | fixed wireless broadband |
| ICT | information and communications technology |
| IPB | Information and Communications Technology Price Basket |
| IREX | International Research and Exchanges Board |
| ITU | International Telecommunication Union |
| JMC | Jordan Media City |
| JMI | Jordan Media Institute |
| JPA | Jordan Press Association |
| JRTV | Jordan Radio and Television Corporation |
| LoT | Leaders of Tomorrow |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| MoICT | Ministry of Information and Communications Technology |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| NCHR | National Center for Human Rights |
| NGO | nongovernmental organization |
| TRC | Telecommunications and Regulatory Commission |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| UGC | user-generated content |
| UN | United Nations |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |

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Companies

Al Jazeera
Arab Advisors Group
BBC
France Telecom
Info2Cell
Jordan Media City (JMC)
Jordan Telecom
Josat
Nilesat
Orange
OSN
Umniah
Xpress
Zain Jordan

Mapping Digital Media: Country Reports (published in English)

1. Romania
2. Thailand
3. Mexico
4. Morocco
5. United Kingdom
6. Sweden
7. Russia
8. Lithuania
9. Italy
10. Germany
11. United States
12. Latvia
13. Serbia
14. Netherlands
15. Albania
16. Hungary
17. Moldova
18. Japan
19. Argentina
20. South Africa
21. Turkey
22. Lebanon
23. Macedonia
24. Bosnia and Herzegovina
25. Poland
26. Montenegro
27. Georgia
28. Nigeria
29. Colombia
30. Croatia
31. Slovenia
32. China
33. Peru
34. Chile
35. Spain
36. Kenya
37. Bulgaria
38. India
39. France
40. Estonia
41. Kazakhstan
42. Malaysia
43. Pakistan
44. Slovakia
45. Czech Republic
46. Egypt
47. Singapore
48. Brazil
49. Armenia

Mapping Digital Media is a project of the **Open Society Media Program** and the **Open Society Information Program**.

Open Society Media Program

The Media Program works globally to support independent and professional media as crucial players for informing citizens and allowing for their democratic participation in debate. The program provides operational and developmental support to independent media outlets and networks around the world, proposes engaging media policies, and engages in efforts towards improving media laws and creating an enabling legal environment for good, brave and enterprising journalism to flourish. In order to promote transparency and accountability, and tackle issues of organized crime and corruption the Program also fosters quality investigative journalism.

Open Society Information Program

The Open Society Information Program works to increase public access to knowledge, facilitate civil society communication, and protect civil liberties and the freedom to communicate in the digital environment. The Program pays particular attention to the information needs of disadvantaged groups and people in less developed parts of the world. The Program also uses new tools and techniques to empower civil society groups in their various international, national, and local efforts to promote open society.

Open Society Foundations

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities in more than 70 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

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