



شبكة الإعلام المجتمعي
Community Media Network

Independent report to be presented to
the 3rd Universal Periodic Review of Jordan

Empower Community Media in Jordan

Submission to the Stakeholders' Summary

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1. Methodology of the report

This report was prepared by the Jordanian NGO, [Community Media Network](#), a Jordanian Media NGO established in 2007 with extensive experience in setting up community radio stations in the Middle East and North Africa.

2. Introduction to Community Media

Community media refers to the third tier of media ownership after public and commercial media. It refers to media owned by not-for-profit organizations usually representing local communities, and depends on the work of volunteers with the purpose of raising awareness and empowering local and fringe communities.

An enabling legal environment that provides recognition and facilitates resources and support mechanisms is necessary for the long-term sustainability of community broadcasters. They work on a non-profit basis, and are tailored according to the specific needs and conditions of their respective communities. This means that favorable community radio legislation and financing have to take into account a multitude of existing business models within a given national media landscape.

A common finding is the struggle for legitimacy, financing, and professional capacity. Many community radio stations give in to influential bodies for survival or give up and move to something else. This is all the more worrying as **community radio is an important vehicle for development in many regions of the world**. It can improve awareness and knowledge of solutions to community problems ranging from rural development, culture, education, agriculture, hygiene and sanitation to local governance.

3. Human Rights Framework

3.1 Scope of international obligations

Jordan is a State party to several of the main international human rights treaties, including ICCPR; ICESCR; ICERD; CEDAW; CAT; CRPD; CRC and its two optional protocols.¹

3.2 The human rights dimension to community radio

3.3.1 International human rights norms

The availability of community media is a driver and enabler of several fundamental human rights including **freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and access to**

information. The rights are enshrined in international human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the ICCPR.

3.3.2 International recognition

UNESCO and Community Media

UNESCO [has highlighted community](#) media as **a means to support democracy** by enabling individuals to **exercise their freedom of expression and right to access information.**

UNESCO has further emphasized that **“free, pluralistic and independent media are key drivers for sustainable development”**, and that community media also has a “catalyzing role for the achievement of enhanced climate action.” Radio is the most widespread form of community media in the developing world because it is **cheap to produce and to access, can cover large areas, and overcomes illiteracy.**

It usually evokes a grassroots attitude and a bias toward the free flow of opinions and ideas. It seeks to educate and entertain, to inform and amuse, and to create a big tent under which its listeners can engage and challenge each other as well as their political leadership. Community media will often fill the void left by larger corporate media entities that operate under different imperatives that may not include the underrepresented or marginalized populations in a society.”

Regional support

The Office [of the Special Rapporteur](#) for Freedom of Expression, under the Organization of American States, recognizes media, especially **radio, “as a guarantee for the democratic process.”** The Office further highlights that, **“the key role of Community Media to ensure the actual practice of freedom of expression and a better access to information for the social sector and indigenous peoples in our region.** Even though many countries in the hemisphere have legally recognized the community sector, there are still obstacles to implement its inclusion in media. Its development will also contribute with diversity and pluralism, and therefore avoid the creation of monopolies or oligopolies.”

National practice

There are numerous examples across the world where community media has proved a crucial platform for information.

4. Situation of Community Media in Jordan

4.1 Legal framework

Jordanian law doesn't recognize "community radio" as a special category, nor does it provide any financial incentives to not-for-profit radio stations, despite the fact that the 2015 audio visual law included a clause allowing stations that don't broadcast any advertisement to receive a waiver. This amendment, however, has yet to be translated into regulation or law, and community radio stations continue to be forced to pay hefty fees that reach JOD 25,000 (equivalent to \$40,000) annually (for both media commission and TRC). For every day that the license fee is not paid, the station is fined JOD 100 (\$140), and after 30 days the license can be revoked.

4.2 Current situation: overview

While community media has been celebrated the world over, it has had little impact in Jordan or the Arab region despite some valiant efforts during the last decade.

While not having the legal recognition or the advantages therein, **Jordan has experienced an explosion in community radio stations** that are neither owned by the state nor by commercial interests. Most of these community radio stations are either owned by universities or city councils. The only exception is Radio al Balad which is managed by the not-for-profit Community Media Network.

Jordan was host to the ninth global meeting of the World Association of Community Radio [Broadcasters \(AMARC 9\)](#) the federation of community media in November 2006. The conference, held under the auspicious of the Prime Minister Marouf Bakhit, called for recognition of a separate category of community-owned media as a third tier of media ownership in addition to state and commercial ownership. [AMARC 9 called for](#) **"legal and administrative structures must be created that guarantee the establishment and development of community media and community radio without administrative or financial restrictions."**

4.2.1 Ownership of media

The **Jordanian Government currently owns many media outlets in Jordan**. Jordan radio and television owns seven radio frequencies and two television frequencies that are outside the regulatory framework of the media commission, which regulates all other media.

