

# PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING IN THE MENA REGION

POTENTIAL FOR REFORM

REGIONAL REPORT



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# Preface

**By Pascal BERQUE**

Executive Director, Panos Paris Institute

Television is the primary vector for information and entertainment of the 200 million people in the eight countries involved in this project. The stranglehold of governments on broadcasting is a major barrier to the democratic exercise. The requirements of openness, diversification and pluralism remained confined to the reception of transnational TV channels and many State receptors require a larger control of content. Meanwhile, the emergence and success of satellite television channels and digital media have rarely being used as leverage to real structural reforms of media landscapes.

However, the Arab revolutions showed how the reforms of the information sector are a central national issue. At the heart of this challenge, the expression and the voice of the poorest populations, where media space is a key gateway to reveal their situations.

In this context, Panos Paris Institute (IPP) initiated in North Africa, since 2007, a work to develop public awareness on the necessary liberalization of the media sector and the importance of regulatory mechanisms. This approach aimed to ensure the public's right to pluralistic, verified and objective information as well as freedom of expression for media professionals.

When we began to engage ourselves in advocacy for the liberalization of the audiovisual sector in the Maghreb and the Middle East, we faced many obstacles. The conclusion was clear: ourselves would be incantatory and futile to claim an opening of the audiovisual sector and to give at the same time, recommendations and demand which are inappropriate and inaudible. It's difficult to dispel decades of autocratic control of audiovisual media.

It seemed essential to adopt a more realistic and pragmatic approach, developed with our network of partners, AMIN, Ammannet, the CMF Mena, the LADDH, Maharat Foundation, OMEC, and associate experts Rasha Abdulla, Larbi Chouikha and Belkacem Mostefaoui, who have long been engaged in the media sector in the region. So, the investment and commitment of IPP and its partners followed this basis: facing the growing number of information channels, media liberalization has begun, and this factual situation will inevitably cause reforms to accompany this change.

The public service broadcasting (PSB) is the central focus. It must be improved to become an exemplary model. It proves the good health of democracy in a country. All countries involved in the project have taken some kinds of commitments towards the PSB through statements, signatures of agreements and ratified conventions. In spite of that, the PSB remains a fuzzy and unknown concept at authorities' level as well as viewers. PSB critics will denounce it as a concept imported from "the West" while its supporters will insist on its universality. Often an educational effort gathers the different parties around the following consensus: authorities are responsible and accountable of a minimum quality programming and a three-fold mission: to inform, educate and entertain.

This book aims both to capitalize all the work undertaken since 2009 to assess the PSB in the Arab region and to suggest some recommendations. Its goal is to share the key results of an overview of the PSB situation in eight countries in the Maghreb / Mashreq region and learn from them, in order to continue our commitment towards public service media serving publics.

Published in four languages - Arabic, Catalan, English and French - it is for all media professionals concerned with the production of quality and diversified contents, in line with the expectations of their audiences and consequently, concerned with the adoption of regulatory mechanisms to ensure independence and quality.

This work would have been impossible without the collective dynamic and the temerity of all partners and experts involved in the project and the funding from Irish Aid, the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation and the Open Society Foundations.

*Invested for over 25 years in favor of pluralism and independence of media, the Panos Paris Institute analyzes the field of media as a whole. The IPP considers that it would be futile to improve journalists' abilities if the legal framework remains restrictive and does not promote the production and the wide broadcasting of reports they will realize. A regulated media framework is essential to professional and responsible practice of press freedom. Diversifying the media landscape is not a direct guarantee of the diversification and improvement of contents quality. It would be necessary to implement a system of protection barriers.*

*This comprehensive approach of IPP contributed to develop a strategy consisting of complementary actions. The publication of books is an essential axis, not only to share experiences and lessons learned from projects implemented but also to propose new strategies adapted to the ever-changing media industry.*



# Preface

**By Teresa VELAZQUEZ**

*President, Mediterranean Observatory of Communication*

OMEC, in the Laboratory of Prospective and Research in Communication, Culture and Cooperation of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), is an interdisciplinary network of individuals and institutions from both sides of the Mediterranean who work in information, communication and ICT. In this sense, when we met Françoise Havelange in Paris, in January 2010, and exchanged information on the projects of both institutions, the mutual interest for collaboration between IPP and OMEC was reflected in a memorandum of understanding. Thus, the path of cooperation began and was completed by the establishment of a consortium between our organizations and the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (ACCD), whose funding has been crucial for the development of the project.

In June 2010, when the monitoring training workshop took place, we had the opportunity to meet the partners responsible for the national studies and the representative of the Center for Media Freedom, Middle East and North Africa (CMF MENA, Morocco). It was a rewarding experience.

We discussed and agreed on the content of the project, its development and schedule, by considering the different situations of each country involved in the study. This project, which aims to promote the development of national media serving pluralism in the region, is undoubtedly very important. Any public service broadcaster should seek quality of content, a compromise between democratic and ethical principles leading to the promotion of public debate.

During the implementation of the project, many events took place in the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The results of the study analyze the situation of public service before the Arab Spring, so it will be very important to continue with similar works to see if the political and social transformations that took place in the region have affected the public service mission of public broadcasters.

On behalf of OMEC, we wish to recognize the work of the national teams who contributed to this project and also, the co-funding of Irish Aid and Open Society Foundations (OSF) at different stages of the project.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues of OMEC Olga Del Rio and Ricardo Carniel Bugs, for their unwavering dedication and contribution to coordinating and reviewing the works throughout the implementation of the project, in collaboration with IPP colleagues. To Annia García for her technical support from the OMEC and her availability. To Victorina Garcia Velez and Miguel Angel Lombardo for their efficient work in the reviewing of national studies in record time. Similarly, to Yoya Alcoceba, Carla Canal and Daniel Peluffo who always believed in this project with their respective activities and responsibilities within the ACCD.



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# Foreword

**By Carles LLORENS I VILA**

*General Director, Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation*

The Mediterranean Sea region has always been a priority area of external action of Catalonia. Catalonia belongs to the Mediterranean region and, for this reason it preserves multiple historical, human, sociological, economic and political bonds and similarities with the countries and territories of this area. These elements can contribute to facilitate the dialogue and the co-operation in this zone.

Now more than ever, in the current context, we must look further for a wider and better cooperation in the region and this project is an example of a project which had started well before the beginning of revolutions and recent risings in the Arab world.

Building and maintaining partnerships with the civil society facilitates the possibility of providing a mutual support, in the most difficult moments, as well as in the most encouraging moments during which it is possible to play an active role in the transformations of our respective countries.

During these last months, some of the partners of this project could be understood as a legitimate and viable alternative in the contribution to the creation of an audiovisual public service of quality and a more democratic society.

This project takes place in a context in which the civil society and the media of the eight countries of the area evolved these last years, but in which, on the other hand, public service broadcasting remained behind.

Freedom of speech, pluralism of the media and in particular public service broadcasting were an essential part of the claims of these last people revolutions. The people and the partner organizations of the project in various countries were attentive and had their requests, claims, analyses and proposals heard. This report, as well as the national studies which are published, are a fair proof of this fact.

In this context, it is therefore more than ever necessary that the dialogue and the cooperation between public institutions and the civil society in the Mediterranean area are reinforced.

In Catalonia, we have a plural and active civil society as well as various public institutions working in this field. We hope that, within the framework of this project that is a main concern to all, and of its possible continuation, the reinforcement of these initiatives and partnerships will keep on existing.

# Foreword

**By Marius Dragomir**

*Senior Manager, Media Program – Open Society Foundations*

Public service broadcasting has been central to the research and advocacy efforts of the Media Program at the Open Society Foundations. For almost a decade now, we have examined the state of public service broadcasting in tens of countries worldwide. We have mapped public service provisions in national and international legal documents and assessed their implementation. We have studied the perception of the public service media in a spate of diverse societies.

One of our studies five years ago found that public service broadcasting is heavily politicized in a number of nations, particularly in eastern Europe, and put forward recommendations to reform it. The same study praised public service media in countries such as Germany and the UK where it is highly valued and paid for by the general public. We said back then that overall, public service media remain a bulwark against commercial trends “that, left unchecked, would be likely to drive standards further down, reducing the less lucrative strands towards invisibility.”

We firmly believe that independently-managed, well-funded and professional public service media contribute to the economic, political and social health of a nation.

The study of public service mission in the Arab world from the Panos Paris Institute (IPP) - Mediterranean Observatory of Communication (OMEC) Consortium and its partners<sup>1</sup> is a significant contribution to the research and understanding of this important service, which is either absent or misunderstood in the Arab region. Here, like in other places, national broadcasters are often a government arm in charge of rather portraying the ruling regimes than serving their public.

When the IPP-OMEC Consortium project was launched, we saw in the planned switch over to digital television an opportunity to launch a debate about the need of public service provisions in broadcasting in this region and believed that this study could force opening this discussion.

Now, following the political transformations in many countries in the region, we see even more openings for the reform of the media and believe that this study is well-positioned to become a reference in these debates in Middle East and North Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (Algeria), AMIN Media Network (Palestine), Center for Media Freedom – Middle East North Africa (Morocco), Community Media Network (Jordan), Maharat Foundation (Lebanon), Ms. Rasha ABDULLA (Egypt), Mr. Amjad BAlAZY (Syria), Mr. Larbi CHOUIKHA (Tunisia) and Mr. Belkacem MOSTEFAOUI (Algeria).

## List of abbreviations

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| AC          | Alliance of Civilizations                                      |
| ACCD        | Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation                     |
| AUB         | Autonomous University of Barcelona                             |
| CAC         | Catalan Audiovisual Council / Audiovisual Council of Catalunya |
| COPEAM      | Permanent Conference of Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators    |
| CSA         | French Higher Audiovisual Council                              |
| CSC         | Conseil Supérieur de la Communication                          |
| CSCA        | Conseil Supérieur de la Communication Audiovisuelle            |
| CSI         | Conseil Supérieur de l'Information                             |
| DGCA        | Direction Générale de la Communication Audiovisuelle           |
| EBU         | European Broadcasting Union                                    |
| ENTV        | Entreprise Nationale de Télévision                             |
| EPTV        | Etablissement Public de Télévision                             |
| ERTT        | Etablissement de la Radiodiffusion-Télévision Tunisienne       |
| ERTU        | Egyptian Radio and Television Union                            |
| HACA        | Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle               |
| HCAC        | High Council for Audiovisual Communication                     |
| IPP         | Panos Paris Institute  |
| ITU         | The International Telecommunication Union                      |
| JTV ou JRTV | Jordan Radio and Television                                    |
| LTDH        | Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme                         |
| MNRA        | Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities                |
| NAC         | National Audiovisual Council                                   |
| NDP         | National Democratic Party                                      |
| NTRA        | National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority               |
| OMEC        | Mediterranean Observatory of Communication                     |
| OSF         | Open Society Foundations                                       |
| PA          | Palestinian Authority  |
| PLO         | Palestinian Liberation Organization                            |
| PSB         | Public Service Broadcasting                                    |
| PTV         | Palestine TV   |
| SNRT        | Société Nationale des Radios et Télévisions                    |
| SOREAD      | Société d'Etudes et de Réalisations Audiovisuelles             |
| STL         | Special tribunal for Lebanon                                   |
| TDA         | Télédiffusion d'Algérie  |
| TL          | Télé Liban   |
| TRA         | Lebanese Telecommunications Regulation Authority               |
| UfM         | The Union for the Mediterranean                                |





## Executive summary

The present publication is part of a project launched to enhance the mission of public service broadcasting (PSB) in eight countries of the Middle East and North Africa. It calls for greater accountability, better quality and more independence for public media outlets. The value and originality of the approach adopted in the project lies in the comprehensive and multi-levelled analysis of the performance and content of public broadcasters across eight countries.

Between 2010 and 2011 teams, academics, researchers, and civil society activists conducted an in-depth inquiry into the actual performance of public broadcasters in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, the Palestinian Territories and Tunisia. In each country the teams explored the definition and understanding of PSB in the Arab context, the values represented by Arab public broadcasters, and the operational set up and regulation of these national broadcasters.

Objective criteria were developed and agreed upon for the analysis of the actual performance and output of public television channels. The present volume includes the major findings of the research project..

Does it really make sense to dedicate time and effort to the study of public broadcasting in the Arab world at this moment in time? Is the dominant model of public broadcasting in the Arab world anything more than a remnant of an era which come to an end with the toppling of authoritarian regimes that had suppressed the expression of pluralism, the independence of the media and the freedom of the press for decades?

Two contributions will provide an initial answer to this question by describing the historical evolution of public television in the Arab World (**Part 1**) and situating the latter in the complex and rapidly changing Arab media environment. These articles will serve as the backdrop to the regional study of the assessments conducted in the eight countries involved in the project (**Part 2**) that will lead to suggestions and practical recommendations for the improvement of the mission of PSB (**Part 3**).

### **The concept of PSB is beginning to emerge in countries undergoing social and political change**

**Khaled Hroub** demonstrates the crucial role played by the media in the ongoing social and political transformation in the Arab world and in particular by the Arab satellite television channels, such as the Qatari Al Jazeera. These channels are ever present and have contributed to limiting the control of governments on their respective national public television channels. Thanks to the interplay between youth and social media, the media coverage of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions has contributed to the spread

of popular uprisings. According to Khaled Hroub, the system of state-controlled media is now outdated and public media outlets are inevitably going to have to evolve and deliver a mission of public service.

However, this evolutionary process is still at an embryonic stage because the concept of PSB is still largely unknown across the region. **Naomi Sakr** points out the gap between the universally accepted definition of PSB and how it is understood and applied in the Arab world. Although the Arab states have signed and ratified international charters and conventions, many hurdles still need to be overcome and Naomi Sakr lists the challenges lying ahead, including the need to establish public service broadcasting along the lines of universal principles and to state clearly the objectives of the mission of public broadcasting in order to guarantee diversity and independence. PSB will thus be able to respond to the legitimate expectations of the national audiences and to cater to their specific linguistic needs when adequate funds are made available to ensure that original programming can be produced. The viability of the mission of PSB is essential to democratic life in the sense that it ensures that the diversity of political views can be expressed.

The activation of PSB requires permanent vigilance and will only come about when large numbers of individuals get involved and create pressure groups with the aim of reforming the public broadcasting sector. This includes systematic monitoring on a regular basis. The experience has shown that the battle for PSB is not won once and for all. The decree of 20 April 1991 which introduced the book of specification for the *Entreprise Nationale de Television* (ENTV) in Algeria and introduced the ideal of PSB was suspended when the state of emergency was enforced and its effect was lost over the following twenty years.

### **PSB in the Middle East and North Africa: a long journey ahead**

An associate expert at the IPP, Dima Dabbous-Sensenig developed the methodology for the analysis of media content and supervised the assessment of national public media in 8 Arab countries. She then synthesized the data collected on the national level and wrote a regional comparative study that highlights similarities and differences with respect to public broadcasting in the 8 countries. The eight national teams of researchers involved in the project included activists from civil society organizations engaged in the defense of the freedom of the press and in the promotion of diversity and independence of the media. They have all endeavored to conduct an objective assessment of the extent of commitment to a mission of public service by the media operators, regulators and relevant ministries in 8 Arab countries.

The regional study consists of 5 parts that explain the nature, scope, and objectives of this comprehensive media assessment ( i.e. its approach and methodological choices) and highlights, analyzes and compares the main findings with respect to public media in the 8 Arab countries .

The regional study starts with an examination of the legal framework-that regulates the operation and management of the national public media outlets and the existing state mechanisms for monitoring and controlling them (part 2 on the legal framework). In a second phase, the study focuses on the analysis of actual content on nine public television channels (one channel per each country and two in the case of Morocco). This analysis of content (part 3 of the regional study) includes three different levels of analysis: a quantitative analysis of the program schedules (section 3A), a quantitative analysis of the evening news bulletins (section 3B), and a qualitative analysis of information magazines(section 3C). In part 4, in-depth interviews conducted with key representatives of civil society made it possible to gain insight into their own perceptions and assessment of public broadcasting in their own countries, and what “public service television’ means to them.

While collecting data, it has not always been easy to elicit straightforward answers from officials and this says a lot about the level of secrecy that surrounds the operation of public broadcasters in some countries, about their lack of accountability to the public, their failure to establish formal rules for the management process, and to introduce adequate methods and tools for monitoring and follow up. For instance the study highlights the fact that the mission and the objectives of Télé Liban are not stated in any legal document or text. Moreover, it was almost impossible to obtain clear information with regard to the operational budget of public television channels and the allocation of funds. There is also a real need to conduct further research about the measures that are planned or actually implemented in order to introduce digital terrestrial broadcasting which might provide an opportunity to reform the operation of public broadcasters in the region.

The findings of the regional study make it possible to draw a number of conclusions:

1. It is difficult to make general statements that apply to all 8 countries without glossing over the specificity of each country, especially that there is no clear cut common denominator among all 8 countries with respect to the nature of the political regime or the geographical location (Middle East/North Africa).
2. Strong evidence seems to confirm the widespread perception that the existing model of public television in the Arab world is obsolete and represents an outdated approach to broadcasting. Programming on Arab public channels lacks vision and does not correspond to the ideal of public service broadcasting: to inform, to educate and to entertain the national audience with quality programs that can help improve the overall quality of public television.

What is also clear is that governments are still maintaining tight control over national public television channels. Moreover, few countries have elaborated a clear definition of the concept of PSB, its principles, and the modalities of its implementation. Morocco stands out as an exception in this respect and has already introduced the use of statistical data when monitoring the implementation of legal requirements with regard to broadcasting content. In the case of the Palestinian Territories the legal texts provide a list of general principles but no details with regard to their actual implementation.

None of the national broadcasters analyzed in the present study could be considered to be editorially independent. With regard to media regulation only Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco do actually have a regulatory authority for the audiovisual media and their level of independence varies greatly from one country to the other.

3. It can be said that for most of the countries included in the study the mission of PSB is still at an embryonic stage. On the one hand, the lack of a regulatory framework does not necessarily imply that the concept of PSB is nonexistent. On the other hand, the introduction of a legal framework to regulate public broadcasting does not ensure that laws will be implemented efficiently.

It was therefore essential to conduct an analysis of the content aired by the national broadcasters. The analysis dealt with program schedules (for the period of May 2010), the evening news bulletins, and the information magazines. The samples for each of the two program genres covered a two-week period in order to draw conclusions based on the data collected.

The analysis of program content made it abundantly clear that many topics and genres that are central to the concept of PSB were not at all part of the program schedules, such as programs dedicated to children and youth. Considering that 60% of the population is below 25 years of age in the countries included in the study, it can be said that public broadcasters are largely failing to provide a mission of public service in this respect.

Programs about issues of general concern to the public do exist but to what extent can it be said that they actually fulfill the criteria of public service broadcasting and deliver a real mission of PSB? Human rights issues for instance feature regularly in the programs of the Palestinian and the Syrian public television channels. A qualitative analysis of the content of these programs has shown that these programs were focused on denouncing human rights violations perpetrated by Israel whilst violations inside the country itself (by the government against its own people) were systematically ignored. The qualitative analysis of the content of programs also showed that a multiplicity of speakers in no way guarantees the expression of political pluralism, just like the participation of guests with different opinions does not in itself mean that the public broadcaster is being neutral or objective. Moderators and anchors can largely influence the outcome of a live talk show or interview in the way they direct questions to some guests and limit their speaking time.

The purely quantitative analysis of programs may initially give the impression that a specific broadcaster is covering a variety of issues and inviting guests from all walks of life, whilst allocating a lot of airtime to vox populi interviews (an approach used extensively in Tunisia and in Syria). It was therefore necessary to conduct a qualitative analysis of programs before reaching any conclusion with respect to programming. Indeed, the analysis of information magazines showed that true debate is a rare staple and that the main concern of national broadcasters is to endorse pro-governmental positions. The head of state is omnipresent in the evening news bulletins whilst many national groups are marginalized, in particular women, youth, minorities and people with disabilities.

These findings were by and large confirmed during the 111 interviews conducted with key representatives of civil society organizations in the eight countries included in the study. The interviewees may not have always been able to articulate a clear and precise definition of PSB but they have all identified pluralism of opinion and diversity as fundamental aspects of PSB. The expression of their frustrations pointed to the fact that programs on national broadcasters were often far below the legitimate expectations of the respondents.

The interviews pointed to a number of challenges:

- the need to raise public awareness about the concept of PSB and make national authorities accountable with respect to providing a mission of public service
- the responsibility to represent all groups that make up the population and to include the most deprived and marginalized ones.

The popular uprisings against dictatorial regimes in the Arab world started while the present study was being conducted. This means that the research findings can now be of value in more than one respect: on the one hand they can be used in order to come up with concrete suggestions to improve the mission of PSB, and on the other hand they can be the benchmark or standard against which the evolution and future performance of PSB in the eight countries of the MENA region can be measured in the future.

The third part of the present volume is thus dedicated to the challenges and to the possibilities for mobilization and reform of the public broadcasting sector in the Arab countries.

### **How to lobby for a stronger role for PSB?**

In order to respond to the multiple challenges brought to light by the assessment of the actual performance of public broadcasters, the present volume includes a number of concrete suggestions with respect to introducing reform in the public broadcasting sector in the eight Arab countries.

The concept of independent media regulation is fundamental to ensure that a true mission of PSB can be delivered and monitored without the interference of the executive power. The backbone of **Juan Montabes Pereira**'s contribution rests on the necessity to take advantage of the successful experiences of countries that have introduced independent mechanisms to regulate the media. He quotes the example of the RIRM as a regional platform to exchange views and to foster cooperation between the countries on the northern and southern parts of the Mediterranean sea.

**Teresa Velázquez** provides the findings of an analysis conducted about the media coverage of the relations between countries that surround the Mediterranean sea and calls for increased regional cooperation.

The contribution of civil society organizations is urgently needed in order to transform the role of public television channels and make them deliver a mission of public service to the population. It is up to citizens to call for a public debate and to insist on the need to improve the performance of public broadcasters. The present project has taken the initiative to conduct interviews with a number of decision makers in this field to explore their views about the role of civil society with regard to promoting pluralism and independence in the media.

**Ahmed Ghazali**, president of the HACA and **Nacer Mehal**, Minister of Information in the Algerian government, have both accepted to respond to the issues and challenges that were raised by the present research project.

**Marc Bou** brings his insight as a professional in the field of international cooperation when reflecting on both issues related to public broadcasting, and the influence of new media on the audiovisual landscape in the region.

In conclusion the present book includes detailed **recommendations** dealing with the overall field of PSB and addresses relevant stake holders (legislators, regulators, operators, media professionals). Above and beyond the presentation of the research findings, its purpose is to elicit dialogue between all the relevant parties interested in the development of PSB in the region.

## **Media in the Arab world: From nation-building to revolution-making**

**By Khaled Hroub**

Director of Cambridge Arab Media Programme (CAMP)

The socio-political role of the media in post-colonial Arab countries has always been a matter of an ongoing discussion. Debates over this role have continued to be as alive and contentious today, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, as they were in the early days of the emergence of independent Arab states in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between these times, the media was part of broader processes of nation-building, the consolidation of ruling elites, and identity-creating and dismantling. It has also functioned crucially in supporting and defeating ideologies, as well as rising and falling parties, and recently in overthrowing regimes that used to be masterful in manipulating the very same media to stay in power.<sup>1</sup>

The following discussion attempts to contextualise the role of the media, mainly television broadcasting but also social media, as a driver for change situated at the core of a broader set of political and social transition processes in the Arab world. The analysis will mostly focus on the recent and present times of the Arab uprisings, but will be kept historically and comparatively framed and closely attentive to the changing role of the media and their owners.

The Arab Spring has been provoked by intertwined processes that have been building up and effectively feeding into each other over years. Analysis of any individual process among these should be cautiously undertaken, with roles and influences of various actors carefully measured. It is from this perspective that the opening argument in this appraisal states that: *The occurrence of Arab revolutions in the year 2011 reflected a historic conjuncture in time and space between unavoidable socio-political changes and unavoidable media changes in the Arab world.*

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<sup>1</sup> In his classic book dealing with the entry of the Arab region into the era of modern states, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernising the Middle East*, Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1958, Daniel Lerner assigns an important role to mass media in the formation of new polities. For an overview of the role of the media in more recent years, see Abdulla, R., *The changing Middle East media over the past 20 years: opportunities and challenges*. In B. Korany (Ed.), *The Changing Middle East*. (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010).

Gathering momentum separately over decades, the eventual convergence of these two courses of change has made the challenge to the status quo and defeat of authoritarianism in the Arab world not only possible but almost unavoidable. Each of these two courses of change will be discussed on its own, showing how both reached their own impasse where a complete breakaway from stagnated conditions became the only way forward. The deadlock of both courses represented the timely meeting ground whereby the implosions that led to the Arab Spring took place.

Starting with the first course of socio-political change (or rather, stagnation) in the Arab states, it is imperative to point out that a major marker in this respect has been the multifaceted state failure after decades of independence. The catastrophic performance of Arab states has been lengthy and unfolding over years, displayed primarily in the ruling elites' incompetence to bring about viable societies and economies. In almost all aspects of governance, the failure of these elites was compounded by corruption, oppression, squandering of national wealth, subjugation to Western hegemony and effectively turning countries into family and clique businesses. Indicators of catastrophic performance at the level of individual Arab states or collectively were shockingly categorised in a series of reports issued by the UNDP in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

### *End of survival paradigms*

Despite failure to build viable nations, these authoritarian regimes managed to survive, mainly by combining a monopoly of national resources, and military and Western support. Their full control of the mass media helped as an auxiliary factor over decades. Concepts of privately-owned mass media or public broadcasting corporations that would be free, even relatively, from heavy-handed state dominance were simply alien. On a broader level, authoritarian Arab regimes have been underpinned by a number of survival paradigms that had long served their interest but have all run out of steam in recent years, prior to the Arab Spring. The first survival paradigm advocated priority of development over democracy; the notion that Arab states were still in an infant stage whose fragility demanded the building of economies and development at the expense of any other agenda, including democracy – the latter had even been ridiculed as a mere luxury.<sup>3</sup>

The second paradigm that was exploited by the ruling elites used the conflict with Israel as an excuse to prolong authoritarian control of power and nudge democracy aside. Several Arab regimes, especially those surrounding Israel, such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, raised the slogan that “no voice should override the voice of the battle (with Israel)” – including the voice of democracy, of course.

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2 These reports started with the one entitled ‘Arab Human Development Reports: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations’ in 2002, New York and Cairo, and since then every year. One important aspect of these reports is that they are researched and written by teams of Arab researchers and academics. For the full list of reports and texts see: <http://www.arab-hdr.org/>

3 In fact, this was a popular paradigm embraced by many Third World countries in the post-colonial era, giving utmost priority for development over democracy and/or political participation.



A third survival paradigm depended on the notion of “cultural specificity”, which has been and still is heavily manipulated by the Gulf and conservative states. Here, it has been argued that Arab societies with their specific history, tradition and religion are fundamentally different from other societies. Thus, what might be suitable for other societies, including forms of governance--- with democracy being the obvious dismissed form-- would not necessarily suite Arab societies. This argument was not only adopted by Arab autocrats but was also appropriated by their Western backers as it absolved them from pressing those despots for reform and political openness.

A fourth survival paradigm that helped these regimes stay in power was their reliance on, and exploitation of, Western fears of any alternative if free and fair elections were to be allowed. Western governments have sided for many years with the *status quo* that provided stability and maintained Western interests in the region, obviously at the expense of democracy and popular will.<sup>4</sup> To genuinely promote democracy in the region is to gamble on uncertain scenarios; where the most likelihood is the ascendance of Islamists to power. The gradual and eventual collapse of all these paradigms of survival for the Arab ruling elites was taking place hand in hand with the emergence of internal political, economic and social deadlocks. One looming and gloomy prospective was coming from the large, ever-growing younger generations. The youth in the Arab countries, comprising vast majorities of around 70% of the population, were facing bleak futures with the World Bank warning, in 2008, that the Arab countries needed to create more than 80 million jobs by the year 2020.<sup>5</sup> Facing an historic impasse resulting from the long unholy marriage between brutal authoritarianism and catalogues of failure; the situation in several Arab countries under a surface of false and flimsy stability was boiling indeed.

### *Arab mass media: From state-control to agent of revolution*

In tandem with the above, a second course of change had been taking place within the Arab mass media, evolving and converging with the political and social course of change – and thus creating its own impasse. At the conjectural point of time and space between the two, when uprisings were about to erupt, the media was ready to undertake its own detour and deploy great help. As it has been stated above, in post-colonial Arab states mass media, and particularly radio and TV, remained for several decades under the strong grip of the governments. News and information broadcast on these media were limited to regime propaganda. The suppression of any real opposition in political life was reflected in a media where no voices of dissent were allowed.

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<sup>4</sup> In a famous speech delivered on November 6, 2003 before the National Endowment for Democracy, George W. Bush said: ‘Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe, because in the long run stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. Therefore the United States has adopted a new policy: a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East.’ See the text of speech on: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A8260-2003Nov6?language=printer>.

<sup>5</sup> *Unlocking The Employment Potential in the Middle East and North Africa*, World Bank Publications, 2007.

The turning point in Arab media took place in 1996 with the emergence of the Qatar-based pan-Arab station: Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera's historic significance on the Arab media scene stems from three main offerings, among others: raising the ceiling of media freedom, setting the Arab TV industry gradually in the direction of public broadcasting, and offering a role model for others to emulate.<sup>6</sup> In less than a decade and to compete with the Qatar-owned Al Jazeera, Saudi, Egyptian, Lebanese and other private and semi-private enterprises launched hundreds of trans-border TV stations - filling the airwaves in the Arab region - and ranging from news channels to entertainment, sport and religious ones. Over its relatively short life Al Jazeera has been a pioneer in many areas: breaking through low ceilings of political discussion and continually pushing the boundaries; providing live coverage of major events and wars in wide-ranging regions; and providing a platform for political and religious opposition groups in the Arab countries. Because of severe competition over audiences and despite that fact that most of the influential TV stations were still controlled directly or semi-directly by governments, pan-Arab broadcasting has succeeded in creating a "regional public sphere", where issues have been debated on relatively free platforms.<sup>7</sup>

However, after a decade and a half of its emergence, high and mostly unrealistic expectations were pinned on Al Jazeera and other pan-Arab TV franchises. In a region that has been remarkably unfortunate with its authoritarian mode of governance and lack of freedoms, pan-Arab TV networks speedily became not only the main platform where political debates could take place, but was also expected to bring about socio-political change in itself, a responsibility that should not be expected from the media alone in any case. As the "fourth estate" the media could only help, not make, political change.

However, the reason why this erroneous appropriation of responsibility has been shouldered onto a free media in the Arab world is due to the startling lack of a separation of powers. All powers in almost every individual Arab country had long been merged and reduced into one authoritarian power - the executive. When free media, the "fourth power", functions relatively independently - that is debating issues, raising concerns, posing critical questions and so forth - it is the job of the rest of the polity, the legislative, the judiciary and the executive to take up the issues exposed by the media and carry them over to the next phases. But what has been happening with pan-Arab broadcasting media in the "public Arab sphere" is that whatever issues it might raise and questions it might pose, are mostly thrown into a void. The vacuum between the single conglomeration of the three powers at one end and the fourth power, the media, at the other end has been the

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6 Literature on Al Jazeera and its impact has become vast. See for example: Khalil Rinnawi, *Instant Nationalism: McArabism, al-Jazeera and Transnational Media in the Arab World* (Oxford: University Press of America, 2006); Marc Lynch 'Voices of the New Arab Media: Iraq, Al Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today' (New York, Columbia University Press, 2006); Hugh Miles, *Al Jazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the World*, (London: Abacus, 2005); and Mohamed Zayani (ed.) 'Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media' (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

7 See Naomi Sakr, *Arab Media and Political Renewal: Community, Legitimacy and Public Life* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), see also Kai Hafez, 'Arab Satellite Broadcasting: Democracy Without Political Parties', *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, no. 15 (2005).

abyss into which all the breakthroughs that Al Jazeera has made have fallen. The once very promising pan-Arab broadcasting has thus faced an impasse, where hot media action was only accompanied by political inaction.

Thus, on the eve of the Arab revolutions it was true that Al Jazeera and other pan-Arab broadcasting were already challenging political taboos and creating new spaces for media and political freedoms culminating in the live coverage of the demonstrations. But it was equally true that with its inability to provoke political action this media had become a means only for venting out anger and frustration, without generating any concrete political action from the dysfunctional other estates – another manifestation of the media impasse.<sup>8</sup> When these two impasses of the political/social and media courses deadlocked, creating almost complete frustration and closing any horizon for change, there were still two emerging agents lurking in many Arab countries, and eventually breaking the deadlock: the youth and social media. The former spearheaded protest against the political status quo, and the latter offered it a mobilisation tool. The Arab youth have been the leading force in the Arab Spring, surprising governments, opposition parties and other political and social forces. The leadership role that they have played has effectively shifted and dismantled many long-lived perceptions about Arab youth and their so-imagined indifference about public affairs, and/or immersion solely in individualistic and entertainment concerns. The energy and creativity that the youth had triggered in igniting the Arab Spring was manifested in many ways, and one of them was the massive introduction of social media in those uprisings. The combination of energetic youth and creative social media has resulted in an uncontrollable mix which challenged long-controlling regimes, and ultimately toppled them. In fact this mix of youth and creativity should be translated into the reality of post-revolutions societies, where processes of legislation and democratisation that hopefully should follow the collapse of authoritarian regimes in the region must include a leading role for the youth in all aspects of life including politics, economics, culture and media. During the Arab uprisings the youth and social media have opened wide unexpected spaces, venues for mass protest, and offered ingenious new means of mobilisation. Thus, against the impasse that conventional and broadcasting media was facing in terms of their inability to mobilise and effect political action, as described above, unstoppable youth and its social media came to the rescue. If broadcasting media stopped at “covering” events, social media took matters way beyond that into the realm of “activism”. A closer look at the eventual integration between the two forms of media, broadcasting and social, and the role they both have played in combined effectiveness, has now become due.

Having been given carte blanche from the top leadership in Qatar in supporting these revolutions, and meeting its own ambitions of amassing regional leverage and influence, Al-Jazeera’s coverage, as well as other stations such the Saudi-owned Al Arabiya, invested enormous resources, time and effort in covering the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia live and around the clock. Days after the protests originated in these two countries, pan-Arab broadcasting media led by Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, and trans-border TV stations

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<sup>8</sup> For the unintended consequence of pan-Arab broadcasting on limiting and sometimes freezing political action, see Khaled Hroub ‘Satellite Media and Social Change in the Arab World’ in *Arab Media in the Information Age* (Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2006).

based outside the Arab region such as the BBC-Arabic (London), France 24 (Paris), Al Hurra (Washington) and Russia Al Yaoum (Moscow) were fully engaged in live coverage. However, this media was soon to face difficulties because of the limitations put on their field correspondents on the ground by local security. Later on, these stations relied primarily on social media networks streaming direct from the streets and among the crowds. An integration and happy marriage between the “wide screen” TV stations, and the “small screen” social media (and mainly camera-enabled mobile phones) took place immediately.

On the “wide screen”, images of Arab masses conveying their powerful demand to the world: “the people want to overthrow the regime” occupied the airwaves. On the “small screen”, details of uprisings, and brutalities by security forces were all recorded and relayed first online, on Facebook, Twitter and other blogs, then channelled to the “wide screen”. Banned from their local media, arrested and mostly on the run, many activists and spokespersons for leading revolutionaries used both wide and small screen as their platform to reach out to their people and mobilise them. Cancelling their regular programmes, the leading TV channels, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, transformed into an around the clock workshop of live news and interviews, switching from one revolution to another. Both these channels immediately became main source of news and coverage, repeating the demands of the people and in fact fuelling the atmosphere.

