

# Restructuring Radio Broadcasting in Arab Countries

Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan & Egypt

Institut Panos Paris (IPP) is a non-governmental organisation, set up in 1986, and specialising in support for media pluralism. Its main objectives are:

- To strengthen media in the South (Central Africa, the Maghreb and Machreq) and their capacity to produce and disseminate pluralist information;
- To support the production of information on priority themes (e.g. human rights, peace, migration, etc.)
- To encourage journalists and opinion leaders to speak out and stimulate public debate;
- To kindle and nurture critical reflection on global issues around information in a world being transformed by new communication and information technologies.

This report was produced by:

- Olfa Lamloum: coordinator of the Media and Pluralism in the Mediterranean ( M E D en M E D <sup>\*</sup> ) programme, and author of this report
- Pascal Berqué: Director of the M E D en M E D <sup>\*</sup> programme, and overall coordinator of the report
- Peter Coles, translation

*The content of this report may be freely reproduced and disseminated by any media or institution, on the condition that the source is mentioned.*

For more information, contact:

*Institut Panos Paris, 10 rue du Mail, F-75002 Paris, France.*

*Tel.: +33-1 40 41 05 50. Fax : +33-1 40 41 03 30.*

*E-mail : [panos@panosparis.org](mailto:panos@panosparis.org)*

This document was produced as part of the MEDIA\*NES programme - MEdias et Dialogues en Algérie - Nouvelles Expressions des Sociétés civiles, carried out in partnership with the Algerian association, Femmes en communication (FEC).

With support from the European Union, within the framework of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and Cordaid.

JANUARY 2006

# C o n t e n t s

<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>GENERAL CONTEXT</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>THE STATE OF THE MEDIA: LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GENERAL SITUATION</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Egypt .....	9
Jordan .....	10
Lebanon .....	12
Syria .....	13
Palestine .....	14
<b>THE IMPORTANCE OF RADIO IN THE ARAB WORLD</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>INDEPENDENT RADIO STATIONS AND NEW LEGISLATION</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Egypt .....	18
Jordan .....	18
Lebanon .....	19
Palestine .....	23
Syria .....	23
<b>NON-EXHAUSTIVE REVIEW OF RADIO BROADCASTING</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Lebanon .....	24
Palestine .....	29
Jordan .....	36
Egypt .....	38
Syria .....	41
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>42</b>

APPENDICES .....	45
APPENDIX 1 - COUNTRY FACT SHEETS.....	46
APPENDIX 2 - RADIO STATIONS IN LEBANON .....	47
APPENDIX 3 - RADIO STATIONS IN LEBANON (YEAR 2000).....	48
APPENDIX 4 - RADIO STATIONS IN EGYPT .....	50
APPENDIX 5 - SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	51
PUBLICATIONS .....	52

# I n t r o d u c t i o n

Since the emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICT) in the mid-1990s, the whole media landscape in Arab countries has been undergoing a transformation, with satellite channels and Internet revolutionising the way information is produced and disseminated.

Until then, the overwhelming majority of Arab media were subject to prohibitions that considerably limited what they could say. As the American researcher, Jon W. Anderson, has pointed out, these media were perceived as tools for protecting the stability of regimes, and were “channels of nation-building states and stages for ritualised communication to mass citizens as witnesses<sup>1</sup>.” But the advent of the digital age, with Internet and satellite news channels, made it possible to trespass beyond State borders and evade the censorship imposed by the Arab elite. This brought a new complexity to the media, as well as radically changing the ways individuals communicate with their governments. The appearance of the 24-hour satellite news channel, Al-Jazeera, in Doha in 1996, was without doubt the major factor behind this development.

In the first years after the turn of the 21st century, these major upheavals also started to have effects on Arab radio, as witnessed by the emergence of independent FM stations, the undisputed success of the American station *Sawa* (‘Together’ in Arabic), launched in March 2002<sup>2</sup>, and changes in the legislation governing radio and television.

The present report by Institut Panos Paris (IPP) is an attempt to draw up a profile of the situation today, focusing on five countries in the Middle East -Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. Rather than try to be exhaustive, our research aims to highlight the main issues and overall trends of this restructuring process and its consequences. As far as is feasible, this report hopes to show what the new Arab radio landscape looks like.

---

<sup>1</sup>.- Jon W. Anderson, “Knowledge and Technology”, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Newsletter, vol. 5, 2000.

<sup>2</sup>.- *Radio Sawa* was funded by US Congress and launched in March 2002. The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) received a US\$35 million budget for this.

# General context

Independent radio stations have been broadcasting on FM since the turn of the millennium in Jordan, Egypt, Palestine and even Syria<sup>3</sup>. Operating with very different financial resources and political contexts, and within legal frameworks that may or may not be explicit, these stations finally brought an end to the State monopoly over radio.

Even so, this process of restructuring is clearly still tentative in some countries, like Syria<sup>4</sup>, and there is a long way to go before it triggers a genuine democratisation of the Arab public arena.

In its 2004 Arab Human Development Report, the UNDP paints a very critical picture of media freedom in the region. In particular, it points to the contradiction between what the ruling elite officially says about promoting press freedom, and the reality of policies on privatisation in the public sector<sup>5</sup>.

And, in terms of legislation, the UNDP report asserts that no Arab state can boast a liberal approach to newspaper publication. Indeed, in 15 Arab countries, the law requires official approval before publication, subjecting the press to a host of restrictions. And a study of 19 Arab countries shows that ten operate censorship (Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates). And the same study shows that, with the exception of Jordan - with its 1990 'Amendment 30' - media legislation in all Arab states gives the government full political and administrative powers of control over the press (via the Ministry of Information, of the Interior, or the Council of Ministers, etc)<sup>6</sup>. The UNDP report adds that "the principle of free circulation of information and the rights of journalists and citizens in general to obtain information are viewed with considerable skepticism by the Arab legislator". Journalists only have a legally assured right to access information in five Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, and Yemen)<sup>7</sup>.

The fact that the media are run by the ruling elites in the Arab world is a direct result of the absence of any form of democratic legitimacy. "Legal institutions in these countries are rarely independent of governments," says Gilbert Achcar, writing in *Le Monde Diplomatique*<sup>8</sup>, "except for certain special tribunals. And, even when opposition parties are tolerated, all kinds of obstacles are often put in their way to render them ineffectual. Arab citizens have no recourse to *habeas corpus*, or even the guarantee of their right to life, often finding themselves in the crossfire between murderous extremist groups and authorities with little concern for sparing innocent people. Women, and very often cultural, religious or ethnic minorities, therefore suffer a 'dual persecution', where their specific oppression is added to the general oppression."

From this perspective, it is interesting to wonder about the recent developments in radio broadcasting. Any reform in this area is obviously a response to both internal and external

---

<sup>3</sup>.- Lebanon is a special case, as will be seen below.

<sup>4</sup>.- Syria in this respect resembles Tunisia (cf. forthcoming report on the Maghreb in preparation by IPP).

<sup>5</sup>.- Cf. Arab Human Development Report 2004, "Towards Freedom in the Arab World", 2005, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup>.- *Idem*, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup>.- *Idem*, p. 120.

<sup>8</sup>.- Cf. Presentation of the UNDP report by Gilbert Achcar, "Chances et aléas du printemps arabe", in *le Monde diplomatique*, July 2005.

pressures. The case of Jordan is interesting in this respect. Weighed down by surrounding conflicts, with no natural resources, and dependent on US aid, the regime of this small country was forced to open itself to reforms, once King Hussein died in February 1999. Since 2003, the official government line has been one of accelerating reforms and introducing a “new style” of governance, in an effort to modernise the country.

The media are said to be one its priorities. Meanwhile, the US administration, which backs King Abdallah II and wants stability in his kingdom, gave a US\$5 million grant to Amman in 2005 to modernise the media. Jordan has become even more vulnerable as Palestine and Israel sink further into conflict, while neighbouring Iraq is in chaos. This another reason why the Jordanian regime has been trying to shore up the foundations of its legitimacy. The 2003 elections, following the dissolution of Parliament two years earlier, are evidence of this, even if they were put off several times - as is the instigation of a new “reformist” government.

By restructuring radio and television, King Abdallah II is pursuing two essential objectives. The reforms are first of all a response to economic demands, opening the sector to both national and foreign private investment, in line with the neo-liberal economic policies of Amman. Private sector players are now allowed to invest in the information market and to profit fully from the advertising revenue it generates. The reforms are also injecting new life into a moribund media landscape, as audiences dwindle in the face of competition from Al-Jazeera and other 24-hour satellite channels. As the researcher, Jon B. Altman, of the Institute of Peace in Washington, has put it, we are witnessing a revolution in Arab media, thanks to Al-Jazeera. Al-Jazeera, he says, imposes competition on the other media. It breaks down the walls of censorship and extends the range of subjects that people can talk about in Arab countries. Even if this revolution in Arab media needs to be put into perspective, simply exposing the State media to the formidable competition of Al-Jazeera forces them to take it into account. The same goes for the permanence and efficacy of these new tools for mobilising public consent.

The reorganisation of radio in the five Arab countries studied here is therefore not so much a response to a call for media democratisation coming from civil society, as a decision from above. It thus mirrors a dual imperative: privatisation of radio on the one hand, and, on the other, takes account of pressure from the Bush administration, which has been seeking democratic legitimacy for its military intervention since the start of the second Gulf war, by encouraging governments in the region to relax their control over the public sector.

# M e t h o d o l o g y

The present study looks at recent developments in radio broadcasting in Arab countries. It offers an overview of new legislation in this sector and a review of the new independent radio stations that have sprung up since the year 2000. It required a number of missions to the five countries retained for the study (Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria), each about one week long, between May (to the West Bank and Gaza) and October (Jordan) 2005.

The results are gleaned from a series of interviews with radio, television and print media journalists, media researchers, NGO militants calling for freedom of expression, lawyers, officials in charge of the media, representatives of regulatory bodies and lecturers or directors of university media departments. And, as far as possible, we have consulted the (albeit slender) existing documentation and research on the subject.

Because radio broadcasting in these countries is constantly shifting, this study should be seen as a preliminary sketch, which would benefit from being updated and complemented in the medium term. It is difficult to carry out an exhaustive study of the situation for a whole range of reasons. These include a lack of legislation regulating radio broadcasting in certain countries (Syria and Egypt), the existence of unlicensed stations (Lebanon et Palestine), the complexity of the official radio organisation (Egypt), the ephemeral nature of legislation on radio and television in some places (Jordan), the extreme vulnerability of certain local radio stations (Palestine), and the absence of a public and transparent system for granting broadcasting licenses (Egypt and Syria).

The five countries in our study sample are part of a wider research project being run by Institut Panos Paris, which also includes three countries in the Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco). It goes without saying that there are many disparities between Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan. Their histories and State structures are different, as is their progress towards open economic policies, the importance of minorities, racial composition, the influence of civil society, the power of Islamic opposition, the influence of religion on the political elite, and levels of literacy. These disparities have a direct incidence not only on radio broadcasting, but also on research. Paradoxically, it is easier to carry out research in the West Bank, which is under Israeli occupation, than in a country such as Syria. State control over the public arena and the lack of political and administrative transparency in Syria, for example, seriously limit access to official documents and information<sup>9</sup>.

Apart from the general lack of democracy in the region, specific aspects of some Arab countries regularly complicate research and access to information. Factors like tensions in Lebanon after the assassination of Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri in February 2005, the blockade in Gaza and restrictions on movements imposed by Israel in the West Bank, do not exactly help work in the field.

---

<sup>9</sup>- Despite our many efforts, it was difficult for us to meet those responsible for radio and television in these countries, in a context of tightened restrictions in Syria after their sudden withdrawal from the Lebanon. Our appointments with the director of radio and television were cancelled and our attempt to meet the Minister of Information was not followed up.



As far as possible, we also tried to visit independent radio stations. But, in both Syria and Egypt, the directors of private stations turned down our requests.

This report is in four parts. The first deals with the situation of the media in general in the five countries. It looks at the legal framework in each country, gives a picture of the media, and the state of press freedom. The second part addresses the legislative framework for privately-owned radio stations. The third part gives a glimpse at existing independent stations, while the final part draws some general conclusions.

## The state of the media: legal framework and general situation

Apart from notable differences in the political and social situations in the five countries, there are obvious similarities in the way the media operate. In all cases, the media remain generally under the control of the ruling elites, and information is a sovereign domain. Wire services, television, radio, newspapers, publishing and Internet are all subject to regulations that restrict freedom of expression.

Regular forms of intervention and control over the media include censorship, harassment and arrests of journalist, seizures of newspapers, and rejected applications for licenses. According to the UNDP report on press freedoms in Arab countries, the situation in Egypt is “difficult”, while Jordan and Lebanon face “considerable problems”. In Syria, the deterioration of press freedom is considered to be “very serious.”

### Egypt

This country extends over an area of 1 million km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of over 77 million (a third of the population of the Arab world) and there are over 500 newspapers and magazines today. Cairo has the oldest press agency in the Middle East, the Middle East News Agency (MENA), which sends out continuous dispatches in Arabic, French and English. The Egyptian press is far and away the most widely read in the region. The three most important dailies are *Al-Ahram*, with a circulation of about 1.1 million, *Al-Akhbar* and *Al-Goumhuriya*. In 2003, 534 licenses were granted for newspapers and magazines. In 2004, 25 new publications were authorised and there are a further 30 regional papers.

Egyptian television is highly varied, even if not very pluralist. There are two national hertzian TV stations, six local stations, and five satellite channels: NileSat 101 and 102, Dream TV1 and TV2, and *Al-Mihwar*. Some 63% of Egyptians have access to television. There are an estimated 2 million satellite dish receivers each serving an average of 33 viewers. The first law regulating publishing in Egypt goes back to 1881 (if a law introduced by Bonaparte in 1867 is ignored!). Before the 1952 “free officers” military coup, the press was relatively independent. Since then, several laws have been passed to regulate the press and publishing. The first significant law was passed in 1960, under President Nasser, who went on to nationalise the press and instigate an editorial monitoring body. This body was dissolved by Sadat in 1974.

The modern Egyptian constitution, adopted in 1971 and amended in 1980, contains several articles regulating the media. Its article 48 guarantees “freedom of the press, publishing, and the media”. Law n°148, passed in 1980, and amended in 1983, 1992 and 1995, authorised the publication of privately-owned newspapers. It thus allowed the appearance of independent newspapers, while requiring that they seek prior authorisation to be vetted by the security services.

Nevertheless, ownership of newspapers is restricted to public or private legal entities, cooperatives and political parties. An individual may not own more than 10% of the capital of

a media. Meanwhile, the government continues to hold a monopoly over the printing and distribution of newspapers. A supreme press council has been set up, with responsibility for awarding licences to journalists and newspapers and for controlling the distribution of foreign press in the country.