A number of radio stations are owned by public institutions such as: the police, owns radio *Amen FM*; the army owns *Radio Hala*; and the municipality of the capital owns *Hawa Amman*.

Radio licenses have been given out to university-connected radio stations in Irbid's Yarmouk University (*Yarmouk FM*) in Maan's King Hussein University (*New Maan radio*) in Tafileh University (*Tafileh Radio*) in Jordan University-Amman (*Jordan University Radio*). City councils in Amman and Zarqa also have received radio licenses. All the above get a waiver to pay radio license fees.

The Jordanian National Centre for Human Rights (the country's A-status NHRI) has flagged the problem of concentrated media ownership as a major human rights problem. Speaking at a coordination meeting on 28 February 28th 2018 in Amman, and called for by the

Insan and Eye on Jordan coalitions. It highlighted its deep concern about the problem of ownership cluster of media ownership in Jordan.

4.2.2 Community radio in Jordan

In Jordan, there have been small but important efforts to create an example of community radio despite the fact that the current laws in Jordan doesn't allow not-for-profit organizations to own radio unless they get an exception or are part of a publicly owned bodies such as a public university. Ironically, an elected city council doesn't qualify for this waiver whereas a government appointed city council does.

4.2.3 Advocacy for community radio in Jordan

A number of efforts have been forged to try to unite community-based radio stations in Jordan and the Arab region. Community Media Network launched [Aswatona](#) a multi-year multi country program aimed at supporting and advancing community radio. Seven stations were established in the Arab region and three international conferences have taken place with the aim of introducing and advancing the concept of community media.

More than 120 community radio activists from 14 Arab [countries gathered](#) on 6 April 6 2014 on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea to talk about the challenges of producing, broadcasting and sustaining community owned media, especially radio. A declaration, the [Dead Sea Declaration](#), issued by the participants called for an “enabling legal and administrative environment that supports and sustains the work of these radio stations in local communities.”

The Media Development Indicators (MDI) of UNESCO carried out [an assessment in Jordan](#) by a comparative analysis of better public service media (PSM) practices in selected European countries and the contemporary practice in Jordan. Together, the MDI assessment and the comparative PSM analysis are intended to form the basis for a review of the government's Action Plan for the Media Strategy that could lead to the development of a revised Action Plan to be agreed upon by the relevant national stakeholders.

In the [recommendations](#) of its report UNESCO called for: “Comprehensive broadcasting legislation needs to be introduced which should, among other things, do the following:

“provide for an equitable allocation of broadcasting licenses to public service, commercial and community broadcasters based on a plan for the frequency spectrum which has been developed following an open and consultative process.”

Other public institutions were involved in other events in support of community media.

Jordan Media Institute concluded August 14th 2015 the workshop “Community Media... towards a better community engagement”, organized by USAID-funded Community Engagement Program.

The two-day workshops focused on designing media campaigns to cover local news, methods of affective social media, and building relationships with the local communities that would benefit journalists, and finally skills of internet search and media sources. A session was dedicated to data journalism and the use of infographics and other tools that would polish the media practice and produce stories according to professional standards.

On the occasion of the International Day for radio February 13th 2017 a group of eight Jordanian community radio stations [urged the Media](#) Commission to recognise them.

The non-profit radio stations also called for creating a legislative environment that supports community media, adopting UNESCO's definition of community radio stations, cancelling fees paid by the stations to commission and the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission.

The stations are *Al Balad, Sawt Al Karak, Yarmouk FM, Sawt Al Janoub, Tafileh Radio, Zarqa Municipality Radio, Liqaa and Husna.*

The European Union, UNESCO Amman Office and [Yarmouk University](#) on Feb 25th 2018 the 7th annual World Radio Day 2018 at the Faculty of Mass Communication in Yarmouk University.

5. Recommendations

Jordan did not receive any recommendations on community media in previous UPR cycles, though it received 12 recommendations on freedom of the press. As the situation of community media is developing in Jordan, Community Media Network believes that the issue must be addressed as a priority concern in the third review.

Community Media Network therefore encourages states to make the following recommendations to Jordan during its third UPR in November 2018:

- 1. Recognize and create an enabling environment for community media in Jordan without administrative or financial restrictions.***
- 2. Implement immediately regulations to the Media Law in order that not-for-profit, non-commercial radio stations are not subject to the Media Commission and TRC license fees.***
- 3. Use international good practices as specific benchmarks for progress to improve the situation of the media community***
- 4. Strengthen capacity-building measures for community media, with a specific focus on supporting training in decentralized governorates and disenfranchised populations.***
- 5. Allow migrants access to community media through opening up the licensing process to Syrian and other migrant communities.***

ⁱ Available at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=88&Lang=EN (last accessed 18/03/2018).