In Arabic, a sister channel to the main Al-Jazaara broadcasting news, one called Al Jazeera *Mubashir* (Al Jazeera Live) was also devoted to live feed-ins from whoever could get through by phone calls, text messaging or video clips. In giving lengthy airtime to opponents of the regimes, and the favourable coverage of the revolutionaries, it was obvious that the policy line of the Al Jazeera network was to take sides with the people. The accusations by the falling ruling regimes that Al Jazeera was not neutral are in fact true. A widely circulated joke captures this by relaying a conversation that takes place in hell between the three Egyptian presidents, Nasir, Sadat and Mubarak, asking each other how they were killed. Nasir’s answer was “by poison”; Sadat’s was “by assassination”; while Mubarak’s answer was “by Al Jazeera”.

In cases where pan-Arab stations still managed to mount dozens of cameras for live broadcast, the around-the-clock coverage of massive crowds multiplied the popular spirit. More importantly, they provided protection to the masses being filmed exercising their peaceful revolution to the entire world and consequently paralysed the might of the security apparatuses, since any crackdown on the protesters would be viewed globally. The live filming of hundreds of thousands of persistent and peaceful protesters attracted world attention and support, embarrassing Western powers that had so longed backed the falling regimes (in Egypt and Tunisia) and compelling them to change policies and support the anti-regimes movements.

## *The Role of Social Media*<sup>9</sup>

However, in the cases where the revolutions turned messy and bloody (Bahrain, Libya, Syria and Yemen), the central role of the pan-Arab TV networks in the Arab Spring would have been highly diminished had it not been for the advent of social media: Facebook, Twitter and mobile phones. Correspondents of the main channels were soon banned from entering these countries where protest was accumulating rapidly, but regime resistance had managed to retain a foothold particularly insofar as keeping control of media activity within its borders. Prepared and used to this typical measure by Arab governments, the channels announced dozens of phone numbers for receiving calls and text messages from the streets, and set up ad-hoc websites to receive video clips taken by ordinary people. These hot feeds which would arrive within moments would be transmitted immediately giving the revolutionaries double service: small and large scale events became amplified and made known to the entire population; and the population itself would know where to mobilise and gather. By the same token, had these hot feeds not been able to be broadcast on the largest scale, outreaching an audience of millions by TV stations, the achievement of the social media in these revolutions would have been minimal. Because of poverty and scandalously high illiteracy rates in the Arab world, the spread of computers and the penetration rates of internet usage are low and not particularly reliable in mobilisation processes. But everyone had access to TV.

Although numbers of users were modest,<sup>10</sup> pioneering young Arab internet activists managed to maximise the use of social media as a much needed bridge between the mass broadcasting media and the people in the street. Video clips taken by mobile phones represented the core material that would be transmitted to TV channels and/or uploaded on websites and made available to all media to use. The various permutations within social media offered a new medium characterised by a number of things all of which created a bridge to the broadcasting media which was very crucial, and which eventually allowed the revolutions to be successful. Five main characteristics can be summarised as follows: *Mobilisation and mobility*: This shows the great capacity of Facebook, Twitter,<sup>11</sup> YouTube and bloggers to mobilise people and create networks. Also, this media is mobile where individuals can report and cover events while on the move without any dependence on fixed equipment; its main tool is mobile phones. People can stay connected in streets and on the move.

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9 For general overview of the use of internet as a domain for activism in the Arab world, before the Arab Spring, see joint study by Bruce Edling, John Kelly, Robert Faris, and John Palfrey, *Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere: Politics, Culture, and Dissent* (Harvard: Berkman Centre Research Publications, June 2009).

10 The internet penetration rates in the Arab world are not particularly high, on average around 33.5% in June 2011 after huge upsurge in the wake of the Arab Spring. See <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm>

11 On the use of Twitter during the Arab world see a pioneering study 'Opening Closed Regimes: What Was the Role of Social Media During the Arab Spring?' researched and published by Project on Technology and Political Islam (pITPI, <http://pitpi.org/index.php/2011/09/11/opening-closed-regimes-what-was-the-role-of-social-media-during-the-arab-spring/>)

*Un-controllability:* Here, social media challenged state control and surveillance technologies because of its wide-spread nature and intensive use by vast numbers of people. Unlike traditional media whose designated correspondents could be easily monitored or even banned, social media activists outpaced state security skills and surveillance, gaining a clear technological advantage.<sup>12</sup>

*Inclusivity:* Social media means and tools have become available extensively and easily, offering an unprecedented degree of immediate coverage of events and places. This goes against the selectivity of coverage that traditional and broadcasting media is compelled to employ because of limitation of resources and complexity of deployment.

*Compatibility:* The mobility, immediacy and inclusivity that social media have enjoyed in the field made them the main provider for broadcasting media. The feeds taken by mobile phones in the street during the Arab revolutions, presented the principal material transmitted and broadcast by pan-Arab TV networks, whose correspondents were banned in most of the cases.

*Affordability:* In all of the above, the main tool of the in-the-field social media has been the camera-equipped mobile phone, which is affordable by the vast majority of people. There was no need for expensive and highly sophisticated operations in order to report and cover events.<sup>13</sup> These characteristics have even overcome the low rates of social media users in the Arab world. Thus, however small were the groups that were very active in this field, compared to the entire population, their products and feeds became multiplied by many thousands when relayed on mass media broadcasting channels. Social and broadcasting media complimented each other in very effective ways.

In post-revolutions Arab countries the media has now entered a new phase. In Egypt, Libya and Tunisia media freedoms have already made unprecedented strides. Public media, mainly TV stations, have become incomparable to those during authoritarian rule in terms of open debates and inclusiveness, attracting vast audiences. People in these countries have started to switch and come back to their local media at the expense of the pan-Arab media which used to win massive followings in various Arab countries because of the failure of domestic media in the past. In every Arab country where the old regime has been changed, freedoms have flourished, domestic media has become sharply on the rise, and pan-Arab media on decline. The industry of media in general, along with vibrant emerging competitiveness is showing rapid signs of healthier markets in these countries. National politics in these countries is now conducted under the scrutiny of a free media. For the first time in a number of Arab countries the media will effectively assume the role of the “fourth estate”, and a real prospect for true “public broadcasting” in the public sphere is more likely to evolve.

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<sup>12</sup> This gap is rapidly closing as reports indicate that remaining authoritarian governments in the Arab region, as elsewhere, are now investing enormously in the area of internet surveillance and filtering. See some reports on: <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2011/09/government-internet-surveillance-starts-eyes-built>

<sup>13</sup> According to some research figures, in November 2011, the mobile penetration rates in the Arab countries, on average is 79.6%, with the most of Gulf countries exceed double that figure. See <http://mobile-thinking.com/mobile-marketing-tools/latest-mobile-stats>

# The Place of Public Service Broadcasting in Arab Democratisation Processes

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Anyone who mentions “public service” ideals in a discussion of media and political participation in the Arab region faces two immediate disadvantages. One is that the literal Arabic translation of “public service broadcasting” is void of important connotations inherent in the concept, such as the electoral weight of public opinion or the existence of more or less robust checks on government editorial interference. The other is that citizens of Arab countries have no first-hand practical experience of public service broadcasting at home.

Public service broadcasting emerged — with the rise of radio in the 1920s — through political pressure, clearly articulated in the UK, for radio waves to be treated as public property and for broadcasting to be regarded as a public utility, able to nourish “informed and reasoned” public opinion as an “essential part of the political process in a mass democratic society”.<sup>1</sup> Arab countries in the 1920s, many under British, French or Italian control, were not part of that vision. Their early national experiments with radio services were either unlicensed, as in Egypt and Tunisia until the early 1930s, or linked to European colonisation, as with Egypt’s Marconi-run service (1932-47), or prompted by British and French efforts to counter Italian and German broadcasting in the late 1930s.<sup>2</sup> To this day, Arab familiarity with Europe’s public broadcasters is usually with the output of their overseas departments, which traditionally operated under a different logic of accountability from domestic services, having more of a foreign policy agenda. Hence, to Arab publics, who often still struggle to access a range of public services, from piped gas to a telephone landline or even refuse collection, and whose opinions have long been feared by governments rather than sought, the feasibility of achieving something called “public service” in relation to broadcasting may seem remote.

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1 For the arguments as expressed in the 1920s see Paddy Scannell, ‘Public service broadcasting: The history of a concept’ in Andrew Goodwin and Garry Whannel (ed) *Understanding Television*, Routledge 1990, pp 11-14.

2 Douglas Boyd, *Broadcasting in the Arab World*, Iowa State University Press, 1999.

## *An integral part of the political structure*

Whatever it is called, however, a type of broadcasting that serves free and open collective public deliberation, engaging all sections of society and all parts of a country, presents itself as an essential element of democratisation. As one proponent puts it, “the institutions and processes of public communication are themselves a central and integral part of the political structure and process”.<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, idealised portrayals of public service broadcasting as an embodiment of democratic practice may not be helpful, given the everyday challenges of resources, regulation and interpretation that constrain and mar its application in countries where it has been practised for generations. Yet an analysis of how big or small those same challenges are in certain Arab countries after the dramatic political changes of 2011 may help towards an understanding of those countries’ path to democracy.

One step towards setting out the balance sheet is to categorise a few principal features of public service broadcasting on which there is broad agreement within international bodies to which Arab states themselves belong. The biggest and best known body is UNESCO, which, in a handbook on the topic in 2005, listed four factors to be “taken into account in judging whether a public broadcasting system is playing the role it is expected to perform”.<sup>4</sup> These are: universality (meaning that the entire population has full access to the service); diversity (in the programmes offered, the audiences targeted and the subjects discussed); independence (guaranteed through protection from political and commercial pressures); and distinctiveness (through a remit to innovate and set high standards). The UNESCO handbook insists that government-controlled broadcasting cannot meet these criteria. It also notes that community broadcasting may perform some public service functions, but does not replace public service broadcasting’s “broader outlook and national scope”.<sup>5</sup>

## *Commitments attached to membership of international bodies*

UNESCO member states jointly agreed the organisation’s goal of strengthening the role of public service broadcasting globally when they approved the UNESCO budget at the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference in 2003. Thus broadcasting achievements in individual Arab countries can be analysed according to criteria which those countries’ own delegates have officially accepted. A further tier of commitment to elements of public service broadcasting has also been undertaken by those Arab national broadcasters who belong to the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Because of the way the European “broadcasting area” is defined within the International Telecommunication Union (ITU),<sup>6</sup> EBU membership is

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3 Nicholas Garnham, ‘The media and the public sphere’, in Craig Calhoun (ed) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, 1992, p 361.

4 UNESCO, *Public Service Broadcasting: A Best Practices Sourcebook*, edited by Indrajit Banerjee and Kalinga Seneviratne, Paris, 2005, p 15.

5 *Ibid.* pp 15.

6 Under a revised ITU agreement of 2006, the European Broadcasting Area is bounded to the west by a line drawn to the west of Iceland down the centre of the Atlantic Ocean, to the east by the meridian 40° East of Greenwich, and to the south by the parallel 30° North. Some territories outside the boundaries (e.g. Jordan, Iraq and part of Syria) are also considered part of the area (<http://www.itu.int/ITU-R/>



open to broadcasters outside the continent of Europe. It currently includes the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), Jordan Radio and Television (JRTV), Télé Liban, Morocco's SNRT, and state radio and television broadcasters from Algeria and Tunisia. EBU membership criteria echo aspects of public service broadcasting identified by UNESCO. They require members to provide "varied and balanced" programming of "national character and importance", which serves all sections of the population and is accessible to "virtually all" of the households receiving radio and television in the country. Special and minority interests should be catered to, irrespective of cost, and a substantial proportion of programmes broadcast should be produced or commissioned by the broadcaster at their own cost and under their own editorial control.<sup>7</sup> When the EBU helped central and eastern European broadcasters to reinvent themselves after the end of the Soviet era, it pinpointed public service broadcasting as the only model that can simultaneously provide benefits such as "a forum for democratic debate", a "spirit of innovation" and "extensive original production".<sup>8</sup>

In the absence of a documented consensus within or among Arab states as to the urgency of establishing public service broadcasting principles and finding ways to implement them, the obligations laid on governments and broadcasters by their existing status as members of UNESCO and the EBU offer a reasonably objective list against which to discuss advances and setbacks by the end of 2011.

### *Growing recognition of links between universality, democracy and diversity*

For a broadcasting service to be accessible to the entire population is not simply a matter of the technologies of reception; it also means airing programmes in languages that all citizens speak and heeding audience responses in order to ensure that everyone feels served. The situation in the Arab region remains mixed on all three counts, despite steps taken to improve accessibility before and during 2011. In the case of audience research, statistics on viewer and listener preferences are notoriously patchy and often collected using methods of questionable reliability.<sup>9</sup> Qualitative feedback on specific programmes is conspicuous by its absence. In 2008-09, Denmark's public service broadcaster, DR, helped JRTV, Syrian TV and Lebanon's Al Jadeed TV (New TV) to conduct focus groups with youth audiences, as part of a project to create innovative shows that would look at youth issues through young eyes. The focus group research revealed that young viewers were thoroughly unaccustomed to being asked their opinions about TV programmes<sup>10</sup> – a finding that highlights simple steps broadcasters can take to enhance both their relationship with their public and their contribution to democracy.

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terrestrial/broadcast/plans/st61/index.html) The original delineation was a legacy of the ITU's predecessor, which was established in 1865 when the telegraph was being developed.

7 [http://www.ebu.ch/en/ebu\\_members/admission/index.php](http://www.ebu.ch/en/ebu_members/admission/index.php)

8 Council of Europe Working Document 10029, January 2004, Appendix I. Available at <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc04/EDOC10029AD.htm#Alt>

9 For details on reliability issues see Ali Belail's article on 'Credible audience measurement' at <http://www.mediapolicy.org/audience-research-Belail>

10 See <http://www.i-m-s.dk/article/closer-collaboration-between-broadcasters>, 17 February 2009

Arab broadcasters have been airing news bulletins and other programmes in English or French for many years, but broadcasting in Tamazight, a name for the family of indigenous Amazigh (Berber) languages widely spoken in North Africa, is much more recent. Morocco introduced a television channel called Tamazight in January 2010, and went on to announce reforms in June 2011 that finally made Tamazight an official language alongside Arabic. In Libya open use of Tamazight – forbidden under Muammar Qaddafi – re-emerged in the summer of 2011 with the crumbling of Qaddafi’s control over areas where these dialects are spoken. Algeria broadcasts in Tamazight on its government-controlled radio and television network, but many Tamazight speakers also tune in to satellite channels received from abroad.

Indeed, satellite transmission has become such a prominent feature of Arab broadcasting that we risk missing what it tells us about the drawbacks of partial access. Eutelsat data collected during the first half of 2010 indicated that satellite penetration was close to 100 per cent of television households in countries such as Algeria (97.3 per cent), Jordan (97.5 per cent), Lebanon (93.4 per cent) and Tunisia (99.2 per cent). Elsewhere the figures were lower, ranging from 84 per cent in Morocco to 75.8 per cent in Syria and 64.9 per cent in Egypt. Where governments monopolise terrestrial transmission, any level of satellite access below 100 per cent means that parts of the population are excluded from non-government coverage of national current affairs. In September 2011 Algeria finally joined Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia in adopting legislation to end the government’s broadcasting monopoly. Egypt, in contrast, remained without an explicit legal regime to allocate terrestrial licences to non-government broadcasters.<sup>11</sup> The vaguely-worded rules that have governed Egypt’s privately-owned satellite channels since the early 2000s are no substitute for a licensing regime that would set standards on diversity, the handling of public complaints, election coverage and so on. That is to say: the goal of achieving universal access links directly with ways of promoting other features of public service broadcasting.

Similar concerns about audience exclusion apply to FM transmission for radio across the region. Habib Belaïd, head of Tunisian state radio, told a meeting hosted by UNESCO in Paris in May 2011 that his station reached only half the population and could be received on FM only in the northeast of the country. He said that installing more FM transmitters was essential to meet the demands of election coverage, but that the cost was beyond reach. Challenge of turning the past’s fake unity into a future of social cohesion.

The public service broadcasting objective of “diversity” is the antithesis of tenets espoused by the broadcasting mouthpieces of the former regimes of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. The Arab Satellite Charter, presented to Arab information ministers in early 2008 but subsequently abandoned as a pan-Arab project, encapsulated the forced suppression of diversity and difference that had become a norm of censorship in most Arab states at that time. It required broadcasters to “abstain from broadcasting anything that would contradict or jeopardise Arab solidarity” [Art.7: para 3] or “social peace, national unity,

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<sup>11</sup> See Toby Mendel’s report for Internews, *Political and Media Transitions in Egypt*, August 2011, pp 12-13.

public order and general propriety” [Art.4: para 5]. Implications of such strictures for articulating diversity in all its forms can be inferred from prohibitions in the ERTU’s code of ethics against any programme that “creates any disputation among different religious groups” or “creates social confusion” or “criticises the principles and traditions of Arab society”.<sup>12</sup> A similar concern for an undefined “national unity” emerges from content restrictions in broadcast laws elsewhere, including for example Art. 20 of the 2002 law establishing Jordan’s Audiovisual Commission.

Essential as it is to outlaw incitement to hatred or discrimination, the effect of vague blanket restrictions on any mention of social diversity over several decades has been to squeeze candid coverage of discrimination and social conflict out of the national broadcast schedules. Instead of the media offering opportunities for the public to face up to social tensions with the aim of achieving understanding and genuine cohesion, the reverse has happened. Thus it was possible for a senior Egyptian military figure, interviewed on Al Jazeera after 27 demonstrators were killed in central Cairo on October 9, 2011, to describe the burning of a church that had triggered the demonstration as “some incident worth less than three milliemes”.<sup>13</sup> The EBU was so concerned at reports of ERTU anchors urging viewers to side with the military during the October 9 demonstration that its president and director general wrote to the ERTU chairman reminding him that EBU membership “entails a commitment to independent and impartial reporting at the service of all sections of the population, including minorities”.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly the outcry triggered by the ERTU’s performance on that occasion reflected a new phase in regional media development, in which people can readily deploy social media outlets to express their fury at blatantly one-sided handling of serious incidents. But it also seemed to emphasise a systemic blockage preventing ERTU management from abiding by obligations undertaken by their own organisation. Besides those already mentioned, relating to UNESCO and the EBU, these obligations include adherence to the Seville Charter issued by the Permanent Conference of Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators (COPEAM) in 2005. The Seville Charter, intended to reinforce a “framework of respect, tolerance and dialogue”, commits its signatories to respect pluralism of opinions, show responsibility, fairness, accuracy and objectivity in reporting facts and events, and “abstain from any form of misinformation through omissions”.<sup>15</sup> The ERTU is not only a member of COPEAM, along with Algerian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Libyan, Moroccan, Palestinian and Tunisian state broadcasters, but was actually a founder member at COPEAM’s inaugural meeting in Cairo in 1996.

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<sup>12</sup> These phrases are drawn from Nos 2 and 18 on the list archived at <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring05/ERTU.html>

<sup>13</sup> A millieme is one-thousandth of an Egyptian pound. The quotation from General Mahmoud Zahir is cited by Mariz Tadros in ‘Egypt’s Bloody Sunday’, *Middle East Report Online*, 13 October 2011, available at <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero101311>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.ebu.ch/en/union/news/2011/tcm\\_6-72864.php?display=EN](http://www.ebu.ch/en/union/news/2011/tcm_6-72864.php?display=EN)

<sup>15</sup> The full text of the Charter is available at <http://www.copeam.org/proj.aspx?ln=en&id=34&p=19>

The diverse meanings of diversity, and the centrality of diversity as a *sine qua non* of broadcasting that serves democracy, are highlighted by gaps in the output of Arab state broadcasters that are just starting to be overcome. Having a station that reflects and engages all ethnic and religious groups is one aspect of diversity. Lebanon's 1994 Audiovisual Media Law licensed stations linked to sects and marginalised the state broadcaster, Télé Liban, even though it was the only station at the time to address all Lebanese regardless of their religious or political affiliation. Thereafter, Télé Liban's unstable financial status left the task of commissioning new non-sectarian content to be undertaken by private groups, such as AlJadeed TV. Another aspect is geographic diversity. Political centralisation under dictatorships created a situation where the state broadcaster would report from the capital city alone. In Ben Ali's Tunisia, for example, only a fraction of Tunisian governorates had radio and television bureaux – a deficit that had to be rectified during the October 2011 elections. After the fall of Mubarak, one immediate target of publicly-minded television producers was to bring in, and thereby “normalise”, voices from all around Egypt, including Upper Egypt and Sinai. A further aspect of diversity is in the age, gender and life experience of audiences represented and addressed.

### *Special care needed to safeguard independence and distinctiveness*

Lawyers, politicians and media freedom advocates who worked on public service broadcasting legislation as part of democratisation processes in central and eastern Europe have plenty of insights to share with Arab colleagues, and many did so during 2011. Two strong recommendations stand out, however, in relation to safeguards for the third and fourth key features of a public service broadcasting, namely independence and distinctiveness. Like universality and diversity, these features are interlinked. Distinctive programming is by definition original, which costs money; the source of that money and the rules for its disbursement will decide how much autonomy the public broadcaster enjoys and whether its managers are permitted to take the risks associated with creativity and innovation.

One recommendation links the question of finance to the vision of what public service broadcasting is, and what it is not. Public service broadcasting is not a minority operation geared to providing high-minded cultural and religious programmes that fail to gain funding from the commercial sector. On the contrary, a successful public service broadcaster offers an all-round general service that is complete enough to be a “potentially powerful competitor” to commercial broadcasters.<sup>16</sup> Thus the service needs to have sufficient finance to achieve the multiple tasks it must perform.<sup>17</sup> The second recommendation relates to the process of forming the body that will interpret the broadcasting law. Experience shows that the source of authority for broadcasting boards or councils is crucial because even a good law can be misinterpreted by board members who put partisan aims above the public interest.<sup>18</sup>

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16 See Werner Rumphorst, *Model Public Service Broadcasting Law*, ITU/EBU/UNESCO 1998, p 1.

17 For this point see Monroe Price and Marc Raboy, *Public Service Broadcasting in Transition: A Documentary Reader*, The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2003, p 4.

18 For what went wrong in Hungary, see <http://hungarianwatch.wordpress.com/2011/02/08/hungarian->

For political parties who win the first post-dictatorship elections, the possibility of exerting influence over a public broadcaster might initially look attractive. But democracy makes it possible for a government to be voted out at the next election, at which point those lawmakers who put the public broadcaster in the pocket of ruling politicians will have reason to regret their initial move, as the same degree of influence they once enjoyed over the broadcaster will now be wielded by their opponents. Thus democratisation and public service broadcasting go hand in hand in the sense that politicians, first and foremost, stand to benefit in the long run from broadcasting that is protected from political influence. Such protection requires that funding settlements for the public service broadcaster last longer than the maximum time between elections, to prevent them becoming a political football. It also requires a dedicated system of accountability, which means in turn that general taxation is not a suitable source. Instead, money should be raised specifically for the public service broadcaster so that its spending can be tracked by the very people — the public — who fund it and therefore own it.

The precedent exists, in countries like Jordan and Morocco, of collecting money for public broadcasting through a levy added to electricity bills. Problems arise when the broadcaster receives less than the sum raised. It was reported in 2009 that JRTV received less than half the JD15m (€15.67m) collected annually through electricity bills<sup>19</sup>, which left the organisation with debts, dependence on advertising and a need to cut costs. If the head of the broadcaster is appointed by the prime minister, as has been the case in Jordan, the scope for questioning budget arrangements is limited.

### *Shared aspirations without a shared name*

Democratic supervision of a publicly-funded broadcasting service contrasts sharply with the autocratic models of governance found among many Arab broadcasters, whether run by governments or individual entrepreneurs. It is a system that media activists and practitioners in the region have explicitly called for, although not necessarily using the term “public service broadcasting”. Item 6 in the Media Freedom Declaration issued by Egypt’s National Coalition for Media Freedom in May 2011 called for an end to the “mono performance” of Egyptian media, which, it said, ignores the pluralism and diversity that are “pillars of strength in the Egyptian society and national unity”. It demanded an end to excessive centralisation on the capital city, and an end to security and administrative restrictions. Item 8 of the Declaration went on to stress the importance of a phased rehabilitation of public media which would liberate them from political and commercial influences and pressures.<sup>20</sup> Over the years community broadcasters like Radio Al-Balad in Jordan and Radio Kalima in Tunisia have contributed to an understanding of public service because they have persevered to serve the public despite repression. If the model of public service broadcasting is to be shared and debated within countries and across the region as part of democratisation, it merits the coining of a new term in Arabic that puts citizens at the centre of the concept, where they belong.

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watch-exclusive-interview-with-peter-molnar-fidesz-party-co-founder-part-1-of-3/

<sup>19</sup> Daoud Kuttab, *In the service of the community*, Jordan Times, 24 September 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Full text at [www.ncmf.info](http://www.ncmf.info)

# **Arab public broadcasting: regional synthesis and comparative analysis**

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## **1. Introduction**

About the project

This regional study is part of the project Strengthening the mission of public service broadcasting (PSB) in the MENA region, launched in May 2010 with the objective to enhance the role of public television in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia, and to serve the interest of the public by enabling citizens to make informed choices on issues of general social concern.

The consortium made up of Panos Paris Institute (IPP) and the Mediterranean Observatory of Communication (OMEC), Barcelona, in partnership with the Center for Media Freedom, Middle East and North Africa (CMF MENA), has undertaken to implement this project with the participation of 8 national partners, who are researchers in the field of Arab media and/or actively engaged in the support of media freedom in their respective countries.

The project is funded by Irish Aid, the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (ACCD), and the Open Society Foundations (OSF).

This project has several objectives:

1. Promoting a culture of public service broadcasting that can play a significant role in fostering democracy and good governance.
2. Promoting diversity and pluralism in each country by ensuring fair and balanced representation of the various communities on public television.
3. Encouraging the expression of the needs, concerns, and interests of minorities and other marginalized groups.

4. Building up the capacity of activists and members of civil society, especially with respect to conducting media monitoring projects and producing information and data that can foster citizen involvement and debate about media, freedom of expression, pluralism, and democracy.
5. Fostering a culture of lobbying among members of civil society in order to promote democratic ideals.
6. Opening up debate about regulation of the audio-visual landscape and the creation of independent regulatory authorities.

The broad lines of the project and its successive phases were elaborated by the partners of the project during a first kick off workshop, organized by the IPP at the headquarters of CMF MENA, Casablanca, in November 2009. The five phases are the following:

**Phase 1:** An initial workshop, organized by the IPP-OMEC consortium, took place at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, in June 2010, to familiarize the eight country teams with the monitoring techniques and to finalize an assessment grid to analyze the content of public TV stations.

**Phase 2:** All the partners monitored and assessed the public mission of national broadcasters in the 8 countries over a fixed period of time and drafted 8 national reports.

**Phase 3:** Validation of the 8 national reports produced in phase 2 and drafting of a detailed regional study.

**Phase 4:** A regional conference with representatives from Arab national broadcasters, media professionals, civil society organizations, and decision makers was held in Amman in December 2011. The main findings of the national reports were presented and a set of recommendations addressed to media decision makers was drafted.

**Phase 5:** Follow up at national and regional levels: launching of public debates in order to share and discuss the conclusions of the regional study and the national reports for each of the participating countries; lobbying to improve the quality of the public service mission of the public broadcasters in each of the eight Arab countries included in the study.

The purpose of this comprehensive evaluative approach is to provide members of civil society with the necessary information that they need in order to raise awareness about the performance of publicly-owned television and to effectively lobby the relevant authorities (parliament, regulatory bodies, etc.). These efforts must be made in order to strengthen the quality of PSB and make sure that public TV in each of the eight Arab countries is addressing the needs and interests of the national population, in all its diversity and components.

More specifically, the present study seeks to:

- Produce a reference document on the extent to which public broadcasters are delivering, or not, a mission of public service in the targeted countries.

- Set up an agreed list of the missions and duties that define public service broadcasting.
- Assess the quality of the media coverage of news and current affairs on the evening news and in information magazines.
- Assess the nature of general programming schedules and the extent to which they serve the public interest.
- Identify the existing mechanisms of regulation (including media laws and regulatory authorities) and to assess their efficiency with respect to fostering democratic ideals and serving the public interest.
- Examine the operating procedures within the publicly-owned television stations in each country in order to identify loopholes and potential shortcomings and eventually recommend suggestions for change.
- Assess the potential for the development of public service broadcasting with the introduction of new information technology and in particular the move towards digital broadcasting.
- Identify key members of civil society organizations and NGOs and to build their capacity to evaluate the output of public broadcasters in their own country and to propose ways of improving their performance.

### Conceptual framework

Within the framework of the present regional study, the definition of “public service broadcasting” and “public service mission” adopted and used for the assessment of Arab public broadcasting is the universal definition of these concepts as accepted in international conventions.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, several Arab countries have already showed their commitment to uphold the ideals of a public service mission by committing to one or more of the international declarations and conventions related to the protection and promotion of diversity and human rights.<sup>2</sup> However, the actual performance of the publicly-owned broadcasters in these countries has, to varying degrees, fallen short of these ideals. The problem is compounded by the lack of adequate regulation and/or lack of monitoring by appropriate regulatory bodies, in addition to the (near) absence of NGOs that can effectively monitor the national media and lobby for a better public service broadcasting system.

Usually, monitoring projects, in the conventional sense of the term, seek to hold the media accountable by comparing their actual output with the requirements of existing media laws, books of specifications (*cahiers des charges*), codes of ethics, and so on. For instance, a monitoring project might seek to find out if the national broadcasters are implementing the quota for national productions, or ensuring the impartiality of the news vis-à-vis candidates in election times, or applying the conditions related to content and programming as spelt

1 For a general overview of public service broadcasting, see Toby Mendel's: *Public Service Broadcasting. A comparative Legal Survey*. Kuala Lumpur: UNESCO, Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development, 2000. Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/mendel/inter\\_standards.html](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/mendel/inter_standards.html)

2 *The Declaration of Rabat, the Sana'a Declaration of 1999, and The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression.*



out in the books of specifications. The present study is undertaken with full awareness that the existing legal environment for most Arab public broadcasters is not sufficiently developed to make it possible to implement this type of approach. Moreover, the regulatory framework varies greatly from one country to the other. Indeed, the present project includes Arab countries which have detailed legal requirements related to content and others where the ruling elites still maintain state monopoly over the media and have not yet introduced (or implemented) audiovisual laws to liberalize and regulate the sector.

Consequently, the current study is to some extent designed to reflect the specific needs and concerns of civil society members and activists in the Arab world, by providing them with a variety of data on the state of public broadcasting in their own country so that they can effectively conduct efficient and constructive lobbying campaigns to improve its performance.

### Methodology

The methodology was specifically designed to help non-governmental and other organizations and concerned individuals in assessing the state of public television in the Arab world, and adopts a multi-dimensional approach throughout the study. This multidimensional approach, which consists of a variety of research methodologies adapted to each section/level of analysis of the comprehensive study, will allow stakeholders to understand the state of publicly-owned TV in the Arab world from a variety of independent, yet deeply related/intertwined levels or perspectives:

1. Understanding the nature of the regulatory environment for public television in the Arab World and the extent to which this environment is conducive to the emergence and operation of public service broadcasting which can be both accountable to the national population (in its diversity) and in tune with its various interests and needs.
2. Assessing, both at the micro and macro levels, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the actual output of public television and the extent to which its content reflects the values intrinsic to public service broadcasting.
3. Probing members of civil society in the 8 Arab countries, both with respect to their direct experience and relationship with publicly-owned TV, and their expectations and opinion vis-à-vis the role and performance of the latter.

### Outline and structure of the study

The purpose of the entire project is not to assess whether each country is providing public service broadcasting as described by existing laws, or to hold governments accountable for implementing their audiovisual laws. As explained earlier, often laws regulating PSB are non-existent to start with. The purpose, instead, is first to understand the existing regulatory framework with its strengths and weaknesses (Part 2), then to understand what kind of programs publicly-owned television is offering its national audiences and to assess whether this content reflects universally agreed upon public service ideals or not (Part 3). In Part 4, in-depth interviews are conducted with active, key members of civil society, in order to document their assessment of the performance of public TV in their own country.

### ***Level one: the legal and regulatory framework***

This part consists of a legal overview of the regulatory environment for existing public broadcasters in the 8 Arab countries included in the present study. This is an essential part of the study and its starting point: without knowledge of the laws that govern these operators and of their effectiveness (whether at the level of the legal text or its implementation), any study of the performance of PSB in the Arab World remains incomplete and “de-contextualized”. Most importantly, this overview of the regulatory framework can explain the great differences in the media landscape in the 8 Arab countries included in the present study. For instance, in the case of Morocco, not only do we find laws regulating the audiovisual landscape (both public and private), there is also a regulatory authority responsible for monitoring and regulating the media (*Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle*, HACA). By contrast, the broadcast media in Syria or Algeria are still entirely under state control with no serious intent, to date, to liberalize the sector despite the pro-democracy upheavals currently sweeping the Arab world.

It should be mentioned that this level of analysis, or Part 2 in this study, will consist of a mapping of the regulatory framework in each country separately, based on a common set of criteria for evaluation developed for all eight countries. Only in the concluding part of the regional study will there be an attempt to draw some comparisons with respect to the regulatory framework in the countries involved.

### ***Level two: analysis of content***

Once the assessment of the regulatory framework is completed, the next step (i.e. Part 3) is to understand the nature of the output of the existing public broadcasters, and the extent to which this output or content (in the form of various programs, genres, etc.) reflects public service ideals, even in those countries which do not have laws regulating or offering public service broadcasting to start with (in the present study, a distinction is made between “public broadcasting” and “public service broadcasting”- a conceptual distinction which will be reflected upon in the conclusion of the regional study).

In order to offer a comprehensive understanding of the content or output of public broadcasters in each country, three different yet complementary methods of analysis of television content were adopted:

1. Quantitative analysis of the totality of output during a given, normal period of seasonal programming (Part 3, Section A)
2. Quantitative analysis of evening television news (Part 3, Section B)
3. Qualitative analysis of information magazines (Part 3, Section C)

Considering the limitations of time and resources, and the fact that the present project is not exclusively a monitoring project in the traditional sense, a decision has been made to limit the period of content analysis applied to the evening news, and to extend the analysis to include a different program genre (i.e. the information magazines) while using a different method of textual analysis:

1. Prime time television news bulletins, which usually get the highest viewing rates and are considered by all Arab governments to be crucial for nation-building and control, were included in the analysis. A quantitative approach was applied to the study of news content in order to check the conformity of this content with the following public service ideals: diversity of opinions, pluralism of news agents/speakers (male or female, governmental and non-governmental, etc.), and coverage of various topics of interest to the public, in addition to coverage of all national geographical areas (urban and rural).
2. Considering the limitations of quantitative approaches in explaining the degree of bias or subjectivity in framing ideas and voices, a qualitative analysis of content was also conducted. However, instead of applying a different method of textual analysis to the same genre (i.e. the television news bulletins), which would have offered a more complete assessment of the evening news, the qualitative textual analysis was applied to a different, though equally popular and ideological TV genre: the information magazine (also commonly referred to as “talk show” in the Arab world). By using different methods of textual analysis (quantitative and qualitative), and by applying them to different genres of information programs (news bulletins and information magazines), it is hoped that a better, more complete assessment of the information-related content on public TV can be achieved.
3. Finally, realizing that effective assessment of the performance of publicly-owned broadcasters in the Arab world cannot be achieved by focusing on just two types of program genres, we have included a third aspect to the analysis of TV content: the quantitative study of the overall programming schedules by the Arab public broadcasters during a “normal” or “regular” period of the year (e.g. the month of Ramadan and the World Cup present an exceptional period with respect to scheduling, and had to be avoided). One normal week of programming in May 2010 was thus selected, where chances were that the full offering on a given day of the week (i.e. Monday) was going to be repeated, under normal times, every Monday of every week for at least an entire season of programming. Considering the difficulty of generalizing the findings of this section (due to the limited time period selected which cannot adequately reflect the yearly programming schedules), this part of the analysis of content cannot pretend to offer an exhaustive and definitive assessment of programming policies. Rather, the purpose is to test the extent to which the national, publicly-owned broadcasters are offering a wide range of programs (educational, informational, entertaining, and cultural) that cater to a variety of national audiences (religious, linguistic or ethnic minorities, children and youth, etc.) the way a public service broadcaster is supposed to do. It is hoped that such a (limited) quantitative assessment can provide media activists and members of civil society interested in promoting the ideals of PSB in their own countries with sufficient useful data to use for their own lobbying activities.