However, these constitutional arrangements on press freedom are being contradicted by the state of emergency that has been in force since 1981, and which was extended for three years in 2003. Law n° 158 of 1958 and its article 3, which is still in force, give the President of the Republic the power to order censorship of newspapers and publications that might threaten public peace and national security. Similarly, the new law on press and publications, amended in 1996, prohibits criticism of the President and official dignitaries. It thus sanctions “libel” of Parliament, the military, public authorities and the President of the Republic. And state management of newspaper printing and distribution of means that their circulation can be disrupted.

Again, according to Law n° 158, the Minister for Defence has the right to ban national publications. Meanwhile, the Minister of the Interior has the power to stop foreign publications from entering the country. Law n° 162 of 1958 authorises arbitrary arrests and detentions without trial. Often-repeated promises by President Mubarak to improve the 1996 law on the press, and to repeal prison sentences for journalists, have never been kept.

Several violations of press freedom were recorded in 2004. The most edifying was the kidnap in November 2004, of Abdel Halim Qindil, editor-in-chief of the Nasser weekly *Al-Arabi* (The Arabic) by men dressed in plain clothes, who threatened to kill him after a series of articles published in his paper criticised President Mubarak for standing for a fifth term of office.

One of the last examples of the limits to press freedom was the media coverage of the last presidential election. The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) followed this coverage from the start of campaigning on 17 August 2005. It observed five State television channels, two independent channels and 17 independent newspapers and magazines. Its conclusion is categorical - both public and independent TV channels gave the lion's share of airtime to Mubarak. And, apart from a few papers like *El-Masri El-Youm* and *Nahdet Masr*, the majority of print media supported the incumbent president's campaign<sup>10</sup>.

## Jordan

Jordan is a small country. with 5.5 million inhabitants. Its three most important Arabic dailies are *Al-Rai*, with a circulation of 100,000 ([www.alrai.com](http://www.alrai.com)) and published by the Jordan Press Foundation (public sector) since 1971. Its main rival, *Ad-Dustour*, with 80,000 copies ([www.addustour.com](http://www.addustour.com)), is close to the government, and was founded in 1967 in Jerusalem by one of the Muslim Brothers. *Al-Arab Al-Yawn*, with 24,000 copies ([www.alarab-alyawn.com.jo](http://www.alarab-alyawn.com.jo)), was founded in 1997. An independent daily, it is considered to be fairly audacious in its treatment of current affairs. Meanwhile, the independent and liberal daily *Al-Ghad* was launched in 2004. The independent weeklies and those affiliated to political parties are by far the freest media in Jordan. The most important is *Al-Shihan*, with sales estimated at about 25,000 copies.

The press law enabled a number of tabloid weeklies to appear, some of which are openly sensational, such as the Arabic language *Al-Shihan* ([www.alarab-](http://www.alarab-)

---

<sup>10</sup>.- The daily newspaper. *Al-Dustour*, devoted 97% of its coverage to the Mubarak campaign, cf. “News from the Media Scene”, Newsletter n° 16, <http://www.rap21.org/article18640.html>

[alyawn.com.jo/shihan/index.html](http://alyawn.com.jo/shihan/index.html)), *Al-Hilal* ([www.alhilal.com.jo](http://www.alhilal.com.jo)), and *Al-Hadath*, known for their eye-catching photomontages. The Muslim Brothers organisation runs the weekly, *Al-Sabil*, while Arab nationalists publish the weekly *Al-Majad* ([www.assabeel.net](http://www.assabeel.net)), directed by Nasserian, Fahd Al-Rimawi. The authorities have suspended this magazine several times.

Entering into law in 1952 and amended in 1974, 1976 and 1984, the Jordanian Constitution stipulates in its article 15 that “the freedom of the press and publishing is guaranteed within the framework of the law”, adding that “the press and publications are free within the framework of respect for the law”. In 1993, Jordan passed a law regulating the media (law on publications and broadcasting) exclusively applied to print media and publishing. Judged to be relatively liberal, it made it possible for several independent Jordanian weeklies to emerge. The Jordanian government did not, however, waste any time before restricting the freedoms acquired by the press, in a new law passed in 1997.

In this way the legislator increased the number of bans and toughened sanctions for breaking the law. The amendments adopted in 1998 only made the situation worse. With the accession of the new King, Jordan introduced a new law in 1999, which was considered by some in the media as fairly liberal. But the law was then beefed up by article 50 of the 2001 penal code, sanctioning offences against “the reputation of the State”, “national unity”, and its “prestige and integrity”. Libel of the king and his family is punishable by up to three years in prison. Journalists may thus be arrested or imprisoned for their opinions. The security machine and courts also intervene to control and censor the press.

To a large extent, the situation of the media in Jordan depends not only on the internal situation, but also on political developments in neighbouring countries. Several observers say that the signature of peace agreements with Israel led to increased vigilance by the authorities vis-à-vis media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the 11 September 2001 attacks, these same observers emphasised that, in Jordan, “the fight against terrorism” was used to justify a number of measures undermining press freedoms.

At the end of October 2003, King Abdallah II designated one of his close advisors to replace the former Prime Minister, who was accused of corruption. The new Council of Ministers, which was called upon to accelerate reforms, instigate a “new style” and go further with modernising the country, has no Minister of Information, and the Department of Information is now placed under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. Despite a democratic façade, the media’s margin of freedom therefore remains limited. Coverage of the 2003 war in Iraq is perhaps the best illustration of this. Despite ongoing privatisation of the media, the authorities continue to have *de facto* control over the media. The government is majority shareholder of the main dailies such as *Al-Rai*, *Jordan Times* and *Ad-Dustour*. At the end of April 2003, the government nullified article 150 of the penal code, passed after the attacks of 11 September, which drew up a long list of subjects banned from the press and which allowed newspapers to be shut down. This article also allowed for sentences of up to three years imprisonment for journalists who are accused of damaging the image of the royal couple, or for incitement “to crime, strike action, or illegal public assembly”.

However, despite the announced democratisation of the media, the State Security Tribunal - a military tribunal whose sentences do not allow right of appeal - continues to sanction journalists accused of overstepping the limits imposed by the law on press freedom. One of the most heavily reported affairs was the suspension, in January 2003, of the weekly, *Al-Hilal*, by the Public Prosecutor of the State Security Tribunal, and the arrest of three of its journalists, following publication of an article said to “attack the values of Islam”. These journalists were held in prison for two weeks, “pending inquiries”. The incriminating article,

entitled “Aïcha (the name of the Prophet’s last wife) in the House of the Prophet”, made allusion to the sex life of Mohammed. As well as being subject to a fatwa by theologians close to the Islamic Action Front, these journalists were finally sentenced to two- to six months imprisonment, for “libel” and “outrage against Islam and the prestige of the State”. The judge also decided to suspend the paper for two months<sup>11</sup>.

Despite the official repeal of the right of censorship, the Prosecutor of the State Security Tribunal continues to intervene to stop newspapers going to press. At the end of 2003, the independent weekly *Al-Wehda* (an Arab nationalist paper) was not allowed to go to press because it criticised the Prime Minister, Faycal Al-Fayez. In September 2004, the weekly *Al-Majd* was shut down for publishing an article criticising Saudi Arabia. The editor-in-chief of *Al-Hilal* was arrested, even though this paper is seen to be close to the Palace.

Within the framework of reforms, the Palace set up a commission chaired by the former Minister of Information and current vice-Prime Minister, Marwan Muasher, whose job it is to draft proposals for democratising Jordan’s media. The commission’s 19 recommendations were made public on 2 October 2005, in time for the Global Forum for Media Development in Amman from 1 to 3 October 2005. They stipulate that the High Council for Information be dissolved and replaced by an independent regulatory body; that a global law on television, radio and the internet be passed; that there be a ban on prior censorship, seizure of newspapers and suspension of authorisations to publish, until the courts have given their verdict. Finally, the recommendations put an end to obligatory membership of the Union of Journalists, a corporatist organisation set up in 1953 and seen to be close to the Palace.

## Lebanon

Lebanon is a small country, with a surface area of 10,500 km<sup>2</sup> and 4 million inhabitants, with no natural resources. It owes its economic development to the role it plays as a bridge between the Arab world and the West. Lebanon is incontestably the Arab country with one of the most diverse ranges of media. There are dozens of daily papers and hundreds of weeklies. The most important dailies are *Al-Anwar* (with a circulation of 47,000), *An-Nahar* (45,000), *Al-Liwa* (32,000), *As-Safir* (30,000) and *The Daily Star* (29,000). In 1992, the Minister of Information recorded 105 licences for political periodicals, seven of them in French, four in Armenian and four in English.

After the Ta’if Accords (1989), the Lebanese government started to reorganise the country’s media. While the civil war was fatal for a number of publications, it helped many radio stations to flourish. Many thought that, with the end of the war, Beirut would at last become the capital of press and publishing in the Arab world again - but the presence of Syria meant that things turned out differently. In reality, the Ta’if accords only institutionalised the political and religious rifts in the country.

As a result, there were two waves emigration of Lebanese journalists out of the country. The first was during the civil war, from 1975. And the second started with the arrival of Arabic language satellite channels in the Gulf region (*Al-Jazeera*, *Abu-Dhabi TV* and *Al-Arabiya*), marginalising State television.

Before its sudden withdrawal in June 2005, the presence of the Syrian army in Lebanon put considerable pressure on the media, even if it did not stop dailies like *An-Nahar* (with its weekly supplement) and *As-Safir* from speaking against the occupation. The Lebanese media

---

<sup>11</sup>.- One of the three journalists was freed in May 2003 and the two others saw their sentences reduced to a fine.

are increasingly cautious today, following the assassination of Samir Kassir in June 2005, and the attempted assassination of a television journalist. Some journalists even employ bodyguards, convinced that Syria has a black list. Tense conditions such as these are hardly conducive to freedom of expression, as the country is hit by chaos in the Arab world and the consequences of the war in Iraq. Competition from the satellite channels and increases in the price of newspapers have also contributed to a drop in print media sales.

Article 13 of the Lebanese constitution guarantees freedom of expression. The press is organised by a 14 September 1962 law, largely based on the French example. The law nevertheless prohibits criticism of “foreign heads of state” with fines for papers that disobey. This law has been used widely to stifle criticism of Syria. And the same law also requires papers publishing political news and comment to obtain a so-called “category 1 license”. In 2003, there were five papers in this category.

## Syria

The press in Syria is in one of the most critical situations to be found anywhere in the Arab world, and is the reflection of an authoritarian regime that has confiscated all forms of democratic freedom. The three official Arabic papers are *Al-Baath* (the Baas party paper), *Al-Thawra* (government paper, circulation 35,000) and *Tishreen* (25,000). There is also a government daily in Alep. A daily free press is not allowed. There are only a few weeklies, such as Voice of the People (*Sawt Al-Shab*), published by the Syrian communist party and member of the Progressive National Front, close to the government, and the satirical weekly *L'Unioniste*. So, with a few exceptions, the State remains the main owner of the media.

In this country, there is only one candidate in presidential elections, proposed by the Baas party, designated by Parliament, and then elected by referendum. According to the law, only independent individuals (i.e. not organisations) can stand in general elections, but they must be backed by the government or belong to one of the parties in the Progressive National Front (i.e. the Baas party and some satellite parties). When Hafez el-Assad died on 10 June 2000, the Constitution was amended to enable his son, Bachar, to take over as President, being too young according to the previous Constitution.

The arrival of the new President did see a small crack open in the political sphere, though. In 2001, there were calls from the people for the state of emergency to be lifted; it had been in force since 1962 and renewed by Communiqué No 2 from the leaders of the 8 March 1963 coup. Civil unrest had touched the party in power, and, for the first time in 40 years, independent newspapers were able to appear. Three opposition party dailies, two independent dailies and one satirical publication were authorised. But the “Damascus Spring” did not last long. Afraid of losing control of the situation, the Baas regime reacted swiftly and launched a new campaign of repression against the opponents.

After the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration stepped up its pressure on Damascus, notably by adopting the so-called Syrian Accountability Act in November 2003, which authorises the President of the United States to impose sanctions against Syria. Meanwhile, the possibility of the involvement of the Syrian authorities in the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri in early 2005, the sudden Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon and pressures exerted by the European Union and the United States, seem only to have had a relative influence on Syrian internal politics, as seen by the outcome of the Baas party congress in June 2005. This congress had been preceded by the repression of the last

democratic forum - the Atassi forum, named after a former Baas party leader who had refused to join the Progressive National Front, which was then headed by the father of the current President. This, together with exceptional efforts to woo the business sector, meant that the congress addressed most of the issues that were being raised inside the country, such as emergency laws, public freedoms, separation of powers, nature of the economy and citizenship for Syrian Kurds. It also got rid of the Party's old guard, but disappointed observers on two essential counts: the principle of political alternation and State reforms. This congress was also an opportunity to get some heads of the security services onto the party's executive committees.

The vulnerability of the regime does not seem to be reason enough for it to take significant measures to provide greater freedom for the media. The media have been regulated since 2001 by a decree (n°50), which contains over 50 articles controlling print media. Newspapers and periodicals may now be under private ownership, but the Prime Minister remains in charge of controlling and licensing them. Article 16 of the decree specifies that a press owner must be at least 25 years of age, of Syrian nationality for at least 5 years and have a university degree. In 2002, the government authorised the privatisation of radio stations.

## Palestine

The press in Palestine is organised by law n°9, which came into force in 1995, regulating print and publishing. It covers the press, publishing houses, distribution services, research centres, market research institutes, wire services, publications, and translation companies. Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this law insist on freedom of expression and publication for all Palestinians. It grants journalists the right to protect the confidentiality of their sources and political parties the right to publish newspapers. Article 11 obliges all newspapers and magazines to have an Editor-in-chief, who must be a bona fide journalist and responsible for only one publication at a time. According to the terms of article 13, the editor-in-chief must also be of Palestinian nationality or, for those deprived of nationality, to have been employed by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). Before a periodical may be published, a license must have been obtained from the Director-general of publications and publishing, the official ministerial office.

Article 21 of the law also requires that daily newspapers have a capital of at least 25,000 Jordanian dinars (30,000 euros) or 10,000 dinars (12,000 euros) for weeklies. Only political party papers are exempt.

Article 37 lists the various prohibitions, such as publishing information about confidential police files, or dealing with matters of public order, articles denigrating religions or posing a threat to national unity.

The three major Palestinian dailies each have a web edition. They are, namely, *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem), which has the widest circulation and is close to the Palestinian Authority, with Walid Abu Zuluf as editor-in-chief; *Al-Ayyam* (Ramallah), editor-in-chief, Akram Haniyya; *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* (Ramallah), editor-in-chief, Hafid Barghouti, often considered as the official mouthpiece for the Palestinian Authority ([www.alhayat-j.com](http://www.alhayat-j.com)).

The weeklies include:

*Al-Bayader Al-Siyassi* (Jerusalem), editor-in-chief, Jack Khazmo ([www.al-bayader.com](http://www.al-bayader.com));  
*Al-Dar* (Gaza), traditionally close to Iraq, directed by Hasan Al-Kashif, ([www.aldaar.com](http://www.aldaar.com));

the Jerusalem Times-Biladi, inclined towards the Palestinian Authority, editor-in-chief, Hanna Siniora ([www.jerusalem-times.net](http://www.jerusalem-times.net)); *Al-Manar* (Jerusalem), editor-in-chief, Ismaiel Ajweh ([www.manar.com](http://www.manar.com)); *Al-Risala* (Gaza), voice of the Al-Khalas party and close to Hamas; *Al-Sabah* (Gaza), editor-in-chief, Sari Al-Qidwa ([www.alsbah.com](http://www.alsbah.com)).

There are also about 30 television channels in the Occupied Territories. The most important are the official Palestinian Authority channel, Palestine TV-(*Qanat Filastin Al-Fida'iyya*) and its satellite channel, Palestine Satellite Channel (PSC). The independent stations include *Al-Amal TV* based in Hebron ([www.alamal-tv.com](http://www.alamal-tv.com)), *Amwaj Radio and Television*, *Bethlehem-TV*, *Al-Mahed Nativity TV* (Bethlehem), *Al-Rouah TV* (Bethlehem), and *Nablus TV* (Nablus).

*Reporters sans frontières* (RSF), in its 2005 report on press freedom in Palestine, points out that threats and violence against journalists, as well as murder, in The West Bank and Gaza are on the increase. In the Occupied Territories, the media are confronted simultaneously by the consequences of Israeli colonisation and its violations of basic human rights (e.g. the right to life, physical integrity, security, freedom of movement, propriety and work) and harassment from the Palestinian Authority. The Authority has no qualms about putting pressure on the media, especially via its security services, which regularly intervene to bring journalists to heel. Meanwhile, only 145,000 Palestinians have Internet access<sup>12</sup>. On 29 July 2005, the Palestinian Minister of the Interior decided to ban all information involving the forces of order.

---

<sup>12</sup>.- [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/803257.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/803257.stm)



## The importance of radio in the Arab world

The people of the Arab world have very limited access to newspapers and magazines. According to the 2004 UNDP Human Development Report, daily newspaper circulation in the Arab world is 53 copies per 1000 inhabitants, compared to 258 per 1000 in developed countries. Print media are largely reserved for the educated. This is particularly true in a country like Egypt, where a large proportion of the population cannot read. In contrast, over half the Arab population today has access to television and radio. These media are the most common source of news in rural areas. In Jordan, where 10.3% of the population is officially illiterate<sup>13</sup>, only 6.3% of homes have their own Internet access, 79.7% possess a radio, 97.2% have a television set and 46.9% have a satellite dish. In Egypt, almost two-thirds of the population listen to the radio every day, especially to news and religious broadcasts<sup>14</sup>.

In Palestine, Bir Zeit University<sup>15</sup> carried out an opinion survey with a sample of 1184 Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, on the perception and coverage of the Intifada by independent radio stations. According to the results published in June 2001, 36% of those interviewed said they could not express an opinion on the content of radio broadcasts, because they either do not register or do not pay attention to the way events are treated; 46% trust the information given out by these stations; 15% only believe in them moderately and 5% do not trust them.

In both the West Bank and Gaza, radio continues to be an important source of information, despite the popularity of television, and especially Qatar-owned *Al-Jazeera*. Both at home and in public transport, local radio broadcasts useful information during Israeli incursions. These stations broadcast air-raid warnings and very often send out messages for the emergency services.

### Access to radio and television in four of the countries studied

Number of radio sets per 1000 inhabitants:	
Egypt	339 (1997)
Jordan	372 (1997)
Lebanon	182 (2001)
Syria	276 (1997)

Access to television sets per 1000 inhabitants:	
Egypt	229 (2002)
Jordan	177 (2002)
Lebanon	357 (2001)
Syria	82 (2002)

<sup>13</sup>.- Source: "Jordan in Figures", May 2005, issue n°7.

<sup>14</sup>.- Cf. "The Media in Egypt. BBC News",

[http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_esat/419](http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_esat/419)

<sup>15</sup>.- Cf. <http://home.birzeit.edu/dsp/surv4/intro.html>

**Access to satellite TV per 1000 inhabitants (in 2001):**

Egypt	11
Jordan	46
Lebanon	79
Syria	50

*Source: World Development Indicators Database, World Bank Group.*

Apart from some disparate figures that are not updated, there are few data on radio in the Arab world in general, and in the five countries of our study in particular. Research on radio listeners and their sociology are more or less non-existent. This paucity of data is basically due to the lack of independent survey organisations and specialised research centres interested in these subjects. What rare figures there are, usually from private companies, need to be treated with caution. This kind of research is often commissioned by radio stations, in order to convince sponsors or businesses that they are competitive, and often respond to advertising imperatives, as is the case in Lebanon. As a result, there is little research on how the media are received.

A consensus nevertheless seems to emerge: radio still has a promising future in the Arab world, both as entertainment and as a source of information. Satellite entertainment channels (specialising in video clips and soap operas) can be seen on screens in public places such as cafés and shopping centres, where no-one would stop to listen to radio. But radio is still putting up a fight against the opposition and is trying to seduce young people, as shown by the emergence of music FM stations and the success of the music and short news flash formula made popular by Sawa, the US radio station.

# I n d e p e n d e n t   r a d i o   s t a t i o n s a n d   n e w   l e g i s l a t i o n

Lebanon was the first Arab country to authorise privately owned radio and television stations, although the government reserves the right to grant and withdraw broadcasting licenses. The new laws on radio and television, introduced in the second half of the 1990's, have given the media a degree of autonomy, but remain essentially very restrictive, often preventing opposition parties and civil society from using the media.

## Egypt

There is no public, legal framework organising radio broadcasting in Egypt.

## Jordan

Before the new law was passed authorising non-public FM radio stations, several foreign FM stations were already broadcasting in Jordan, outside any form of legal framework. The BBC, Radio Monte-Carlo, Sawa and MBC had no official authorisation. Now, broadcasting is covered by law n°71 of 2002, which refers exclusively to terrestrial and satellite radio and television. Its objective has been to reorganise Jordan's media, by authorising private investment, notably from abroad, in the country's radio and television stations. This law makes it possible to set up a radio station, once a license has been obtained from the Audiovisual Commission, a new body created under law n°71. The license application must state explicitly how the station will be financed, include documents underwriting the solvency of the applicant, list the technical means and equipment that will be used, and describe the chosen editorial approach. The law stipulates a maximum delay of 60 days to process an application to the Commission. In compliance with the law, the radio station has to nominate a full-time executive director, who must be experienced, be fluent in the main language used by the station, and have no criminal record. The law gives the media one year to start its activities, once it has obtained a license; beyond that date the Commission will withdraw its permit.

If a license is refused, the law does not require the Commission to justify its decision.

In 2003, following the entry into force of law n°71, the Kingdom passed decree n°163 on the granting of broadcasting licences. This decree prohibits the broadcasting of programmes that undermine:

- religious beliefs;
- the values of the nation, its heritage and the union of Jordanian society;
- public order and morals;
- citizens' rights.

The decree also sets taxation levels for FM stations with transmitters less than 5 kw: 25,000 dinars (30,000 euros) for the region of Amman, 15,000 dinars (18,000 euros) for the regions of Zarka and Irbid and 10,000 dinars (12,000 euros) for the rest of the kingdom.

FM stations that belong to a foreign radio station and use a transmitter on Jordanian soil, have to pay 20,000 dinars (24,000 euros) for the region of Amman and 10,000 dinars for the

rest of the kingdom. Further taxes become payable if other frequencies, or satellite broadcasting capabilities, are acquired. The tax is subject to a 50% surcharge if the station broadcasts political or news programmes.

- **Regulatory bodies**

Law n°71 gave rise to the Audiovisual Commission, with its 'administrative and financial autonomy'. Nevertheless, this Commission still depends on the Minister of Information for funding. The Commission plays a strictly consultative role, namely to:

- promote the radio and television sector and its organisation;
- examine license applications;
- monitor authorised media;
- grant authorisations for correspondents and technical equipment used by these media.

The Commission comprises a director, designated by the Council of Ministers, and an executive structure made up of civil servants appointed by the Ministry of Information to whom the Director must report back.

The Commission is supported by another body, the High Council for Information, a consultative structure close to the Palace. Although it was created in 2001 and operational by 2002, its statutes were not passed until 2004. It has five main lines of action:

- proposing new laws governing radio and television;
- presenting reports on press freedom;
- setting up a training centre for journalists;
- organising training sessions for radio journalists;
- arbitrating in disputes relating to information issues (e.g. examining complaints from journalists or media organisations).

## **Lebanon**

Lebanon has played a pioneering role in the region, introducing legislation for independent radio stations and setting up a regulatory body. From a researcher's point of view, it offers a fuller and more stimulating field for observation.

Lebanese radio and television broadcasting are regulated by a dedicated law, n°382 of 4 November 1994. This law was passed by the Council of Ministers and published in the Official Journal of 10 July 1994. It aims "to regulate radio and television broadcasting, whatever technique, means, or equipment may be used, and independent of its status or name, as well as regulating all questions relative to such broadcasting".

Nowadays, a license is required before any radio or television media can be established on Lebanese soil, accorded "in virtue of a decree passed by the Council of Ministers after consultation with the National Audiovisual Council". The law further specifies that "the license is valid for a period of 16 years, renewable in virtue of an application submitted three years before the expiry date". This license is granted to radio and television media according to their capacities and the technical characteristics of their transmitters and broadcasting equipment. The law in particular stipulates that they "may not broadcast any programme that may help to promote relations with the Zionist enemy".

According to article 12, any given audiovisual enterprise may only own one radio or television station. In practice, when a radio belongs to a "media group", it is in fact coupled with a television station.

Radio stations are subject to very precise nomenclature:

- category 1: radio stations which broadcast all kinds of radio programmes, including news and political programmes, and whose range covers the entire Lebanese territory;
- category 2: radio stations which broadcast all kinds of radio broadcasts, with the exception of news and political programmes, and whose range covers the entire Lebanese territory;
- category 3: digital radio stations, whose broadcasts may only be received by subscribers with the appropriate technical equipment;
- category 4: international radio stations, whose broadcasts require the use of satellites and extend beyond Lebanese territorial limits.

The law also stipulates that “each radio or television station nominate a director of programming” and that “the director must have had Lebanese nationality for more than ten years”.

The standard specifications for category 1 and 2 radio and television organisations were ratified by the Minister of Information, in virtue of decree n°7997 of 28 February 1996, which specifies the dispositions and conditions for applying law n° 382.

- **Specifications for category 1 radio broadcasting organisations**

This document is intended to encourage production in the area concerned and to develop a modern media industry. It specifies the objectives of category 1 radio stations, which must agree to “respect the individual”, “encourage Lebanese radio and artistic production”, “ensure free and professional competition between radio broadcasting organisations”, “adopt a considered and flexible programming schedule, that suits given age groups and protects public morals and family ties”. In order to attain these objectives, the specifications call upon radio broadcasting organisations to “ensure diversity in the expression of opinions”, to guarantee “human rights”, “preserve public order, national defence and imperatives in the public interest”, to agree not to “broadcast any programme that may promote relations with the Zionist enemy”, “not to broadcast any programme that may stir up or incite religious animosity, or any subject that may encourage society and especially children, to physical or moral violence”.

The specifications also lay out the legal, financial and administrative conditions of category 1.

Legally, the company applying for the licence must “be a Lebanese limited company not possessing or having the right to possess more than a single television organisation and a single radio organisation”. All of its shares must be attributed and shareholders, when they are named individuals, must be Lebanese. Other shareholders, not individuals, must be “a Lebanese company”. Similarly, the internal regulations of the organisation must stipulate that, “no individual or corporate body has the right to own more than 10% of the total of the company’s shares (...) and does not have the right to be a shareholder in more than one company”. The radio station is also required to “publish the list of its shareholders in the Official Journal and the proportion of shares they hold”. It is also “forbidden to sell or transfer shares without prior authorisation from the Council of Ministers”.

Financial conditions: the license application “must contain proof of the capacity of the organisation to absorb all expenditures in at least the first year after the license is awarded”.

On an administrative level, “the organisation must nominate a full-time director of programming, who should hold a university diploma recognised by the authorities competent in the field of his or her specialisation”. Furthermore, “the organisation must have specialist directors and heads of department”.

On a technical level, the radio station is requested to “prepare files, technical studies and documentation regarding the attribution of the frequencies which are granted to it, and to present them to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, in order that it be registered with the International Frequency Registration Board (ITU) in due form”. It is also stipulated that, “if a media organisation wishes to install a new transmitter, it must submit a request to the Ministry of Information”.

In order to enable the government to monitor the content of radio programmes, the specifications require the organisation “to record all kinds of live radio broadcasts and to archive them for at least 30 days from the date they were first broadcast. The organisation accepts responsibility for submitting the recorded programme to the appropriate authorities during this period”.

The specifications require the radio organisation to carry out “continuous quality control of signals at the different stages, from studios and production units, via relay networks to the transmitters situated in all the various centres”.

Under the law the Council of Ministers must publish a decree allowing radio stations to begin broadcasting, by attributing frequencies. The decision, which is taken “on the basis of a proposal from the Ministers of Information and Telecommunications, which fixes the broadcasting frequencies attributed to each organisation that has obtained a licence, as well as the geographical areas in which these frequencies may be used, and the broadcasting characteristics associated with each of them”.

The license for the use of frequencies and relay equipment by radio broadcasting organisations is obtained from the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, in conformity with conditions imposed by this Ministry.

The specifications also set out the conditions to which transmitter pylons must conform, as well as the specifications for aerials. They also specify the technical characteristics required for FM broadcasting and various other parameters, such as the type of modulation, voice bandwidth, etc.

Apart from these technical aspects, category 1 radio broadcasting organisations are called upon to respect a certain number of programming rules. A category 1 radio organisation “must broadcast a minimum of 18 hours a day of local programmes, both Arabic and international”. The station must devote a minimum of 1076 hours per year, to programmes produced locally, according to the following breakdown:

- news: 400 hours;
- political: 104 hours;
- cultural: 78 hours;
- educational: 26 hours;
- women and families: 26 hours,
- children: 52 hours;
- the environment: 26 hours;
- health: 26 hours;

- sport: 52 hours;
- young people: 52 hours;
- entertainment and games: 104 hours;
- drama: 26 hours;
- rural and farming: 52 hours;
- the economy: 52 hours.