#### Level three: civil society assessment of PSB

The third level of the study (i.e. Part 4) seeks to document, through personal interviews, using a qualitative approach, the perception that various members of civil society have of the role and performance of their national, publicly-owned television. For that purpose, a number of key members in NGOs, trade unions, and other sectors of civil society were identified and interviewed. They are professionals (lawyers, engineers, doctors, etc.), academics, journalists, bloggers, and members of national non-governmental organizations that defend human rights in general (including women and children's rights). Exceptionally, a number of public officials and employees (even MPs) were included for their critical, "insider's" view and the rare insight they can offer about the operation and performance, but especially the shortcomings, of publicly-owned television in the Arab world. Indeed, their assessment not only confirmed the major findings of the present study (in Part 2 and Part 3), but also enriched our understanding of the nature and performance of public broadcasting in the 8 Arab countries.

## **2. Overview of the audiovisual regulatory framework**

### *2.a. Purpose of the section, conceptual framework, and methodology*

The present part of the regional study offers an overview of the regulatory environment in which public television operates in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia. More specifically, it seeks to document how the mission of public service with respect to broadcasting is understood and practiced by public operators in these countries, how it is defined and regulated in existing legal texts, and implemented and monitored by relevant public institutions and regulatory bodies.

Studies of Arab media which deal with both the regulatory environment and the content of these media (using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches) are practically non-existent. More common are studies which are focused on either one of these areas of analysis, and they usually deal with one country at a time. As a result, the assessment of the Arab media landscape in these studies is never comprehensive, often de-contextualized (in case the analysis of content is done without an assessment of the regulatory framework), or incomplete and disconnected from actual practice and performance (when assessment of Arab media laws is carried out without examining actual media content and the relationship between regulation and content). The present regional study of Arab public broadcasting seeks to fill a research gap in this respect, by offering a detailed, comprehensive, and comparative perspective on the state of public broadcasting in the Arab world: first, by including an overview of the legal framework with regard to broadcasting in 8 different Arab countries; second, by analyzing the output of these public broadcasters, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches; third, by documenting how key members of civil society in each country view public broadcasting in their own country.

This first part of the regional study focuses on the available laws which regulate the public television sector, and seeks to examine the extent to which the text of these laws and their implementation reflect the values of democracy and pluralism (with respect to setting up an independent regulatory authority, creating a transparent licensing system, introducing both positive and negative content requirements in order to serve various societal groups, etc.). Whenever possible, an assessment of the internal management and operation of

individual public broadcasters was also provided. This overview of the existing legal and institutional framework is a necessary step before undertaking an actual evaluation of the content of Arab public broadcasting (Part 3 of the study), considering the effect that regulation and management of this sector can have on its content.

The present overview of the regulatory framework consists of four parts:

1. General mapping of the legal framework that regulates audio-visual broadcasting in each country.
2. Assessment of the management, structure, and source of funding of the public broadcasters, and of the extent to which they are entrusted with a public service remit.
3. Identification of the various regulatory bodies and assessment of their powers, responsibilities, and the extent to which they are actually independent from government.
4. The state's commitment to introducing digital broadcasting.

## 2.b. *Broadcast laws*

### 2.b.1. Laws for public television

**Algeria:** State monopoly over broadcasting has been secured since 9 November 1967 and was later reinforced by successive pieces of legislation, including the Emergency Law introduced in the early 1990s (Presidential decree No. 92-44 of 9 February 1992).

To start with, the Information Law (*Code de l'Information*) of 1982, along with two other documents, clearly delineates the state policy vis-à-vis information. The Code of 1982 has severe restrictions on freedom of expression: Article 3, in an oxymoronic approach, stipulates that the “right to information is exercised freely within the limits of the ideological options of the country, its moral values and political orientation”.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, journalists' duties are more political than professional in nature: “Journalists exercise their profession in a responsible manner which aims at realizing the objectives of the revolution” (Article 35) and as part of a “militant action in line with the options laid out in the basic texts of the country” (Article 42).

Article 2 of the decree of 1 July 1986, which created the *Etablissement Public de Television* (EPTV, also known as ENTV), the entity responsible for the administration of the country's public television, stipulates that “the institution is under the tutelage of the Ministry of Information”. Other public channels include Canal Algérie (in French), A3 (in Arabic), TV AM (in the Tamazight language, since 2007), and TV-Coran.

The executive decree of 7 April 1992 reaffirmed state monopoly over “broadcasting and transmission, in Algeria and abroad, with all appropriate technical means...”.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are done by the author of the regional study.

**Egypt:** Television broadcasting began in 1961, and, along with radio, soon became an important tool for spreading Nasser's political influence both at home and abroad.<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), the sole authority responsible for radio and television broadcasting, was established in 1971. It operates under Law No. 13 of 1979, last amended by Law No. 223 of 1989. The ERTU consists of different sectors, some of which include radio, television, specialized and local channels, and deals with various parts of the production process. Other sectors may be established according to the needs of the business, based on a decision of the ERTU Board of Trustees.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Egyptian Constitution guarantees, in principle, freedom of expression (Articles 47 and 48), the emergency law (Law No. 158 of 1958, as amended by Law 37 of 1972 and Law No. 162 of 1985), the publication laws (particularly Law No. 148 of 1960, and Law No. 93 of 1995 as amended by Law No. 96 of 1996), and the Penal Code could be called upon in order to curb civil liberties.

**Jordan:** Jordan's publicly-owned television, Jordan TV, started broadcasting in 1968. It was more recently regulated by Law No. 35 of 2000 which set up a public institution called *mu'assasat al-iza'a wal television al-urdunyya* (the Jordanian institution for radio and television) in order to manage both public radio and television in the country. This public institution is also regulated by Law No. 71 of 2002 for the audio-visual media. According to Article 3 of Law No. 35 of 2000, the public institution for radio and television is independent both administratively and financially. However, this is hardly the case in practice, as we are going to see in section 2.c.1.

**Lebanon:** Prior to 1977, television broadcasting in the country was limited to two television stations which were entirely owned by the private sector (some of the shares were owned by British and French shareholders). In other words, there was no publicly-owned television in Lebanon. By 1995, the state had full ownership of Télé Liban (TL), following the introduction of the audio-visual law No. 382 of 1994 and the liberalization of the sector in the country. Law No. 382 of 1994 mostly addressed private broadcast media, and sought to regulate their license applications and their content. It imposed on private licensees several content requirements, many of which conformed to a mission of public service broadcasting (PSB). For instance, all private licensed broadcasters had to ensure universal access (i.e. cover the entirety of the Lebanese territory), had to promote national production, and to respect diversity of opinion and pluralism. The books of specifications (*cahiers des charges*) for each type of license contained quotas for different program genres, instructing licensees to allocate a specific number of hours for news, dramas, children programming, documentaries, and so on. Interestingly, the general content requirements in Law No. 382/94 applied to Lebanon's publicly-owned television station as well, whereas the books of specifications, with detailed quotas and specifications with respect

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2 Boyd, D. (1999) *Broadcasting in the Arab World: A survey of the Electronic Media in the Middle East* (3rd ed.) Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

3 Law No. 13 of 1979, amended by Law No. 223 of 1989. Website of the United Journalists Center <http://www.ujcenter.net>

to programming, only applied to private broadcasters. This meant that private television operators in Lebanon are theoretically and legally held to higher content standards than TL which is still operating in a vacuum, pending a decree regulating its content.<sup>4</sup>

**Morocco:** Morocco's public TV started broadcasting on 3 March 1962. The Moroccan audio-visual sector is currently regulated by Law No. 77-03 of 2005. It was voted for unanimously by both parliamentary chambers in November 2004, and was not subjected to serious public debate during parliamentary deliberations. Its text was promoted as having been the product of "royal will". Its preamble states that reform of the audio-visual sector "is a basic component of the general reform movement", especially with respect to the "consolidation of the values of liberty, pluralism, modernity, openness, respect of the dignity and rights of human beings", and so on. The preamble then goes on to add that the philosophical foundation of the law balances on the one hand the values of Islam, of constitutional monarchy, and the importance of national unity, and on the other hand the universal principles relating to human rights as recognized internationally. It reiterates the "strong royal will to develop the democratic path of the country by consecrating pluralism, consolidating the rule of law and the guarantee of exercise of freedom of expression and opinion, within a spirit of responsibility". However, as we are going to see in subsequent sections (see especially 2.c.2), the same law contains provisions that undermine the very principles of diversity and freedom it tries to uphold. It should be noted that this law also failed to introduce a 3<sup>rd</sup> category of broadcasting, in addition to the public and private ones, namely community broadcasting – an internationally recognized category for broadcasting which serves to empower local communities and cultures, but which none of the Arab audio-visual laws studied in this report explicitly refers to or includes.

The 3 public television operators in Morocco are: *Société Nationale des Radios et Télévisions* (SNRT), with its most important TV station, the generalist Al Aoula; *Société d'Etudes et de Réalisations Audiovisuelles* (SOREAD 2M or 2M), and Medi 1 Sat, which is a private TV station that became public in 2009.

**Palestine:** Until the advent of Palestine TV (also referred to as PTV) in 1994, the Palestinian people mostly had access to Israeli TV, which broadcasts news in Arabic for half an hour daily. Through the news bulletin and a few other programs in Arabic, Israeli TV was attempting to shape Palestinian public opinion. Despite the common belief (among Palestinians) that programming on Israeli TV was controlled by the Israeli secret services, large numbers watched it. It provided a regular diet of local news that greatly appealed to the Palestinian viewers, much unlike what they could get from Egyptian and Jordanian TV channels which could also be received in the Occupied Palestinian territories. These channels, however, rarely covered events within the Palestinian territories, and as a result were only watched for their drama series. In other words, until the early 1990s

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<sup>4</sup> Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2002). «From Defending "Cultural Exception" to Promoting "Cultural Diversity": European Cultural Policy and the Arab World», in *Quaderns del CAC*, issue focusing on globalization, the audiovisual industry and cultural diversity, published by the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC), Spain, No. 14, September-December 2002.



and the proliferation of Arab satellite channels, Israeli TV was the main source of news for Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian territories (MBC was the first Arabic channel broadcasting from England to capture the attention of Palestinian viewers).

On 6 July 1993, President Arafat issued a decree for the creation of PTV. Broadcasting started in Gaza on 30 September 1994. As for the satellite service, it was introduced by ministerial decree in Gaza on 1 July 1998. The trial broadcast took place in April 1999, and continued throughout the following 6 months, at the rate of 7 hours a day, until it became a full blown, 24 hour broadcast through Nile Sat. The Palestinian satellite service became so instrumental in documenting abuses by the Israelis that on 20 November 2000 Israeli planes raided the premises and entirely destroyed the facilities. Broadcasting resumed shortly after, following the merger of the terrestrial and satellite services under the common name Palestine TV.

With the exception of general provisions related to freedom of expression found in the Penal Code, the Press Law, and the Palestinian Basic Law of 2002, there was no legislation dealing in specific with public radio and television (terrestrial or satellite services) until 2010. Up until then, the operation of public broadcasters depended mostly on decisions by specific administrators who were in charge of these radio and television stations. This lack of regulatory framework led to internal struggles within these operators and accusations of corruption in their administration. According to the General Director of public radio and television Yasser Abed Rabbo, cases of corruption within the Radio and Television Committee (*hay'at al-iza'a wal television*) actually date back several years, because “this institution was not regulated by any financial or administrative system.”<sup>5</sup> Moreover, throughout this period, basic media liberties were not guaranteed, despite provisions to the contrary in the Basic Law of 2002 (Article 10).

The situation deteriorated during times of political crisis, such as when Hamas won the legislative elections in 2006, and Palestine became politically divided in 2007 (West Bank vs. Gaza), with Hamas taking over control of Gaza. The regulatory limbo lasted for several years, despite the fact that the public TV operators (terrestrial and satellite) were relying administratively on the president of the committee (i.e. *hay'at al-iza'a wal television*) and on upper level managers who retained the right to draw the policy, objectives, and priorities of Palestinian radio and television. Employees were treated as public employees, without any acknowledgment of the specificity of their work. They received the minimum wage, which negatively affected their commitment and dedication to the institution.<sup>6</sup> The employment conditions were so unattractive that many of them decided to work for other national and foreign media (only 6% of employees at PTV made more than 600 Euros per month).<sup>7</sup>

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5 See related Arabic article at <http://www.aman-palestine.org/arabic/Activities/Aman/2010/15042010.htm>

6 Imad al-Asfar, programming director at PTV, personal interview, 11 February 2011.

7 Report by *Al-hay'a al-falastiniyya almustakilla lihuquq al muwatan*, “*Television palestine wa qanat palestine al-fada'iyya: alidara wat-tamweel wa-syasa al-baramiyya*”, Palestine, May 2003.

The situation changed in 2010, date of the introduction of Presidential Decree No. 2 of 9 March 2010. The decree organized the administrative aspects of work within these public broadcasters, in addition to specifying some of their duties and responsibilities. It stipulated the creation of a general committee to run Palestinian radio and television: “*al-hay’a al-amma lil-iza’a wal television al-falestiniyya*” (also referred to here as *hay’a*). According to the same decree, this *hay’a* is dependent on the president of the PA and enjoys an “independent administrative and financial status”.

**Syria:** Since its inception, Syrian TV has been run on the one hand by a number of general principles cited in Decree No. 68 of 1951 which established the entity responsible for running public radio and television (*al mudiryya al amma lil iza’a wal television*), and on the other by administrative orders issued by the Minister of Information and the director of the *al mudiryya al amma*.

More recently, Legislative Decree No. 10 of 26/1/2010 was introduced, stipulating the creation of a new general committee to administer publicly-owned radio and TV called “*al-hay’a al’amma lil iza’a wal television*” (also referred to here as *hay’a*). This *hay’a* is “connected to the Minister [of Information]” and “enjoys ...financial and administrative status”, according to Article 2 of the legislative decree.

Currently, there are several public TV channels in Syria: the terrestrial Arabic - Al Aoula which is referred to as “Syrian TV” in the present study, Al-Thania (terrestrial, Arabic & English), Al-Fada’iyya al-Souriya (satellite, generalist), Syria Drama (satellite, specialized drama), Al-Taalimyya (satellite, educational), and Al-Ikhhbaryya al-Souriya (satellite, news). Although the latter was hailed by Syrian authorities as “independent”, soon after its launch it proved to be another mouthpiece for the government.<sup>8</sup>

**Tunisia:** In the absence of laws specific to the audiovisual sector, the broadcast media in Tunisia have been regulated by the Telecommunications Law with respect to frequency allocation (Law No. 2001-1 of 15 January 2001) and the Press Law with respect to content control (Law No. 1975-32, Official Gazette No. 29 of 28 April 1975).<sup>9</sup>

According to Articles 48, 50, and 51 of the Telecommunications Law, all broadcast and reception activities (whether public or private) are placed under the control of the ministers of Telecommunication, of National Defense, and of the Interior. As such, the political decision to open up the sector to private ownership does not reflect a withdrawal in terms of state control or a serious commitment to liberalize it.

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8 By way of example, in June 2011, the channel broadcast news about a demonstration in Damascus whose purpose, according to this new TV channel, was to thank God for sending down the rain, whereas the demonstration was reportedly staged in protest against the government. In another instance, some cyber activists tried to prove that some of the people interviewed by the station were not random, but carefully selected to echo the government’s stance. Check <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFzeDUh1vgE>

9 The Tunisian Press Law (Law No. 29, Official Gazette No. 1975-32 of 28 April 1975) available at <http://www.jurisitetunisie.com/tunisie/codes/cpresse/cpresse1000.html>  
The Tunisian Telecommunications Law (Law No. 2001-1 of 15 January 2001) available at <http://www.jurisitetunisie.com/tunisie/codes/telecom/telcom1000.htm>

Since its creation in 1957, the entity known as “*Radiodiffusion-Télévision Tunisienne*” (RTT), which became known in 1990 as « *Etablissement de la Radiodiffusion-Télévision Tunisienne* » (ERTT) has been in control of the audio-visual sector in the country.

Following the introduction of Law No. 2007-33 of 4 June 2007 to regulate public broadcasting institutions, ERTT was broken up into two different organizations: one overseeing Tunisian television broadcasting and the other radio broadcasting (Official Gazette No. 60 of 27 July 2007). Decree No. 2007-1868 of 23 July 2007 created and organized the administrative and financial aspects of “Tunisian television”, which became a public institution with “a non-administrative character” under the “tutelage” of the Minister of Communication.

By mid-2011, there were 9 public radios and two public TV stations: the national Tunisie 7 (which is included in the present regional study) and Tunisie Canal 21.

#### 2.b.2. Laws for private television channels

**Egypt:** Private broadcasting is a relatively new phenomenon in Egypt, dating back to the last decade. The state retains its monopoly over radio and television as per the ERTU Charter, which makes the ERTU the sole entity allowed to own a radio or television station in Egypt. In order to circumvent this “legal hurdle”, Egypt turned its Media Production City (MPC) into a “free zone” which is controlled by the General Authority for Investments and Free Zones. This means, among other things, that the entity responsible for regulating private broadcast stations lacks the needed expertise to do so (it should be noted that only private satellite stations have been licensed in the media free zone). Not only that, but interviews with members of the ERTU conducted for the purpose of this study (please see Part 4 on civil society) revealed that a good deal of the licensing process with respect to private media is political in nature and is done with the approval of the state security apparatus.

**Jordan:** Law No. 71 of 2002 regulates the audio-visual sector in Jordan, whether private or public. So far, the number of licensed private satellite stations in Jordan has reached 35. Thirteen out of the 35 licensed satellite operators obtained their license in 2010 and have not yet started broadcasting. The other 22 satellite stations are in operation, having been licensed after the setting up of the national Audio-visual Commission in 2003. Only one terrestrial station, ATV, was licensed, but it has not started broadcasting yet. It is worth noting that the licensed satellite stations do not broadcast news bulletins, although nothing in the audio-visual law prevents them from doing so. Only one cable operator exists, the Jordanian company for cable TV and Internet services, which obtained its license from the Commission responsible for regulating the telecommunications sector.

**Lebanon:** Although private TV broadcasting in Lebanon dates back to 1959, there was no law regulating the public or private sector until 1994, date of the introduction of audio-visual law No. 382 of 1994. This law ended state monopoly over the airwaves (it was the first to do so in the Arab World) and regulated the operation of private radio and television operators. As a result, dozens of terrestrial, private radio and TV stations were licensed in 1996, and most of them are still currently in operation.

**Morocco:** Law No. 7-03 of 2005 regulates all types of broadcasting, private and public (the liberalization of the sector started with Law No. 1-02-212 of 31 August 2002). It specifies the conditions to be fulfilled to obtain a license (Article 18). It contains provisions that limit concentration of ownership (a single owner cannot have more than 51% of the total shares), as well as cross-media ownership (shareholders cannot have shares in another enterprise with the same social objective). A book of specifications (*cahier des charges*), established by Morocco's regulatory authority (the HACA), determines the obligations of each licensed private operator.

So far, the HACA has licensed 17 private radio channels, some of them thematic, other regional. By contrast, not a single private TV station or generalist radio station has been licensed (originally, Medi 1 Sat obtained a private license, but this license was eventually changed into a public one when this private operator faced financial difficulties).

**Palestine:** The proliferation of private radio and television channels is characteristic of the audio-visual landscape in the Palestinian territories. Since the creation of the Palestinian Ministry of Information in 1993, several licenses for private (terrestrial) radio and TV operators were granted. Currently, 31 private TV stations are operating in the West Bank. Only one private TV station is licensed in Gaza, but it hasn't started operating yet. All these stations cover a limited part of the Palestinian territories (mostly cities). Most importantly, their licensing is not due to the existence of any audio-visual law. One satellite service is to be added to this landscape, the Al-Aqsa satellite channel, which is partially owned by Hamas, and which started broadcasting in 2006.

**Syria:** There was no law regulating private TV in Syria until 2011, date of the introduction of the new media law (Presidential Decree No. 108 of 2011), which allows for the licensing and operating of various private media in Syria (terrestrial and satellite broadcasting, press, etc.), but which has not yet been implemented.<sup>10</sup> Also very recently, the first law regulating parties in Syria was introduced by Legislative Decree no. 100 of August 2011, but has not been implemented yet, as the Baath party is still (the only party) in control in Syria.

The law regulating the printed press (Legislative Decree No. 50 of 2001) guaranteed freedom of the press, but did not apply it to broadcasting or the Internet. Legislative Decree No. 10 of 2002 allows for and regulates commercial, private radio stations, to the exclusion of private TV stations. However, according to Article 3 of Decree No. 40 of 2003 relating to investments in the Syrian free zone, a special committee (*al-mu'assasa al'amma lil manatek alhurra*) can oversee, among other things, investments in the administration and development of media cities and centers. As a result, only one private TV station, Dunya TV, was launched in 2007. It does not operate according to any media regulatory

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<sup>10</sup> The National Audiovisual Council of Syria was established by the presidential decree of 20 November 2011 but has no funds or operating structure, see <http://www.damaspost.com/محليات/الرئيس-الأسد-يصدر-مرسوماً-بتأليف-الجلس-الوطني-للإعلام.htm>  
Initial reactions to the new media law are available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2011/Aug-28/Syrias-Assad-issues-decree-on-media-law-SANA.ashx#axzz1jJ0XTh7w>

framework, but instead operates according to the law regulating the Syrian free zone, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economy. In other words, the Minister of Information has no formal or legal control over this private Syrian TV operator.

**Tunisia:** On 13 February 2004, the Tunisian public learnt, through the press, of the introduction of Tunisia's first private terrestrial TV station: Hannibal TV, which started broadcasting in 2005 and was followed in June 2008 by another private channel, Nessma TV. The Tunisian public neither knew how the application process was initiated, nor the basis on which the applications were processed and eventually granted to these two private operators. Eventually, it became known that several other applications for radio and television had been rejected (the Tunisian union of free radios or STRL estimated that 17 applications were submitted in May 2006). One such case involved Radio Carthage whose application, submitted since 1996, was never processed by the Ministry of Telecommunications. The applicant, Zied El-Heni, submitted a complaint in March 2004 with the administrative court (*Tribunal Administratif*), citing "abuse of administrative power", but to no avail. Another applicant, a member of the political opposition, Rachid Khechana, filed a similar complaint with the Ministry of Telecommunications on 17 March 2004. He is still waiting for a response from the Ministry. The case of Ahmed Bouazzi is even more startling: he submitted an application for a cultural and scientific radio called Numidia. One month later, the Ministry informed him that his application file was forwarded to the information office of the prime minister in order to be studied by qualified personnel, although no legal text stipulates that such a unit or office is authorized to issue broadcast licenses or to distribute frequencies. In sum, the entire licensing process is characterized by total opacity. Not only is the Tunisian citizen kept in the dark with respect to the licensing conditions, licensing authorities are not required by law to justify their decision when an application file is rejected. Indeed, the decision to license private operators seems to be based on political criteria (i.e. the pro-regime stance of the applicant). In other words, despite the liberalization of the sector, broadcasting continues to be tightly controlled by the state, and licenses are granted sparingly, unfairly, and without transparency.

## *2.c. Status of Arab public broadcasters*

### *2.c.1. Structure, management, and accountability*

#### *2.c.1.a. Structure and internal organization*

**Algeria:** The decree of 20 April 1991, which made the ENTV a public institution with a commercial character, placed it "under the tutelage of the authority designated by the head of state" (Article 2). The head of state also chooses the director general of the establishment.

The make-up of the *Conseil d'administration* or Board of Directors of ENTV does not guarantee its independence from government, since 6 out of its 9 members are government employees and representatives of governmental media (Article 15, Executive Decree No. 91-100 of 20 April 1991). The *cahier des charges* of ENTV, according to the decree of 20 April 1991, represented a move towards less state control back then: it required that ENTV programs reflect "the pluralist expression of different currents of thought and

opinion and the respect of the principle of equality of treatment, honesty, independence, and recommendations of the CSI” (Article 4). However, the subsequent introduction of the emergency law on 9 February 1992 suspended the requirements and stipulations of previous media laws, and subjected the public operators to complete state control.

In February 2011, probably in response to the wave of public protests and calls for more democratization which swept the Arab world, an announcement was made that a new organization chart for public broadcasters was being discussed at the Council of Ministers (or Cabinet), but so far there are no reliable news concerning this announcement nor has any serious follow up been documented.

**Egypt:** The formation and membership of the ERTU Board of Trustees is governed by various laws. According to Law No. 23 of 1989 and the amended Article 4 in Law No. 13 of 1979 which stipulates the creation of a Board of Trustees for ERTU, the Minister of Information supervises the ERTU and follows up on the implementation of its objectives and services. The modification of the ERTU Charter in 1989 increased the control of the Minister of Information over the ERTU and its Board, by making any decision of the Board ineffective unless approved by the Minister. Article 5, which deals with the specifics of the formation of the ERTU Board, gives the president of Egypt the power to appoint, upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister, the president of the board and to determine the duration of his/her term as well as his/her salary and compensation. The same article details the criteria for membership (board members should be public figures who come from diverse professional backgrounds). As per the 1989 amendment to the ERTU Charter, the Prime Minister issues the decrees that specify their appointment, their salary, and the duration of their term. The Minister of Information appoints the heads of the various ERTU sectors, and the latter are also ex-officio members of the ERTU Board. Among the responsibilities the ERTU Board is entrusted with, we find: developing the general policies of the ERTU, including its code of ethics; adopting the main strategies and plans to implement these policies; monitoring and evaluating the functions of the ERTU; preparing the annual budget; and approving the general programming schedule and the use of foreign content (Article 6).

With respect to training personnel, the ERTU Charter specifies, in its Article 3, that the ERTU has the authority to establish training centers to prepare staff and develop their technical skills. Although the ERTU does have an in-house training centre, interviews conducted for the purpose of the present study indicated dissatisfaction with the nature of the training offered to employees, because it is mostly theoretical and not geared towards the actual improvement of production quality.

**Jordan:** The Council of Ministers has the prerogative to issue all internal bylaws regulating the financial and administrative matters pertaining to the institution (i.e. Jordan TV or JTV).

JTV is run by a board of directors consisting of 9 members who are all appointed by the Council of Ministers, based on a recommendation by the the Prime Minister. Moreover, the chairperson of the board, who can be one of the serving ministers, is also appointed

by the Council of Ministers, based on a recommendation by the the Prime Minister. All 9 appointments have to be approved by the King (Article 6 of Law No. 35 of 2000 relating to Jordanian radio and television). The chairperson can be terminated by a decision of the Council of Ministers, based on a recommendation by the Prime Minister (Article 6, paragraph d). All these and related provisions make the board, and consequently the public institution it presides over, beholden to the government, and not independent of it.

Hiring of personnel does not proceed according to any open and transparent criteria.

**Lebanon:** In 1977, the Lebanese government acquired 50% of TL's shares and became involved in its management through the appointment of half of the members of the board of directors, including the president of the board. In 1995, all shares of TL became publicly-owned. Based on article 41 of the 1994 audio-visual law which required the government to reorganize TL through decrees to be issued by the Council of Ministers, the Council finally issued Decree No. 7576 of 8/3/2002, which sought to re-organize the company without changing its legal status. According to this latest decree, the board of directors should consist of two members and a president (instead of 6 members as was the case previously) who are all appointed (by decree) by the Council of Ministers, upon the recommendation of the Minister of Information. The president of the board also serves as director general of TL. The same decree specifies the term of the members of the board and their remuneration, and they can be relieved of their duty at any time by a decision of the Council of Ministers. The Minister of Information represents all shares that the state owns in TL and cannot transfer this prerogative to anyone else. His decisions with respect to TL shares have to be approved by the Council of Ministers. Until the writing of this report, a decade after the introduction of Decree No. 7576, the TL Board of Directors still consists of 6 members, as per the older bylaws. The justification (for not implementing Decree No. 7576) is that confessional balance and the need to represent all major confessions on the board have to be maintained: 3 Christian members (one Maronite, one Catholic, and one Greek Orthodox), and 3 Muslims (one Sunni, one Shi'ite, and one Druze). Thus, the term of the currently serving Board of Directors is actually expired since 2001, and no new board has been appointed due to the confessional tug of war. The Council of Ministers has the upper hand over the TL Board, appointing "loyal" members who are obliged to do its bidding, under the threat of being terminated at any moment, without any justification whatsoever to be offered by the Council of Ministers. Moreover, all appointments within TL are made according to confessional/political considerations and quotas, and not necessarily merit. In other words, the stronger the political and confessional backing one has, the better the chances of being employed at TL.

From a legal perspective, TL is a limited liability company under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Information who nonetheless cannot interfere in its day to day operation. The president of the board, if he or she wishes, can refuse to obey orders by the Minister of Information, unless they are approved of, through voting, by the board of TL itself (Article No. 157 of the Lebanese commercial law which regulates shareholding companies). In other words, the Board of Directors, theoretically, has quite unlimited powers and can function quite independently, except when decisions are made by the Council of Ministers

(which is represented by the Minister of Information). Again, it should be remembered that this “independence” is limited by the fact that the TL Board of Directors can be dissolved and replaced by another board, at any time, by a simple decision of the Council of Ministers.<sup>11</sup>

**Morocco:** Based on a recommendation by the audiovisual regulatory authority (*Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle* or HACA), and at the request of the King, the two companies SNRT and SOREAD 2M merged in 2006 in order to create a holding company responsible for public broadcasting.<sup>12</sup> The holding company manages a diverse number of activities: television, radio, production and broadcasting, advertising, marketing, etc. In order to establish managerial control, the King appointed a common director general for the two companies. Through this merger, it was believed that the two companies would increase their chances for success, while also maintaining their editorial independence. However, it seems that these structural reforms failed to achieve the desired result. Consequently, the government has promised to come up with a new reform strategy for this public sector.

**SNRT:** The board of directors is made up of 12 members, 10 of whom are representatives of the different ministries and public administrations, with a chairman appointed by the government. The other two members are internal members voted for by the employees. Moreover, the organization chart contains 10 departments or divisions, with no coherent set of rules concerning personnel and the management of human resources (HR). This has resulted in continuing conflicts, mostly between management and employees.

**2M SOREAD:** The board of directors is made up of 8 members. Only one of them is a representative of personnel with non-voting powers (observer status). The others are as follows: the chair of the board, two representatives from the Ministry of Finance, two representatives from the Ministry of Communication, the president of the public media sector, and a representative of Omnium Nord Africain, a leading industrial and financial group in Morocco.

The predominance of public officials within both boards is problematic, and can affect negatively the independence of these public operators, making them more likely to cater to government interest than to the public interest.

As for the training of personnel, it is provided within the SNRT, with a budget being reserved for this purpose, based on the awareness that audiovisual work requires a complex set of qualifications (technical, artistic, legal, financial, etc). The director of the board decides which training workshops to offer, based on needs identified by the SNRT. Articles 51 and 52 of the law describe the mechanism for training and developing personnel.

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11 Boulos, J.C (2007) *At-television rehla ilal jaheem*, 1st edition, Beyrouth: Dar an-nahar lil nashr.

12 Press Release, Rabat, February 13, 2006, the CSCA recommendation to the King with respect to the restructuring of the public audiovisual sector.



Unlike the case at SNRT, 2M SOREAD does not have a special law regulating the employment of staff, although its board of directors gave a recommendation to this effect in its meeting of 14 February 2006. Employees of 2M SOREAD are thus subject to the national labor law.

**Palestine:** Presidential Decree No. 2 of 9 March 2010 called for the creation of a board of directors for *al-hay'a al-amma lil-iza'a wal television al-falestiniyya* (or *al-hay'a*, the institution in charge of public radio and television). The board has, amongst other things, the duty to manage all financial and administrative affairs related to the *hay'a* and to decide upon its general policies and internal bylaws.

The same decree also calls for the creation of a board of trustees, whose members are people who are active in various fields (intellectual, religious, artistic, scientific, economic, etc.). However, the board of trustees has no executive powers, and its role is strictly advisory (with respect to the board of directors or the president of the PA). By contrast, the board of directors is given wide prerogatives when compared to the board of trustees. As a result, the board of directors plays a double role: it is entrusted with both deciding upon the general policies of the public broadcasters and executing them (i.e. administrative and financial duties). A more effective approach would have involved the separation of these two different functions: i.e. the *hay'a* should have been entrusted with administrative duties, whereas a board of advisors, separate from the *hay'a*, should have been entrusted with preparing the general guidelines and policies for PTV.

The decree fails to specify the exact number of the members of the board of directors. It mentions that the number of members can be anywhere between 9 and 13, and does not explain the criteria according to which a specific number should be chosen. Moreover, the criteria for membership do not require any expertise in the area of broadcasting (whether legal, technical, or otherwise). Members have to fulfill the same criteria as any other civil servant (i.e. members are not convicted of a crime, hold the Palestinian citizenship, have a record of good conduct, etc.). Members are nominated by the general supervisor of the *hay'a*. It should be noted that the appointment of the first Board of Directors did not respect the decree's conditions in this respect: 15 members were appointed (two above and beyond the legal limit), for a one year-term, renewable, instead of the legal 4-year term, renewable. This was done with the approval of the Palestinian president, without amending the presidential decree of 9 March 2010. As such, from a strictly legal perspective, it can be argued that the first Board of the *hay'a* was illegal, since a presidential approval or decision is not the equivalent of a presidential decree.

As for the chair of the board, also referred to more commonly as “general supervisor” (*mushref aamm*), he supervises the work of the *hay'a* as well as its management, and executes tasks required by the president of the Palestinian Authority (PA). He/she is not elected by the board members but appointed by the president of the PA, which means that not only the chair of the board, but this entire body is beholden to the president (who is also the president of the Executive Committee of the PLO), with all what this entails in terms of compromising the independence and impartiality of the *hay'a* responsible for running PTV. Decree No. 2 of 2010 also allows the president of the PA to remove from office, at

any time, a board member, without any justification. This means that the board is not given protection from political interference and cannot enjoy the stability and continuity necessary to run the *hay'a* independently and to implement policies to serve first and foremost the Palestinian public.

Another major weakness in the management and structure of the *hay'a* is the fact that Decree No. 2 of 2010 specifies that this body is dependent upon the president of the State of Palestine/the head of the Executive Committee of the PLO, and not just upon the president of the PA. This means that, in the event of new presidential elections, and in case a president of the PA is elected who is not at the same time the president of the PLO, this newly elected president cannot be the public authority responsible for the *hay'a*, despite the fact that the person who signed the decree creating the *hay'a* is none other than current President Mahmoud Abbas. This is especially problematic since Abbas signed the decree in his capacity as president of the PA and not of the PLO, and since the decree is part of national laws and not the laws of the PLO. In sum, the independence of the *hay'a* is compromised in two major ways: first by the fact that it is dependent on the president for its functioning and operation, and second by the fact that it is dependent on the president but only when he or she is also president of the PLO, which eventually makes it dependent on a single party in the country, and not on a publicly elected president or the 132 members of the legislature.

The *hay'a* is actually dependent in more than one way on the president of the PA. To start with, according to Article 2 of Decree No. 2 of 2010, the *hay'a* is “attached” to the office of the president. According to Article 5, the board of advisors/trustees is appointed by the president, and Article 7 states that appointment of the board of directors and the chair of the board, who is also the general supervisor (*mushref aamm*), is also done by the president. As for Article 15, it states that the president issues all rules and regulations pertinent to the implementation of the decree.