The radio station must produce 10 hours of programmes featuring Lebanese arts. The specifications state how this production should be broken down. For example, it should produce six pieces of light music or jazz and 13 songs for children, etc. It also states how often news bulletins should be broadcast, and even that the station must produce at least four news bulletins per day, if it broadcasts for more than 18 hours a day. The specifications make it obligatory to broadcast “the official Independence Day ceremonies”. On the other hand it is forbidden “to broadcast live coverage of any political ceremony without appropriate authorisation”. Even more curiously, the specifications oblige radio stations to “devote time in its programmes to family-oriented issues, to strengthen links between family members”. And, furthermore, “to pay special attention to women, so that they may fulfil their role in society and ensure family well-being”. Finally, all radio stations must “play the national anthem at the start and end of broadcasting each day”.

- **Specifications for category 2 radio broadcasting organisations**

The specifications for category 2 radio stations are almost identical to those for category 1. The differences concern programming issues, such as the minimum number of hours of broadcasting and of local programme content. Radio stations in this category must devote at least 1076 hours per year to locally-produced programmes. And the breakdown is different to that for category 1 stations:

- documentaries in the station’s specialist area: 400 hours;
- programmes in the station’s specialist area: 104 hours.

Category 2 radio stations therefore do not broadcast news, or political programmes. Their news flashes must relate only to their areas of specialisation.

The right to a category 1 license costs 125 million Lebanese pounds (75,000 euros) while the annual rental fee for the use of the assigned frequency is 25 million pounds (15,000 euros). Meanwhile, the right to a category 2 licence costs 50 million pounds (30,000 euros) and the annual frequency rental fee is 15 million pounds (9,000 euros). A political station is therefore more expensive than a station devoted to entertainment.

- **The Regulatory body: The National Audiovisual Council**

The Council, which is a consultative body, was set up under law n° 382 of 4 November 1994, which also sets out its prerogatives. It comprises ten members nominated equally by the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly. Its duties are to:

- advise on the standard specifications for each category of radio and television broadcasting organisation;
- consider each application for a license, write a report and present it to the Minister of Information within 45 days of the application being received;
- advise the Minister on measures to be taken against organisations which infringe the regulations;
- consider requests for licences submitted to the Council of Ministers via the Minister of Information;

- give consultative advice to the Council of Ministers, regarding the approval or rejection of applications.

The National Audiovisual Council's mandate is for three years, and is renewable.

## Palestine

One of the main reasons for the burgeoning of independent radio stations in the West Bank and Gaza after the Oslo agreement (1993) is the absence of legislation covering radio broadcasting, the weakness of the Palestinian Authority and its inability to control this media. Since September 2004, Palestinian radio broadcasting is theoretically regulated by a decree from the Council of Ministers, which has not yet been ratified by the Legislative Council<sup>16</sup>. This law relates to the conditions for awarding licences to terrestrial and satellite radio and television stations, and designates ministries to examine applications. The technical aspects are assigned to the Ministry for Communications and Information Technologies (e.g. frequencies, transmitters, etc.), while the Ministry of Information handles content issues. The Ministry of the Interior issues license application forms for licences, and handles security issues and validates "the legality of the media organisation's capital holdings"<sup>17</sup>.

A commission with members from the three ministries makes the final decision on applications and grants authorisations. The applicant can receive two kinds of authorisation: the first is technical, and comes from the Minister for Communications, while the second is professional, and comes from the Minister of Information. The law requires that the owner and the director of a radio station have Palestinian nationality and reside in Palestine<sup>18</sup>. The director must also have five years experience and hold a university degree. The law requires all radio stations to employ at least six journalists and stipulates that 40% of programme content be locally produced or produced by the station. There must be no more than eight minutes of advertising per hour of broadcasting. The law also requires that each radio station "contribute to the reinforcement of national policies". It grants the Palestinian Authority a monopoly over religious radio and television stations.

The law also sets the cost of a radio license and the annual tax for using the attributed frequency (currently 1,000 Jordanian dinars (1200 euros)).

The law, which was passed in September 2004, gives radio and television stations operating in the West Bank and Gaza six months to comply with its stipulations. However, the recent election of Hamas in January 2006, will probably affect the way Palestinian radio broadcasting is regulated.

## Syria

There is no published legal enactment regulating radio broadcasting in this country. However, the government has announced amendments to the law in force.

---

<sup>16</sup>.- The victory of Hamas in the last elections may of course lead to changes in the legislation on radio and television.

<sup>17</sup>.- We base our analysis on the Arabic version of the law of 14 September 2004 passed in Ramallah, cf. part 2 of this study, article 2.

<sup>18</sup>.- It is the law on the promotion of foreign promotion investments that applies to applications for licences made by non-Palestinians.



# Non-exhaustive review of radio broadcasting

## Lebanon<sup>19</sup>

It was in September 1938 that Lebanon witnessed its first regular radio broadcasts, with France's inauguration of Radio Orient. This was the second radio station in the Middle East, after Cairo. Two years after independence, in 1943, Radio Orient became National Lebanese Radio, which maintained its monopoly until civil war broke out in 1975.

This had a fatal effect on a great many newspapers, but, throughout this period, over 150 independent stations, often religious, were set up outside of any form of legal framework. It was only when the conflict ended, with the 1989 Ta'if Accords, that new regulations were instituted. A law on radio and television broadcasting was passed in 1994. Its requirement for prior licensing reduced the number of existing stations. In fact, only a certain number of radio stations acquired legal status under the terms of this law.

- **List of licensed radio stations (August 2005)**<sup>20</sup>

### **Category 1 radio stations**

1. Radio NBN (National Broadcasting Network), close to the Amal Shi'a movement, whose chairman is Head of the National Assembly.
2. Radio Orient (*Al-Mustaqbil*), owned by the family of the former Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri.
3. *Sawt Al-Shaab* (Voice of the People), close to the Lebanese Communist Party.
4. *Sawt Al-Ghad* (Voice of Tomorrow).
5. *Sawt Lubnan* (Voice of Lebanon), close to the Lebanese army.
6. *Lubnan Al-Hur* (Free Lebanon), close to the Phalangists.
7. Radio Lebanon.
8. Radio *Al-Nour*, close to Hezbollah.
9. *Sawt Al-Watan* (Voice of the Country).
10. International Society for Media Projects.
11. Voice of Beirut and Lebanon.
12. Radio Mont Lebanon, close to the Druze leader Walid Joumblat.
13. Radio *Al-Fajr*, Sunni.

### **Category 2 radio stations**

1. *Al-Bashair*.
2. Radio Delta.
3. Sawn Music.
4. Radio Scope.
5. Fame FM.
6. Lebanon Star.
7. Pax FM.
8. Radio Mont Liban.

---

<sup>19</sup>.- See the list of Lebanese radio stations, in appendices 2 and 3.

<sup>20</sup>.- This list was provided by the Audiovisual Council in August 2005.

9. Radio One.
10. Mix FM.
11. Light FM.
12. France FM.
13. Nostalgie FM.
14. Radio Strike.
15. Sawt Fun.
16. MBS.

It is obviously difficult to carry out an exhaustive review of Lebanese radio stations, because they are so numerous. The following may serve as a guide to their importance.

### **1. Nostalgie FM**

Operating in Lebanon since February 1988 and officially launched in February 1995, *Nostalgie Liban* follows the same marketing imperatives as all the other radio in the *Nostalgie Internationale* network, to which it belongs. According to its web site, the station “broadcasts legendary hits in French and English. Programming is based on songs from the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s and also includes new recordings”. Nostalgie FM covers the entire country with two frequencies, 88 and 87.7 MHz and claims to aim at a wide audience (from 20 - 60 years) from all classes of society.

[www.nostalgie.com.lb](http://www.nostalgie.com.lb)

### **2. Radio Al-Nour**

Radio Al-Nour was launched on 19 May 1988 by Hezbollah, and calls itself “a Lebanese media institution” working to promote “the values, principles and concepts embodied in the divine messages”. It also claims to promote resistance against Israeli colonisation. A general interest station, *Al-Nour* also broadcasts drama productions. It employs 100 staff, including 45 journalists. Its news department comprises 60% female staff. The Hezbollah station only received its license in September 1999 as a category 1 radio. Being granted legal status gave it access to the Arab world and, in the year 2000, it became a member of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), an organisation linked to the Arab League. This meant that it could take advantage of the training seminars held by this organisation, and take part in festivals and competitions across the Arab world. As a result, *Al-Nour* has won several trophies and in 2001, received the largest number of prizes in the Arab world. Since 2002, the station has gone digital and covers all of Lebanon, Palestine, certain regions of Jordan and Cyprus. In 1999, it opened a web site. Radio Al-Nour’s annual budget is US\$800,000 - \$1 million. Its resources come from donations, advertising revenue, and sales of its productions. Officially independent of Hezbollah, it is nevertheless directed by an executive committee comprising members of this party. Its correspondents cover Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Iran. With the intention of being open to all Lebanese political leanings, *Radio Al-Nour* invites all parties to express themselves on its airwaves. It does, however, draw the line at giving airtime to Israelis.

[www.alnour.net](http://www.alnour.net)

### **3. Voice of Lebanon**

Founded in 1975, this station claims to be the first commercial radio to broadcast across Lebanon. A general station, it broadcasts on 93.3 - 93.4 MHz FM in the Bekaa valley, and on 93.6 MHz in the south and north of the country. Voice of Lebanon is also relayed to Canada by Middle East Radio and in Australia by another station with the same name. In Beirut, it re-broadcasts live news in Arabic from Radio Canada International (RCI), according to an agreement between the two radio stations. Voice of Lebanon has also signed an agreement with RFI allowing it to broadcast a news programme in French.

[www.vdl.com.lb](http://www.vdl.com.lb)

### **4. Radio Van**

Music station

[www.voiceofvan.com](http://www.voiceofvan.com)

### **5. Sawt Al-Ghad (Voice of Tomorrow)**

Live music station via Internet.

[www.sawtelghad.com](http://www.sawtelghad.com)

### **6. Radio Strike**

Arabic language music station

[www.radiostrike.com](http://www.radiostrike.com)

### **7. Radio Mont Lebanon**

[www.rml.com.lb](http://www.rml.com.lb)

### **8. Fame FM**

A music station founded in 1998 by linking two other FM stations - Magic 102, which was launched in 1977 and broadcasting in eastern Lebanon - and Switch FM, a leading Oriental dance station. Fame FM broadcasts all forms of music: R'n'B, pop, and rock. The station broadcasts on two frequencies, 99.9 and 99.5 MHz. It covers the entire country and some areas of neighbouring Syria and Israel.

[www.famefm.com](http://www.famefm.com)

### **9. Radio Delta**

A music station with a small team of two producers, three presenters and some DJ's, Radio Delta was the first Lebanese station to broadcast on internet. It was founded in 1982 by its CEO, businessman, Rony Njeim, and obtained its broadcasting license in 1996. It broadcasts 24 hours a day across the entire country. It can also be received on the east coast of Cyprus, in Jordan and Syria. According to certain statistics, Radio Delta is the premier FM radio in terms of audience.

[www.radiodelta.com](http://www.radiodelta.com)

### **10. Radio Scope**

[www.radioscopelb.com](http://www.radioscopelb.com)

## 11. Radio Free Lebanon

This generalist station was founded by Béchir Gemayel during the civil war in mid-Summer 1978. It first broadcast in AM out of a convent in the Adra region. It later moved to premises just outside Beirut. Following the Ta'if Accords, Radio Free Lebanon was the first station to obtain a licence as a category 1 radio, in February 1996. It is managed by the Free Lebanon Company for Producing and Broadcasting and directed by Shawki Abou Sleiman. It goes out on 102.3 MHz - 102.7 MHz, from 5.40 am to 12.45 am, broadcasting news from LBC (Lebanese Broadcast Corporation) at 8 pm, and a newflash every hour.

[www.rll.com.lb](http://www.rll.com.lb)

## 12. Pax FM

[www.paxradio.com](http://www.paxradio.com)

## 13. Mix FM

This music station was founded in 1996. It covers all of Lebanon, with a non-stop selection of music. It has also been broadcasting in Cyprus since 2002, on 102.3 MHz.

[www.mixfm.com.lb](http://www.mixfm.com.lb)

## 14. Radio One

Launched in 1988 this music station goes out on 105.5 MHz.

[www.radioonev5.com](http://www.radioonev5.com)

## 15. Sawt Al-Mousika

Belonging to the company of the same name, this station received its broadcasting license in 1996.

[www.sawtelmousika.com](http://www.sawtelmousika.com)

## 16. Sawt Al-Shaab

Close to the Lebanese Communist Party, Voice of the People started broadcasting in 1987, and goes out on 103.7 and 104 MHz. The station claims to be open to all tendencies of the country's political left and be a proponent of democracy and secularism. *Sawt Al-Shaab* favours social programmes and gives airtime to civil society organisations. The station was one of the first to be licensed, in 1996. Its director says that his station, which was one of the rare non-religious stations, between 1987 - 1996, played an important role in this period and attracted a great many listeners. He admits that *Sawt Al-Shaab* has lost some of its audience since 1996. According to the station's surveys, it now attracts around 200,000 listeners daily. The station covers South Lebanon and Beirut. It employs 50 staff, 25 of them journalists, of whom 12 work in Lebanon and five abroad. The station has a single headquarters, but several transmitters. Its annual budget is estimated at US\$300,000. Because of its narrow range, *Sawt Al-Shaab* attracts very little advertising. The station carries no religious programmes and has never received foreign financial support.

- **Audience**

A survey carried out by a private company, Lebanon Statistics, in August 2005 on a sample of 600 listeners living in Lebanon, yielded the following results, for entertainment and music FM stations:

- stations broadcasting in Arabic: Sawt Al-Ghad 40,3%, Radio Delta 20,5%, Radio Strike 20%, Sawt Al-Mousika 12,7%;
- foreign language stations: Nostalgie 18,7%, Radio One 8,5%, Mix FM 1%;
- general and political news stations: Voice of Lebanon 28%, Free Voice of Lebanon 28%, Voice of the Orient Voix (*Sawt Al-Shark*) 17,3%, Sawt Al-Shaab 10,8%, Radio Monte-Carlo 1,33%.

- **Reality of radio pluralism**

In its first report to the Minister of Information, on 12 June 2001, the Lebanese Audiovisual Council asked the Legislator to pass other laws and decrees so that radio and television could be institutionalised and better organised.

The report raised the issue of certain religious media, which sidestep the law and broadcast without a license, as well as the expanding sector of telephone information.

The report also pointed out that most category 1 and 2 stations were not adhering to the specifications laid down by the law: e.g. non-payment of license fees and taxes, and disrespect for legal obligations concerning employees (social security cover, or not sending a list of employees to the Audiovisual Council, etc.).

However, the most common infringement, according to the 2001 report, is a disregard for the legal arrangements concerning programme schedules and the assignment of themes to certain times of day. The most recent Audiovisual Council report came out in September 2005, and brings attention to programme content. Looking at coverage of the 21 June 2005 general elections, and based on observations from 19 May 2005 au 19 June that year, the report found several cases where both radio and television had violated regulations. It says that the Lebanese political crisis, compounded by the elections, turned the media into religious and political tools. Current practices in this period included bias in the time devoted to different candidate parties, outright propaganda for the candidate that a given media and its owner supported, attacks on a neighbouring country (Syria), denigration of competing candidates, and incitement to religious hatred.