In sum, the *hay'a* is entirely dependent on the president: he is responsible for all appointments, bylaws, and internal rules regarding its operation. This means that amending these bylaws will require a presidential decree, thus making the president the ultimate authority in control of the *hay'a*. What would have helped introduce a measure of independence with respect to the management of public radio and television is the provision that the bylaws of the *hay'a* be approved by the country's parliament/legislative body, and not the president of the PA.<sup>13</sup> Although no legislative body existed at the time of signing Decree No. 2 of 2010, such a provision would at least have given parliament the ability to play this role the moment such a body was introduced.

Despite the weaknesses in the role and make-up of the *hay'a*, the act of creating a board of directors, in and of itself, can be seen as an improvement when compared to the previous situation: for the first time since its introduction, PTV is not run by one person but by a

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13 Imad al-Asfar, program director at PTV, personal interview, February 11th, 2011.

group of people (i.e. the Board of Directors). This can, to some extent, reduce interference by politicians and high-ranking officials in the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) who were treating PTV as if it were the private television channel of the PLO.

As the general supervisor (chairman of the board) of PTV, Yasser Abed Rabbo publicly stated on 14 May 2010 that “the phase following the issuing of the Presidential Decree is a new phase and we have embarked on a new challenge today, i.e. the first real board of directors for running this institution as a public institution, with great transparency... enjoying openness and diversity”. He also added that PTV is an independent institution and will not be a mouthpiece for government.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, following the introduction of the first board of directors, there was a noticeable improvement in the content of PTV with respect to pluralism and diversity of views, and a decrease in pro-PLO bias. The shift was such that some PLO members demanded the removal from office of the general supervisor of PTV, Yasser Abed Rabbo, under the pretext that he has been trying to exclude the PLO from PTV.

**Syria:** Since 26 January 2010, *al hay'a al'amma lil iza'a wal television* (or *hay'a*) has replaced *al mudiryya al amma lil iza'a wal television* (Article 3, Legislative Decree No. 10 of 2010). This new administrative body has specific objectives with respect to public radio and television, and is helped in achieving them by the television and radio directorates in Syria (*al-mudiryyat al amma lil television* and *al-mudiryyat al-amma lil itha'a*). To date, this new administrative body has no legal framework or internal bylaws regulating its operation. Moreover, in the last 60 years or so, Syrian TV has been run by a number of general principles cited in the decree which established *al mudiryya al amma lil iza'a wal television* (Law No. 68 of 1951), and administrative orders which acquired the status of internal bylaws and which are issued by the Minister of Information and the director of the *al mudiryya al amma*. In other words, transparency and independence have not characterized the management and operation of Syrian TV, a situation that continued even after the introduction of Legislative Decree No. 10 of 26/1/2010, as other sections of the study will show. Although current discussions are underway concerning the internal bylaws of this committee (or *hay'a*), its operations remain under the control of the Minister of Information, since Article 15 of the related decree stipulates that the internal bylaws of the *hay'a* are issued based on a decision by the Minister.

As for the specific administrative structure and internal organization of the *hay'a*, it consists of a board of directors with 14 members, and is presided by the Minister of Information himself. Moreover, six members are nominated by the Minister of Information, with one member representing the Ministry of Telecommunication and another one the Ministry of Finance. In sum, the board is almost entirely beholden to the government, mostly through the intermediary of the Minister of Information. The latter also presides over the advisory

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<sup>14</sup> See the complete text of the article “From now on Palestinian TV will not be a mouthpiece of government”, at <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2010/05/14/149286.html>

board, which includes, in addition to the general manager of the *hay'a*, 5 experts in the field. In sum, the managerial structure of the *hay'a* does not guarantee its independence from government.

There is also no department for human resources (HR) at Syrian TV. Instead, HR and personnel issues are dealt with based on unwritten administrative practices and procedures introduced since the inception of this public television, and which have acquired the force of law.

There is also no training and workshops offered to personnel at Syrian TV. Instead, the Ministry of Information conducts some workshops about professional reporting and sends out invitations to attend these workshops to high-level employees at the *hay'a*, including some from Syrian TV, considering that they are all government employees. The new law of 2010, which introduced the *hay'a*, requires in Article 3b, paragraph 8, the setting up of a centre for training. However, at the time of writing, this had not taken place yet.

**Tunisia:** According to Decree No. 2007-1868 of 23 July 2007, a public entity called “la Télévision Tunisienne” (Tunisian TV) was created, and placed “under the tutelage of the ministry in charge of communication” (Article 1). Moreover, Tunisian TV was run by a board of directors whose chair/president was appointed by decree by the Ministry of Communication (Article 4). The Board consisted of 10 members, all of whom came from the public sector and were also appointed by decree by the Ministry of Communication: 8 members represented various ministries and the remaining 2 represented Tunisian radio and the national broadcasting office (Article 5). The Board delegated to its president “all the necessary prerogatives which would allow him (sic) to run the Tunisian television, in conformity with applicable laws” (Article 4). Chapter IV of the law details the extent of this “tutelage”: the Minister of Communication controls the institution’s finances, follows up on management and day to day operation, approves of programming, has access to deliberations by the board, in addition to controlling recruitment and pay raises and promotions (Article 16).

### ***2.c.1.b. Funding***

**Algeria:** Algeria’s public broadcaster follows a hybrid system whereby some of the funding is commercial, relying on advertising revenues, and some of it is public, whereby citizens are charged on their electricity bill, of which 10% goes to fund ENTV. Still, the budget of ENTV remains minimal when compared to other competing foreign TV stations: according to a confidential internal audit report prepared in 2004, the budget of ENTV in 1998 was 5.7% of that of Al Jazeera, 2.5% of Egypt TV, 3% of France 2, 2.7% of France 3, and 16% of M6.

In the early 1990s, ENTV was mostly dependent on state funding: 6% of its funding came from advertising, 21% from the license fee charged on the electricity bill, and 73% from the state. By 2006, advertising became the main source of revenue (50%).

Whereas ENTV promotes state propaganda in the news and political programming, the commercial aspect of ENTV has seriously affected its public service mission in terms of promoting national heritage and culture. In order to face the fierce competition from foreign channels such as Al Jazeera, MBC, and TF1, ENTV started relying heavily on imported entertainment programs and the transmission of football matches, all at the expense of promoting national productions.<sup>15</sup> For the 2010 World Cup, for instance, the Algerian public TV was the only Arab TV to buy the exclusive right to retransmit the live matches, which happened at a great financial cost to this national operator.

**Egypt:** Articles 16 to 27 of the ERTU Charter deal with sources of funding for the ERTU. Article 18 stipulates that the ERTU shall have an independent annual budget, issued by presidential decree. According to Article 20, the ERTU's income consists of: revenues from fees prescribed by law, funds allocated by the state, subsidies and grants, loans, and profits from companies owned by the Union.

More specifically, Article 24 states that the government shall decide annually upon the amount to be allocated to the ERTU, and deposit it in the latter's account at the Central Bank of Egypt. Considering that part of the ERTU annual budget, as well as the salaries and compensation of all members of the Board of Trustees, come from the government, it can be said that, effectively, no entity within the ERTU has financial autonomy. Considering that no fees are imposed on TV users, other sources of funding exist as well. They include, but are not restricted to, advertising and the marketing and sale of radio and television programs and shows. It should be added that the ERTU budget is not made public.

**Jordan:** The budget is approved by the Council of Ministers, based on the law regulating JTV. One of the main sources of funding for JTV is the yearly national government budget approved by the parliament.

The institution also needs the approval of the Council of Ministers when accepting donations. Moreover, the Council of Ministers decides upon the tax to be levied on ownership of TV sets (Article 14 of the law regulating JTV). In order to help finance JTV, each household is charged one Jordanian Dinar (c. one Euro) for the "ownership of a TV set", to be added to the monthly electricity bill.

The budget of JTV in 2010 was the equivalent of 18.7 million Euros. It was the same amount allocated in 2009, knowing that the state is able to levy only 1.5 million Euros per year through license fees paid by Jordanian households (1.5 million is the official number of households in Jordan, according to the Bureau of Statistics). As such, JTV is hardly independent of government, as it needs the approval of the Council of Ministers for the budget allocation.<sup>16</sup>

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15 Cheurfi, A. (2010), "La presse algérienne. Genèse, conflits et défis". Alger: Casbah Editions.

16 This information is derived from statements by the former CEO of JTV, Jareer Maraka, (<http://almanahnews.com/newss/news.php?c=117&id=26611>). Maraka was removed from office and replaced by former Information Minister Saleh al-Kallab, who was named interim CEO and Chairman of the Board in May 2010.

Other sources of funding include: advertising, returns on the various services offered by this public institution (production, engineering, and administrative services), income generated by the sale of various TV programs, investments, and so on.

JTV employs 1524 people, in addition to 200 free lancers, according to former General Manager Jareer Maraka. This public institution spends in excess of 95% of its budget on salaries and basic operating expenses, according to then Minister of State for Media and Communication Nabeel al-Shareef.<sup>17</sup>

**Lebanon:** A report approved by the Council of Ministers in 2007 showed the extent to which TL was indebted to both the public and private sectors. The report also showed that, between 1990 and 2007, the state contributed 123 billion Lebanese Pounds (c. 82 000 000 \$) to cover salaries and operating costs. Moreover, since 1978 the state has increased the capital of the company by 83 billion L.L (c. 55 333 333 \$). According to the report, although most debt to the private sector was taken care of, 7 million dollars in private sector debt was still outstanding.<sup>18</sup>

To date, TL has no source of funding except (meager) contributions by the government. The Lebanese government is also allocating 300 000 dollars monthly (3 600 000 dollars per year) in order to cover some of TL's expenses, as part of the budget of the Ministry of Information and not of any budget specific to TL. This monthly budget barely equals the bi-weekly budget of any of the other private TV operators in the country.<sup>19</sup> In February 2001, the Council of Ministers decided hastily to shut down the operation of TL and lay off all its employees due to the great financial debt the company was in. The financial problem at TL, it should be noted, was greatly exacerbated by the fact the TL was suffering from a surplus of employees, whose number exceeded 500. The indemnities paid to lay off employees only served to add to the financial burdens of the company. The decision to shut down TL was reversed shortly after, on 25 May of the same year, less than 3 months after it was made, and coincided with the celebration of the resistance (against Israel) and the newly introduced Liberation Day holiday. This temporary closure allowed the government to reduce the financial burden of TL: only 200 employees were rehired for lower pay and without any of the privileges enjoyed by previous employees (e.g. being paid 14 months a year, receiving social benefits, etc).

The new employment package prompted the union for TL employees to repeatedly threaten the administration with strikes unless new internal bylaws were introduced to guarantee the rights of TL employees. After a strike was announced on 12/1/2009, the Minister of Information back then, Tarek Mitri, intervened with the union and promised to look into its demands, and a settlement was reached.<sup>20</sup> Although not all issues were

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17 See full article in Arabic, 21 May 2011, at <http://www.eyconmediajo.net/?p=3892>

18 Cabinet Decision No. 85 of 27 August 2007, in which the Council of Ministers accepted the information minister's report about the situation of TL.

19 Figures quoted by Wassef Awada, the assistant to TL's general manager, in an article published by the *Al Balad* Lebanese daily, 28 June 2009.

20 Lebanese daily *An-Nahar*, 6 February 2009.

resolved, some basic demands were met. The union is currently seeking ways to guarantee more rights for TL employees, such as university education benefits, so that TL employees can enjoy the same rights in this respect as employees in other public sectors.<sup>21</sup>

**Morocco:** The Moroccan public operator is a hybrid system with multiple sources of funding: first, there is the monthly 2 Euro license fee, which is levied as part of the water and electricity bill of each household, 40% of which goes to fund public TV (the other 60% funds national cinema). Other sources of funding include budget allocation by the government, advertising revenues, and revenues from the sale of programs.

Since 31 December 2007, the state acquired 71.71% of the capital of SOREAD in order to save the floundering institution. Consequently, the state injected significant amounts of money (216 846 500 DH or 21 684 650 Euros) in addition to annual subsidies which, in 2007, reached a total of 1.12 billion DH (or 112 million Euros). Despite the state subsidies and significant advertising revenues, the financial status of the company remains shaky.<sup>22</sup>

**Palestine:** According to Decree No. 2 of March 2010, the *hay'a* (i.e. the committee responsible for running Palestinian radio and television) enjoys both financial and managerial independence, although, according to the same decree, its yearly budget is part of the general state budget. Other sources of revenues are also enumerated, such as donations and revenues for services rendered (prior to the issuance of the decree, the budget of PTV depended on two main sources: funding from the office of the president of the PA, and a share of the yearly state budget). There are no figures available in terms of the actual size of the yearly budget for PTV. However, statistics published in a report prepared by a Palestinian NGO for human rights indicated that, between 2001 and 2003, the yearly budget was close to 10 million dollars, one third of which went to cover salaries.<sup>23</sup> There are no advertising revenues since there are no commercial ads on PTV, only public service ads by national NGOs.

**Syria:** The major source of funding for the public Syrian TV comes from the yearly state budget, a part of which is allocated to the *hay'a al-amma* based on a decision by the Minister of Information and following the approval of the Ministry of Finance (Article 10, Legislative Decree No. 10 of 26/1/2010). For the year 2010, the budget of the *hay'a al-amma* was the equivalent of 87 million Euros, and the share of Syrian TV in 2009 was the equivalent of 9.5 million Euros. There is no information available concerning the detailed allocation of these budgets.

Other sources of funding include the leftover money from the previous fiscal year, advertising, returns on investments, selling of programs, and donations.

**Tunisia:** Law No. 79-66 of 31/12/1979 introduced the license fee in order to provide funding for public radio and television: citizens are charged on their gas and electricity bill, and the amount is calculated based on their consumption of electricity.

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21 Lebanese daily *As-Safir*, 28 February 2009.

22 The Court of Auditors' report is available at: <http://www.courdescomptes.ma/>

23 Report on PTV and Palestine Satellite Channel available in Arabic at: <http://www.ichr.ps/pdfs/sp22.pdf>

Article 5 of Law No. 2007-33 enumerates the various sources of revenue for the public audiovisual sector (loans, donations, state subsidies, etc.).

### ***2.c.1.c. Transparency and accountability***

**Jordan:** Lack of openness and transparency characterizes most decisions by the administration at JTV. Information relating to its internal operation and management is simply not available to the public. Even the website lacks some of the most basic types of information, such as the seasonal programming schedules. However, as is the case with any publicly-funded government institution, JTV can be submitted for scrutiny by parliament which can, theoretically, hold the Council of Ministers accountable for the decisions it makes with respect to overseeing the administration of JTV.

**Lebanon:** To date, there are several loopholes in the management of TL. The Board of Directors retains the exclusive power to decide upon rewards and promotions, without even consulting with upper management or unit managers. The organization still lacks an organizational chart and a pay scale. The lack of job descriptions has created an overlap in duties and friction among employees. Perhaps Article 10 of the internal bylaws is among the most problematic unsolved issues. According to this article, employees are promoted according to “criteria decided upon by the board”. Not only are these criteria unclear and unknown, but there is no guarantee that they will be applied with neutrality and transparency, and can be open to interpretation and exploitation by the board. Another problematic article is Article 4, according to which no new position can be filled unless there is vacancy and a special budget is allocated for it. This article in effect puts a cap on hiring: any new position needs to have the government’s approval for the budget allocated for it, which is hard to achieve knowing the ongoing dire financial situation at TL. From the perspective of the management, restricting new employment is important as this will prevent a repeat of the 2001 crisis with respect to over-employment.<sup>24</sup> Lately, as a result of the government’s new employment policy at TL, management has resorted to contractual and free-lance employment, knowing that these contracts can be easily terminated, which turns the situation of many contractual employees into a precarious one.

**Morocco:** The *cahiers des charges* of both public broadcasters (Article No. 161 for SNRT and Article No. 43 for 2M) require them to make public annual reports that document their programming and financial activities. Not only do these reports have to be publicly accessible, this has to be done free of charge. According to these articles, the reports must provide “all necessary information, in terms of the number of broadcast shows and the volume of broadcasting by category or investments made, in order to demonstrate adherence to the requirements set up in the *cahiers des charges*”. The articles also require the publication of the volume (i.e. in terms of duration) of each category of programs which is broadcast; the total amount of investments in production, co-production, and the acquisition of national audio-visual productions and films; the efforts deployed in order to promote national heritage and cultural and linguistic diversity; and the investments made in order to train and develop personnel.

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<sup>24</sup> *As-Safir* daily newspaper, 28 February 2009.



It should be noted that both public broadcasters have failed to fulfill the requirement to make public the reports about their annual activities. Indeed, since both broadcasters became invested with a public mission, they have never published these reports. Neither the Ministry of Communication nor the HACA have requested compliance with this requirement. It should also be noted that it was not possible to obtain information concerning programming obligations and decisions (“*contrats programmes*”) at SNRT and 2M for the purpose of this study, although both are public institutions funded with public money, which raises serious issues concerning the transparency in management of these public operators.

**Palestine:** There are no clear criteria and transparent procedures for hiring and promotion of staff at PTV, and current practice is based on clientelism (closeness to the PLO), especially with respect to upper level management. By the end of 2010 there were still no internal bylaws to regulate the work and responsibilities of the *hay’a* in charge of public radio and television. Similarly, the various departments within PTV are still functioning without internal bylaws that can delineate their duties and operational procedures. Moreover, public TV in Palestine (both terrestrial and satellite) lacks a production unit or department. Considering the lack of bylaws and oversight over the various departments, it is very difficult to assess the performance or to identify problems with respect to operating procedures within this public institution. Finally, in the absence of proper control by the department for human resources, a number of employees at PTV report to work in the morning but then leave the institution soon after, often to work for other (foreign) agencies or national newspapers. According to the programming director at PTV, Imad al-Asfar, who was interviewed on 11 February 2011, private consultancy companies have been commissioned in order to prepare by-laws for the various departments at PTV.

**Syria:** Transparency in Syrian TV management is totally lacking, considering that decisions are made single-handedly by some powerful individuals within this public institution. Such decisions relate to the transfer, promotion, and rewarding of employees and the selection of who is eligible for travel and professional training. Moreover, the decisions of the *hay’a* in charge of managing the TV are not made public or visible on its website. Indeed, access to these decisions is only possible for those who are affected directly by them, and only so with the prior consent of the general manager of the station – a built-in bureaucratic mechanism which acts as an obstacle for those employees with job-related grievances.

Article 70 of the Syrian Constitution stipulates that members of parliament (*majles a’shaab*) are allowed to question the performance of ministers and ministries. The *hay’a al-amma lil iza’a wal television*, responsible for managing public radio and TV, is a government institution accountable to parliament, just as the Minister of Information is. However, there is no parliamentary precedent whereby either the general director of Syrian TV or the Minister of Information were ever questioned by parliament. By contrast, some sort of “accountability” occurs outside the walls of parliament, based on individual decisions by the Minister, such as the decision to remove from office the general director of Syrian TV, or some lower echelon directors at the station. It should be noted here that, in light of the

absence of job descriptions for all employees at Syrian TV, and in the absence of internal bylaws for the *hay'a*, any director who commits professional mistakes can easily transfer blame onto lower-level employees and thus eschew responsibility.

There is an office for internal investigation whose responsibility is to deal with both internal and external complaints (the complaints are received first by the general director who then forwards them to the appropriate office or section). However, due to widespread corruption and nepotism, very few employees ever dare to file a complaint, and there are cases when such complaints affected these employees negatively (e.g. by being transferred to other departments or fired).<sup>25</sup> Moreover, due to the corruption plaguing the judiciary in Syria, there is no higher legal authority that Syrian citizens can resort to in order to redress a wrong inflicted upon them within any of the Syrian public institutions.

## 2.c.2. Public service obligations and duties

**Algeria:** Between 1990 and 1992, the country experienced a short-lived democratic phase which reflected positively on the media. A new media law was enacted, Information Law No. 90-07 of 3 April 1990, and soon after the “*Conseil Supérieur de l'Information*” or CSI was introduced by Executive Decree No. 91-100 of 20 April 1991. As a regulatory body, the CSI was entrusted with guaranteeing the “pluralism and independence of information” of the public broadcaster or ENTV (*Entreprise Nationale de Télévision*) and with giving it a margin of autonomy in terms of programming and production. The board of directors of ENTV had, according to Article 7, to “safeguard the independence of the public service mission of the station and to respect the guidelines of the *cahiers des charges*”. The *cahiers des charges* of ENTV, according to the decree of 20 April 1991, also represented a move towards less state control: they had to guarantee “the pluralist expression of different currents of thought and opinion and the respect of the principle of equality of treatment, honesty, independence, and recommendations of the CSI” (Article 4).

All these positive reforms were swept away when the Emergency Law was introduced in February 1992. Moreover, both the Algerian Code of Ethics, established by the national union of journalists on 13 April 2000, as well as the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Ethique et de la Déontologie*, in charge of its implementation, have failed to guarantee freedom of expression to journalists and to protect them from state harassment and persecution.<sup>26</sup>

**Egypt:** Article 2 of the ERTU Charter (Law No. 13 of 1979 last modified by Law No. 223 of 1989) deals with the ERTU's role with respect to broadcasting content. It lists 13 objectives, of which the 3rd (i.e. paragraph 3) can be seen as a blueprint, albeit an incomplete one, for a public service mission:

Support the spread of knowledge; create and provide programs oriented towards a wide range of subjects, especially in relation to education, humanitarian disciplines, and civilization, for the benefit of a cross-section of the Egyptian society; and,

<sup>25</sup> Interview with an anonymous employee at Syrian TV, 14 December 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Full text of the Algerian code of ethics and duties of the ethical council responsible for enforcing it are available at: <http://lexalgeria.free.fr/com.htm>

dedicate specific programs for the development of different population groups, including children, adolescents, young men and women, professionals, and farmers. In return, this shall promote the social welfare and wellbeing of the society, as well as the family stability and coherence.

Considering the general nature of these objectives (paragraph 2 of Article 2 speaks of “maintaining the human dignity and freedoms”), and in the absence of related books of specifications which expand on and interpret these general guidelines (e.g. allocating quotas to different program genres and audiences), these content provisions and “ideals” are simply a form of lip service to existing international norms and expectations. Indeed, the statistical results of the content analysis included in the present study (Section 3.A.) demonstrate the extent to which the ERTU has actually failed to translate these general public service objectives into actual programs.

The ERTU Code of Ethics leaves no doubt as to what the actual role of the ERTU is with respect to broadcasting content: it is a detailed list of prohibitions, 33 in all, with each one starting with the ominous phrase “it is prohibited to broadcast...”.<sup>27</sup> While some “prohibitions” are quite universal in their attempt to maintain human dignity in general, and seek to protect children and people with disability in particular, in addition to preventing the broadcast of racist and discriminatory content (based on ethnicity, class, and religion), the overwhelming majority of the prohibitions seek to protect the interests of the power elites and to stifle critical views vis-à-vis their performance. Perhaps the exhortation to avoid broadcasting “any program that criticizes other broadcast programs” is the most revealing element of this code of ethics whose main purpose is to stifle criticism in all its aspects (including media self-criticism) – an endeavor which radically counters the precepts of any truly democratic project. In sum, the ERTU Code of Ethics fails to offer useful tips to media professionals about how to balance the need to inform and educate and to express one self freely with the need to preserve human dignity, privacy, and so on (a balancing act at the heart of journalistic ethical thinking). Worse yet, it works to effectively curb freedom of expression, leaving a very small margin for maneuvering if one were to abide by all its articles. As one media analyst put it: “Restrictions like these make it all but impossible to risk transmitting television broadcasts live.”<sup>28</sup>

**Jordan:** JTV is dependent, for its editorial policy, on government policy, since it is bound, according to Article 5 of Law No. 35 of 2000 regulating this public institution, to operate according to the “media policy and national media plans of the State”. These “media policies and plans” are usually announced by the Prime Minister, in what is commonly known as *khitab al-takleef* or the speech that details the government’s platform, and has to be approved by the King when a new government is formed. The values to uphold in such a speech are usually derived from a combination of royal and legal precepts, such as the 2003 “royal vision” summarized in the document for Jordanian media (or *wathiqat al’ulam al’ordom*); the Jordanian Constitution; Law No. 35 of 2000 regulating JTV; and audiovisual

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27 ERTU Code of Ethics available at <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring05/ERTU.html>

28 Naomi Sakr (2000), “Optical Illusions: Television and Censorship in the Arab World” in *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, No.5, Autumn-Winter 2000, <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall00/sakr2.htm>

law No. 71 of 2002. The first two of these documents emphasize the importance of guaranteeing freedom of expression and promoting and respecting diversity of opinion. However, they are contradicted by the latter two legal texts, which contain several restrictive measures that curb diversity of opinion and freedom of expression. For instance, Article 3 of the audiovisual media law stipulates, among other things, that licensed operators should commit “not to broadcast” anything that might “threaten national unity or incite to terrorism or racial and religious divisions or hurt the relationship of the Kingdom with other states”. Licensed broadcasters should also “refrain from broadcasting any subject or economic commentary which might affect the soundness of the economy and national currency”. Obviously, not all content provisions in this law are problematic, and some of them are actually in tune with international PSB standards with regards to respect of diversity of opinion, committing to professional standards, and promoting national production. However, the vague provisions with respect to “national unity”, “relationship with other states”, and the inability to criticize the economy and the national currency are very problematic. Similar to the case in Lebanon, these content restrictions can be used and abused to curb practically any speech that the powers that be deem critical of their own performance, even if such speech is in the interest of the Jordanian people and reflects the different currents of thought that exist in Jordanian society. Indeed, various restraints on freedom of expression were documented in national reports about media in Jordan for the year 2010.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, JTV is operating without a code of ethics.

**Lebanon:** Considering that TL is the national, publicly-owned television station, bylaws and regulations specifying the duties and objectives to be achieved through its broadcast operations should normally exist. However, Decree No. 1095 of 22/3/1978, which approved of the internal operating procedures for this organization, did not mention anything with respect to TL’s mission and objectives. A review of the various internal bylaws that regulate the operation of TL also shows that no specific requirements exist for TL in terms of broadcasting content. Indeed, since the passing of the 1994 audiovisual law, TL has been regulated by the same general requirements that this law imposes on private operators (as long as these requirements do not contradict with legal texts regulating its own operation). It should be emphasized that this law was introduced in order to liberalize the sector and to regulate the operation and content of private broadcast media, and that only one article, Article 41 in Chapter 9, deals with the status of TL. According to this article, “the monopoly status of TL over television channels is cancelled” (Article 41, parag. 1), and “the government is entitled to reorganize TL by decrees issued by the Council of Ministers based on a recommendation by the Minister of Information and the Minister of Finance” (Article 41, parag. 3). Once again, a golden opportunity to revisit the role and function of this public television in post-war Lebanon was missed, and TL is, in terms of regulation, treated like any other private broadcaster in the country. Article 1 of Law No. 382 of 1994 stipulates that “the purpose of the present law is to regulate television and radio broadcasting, regardless of the technology used, regardless of status and name,

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<sup>29</sup> *The state of media freedoms in Jordan 2010: annual report* available at <http://www.cdfj.org/look/PDFs/Media%20Freedom%20Status%20in%20Jordan%202010-Ar.pdf>

and to regulate all matters pertaining to this type of broadcasting”. This means that TL is subjected to Law No. 382 and is regulated by it, particularly with respect to the general content-related requirements found in Article 7 of the law. These are:

1. The broadcaster should respect the human person, the freedom of others and their rights, the pluralist character of thought and views, the objectivity of the news, youth, public order, and the needs of national defense and general interest.
2. The broadcaster commits to the development of national industry, specifically national audio-visual production.
3. The broadcaster seeking a license has to abide by the quantity of national production in all program genres, as specified in the book of specifications relative to each type of broadcasting license.
4. The broadcaster commits not to make, directly or indirectly, any financial gain not related to the nature of its work.
5. The broadcaster commits not to broadcast anything that might lead to the promotion of relations with the Zionist enemy.

Whereas TL has to abide by the same general requirements imposed on licensed private broadcasters, unlike the latter it does not have to abide by the *specific* content requirements found in the books of specifications (*cahiers des charges*), and which are part and parcel of the licensing process for private channels. Indeed, private broadcasters have a detailed breakdown of the number of hours for each program genre that they have to locally produce and broadcast per year, and the type of audiences that they have to target through their programming. By contrast, TL is not bound by any of these specifications or conditions which, ironically, require licensed operators to fulfill a public service remit.<sup>30</sup>

Almost two decades after the passage of Law No. 382/94, no decree organizing the role and mission of TL has been issued, as stipulated by Article 41, paragraph 3 of the law. To this day, the various consecutive governments have not agreed yet on the role that TL should play. Rather than carve up a developmental, national role for this public institution, spurred by a constitutional mandate to reorganize the audio-visual sector as part of the post-war reconstruction efforts (Taif Agreement of 1989), governments in post war Lebanon totally neglected TL, and at some point not only considered selling it to private investors, they even shut it down temporarily.<sup>31</sup>

It should be noted that the content of all audio-visual media, private or publicly-owned is not only regulated by the 1994 audio-visual law, it is also regulated by the Penal Code and the Press Law of 1962, especially with regards to “publication crimes”. These “crimes”

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30 Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2002). “From Defending ‘Cultural Exception’ to Promoting ‘Cultural Diversity’: European Cultural Policy and the Arab World”, in *Quaderns del CAC*, issue on Globalisation, audiovisual industry, and cultural diversity, published by the Audiovisual Council of Catalunya (CAC), Spain, No.14, September-December 2002.

31 Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2005) “‘Lost in Translation’ dans le Monde Arabe” (Translated from English original: “Lost in translation? The concept of public service broadcasting in the Arab World”), in *Une Television Sans Service Public?*, edited by Jerome Bourdon, a *MediaMorphoses* ‘Hors Serie’ publication by the National Audiovisual Institute (INA), France, pp. 135-143.

include libel, blackmail, hurting the dignity of the Lebanese president or the president of another country, criticizing members of the judiciary or the army, inciting confessional hatred, threatening public safety, and so on.

There is no code of ethics specific to TL, only a general one for the press, dating back to 1974. This code for the press is very obsolete, general, vague, and brief, and fails to address the complexity of journalistic work in general (e.g. how to handle sources and when to respect their anonymity, etc.). Moreover, it does not have a single provision related to broadcast journalism or the technological innovations which were introduced in the last two decades, and which have a considerable bearing on the ethical practice of journalism (e.g. digital manipulation).<sup>32</sup>

**Morocco:** The audiovisual communication law No. 77-03 of 2005 contains various provisions concerning the purpose of the law. These include: guaranteeing freedom of expression and pluralism, respect for human rights, human dignity and privacy, the development of both the public and private communication sectors, the protection of intellectual property, the protection of cultural heritage, and the promotion of local production and creativity. Moreover, according to Article 8 of the section on “general principles” in Chapter 1, media institutions (both public and private) should, among other things:

- Provide pluralist and accurate information.
- Promote Moroccan artistic creation and encourage local production.
- Present news objectively and with neutrality and refrain from privileging any political party or interest group or association, or any ideology or doctrine. Programs should reflect equitably pluralism and diversity of opinion. Personal points of view and commentaries should be identified as such.
- Serve, as much as possible, the greatest number of regions in the country, in terms of radio and television programs.
- Give, in terms of program offering, preference to national audio-visual production.
- Draw on Moroccan talent for the creation of audio-visual works and their presentation, unless such an approach proves to be too difficult to realize because of the nature of the service, such as content, special format, or language use.
- Respect laws and regulations regarding copyright and other related rights.

Unlike the case in most Arab countries included in the present study, several of the above general requirements are detailed in the book of specifications relative to each licensed operator, and, whenever possible, are expressed quantitatively, in the form of production quotas and number of hours for certain types of programs.

Whereas Article 8 of Law No. 77-03 contains several positive requirements that largely define the role and mission of a licensed broadcaster (i.e. “what to do” in order to fulfill the requirements of the law), Article 9 contains several negative requirements (i.e. what

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<sup>32</sup> For a detailed evaluation of the Lebanese code of ethics, see Dabbous-Sensenig D. (2007) “The state of the media in Lebanon”, in *Promoting the Rule of Law and Integrity in the Arab Countries*, published by the Arab Center for the Rule of Law and Integrity, Beirut, funded by UNDP. English text: [http://www.arabruleoflaw.org/Files/PDF/Media/English/P2/Lebanon\\_MediaReportP2\\_En.pdf](http://www.arabruleoflaw.org/Files/PDF/Media/English/P2/Lebanon_MediaReportP2_En.pdf)

not to do) related to content. On the one hand, it is legitimate to include some restrictions with respect to content: e.g. programs should not harm children or negatively affect their rights as universally recognized, should not contain false allegations which might deceive consumers, and should not incite racist behavior or behavior which is harmful to the security of people, property, and the environment. However, Article 9 also contains loosely phrased content restrictions that can be easily used by the authorities in order to curb “unwanted” speech, suppress critical views, and restrict the diversity of opinion. For instance, programs cannot be harmful to the dogmas of the Moroccan kingdom as they are defined by the Constitution, notably those dogmas related to Islam, the territorial integrity of the Kingdom, and the Monarchy. Moreover, programs cannot offend public morals and serve the particular interests and the exclusive cause of political, ethnic, economic, or financial groups.

Indeed, many organizations, including trade unions for journalists, have criticized the handling of “diversity” within these public institutions, especially within the “news” and “information magazine” genres (see more on Morocco in section 2.c.3.a).

Despite a number of shortcomings, Law No. 77-03 of 2005, unlike any of its equivalents in the other Arab countries studied, imposes on Moroccan public broadcasters specific requirements which reflect a public service mission as universally understood. For instance, realizing the important role played by news bulletins, information magazines, and any other “genre which has to do with the exercise of political rights”, and in an attempt to keep information as independent as possible, Article 65 of the law (regarding the operation of SNRT) forbids this public operator from using advertising or sponsors when broadcasting any of these TV formats. The duties and obligations of public operators, moreover, are further developed in section 3 of Chapter 1 of the law (Articles 46 and 48). These operators should satisfy, in the interest of all (*intérêt général*), “the cultural, educational, informational, and entertainment needs of the public”. Not only should public operators respect the general content provisions applying to all, they should also abide by the *cahiers des charges* or books of specifications. These contractual documents/ books specify the obligations of each public operator, as prepared by the government and approved by the HACA.

The books of specifications for both SNRT and 2M were approved by the HACA in July 2009. These require, just as some of the articles of the law do, programming which is general and diversified, reaching as wide a public as possible, founded on the principles of the Islamic Arabic and Amazigh civilizations of Morocco, as well as on universal humanist values. They also require, among other things, the guarantee and respect of pluralism of expression of opinion, and contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. As for the code of ethics regulating journalistic work at these public broadcasters, it is also embedded in their books of specifications, along with other programming duties and public service obligations.

Compared to private broadcasters, public broadcasters in Morocco have additional requirements related to their “public” status. For instance, they have to cover “royal activities”, “the sessions and debates of both chambers of parliament”, and “government

communiqués and important messages at any time the government wishes”. Public broadcasters are also required to promote national production and are given relatively precise guidelines on how to do so. For instance, the SNRT is required to broadcast daily 9 hours and 30 min of national programs (1<sup>st</sup> screening), whereas 2M is required to broadcast 4 hours daily of national programs, 1<sup>st</sup> screening. Concerning their contribution to national film production, SNRT should broadcast at least 20 Moroccan feature length movies and 20 short ones, whereas 2M has to broadcast at least 10 in each category.<sup>33</sup> Quotas for programming about ethnic groups and youth (which are fixed in the book of specifications of each operator), in addition to financial incentives, are introduced by the CSCA as concrete steps towards the promotion of multiculturalism in national audio-visual production (please see section 2.d.2 for details about the CSCA and the HACA). Indeed, Moroccan regulators have even introduced a specialized public channel to produce and broadcast programming in the Amazigh language, with the aim of developing and preserving the Amazigh culture.

The HACA dealt with a number of other issues related to content, in order to ensure the broadcasting of programs which serve the public interest. For instance, concerning the protection of minors from harmful sexual or violent content, the HACA published guides for both broadcasters and parents (they are available on its website) and introduced a multiple warning system (visual on-screen labels, sound alert before the beginning of some programs, press releases, etc.). Young viewers are also protected from consumerism by forbidding broadcasters from airing advertisements during programs targeting children who are less than 10 years old.

Moreover, not only should Moroccan public operators respect the pluralism of opinion, they should provide “equitable access” to political parties and trade unions, “depending on their importance and representativeness, especially during election periods” (Article 48). Indeed, the first decision taken by the CSCA regarding the respect of pluralism (Decision of CSCA No. 23-05) was taken on 21 September 2005 (but was not enforced until 2007): it forces public operators who have to fulfill a public service mission to ensure coverage of national rallies by political parties. The decision came as a result of a complaint against 2M-SOREAD lodged by the FFD party,<sup>34</sup> which followed another collective complaint by 8 different national parties who were protesting against the politics of exclusion practiced against them by the two public broadcasters.<sup>35</sup>

Eventually, after two years of deliberations, another decision regarding “rules to guarantee pluralism outside election periods” was made (Decision of CSCA No. 46-06).<sup>36</sup> This new decision regulated access for parties, trade unions, professional and economic associations, as well as national organizations with national scope, based on their importance and social or institutional representativeness. For instance, according to Article 5 of this decision,

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33 1<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Chairmen of Francophone Regulatory Authorities, Marrakech, 16-17 November 2009.

34 See details at <http://www.haca.ma/html/pdf/23-05.pdf>

35 See details at <http://www.maniolnet.com/pre/actualitecomp4.htm>

36 See details at [http://haca.ma/pdf/Note\\_de\\_syntheseVF.pdf](http://haca.ma/pdf/Note_de_syntheseVF.pdf)



the representativeness or importance of political parties is evaluated on the basis of their presence in parliament, and that of the trade unions is based on their importance and the results of the election of representatives of salaried employees in both the private and public sectors. Concerning political pluralism in public television stations, the CSCA used a quantitative method, the “rule of third” (*“règle des trois tiers”*), in order to guarantee equal access to various political entities in the country: one third of speaking time was to be allocated to government, one third to the parliamentary majority, and one third to the parliamentary opposition. The respect of pluralism would be estimated by the HACA on a quarterly basis for news bulletins and a bi-annual basis for debate shows and other programs. As for political parties not represented in parliament, they are entitled to 10% of the global time given to the other 3 categories. The HACA also adopted indicators (e.g. speaking time, broadcast time, etc.) that would allow the analysis of political pluralism in the context of the news and general programming. Regular reports (every 3 and 6 months) are prepared by the regulator and sent to the appropriate institutional actors as stipulated by Law No. 1-02-212 of 31 August 2002 (relative to the creation of the HACA).

Another decision by the CSCA, Decision 14-07, enforces the respect of political pluralism in the audiovisual media (both private and public) during election periods. It complements the stipulations of Article 295 of the electoral law. Its purpose is to provide access to the media and encourage political debate prior to election time, for both municipal and parliamentary elections.<sup>37</sup>

Though various existing laws and decisions by the HACA or the CSCA tried to develop a number of mechanisms in order to ensure the existence of political pluralism on public screens, enforcing such rules and regulations proved to be fraught with difficulties: 2M explained in a press conference why meeting its obligations with respect to pluralism outside of election times proved to be difficult.<sup>38</sup> 2M deplored the weak communication and PR skills of political actors, the predominance of government activity in daily news, the lack of guests who are willing to appear on talk/debate shows, the rigidity of the news format (where there is a lesser margin for maneuvering compared to that of information magazines), and the fixed (and numerical) division of screen time for political actors/speakers which tends to favor quantity over quality. Consequently, 2M recommended that the HACA adopt a new approach to regulating political pluralism – one that would reconcile quality with quantity while favoring auto- or self-regulation. As for news, covering the latest and most important events should take precedence over other considerations, with a margin for exceeding the allowed limits varying between 3 to 5 percent.

2M also identified problems/challenges related to enforcing political pluralism during electoral campaigns. These included: quality of communication by political parties, the late delivery of video news releases (VNR) by some parties, the non-respect of taping schedules,

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37 Please see details at [http://www.haca.ma/pdf/note\\_presentation\\_decision\\_VF.pdf](http://www.haca.ma/pdf/note_presentation_decision_VF.pdf)

38 REFRAM Conference «Management of pluralism in the audiovisual media in normal times and during elections,» Fez, 29-30 November 2010.

and the restrictions on editorial freedom. Among other things, 2M recommended more training for journalists and the preparation of a practical guidebook for journalists to help them with their duties and obligations during elections times.

SNRT also started having problems with enforcing the pluralism requirement in 2007, date when the pluralism provision was introduced. It found itself unable to “realize the perfect balance on the screen between participants, especially when it comes to the news.”<sup>39</sup> It also admitted that the government and the majority MPs are getting screen time in excess of what is allowed by the decision of the HACA, which is 60%. As for the news, it added, “we see a monopoly by the government and the majority [MPs]”. Even when percentages vary, the tendency for “over-representation persists.”<sup>40</sup>

It should be noted that the Pluralism Unit of the HACA is following up on 20 different broadcasters: 4 public television channels and 16 radio channels, of which 3 are public and 13 are private. For the first 3 years of monitoring pluralism (2007, 2008, 2009), the HACA reports were mostly syntheses for all monitored media. As of 2010, a new design for these reports has been adopted, with an emphasis on monographs (one monograph per station), and 3 new levels of analysis being introduced: first, the gender dimension (i.e. representation of women as speakers); second, the language used (Arabic, French, and Amazigh); and finally regional representation (the extent to which speakers from various regions are being represented in each medium).

Public broadcasters, moreover, are required by law to submit yearly reports about the measures taken in order to abide by their books of specifications. It should be noted, however, that these reports are not publicly available. Not only that, but in practice, the general programming policy of the two public operators has been met with criticism by the public and the press. Both operators are accused of scheduling too many imported dramas (Mexican, Turkish, and even Korean series dubbed in Arabic), with an average of 5 of these imported dramas being broadcast daily on each of the two channels.<sup>41</sup>

Other criticisms relate to the dearth of political programs and debate shows, of documentaries, educational programs, investigative reporting, and shows dealing with societal issues and problems. Also criticized are programs for children, which consist mostly of imported cartoons. The two operators justified the “poorness” of content by blaming it on the lack of financial resources and the need to attract advertisers who are not interested in quality but in the number of viewers.

**Palestine:** Presidential Decree No. 2 of 9 March 2010 specifies the objectives and mission of the *hay'a* responsible for managing PTV, including the following:

1. Reinforcing national unity and public peace and respecting the dignity of the individual and his (sic) freedoms and striving to spread national democratic culture.

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39 Ibid

40 Ibid

41 See related article at [www.leconomiste-magazine.com/.../91.../734-chaines-nationales.ht](http://www.leconomiste-magazine.com/.../91.../734-chaines-nationales.ht)

2. Raising awareness among citizens about Palestinian, Arab, and human heritage and history.
3. Raising awareness among citizens and developing their thoughts and tastes and providing them with useful entertainment through the various television broadcasting means.
4. Dealing with general issues and contributing to the expression of the citizens' needs and problems, and supporting their right to freedom of expressing opinion, participation, and knowledge.

The Committee (or *hay'a*) was also entrusted with developing broadcasting, ensuring universal coverage over the Palestinian territories and abroad, and promoting production in such a way as to enable exchange with private media institutions, in addition to developing and training personnel.

It should be noted that such duties and objectives are far from reflecting a public service mission. Understandably, emphasis is placed on reinforcing national unity and preserving national culture, a necessity stemming from years of Israeli occupation and the need to resist it. Despite the brief and vague mention of the need to foster freedom of expression among individuals, and the fact that the board of trustees (i.e. the advisory board) should be comprised of people chosen for their participation in intellectual, religious, artistic, cultural, and scientific activities, these vague provisions fall short of adequately addressing the need to foster pluralism (political or religious). Although the Palestinian society is diverse religiously, for instance, there are no clear provisions to guarantee the various religious interests, such as covering Friday sermons for Muslims, and Sunday service for Christians. Indeed, the broadcasting of the Sunday service was only introduced recently on PTV, under the auspices of the new management, and nothing in the decree mandates it or ensures its continuity.

Similarly, other than the general exhortation that members of the Board of Trustees should be selected among people “who are interested in the activities of youth, women, and children...and other activities” (Article 5), there are no specific mechanisms to guarantee programming which protects the rights of women and children. For instance, nothing in the law prevents violent programs from being broadcast early in the evening when children are watching TV. Moreover, there are no rules forcing the public broadcaster to install a control chip or to identify, through labels, programs which are not suitable for children. More important in the case of children is that there is no requirement to produce a certain percentage of local shows (through quotas) specifically targeting Palestinian children. In the absence of all these rules and regulations, one wonders how PTV can truly cater to the needs and interests of Palestinian children.

In the same vein, there are no rules and regulations for ensuring diversity in programming. Indeed, the dearth of sports, economic, social, and artistic shows, especially when compared to the abundance of political programs, proves the dire need to introduce legislation (or books of specifications for public broadcasters) in order to effectively fulfill a public service mission (please see also statistical results in section 3.A.). Similarly, there are no provisions

(in any existing document) with respect to news bulletins and their independence and impartiality. There is not even a code of ethics for regulating journalistic work and translating, in practical terms, the general exhortations contained in the presidential decree. Moreover, the presidential decree of 9 March 2010 did not specify a policy with respect to local production. It is unclear whether shows have to be produced internally or externally, or whether there are specific mechanisms for the purchasing of programs. However, it became apparent lately that the percentage of programs which were purchased was increasing; whereas in previous years this percentage was almost nil at times, more recently it has become very high (nearly 50% of programs on PTV are purchased).

Finally, the presidential decree regulating the work of PTV does not contain any requirements with respect to advertising (e.g. specifying the number of minutes per hour or including mechanisms for the content control of ads). In the absence of such rules and regulations, the director of PTV decides whether an advertisement is to be broadcast or not, at his/her own discretion. Indeed, recently one TV commercial was pulled out by management simply because one newspaper article accused it of being harmful to women, without going through a legal process for deliberation.<sup>42</sup>

While there is no law or decree regulating advertising on PTV, there are no commercial ads on PTV, only public service ads by national NGOs. Commercial companies meanwhile advertise mostly in the printed press (the current presidential decree which organizes the work of PTV does not deal with advertising). In an interview with the director of programming at PTV, Imad al-Asfar said that in case PTV starts accepting commercial ads, he does not know what the official response will be if some company decided to advertise alcoholic drinks or the Viagra pill for instance. He also pointed out that one public service ad for breast cancer check up produced by one of the local NGOs was broadcast, despite showing a woman breastfeeding.<sup>43</sup>

The presidential decree of 9 March 2010 does not specify the language of broadcasting. Arabic is the predominant language, but this does not mean that other languages cannot also be used. However, the decision to do so is up to the managers themselves, and not in fulfillment of any legal requirements. It should be noted that PTV does not address exclusively Palestinians living within the PA territories, but also seeks to reach out to Palestinians in the Diaspora, most of whom (especially the young people) do not speak Arabic.<sup>44</sup> If Palestinians abroad are to be successfully reached out to, then language specifications have to be legally instituted. Similarly, nothing is foreseen by law in order to accommodate people with hearing disability. This is the case despite the fact that the 1999 law for people with disability requires the Ministry of Social Affairs to coordinate with all concerned parties in order to use sign language on TV.<sup>45</sup>

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42 Imad al-Asfar, director of programming at PTV, speech at the conference "Arab Public Broadcasters in a Time of Change", December 9 and 10, 2011, Amman, Jordan.

43 Imad al-Asfar, director of programming at PTV, personnel interview, February 11, 2011.

44 Ibid

45 Ibid

In sum, Presidential Decree No. 2 of 2010 contains a number of lofty ideals with respect to content on PTV (e.g. pluralism, professionalism, national production, etc.). However, neither the decree itself nor related documents contain concrete steps and mechanisms which can help translate these ideals into actual programming that can fulfill a public service mission. For instance, the decree mandates raising awareness among the citizens about Palestinian history and heritage, but does not contain mechanisms which can promote national production and provide jobs for national talent. To make matters worse, some creative artistic people were recruited at some point for that very purpose, but eventually the whole venture came to a dead end, due to the absence of a law for hiring TV personnel. The generic law for recruitment and employment of public servants was applied instead, with its strict rules about working hours and shifts that do not take into consideration the irregular nature of working hours in the broadcasting sector. Until further laws, decrees, and bylaws are introduced to fill out the void, it is doubtful that PTV can seriously start to function as a public service broadcaster.

**Syria:** So far, public TV is still functioning as an organ of the Baath party with not only oppositional views but also diversity in its various forms being totally absent. According to Article 3a of Legislative Decree No. 10 of 26/1/2010, a number of provisions require the *hay'a* to improve the quality of various types of programs (politics, economy, culture, arts, sports, etc.), to provide the public with objective news, to contribute to public scrutiny and constructive criticism of government institutions, and to highlight corruption as part of this committee's developmental role. Moreover, the *hay'a* is supposed to help the Ministry of Information in its plans to launch a specialized satellite channel for Syrian drama and culture (Syria Drama channel was launched recently), and to start local radio and TV services in all Syrian provinces. These newly- introduced objectives do reflect to some extent a public service mission (coverage of different provinces, encouraging and promoting local production and drama, etc.). However, the *hay'a* is also keen on enforcing positive requirements that are strictly ideological, such as the mission "to consecrate the correct understanding of Arab identity",<sup>46</sup> which could easily lead to the eradication of multiple viewpoints and cultural diversity, two important aspects of PSB as universally understood. Moreover, *al-hay'a* is entrusted with enlightening the public with various political, economic, and intellectual views which exist "in the world" (Article 3a, Decree No. 10 of 26/1/2010), but nothing is mentioned concerning views on diverse topics and issues which exist on a local or national level – a matter of utmost importance for a national public service mission. Meanwhile, in practice, programming continues to be mostly one-sided, pro-Baath party, and represents one religious community (the Sunni community) and its language (Arabic) at the expense of other religious and linguistic ethnic communities present in Syria. Indeed, when Syrian "culture" is represented on TV, this representation is limited to emphasizing the folkloric and traditional aspects of culture (costumes, dances, food, etc.). It should be noted that more recently, some breakthroughs here and then could be observed (such as covering secular ideas, or the economic activities of the private sector), but they only break social, and not political taboos.

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<sup>46</sup> Personal interview with an anonymous employee of *al-hay'a*. He summarized the results of the deliberations of the meeting of the fourth quarter of 2010 of *al-hay'a*, 18 December 2010.

In previous years, Syrian TV relied on an internal production unit for the local production of programs. With the increased competition from the private sector in the area of drama series production, Syrian TV had to expand its production capacity. On 25 April 2010, Law no. 16 of 2010 was introduced, according to which a new public institution is set up, *almu'asasa al'amma lil intaj al-televisioni wal itha'i*. This new body, which replaces the old *mudiryat al-intaj al-izai'i wal television*, is closely “connected to the Minister of Information”, as specified by law. Its purpose is to support local production and local talent for radio and television (by providing jobs to actors, technicians, producers, writers, etc.), and giving out loans to private production companies.

The lack of a public service mission (with respect to content) at Syrian TV is coupled with a lack of a professional code of ethics for journalists, although there has been talk about introducing one. However, there are some general principles accepted to all such as the protection of sources by journalists and editors, and solidarity among them with regards to penalties and administrative orders which seek to keep them in check and which many resent as being unfair. Still, a number of these journalistic ethical principles are sometimes breached, especially when they clash with the existing system of “loyalties” which increasingly controls the behavior of employees at Syrian TV.

**Tunisia:** Law No. 2007-33 entrusts public broadcasters with the following responsibilities: to ensure a public service; to promote the state’s culture and politics while respecting the attributes of national identity; to develop the audiovisual sector; to provide national and regional information; to facilitate access to information; to promote national creativity; to produce short and feature length films and drama series; and to promote co-productions and international cooperation and exchange. Not only do these responsibilities fall short of covering the full extent of a public service mission (note the glaring absence of promoting diversity and pluralism), they remain ineffective as long as they are not accompanied by related books of specifications which can help turn these general, vaguely-worded ideals into concrete measures (e.g. quotas for specific program types or audiences) that public broadcasters can implement.

### 2.c.3. Editorial independence & public accountability

#### ***2.c.3.a. Editorial Independence***

**Algeria:** Not only is ENTV suffering from a general lack of editorial independence due to the tight control exercised on it by law, whether through its management or its structure, Algerian journalists in general are constantly threatened with jail terms for infringing content controls while exercising their profession. Indeed, since the amendment of the Penal Code in June 2010, harsher penalties for journalists, especially when it comes to defaming state officials (the president, MPs, judges, or the army), have been implemented. Article 144 in specific stipulates prison sentences for journalists that can exceed 12 months, in addition to fines for defamation.

Perhaps the following anecdote best reflects the inadequacy and lack of independence of the country’s public TV (ENTV) and the extent to which it is out of sync with Algerian society. In August 2010, some Internet users responded to the neglect by ENTV of the

problems and realities of Algeria by creating the website *Eljournane*. On this website, material from Facebook and YouTube is posted, especially the humorous TV news bulletin “L’ENTVrai” (i.e. the “real ENTV”), whose very name parodies the name of the public broadcaster.<sup>47</sup> In this bulletin, the most taboo subjects overlooked by ENTV are dealt with. During Ramadan in summer of 2011, for instance, the website posted videos of the court proceedings at Ain El-Hammam (willaya of Tizi Ouzou, Kabylie region), against two construction workers who were caught by the police while having lunch during the fasting period. Images of citizens engaged in a sit-in and demanding the release of the workers were broadcast. The website was provided with additional material by other Internet users in support of the cause. The site, on its homepage, says the following: “L’ENTVrai, for information by the people, for the people”. It adds: “this is not a site for journalistic and professional information, but a place where we can discuss lightly, even insolently, and where we can comment on the news... news as seen by young Algerians”.

**Egypt:** As already explained with respect to ERTU’s Charter, structure, and sources of funding, this public institution is not autonomous. The Egyptian government controls it by covering parts of the ERTU’s annual budget, as well as the salaries and compensation of all members of the Board of Trustees, including its Chair. This lack of financial independence seriously affects the editorial independence of the ERTU and the work of journalists within it. The lack of editorial independence is compounded by the ERTU Code of Ethics itself, whose main objective is to hinder freedom of expression and forbid criticism of state institutions and public officials.

**Jordan:** The dependency relationship that the Jordanian public TV has with the Council of Ministers (with respect to appointments and funding) manifests itself mostly in the lack of editorial independence, especially in news bulletins and political programs. Interestingly, the news manager at JTV, Ibrahim al-Bawarid, does not think that the existing, close connection between JTV (please see section 2.c.1.a.) and the Minister of Information is problematic and compromises the editorial integrity and independence of the station. According to him: “the TV is for the nation, that is why when the Minister of Information makes a request, this does not mean that this is a reflection of his own personal interests. It is a reflection of the policies of the state and not of individual people.”<sup>48</sup>

**Lebanon:** TL has always been under government control, even when it was operating as a private company. Its editorial policy, strongly manifested in its news output, has always reflected government policy, even during the pre-acquisition days when it started as an independent private TV company: a government official was placed in the newsroom in order to monitor the news bulletin and other political programs. As for all other types of programs, TL management was given free reign: it was not bound by any specific rules whatsoever (whether in terms of promoting national production or producing children’s

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<sup>47</sup> Check <http://eljournane.e-monsite.com/>

<sup>48</sup> Personal interview, 22 December 2010.

programs, for instance), as long as general provisions relating to libel, criticizing the army, judges, and presidents- provisions which also applied to all other national media, were respected.

Quite recently, former Minister of Information Tarek Mitri, who was heavily involved in the administrative reform efforts at TL, made a few clarifications with respect to the “reform plan”. He explained that the plan is basically two-pronged, dealing with the nature of TL and its sources of revenue. As he put it, this plan seeks to make TL “relatively free of commercial pressure and of the need to attract advertisers” and viewers. He also added: “TL is a public TV, not a state TV. Lebanon does not need a television station to defend the government. TL should have total independence from political forces, and should be for all religious communities.”<sup>49</sup> This plan, to date, has not materialized. It has not yet been presented to the Council of Ministers (which was eventually dissolved and replaced by another council). As for the new Minister of Information, he has not yet expressed his plans with respect to reforming TL.

**Morocco:** As already mentioned, despite several provisions in Law No. 77-03 that require neutral, accurate, and politically independent news and information programs, *in practice* the two Moroccan public operators are found wanting in this respect, and their content, with varying degrees, fails to fulfill adequately its public service mission. In the most recent demonstration organized by the “Movement of 20 February”, hundreds of journalists from 2M and Al Aoula, the two public television stations, came together for the first time in order to call for the end of censorship and the independence of their channels from political interference. They chanted: “we want transparency. We want editorial independence”. Thouria Souad, journalist for the last 20 years at 2M, was quoted saying: “I am the oldest [at 2M]. I am pushing for reform in the news. There is a lot of censorship.”<sup>50</sup>

**Palestine:** There is no mechanism to monitor content at PTV – a fact which renders its work more dependent on individual decisions by management than on any clearly stated policy with respect to public service ideals and requirements. The management at PTV is proud that no censorship office exists within this public operator and considers its absence an indicator of the greater margin of freedom now enjoyed at PTV. However, one should not naively equate the physical absence of a state censor with an increase in the margin of freedom of expression on public TV. Indeed, many Palestinian media institutions suffer from at least two other types of censorship: indirect censorship and self-censorship. Moreover, the absence of content monitoring can lead to overlooking cases of prejudice against specific groups (women, children, minorities, etc.) and a failure to document cases or programs that infringe human rights in general. This type of content monitoring is indeed needed, if a repeat of the crisis that befell PTV in 2007 is to be avoided (public TV was then instrumentalized in the internal struggle between the PLO and Hamas).

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49 *As-Safir* daily, 12 March 2009.

50 “Au Maroc les journalistes des chaînes publiques réclament une télévision indépendante” by Abdelhak Senna, AFP / For RFI, 25 March 2011, available at <http://www.yabiladi.com/forum/maroc-journalistes-chaines-publiques-reclament-2-4220905.html>



**Syria:** The Syrian government monopolizes the media in Syria, especially television, which is de facto considered to be “government property”. The government controls every aspect of broadcasting on Syrian TV, such as funding, hiring employees, monitoring content, providing equipment, and relay stations. This also means that Syrian TV does not enjoy editorial independence. Not only does it rely extensively, for its source of news, on the national news agency SANA, its news bulletin functions according to “set priorities”: news about the Syrian president come first, followed by news of Palestine and Iraq, and then important news about the Arab world. Moreover, news which do not conform with general state policies are eliminated or totally ignored, except when it becomes impossible to ignore them. In this case, these “problematic” news events are dealt with selectively and are altered to express the government’s point of view. By way of example, Syrian TV ignored for over 24 hours the news of the assassination of Hezbollah official Imad Meghnieh in Damascus, at a time when other TV channels were trying to cover the details of the event and its more recent developments. In another example, there was no news coverage of the popular uprising in Egypt whatsoever until President Mubarak’s regime was actually toppled. Since March 2011, throughout the popular uprisings in Syria, Syrian TV ignored anti-government demonstrations and instead focused exclusively on pro-government demonstrations and official views from around the world which supported the Assad regime.

As for the news editing process, first the director of news convenes regularly with the various news editing managers, and then he/she makes editorial decisions in consultation with the general manager (of Syrian TV) and sometimes with the Minister of Information. In sum, the news director manages the day to day news operations but does not function independently, and it is instead the general manager of the TV station who oversees the news bulletin. This gives the news bulletin its “security” character.

**Tunisia:** Considering that all 10 members of the Board of Directors of Tunisia’s public television (Tunisie 7), including the president of the Board, were appointed by decree by the Ministry of Communication, and that the powers of the Board were delegated to its president, the Ministry of Communication had total control over this public institution. In addition to appointing all members of the Board, it supervised the management, finances, and programming policies of Tunisia’s public operator. It also singlehandedly interpreted the meaning of “public service mission” for Tunisie 7 which functioned as a mouthpiece for the government before the revolution of 2011.

### ***2.c.3.b. Interactivity with audience and complaint mechanisms***

Most Arab public TV operators included in the present study do not offer the possibility of interacting with their audiences, and do not have formal procedures for officially dealing with complaints from the public. Some complaints with regards to content can be filed by being sent to the supervisor/general manager or board of directors of public broadcasters. However, there is no mechanism for dealing with such letters/complaints or for tracing their trajectory, since there are no formal mechanisms for follow up. When some complaints do reach upper management, this is done very informally, as is the case with PTV, when powerful people can complain directly to the president of the PA.

The official homepage of each of the 9 Arab broadcasters included in the present study provides mostly general background information about the history and development of the medium, the daily programming schedule, information about the advertising department, and a list of phone numbers related to major departments in each institution. In very few cases, online visitors will also be offered the possibility to watch some of the programs (e.g. the news bulletin on Algeria's ENTV). The website of the Syrian *hay'a* responsible for running public radio and TV offers general information about a number of services not even related to broadcasting (currency, weather forecast, procedures to obtain an entry visa to Syria, etc).

In addition to Morocco (see details below), only 3 websites related to Arab public TV operators offer the possibility for interaction with viewers/visitors of the website. Tunisia's public TV started posting viewers' comments (concerning programming) only as of the end of December 2011. The websites of JTV and Syrian TV have an on-line audience poll as a rudimentary/rigid form of interactivity with viewers, where a question concerning programming or a recent event is asked, and audience members can choose one out of a number of possible answers and then check the poll results. By contrast to the general, bland questions about programming on the JTV website (e.g. "which *type* of programs is your favorite?"), questions on the Syrian *hay'a* website are of an ideological/political nature. One question posted recently required web visitors to evaluate other TV stations (Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya in specific) by agreeing (or not) to the statement that their "news coverage is bankrupt". Another question asked them to agree (or not) that "the decisions of the Arab League vis-à-vis Syria are bankrupt". Needless to add, the results of the online polls showed that the overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) chose to agree with the negative statements about the Arab League and the pan-Arab satellite news channels.<sup>51</sup>

Of all Arab public TV broadcasters included in the present study, only three have a regulatory authority which would normally be entrusted with receiving and processing viewers' complaints: Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco.

Although the Lebanese National Audiovisual Council seems to be *de facto* handling complaints about media content here and then (televised appearances by its president Abdel Hadi Mahfouz are often related to politically controversial TV programs), there is no transparent and official mechanism for members of the public to reach out to the Council. There is no website for the Council itself. Instead, a very short link about it is embedded in the homepage of the Ministry of Information, without any information being offered with regards to the Council's members, responsibilities, decisions, and so on. Whereas the website of JTV does not have a link allowing audience members to file complaints about controversial content on TV, it is theoretically possible to file such complaints with the Commission that regulates the audio-visual media in Jordan. Its chairperson is entitled, by law, to "look into complaints filed with him by the public against licensed operators and to take necessary measures relating to them" (Law No. 71/2002, Article 8, parag. J). There is no evidence that any such complaints have been filed so far.

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51 Check the official homepage of the Syrian *hay'a* at <http://www.rtv.gov.sy/>

For all publicly-owned operators, except for the Moroccan ones, no official and reliable data is available concerning their share of the national audience.

Morocco indeed stands out as the only Arab country whose public TV operators are, to some extent, held accountable vis-à-vis the public. Indeed, in order to establish a relationship between viewers and the public broadcasters, the HACA introduced in the *cahiers des charges* of Al Aoula and 2M the obligation to designate a mediator. His/her role is to collect feedback and comments from viewers, follow up on them, and respond to them whenever possible (Article 134 for Al Aoula and Article 40 for 2M). According to these two similar articles, the “mediator” (or ombudsman) does not interfere in the editorial process of each broadcaster, and the station is required to broadcast, at least once a month, a “mediation program” (*émission de médiation*) which cannot be sponsored or interrupted by advertising. This program, moreover, hosts public personalities who are invited to speak on a specific issue related to the programs available on the channel. Public broadcasters are also required to make available, on their website, the answers provided by the mediator about topics of concern to the public.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the mediator must prepare an annual report detailing his/her execution of the task and his/her recommendations, if any. Indeed, the SNRT has already posted on its website the last 3 reports of its mediator, the most recent one dating back to 2009.<sup>53</sup>

According to the 2009 report, the mediator received 1755 messages of which 564 were about Al Aoula. This 60-page report consisted mostly of criticism of programming content, with the harshest criticism being directed at political debates, and cultural and artistic programs. The website of 2M, by contrast, though open to comments by the public,<sup>54</sup> does not offer the same facilities for officially receiving and processing viewer complaints as Al Aoula, nor does it make annual reports by the mediator that are publicly available (for the purpose of the present study, a request for copies of the reports was sent to the administration of 2M which promised to send them, but has not yet done so.)

With respect to viewership of public TV, the CSCA, in its Decision No. 81-10 of 24 November 2010, commissioned a private institution, Marocmétrie, to measure the viewership of public television and of other broadcasters licensed to operate in Morocco.<sup>55</sup> In a 2010 report, it turned out that during prime time (between 8:50 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.) 7.7 million Moroccans watched Al Aoula, 2M, and Al Maghribia.<sup>56</sup>

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52 Information about the SNRT’s mediator is available at [http://www.snrt.ma/mediateur\\_role.php](http://www.snrt.ma/mediateur_role.php)

53 Reports available at [http://www.snrt.ma/mediateur\\_rapport.php](http://www.snrt.ma/mediateur_rapport.php)

54 Check the following on the 2M website (<http://www.2m.ma/Club2M/Contactez-nous>) where visitors are invited to submit their comments about shows, send questions, ask to participate in shows, etc: «Club 2M, it is the space of interactivity and participation by Internet users in the life of your favorite channel, 2M. Through this space, you can react to issues, ask questions, suggest ideas for topics, ask to participate in programs with the public or ask for Internet games and many other possibilities.»

55 Decision of the HACA available at [http://www.haca.ma/decision\\_03\\_06.htm](http://www.haca.ma/decision_03_06.htm)

56 “Mesures d’audience: les télévisions étrangères en force, les nationales résistent”, by Faical Faqih, *The Economist*, No. 3309 of 30 June 2010.

From the perspective of the HACA, measuring audience share is very important as it allows regulators to assess the impact of TV content on viewers. It is also a stimulus for competition among public broadcasters, and for developing high quality programs and maximizing advertising investments. However, critics have found little or no direct impact of audience share on programming by public operators: their program schedules are replete with either foreign productions or national productions of low quality - an observation largely supported by the findings in the present study (Part 3 on the analysis of content).

## *2.d. Status of Arab broadcasting regulatory authorities*

### *2.d.1. Powers and responsibilities*

To date, only 4 out of the 8 countries included in the study have a regulatory authority (other than the Ministry of Information) to oversee the licensing process and monitor the content of national media. Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria are operating their public audiovisual media without the existence of any regulatory authority. In the latter four countries, the government (the Ministry of Information in specific), but also often the head of state, is still the official authority controlling national broadcasters. Even in those countries that have very recently introduced liberal media laws which allow for the privatization of the sector and the setting up of regulatory authorities to oversee it, it is too soon to assess the impact and effectiveness of these laws. In Syria, for instance, the text of the new media law of 2011 (Legislative Decree No. 108 of 2011) fails to effectively create an independent regulatory authority to start with. Indeed, Article 19 of the law stipulates the creation of a national audiovisual council that has many of the duties and responsibilities of an independent regulatory body (allocating licenses to private media operators, monitoring media output, etc). However, this council is, according to the same article, “*connected* with the Council of Ministers” (emphasis mine) and therefore not independent, and its major decisions with respect to licensing private operators have to be ultimately approved by the Syrian Council of Ministers (Article 49).

Not only is such a council (or regulatory authority) still not operational months after the passing of the new law, the police state continues to exercise content control via its various institutions and apparatuses. Programs deemed problematic are stopped from airing, and managers and unit directors (at the management and mid-management levels) are punished in various ways (deduction of salary, temporary or permanent suspension, forced transfer to other departments, firing, or arrest). In principle, it is possible for journalists and employees in Syrian TV to appeal the decision in a civil court, a right which is constitutionally guaranteed. However, considering that most “crimes” related to the media are dealt with in a military or “security” court (*amm-el dawla*), arrested journalists and people accused of “thought crimes” (such as libeling government officials) lose the right to appeal the court’s decision.

**Jordan:** The Jordanian audiovisual Commission was created upon the introduction of the audiovisual law of 2002 (Law No. 71 of 2002), in order to act as a regulatory body with administrative and financial independence. Among the most important duties that this

regulatory authority should fulfill according to Article 4 we find the following: studying license applications, monitoring the work of licensed operators, and granting licenses to types of audiovisual programs and audiovisual equipment used in broadcasting, in coordination with the Telecommunications Regulatory Committee. No direct mention is made anywhere with respect to publicly-owned media, as the Commission's role is restricted to "licensed parties" (Article 4).

With respect to the power to license operators, the Commission, through its director or chairperson, sends its recommendations to the Minister of Information, whereby he/she is informed of the approval or rejection of the Commission vis-à-vis applicants. The Council of Ministers, based on the recommendation of the Minister (itself based on the recommendation of the chairperson of the Commission), can grant licenses, renew them, or withhold them (Article 16). More serious than the fact that the Council of Ministers has the final say when it comes to licensing private operators, is the fact that it can do so without having to justify its decision and without granting any possibility for appeal to rejected applicants. Article 18 is very clear and categorical in this respect: "the Council of Ministers has the right to deny granting a license to whoever it is without clarifying the reasons".

**Lebanon:** Article 5 of Legislative Decree No. 100 of 1977 gave the Council of Ministers full authorization to oversee TL's operations in terms of goals, prerogatives, management, content control, funding, and relationship with other entities. With respect to content control, prior to 1994, the duty to monitor TL was carried out by a government representative or controller at TL, as per Decree No. 3372 of 8/8/1980. S/he is appointed by the Council of Ministers and has the duty to monitor TL's performance in terms of content and financial operations. This representative, moreover, was the actual link between the company and the government, which was represented by the Minister of Information. This government controller had the right to express his/her opinion about programming proposals when they were presented to the committee responsible for programming (Article 25 of TL's bylaws), and to express his/her opinion about the channel's editorial policy. S/he had the mandate to attend all meetings by the Board of Directors and to get involved in the deliberations, without voting power (ex-officio member). As such, up until 1994, the "regulatory body" was none other than the Council of Ministers.

Following the passing of Law No. 382 of 1994, the National Audiovisual Council (hereafter also called NAC) was created in 1996. This regulatory body, the first of its kind in the Arab world, is entrusted with studying the applications files of private radio and television operators and to publish its opinion vis-à-vis these files in the Official Gazette (Article 19). In other words, the NAC does not have the power to license private broadcasters. It acts as a consultative body to the Council of Ministers which may accept or reject the recommendations put forth by the NAC and which is ultimately responsible for issuing licenses (Article 16 and Article 19).

Moreover, the NAC is entrusted with monitoring the audiovisual media in the country (Article 47), to give its opinion with respect to the books of specifications (which are to be drafted by an ad hoc committee appointed by the Council of Ministers) (Article 25), and to recommend sanctions in case of infringement of the law (Article 35). It should be noted that the NAC does not have a mandate to deal with complaints by the Lebanese public.