Now, more than ever, scrutiny of the context in Lebanon shows just to what extent politics in that country are organised around religion, with the media being just one of the most instructive examples. These observations are also confirmed in a report by the committee of observation of the European Union.

The crisis is, in effect, accentuating the major weakness of Lebanese radio broadcasting (category 1 stations), namely, its religious structure. And, with a few exceptions, Lebanese radio stations reproduce this structure. They are often little more than a tool in the hands of the main shareholder, usually a religious leader, and therefore a politician. This is why many are calling for the Audiovisual Council to be given more power, in order to regulate the media to a greater extent.

The other main problem comes from the numerous commercial stations, whose main concern is profit, which they get from advertising. These stations are usually operated by very small teams of young people with no further education. They are happy just to broadcast a hit parade of popular songs and society news. The advertising market is, as yet, not regulated by any laws.

## Palestine

Palestinian radio stations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip started after the Oslo agreements of September 1993 and the institution of the Palestinian Authority, which rapidly provided itself with its own media. It founded a radio station, Voice of Palestine, a television channel, and, later, a satellite channel. Voice of Palestine has a staff of about 150, around 30 of them in Gaza.

Before this, Israel denied any Palestinian living outside Jerusalem the right to publish a newspaper or start a radio or television station. Those Palestinian newspapers that did exist were published in Jerusalem. Even the Hamas movement did not have its own paper, before the Palestinian Authority was set up. The peace accords signed between Israel and the PLO contained no mention of sovereignty over the airwaves, and so said nothing about assigning and controlling the use of frequencies. The radio stations that began to appear in the second half of the 1990s were outside the law, and forced themselves upon Israel.

With the start of the Intifada, in September 2000, all of the independent radio stations in the West Bank were plunged into a serious financial crisis. According to the MAS Economic Monitor (2001), some official sources estimate that losses to the Palestinian economy in the first year of the Israeli siege at about US\$5300 million, of which US\$2861 million were due to the freezing of production, \$1092 million to lost salaries of workers unable to get to their jobs in Israel, \$263 million due to the destruction of public property. These sums are considerable, given a GDP of US\$5083 million at 1999 levels, and a GNP of \$6227 million de dollars. In the first year of the Intifada, the Palestinian economy therefore lost more than its 1999 GDP, even though that year had been one of economic growth<sup>21</sup>.

The economic crisis hit Palestinian independent radio stations hard. They had to cut their budgets drastically, laying off staff, and sacrificing equipment and productions, while giving ever more air time to adverts and hit records. The precarious working conditions in these radio stations led to high staff turnover, which, in turn, affected programme quality and caused valuable professional experience to be lost.

While some radio stations went so far as to devote between 50 and 60% of their daily schedule to music and advertising, others simply chose to axe their news service, for lack of funds. Others reduced their news broadcasts to a strict minimum: two minutes of news, five or six seconds for each subject, twice a day. Needless to say, these stations no longer have the means to send out teams of reporters to gather news or carry out interviews. They can no longer hold debates, or offer their listeners a diverse and plural range of programmes. Radio stations like Marah in Hebron, and Radio Isis in Bethlehem, have reduced their daily news to very short flashes, with improvised, continuous coverage every now and then of what is seen as an important event, after mustering whatever resources they can find. And

---

<sup>21</sup>.- Cf. "Confluences Méditerranée".

this often lays the station open to amateurish mistakes of unreliable reporting (e.g. information that is not checked, consulting just one source) and broadcasting conditions (a rigid format that is not adapted to the medium).

Radio Hebron and Bethlehem 2000 are the only two stations to succeed in maintaining two news bulletins a day with pre-recorded reporting and interviews.

Needless to say, with such limited resources - a lack of correspondents, the high cost of subscriptions to wire services and newspapers, etc. - it is hard for them to gain access to information. To manage, some stations have opted to work together in networks, establishing links and exchanges, even covering certain events by pooling resources<sup>22</sup>. They have also established direct connections with some of the major media, telephoning press agency correspondents and journalists from the Arab satellite channels.

The Intifada and the worsening of the conflict with Israeli have squeezed out the treatment of economic and social issues, both nationally and locally. Focussing on the conflict is often seen as “in the national interest”, which means avoiding internal tensions in the “House of Palestine” (*Al-Bayt Al-Filistini*) and controversial issues.

An excess of international NGOs working in Palestine, especially after the Oslo agreement and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, gave several local radio stations an opportunity to receive financial support and training, which had mostly come to a halt since the Intifada. Meanwhile, the liveliness of the Palestinian people allowed links to be formed between certain radio stations and militant networks.

In the West Bank and Gaza, radio stations suffer from two major problems: a lack of qualified personnel and financial difficulties. Those that dare to challenge the official Palestinian Authority line run the risk of being shut down. Some stations have even been threatened by armed Palestinian groups.

Even so, the main obstacle to development of these radio stations seems to be Israel. Alongside the generally catastrophic economy and its direct implications for their financial viability, Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement put radio stations under constraints that are very hard to overcome. As a recent Amnesty International report put it, no Palestinian living in the Occupied Territories has escaped the consequences of Israeli army restrictions on their freedom of movement. The repercussions of these measures, which have become increasingly severe over the past three years - on the right to work, and a decent standard of living, etc - says the report, have been catastrophic.

Meanwhile, some Jewish colonies, according to Palestinian witnesses, have been jamming local Palestinian broadcasts. This was the case for *Ajyal al-Janoub* radio (Generation of the South) in Hebron, which had to change frequency.

- **Independent radio stations in the West Bank<sup>23</sup>**

There are 17 independent radio stations in the West Bank, with legal, temporary authorisation, but this figure is constantly changing<sup>24</sup>.

---

<sup>22</sup>.- we will come back to this experiment.

<sup>23</sup>.- This summary draws widely on research by Bassem Romi for the Palestinian website Amin, entitled: “Palestinian Private Radio stations”.

<sup>24</sup>.- This figure was provided by a representative of the Amin site.

## 1. Radio Amwaj (Waves)

Broadcasting on 91.5 MHz, Amwaj is a generalist station, launched in June 1995. Up until 2002, Amwaj was the foremost Palestinian radio station in the West Bank. The Israeli invasion of Ramallah, at the end of June that year, was catastrophic. Because of the station's strategic location, near to Muqata, the Palestinian Authority headquarters, the Israeli army entered the radio station's offices, forced the personnel to leave and turned it into a military control centre, causing very extensive damage. Israel left the premises a year later, but Amwaj had lost 90% of its equipment. Today, the station is operating with a minimum of equipment and staff.

The station relies on advertising for funding, and belongs to a group of Palestinian businessmen. It covers Ramallah, Jerusalem, part of Nablus and coastal regions to the West. The station has a 2000-watt Meta system, a recording studio and three departments - technical, programming and administration. Amwaj employs a staff of 18, including its director Sa'ad Arori, seven presenters and one producer. Because of its financial problems, the station has temporarily suspended its news service, but continues to offer its listeners a varied programme covering several aspects of Palestinian society. The most important daily broadcast is *Amwaj As-Sabah (Morning Waves)*, which goes out from 7 am to 8.30 am. It starts with a review of the Palestinian press and then covers a national political or social issue, interviewing Palestinian public figures. It rounds up with a diary of social events that day in Ramallah. The other daily broadcast is a review of the Israeli daily papers, with comments by Arab and Palestinian thinkers. The station also broadcasts co-productions with Palestinian civil society organisations and international NGOs. Since 2005, Amwaj has been broadcasting short information briefs from Palestinian women's organisations on work and health issues.

## 2. Radio Ajyal (Radio Generations)

Ajyal goes out on 103.4 MHz and belongs to a wealthy Palestinian businessman, Deeb Bakri, who also owns Angham (a music radio for young people, launched in 2001 and going out on 92.3 MHz) as well as Ajyal al-Janoub, broadcasting on 107.1 MHz. Radio Ajyal, which is seen as the most important station in the West Bank, was able to recruit a team of experienced professionals as soon as it started. With its 10 kW transmitter, and financed from advertising revenue, Ajyal covers all of the Occupied Territories, part of the North of Jordan and the north of Egypt. The station's management says it has excellent relations with the Palestinian Authority, but also says it has come under pressure from armed factions. Ajyal has seven departments (administration, marketing, finances, programming, editing, technical and maintenance), and employs 32 full-time, and 7 part-time staff <sup>25</sup>.

Ajyal is a generalist station, broadcasting news bulletins, a variety of other programmes and music. News flashes are broadcast on the hour, from 8.00 a.m. to 10 p.m., cover Palestinian, Arab and International news and last a maximum of 5 minutes. The station uses Internet to gather news, has subscriptions to Reuters and Wafa (the official Palestinian agency), and to the Al-Jazeera satellite channel. During the Ramallah events, Ajyal regularly sent in a correspondent. Using a video camera phone, the radio was able to file live reports. Some journalists work for Ajyal as well as the official station, Voice of Palestine (*Sawt Filistin*), which allows the station to benefit from their skills and access to news information. This has drawbacks regarding the station's editorial independence vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority.

---

<sup>25</sup> - Interview with Walid Nassar, director of the station, a graduate of Bir Zeit University, Ramallah, May 2005.



### 3. Radio Bethlehem 2000

A generalist station broadcasting out of Bethlehem on 96.4 MHz and via an internet site. It is owned by Yousef Shomali and covers Bethlehem, Hebron and Jerusalem. The station has six computers and is organised into four departments: technical, commercial, programming and administration. It has a staff of 16, nine of them part-time. Some employees followed a technical training course in the year 2000 (on mixing, direction, sound engineering, interview techniques, and marketing) held by a Catholic institute. Radio Bethlehem 2000 broadcasts news, cultural and scientific programmes, entertainment, and music. News bulletins are broadcast every hour and cover national and international current affairs. The station also broadcasts its own review of daily papers between 9.00 a.m. and 9.30 a.m., using Palestinian and sometimes Israeli and Arab newspapers. From 1 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. the station broadcasts a news programme on the day's main events, with reports and interviews with Palestinian Authority officials. The station also broadcasts a daily news flash in English. Radio Bethlehem gathers information for its news from satellite channels and internet sites, as well as a network of journalists and reporters working for other media who accept to collaborate. The station suffers from a lack of social programmes and the heads of the station recognise that staff need more training. Because of the economic crisis in the West Bank, Radio Bethlehem 2000 has lost part of its advertising revenue. This station does not work with Palestinian civil society NGOs.

### 4. Radio Isis

This station was launched in September 2003, broadcasting in Bethlehem on 87.5 MHz and has a website ([www.radioisis.net](http://www.radioisis.net)). Its owner is Georges Misleh, and revenue comes mainly from advertising. Radio Isis uses a 1200-watt transmitter for Bethlehem and 300 watts for Hebron, and also covers Jerusalem, Ramallah and Jericho. It has a staff of 16 persons, including the director and five presenters. However, none of the employees has any real training in journalism<sup>26</sup>. In the beginning, the station only broadcast general interest programmes and music, but has recently introduced three news bulletins into its schedule - at 10.00 a.m., noon and 3.00 p.m. via the satellite network. Radio Isis produces programmes on social, political and cultural issues, including a weekly news panorama, based on a selection of the week's events. A panel of guests is invited to comment on these events either in the studio or by telephone, while listeners can also phone in. Another weekly programme, called "People and NGOs", is devoted to the local activities of Palestinian civil society organisations. Its format includes interviews with militants from these organisations and telephone calls from the public. Radio Isis also produces a cultural programme devoted to young artists, and a twice-daily news programme broadcast in the morning and evening, that looks at national events and includes a review of the Palestinian and foreign press, reports, political analysis and interviews with representatives of the Palestinian Authority. Radio Isis also produces programmes on national folk culture, with patriotic songs. An acute financial crisis nevertheless undermines the station's operation, while the lack of professional experience of its staff impairs programme quality.

### 5. Radio Hebron

This was the West Bank's first radio station, broadcasting out of Ras el-Jora on the outskirts of Hebron, on 90.6 MHz FM. Started in 1996, it is owned by Amjad Shawer, and claims to have a moderate and independent editorial policy. With a 200-watt transmitter, it broadcasts with a range of 25 km, covering the district of Hebron, the Negev desert,

---

<sup>26</sup> - the station's director has a degree in media production.

southern Gaza, the Bethlehem region and the Dead Sea. Radio Hebron is funded mainly from advertising revenue. It has two studios and an administration office. It employs a staff of 20, including three reporters based, respectively, in Gaza, northern West Bank and Ramallah. Several members of the team attended a training course organised by the Media centre of the University of Bir Zeit. Radio Hebron produces social, political, cultural programmes, and entertainment. Three news flashes are broadcast daily at 6.30 a.m., 8.00 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. Twice a day, at 2.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m., the station connects to Al-Jazeera and retransmits its news bulletins. Its most popular weekly programme is “*Dababees*”, which deals with social issues in Hebron and the entire West Bank, and where guest speakers and listeners are invited to take part. The station’s other star show is “Chat with Hebron FM”, which tackles a political or social issue once a week, with an invited guest and audience phone-in. The station also broadcasts co-productions with international NGOs, like Save the Children, Médecins Sans Frontières and Human Land Organisation. There is a quiz competition sponsored by advertisers, where listeners answer questions on history, geography and culture. Like the other local radio stations in the West Bank, Radio Hebron suffers from poorly trained staff and serious financial difficulties that make it difficult to cover running costs like electricity and rent.

## 6. Radio Marah

Radio Marah broadcasts on 110.6 MHz FM out of Nimra, in Hebron, and belongs to Fawzi Dah’a. With its 1000-watt transmitter, the station covers a 50 km radius area, that includes the district of Hebron, part of the Negev desert, Bethlehem to the north, the Dead Sea region and the west coast. Its resources come mostly from advertising. Its premises comprise a main studio, director’s office, and the administrator’s office. The station has two departments - programming and technical - and four computers. The main studio equipment includes a mixing desk and computer. The station employs a staff of 13, including the director and seven presenters. It does not have a news service, but intends to create one early in 2006. Even so, its news flashes and live broadcasts enable listeners to follow the hottest events on the Occupied Territories. Using telephone interviews with political figures and journalists in the field, it is able to cover incursions by the Israeli army, its targeted assassinations of militants and other exactions. The station regularly produces political, cultural and social programmes. Its best-known is the weekly “*Hadith al-Madina*” (Voice of the City), which tackles political issues (e.g. local Palestinian election issues) and social issues (e.g. health, access to treatment). “*Talit el-Sabah*” is a programme on local political issues that goes out daily from 9.30 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. There is a daily review of the Palestinian, Arab and foreign press from 7.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. the station also co-produces programmes with local NGOs such as the Hebron French Society. This programme deals with issues such as women’s rights, violence towards children, etc. Like the other stations, most of the daily programming is taken up with music and entertainment. Some staff took part in training programmes organised by the Hebron French Society in co-operation with Radio France Bleue, but they were not felt to be very useful, as the trainers did not speak Arabic. Radio Marah, then, is much like the rest of Palestine’s stations, in that its staff suffer from a lack of training in programme-making techniques, production skills and journalistic writing. Its financial crisis echoes that of the West Bank as a whole.

## 7. Al-Horiyya-Hebron

Broadcasting from Ras el-Jora in Hebron, this station was launched in January 2001 by its owner, Ayman Qawasmi, a Palestinian preventative security officer. The station goes out on 92.7 MHz FM, using a 1000-watt transmitter that covers a 45 km radius, including the district of Hebron, the entire Negev desert, Gaza, the Dead Sea region, Bethlehem, and,

from time to time, the south of the city of Jerusalem. The premises have four offices including two studios. The main studio has two microphones. There is a staff of 21, including the director. A generalist station, Al-Horiyya-Hebron Radio broadcasts news, political, social, and cultural programmes, and music. It puts out two news bulletins a day, at noon and 6 p.m., put together and presented by the same person. It also offers listeners live coverage of important local events, with a special focus on the Intifada. For its news programmes, the station mostly uses Internet and Al-Jazeera. For national news, the station is in contact with an informal network of journalists. It also produces three other programmes, namely:

- "*Sonna al-Qarar*" (the Decision-makers), a talk show that goes out twice a week, dealing with social issues, such as child marriages and unemployment, etc;

- "*Sada el-Athir*" is a talk show addressing women's and children's rights issues and democracy;

- "*Man el-Masoul*" (Who is responsible?) is another talk show, where representatives of the Palestinian Authority are invited to respond to citizens' everyday questions and problems.

Given its very limited resources, self-produced programmes only make up about 10 - 15% of the station's daily output. The remaining 85% is advertising and music.

Like other independent Palestinian radio stations, Al-Horiyya-Hebron's equipment was completely destroyed by the Israeli army in November 2002. Also, the economic plight of the Occupied Territories and the lack of advertisers have a profound effect on the station's performance. The staff are aware of their failings and are willing to undergo training.

## 8. Al-Nawras

This Hebron-based station was launched in late 2003, is owned by Bilal Khalid Doufash, and goes out on 93.7 MHz FM. Its 1000-watt transmitter covers a 40 km range, reaching Hebron and the northern region of Bethlehem. It derives all of its income from advertising. The station has three offices, including a studio used for both live and re-recorded programmes. It employs a staff of 12, including the director. With its very basic facilities, Al-Nawras puts out a news bulletin once a day at 8.30 a.m. and connects to Al-Jazeera to retransmit its 3 p.m. television news programme. Like other Palestinian independent radio stations, Al-Nawras has forged informal links with a network of journalists and reporters across the West Bank, enabling it to gather verified information. Because of its very limited means, Al-Nawras mostly broadcasts entertainment programmes sponsored by private enterprises, such as restaurants and shopping centres.

The station broadcasts only three programmes:

- a news programme and review of the press, every day from 8.30 - 9.30 a.m., which starts with a short news flash on the Intifada and Israeli army movements, the rest of the time being devoted to a press review concentrating on the Palestinian dailies;

- a weekly health programme where a doctor answers listeners' and the presenter's questions;

- a weekly talk show addressing social interest subjects such as unemployment and education.

Al-Nawras has no experience of co-production with local or international NGOs.

## 9. Radio Tariq Al-Mahabbeh (TMFM, Voice of Love)

This station was launched in 1996, is owned by Amar Abdul Hadi, and broadcasts from Nablus on 97.7 MHz. Its income comes entirely from advertising. TMFM covers the entire northern region of Nablus, Janin, Tulkarm and Qalqilyah. It has three studios and 11 computers. It employs a staff of 19, including a news director. The news department is run by a staff of four. The station broadcasts three news bulletins a day at 11.00 a.m., midday and 1.00 p.m. At 2.00 p.m., the station connects to Al-Jazeera and retransmits its news

bulletin. The station intends to develop its own daily news programme. It has hosted a group of 20 students from the department of journalism of the Al-Najah University in Nablus, for a 3-month internship. These students were used to carry out field reporting, gathering news, filing live reports and writing scripts.

TMFM produces three kinds of programme:

- talk shows like the one broadcast daily from 7.30 - 9.30 a.m., which includes a news section, a review of the papers, music, and news of prisoners in Israeli jails;
- light entertainment;
- historical programmes.

In the past, the station co-produced programmes with Palestinian civil society organisations, looking at women's issues, democracy, etc.

Since the start of the Intifada, the station has concentrated on covering arrests and attacks by the Israeli army, thus avoiding covering controversial social issues.

## 10. Radio Nablus FM

This generalist station broadcasts from Nablus in the West Bank. It was launched at the start of 2002, and belongs to a group of friends. Its 500-watt transmitter covers the towns of Nablus and Tulkarm. Nablus FM is financed by advertising revenue, has two computers and employs a staff of eight, including five presenters. The station broadcasts news bulletins every two hours, devoting particular attention to local issues and the Intifada. Like other Palestinian radio stations, Nablus FM gathers news from a network of volunteer journalists. The head of news is an 18-year-old woman without university education. She is responsible for putting together the news bulletins as well as presenting them. In other words, the station suffers from a lack of means and poorly trained staff.

The station produces only two programmes a day, in the morning:

- a review of the papers, based on local dailies, which goes out from 7.30 a.m. - 9.00 a.m.
- a magazine comprising news, health, social and cultural issues, as well as advertising, which goes out from 9.00 - 11.00 a.m.

Nablus FM has been widely affected by the disastrous economic context of the Occupied Territories since the start of the Intifada. The radio originally wanted to involve professional journalists, but was soon obliged to lower its ambitions. In the past, this local radio co-produced programmes on issues concerning women's rights and democracy, in collaboration with local NGOs. Some of its programmes attracted the wrath of the Palestinian Authority's security services and has been closed down several times.

- **Radio stations in Gaza<sup>27</sup>**

Independent Palestinian radio stations are a new phenomenon in Gaza. Before 1994, the only stations that could be received were likely to be Israeli. Now there are a dozen independent radio stations in the Gaza strip, most linked to Palestinian political organisations. They are all in a state of great precariousness. The most significant are: Sawt Al-Umal, close to the Palestinian Workers Union; Sawt Al-Shabab, close to Fatah; Radio Al-Horiya, also close to Fatah; Sawt Al-Quds, close to the Islamic Jihad; Sawt Al-Aqsa, close to Hamas; Sawt Al-Iman, close to the Salafists; Radio Alwan, close to the Palestinian Authority, and directed by Jabr Washah, a former officer in the Palestinian security services; Sawt Gaza, also close to the Palestinian Authority and directed by Kussai al-Aji, son of a retired officer of the Palestinian security services; and Al-Manar, an independent station.

---

<sup>27</sup>.- During our mission to Palestine in May 2005, we succeeded, with great difficulty, in obtaining Israeli army authorisation to enter Gaza, but the extreme tension there seriously hampered our inquiries. Most of the radio stations refused to meet us, given the extremely tense security situation.

## 1. Al-Manar<sup>28</sup>

Al-Manar was launched in 2003 and is owned by Talal Abu Rahma, the France 2 and CNN Gaza correspondent, renowned for filming the murder of young Mohammed Al-Durra at the start of the Intifada. The station is not authorised, but is tolerated. As the Palestinian Authority does not have sovereignty over the airwaves in the Gaza strip, Al-Manar has pirated its frequency, like other radio stations. The main income comes from advertising. It employs 14 - 21 staff, both freelancers and full-time. It broadcasts 21 hours a day. Al-Manar relies on two correspondents, the first based in the West Bank and the second in Egypt. There is a news broadcast every hour and other productions are varied. Al-Manar broadcasts music, plays, light entertainment (games, society gossip, etc.), a review of the Arab and foreign press, a women's programme and a talk show on political and social issues.

## 2. Radio al-Shabab

Founded in February 2002, this station set out to cover the Intifada, after the destruction, a month earlier, of the studios of the official radio station, Voice of Palestine. According to its director, Al-Shabab, the station is equipped with a 7.5 kW transmitter and has had a license from the Palestinian Authority since it started broadcasting, as well as an authorisation from the State of Israel. A generalist station, Al-Shabab goes out on 104.5 MHz and broadcasts around the clock. Its director does not have a higher education diploma and was previously employed by an Israeli television company. Al-Shabab is close to Fatah, the main Palestinian political organisation, and is twinned with a Qatar-based station. It has three studios, for training, editing and live broadcasts.

In September 2005, 11 Palestinian radio stations received official recognition, including Kalkilya, TMFM (Voice of Love), Ajyal, Angham and Radio Isis in the West Bank, as well as Al-Manar and Al-Huriyya in Gaza.

- **Foreign radio stations**

USA-backed Sawa is the most important foreign station and seems to be most listened to. It has been broadcasting across all of Palestine since 2002 from the Voice of America studios in Amman. Sawa goes out on 98.1MHz in the West Bank and 94.2 MHz in Bethlehem and Ramallah.

## Jordan

The first licence given to a privately owned radio station in Jordan was on 16 November 2003. In October 2005, the Audiovisual Commission awarded a further 14 licences. Five radio stations are currently being set up, while eight licensed stations have started broadcasting. These are:

- Mood FM, which belongs to an advertising company called Al-Nawaris, owned by Hussin Khithr. It goes out on 92.0 MHz and covers greater Amman;
- Play FM, belongs to a company called Al-Haditha lili'lâm, owned by Ramzi Halabi. It goes out on 99.2 MHz and covers greater Amman;
- Mazaj FM, belongs to a company called Al-Shabaka Al-Arabiyya lili'lâm (Arab Information Network), owned by businessman Tarik Abou Al-Ghad. The station goes out on 95.3 MHz and covers the Greater Amman region;

---

<sup>28</sup>.- Interview with Talal Abu Rahmi, Gaza, May 2005.

- Radio Beat. Mood FM, it belongs to a company called Al-Nawaris, owned by businessman, Hussin Khithr. It goes out on 102.4 MHz and covers Greater Amman;
- Ahlan FM, belongs to a company called Al-Diqa lil Bath al-Itha'i (Precision for Radio Broadcasting), owned by Ali Janik. It goes out on 97.1 MHz and covers Amman;
- Sawt Al-Ghad. This is a Lebanese station that belongs to a company registered in Jordan, called *Al-Urdun al-dawliyya lil Bath al-itha'i* (Jordan International for Radio Broadcasting), owned by Lebanese businessman Mutassim Abbabina. The station goes out on 99.3 MHz and covers the Greater Amman region;
- Radio Rottana, belongs to the mother company Rottana, a well-known broadcasting company that manages several satellite channels owned by rich Saudis. This Jordanian station is registered in the name of a company called *Al-Kawn lil- bath al-Ithai wal tilfisyuni* (the Universe for Radio and Television broadcasting) and belongs to businessmen Muhanid Khalifa and Zayd Jumua. The station goes out on 99.9 MHz and covers Greater Amman;
- Sawt al-Mujtam al-Mahali (Voice of Local Society) is the only local radio dedicated to civil society (formerly Amman.net). It is registered in the name of David Kuttab (a company) and belongs to a Palestinian intellectual, Dawood Kuttab. The station goes out on 96.4 MHz and covers Greater Amman.

- **The Amman.net experiment**

Amman.net got started by making use of a loophole in Jordanian law, which had made no provision for broadcasting over internet. The project was launched in October 2000 by Palestinian journalist Dawood Kuttab, with support from UNESCO, and was conceived as the first step in building an internet site. In December 2001, Amman.net was registered as an on-line radio station, with a number of journalists as its executive committee. Amman.net gave priority to local news about Amman. Meanwhile, regional, Arab and foreign news was broadcast if it had repercussions for Jordan's capital city. Amman.net hoped to attract young listeners and to become an independent station to civil society. The station broadcast news bulletins and reports. It also put out cultural, social and political programmes. Up until October 2005, Amman.net was broadcast on the Web, as well as by satellite via Nilesat, from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. on 11881 MHz. The station looked at Parliamentary life in Jordan, with its programme 'Looking at Parliament', covering the work and discussions of the House. It also launched an educational programme on civil and political rights, supported by the European Union. The station offered its listeners a weekly review of the press based on papers published in Jordan, Palestine and the Lebanon, as well as a national tourism service ([www.ammantoday.com](http://www.ammantoday.com)). In 2005, Amman.net had obtained a licence for political broadcasting and had started to broadcast in Palestine on 2 October. Amman.net ceased to exist.

Other local radio stations are being set up, notably:

- Al-Hayatt FM. An independent station, close to Jordanian Islamists, but which wants to remain apolitical. Its priority is to look at education about Islam and the family. It goes out in Arabic and relies on advertising revenue.
- Radio Ma'an<sup>29</sup>. This station was launched by the University of Ma'an, together with the British Council and al-Husseini University. It is run by students, and hopes to become a local radio for young people. It has already obtained a license and will start broadcasting early in 2006.
- Sawt Karak<sup>30</sup>. This local radio station was started<sup>30</sup> by the Forum of Popular Forces (a coalition of civil society NGOs). It has already obtained a licence and expects to start

<sup>29</sup>.- The constituency of Ma'an has 110,000 inhabitants, or 1.9% of the Jordanian population.

<sup>30</sup>.- The constituency of Karak has 211,000 inhabitants, or 3.9% of the total population of the country.

broadcasting early in 2006. The station's priority is to improve cultural life and tourism in the Karak region. The station has been exonerated from paying the license tax.

The privatisation of radio broadcasting in Jordan has, with a few exceptions, been of most benefit to music stations and their sponsors, rich businessmen close to the Palace, who control a major part of the advertising market. This is especially the case for Fun FM, owned by Zayd Jumua (the husband of Princess Aïcha, the King's sister, and owner of *Al-Kawn lil bath al-ithai wal talfazi*). Fun FM was launched in 2004 and is considered to be the most popular station. Some of its shareholders are members of the royal family, but no-one, of course, thinks that its news department is directed by the army information service. Zayd Jumua is also shareholder or owner of the society magazine Layalina (Our Nights), the newspaper, Al-Ghad (Tomorrow), and the magazines Go and Hello.

The exorbitant tax imposed by the law and the lack of any state support for local radio encourages entertainment radio and television stations, which is tantamount to political selection on monetary criteria. In total, eight music radio stations have been launched or are in the process of setting up.

- **Foreign radio stations**

As well as receiving the independent stations, Jordanians can also pick up the US station, Sawa, which covers Amman and the West Bank on 98.1 MHz and north Jordan on 107.1 MHz; the BBC, which covers Amman on 103.1 MHz and 417 AM; and Radio Monte-Carlo, which covers Amman on 97.4 MHz and Ajlun on 106.2 MHz.