In cases of infringement, the Minister of Information, “based on a recommendation by the National Audiovisual Council”, can order the operator to shut down for a period of 3 days. For a second time offence, the Council of Ministers becomes the body responsible for deciding whether to temporarily close down the licensed operator, based on a recommendation by the Minister of Information (Article 35). In other words, it is the Council of Ministers, and to a lesser extent the Minister of Information, and not the NAC, which has the ultimate power to license and to impose sanctions. Indeed, there were a number of occasions when the NAC’s “recommendation” was ignored by both the Minister of Information and the Council of Ministers. In 1996, when private radio and television channels were being licensed for the first time in the country, a recommendation to reject one of the applicants was ignored by the government.<sup>57</sup> More recently, the NAC criticized the programming of a number of licensed operators, accusing them of infringing the law (Law 382 of 1994 or the Penal Code). However, the Minister of Information held a different position, discarded the recommendation of the Council, and did not enforce any sanctions, citing freedom of expression in Lebanon as a protection for what was broadcast.<sup>58</sup>

**Morocco:** Law No. 1-02-212 of 31 August 2002 (modified by Law No. 1-03-302 of 11 November 2003, Law No. 1-07-189 of 30 November 2007, and Law No. 1-08-3 of 20 October 2008) introduced the HACA. This new regulatory body, inspired by French legislation in the field, was given the power to regulate, monitor, control, and sanction licensed radio and TV operators, both public and private, when these are found in infringement of the rules of their licensing terms and conditions.

The HACA exercises an advisory role vis-à-vis the King (Articles 1 & 2 of Law No. 1-02-212 of 31 August 2002), government, and parliament (Article 3). Its opinion, though purely consultative, is a pre-requisite in the legislative process, i.e. it is solicited whenever a draft law or decree related to audiovisual communication is being introduced in the Council of Ministers or parliament (Articles 4 & 5). It has the duty to ensure that any such draft laws or proposals are coherent with the basic tenets of laws regulating the sector. The HACA also exercises some regulatory functions. In addition to the power to grant licenses to different types of audiovisual media institutions (Articles 5 & 13, Law No. 77-03), it is the body in charge of drafting the *cahiers des charges* for public broadcasters and of monitoring their application (Article 3, clause 11 & 12, Law No. 1-02-212 of 31 August 2002). These *cahiers*

57 Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2003). *Ending the War? The Lebanese Broadcast Law of 1994*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, United Kingdom.

58 The controversy which surrounded one episode of the parody show *Bas mat watan* on LBCI, where Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah was spoofed, is a case in point. The show was met by anger and street violence from the Lebanese Shi’ite community because their “religious figure” was ridiculed. The NAC condemned it harshly and wanted to impose sanctions on the station, but the Minister of Information disagreed with the NAC and defended LBCI. See article titled “Lebanon: Protests over TV Hezbollah parody”, 2 June 2006, at <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=16632>

*des charges* (or books of specifications) are very important, as they codify, in the absence of adequate legislation, the rules regarding advertising (in terms of content and scheduling) and imposing sanctions in case of infringement. The *cahiers des charges* are contracts signed by both the HACA and licensed operators, and contain the terms and conditions that licensees have to abide by. They constitute the main legal and practical instrument for the regulation of the audio-visual sector. The CSCA is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the conditions enumerated in these contracts.

For instance, one content requirement imposed on all licensed operators with a license to broadcast national news and information, be they private or public, is the political pluralism requirement. It applies to both national news and information magazines. Consequently, rules for equitable access were established by the decision of the CSCA of 27 September 2006, and specialized computers for the non-stop recording, digitizing, and archiving of broadcast material were acquired in order to allow for the subsequent analysis of content with respect to pluralism. Such studies become the basis for internal reviews whose purpose is to further develop the sector.

As for sanctions, when a licensed broadcaster infringes the law or fails to respect one of the operating conditions as stipulated in the *cahiers des charges*, the Director General of Audiovisual Communication sends a warning within a period of 30 days (Article 17, Law No. 77-03). If the infringement continues, the Director General informs the CSCA which, after deliberation, can decide upon a variety of measures:

1. Send a warning. The CSCA can also decide to publish the warning in the Official Gazette or to have it broadcast by the station in infringement of the law.
2. Put in motion the sanctions listed in the *cahiers des charges* of the licensed operator.
3. Forward the case to the relevant administrations/bodies which can decide to temporarily or permanently withhold the license.

**Tunisia:** Introduced on 30 January 1989, Tunisia's regulatory authority (Conseil Supérieur de la Communication or CSC) was an advisory body which was initially connected to the presidency of the Republic and later to the office of the Prime Minister (Decree No. 2964 of 8 September 2008). Since the expansion of its responsibilities in 1998, the CSC was entrusted with monitoring the sector, following up on its evolution, and presenting annual reports. In April 2008, the responsibilities of the CSC were further expanded, without guaranteeing its independence from government. Its regulatory function thus remained limited and its reports shrouded in secrecy (it was eventually dissolved in March 2011, following the creation of INRIC, the national commission for the reform of the information and communication sectors). During the October 2009 parliamentary and presidential elections, the president of the CSC was entrusted with supervising the public radio and television coverage of elections and with evaluating and censoring, before their broadcast, election-related recordings. This task, which was based on direct presidential orders by Ben Ali during a presidential address given on 7 November 2008 in celebration of 21 years in power, generated a public outcry, especially by members of the independent opposition. According to Ahmed Brahim from Attajdid movement: "we were facing a decision which diverted the Communication Council from its real mission, and which

risked making our country the only country in the world, to my knowledge, which instituted pre-censorship with respect to statements by candidates...this decision also meant that the president of the CSC, who was a former minister and close to the RCD [the then ruling party in Tunisia], could delegate to another Council member connected to some party ... the power to exercise prior censorship against the ‘opposition which opposes’ [l’opposition qui s’oppose] or against their competitors”.<sup>59</sup>

### ***2.d.2. Structure, management, and accountability***

**Jordan:** According to Article 6 of the 2002 law, Jordan’s regulatory authority is made up of a director and an executive unit. The director is appointed by the Council of Ministers, based on a recommendation by the Minister of Information. Pay and other financial benefits are also decided upon by the Council of Ministers. The director is also the president of the Executive Unit of the Authority, itself made up of employees and hired personnel. No further details are added, especially with respect to the number of members to be appointed, the terms of their appointment, the professional criteria for membership, and the circumstances under which membership can be terminated. The article only mentions that, for the Authority’s hired personnel, appointment, salary, promotion, rights, and duties are fixed according to bylaws to be introduced later for this purpose. Finally, Article 8 details the duties of the director, making clear his auxiliary status vis-à-vis the Minister of Information: “the director is responsible vis-à-vis the Minister for the work of the Authority”.

There is no possibility for members of the public to lodge complaints about the performance of JTV, whose website also lacks the required mechanism which would allow this to happen. However, the audiovisual law of 2002 foresees this role for the Authority, whereby the latter is authorized to look into complaints lodged by the public and “to take necessary measures” regarding these complaints (Article 8, paragraphs j & k). It is not clear whether this complaint mechanism is interpreted to also include complaints about the publicly- owned broadcaster, or whether it is limited to private licensed operators.

**Lebanon:** As per Law No. 382 of 1994, the National Audiovisual Council consists of 10 members appointed by the Council of Ministers and parliament (Article 17). Its members should be qualified people from a variety of fields (arts, literature, science, and technology). In order to avoid conflicts of interest, members of the NAC cannot be elected officials or government and municipal employees (Article 18), and cannot hold any position which conflicts with their own work within the Council (Article 21). Members serve for a 3-year term which can be renewed (Article 20). Members who miss three consecutive meetings by the Council lose their membership in the NAC (Article 20). The NAC writes its own internal bylaws and submits them to the Council of Ministers for approval (Article 22). Despite the existence of the above-mentioned provisions whose purpose is to create an “independent” council, the NAC is compromised in its independence by the very fact that the government, and not just parliament, is responsible for electing half of its members.

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<sup>59</sup> “The CSC: Tool for media openness or instrument of censorship?” *Attariq aljadid*, 22 November 2008, available at <http://documents.ettajdid.org/spip.php?article355>



Indeed, the appointment of the members of the first NAC in 1996 was highly controversial, with critics condemning the political nature of the appointments. Several of the NAC appointees back then lacked the expertise required by law and were closely related to Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.<sup>60</sup>

The NAC, moreover, is dependent for its monitoring responsibilities on the Ministry of Information: according to Article 35 about “forbidden content and sanctions”, the Minister can decide to convene the Council at any time, and he/she can impose sanctions without the opinion of the NAC if the latter fails to attend the meeting within 48 hours. Moreover, the monitoring activities of the NAC are to be carried out with the apparatus of the Ministry of Information (Article 47). Indeed, the NAC is neither provided with its own premises (it is physically located within the Ministry of Information) nor with an independent budget to carry out its monitoring duties. It has no staff trained in monitoring techniques, and produces no regular (or irregular) reports about the performance of licensed media. In the absence of such facilities, it has to rely on existing (and opaque) monitoring activities by the general security police, where regular police officers watch and (informally and non-scientifically) monitor the content of national media.

Indeed, the NAC is rather meant to serve as an appendage to the Ministry of Information, which is effectively the body ultimately responsible for monitoring the media and sanctioning operators in infringement of the law. So far, there is no evidence that the NAC is also monitoring the output of TL. However, nothing prevents it from doing so, especially if the Minister of Information requests it.

In sum, since its inception in 1996, the NAC has been carrying out its monitoring function with a minimum of equipment and human and financial resources. Not only it does not have its own website, it is barely mentioned on the website of the Ministry of Information. This also means that very little is known or made public about the actual work of the NAC, its internal bylaws, and decisions.

**Morocco:** The HACA, by contrast to its (underdeveloped) Lebanese, Jordanian, and Tunisian counterparts, has a more complex structure, and is a bipartite institution. It is endowed with both human and financial resources and an independent budget in order to organize, regulate, and define strategies for the development of the audio-visual sector. The two-tiered structure of the HACA includes the CSCA (*Conseil Supérieur de la Communication Audiovisuelle*) and the DGCA (*Direction Générale de la Communication Audiovisuelle*).

The Director General of the DGCA is nominated by the King. Under the direct authority of the president of the HACA, he/she has control over administrative, technical, and financial services within the HACA. He is also responsible for following up on programming, legal studies, technical infrastructures, auditing, IT and archiving/documentation.

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60 Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2003). *Ending the War? The Lebanese Broadcast Law of 1994*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, United Kingdom.

The CSCA includes 9 members: a president and 4 members nominated by the King, 2 by the Prime Minister, 1 by the president of the lower chamber of parliament, and 1 by the president of the upper chamber (or house). Members enjoy the same status enjoyed by members of parliament in terms of indemnities (Article 10). The president of the CSCA has the same ranking as that of members of government (i.e. ministers). Members serve for a 5 year term, which can be renewed once.

It should be noted that a recurrent criticism by members of civil society is that the choice of members of the CSCA is governed by “security” considerations, similar to other managers and presidents of media institutions who have always been selected based on their loyalty to the regime. The latest team to be nominated (on 24 May 2011) consists, more than is the case with previous members, of a number of professionals and experts who have no established financial interests in the audio-visual sector: lawyers, artists, academics, etc. However, even the nomination of these members has been criticized for being political.

Concerning the operating procedures of the CSCA, Article 12 stipulates that the *Conseil* cannot meet without the presence of its president and 4 other members. Decisions are made by majority vote. When opinion is divided, the vote of the president prevails. Deliberations are not only secret, little if nothing is known about the internal bylaws of the *Conseil*. This veil of secrecy around the internal management and procedures of the *Conseil* raises serious concerns about the voting behavior among members and the decision making processes inside this council. However, this issue of governance and transparency (or lack thereof) has rarely been contested by stakeholders. While deliberations are kept secret, the CSCA publishes its decisions in the printed press and the website of the HACA. Moreover, members of civil society have, on some occasions, been able to participate in public consultations organized by the *Conseil*, as was the case with respect to developing a code of ethics concerning the representation of women in the media. The president of the CSCA and high echelon employees regularly participate in conferences and roundtables where the tasks of the HACA are debated publicly. However, these debates are few and far between. There is also a dearth of civil society groups who can represent the interests of citizens/media consumers and exercise lobbying power on the HACA and its decisions. As already mentioned, when the HACA justified its unwillingness to license private television operators in order to protect the country’s public broadcasters in a dwindling advertising market, the decision did not elicit open criticism or challenge by either members of civil society or applicants themselves.

Article 4 of Law No. 1-02-102 of 31 August 2002 stipulates that the CSCA should handle complaints concerning infringements by licensed operators. Such complaints can originate from political organizations, trade unions, and recognized associations. Indeed, the CSCA put in place a process for the reception and handling of complaints concerning the respect of pluralism during non-electoral periods. According to Decision 06-46 about political pluralism, the complaint file is forwarded to the concerned operator who has a maximum of 7 days to send a response to the CSCA. A decision concerning the complaint should be made within 30 days, and both operator and plaintiff are notified. The decision, moreover, is published in the Official Gazette and is sent in the form of a press release to the media.

A special unit within the HACA handles the processing of complaints. So far, several complaints have been handled by the CSCA, with some social actors able to exercise some influence with respect to the development of the sector.

**Tunisia:** The now defunct CSC included 21 members who were distributed as follows: 6 qualified people from the field of communication, 5 representatives of political parties from parliament, 4 representatives of civil society, and 6 members representing public radio and television as well as the *Agence Tunisienne de Communication Extérieure*. Between May 2008 and March 2011 (date of the dissolution of the CSC), the president of Tunisia's regulatory body was Abdelbaki Hermassi, former minister, former ambassador, and member of the ruling party.

### ***2.d.3. Regulatory authorities, content regulation, and PSB***

Legal provisions which seek to control the content of licensed operators are general and quite vague in their wording, and almost exactly the same in the case of Jordan and Lebanon, especially with respect to preventing criticism of people in power. In the case of Jordan, for instance, licensed operators are required to respect “the pluralist character of the expression of ideas and views”, “the objectivity of the news”, and youth, and should maintain “public order and the requirements of national security and of the public interest” (Jordanian audiovisual law of 2002, Article 20, parag. I). Licensed operators should also refrain from inciting confessional and racial hatred, from disturbing national unity, from inciting terrorism, and harming the relations of the Kingdom with other countries (Article 20, parag. N). Licensed operators have to “participate in developing national audiovisual production (Article 20, parag. M). Finally, licensed operators are not allowed to broadcast “any subject or economic comment which can affect the stability of the economic situation or that of the national currency (Article 20, parag. O).

While some of these requirements reflect a public service mission to be carried out by private operators (e.g. promoting national production and respecting pluralism of views), the lack of a specific interpretation of these content requirements and of concrete measures to be followed (a task usually developed in the books of specifications) make it very difficult for a licensed operator to fulfill a public service mission in the case of Jordan. The vagueness of several content-related provisions in the law can actually serve to stifle freedom of expression and opinion in the country. Paragraph 0 in Article 20, that prohibits the media from questioning the “safety of the economy and the national currency”, as indeed a content requirement which contradicts the one that precedes it about “pluralist expression” and which prevents the Jordanian media from broadcasting critical views about issues of public interest.

Unlike the case in Jordan, the audiovisual media law in Lebanon requires the drafting of books of specifications to complement the law and provide licensees with details and guidelines concerning content. These were indeed introduced shortly after the passing of the law, on 29 February 1996. However, a close examination of the content-related conditions that are imposed on licensed operators reveals a glaring lack of commitment (by legislators) in upholding public service ideals. For instance, the book of specifications for

private operators requires them, as part of their mandate to “promote national audiovisual production” (Article 7 of Law No. 382 of 1994), to produce each 13 hours of drama series per year – at least 40% of which having to deal with Lebanese cultural heritage (Lebanese book of specifications, section 3 on programming, parag. 7). Not only is this a very low percentage that in no way can help promote local drama production, the NAC, since its inception, has not taken a single measure to implement the program quotas as stipulated in the books of specifications for licensed private operators.<sup>61</sup>

**Morocco:** In addition to its consultative and regulatory role, the HACA can, whenever there is a lack of legislation to this effect, introduce rules to ensure the respect of pluralist expression, especially as regards political information. Such regulatory measures allow the various political parties and organizations (professional organizations, trade unions, etc.) to have access to air time which is commensurate with their importance on the national level, based on objective criteria. The HACA is also responsible for ensuring equitable access to airtime on national broadcast media by the different political parties and organizations during parliamentary elections.

Indeed, one of the first missions the HACA was entrusted with since it started operating in 2004 was the introduction of mechanisms to ensure pluralism in broadcasting. However, its two major challenges continue to be the preservation of freedom of expression and neutrality in audiovisual media, especially that the role of the HACA cannot be seen in isolation from its larger socio-economic context and the political and economic reforms being introduced. Indeed, the “match” between the reforms introduced on paper (i.e. through legal texts and legislation) and the concrete activities and measures to be implemented remains the only true measure of the seriousness of the reforms envisaged by public officials in the kingdom.

In order to perform its mission of monitoring content, the HACA has installed specialized computers which can record, digitize, and archive radio and TV programs 24 hours a day for all national operators, whether they are terrestrial, satellite, or digital. A system for analyzing the data quantitatively, as required by the *cahiers des charges*, was also developed, allowing continuous sampling and monitoring of broadcast material. The results of the study of the data serve as an important source of information for the elaboration of internal studies that can be used to develop the sector.

The monitoring of licensees is done on the basis of control guides (*guides de contrôle*) which are specific to each licensed operator. These guides contain the main conditions of the *cahiers des charges* (or books of specifications) with respect to programming. Three different areas are covered in these guides: quantitative control of programming, ethical obligations, and respect of political pluralism. Ethical obligations refer to the journalistic/professional ethics but also to the basic principles of the Kingdom. Media professionals are thus

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61 Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2002). “From Defending ‘Cultural Exception’ to Promoting ‘Cultural Diversity’: European Cultural Policy and the Arab World”, in *Quaderns del CAC*, issue on Globalisation, audiovisual industry, and cultural diversity, published by the Audiovisual Council of Catalunya (CAC), Spain, No.14, September-December 2002.

required to abide by the principles of objectivity, neutrality, and accuracy of information. Programs should respect human dignity, women, minors, etc. As for the quantitative control of programming, numerical results are compared with the quotas for programs and genres as fixed by the *cahiers des charges* of each operator. This allows the monitoring body to check if the licensed operator is abiding by its mission or not (i.e. thematic vs. generalist, etc.). Numbers are also used to quantify the volume of national productions and programs which reflect national culture in its diversity (ethnic and linguistic). This quantitative approach to monitoring allows the CSCA to better assess the performance of licensed operators and to see if they are living up to the terms of their license.

#### ***2.d.4. Independence of the regulatory authority***

**Jordan:** The audiovisual law of 2002 states that Jordan's regulatory authority (the Audiovisual Commission) operates on "an independent budget" which is to be approved by the Council of Ministers, based on the recommendation of the Minister of Information (Article 11). The budget of the Commission is allocated as part of the yearly state budget, and can also include donations with the approval of the Council of Ministers. Moreover, Article 12 ensures that all revenues coming from license fees, licensing renewals, and financial penalties are considered state revenues and are part of the national treasury.

Article 9 guarantees the lack of conflict of interest by stipulating that members, including their spouses or relatives (twice removed), should not have, directly or indirectly, any investments in the audiovisual sector for the duration of their term.

As is the case in Lebanon, the Jordanian audiovisual law seems to have a very narrow single definition or understanding of the "independent" status of the country's regulatory authority for the media: avoiding conflict of interest when appointing members. However, all other provisions in the law work to ensure the actual dependency status of this body.

Article 3 of the audiovisual law of 2002 best embodies the contradictions involved in defining the status of Jordan's regulatory body: according to this article, the Commission enjoys "financial and administrative independence" and is "tied financially and administratively to the Minister [of Information]".

**Lebanon:** Although some provisions are introduced in Law No. 382 of 1994 to ensure the independence of the NAC members upon their appointment to the Council, other provisions (and omissions) in the law prevent the NAC from operating independently from a structural and financial point of view. For instance, the audiovisual law states that the NAC operates as part of Ministry of Information and from within its offices. It also omits to allocate an independent budget to ensure the proper and independent functioning of the Council, whose budget is allocated by the Ministry of Information. As for the powers and responsibilities of the NAC, as we have already seen, these are also purely advisory with respect to both licensing and content. Licenses are granted by the Council of Ministers, whereas audiovisual content (including sanctions) is the responsibility of the Minister of Information and the Council of Ministers.

**Morocco:** The HACA is different from other administrative bodies in Morocco by the fact that it answers directly to the King (Article 1 of Law No. 1-02-212 of 31 August 2002). It should also be noted that the law does not consider the HACA to be a legal personality. This tutelage by the King is justified on the basis that it will guarantee independence and impartiality for this new regulatory body and shield will it from interference by other political institutions (namely government) and financial pressure groups. However, by the same token, this tutelage also means that the HACA and its decisions cannot be scrutinized by parliament – a situation which reduces its responsiveness to the “public interest” and compromises its degree of accountability within democratic institutions.

However, as is the case with Lebanon and Jordan, a number of articles seek to establish the independence of the members of this regulatory body by eliminating sources of conflict of interest (Article 7). For instance, among other things, members cannot simultaneously hold another public office (except as teachers/researchers in institutions of higher education), or exercise “a permanent, professional lucrative activity the nature of which can limit the independence of the members”. They are not allowed to be remunerated for any work done, except for serving as members of the HACA. In fact, the failure to abide by the above restrictions were at the centre of a controversy surrounding one of the members of the CSCA, Salah el Ouadi, who participated in parliamentary elections in 2007 (*Parti Authenticité et Modernité*), and who was the subject of public debate and criticism in the printed press.

Finally, according to Article 7b (1), newly elected members are required to declare their assets in addition to any earnings they made the year previous to their appointment. Interestingly, these “declarations” of personal assets and fortunes, whose purpose is to add a measure of transparency to this regulatory body, are not made public.

As previously mentioned, the HACA has so far licensed 17 private radio channels, some of them thematic, other regional. By contrast, not a single private TV station or generalist radio station has been licensed so far (originally, Medi-1-Sat obtained a private license, but this license was eventually changed into a public one by the HACA).<sup>62</sup>

This reluctance to license private television stations has elicited skepticism with respect to the regime’s will to liberalize the private audiovisual sector in Morocco and concerning the ability of the HACA, as the sole regulatory body responsible for granting licenses, to act independently. The HACA gave exclusively financial reasons to justify its decision: the shrinking size of advertising revenues, the crisis undergone by Medi-1-Sat, and the need to “maintain the stability and viability of existing public and private operators”. However, these justifications were not convincing for some analysts and critics who saw in it a clear attempt to restrict freedom of expression, control the advertising market (in order to benefit the public sector exclusively) and, most important of all, maintain state

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62 For more information on the controversial status of Medi-1-Sat, see “Medi-1-Sat: Polémique autour de son nouveau statut de chaîne publique”, par Mohamed Doueyb, available at <http://www.yabiladi.com/article-economie-2197.html>

control over the audiovisual sector.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, throughout its licensing years – with the exception of the controversial case of Medi-1-Sat, and despite the quality of some of the applications, the HACA has refused to grant licenses to private stations. The HACA’s “economic” justifications (mentioned above) were deemed, according to critics, to be politically motivated.

The liberalization of the sector with respect to radio stations is also restricted by the requirement that the ownership be in the form of a limited liability company, which makes it impossible to introduce community radio – a specific type of radio broadcasting which is vital to community development and to spreading awareness among isolated, rural communities.

Finally, it should be noted that efforts to regulate and reform the sector are still below expectations. For critics, the HACA, more than any other institution capable of reforming the audiovisual sector, has significant powers at its disposal – powers that it has not yet deployed. In response to the wave of public protests which swept the Arab region in 2011 and the need to introduce reform within public institutions, the new Moroccan Constitution of July 2011 consolidated the role of the HACA by enshrining it in its Article 165. The HACA has now a constitutional mandate to guarantee pluralism and diversity of views in the country’s audiovisual sector.

**Tunisia:** Not only was the Tunisian regulatory authority a strictly advisory body, it was not endowed with any independent status, being placed directly under the supervision of the Prime Minister (Decree No. 2964 of 8 September 2008). In 2009, a report about the coverage of the 2009 parliamentary and presidential elections, prepared by 5 independent NGOs, noted that “in the absence of transparency, and considering the non-existence of a public regulatory institution which is truly independent of political powers, the liberalization of airwaves in Tunisia is nothing more than a renewed form of subordination to the state”.<sup>64</sup> Since March 2011, a newly introduced committee, the National Committee of Information and Communication Reform (INRIC), has been entrusted with liberalizing the media sector in the country and asked to review both the Press Code and the decree for the High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communication.

## *2.e. Digital broadcasting*

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has specified the date 17 June 2015 (the “switch-off date”) for the conversion from analog to digital broadcasting, as analog broadcasting services will have no legal protection from cross-border interference as of that date.<sup>65</sup>

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63 Check <http://www.haca.ma/pdf/Rapport%20G2%20MEP.pdf>

64 *Observations de la couverture des élections législatives et présidentielles*, 2009 Report, Tunisia, available at [http://www.ifex.org/tunisia/2010/04/13/media\\_monitoring\\_fr.pdf](http://www.ifex.org/tunisia/2010/04/13/media_monitoring_fr.pdf)

65 <http://www.digitag.org/ASO/ASOHandbook.pdf>

Although Arab countries are in principle committed to the digital switch-over by 2015, very few concrete steps have been taken by the individual countries involved in order to transition into digital broadcasting, beyond the few feasibility studies that have been commissioned to that effect or the simple acquisition of some HD equipment, as is the case with PTV.

To start with, the Algerian state has shown great interest in switching to digital broadcasting and in 2002, plans by the TDA (*Télédiffusion d'Algérie*) to develop technical expertise and introduce equipment, led by a German study firm, were introduced. Since then, the competition has been open to French, American, and Japanese firms highly interested in the Algerian market. Three big stations were installed since then in Tessala (Sidi Bel Abbès, West), Chrea (Blida, Center), and Kaf Lakhal (Constantine, West). The aim of the TDA is to equip 70 to 80% of the territory by the end of 2013. Interestingly, the necessity to introduce digital broadcasting seems to be less motivated by technical or economic incentives than by political ones. As one source put it, "TNT [digital broadcasting] can help in the preservation of the sovereignty of the state in the field and in providing it with the means to counter cultural influences on the population". Moreover, "TNT allows for the multiplication of channels and to avoid being under the mercy of satellites. TNT allows the state to take back a measure of control over messages broadcast on television".<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, the Egyptian government, through the executive president of the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) Amr Badawi, has expressed its intent to meet the 2015 deadline set by the ITU to complete the switch-over. Badawi pointed out that the success of the project requires cooperation between the parties concerned: the ERTU, the Ministry of Information, Telecom Egypt, and content producers, in addition to telecom operators and equipment manufacturers and distributors of TV sets.<sup>67</sup> In 2009, the NTRA commissioned the German Fraunhofer Institute to conduct a feasibility study and design a "road map" for the transition to digital broadcasting in Egypt. No progress with respect to the actual transition has been noted since then.

In Jordan, public statements since 2011 by both the Telecommunications Minister and the Information Minister have affirmed the government's will to switch to digital broadcasting, but no concrete steps have been taken so far in order to undertake the switch-over.

In 2008, the Lebanese Telecommunications Regulation Authority (TRA) prepared a study concerning the strategy to be adopted for the transition.<sup>68</sup> However, to date, no practical steps have been taken to start this transition. Many obstacles face the transition to digital broadcasting, some of them due to the lack of cooperation between the various parties

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66 "L'expérience française de la télévision numérique terrestre débattue à Alger: la TNT ou la possibilité « technique » d'ouvrir l'audiovisuel », *El Watan* daily, 16 June 2010, available at <http://www.elwatan.com/archives/rubrique.php?ed=2010-06-16&rub=ew:w:une:actualite>

67 "Promises (that digital technology) will reach Egyptians by 2015", *Al Hayat* daily, 2 April 2008, available at <http://international.daralhayat.com/archivearticle/200758>

68 Study available at [http://www.google.com.lb/search?q=Lebanon+the+2006+Geneva+Agreement+boradcasting&hl=en&gbv=2&prmd=ivns&ei=N60yT936M1eq8QO\\_z63\\_Bg&sa=N&oq=Lebanon+the+2006+Geneva+Agreement+boradcasting&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&gs\\_sm=s&gs\\_upl=1907812600010128859119119101140101296146810.1.11210](http://www.google.com.lb/search?q=Lebanon+the+2006+Geneva+Agreement+boradcasting&hl=en&gbv=2&prmd=ivns&ei=N60yT936M1eq8QO_z63_Bg&sa=N&oq=Lebanon+the+2006+Geneva+Agreement+boradcasting&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&gs_sm=s&gs_upl=1907812600010128859119119101140101296146810.1.11210)



concerned, in both the private and public sector, including the broadcasting companies themselves. There are also problems due to the lack of adequate infrastructure and of equipment providers. TL, similar to other existing operators, is awaiting the implementation of a plan for this transition.

Having signed international treaties with respect to digital convergence, Morocco is currently working on the transition from analog (for UHF) to digital, set to take place in 2015. A working group within the HACA is charged with supervising the transition for national media. In addition to a new frequency plan introduced, the group has worked on general conditions related to security with respect to TV receivers, in addition to guaranteeing quality of reception. It should be noted that Law No. 77-03 which regulates the liberalization of the sector did not include any provisions with respect to digital broadcasting. However, the legal framework set up by the law allows the HACA to oversee the digital transition, in coordination with l'Agence Nationale de Régulation des Télécommunications (ANRT), namely the planning of a network of 142 sites/locations that covers 90 to 95% of the population at the rate of 5 to 6 channels per site/location. Meanwhile, the HACA is contending with 3 major issues/questions: will programming be attractive enough? What position to take vis-à-vis satellite channels? How motivated will the public be about the switch-over?

In 2010, Syrian Minister of Information Mohsen Bilal stated that Syrian TV was preparing to introduce digital broadcasting technology and HDTV within the following year. Preparations in the form of feasibility studies and plans for the transitional period were supposed to start soon after. A number of contracts were signed with specialized companies in order to buy equipment and decide upon the best way to provide citizens with affordable receivers that can be produced locally.

So far, however, there are no indications about the nature of these plans or details about the digital conversion. It should be noted that all channels in Syria are free to air channels, including the only private TV (Dunya TV), and that there is no pay TV.

Tunisia seems to be ahead of most countries included in the present study with respect to switching from analog to digital broadcasting and meeting the 2015 deadline. The first step was taken in 2001, with a pilot project covering the Grand Tunis in MPEG 2. By the end of 2009, some 90% of the national territory had access to digital broadcasting. The French firm Thomson Grass Valley is in charge of completing the national network which consists of 17 stations.

### 3. Analysis of content

#### *General Introduction*

After analyzing in Part 2 the regulatory framework for 9 publicly-owned broadcasters in the Arab world (1<sup>st</sup> level of analysis), Part 3 will deal with the second level of analysis, i.e. the analysis of the content/output of these broadcasters. As demonstrated previously, some Arab countries have neither legislation that allows for private non-commercial media, nor content regulations that specifically promote political pluralism or cultural diversity (religious, ethnic, and linguistic). Consequently, the underlying conceptual framework for this part of the study is derived from international standards of human rights (e.g. women's rights, minority rights, protection of children, etc.) and universally accepted PSB values (e.g. to provide universal access, to represent the diversity of thought in society, to promote local production, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the methodology used in this part, three different methods of analysis of TV content have been adopted, depending on the nature of the inquiry or research question to be answered in the study. In sections 3.A and 3.B, a quantitative approach was used in order to assess, as objectively as possible, the overall programming and the evening news, and to produce statistical data that can allow for effective comparison between the 8 different countries. For instance, despite the limited time period covered, the quantitative analysis of news bulletins over 14 consecutive days in May 2010, from Wednesday May 12<sup>th</sup> till Tuesday May 25<sup>th</sup> (included), yielded interesting results which revealed a lot about the performance of the broadcasters included in the study. More importantly, these results are valid, measurable, replicable, and verifiable (for details please see *Le Monitoring des Médias-Manuel Pratique*).<sup>2</sup> As such, they can be convincingly used by members of civil society who want to lobby for an improved performance by Arab public broadcasters.

When trying to assess which news actors were allowed to express their views, for instance, the analysis grid developed for this study showed, quantitatively, who exactly had access to and was allowed to speak in the news (e.g. member of government or of civil society), and for how long.

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<sup>1</sup> Teer-Tomaselli, R. (1998). 'The Public Broadcaster and Democracy in Transformation', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 23, No. 2. And Prosser, T. (1992) 'Public Service Broadcasting and Deregulation in the UK', in *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 7, pp.173-193.

<sup>2</sup> Frère, Marie-Soleil (2008), *Le Monitoring des Médias-Manuel Pratique*, Paris: Institut Panos Paris.

However, being fully aware that a quantitative analysis, despite its strengths and objective value, has limitations and cannot fully account for the “how” of these appearances by these news agents/sources, another method of analysis was also included. For instance, a politician may appear and speak for a relatively long time (50 seconds) compared to other politicians, but this cannot unequivocally lead to the conclusion that he or she was represented positively (simply because he or she was heard and seen speaking for a longer period). Indeed, quite the opposite can be said when attention is also paid to the “framing” of his/her speech, and the way he or she is introduced by the studio anchor (who can use the word “X claimed” and not “X stated” when introducing a news agent, for instance). Therefore, the analysis of content in the present part of the regional study will also include a qualitative section (section 3.C.) in order to complement the findings of the quantitative analysis of the news bulletin (section 3.B.) and to deal with another important format/genre: the information magazine (also referred to as “news & current affairs” program and, more commonly, as “talk show”). This format has become an important source of televised information on a variety of important issues (politics, economy, health, etc.) and some Arab satellite stations have acquired fame and prestige due to their televised information magazines which also often feature members of the opposition and adopt the confrontational debate format. By including a qualitative analysis of the content of these magazines, which were broadcast during the same two weeks in May 2010, the study hopes to offer a more complete assessment of the news and information content of Arab public television channels.<sup>3</sup>

Before dealing with the two specific TV formats mentioned above, this analysis of content will start with a quantitative examination of the overall programming during one regular week in May 2010, when no exceptional incidents or events have taken place or disrupted the normal schedule (section 3.A). By quantifying every format and program genre offered on a daily basis during a full week (with the assumption that this week is representative of the seasonal programming schedule), the study hopes to offer a more complete assessment of the output of Arab public broadcasters, and to identify those public service values that are being met (or not) through the weekly TV schedules: programs for children and youth, programs for linguistic and religious minorities, locally produced shows and drama series reflecting national heritage, and so on.

### *3.a. Quantitative analysis of the general programming schedules*

#### 3.a.1. Introduction

This first section of the overall analysis of content on public television in the Arab world examines the extent to which each station is respecting a number of public service values by offering their audiences a variety of programs that:

1. respond to the educational, informative, and entertaining needs of society;
2. serve a wide audience, including religious and ethnic/linguistic minorities;
3. cater to the needs of children and youth in the country;

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<sup>3</sup> The weekly number of these magazines or talk shows, which were broadcast over two weeks, varied greatly among the 9 Arab broadcasters included in the present study.

4. promote national production;
5. serve the national audience during peak times (or prime time).

By having a breakdown (by genre) of all programs offered on TV, knowing their time of broadcast, the language(s) used, whether these programs are imported or locally produced, and so on, it is hoped that a detailed assessment of the general programming schedule of each channel can be achieved, especially with respect to fulfilling a public service mission. For instance, it is a common complaint by some Arab critics of Western media that Arab television is constantly being invaded by Western products (e.g. the cultural imperialism thesis), and failing to produce programs which reflect local content. However, a recent study of actual programming schedules on national TV channels in Lebanon has shown that these complaints were unfounded, and that the overwhelming majority of programs broadcast on these channels were still locally produced. When a further break down of these local programs was carried out, in order to find out more about their content/genre, the results in the same study showed that most of the local programs produced and shown in Lebanon were actually reality and game shows.<sup>4</sup> As far as the present study of PSB is concerned, the above findings mean that the objective for public TV to promote national heritage, discuss local issues, and provide jobs for local artists (scriptwriters, actors, etc.) cannot be met by simply producing “local” programs.<sup>5</sup> Local production has to include drama series, public affairs magazines, feature films, and children’s programs, for instance, in order to effectively promote the above-mentioned public service ideals.

For the purpose of this section on programming schedules, an analysis grid was developed in order to examine (and categorize) the overall types and genres of programs that the public broadcaster is offering in a given country. This grid allowed us to determine the extent to which the five public service ideals listed above are actually being met. Different program genres (e.g. news, sports magazines, drama series, game shows, reality shows, religious programs, feature films, children’s programs, cartoons, documentaries, etc.) were classified in terms of the following 4 axes or binary combinations:

1. Local (or national) vs. international programs
2. 1<sup>st</sup> screening vs. rerun or repeat shows
3. Live vs. pre-recorded programs
4. Arabic-language programs vs. programs in other languages

To start with, it was necessary to classify all program genres which normally appear on TV, in order to find out which specific TV genres are being broadcast in the first place. For instance, (quality) social, historical, and political documentaries serve an important public service mission (to inform and educate), but they are rarely scheduled because they are not necessarily very popular or attractive to advertisers (or most viewers). By contrast, national

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4 Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2006). “Ahead of the Bandwagon: Lebanon’s Free Media Market”, in *Trading Culture: Exploring the ‘Indigenous’ and the ‘Exportable’ in Film and Television Culture*, edited by Sylvia Harvey. London: John Libbey.

5 Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2002). “From Defending ‘Cultural Exception’ to Promoting ‘Cultural Diversity’: European Cultural Policy and the Arab World”, in *Quaderns del CAC*, issue on Globalization, audiovisual industry, and cultural diversity, published by the Audiovisual Council of Catalunya (CAC), Spain, No. 14, September-December 2002.

dramas might be very popular, but they are also expensive to produce. Consequently, public broadcasters often decide to schedule (cheaper) imported dramas or nationally produced game shows to fill out their seasonal programming schedules, all at the expense of producing and broadcasting quality programming which promotes national production and reflects national heritage, issues, and concerns.

Next, it was important to examine the programs along the 4 above-mentioned axes, in order to better assess the extent to which public broadcasters are fulfilling a public service mission. For instance, finding out that national dramas, as a program genre, are being broadcast is not sufficient to draw the conclusion that a specific broadcaster is fulfilling the public service mission of promoting national production. It is also important to determine whether these national dramas are also being screened for the first time: reruns of national dramas, understandably, cannot be said to promote national production. It is precisely for this reason that many regulators of public service broadcasting, for instance, have the double requirement that a specific percentage of some program genres be both locally produced and screened for the first time in order to adequately fulfill the quota for nationally produced programs.

The present analysis dealt with 7 consecutive days of a given regular week in May 2010 in the case of eight out of the nine publicly-owned channels included in the study:

**Algeria:** ENTV

**Egypt:** Al Masriya

**Jordan:** Jordan TV

**Morocco:** 2M and Al Aoula

**Palestine:** Palestine TV

**Syria:** Syria TV (channel 1)

**Tunisia:** Tunisie 7

May 2010 turned out to be an exceptional period for Lebanon's Télé Liban due to the municipal elections that took place throughout this month, and the (unexpected and severe) disruption in the normal programming schedule. An alternative sample thus had to be chosen, i.e. the week of programming reflecting the winter schedule, between 6 and 12 December 2010.

### 3.a.2. Statistical results: comparative analysis of weekly programming

**General program distribution:** TL stands out with the highest percentage of news on a daily basis (21.3%), followed by Morocco's Al Aoula (19.84%). In Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Algeria, and Tunisia, public broadcasters were all similar in the amount of time they dedicated to news out of the totality of their programming (c. 11%). Egypt's Al Masriya broadcast the lowest percentage of news, with 7.73%, followed by 2M, with 8.22% (note the big discrepancy between 2M and Al Aoula in this respect). Only one channel, the Moroccan Al Aoula, out of the total of 9 channels studied, covered parliament, dedicating the highest percentage of its total news output to this specific category of news (or 6.19% of the total weekly programming), probably in fulfillment of its public service mandate to

inform Moroccans about this important national institution (see Table 3.a.1). Indeed, as we will see in the following section (i.e. 3.B), the evening news bulletins on the Moroccan public channels will also stand out due to their dedication of airtime to different parliamentary groups, including opposition MPs.

In the general category “information magazines”, we find that several countries dedicated a high percentage of their programming to this program genre (topical and generalist talk shows). Palestine TV topped the list with 41.11%. It was followed by Jordan TV (36.61%), Syrian TV (27.43%), and Al Masriya (26.73%). Morocco’s two public channels had the lowest percentage of information magazines out of their total programming (7.33% on 2M, and 9% on Al Aoula). It should be noted that for 3 out of the 9 channels studied, the two categories “news bulletins” & “information magazines” made up, by themselves, nearly half of the totality of programs offered (52.46% for Palestine TV, 48.5% for Jordan TV, and 46.7% for Lebanon’s TL). Morocco’s 2M offered the lowest percentage of news and information programs (15.5% of the total).

“Entertainment” as a general program category (with various sub-genres) dominated scheduling on all these channels: films, game shows, reality shows, sitcoms, drama series, etc. Morocco’s 2M came first with a staggering 55.62% of its programming dedicated to entertainment, followed by Al Masriya (39.6%), then Tunisia (38.01%). Palestine TV offered the lowest percentage of entertainment (21.35%).

Considering that the category “entertainment” is quite general and cannot give a precise idea concerning the fulfillment of public service ideals by these TV channels, a closer look at the sub-categories which are classified under “entertainment” is needed. Indeed, results for these sub-categories showed a clear imbalance in the weight given to the different sub-genres: drama series in general were the dominant form of entertainment on all these stations (with the exception of 2M which also offered sitcoms). One third of the total programming on Morocco’s 2M went to drama series (and sitcoms), followed by Jordan TV (25.89%). Palestine TV, Algeria’s ENTV, and Tunisie 7 lagged behind with 15.31%, 15.17%, and 13.33% respectively.

Normally, the production and broadcasting of drama series and films on national TV are important because these are two major areas where national TV can effectively contribute to the promotion of national culture and heritage, and provide artists, actors, directors, scriptwriters, technicians, and others with employment opportunities. However, a breakdown of the drama series and films shown on each national broadcaster in terms of “origin” (i.e. whether they are national and locally produced or regional/international and imported), and in terms of “types of screening” (1st screening vs. rerun), revealed an entirely different picture: i.e. the extent to which the public service mission of broadcasting national drama series and films is in reality barely being fulfilled in this particular area of programming. For instance, in the case of JTV, the “entertainment” category with all its sub-genres consisted predominantly of (international or regional) imported programs. To start with, very few films were broadcast in this category on JTV or 0.6% of total programming output – a very low (almost negligible) percentage. Moreover, all these films

were non-Jordanian, imported films. This percentage was matched closely by Tunisie 7 (2.32%). As for drama series, which by themselves constituted one fourth (or 25.89%) of all programs on JTV (only 2M offers more, with 31.05%), they were also predominantly imported, with the locally produced ones making up only 5.56% of all local shows on JTV. With respect to TL, 21.43% of its weekly programming consisted of drama series, but when the “local” factor/indicator was taken into consideration, then we find that local drama series only made up 10.32% of all shows broadcast weekly on TL. When, furthermore, we consider the factor “rerun vs. first screening” for these local drama series, we find that all drama series on TL were actually reruns (100%).

**Table 3.a. 1: % Share of all weekly programs (based on weekly duration)**

|           | Program Genre                       | Jordan       | Lebanon     | Palestine    | Syria        | Algeria      | Morocco     |              | Tunisia      | Egypt        |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|           |                                     | JTV          | TL          | Palestine TV | Syrian TV    | ENTV         | 2M          | Al Aoula     | Tunisie 7    | Al Masriya   |
| News      | Morning                             | 0            | 5.56        | 2.03         | 0            | 1.51         | 0           | 0            | 0            | 0            |
|           | Afternoon                           | 3.57         | 4.63        | 4.4          | 5.41         | 4.76         | 3.37        | 2.91         | 2.88         | 3.22         |
|           | Evening                             | 6.25         | 5.56        | 2.9          | 4.02         | 3.3          | 2.48        | 5.5          | 2.86         | 4.51         |
|           | Late evening                        | 2.08         | 5.56        | 2.03         | 1.95         | 2.22         | 2.37        | 2.17         | 1.53         | 0            |
|           | Other (News from 1:00 to 6:00 a.m.) | 0            | 0           | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0           | 3.07         | 2.99         | 0            |
|           | Coverage about parliament           | 0            | 0           | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0           | 6.19         | 0            | 0            |
|           | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>11.9</b>  | <b>21.3</b> | <b>11.35</b> | <b>11.38</b> | <b>11.79</b> | <b>8.22</b> | <b>19.84</b> | <b>10.27</b> | <b>7.73</b>  |
| Sports    | Live match or competition           | 0            | 0           | 0            | 0            | 1.62         | 1.32        | 1.22         | 4.23         | N/A *        |
|           | Magazine about sports               | 2.38         | 0           | 1.16         | 1.92         | 2.38         | 2           | 2.28         | 4.62         | 2.09         |
|           | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>2.38</b>  | <b>0</b>    | <b>1.16</b>  | <b>1.92</b>  | <b>4</b>     | <b>3.32</b> | <b>3.49</b>  | <b>8.85</b>  | <b>2.09</b>  |
| Inf. Mag. | Topical                             | 19.05        | 13.49       | 19.13        | 10.56        | 2.97         | 2.32        | 3.6          | 9.07         | 4.51         |
|           | General                             | 17.56        | 11.90       | 21.98        | 16.87        | 16.01        | 5.01        | 5.4          | 8.14         | 22.22        |
|           | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>36.61</b> | <b>25.4</b> | <b>41.11</b> | <b>27.43</b> | <b>18.98</b> | <b>7.33</b> | <b>9</b>     | <b>17.2</b>  | <b>26.73</b> |
| Religion  | Call to prayer or Koran recitation  | 2.08         | 0           | 2.61         | 0.64         | 0.54         | 0.31        | 1.24         | 3.47         | 0.64         |
|           | Religious ceremonies                | 0.89         | 0           | 0.58         | 0            | 1.51         | 0           | 0.42         | 0.13         | 0            |
|           | Religious magazine                  | 6.25         | 0           | 1.45         | 0.68         | 5.66         | 0.26        | 2.01         | 1.86         | 1.29         |
|           | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>9.23</b>  | <b>0</b>    | <b>4.64</b>  | <b>1.32</b>  | <b>7.71</b>  | <b>0.57</b> | <b>3.67</b>  | <b>5.47</b>  | <b>1.93</b>  |

|                    | Program Genre                              | Jordan       | Lebanon      | Palestine    | Syria        | Algeria      | Morocco      |              | Tunisia      | Egypt        |
|--------------------|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Entertainment      | Film                                       | 0.6          | 5.16         | 3.19         | 9.29         | 6.87         | 14.55        | 8.94         | 2.32         | 20.29        |
|                    | Games                                      | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0.43         | 1.3          | 0            | 0.32         | 3.94         | 0            |
|                    | Reality shows                              | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 3.24         | 6.38         | 0.26         | 4.31         | 0            |
|                    | Drama series / Sitcoms                     | 25.89        | 21.43        | 15.31        | 18.27        | 15.17        | 31.05        | 23.02        | 13.33        | 16.1         |
|                    | Theatre/Plays                              | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0.32         | 1.32         | 0            | 1.93         |
|                    | Variety Showbiz                            | 0.3          | 6.88         | 2.85         | 3.23         | 6.38         | 3.32         | 2.7          | 14.12        | 1.29         |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>26.79</b> | <b>33.47</b> | <b>21.35</b> | <b>31.22</b> | <b>32.97</b> | <b>55.62</b> | <b>36.57</b> | <b>38.01</b> | <b>39.61</b> |
| Children/Youth     | Cartoons                                   | 2.08         | 2.78         | 1.45         | 4.05         | 4.49         | 9.17         | 5.13         | 3.84         | 0.48         |
|                    | Children's programs                        | 3.27         | 3.17         | 2.32         | 4.59         | 0            | 0.37         | 2.59         | 4.48         | 1.13         |
|                    | Youth programs                             | 2.08         | 0            | 0            | 0.71         | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>7.44</b>  | <b>5.95</b>  | <b>3.77</b>  | <b>9.34</b>  | <b>4.49</b>  | <b>9.54</b>  | <b>7.73</b>  | <b>8.32</b>  | <b>1.61</b>  |
| Culture            | Literature, poetry, concerts, cooking etc. | 1.49         | 5.56         | 2.51         | 12.87        | 3.08         | 4.22         | 3.55         | 2.96         | 12.88        |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>1.49</b>  | <b>5.56</b>  | <b>2.51</b>  | <b>12.87</b> | <b>3.08</b>  | <b>4.22</b>  | <b>3.55</b>  | <b>2.96</b>  | <b>12.88</b> |
| Documentary        | Historical                                 | 0            | 0.4          | 4.88         | 0            | 5.68         | 0.11         | 2.96         | 5.1          | 0            |
|                    | Animal Life                                | 0            | 0            | 0.58         | 0            | 2.6          | 0            | 2.01         | 3.67         | 0            |
|                    | Social/Cultural                            | 2.38         | 1.19         | 2.32         | 0.64         | 6.02         | 3.85         | 1.91         | 0            | 0            |
|                    | Scientific                                 | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 6.64         | 9.26         | 0            | 0            |
|                    | Sport                                      | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0.58         | 0            | 0            | 0            |
|                    | Theater                                    | 0            | 0            | 1.45         | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>2.38</b>  | <b>1.59</b>  | <b>9.23</b>  | <b>0.64</b>  | <b>14.30</b> | <b>11.18</b> | <b>16.14</b> | <b>8.77</b>  | <b>0</b>     |
| Advertising        | Infomercials                               | 0            | 5.56         | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
|                    | Commercials**                              | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>0</b>     | <b>5.56</b>  | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     |
| Other              | Songs or Video Clips                       | 1.79         | 1.19         | 4.88         | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
|                    | Other ***                                  | 0            | 0            | 0            | 3.88         | 2.68         | 0            | 0            | 0.14         | 7.41         |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>1.79</b>  | <b>1.19</b>  | <b>4.88</b>  | <b>3.88</b>  | <b>2.68</b>  | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0.14</b>  | <b>7.41</b>  |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>100</b>                                 | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   |              |

\* In the case of Egypt, where live sports competitions (especially football matches), are very popular and frequently broadcast on TV, this category had to be omitted from the above statistical table because data (i.e. details of daily programming) for Egypt was obtained based on the official programming schedules published by the ERTU, which are not updated to reflect live broadcasting of football matches.



\*\* The number of advertising minutes per 24 hours of broadcasting was not included in the present quantitative analysis of programming. This is due to the fact that, for many countries, the results in the above table were mostly derived from published programming schedules which do not include the number and duration of advertisements broadcast per day. Therefore, the total of broadcasting minutes per day for each channel was calculated based on the total duration of all programs, excluding advertisements.

\*\*\* “Other programs” in the two weeks analyzed included “seminars” (in the case of Syria), “Info about President Bouteflika” (in the case of Algeria), and programs about women and health (in the case of Egypt).

Consequently, taking into consideration only the weekly broadcast duration of a given type of programs cannot fully explain whether a broadcaster is fulfilling a public service mission in terms of programming. In the case of TL, there was indeed a high percentage of weekly broadcast time given to an important program genre such as drama series (or 21.43%). However, this does not automatically mean that TL is promoting local dramatic production. Quite the contrary: not only were half of these dramas (840 mn of the total 1620 mn, or 51.8%) imported, as already shown, they were all reruns. In other words, TL is not buying or producing drama series. It is simply playing, over and over again, drama series that had been acquired or produced in previous years, probably due to severe budget constraints as seen in Part 2.

Moreover, the disproportionate attention given to some sub-genres in the entertainment category shows the extent to which these public broadcasters are actually neglecting to broadcast important, entertaining cultural products such as films (national films in specific) and theatre plays. Films per se (whether imported or locally produced) are rarely seen on Jordan TV (0.6%), Tunisie 7 (2.32%), and Palestine TV (3.19%). The results are slightly higher for TL (5.16%), ENTV (6.87%), Morocco’s Al Aoula (8.94%), and Syria (9.29%). The highest percentage of films is shown on Al Masriya (20.29%), followed by Morocco’s 2M (14.55%).

When considering the origin of the production with respect to the category “film”, i.e. when assessing the percentage of local films on national public television, the number of these films shown per week drops dramatically, often reaching zero. For instance, all films on Jordan TV, TL, Palestine TV, Syrian TV, Tunisie 7, and ENTV were imported (0% local films). Only Morocco’s 2M and Al Aoula broadcast films which were nationally produced (30% of all films broadcast on 2M were local, against 24.8% on Al Aoula). This comparatively high percentage of local films is a good reflection of the extent to which these two Moroccan public broadcasters are fulfilling a public service mission as specified in their books of specifications (see Part 2). As for Egypt, we find that 100% of all films shown on Al Masriya were locally produced. These results are not surprising considering that the country is the number one producer and distributor/exporter of feature films in the Arab region. However, none of these films is 1st screening (i.e. they are 100% reruns), which reflects this public broadcaster’s limited ability to promote national film production.

The results for theatre are even lower than those for film. Theatre is entirely absent from the small screen in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Algeria (0% for all), and barely appearing in Morocco (0.32% for 2M and 1.32% for Al Aoula), with the highest percentage going to Egypt (still a meager 1.93%).

In sum, with very few exceptions (Egypt and Morocco), Arab public channels are not fulfilling a public service mission with respect to promoting national production and heritage, and providing employment opportunities to local talent through the production and/or broadcasting of drama series, feature films, and theatre plays. Film as a genre is practically absent, and when broadcast on television it is mostly imported (except for Egypt). Drama series, by contrast, are very heavily present, but are also mostly imported (except for Egypt) and reruns. Theatre is simply absent.

Results for children and youth programs, cultural programs, and various types of documentaries also confirm the extent to which publicly-owned broadcasters in the Arab world are failing to offer a “balanced” diet to their viewers. Screens are dominated by news, information magazines, and (mostly imported) drama series, at the expense of everything else. To start with, children and youth are severely neglected: there was 0% programming for youth on TL, Palestine TV, ENTV, Al Masriya, and both Moroccan channels; 2.08% of programming went to youth on JTV; and Syrian TV dedicated only 0.71% of its programming to youth. The results were slightly better for local children programs: they varied between 1% and 4.5% for all channels, except for Algeria’s ENTV (0%). The percentages were often the same or higher for children’s cartoons: Morocco’s 2M stood out with the highest percentage (9.17%), while the aggregate average for all other broadcasters was 3.71%. However, the “higher” results when it comes to children’s cartoons on 2M are not very meaningful from the perspective of a public service mission: unlike the case with children’s programs, these cartoons are predominantly imported and as such do not reflect the specific needs and interests of children in each of the countries included in the study.

Culture in the widest sense is also neglected, not exceeding 5.5% in 6 out of the 8 countries. The only 2 countries which dedicated a comparatively high percentage of their programming to “culture” are Syria (with 12.87%) and Egypt (with 12.88%). It should be noted that even in this case “cultural” programs have to be qualified. In the case of Syria, where several ethnic, linguistic, and religious minority groups live (Kurds, Armenians, Christians, etc.), cultural programs about these groups do not reflect their specific interests and needs. Rather, the “folkloric” aspects of their lives are highlighted, such as their “ethnic” cuisine, dance, songs, costumes, etc. This approach to covering the various ethnic/minority groups can hardly be seen as a fulfillment of a public service ideal. Unless the political interests and specific social and economic problems faced by these communities are also addressed, these “cultural” shows may actually be doing a disservice to these groups, who are thus further marginalized and depoliticized.

Finally, the documentary genre showed very disparate results with respect to the 8 countries studied: it is barely present in Jordan (2.38%), Lebanon (1.59%), and Syria (0.64%), and entirely absent in Egypt. By contrast, public broadcasters in Morocco and Algeria allocated considerably more air time to documentaries than broadcasters in other countries: Al Aoula came first with 16.14%, followed by Algeria's ENTV (14.3%), 2M (11.18%), Palestine TV (9.23%), and Tunisie 7 (8.77%). With the exception of Morocco's two public broadcasters which had a relatively high percentage of science documentaries (an average of 7.95% of their total programming), all other channels broadcast mostly historical and/or cultural documentaries. Beyond the mere recording of the existence of this important program genre, a proper assessment of the public service mission of these documentaries would have to take into account their content (i.e. the specific subject matter and how it is dealt with) – something that only a qualitative analysis of content can do.

Whereas the near absence of documentaries, especially locally produced ones, can be explained by the high cost of production coupled with low viewership (viewers are more attracted to news and entertainment<sup>6</sup>), nothing really explains the glaring absence of sports, particularly live sports competitions, on public television. As a national activity par excellence, which is also of interest to a great number of people and with relatively low production costs (compared to some other formats and genres such as drama series), it is surprising that live coverage of sports received such a low priority when it came to programming by several Arab public broadcasters. Thus, we find that in 4 out of the 8 countries studied, no live matches or competitions whatsoever were broadcast during the sample one week in May 2010 included in the present study: Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria (Egypt is an exception for reasons which will be explained below). One plausible explanation could be that national live matches are not a weekly occurrence, and that the study of another period (i.e. another week or month) could yield different results (i.e. higher percentages) for these countries. Only a quantitative analysis of programming which covers a significantly longer period of time can adequately deal with the issue of live sports coverage on Arab public TV. This is especially needed in the case of Jordan and Syria, where the quantitative analysis of evening news (section 3.B) on Jordan TV and Syrian TV showed that these two public broadcasters are indeed interested in sports, and have dedicated to it a relatively good percentage of their evening news time in May 2010. However, a look at the results with respect to sports magazines (i.e. studio shows about sports) confirms the general assessment that sports are a very low priority for most Arab public broadcasters. TL showed 0% of sports magazines, whereas for all other broadcasters, the results varied between 1.16% and 2.38%. It should be noted here that, unlike other broadcasters, the low percentage of sports programs (whether magazines or live coverage of competitions) on Morocco's 2M and Al Aoula cannot be interpreted as a reflection of their weak interest in this popular, national program genre. In the case of Morocco, another public channel operates alongside 2M and Al Aoula, and is fully dedicated to sports. This explains the very low percentage dedicated to sports on these two generalist channels.

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6 For details see <http://www.cybercollege.com/tvp063.htm>

In the case of Egypt, no data concerning the number and duration of live sports matches on Al Masriya could be obtained for the month of May 2010. The weekly programming schedule published by the ERTU, which was used as a source for the data included in the table above, is not accurate, complete, or properly updated to include live weekly matches. Football, however, is the number one national sports activity in Egypt: hardly a week goes by without having several football matches being broadcast live on Al Masriya. Indeed, the evening news which were analyzed for the two-week period in May 2010 strongly reflected this great national interest in sports (the percentage of sports coverage in the news was the third highest in terms of duration after politics and the economy, see section 3.B about the evening news. Interestingly, Egyptian members of civil society who were interviewed in the present study (Part 4) were critical of this predominance of sports programs on their public TV, accusing their government back then (i.e. Mubarak's regime) of distracting the people away from important (political) issues by deliberately keeping them busy with a high "dose" of entertainment and televised football matches.

As for religion, the short, daily calls for prayer were broadcast on 7 channels, with the highest percentage found on Tunisie 7 (3.47% of total programming) and the lowest percentage characterizing TL (0%). These results are quite interesting in the case of Tunisia and Lebanon. For what is ostensibly and officially the most "secular" Arab country in North Africa, the duration of weekly calls for prayer on Tunisie 7 are the highest when compared to all other broadcasters. As for TL, the total absence of religion (any religion) does not seem to be in tune with the country's Constitution which acknowledges all monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Understandably, the absence of the "Muslim call for prayer" is due to the fact that Lebanon, unlike all other Arab countries studied, is not a predominantly Muslim country, but a multi-confessional one where Muslims and Christians rule together, as per the Lebanese Constitution. This means that TL cannot (or would not) reflect Muslim culture exclusively, unlike public broadcasters in other Arab countries. Interestingly, TL did not include any type of religious culture or practices in its programming (0% for all religious programs), knowing that private operators in Lebanon are required by the Lebanese book of specifications (as per the audiovisual law of 1994) to broadcast one hour of religious (Christian or Muslim) programming every week (or 52 hours a year). By contrast, it was the only public broadcaster to give access to the various religious leaders in the country on its evening news (see tables 3.b.4 and 3.b.5, Section 3.B)

Table 3.a.2: % Share of prime time programs only

|                | Program Genre                      | Jordan           | Lebanon   | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria      | Morocco      |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|----------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                |                                    | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i> | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i>  | <i>2M</i>    | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| News           | Evening news                       | 37.5             | 28        | 11.63               | 19.48            | 9.77         | 10.83        | 24.76           | 13.35            | 25.45             |
|                | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>37.5</b>      | <b>28</b> | <b>11.63</b>        | <b>19.48</b>     | <b>9.77</b>  | <b>10.83</b> | <b>24.76</b>    | <b>13.35</b>     | <b>25.45</b>      |
| Sports         | Live match or competition          | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 4.8          | 0            | 0               | 3.74             | 0                 |
|                | Magazine about sports              | 0.               | 0         | 0.                  | 0                | 7.04         | 2.53         | 0               | 12.87            | 0                 |
|                | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>         | <b>11.84</b> | <b>2.53</b>  | <b>0</b>        | <b>16.61</b>     | <b>0</b>          |
| Inf. Mag.      | Topical                            | 23.21            | 12        | 39.53               | 5.96             | 6.24         | 2.76         | 7.14            | 21.17            | 25.45             |
|                | General                            | 0                | 0         | 5.81                | 1.68             | 0.48         | 8.29         | 3.1             | 0                | 49.09             |
|                | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>23.21</b>     | <b>12</b> | <b>45.34</b>        | <b>7.64</b>      | <b>6.72</b>  | <b>11.05</b> | <b>10.24</b>    | <b>21.17</b>     | <b>74.54</b>      |
| Religion       | Call to prayer or Koran recitation | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0.64         | 0            | 0               | 1.97             | 0                 |
|                | Religious ceremonies               | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0            | 0            | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
|                | Religious magazine                 | 3.57             | 0         | 0                   | 2.24             | 2.72         | 0            | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
|                | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>3.57</b>      | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>            | <b>2.24</b>      | <b>3.36</b>  | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>        | <b>1.97</b>      | <b>0</b>          |
| Entertainment  | Film                               | 0                | 20        | 0                   | 7.57             | 12.33        | 30.88        | 5.95            | 0                | 0                 |
|                | Games                              | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 2.1              | 3.84         | 0            | 1.43            | 6.29             | 0                 |
|                | Reality shows                      | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 3.84         | 10.14        | 0               | 5.57             | 0                 |
|                | Drama series / Sitcoms             | 35.71            | 32        | 12.79               | 36.72            | 19.31        | 29.49        | 36.19           | 6.67             | 0                 |
|                | Theatre/ Plays                     | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0            | 0            | 5.95            | 0                | 0                 |
|                | Variety Showbiz                    | 0                | 2         | 9.3                 | 7.29             | 5.44         | 5.07         | 6.43            | 23.09            | 0                 |
|                | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>35.71</b>     | <b>54</b> | <b>22.09</b>        | <b>53.68</b>     | <b>44.76</b> | <b>75.58</b> | <b>55.95</b>    | <b>41.62</b>     | <b>0</b>          |
| Children/Youth | Cartoons                           | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0            | 0            | 4.29            | 0                | 0                 |
|                | Children's programs                | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0            | 0            | 4.76            | 0                | 0                 |
|                | Youth programs                     | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0            | 0            | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
|                | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>9.05</b>     | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>          |

|             | Program Genre                              | Jordan     | Lebanon    | Palestine    | Syria        | Algeria      | Morocco    |            | Tunisia     | Egypt      |
|-------------|--|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Culture     | Literature, poetry, concerts, cooking etc. | 0          | 0          | 4.65         | 16.96        | 1.6          | 0          | 0          | 4.08        | 0          |
|             | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>4.65</b>  | <b>16.96</b> | <b>1.6</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>4.08</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| Documentary | Historical                                 | 0          | 0          | 1.16         | 0            | 5.44         | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | Animal Life                                | 0          | 0          | 0            | 0            | 0.8          | 0          | 0          | 1.2         | 0          |
|             | Social/Cultural                            | 0          | 6          | 1.16         | 0            | 10.31        | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | Scientific                                 | 0          | 0          | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | Sport                                      | 0          | 0          | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | Theater                                    | 0          | 0          | 2.33         | 0            | 0            | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>0</b>   | <b>6</b>   | <b>4.65</b>  | <b>0</b>     | <b>16.55</b> | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>1.2</b>  | <b>0</b>   |
| Advertising | Infomercials                               | 0          | 0          | 0            | 0            | 0            | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | Commercials                                | N/A        | N/A        | N/A          | N/A          | N/A          | N/A        | N/A        | N/A         | N/A        |
|             | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>     | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>    | <b>0</b>   |
| Other       | Songs or Video Clips                       | 0          | 0          | 11.63        | 0            | 0            | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | Other                                      | 0          | 0          | 0            | 0            | 5.38         | 0          | 0          | 0           | 0          |
|             | <b>Total</b>                               | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>11.63</b> | <b>0</b>     | <b>5.38</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>    | <b>0</b>   |
|             | <b>Grand Total</b>                         | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b>   | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> |

\* Please see note related to advertising/commercials in Table 3.a.1

**Prime time program distribution:** A thorough assessment of the programming policies in each of the Arab public broadcasters cannot be undertaken without a close examination of the time period during which programs are broadcast. It can be argued that fulfillment of a public service mission is not a question of quotas and percentages only. Some programs are also given priority in terms of broadcast time. For instance, if a given TV station fulfills its quota for local production (say local drama series or films), but schedules these series or films very late in the evening (or during a broadcasting period characterized by very low viewership), then the objective of promoting national culture and heritage cannot be properly met. Indeed, scheduling some types of programs during odd hours is similar to making them invisible, or “unseen”. Finding out which programs are slotted between 7:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. (i.e. during prime time, which is also a viewing peak time) also gives an indication as to how important such programs are with respect to the programming policy of a given broadcaster.

In general, results with respect to prime time programming for all stations showed a similar pattern (Table 3.a.2). By far, three program genres dominated prime time: the evening news bulletin, the topical information magazines (discussing politics, economy, social issues, etc.), and drama series. To start with, Morocco's 2M had, by far, the highest percentage of entertainment programs during prime time (this general category accounted for 75.58% of all programs shown between 7 and 11 p.m. on 2M). Al Masriya had the highest percentage of information magazines during prime time (74.54% of all prime time programs) while Jordan TV had the highest percentage of news during prime time (37.5% of all prime time programs). There were also exceptions: of all public channels, Syrian TV had the highest percentage of cultural programs during prime time (16.96% of its entire prime time slot), while Algeria's ENTV stood out with 16.55% of its prime time shows consisting of documentaries.

The formula seems to be the same during prime time, when viewers are expected to tune in the most. Arab public broadcasters are offering a high percentage of locally produced shows, consisting mainly of news bulletins and political and social talk shows. Combined, these local news bulletins and (mostly political) talk shows alone make up 99.99% of prime time programming on Egypt's Al Masriya, 60.71% on Jordan TV, 56.97% on Palestine TV, 40% on TL, 35% on Morocco's Al Aoula, 34.52% on Tunisie 7, 27.12% on Syrian TV, 21.88% on Morocco's 2M, and 16.49% on Algeria's ENTV. For each of the broadcasters studied, with the exception of Al Masriya and Tunisie 7 which did not show drama series during prime time (0% and 6.67 respectively), the rest of the prime time slot is filled with a relatively high percentage of (mostly imported) drama series.

In sum, as the present analysis of prime time programs has shown, on the one hand, we find drama series which are heavily broadcast during this period for their popular appeal (except for Al Masriya where reruns of nationally produced drama dominate the afternoon time slot), without this possibly leading to a promotion of the local audiovisual industry or of local culture and content because they are mostly imported and/or reruns, as we have already seen. On the other hand, there is a clear emphasis on news and current affairs shows, which are, for obvious reasons, locally produced and were first screened during May 2010 (i.e. not rerun shows). It is another question altogether whether these news and current affairs programs are fulfilling a public service mission other than that of promoting "local" production in the narrow sense: i.e. whether their content is also providing a fair and balanced representation of events, promoting diversity of opinion, covering issues of interest to the public, and so on. Only a close examination of the content of news and public affairs programs (in terms of themes, guests, and formal structure) can tell us the extent to which these programs are serving a truly informational function, and not just serving as a propaganda vehicle for the regime's policies and actions. This is what the following sections (i.e. 3.B on news and 3.C on information magazines) seek to do.

**Table 3.a.3: % Share of live vs. recorded programs**

| Live/<br>Recorded | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|-------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                   | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Live              | 46.73            | 61.38      | 28.16               | 30               | 34.72       | 11.81      | 21.3            | 23.36            | 30.60             |
| Recorded          | 53.27            | 38.62      | 71.84               | 70               | 65.28       | 88.19      | 78.7            | 76.64            | 69.40             |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

**Table 3.a.4: % Share of local vs. international programs**

| Local/<br>International | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                         | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Local                   | 69.64            | 78.97      | 69.95               | 83.67            | 62.44       | 45.8       | 55.17           | 62.96            | 100               |
| International           | 30.36            | 21.03      | 30.05               | 16.33            | 37.56       | 54.2       | 44.83           | 37.04            | 0                 |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

**Table 3.a.5: % Share of rerun vs. 1st screening programs**

| Rerun/1st<br>Screening | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|------------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                        | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Rerun                  | 32.44            | 31.48      | 35.85               | 16.01            | 32.59       | 27.88      | 24.45           | 18.88            | 38.81             |
| 1st Screening          | 67.56            | 68.52      | 64.15               | 83.99            | 67.41       | 72.12      | 75.55           | 81.12            | 61.19             |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

**Table 3.a.6: Arabic vs. other languages programs**

| Arabic/<br>Other<br>languages | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                               | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Arabic                        | 93.45            | 94.44      | 98.26               | 89.4             | 95.67       | 73.17      | 81.21           | 98.22            | 100               |
| Foreign<br>languages          | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 10.6*            | 0           | 0          | 0               | 1.78             | 0                 |
| English                       | 6.55             | 5.56       | 1.74                | 0                | 0           | 0          | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| Hindi                         | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 1.21       | 2.23            | 0                | 0                 |
| Tamazight                     | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 1.51        | 2.06       | 5.93            | 0                | 0                 |
| Spanish                       | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0          | 1.32            | 0                | 0                 |
| French                        | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 2.81        | 23.57      | 9.32            | 0                | 0                 |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

\* In the case of Syria, the category “other languages” includes mostly English and French.



**Understanding “local” production:** Lebanon’s TL stands out with most of its programming being broadcast live (61.38% of total output). This is probably a reflection of the fact that TL also has the highest output of news bulletins (21.3% of total programming), which are broadcast live, and the fact that 79.4% of its topical information magazines (mostly current affairs) and 100% of its general information magazines (which are also morning shows) are broadcast live. One additional explanation, consistent with the fact that TL has severe and chronic financial problems, is that live broadcasting of news, talk shows, and similar programs is another way of saving on expenses (editing, taping, etc.). Paradoxically, none of these “live” shows which are broadcast directly to homes allows viewers to call in (please see analysis of Lebanese political talk shows in section 3.C.). This means that one cannot infer, simply by knowing that a given program is broadcast direct or live, that the program also involves viewers’ participation, which is one of the features of public service broadcasting (allowing interactivity and viewer participation). The second public broadcaster with a very high percentage of live programming is Jordan TV, with almost half of all shows being broadcast live (46.73%). Similar to the case of Lebanon, this is mostly a reflection of the fact that news bulletins and information magazines (or talk shows) are also broadcast live. To be specific, 100% of general information magazines on Jordan TV are broadcast live, whereas 57.8% of (topical) political and social talk shows are broadcast live. Morocco’s two public channels stand out with the lowest percentage of live programs (11.81% for 2M and 21.3% for Al Aoula).