- **The official radio station**

Jordanian Radio and Television has three stations broadcasting on AM and FM. In 1994 the public radio channel launched an FM station broadcasting 24/7 to Amman on 105.6 MHz, 99 MHz and 103.8 MHz. It broadcasts news flashes every half-hour and music from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. A Jordanian Radio French service started on 27 November 1992 with two hours of programmes. It currently broadcasts 13 hours a day in two blocks - music DJ's in the morning (7 a.m. - 11 a.m.) and evening (4 p.m. - 8 p.m.) and another block of programmes and music from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. It produces three news three bulletins, going out at 7.30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 6.30 p.m., on top of the half-hourly news flashes.

## **Egypt**

Egyptian radio broadcasting comprises 70 radio stations in eight national networks, making it the most developed in the Arab region. The stations broadcast on FM, AM and shortwave. The national radio stations broadcast over 300 hours of programmes a day. Since 2003, Egypt has had two privately owned radio stations: Nugum FM (Stars) and Nile Radio 1.

The first radio station in the Arab world opened in Egypt. It was set up by the British authorities under the reign of King Farouk, in 1926, and run by a private commercial company. This led to several stations (including Egyptian Kingdom Radio, Radio Misr al Malakeya, Radio Sabo, and Radio al Amir Farouk) to start broadcasting on Egyptian soil. In 1932, King Farouk's Minister of Information decided to pass a new law to organise radio broadcasting, in an attempt to deal with the rising scale of protest against the British occupation. He declared all existing stations illegal. The same year a contract was signed with a British company to run a new Egyptian radio station. It was officially launched on 31

May 1934. Egyptian Radio was to be a pioneer in the Arab world. The contract with the British company was renewed in 1943.

But because of mounting Egyptian resistance and diminishing British influence in the Arab world after the Second World War, the contract with the British company was suspended in 1947 and the station became 100% Egyptian.

Egyptian Radio entered its golden age after the 1952 revolution. The new leadership thought it could be used to boost national identity and public awareness, modernise morals and combat the most outdated customs. President Nasser decided to assign the radio station a significant budget, and it became a political instrument, influencing the spread of its policies and defending national independence movements in the Arab world and Africa. Radio stations broadcasting in several foreign languages were set up, to compete with the foreign service stations of colonial or imperial powers, such as France, Great Britain and the United States.

When Sadat came to power in 1970, the media became relatively more open. The 'Corrective Revolution' (*Thawret Al-Tashih*) started in 1971 as a means to distance or neutralise the Nasser old guard, spreading to editors of the state press. But the main change in the media came from shifts in censorship rules and the authorisation given to opposition parties to publish their own newspapers. It also opened the way for private investment in the media a few years later with the arrival to power of Mubarak.

During the Sadat era, but even more so under Mubarak, self-censorship replaced censorship as the way to regulate the media. But radio was inured against change and remained under the exclusive control of the ruling elite.

In an effort to muster support from other Arab states, especially investors from the Gulf States, and to prepare the Egyptian public for the signature of peace agreements with Israel in 1979, Sadat gave a new direction to radio Sawt Al-Arab (Voice of the Arabs). As part of the same impetus, he founded a new station in 1975, called *Al-Shabab wal Reyada* (Youth and Sport) to symbolise the new era. He also set up a new ministry with the same name, as well as a secretariat for youth.

Today radio is the second most popular media after television, with 18 million radio sets in the country<sup>31</sup>.

In 1981, Egyptian national radio had seven services: the most prominent was Al-Barnameg Al-Am (general programme network), Sawt Al-Arab (Voice of Arabs), Al-Shabaka Al-Thakafiya (cultural network), Al-Shabaka Al-Tigariyya (commercial network), Al-Qur'an (Koranic network), Al-Mahaliyyat (local radio network), and Al-Mowagahat, (foreign service network). The local radio network is made up of 11 radio services covering different departments in the country. This network includes a station in Alexandria that was launched in 1954, a station in the centre of the Delta which has been broadcasting since 1982, an Upper Egypt station broadcasting since 1983, a station for the Northern Sinai launched in 1984, and one for Southern Sinai started in 1985. The latter two stations were set up for tourism. A station in the Wadi El Gedid valley started in 1990, as well as an educational station. The foreign service network was founded in 1953 and comprised 45 stations broadcasting in 35 languages.

---

<sup>31</sup>.- Doaa Mohamed Zaki Darwish "History and Development of the Egyptian Radio (a case study)", PhD thesis, July 2003, American University, Cairo, p. 23



Under President Mubarak, television became trans-national, with the introduction of satellite channels, while Egypt launched its own satellite, Nilesat, in April 1998. Several other projects also helped bring about change in Egypt's media, like the vast "Media Production City" complex 30 km outside of Cairo, with several production studios and, since 2003, the first Egyptian independent radio station. When Egypt signed the Gatt agreements, it gave a strong push to privatisation efforts. This had effects on the media sector, as seen by the licenses awarded to private channels and, in 2003, to FM radio stations, like Nugum FM and Nile Radio1.

Official figures on the nine state radio stations show that, between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001, news made up 0.6% of general programming, political programmes 9.1%, religious programmes 15%, entertainment programmes 33.2% and educational programmes 1.2%. Religious programmes are more important on local stations. Up until the late 1990s, political programmes were scrutinised by a special unit in the Information department before being broadcast<sup>32</sup>. The influence of satellite channels on all of Egypt's radio and television media should not be overlooked. During the war against Iraq, all the country's radio stations changed their programme schedules to cover the event and adopted an editorial line hostile to the war. Even the music station followed the rule, broadcasting patriotic songs. Altogether, the nine radio stations broadcast a total of 11,803 hours in 2000-2001.

- **The Ministry responsible**

From the time Egyptian Radio started, up until 1939, it came under the Ministry of Communication. This responsibility was then transferred to the Ministry of Social Affairs, then the Ministry of the Interior, from 1942 to the end of the Second World War. In 1947, the radio was given a new status by decree, as an independent organisation under the Ministry of Social Affairs. In November 1952, responsibility passed to the newly created Ministry of Planning. In 1958 it was declared an independent public body under a new name - United Arab Republic Radio. In 1971, Egypt's radio and television were merged into a single institution, which became the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU). A satellite channel section was added later, in the late 1990s.

Since 1972, Egyptian radio has been slightly subsidised by a license fee, paid as part of the domestic electricity bill, as well as government grants. Advertising was only introduced recently.

- **Independent radio stations<sup>33</sup>**

The government recently authorised two independent stations, each employing eight people: Nugum FM (100.6 MHz), an Arabic language music station, and Nile FM (104.2 MHz), a music station in English, both with premises in the "Media Production City" complex.

Both stations belong to the Good News group, which manages several newspapers, including Al-Alam Al-Youm (The World Today), Nahdhat Misr (The Renaissance of Egypt), Adam magazine, and Kul Al-Nass (Everyone). Its main shareholder is Immad Adib, former star

---

<sup>32</sup>.- *Idem*, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup>.- See the list of Egyptian radio stations in appendix 4.

journalist for the Saudi network, Orbit. Some say he is just a front-man for the son of Safwat Al-Sharif, Minister of Information, and current president of the Shura Council (upper house of parliament). According to the management of Good News, this experiment has been a great success. The annual turnover of Nugum FM, which has been on the air since 2003, is officially 25 million Egyptian pounds (3.6 million euros), while the two radio stations bring in a total of 11 million Egyptian pounds (1.6 million euros).

## Syria

Radio broadcasting in Syria is very poorly developed, even if, as in other Arab countries, it has been making progress. Since 2002, some independent music and commercial FM stations have started to appear. In 2003, the first two independent radio stations were authorised, Al-Madina (the City) and Al-Arabiya (Arabic), but they are not allowed to broadcast news.

At the end of September 2005, the then Syrian Prime Minister, Naji Otari, authorised a further four independent commercial radio stations: Syria Al-Ghad (run by a company called Sawt Al-Ghad), Style FM, Melody FM and Farah FM. And, at the same time, in early December 2005, a privately owned television station, Al-Sham, started broadcasting, while, according to official sources, another nine television stations are being authorised<sup>34</sup>.

Meanwhile, the Syrian state owns three stations: Syrian Arab Republic Radio, Radio Damascus and Radio al-Shabab (an FM music station).

But this sudden move to open up radio and TV broadcasting seems to be more of a response to pressure from the USA.

---

<sup>34</sup>.- Cf. Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 7 December 2005, London.

# C o n c l u s i o n

Since the mid-1990s, in both Palestine and Lebanon, independent radio stations have been starting to broadcast, forcing the authorities to adapt. Meanwhile, foreign economies liberalising their markets have been putting pressure on other countries to follow their example. But Arab radio stations are only gradually, and sometimes timidly, moving away from State domination. The reorganisation of radio broadcasting in the five Arab countries we have looked at is a slow, unequal, up-and-down and unfinished process. It is unfinished in that some states (Egypt and Syria), still have not published the conditions for awarding broadcasting licenses, even though some independent stations have received authorisation. The beneficiary stations thus have no real legal status, but are private businesses broadcasting music, and refraining from broadcasting news. The stations seem to be of most benefit to businessmen close to the authorities, and are more a part of the process of State privatisation than media democratisation. There is a general lack of transparency, and very little information is available about these radio stations. Journalists know little about the shareholders, working conditions in the stations and how they are organised. The legal vacuum will no doubt eventually be filled in these two countries. But, for the time being, radio broadcasting in Egypt and Syria remains totally under the control of the authorities.

Lebanon is a special case. By allowing radio and television stations to be privately owned, Lebanon has essentially brought an existing state of affairs within the law, since these independent stations did not wait for the 1996 law to be passed before going on the air. Nevertheless, the various attempts to prevent religious interests from controlling the media have so far failed, and the political stations are a direct mirror of the country's religious polarities. Every political/religious party has its own radio station (and television channel), which it uses to support its political choices. And the only non-religious station, Sawt Al-Shab, is close to the Lebanese Communist Party.

Despite their vulnerability, the Palestinian and Jordanian experiments are without doubt the most promising. The legal framework is restrictive, in these two countries, but the privately-owned stations are pushing back the boundaries of news broadcasting, are helping to render the media more autonomous, and introducing a relative degree of democracy in the field of information. But these experiments remain dependent on the unstable political context and resulting legal restrictions. The new legislation is more favourable to entertainment stations and benefits businessmen close to the authorities, leaving little space for civil society radio projects to develop.

Also, despite the diversity of situations in the five countries examined, similar problems are often encountered, such as those set out below.

- **Legislation and regulation:**

- absence of a legal and democratic framework that encourages editorial independence, pluralism of the media in general and of radio in particular;
- absence of, or ineffective, regulatory bodies;
- lack of transparency in how licenses, budgets and grants are awarded to radio stations;
- absence of citizen representation;
- a proliferation of means of control, censorship and criminalisation of independent journalism.

- **Organisation of the media profession:**

- general lack of professional associations representing the radio broadcasting sector;
- weak and unrepresentative unions for journalists and other media workers.

- **Strengthening of press enterprises:**

- legal management of the advertising market;
- precariousness of journalists and other temporary media workers;
- non-respect for workers' rights in the media;
- lack of direct or indirect public aid.

- **Professionalism of journalists:**

- poor commitment to quality, creativity and diversity;
- low professional standards of media personnel in general and those working in radio in particular;
- low level of managerial staff in radio stations and the bodies that run them;
- poor use of new information technologies;
- lack of, or poor commitment by radio broadcasting organisations to continuous training for their staff.

- **Civil society participation and media awareness**

- lack of consultation of civil society on media reforms, especially regarding privatisation of radio broadcasting;
- low level of involvement of civil society in running public radio stations through representative structures, such as consultative programming bodies;
- absence of public recourse, whether internal or external, though a mediator or other means.

- **Presence of women**

The place of women in the world of Arab television and radio is another issue worth raising. There is little research available on the status of women in the media. The International Federation of Journalists did carry out a study in 2003-2004 of journalists in Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian media<sup>35</sup>. The study revealed discrimination of women, especially in terms of lower salaries, promotion opportunities and access to information. But there are no global, quantitative studies on the social composition of these media. So it is very difficult to know the proportion of women, young people or religious minorities in radio

---

<sup>35</sup>.- On a sample of 124 women.

broadcasting organisations. Nevertheless, it is evident that, while women may be present as presenters and programme hosts - often limited to entertainment and women's programmes that reproduce a stereotype of the woman as mother, housewife and obedient spouse, etc - they are very rare in management. It is exceptional for a woman to be head of a radio or television organisation - as is the case in Syria. Out of 1475 radio and television staff in Jordan for example, only 339 are women, and only four have managerial responsibilities, compared to 14 men. Yet, as a rule, courses in journalism attract more women than men. In Jordan, for the 2004-2005 academic year, about 64% of students at Yarmouk university (which hosts the country's main school of journalism and media) were women. And at the faculty of communication of Cairo University, about 75% of students in the 2004-2005 academic year were women<sup>36</sup>.

However interesting it may be in terms of analysing ongoing changes in the media and their associated institutions, the reorganisation of radio broadcasting in the Arab world is only just beginning. Several factors should accelerate this process, though, such as the international-scale disruptions arising from globalisation and the introduction of new information technologies in the media, the political crisis in Arab countries, new means of managing conflicts, and rebuilding the legitimacy of established authorities. It would, however, seem premature to draw any conclusions about the future based on the jarring transitions that States and societies in the region are going through at the moment.

---

<sup>36</sup>.- Interview with the director of the department, September 2005.

# A p p e n d i c e s

Appendix 1 - Country fact sheets

Appendix 2 - Radio stations in Lebanon

Appendix 3 - Radio stations in Lebanon (year 2000)

Appendix 4 - Radio stations in Egypt

Appendix 5 - selected bibliography

## Appendix 1 - Country fact sheets

### Egypt

Official name: Arab Republic of Egypt.  
Head of State: Mohamed Hosni Mubarak.  
Capital: Cairo, 17.5 million inhabitants (2005).  
Surface area: 997,739 km<sup>2</sup>.  
Population: 77.5 million inhabitants (2005).  
Urbanisation: 45% (1999).  
External debt: US\$31 billion (2000).  
Unemployment rate: 11.5% (2000).

### Jordan

Official name: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.  
Head of State: King Abdallah II.  
Capital: Amman, 2.1 million inhabitants (2005).  
Surface area: 88,946 km<sup>2</sup>.  
Population: 5.5 million inhabitants (2004).  
Urbanisation: 76,6%.  
External debt: US\$8 billion.  
Unemployment rate: 25% (1999).

### Lebanon

Official name: Lebanese Republic.  
Head of State: Emile Lahud.  
Capital: Beirut, 1.5 million inhabitants (2004).  
Surface area: 10,452 km<sup>2</sup>.  
Population: 4 million inhabitants (2004).  
Urbanisation: 89.3% (1999).  
External debt: US\$9.6 billion (2000).  
Unemployment rate: 18% (1997).

### Palestine

Official name: State of Palestine.  
Head of State: Mahmud Abbas.  
Provisional Capital: Ramallah, seat of Parliament.  
Surface area: West Bank 5879 km<sup>2</sup> and Gaza 378 km<sup>2</sup>.  
Population: 3.8 million inhabitants in the West Bank and Gaza (2003).  
Unemployment rate: 40% (1993).

### Syria

Official name: Syrian Arab Republic.  
Head of State: Bachar el-Assad.  
Capital: Damascus, 6 million inhabitants (2005).  
Surface area: 185,181 km<sup>2</sup>.  
Population: 17.8 million inhabitants (2005).  
Urbanisation: 57% (2003).  
External debt: US\$7.7 billion (2006).  
Unemployment rate: 22% (2003).

## Appendix 2 - Radio stations in Lebanon<sup>37</sup>

### FM radio stations

88.0	-	<a href="#">Nostalgie FM</a> - Beirut (French/English)
88.6	-	<a href="#">Radio Orient</a> - Beirut (Arabic/French)
89.0	-	<a href="#">NBN</a> - Beirut
89.7	-	<a href="#">Al Quran Al-Kareem Radio</a> - Beirut
90.0	-	<a href="#">Kiss FM</a> - Tripoli
90.4	-	<a href="#">Nostalgie FM</a> - Tripoli (French/English)
91.0	-	<a href="#">Kiss FM</a> - Beirut
91.8	-	<a href="#">Radio al-Nour</a> - Beirut
92.4	10kw	<a href="#">France FM</a> - Beirut
93.0	2.5kw	<a href="#">France FM</a> - Tripoli
93.3	-	<a href="#">Voice of Lebanon</a> - Beirut
94.7	-	<a href="#">Radio Van</a> - Beirut
97.0	-	<a href="#">Sawt al-Ghad</a> - Beirut
97.7	-	<a href="#">Radio Strike</a> - Beirut
98.8	-	<a href="#">RML (Radio Mont Lebanon)</a> - Tripoli
99.1	-	<a href="#">RML (Radio Mont Lebanon)</a> - Beirut
99.5	-	<a href="#">Fame FM</a> - Jounieh
100.9	2.5kw	<a href="#">Radio Delta Lebanon</a> -Bekaa Valley
100.9	10kw	<a href="#">Radio Delta Lebanon</a> - Tripoli (Allap)
101.3	-	<a href="#">Radio Scope</a> - Beirut
101.6	10kw	<a href="#">Radio Delta Lebanon</a> - Deir al Achaer
101.7	2.5kw	<a href="#">Radio Delta Lebanon</a> - Saïda (Bekaa)
102.0	30kw	<a href="#">Radio Delta Lebanon</a> - Beirut
102.3	-	<a href="#">Radio Lebanon Libre</a> - Beirut
103.0	-	<a href="#">Pax FM</a> - Beirut
104.4	-	<a href="#">Mix FM</a> - Beirut
105.5	-	<a href="#">Radio One</a> - Beirut
105.8	-	<a href="#">Voix de la Charité</a> - Beirut
106.5	-	<a href="#">Sound of Music</a> - Beirut

### AM radio stations

873	-	<a href="#">Voice of Lebanon</a> - Beirut
-----	---	---

### Radio stations on Internet

<a href="#">Beirut Nights Radio</a> - Beirut
<a href="#">LBC</a> - Beirut (News, chat and sports)
<a href="#">Star Radio</a> - Beirut
<a href="#">Tripoli Internet Radio</a> - Tripoli
<a href="#">Vibe Lebanon</a> - Beirut

<sup>37</sup> Source: Site TV Radio World  
[http://www.tvradioworld.com/region2/8lbn/Radio\\_TV\\_on\\_Internet.asp](http://www.tvradioworld.com/region2/8lbn/Radio_TV_on_Internet.asp)



## Appendix 3 - Radio stations in Lebanon (Year 2000)

List of radio stations in Lebanon \*

	Voice of the People	France FM	Nostalgie	Radio Delta	Radio Liban	Radio Liban libre	Radio One	Radio Orient	Radio Mont Liban	Voix de la charité	Voice of Lebanon
Frequency Modulation	103.7	92.4	88.0	102	96.2	102.3	105.5	88.6	99.1	107.7	93.3
Genre	Mainly news	Music	Music	Music	Generalist	Generalist	Music	Generalist	Music	Generalist chrétienne	Info
Proportion of total audience	150,000	1.70%	5.80%	6.90%		7.30%	5.80%	4.10%	1.50%		7.90%
Internet addresses		France.fm.com.lb									
Group	Radio belonging to PCL	Radio One	Independent	Radio Delta		SAL	France FM	Future Television	MTV SAL	Congregation of missionaries	
Capital	43 shareholders	Roger and Raymond Gaspar	13 shareholders	Rnny Njeim		13 shareholders	Gaspar family	Radio Orient	MTV		
Proportion of news	46 bulletins	0%	0%	0%	5.5 hours of RFI	Every minutes	News Flash every hour	7 - 8 hours	No news	Retransmission of Radio Vatican news	5 full bulletins
Proportion of production in French	0%	75%	60%	0%	90%	0%			2 hours per week		2 hours a day
Number of salaried staff	60	35	27	40	35	60	35		25	25	60
Number that are journalists	30	0	6	12	6	20	1	12	0	0	15
Correspondents	Damascus-London	0	0	0							

Date set up	1987		1988	1988	April 1996	1978	1984	October 1990	1979	1984	
Languages	Arabic/English	French (ads in English and Arabic)	French	Arabic	French/English/Armenian	Arabic	English	English above all		French/English/Arabic	Arabic/English/French

\*Source: The Lebanese media, mars 2000. Rédaction: Frédéric Rollin.

## Appendix 4 - Radio stations in Egypt<sup>38</sup>

<b>FM Radio stations</b>		
<u>El-Bernameg Al-Thekafy</u> - Cairo/public cultural station /ERTU)	89.5	20kw
<u>Al-Bernameg Al-ghorbi</u> - Cairo/European service (public)	95.4	20kw
<u>Al-Shabab Wal Riyadah</u> - Cairo/youth and sport (public)/ERTU)	98.8	20kw
<u>Shabakat Al-Iza'at El-Eqlimiyah</u> - Cairo/regional public radio /ERTU)	102.2	20kw
<u>Al-Aghani</u> - Cairo/ public music radio /ERTU)	FM	
<u>Al-Akhbar wa Al-Moseekah</u> - Cairo/news and music radio	FM	
<u>Al-Kahera Al-Kobra</u> - Cairo/regional service	FM	
<u>Al-Kebar</u> - Cairo/educational radio	FM	
<u>Al-Qur'aan Al-Kareem</u> - Cairo/religious service	FM	
<u>El-Bernameg Al-Aam Egypt</u> - Cairo/general service	FM	
<u>El-Bernameg Al-Ebry</u> - Cairo/Hebrew service	FM	
<u>El-Bernameg Al-Moseeky</u> - Cairo/music radio	FM	
<u>Iza'at Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (Middle East Radio)</u> - Cairo	FM	
<u>Shamal Al-Saaeed</u> - Cairo	FM	
<u>Sout Al-Arab (Voice of the Arabs)</u> - Cairo	FM	
<u>Sout Falasteen (Voice of Palestine)</u> - Cairo	FM	
<u>Iza'at Wadi Al-Neil (Nile Valley Radio)</u> - Cairo	FM	
<u>Iza'at Wast Al-Deltah</u> - Cairo	FM	
<b>AM Radio stations</b>		
<u>Radio Cairo (International)</u> - Cairo	Swave	
<b>Egypt (outside the Capital)</b>		
<b>FM Radio stations</b>		
<u>El Gouna Radio</u> - Hurghada (Al Ghardaqaq) Arabic classical music	100.0	
<u>Iza'at Al-Iskandaryah (Alexandria Radio)</u> - Alexandria	FM	
<u>Iza'at Aswan</u> - Aswan	FM	
<b>Satellite radio stations</b>		
<u>ART Al-Thekr</u>		
<u>ART Music Radio</u>		
<u>Sout Falasteen (Voice of Palestine)</u> - Cairo		
<u>Radio Cairo World Service 1</u> - Cairo		
<u>Radio Cairo World Service 2</u> - Cairo		
<u>Radio Cairo World Service 3</u> - Cairo		
<u>Radio Cairo World Service 4</u> - Cairo		
<u>Radio Cairo World Service 5</u> - Cairo		
<u>Radio Cairo World Service 6</u> - Cairo		
<u>Radio Cairo World Service 7</u> - Cairo		

<sup>38</sup> Source: Site TV Radio World  
[http://www.tvradioworld.com/region2/8lbn/Radio\\_TV\\_on\\_Internet.asp](http://www.tvradioworld.com/region2/8lbn/Radio_TV_on_Internet.asp)

## A p p e n d i x 5 - S e l e c t e d b i b l i o g r a p h y

“Arab Human Development Report 2004. Towards Freedom in the Arab World”, 2005.  
[www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr2.cfm?menu=12](http://www.rbas.undp.org/ahdr2.cfm?menu=12)

Bassem Romi, “Palestinian Private Radios”, Arabic Media Internet, network Amin.  
[www.amin.org](http://www.amin.org)

“A Comparative Study on the Media Situation in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia”, Olof Palme International Center, with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDCA), 2005.

Sadaka Georges, “Le rôle de la radio dans les conflits du Liban”, University of Paris II, Sciences de l’information, Paris, 1991.

Doaa Mohamed Zaki Darwish, “History and Development of the Egyptian radio (a case study)”, thesis, American University of Cairo, July 2003.

“Aswât Makhnûqa (Silenced Voices), a study of legislation on Arab media (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Bahrein)”, Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists, Internews, 2005.

Jon W. Anderson, “Knowledge and Technology”, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Newsletter, vol. 5, 2000.

Douglas A. Boyd, “Broadcasting in the Arab World”, Iowa State Press, 1999.

Frédéric Rollin, “Les médias libanais”, Institut français du Proche-Orient/Liban (IFPO), March 2000.

Franck Mermier, “Mondialisation et nouveaux médias dans l'espace arabe”, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée de Lyon et les Editions Maisonneuve et Larose, 2003.

Noami Sakr, “Satellite Realms : Transnational Television, Globalization and the Middle East”, IB Tauris, 2002.

William A. Rugh, “Arab Mass Media: Newspapers Radio and Television”, Hardcover, 2004.

## P u b l i c a t i o n s

- **Publications by Institut Panos Paris (IPP)**

*Iraq : Media, War and Democracy*

Olfa Lamloum

Institut Panos Paris (IPP) has published the proceedings of the international conference on “Iraq : Media, War and Democracy” which it organised on 4 November 2003. In two parts, this meeting, enabled journalists from USA, Europe and Arab countries who had covered the conflict in images or print to share their experiences of the war. The aim was to show the ambiguities, ambivalences and difficulties in speaking of and showing the war in Iraq.

February 2004 - (French and English versions)

*Iraq: Media at War*

Collective work, Actes Sud and IPP

Based on six studies on France, USA, Israel, Turkey, Iraq and the Al-Jazeera channel, this book explores and compares the different ways of covering the war against Iraq. It explains the role of the media in mobilising support for or opposition to the war.

September 2003

*Views from the South of the first anniversary of the attacks of 11 September*

Institut Panos Paris

In September 2002, the Western world commemorated the first anniversary of the attacks in New York. In countries in the South, the press also looked back on the events analysing their effects, and often in very different terms to the predominant commentaries in the major Western media. The study presented by Institut Panos Paris offers an analytic approach to what was being said in various newspapers in the Islamic world, in the week of 11 September 2002.

March 2003 - (French and English versions)

*The Attacks of 11 September and their Consequences: views from the South*

Institut Panos Paris

A report on the treatment by Arab and Central African media of the events of 11 September, the American reprisals against Afghanistan and the transfer of prisoners to Guantanamo Bay. Highly different analyses compared to those put forward in the Western press.

April 2002 - (French and English versions)

- **Publications by Femmes en communication (FEC), Institut Panos Paris' partner in Algeria**

*Femmes en Communication* is an Algerian Association set up on 8 May 1995 in Algiers, "born of the need to exchange, discuss, and communicate our preoccupations, both woman-to-woman, and with all of civil society".

*Algeria : the family code, or debate made impossible*  
Femmes en communication

Femmes en communication has published a third report, in collaboration with Institut Panos Paris, on the family code in Algeria. It asks whether the passionate debate on the law and its amendments is really the only factor slowing emancipation of women. It then tries to explain why the feminist struggle, so widely reported by an inflammatory press, has not dealt with men and their relationship to women.

September 2005 - (French and Arabic versions)

*Algeria : Towards a new law on the media. Issues behind the debate*  
Femmes en communication

This publication looks at the revision of the law on information in Algeria. It traces the birth and development of the "intellectual adventure" of Algeria's free press, and is a complementary piece of evidence in the file on democratic expression in Algeria.

January 2005 - (French and Arabic versions)

*Algeria : Civil Society and the Presidential Elections*  
Femmes en communication

Femmes en Communication wanted to observe the involvement of non-profit and citizens' organisations during the Presidential elections of 8 April 2004, through their expression, mobilisation, adoption of positions and capacity to make themselves heard, even recognised, in a media world that allows little space for civil and political dialectics.

This report was published in collaboration with Institut Panos Paris, and hopes to echo initiatives aimed at strengthening the access and participation of civil society players in pluralist information in the Maghreb, via the experience of Algeria.

September 2004 - (French and Arabic versions)

## Institut Panos Paris

10, rue du Mail, F-75002 Paris

Tel: 33 (0)1 40 41 05 50

Fax: 33 (0)1 40 41 03 30

E-mail: [panos@panosparis.org](mailto:panos@panosparis.org)

Web site: [www.panosparis.org](http://www.panosparis.org)

The development of new information and communication technologies has changed the face of media in Arab countries. And, since the early years of the millennium, radio broadcasting has also been affected by these major changes. Evidence for a reorganisation of radio broadcasting can be seen in the emergence of independent, privately-owned FM radio stations, the undisputed success of the American station, SAWA, launched in March 2002, and changes in the legislation regulating radio and television.

Independent radio stations are starting up in both Palestine and Lebanon, forcing the authorities to adapt. Meanwhile, the liberalisation of markets abroad is putting pressure on other Arab countries to follow suite. Gradually, and albeit timidly, Arab radio stations are gaining independence from State control.

The survey presented here was carried out by Institut Panos Paris (IPP) between May and November 2005 and looks at the state of radio broadcasting in five countries in the Middle East: Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan. The study does not pretend to be exhaustive, but, rather, aims to highlight the general issues and trends of the ongoing reorganisation. And, as far as possible, it hopes to paint a new portrait of radio broadcasting in Arab countries.

*Document realised with the support of the European union and Cordaid.*