With respect to language, Arabic (in its various regional dialects) is the main (and often exclusive) language on Arab public television. When programs using other languages are broadcast, these are mostly feature films and other imported programs, where French or English is the language of origin (they are often subtitled in Arabic). It should be noted that Syria and Lebanon have significant linguistic minorities (Kurds and Armenians in Syria, and Armenians in Lebanon). However, neither Syrian TV nor Lebanon’s TL offer programming in Kurdish or Armenian. By contrast, Morocco and Algeria offer programming in Tamazight, the language of the indigenous Amazigh people of the area, which is also recognized as a national language in the Moroccan Constitution. In the case of Algeria’s ENTV and Morocco’s 2M and Al Aoula, the very low percentage of programming in Tamazight (1.51%, 2.06%, and 5.93% respectively) can be explained by the fact that both countries have a specialized public channel dedicated to the Amazigh culture. In other words, this very low percentage cannot be unequivocally interpreted as an indication of the failure of the public broadcasters in these two countries to be inclusive and reflect ethnic and linguistic diversity. It is another issue whether actual programming in the Tamazight language reflects Amazigh content (and cultural specificity), or whether it is simply regular Arabic programming dubbed in Tamazight (as is mostly the case on the specialized channel in Algeria).

### *3.b. Comparative analysis of news bulletins*

#### **3.b.1. Introduction**

The aim of this section is to find out the extent to which pluralism as a core public service objective is being met by Arab public broadcasters, especially with respect to the following aspects:

1. Representing and giving access to the various groups in society: e.g. ministers, MPs, and politicians in general (both majority and opposition), various members of civil society, minority groups, and so on, in addition to promoting gender balance in the news
2. Promoting a national perspective on news, specifically by providing coverage of various local and national news events and getting national reporters to do the field reporting themselves, instead of relying on feeds from foreign news agencies
3. Covering all geographical areas in each of the countries involved, especially rural areas (which are often densely populated), and not just the capital or major cities.
4. Promoting freedom of speech and different perspectives on a variety of issues, including opinions critical of the government.
5. Covering various themes of interest to the public (health, economy, education, environment, human rights, etc.)

More specifically, this part of the analysis of content, by focusing on the evening news bulletin, seeks to answer the following questions which are all derived from the public service values and objectives identified above:

- a. Which public service themes are being covered? How often and for how long?
- b. Which news agents/sources are allowed to express their views on national evening news? How representative are they of the diversity of social groups in society?
- c. How long and how often are these news sources/agents allowed to speak?
- d. What is the gender of these news sources/agents? Is there gender balance on national news when seeking the opinion of news sources/agents?
- e. Is there diversity (or even contradiction) in the opinions expressed? i.e. does the news coverage of the various news themes reflect a healthy, democratic diversity of opinions and promote debate in society? Or is it solely promoting the views of government and of people in power?
- f. To what extent is the news locally produced, with national field reporters being present on the scene?
- g. Is there a balance in covering the different regions of the country (i.e. both rural and urban areas)?

News, especially the evening news, is probably one of the most important program genres from a national perspective. Studies in many Arab countries have shown how television news is the number one source of information for citizens, way ahead of newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For details see <http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/rr-12-02/perspectives.html> and <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/popularity-of-tv-news--concern--89746.html>

Governments have also recognized the ideological function of the news, and have used them for a variety of purposes: nation building, social control, etc.

Several studies exist about the content of news in the Arab world, though most of these concentrate on print media (i.e. newspapers) rather than on television. One major reason for this choice of print media as object of study is the lack of access, in general, to audiovisual research data: national Arab broadcasters, in general, do not keep records of their programs over long periods of time. Moreover, they either suffer from poor archiving due to financial constraints (a case in point is Lebanon's TL), or simply deny citizens and researchers access to their archives when these latter exist. This lack of public access to primary data makes it extremely hard for media researchers to analyze radio or television programs, especially when a large corpus is needed, as is the case with quantitative approaches (e.g. content analysis). Consequently, many researchers choose instead to analyze the more easily accessible content of print media (and more recently, blogs, websites and social media which, by comparison, are easily accessible on the internet).

The present study seeks to fill a gap with respect to the analysis of content on public television in the Arab world. By using a quantitative approach in the present section on news, not only will readers get a thorough understanding of the content of these news bulletins during a "regular" broadcasting period of the year, probably for the first time too they will be able to compare the results for all 8 countries included in the study, since the same methodological approach was adopted for all (including size of sample, coding system, indicators, and units of analysis).

For the purpose of the present analysis of prime time news, 14 consecutive days during the month of May 2010 (from May 12 till May 25 included<sup>2</sup>) were selected for inclusion in the study. It should be noted that another time period in 2010 had to be chosen for Lebanon, because of the municipal elections which took place in May 2010 and which disrupted regular programming on Lebanon's public broadcaster (TL covered heavily this important national event throughout the day and in the evening news over several weeks in May). Using the same time period for TL in the comparative analysis would have strongly skewed the results for Lebanon.

The prime time news on the following TV channels were analyzed:

**Algeria:** ENTV

**Egypt:** Al Masriya

**Jordan:** Jordan TV

**Lebanon:** Tele Liban

**Morocco:** 2M, Al Aoula

**Palestine:** Palestine TV

**Syria:** Syrian TV (1<sup>st</sup> channel)

**Tunisia:** Tunisie 7

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of Tunisie 7, the quantitative analysis of news focused on a 13-day period (May 13-25, 2010). Data from May 12 could not be collected.

The following are the public service themes identified by participants in the Barcelona workshop which took place in June 2010, during the beginning stages of the research project. These themes served to categorize the content of the various news segments and to allow us to assess the diversity of content in the evening news bulletins:

1. Health
2. Human rights
3. Women's issues
4. Minority issues
5. Environment
6. Politics
7. Economy
8. Science & technology
9. Youth and children
10. Education
11. Art & Culture
12. Sports
13. Other

#### 3.b.2. Statistical results and comparative analysis of news bulletins

##### ***3.b.2.a. Coverage of public service themes***

A detailed breakdown of the news bulletins in terms of public service themes covered showed, overall, a great imbalance in the news coverage of these various themes (Table 3.b.1). The overwhelming part of the news bulletins was dedicated to covering politics: Palestine TV and Télé Liban topped the list, respectively, with 81.68% and 76.2% of their total news time dealing with politics. For those two public broadcasters, in other words, news was synonymous with political news. Jordan TV came third with slightly more than half of its news (55.03%) dedicated to politics. The economy, though next in importance (especially for Morocco and Egypt), was a distant third for Jordan TV (15.87%) and Télé Liban (7.41%), with the lowest percentage found at Palestine TV (3.21%). For broadcasters in Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco, coverage of political issues was comparatively less intensive (the average for the first four broadcasters was between 40% and 44%) whereas other themes were given more coverage as we will see below. Morocco was the country with the lowest percentage of total news time dedicated to politics, on public TV (25.86% on 2M and 36.96% on Al Aoula).

In general, the second most dominant theme on the evening news was the economy, knowing that the variation in results between one broadcaster and another was sometimes considerable: whereas the coverage of economic issues was strongest on Morocco's Al Aoula (28.69%), followed by Egypt's Al Masriya (with 20.04%), coverage of this theme was the lowest on Palestine TV (3.21%) and Tunisie 7 (5.64%). Another theme which got relatively extensive coverage for 3 out of the 8 countries was sports, accounting for 19.51%, 16.92%, and 15.94% of all news time in the case of Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan respectively.

Coverage of sports was as important as that of the economy in some cases: the average for both themes was 16% in the case of Jordan TV and 11% for Syrian TV. Tunisie 7 stood out with the biggest gap in terms of coverage time dedicated to these two very important themes (after politics) on Arab public television: 5.64% of the total coverage dealt with the economy (the lowest percentage after Palestine TV), while 19.51% of the coverage dealt with sports (the highest percentage when compared to all other broadcasters).

Morocco's two public channels dedicated a (low) combined average of 5.3% to sports news. However, in the case of 2M and Al Aoula, this cannot be interpreted as a neglect of this important national theme, considering that one of Morocco's specialized public channels is entirely dedicated to sports. The results for Lebanon and Palestine, by contrast, show the utter neglect of sports by TL and Palestine TV (0% and 1.9% respectively). Live coverage of sports in the case of Lebanon's TL is also entirely absent from its general program schedule (please see Section 3.A on programming).

**Table 3.b.1: Theme distribution (by duration only)**

|                      | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|----------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                      | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Health               | 0.64             | 1.42       | 1.78                | 0.95             | 1.76        | 5.23       | 2.04            | 1.66             | 4.13              |
| Human Rights         | 0.13             | 0.49       | 0.67                | 14.99            | 2           | 5.26       | 2.75            | 0                | 4.56              |
| Women's Issues       | 1.1              | 0          | 0.45                | 1.31             | 0.12        | 3.01       | 2.25            | 0.6              | 0                 |
| Minority issues      | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0.69       | 0.96            | 0                | 0.37              |
| Environment          | 6.69             | 3.59       | 2.1                 | 4.54             | 6.14        | 9.12       | 5               | 3.57             | 1.71              |
| Politics             | 55.03            | 76.2       | 81.68               | 40.22            | 44.1        | 25.86      | 36.96           | 41.91            | 42.69             |
| Economy              | 15.87            | 7.41       | 3.21                | 11.81            | 7.67        | 21.4       | 28.69           | 5.64             | 20.04             |
| Science & Technology | 0                | 0.3        | 0                   | 0.47             | 4.33        | 0.7        | 0               | 6.18             | 1.85              |
| Children & Youth     | 0                | 0.89       | 0                   | 0.96             | 0.82        | 2.83       | 0.54            | 1.37             | 0                 |
| Education            | 0                | 0.96       | 0.9                 | 1.12             | 9.46        | 0.76       | 2.09            | 2.44             | 0.74              |
| Art & Culture        | 2.82             | 7.72       | 4.27                | 8.67             | 12.22       | 20.47      | 9.37            | 16.75            | 1.87              |
| Sports               | 15.94            | 0          | 1.93                | 11.17            | 10.05       | 2.92       | 7.79            | 19.51            | 16.92             |
| Other                | 1.79             | 1.03       | 3.01                | 3.79             | 1.33        | 1.76       | 1.56            | 0.36             | 5.11              |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

With the exception of the theme of “art & culture” (which received an aggregate average of 9.3% of the total coverage for all channels), other important public service themes identified in this study received such a low percentage of the total coverage (in terms of duration) that

they are practically non-existent in the evening news: “human rights”, “minority issues”, “women’s issues”, “children and youth”, “environment”, “education”, and “science and technology”. Starting with the first two inter-related themes “human rights” and “minority issues”, there are significant results that deserve to be analyzed. The Arab world is quite diverse when it comes to the origin, ethnicity, religion, and languages of its population. Moreover, the political and social status of its minority groups is generally inferior to that of the majority population in the Arab countries, which simultaneously raises important human rights concerns with respect to the lives and safety of these minority groups (the recurrent violence against the Christian Copt minority in Egypt is one such example, and the inhumane treatment of Iraqi refugees and prison inmates in Lebanon is another).<sup>3</sup>

Yet, human rights issues were barely covered in the news. With the exception of Tunisia where this theme is not covered at all (0%), coverage of human rights issues on public TV varied between 0% and 5.2% for 7 out of the 8 countries studied, with coverage of this theme on 5 broadcasters not exceeding 1%. Syrian TV stood out with the highest percentage of total coverage dealing with human rights (14.99%).

Results concerning the coverage of many themes and topics on Arab public broadcasters should be used with caution. This is mostly true with respect to political news, especially news about human rights violations and minority issues, but also in the case of “less sensitive”, apparently non-political news such as “the economy”, “arts & culture”, “science & technology”, and so on. For instance, coverage of the theme of “human rights” is often self-serving, meant to either emphasize the “improvements” with respect to this issue on the national level, or the “abuses by others” (especially Israelis), at the regional level. In the case of Egypt, where this issue was covered only a handful of times on public TV, the main human rights story was about the success of implementing international human rights standards inside Egyptian prisons (25 May 2010). This was so despite the existence of major violations (including torture) inside these prisons, as documented by national and international human rights organizations.<sup>4</sup> Another “human rights” story (specifically about “human rights violations in the region”) involved the killing of an Egyptian engineer in Nigeria (16 May 2010).

On Syrian TV, where the coverage of human rights issues was the highest (14.99%), this should not be readily interpreted as a reflection of this public broadcaster’s interest in human rights issues at all levels. Indeed, in the case of Syria (but also of Palestine), the human rights issue in the news focused exclusively on the human rights abuses by Israelis. Human rights abuses within each of these two countries (i.e. abuses perpetrated by an Arab government against its own people, especially in the prisons) were simply absent from the news.

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3 Lebanon: Iraqi refugees face prison and deportation. *United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*, (2007, November 6). Available at <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=75172>

4 For details concerning torture in Egyptian prisons as documented by the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), check [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian\\_Organization\\_for\\_Human\\_Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_Organization_for_Human_Rights)

As for minority issues, a major story about the sectarian shooting and killing in Egypt of 6 Christian Copts outside a church in Nag Hammadi on May 17th, 2010, was very briefly (118 seconds) and superficially covered, without providing any background information or analysis. This news story marked the only time when Al Masriya covered a minority issue over a two-week period in May 2010 (0.37% of total news time).

Finally, the statistical results with respect to other important public service themes, such as “children and youth”, “education”, “science and technology”, and the “environment”, were so low for most of the Arab broadcasters studied that one could say they were practically non-existent. Once again, the gap between public interest and needs, and editorial priorities in the news room becomes glaring. For instance, in a region that boasts some of the highest rates of youth population in the world, it is surprising to see that issues related to “children and youth” are absent from the main evening news (the average percentage of news coverage for all stations was 0.8%). Similarly, education was a “non-topic” on the evening news. With the exception of ENTV which scored a relatively high 9.46% in this respect, the average for all other broadcasters was 1.1% of evening news time dedicated to this theme.

Women’s issues, also not surprisingly, did not get covered either (average 1% coverage for all stations, with Morocco’s 2M scoring the highest with just 3%, and Lebanon and Egypt scoring the lowest with 0%). In a region where women’s organizations are numerous (numbering by the hundreds for each country) active, and work on a variety of issues related to human rights, their (near) absence in the evening news is problematic to say the least. This is especially so in a country like Tunisia (0.6% of the total news coverage dealt with women’s issues), which boasts of having the most progressive, pro-women laws and policies in the Arab world. This absence of coverage of women’s issues is probably symptomatic of a general attitude among Arab public broadcasters according to which news is exclusively about men, specifically high ranking politicians and heads of state even when the theme is not traditionally “masculine” (e.g. politics and sports). Indeed, when other public service themes were covered during the two weeks in May 2010 (e.g. health, science and technology, or art and culture), coverage highlighted the achievements of the government at the expense of any other angle or perspective of interest to the public. A case in point is that of the Egyptian Al Masriya: of the very few “art and culture” themes covered by this public broadcaster (1.87% of total news time), the main national cultural item concerned the inauguration of the Egyptian Academy of Art in Rome (16 May 2010). This important non-political event became another opportunity to praise the government’s achievements and was covered as part of President Mubarak’s visit to Italy, and not as an important cultural event in and of itself. The same can be said about other public service themes covered, such as “health”. Most of the (few) news segments dealing with this theme consisted of investments in health infrastructure (such as the inauguration of a new hospital or medical research institute), and the health-related events were framed as an achievement by the government and covered in the framework of an official visit by President Mubarak or one of the top officials in his government.

Coverage of several “non-political” events on Tunisie 7 followed a similar trend. Not only was President Ben Ali present in the top news segments about politics (greeting officials and politicians), several news segments about themes such as “education”, “art and culture”, “sports”, “environment” or “science and technology” were often just another occasion for the president to appear on and dominate the evening news. For instance, on the 13th of May 2010, what could have been exclusively an event about health and alternative farming (organic farms in Tunisia) was covered as an “official visit by the president” to one such farm. News segments about the theme of “science and technology”, which had the highest coverage on Tunisie 7 (6.18% of the total whereas the average for other stations was 0.9%), were also another opportunity to praise the government’s effort and achievements with respect to this theme. For instance, over several days in May, the visit by an American astronaut to Tunisian schools served to highlight the role of the Tunisian government in promoting interest in science and technology among students. None of these news segments, however, mentioned which practical and concrete measures were undertaken by the government to that effect, and whether schools throughout the country were actually equipped to provide students with an adequate scientific education or to facilitate access to technology.

Consequently, one should not hastily assume that Arab public broadcasters are actually covering themes of interest and value to the public simply because these themes can be identified in the news. “Health”, “culture”, “education”, the “environment” and other “non-political” themes are very often covered from a single (political) angle: to highlight government achievements (specifically those by the head of state) in all walks of public life. For this reason, a more in-depth, qualitative look at the framing and handling of news and public affairs issues is required in order to adequately assess the public service mission of broadcasters –a task we turn to in the following section on the qualitative analysis of current affairs shows or «information magazines» (Section 3C).

### 3.b.2.b. Gender representation in the news

**Table 3.b.2: Theme distribution (by duration only)**

|              | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|--------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|              | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Male         | 94.34            | 92.43      | 92.59               | 83.86            | 93.38       | 78.68      | 84.84           | 76.8             | 95.64             |
| Female       | 5.66             | 7.57       | 7.41                | 16.14            | 6.62        | 21.32      | 15.16           | 23.2             | 4.36              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

Results show that women are severely underrepresented in the news genre on all 9 public broadcasters. They are rarely seen and heard as news agents/speakers in 5 of the 8 countries studied (Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Algeria, and Egypt) where, on average, they make up only 6.3% of all news speakers solicited for their views on the evening news. Al Masriya scored the lowest in this respect (with only 4.36% of its news speakers being female). Tunisie 7 came first with the highest percentage of women appearing as news



agents. Morocco's 2M came second, with 21,32%. However, a more detailed analysis of female representation that considers their speaking time by theme, and not as a percentage of the total time for speakers during the two weeks studied, shows more differentiated results. Women as news speakers are found to be more present in some news segments than others, depending on the theme of the news segment.

In general, women as news agents/speakers seem to be more solicited when the theme dealt with is in line with the traditional/stereotypical role assigned to them: i.e. in health, education, art and culture, and, predictably, news about women's issues. By contrast, women are almost entirely absent from those news segments which cover areas considered to be part of the "male domain", i.e. politics, the economy, and sports.

To start with, Morocco's public channels are, by far, the two broadcasters with the highest percentage of female speakers when a thematic approach to gender representation is taken into consideration: with respect to the theme of "children and youth", we find that 56.52% of the news speakers are female on Morocco's Al Aoula. When it comes to education on Morocco's 2M, 68.57% of news speakers are women. Women as news agents/ speakers in these two public broadcasters become a significant majority when the theme is "women's issues": 72.76% of news speakers on Al Aoula are women, as opposed to 63.32% on 2M.

On other public broadcasters which provided some coverage of "women's issues", the percentage went significantly up, with women sometimes making up 100% of all speakers in news items about this theme, as was the case in Jordan, Palestine, and Syria. Lebanon's TL, Egypt's Al Masriya, and Algeria's ENTV stood out with 0% inclusion of female speakers with respect to this theme. One major explanation for this absence of women as news agents is due to the fact that the theme of "women's issues" itself was practically not covered in these countries during the two-week period studied (0% coverage in Lebanon, 0% in Egypt, and 0.12% in Algeria). Paradoxically, Tunisie 7, despite Tunisia's official pro-women stance and family laws (not matched anywhere in the Arab world), joined the ranks of TL, ENTV, and Al Masriya in terms of allocating news time to the theme of "women's issues" (0.6% of all news time for the entire period covered). Unlike these countries, it allowed women to "speak" in the very few news segments about women's issues: 63.41% of speakers in these segments were women. However, when the total duration of speaking time and not the percentage of speaking time is taken into consideration for this theme, one realizes the extent to which women are "silent" or "absent" (or both) even on Tunisie7 where they spoke for only 26 seconds on women's issues during the two weeks of evening news in May 2010.

The percentage of female speakers was very high in news about education when this theme was covered (Lebanon with 100%, Egypt with 100%, Tunisia with 61.14%, Palestine with 42.67%, Morocco's 2M with 68.57%, and Al Aoula with 32.11%). Results were also relatively high for the theme of "art & culture", where women's presence ranged between 15% and 35%, except for Jordan and Egypt where they were once again entirely absent (see Table 3.b.3. for details).

Women were also solicited as speakers in news segments dealing with the themes of “human rights” and “health”. Tunisia 7 news stood out with 69.23% of speakers in health-related issues about women. However, when one considers that this theme only got 1.66% of the total news time, the high percentage of female speakers becomes insignificant (a total of 90 seconds in two weeks). On Palestine TV, women were the only news agents when covering the theme of human rights (i.e. 100%), but this theme was barely covered on PTV to start with (0.67% of all news on PTV), and women spoke for a total of 27 seconds only on the issue of human rights throughout the two weeks in May 2010.

In sum, results varied from one country to another with respect to women as agents/speakers in the news. Tunisia 7 had the best representation of women (as news speakers) of all countries studied (a total average of 23.2% of all news speakers on this channel). It was followed closely by Morocco (a combined average of 18.24% for the two public channels), and then Syria (16.14%). The average for all other broadcasters was a meager 6.3%. Moreover, the percentage of female representation varied, depending on the theme covered in each news segment. Their presence was very low when the news segments dealt with politics (average of 7.34% for all countries), economic issues (10.86%), or sports (2.62%). It should be noted that these 3 themes got the highest coverage on all 9 broadcasters. By contrast, female presence was the highest in areas traditionally associated with women such as culture, education, health, and women’s issues/rights – areas which were rarely covered on the evening news, as we saw above. News and politics seem to be public arenas exclusive to men.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 3.b.3: Gender representation by topic (or public service theme) in terms of speaking time**

|                       |        | Jordan           | Lebanon   | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco   |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|-----------------------|--------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                       |        | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i> | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i> | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| <b>Health</b>         | Male   | 100              | 67.74     | 89.44               | 100              | 100         | 73.14     | 76              | 30.77            | 77.72             |
|                       | Female | 0                | 32.26     | 10.56               | 0                | 0           | 26.86     | 24              | 69.23            | 22.28             |
| <b>Human Rights</b>   | Male   | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 73.99            | 66.46       | 70.85     | 68.42           | 0                | 94.44             |
|                       | Female | 0                | 0         | 100                 | 26.01            | 33.54       | 29.15     | 31.58           | 0                | 5.56              |
| <b>Women's Issues</b> | Male   | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 36.68     | 27.24           | 36.59            | 0                 |
|                       | Female | 100              | 0         | 100                 | 100              | 0           | 63.32     | 72.76           | 63.41            | 0                 |
| <b>Minorities</b>     | Male   | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 100       | 92.13           | 0                | 100               |
|                       | Female | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 7.87            | 0                | 0                 |

<sup>5</sup> For more details on the participation of women in politics and the workforce, check article on the Arab Human Development Report for 2011 titled “Lack of data slows progress in Lebanon: UN report”. *Daily Star* newspaper, 4 November 2011.

|                      |        | Jordan           | Lebanon   | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco   |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|----------------------|--------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                      |        | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i> | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i> | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Environment          | Male   | 98.6             | 66.1      | 100                 | 100              | 91.13       | 71.57     | 80.91           | 69.47            | 100               |
|                      | Female | 1.4              | 33.9      | 0                   | 0                | 8.87        | 28.43     | 19.09           | 30.53            | 0                 |
| Politics             | Male   | 94.35            | 96.94     | 93.54               | 87.29            | 96.76       | 86.7      | 96.66           | 83.98            | 97.73             |
|                      | Female | 5.65             | 3.06      | 6.46                | 12.71            | 3.24        | 13.3      | 3.34            | 16.02            | 2.27              |
| Economy              | Male   | 99.06            | 90.21     | 100                 | 94.1             | 100         | 88.47     | 80.15           | 59.91            | 93.08             |
|                      | Female | 0.94             | 9.79      | 0                   | 5.9              | 0           | 11.53     | 19.85           | 40.09            | 6.92              |
| Science & Technology | Male   | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 91.6        | 0         | 0               | 87.27            | 100               |
|                      | Female | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 8.4         | 0         | 0               | 12.73            | 0                 |
| Children & Youth     | Male   | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 100              | 100         | 66.53     | 43.48           | 56.76            | 0                 |
|                      | Female | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 33.47     | 56.52           | 43.24            | 0                 |
| Education            | Male   | 0                | 0         | 57.33               | 100              | 95.61       | 31.43     | 67.89           | 38.86            | 0                 |
|                      | Female | 0                | 100       | 42.67               | 0                | 4.39        | 68.57     | 32.11           | 61.14            | 100               |
| Art & Culture        | Male   | 100              | 83.8      | 80.4                | 84.63            | 64.09       | 70.96     | 67.5            | 83.29            | 100               |
|                      | Female | 0                | 16.2      | 19.6                | 15.37            | 35.91       | 29.04     | 32.5            | 16.71            | 0                 |
| Sports               | Male   | 93.31            | 0         | 100                 | 100              | 100         | 100       | 90.25           | 92.82            | 100               |
|                      | Female | 6.69             | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 9.75            | 7.18             | 0                 |
| Other                | Male   | 100              | 0         | 100                 | 100              | 100         | 100       | 100             | 0                | 100               |
|                      | Female | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0               | 0                | 0                 |

### ***3.b.2.c. Access of various national agents/actors to the news (by function or position)***

The analysis of news speakers or agents entailed the classification of national news actors according to their public function, profession, or type of employment. This breakdown made it possible to assess the extent to which various national societal actors/groups were involved or solicited in the news (i.e. had access to public television), and whether governments and parties in power were monopolizing the news (or not). Indeed, one of the major roles of public service broadcasters is to serve the public (in all its diversity) and not the interests of the regime or people in power. In other words, not only should public

service broadcasters cover issues relevant to the public, they should also give access to various members of civil society (including religious or ethnic minority groups), and allow them to speak for themselves, not just to be spoken for or about.

When gender was used as an indicator (see Table 3.b.2), results showed that women, as a group, were in general marginalized in the evening news bulletin and rarely solicited as news agents. In this part of the news analysis, the position or function of the news speakers who appear and speak on the evening news is also used as an indicator in order to find out if the 9 Arab public broadcasters are living up to the ideal of making national, publicly-owned TV accessible to the various groups in society, on one of television's most watched programs during prime time.

Results in Table 3.b.7 show that visual appearances, through still photos or video footage, by national politicians (as a general category of news agents which includes government ministers, MPs, heads of state, previous government members and MPs, etc.) by far dominated the evening news on most Arab public broadcasters during May 2010.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this category of news actors was the largest, overshadowing all other categories (national civil society groups on the one hand, and all regional and international politicians and organizations on the other). Of all public broadcasters studied throughout the two weeks in 2010, TL allocated the highest percentage of the total photo/video time for news agents to national politicians (60.26%). ENTV came second (53%), and Jordan TV came third with 41.22 %. With the exception of Palestine TV which had the lowest percentage in this respect (18.79%), the results varied between 23.59 % and 37.86% for Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia. In Morocco, the combined average for both public broadcasters was 32.5% –a result which was relatively close to that obtained in most other countries. This national average for Morocco, however, masks the big discrepancy in percentages which existed between 2M and Al Aoula (20.09% and 45.15% respectively).

When the percentage of public officials who work in the various national ministries is added to the category “national politicians” (please check the category “government administration” in Table 3.b.4), the percentage of news agents directly associated with national governments and the ruling elites in each country further increases. The most

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6 Methodological note: With respect to news agents/speakers, a distinction was made between the “time of their appearance” and their “speaking time”. Those two indicators did not always coincide: a given news agent could be seen on the news but not heard directly when speaking (a voice-over narration by the anchor or journalist is heard instead). Moreover, all news agents/speakers were separated into two broad categories: national vs. international news actors. “National” refers to all news agents/speakers who are citizens of one of the countries included in the present study. In that case, the qualifier “national” will not be used every time a national news agent is referred to in the text or the tables. For instance, an Egyptian MP who appears on Egypt's Al-Masriya is considered to be a “national” news agent, without adding the qualifier “national” or “Egyptian” in related tables. If any other Arab (i.e. Palestinian, Jordanian, etc.) or non-Arab (i.e. British, French, Chinese, etc.) news speaker appears on Al-Masriya, he/she will be categorized as “international” news agent, and the qualifier “international” will be used consistently in the tables with statistical results for Egypt's public channel. Likewise, with respect to results for Tunisie 7, for instance, a “national” MP or minister is understood to be Tunisian (therefore the “national” qualifier will not be used in the tables of results). If an Egyptian politician appears on Tunisie 7, he/she will be categorized as “international news agent” when calculating the results for Tunisie 7, and the qualifier “international” will be used.

dramatic increase is noted with respect to Palestine TV. Indeed, it is the only Arab public broadcaster where public officials employed in the various ministries, as one category of national news agents, appear much more frequently than the Palestinian head of state, all ministers, and all MPs combined (38.05% and 18.79% respectively). Together, these two categories of national news agents dominated the evening news on PTV (56.84% of all news agents who appeared throughout the two weeks in May 2010).

By contrast, the percentage of members of civil society as national news agents was significantly low in each country (Table 3.b.7). For all public broadcasters except TL and 2M, the average for all members of this general category who appeared as news agents was 13.5%. The percentage was the lowest on Lebanon's TL (only 3% of all appearances by news agents) and the highest on Morocco's 2M. Indeed, 2M stood out as the only Arab public broadcaster which privileged appearances by members of civil society over appearances by politicians: it had the second lowest percentage of appearances being made by national politicians (20%) and the highest percentage of news appearances being made by members of Moroccan civil society (26.95%).

Interestingly, results differed (sometimes dramatically) when speaking time for national politicians (as a general category of news agents) was calculated (compare tables 3.b.7 & 3.b.8). In other words, when a national politician was seen on screen for a given duration of time, he/she was not always speaking for the same duration (the opposite is also true). For instance, in the case of Algeria, the percentage of photo/video time was 53.06% for national politicians, while the percentage of their speaking time was 43.38%. This means that not all politicians who appeared as news agents were also heard speaking (some were only seen in the news). While TL news stood out as the only evening news where photo/video time for national politicians (as a general category) was lower than their speaking time (60.26% and 68.14% respectively), Tunisie 7 had the biggest drop in percentage points when speaking time was considered with respect to the same category of news agents (photo/video time at 37.86% vs. speaking time at 8.08%). Syrian TV came second (photo/ video time at 28.44% vs. speaking time at 8.97%). In other words, in the case of Tunisia and Syria, national politicians were seen very frequently during the evening news but they were rarely heard speaking.

Calculating the time when a news agent speaks for him/herself is an important factor when determining the extent to which this news agent is literally and metaphorically given a "voice" in the news. It is common in news bulletins to see politicians (from the entire political spectrum) and members of civil society, and to hear simultaneously the voice-over of the channel's journalist "paraphrasing" their views or "commenting" on their activities. In the case of opposition MPs and critical members of civil society, this "paraphrasing" through the voice-over technique can play a very ideological role: on the one hand the channel can argue that it is "representing" critical voices (they are actually seen in the news), but on the other hand their "voice" is conveniently contained/controlled (and eventually silenced) through the use of the voice-over technique. Only a more in-depth, qualitative analysis of the content of direct televised speeches/commentaries by news agents/sources,

which juxtaposes them with the voice-over/paraphrased version of these speeches on a given TV channel, can effectively determine the extent to which critical news agents are allowed to speak for themselves directly and freely (or not).

It should be noted that of all types of national politicians included in the general category “politicians as news agents”, presidents and kings –as individual news agents– showed the biggest discrepancy in terms of percentage points when photo/video time was compared with speaking time. In the case of most heads of state in the 8 countries studied, they appeared very frequently and for relatively long periods of time, but they rarely spoke, with the exception of President Abbas (on PTV) and King Abdallah (on JTV) whose speaking time and photo time were almost a perfect match. For instance, President Assad of Syria, President Mubarak of Egypt, and President Bouteflika of Algeria were never heard speaking in the evening news, although their presence is quite dominant for a single news actor (compare results in tables 3.b.4 and 3.b.5). Bouteflika was the most dominant single news agent on the evening news on ENTV (16% of the duration of all photo/video appearances by news agents), but he was never heard speaking in the evening news (0% speaking time). The gap was even greater in the case of Tunisia’s Ben Ali (22.03% of total photo/video time vs. 0.78% of total speaking time).

As already argued above, in the case of news agents who are members of the national opposition or who are critical towards national government, a speaking time which is lower than photo/video time can be indicative of an editorial decision in the news room to subtly and indirectly “silence” their voices. This can hardly be the case with Arab heads of state who appear frequently and for relatively long periods of times on the news, but are not heard speaking. The “silent TV presence” of these Arab heads of state seems to be a “journalistic” practice that plagues the national news in the Arab world: most news bulletins revolve around (and start with) the president or the king. On a daily basis and almost ritualistically, he is tirelessly seen receiving guests and officials, visiting other heads of state and other countries, inaugurating new public institutions, and so on. He makes the news even when he has nothing “new” to say. Indeed, some of these heads of state do not have to speak at all. Someone else (in this case the anchor or journalist) does the talking on their behalf.

The results in Table 3.b.6 seem to confirm the “personality cult” with respect to heads of state in the Arab world. They are always in the headlines and the opening segments of the news, regardless of the existence of a newsworthy occurrence or event to justify the predominance of their photo/video appearance. When only the top 4 segments in each news bulletin were analyzed, the results in terms of frequency of appearance of news actors/agents further highlighted the strong presence of national heads of state compared to other news actors/agents. In other words, the beginning of the news bulletin, understood to be the section of the news bulletin where the most important news are delivered first, seems to be reserved for the national head of state in each of the 9 broadcasters analyzed. As a single news actor, he appeared more frequently in these opening segments than any other high ranking politician in the country (e.g. prime minister or speaker of parliament). The most extreme case was that of Tunisia’s Ben Ali: 25.74% of all appearances were

attributed to him. As a single news agent, he appeared more frequently than any other news agent or group of agents (i.e. ministers, MPs, public officials, etc) throughout the two weeks studied.<sup>7</sup>

In Algeria, Bouteflika alone made up 16.67% of all appearances by news actors in the top 4 news segments, whereas Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, who appeared throughout the two weeks, was totally absent (0% appearances in the top 4 segments). Morocco's king was the Arab head of state who appeared the least in the top 4 segments on the daily evening news (combined average of 5.7% for 2M and Al Aoula).

Table 3.b.6 also showed the very low importance accorded to news of parliament in each of the 8 countries. The speaker of parliament was totally absent (0% frequency of appearance) from the top 4 news segments in the following countries: Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt. He was barely seen on ENTV (1.85%). The results were identical with respect to majority and opposition MPs in each of the above-mentioned countries (i.e. 0%), with the exception of Morocco: whereas the speaker of parliament was totally absent from the top 4 news segments over two weeks, the presence of both majority and opposition MPs was recorded in these news segments, with the representation of the two parliamentary groups being almost equal on each of 2M and Al Aoula.

The case of TL was exceptional in many respects: both the prime minister (Saad Hariri) and the speaker of parliament (Nabih Berri), as single news actors, dominated the top 4 segments of the news on TL (4.17% and 5.83% respectively), coming after President Suleiman (12.5%). These results confirm the Lebanese ruling principle of "troika" which has been consolidated since the end of the civil war, and according to which "3 presidents" of 3 different religious communities (or confessions) rule the country: the Maronite head of state, the Sunni prime minister, and the Shi'ite speaker of parliament. It is also important to note that Lebanon's TL stands out as the only publicly-owned broadcaster which gave relatively high access to opposition MPs in its evening news (Table 3.b.5), with 18.66% of all speaking time going to this category of Lebanese news actors – a percentage which slightly exceeded that of majority MPs (16.62%). By contrast, opposition MPs were totally absent from Jordan TV (0%), Syrian TV (0%), and Al Masriya (0%); and barely heard on Palestine TV (0.17%), ENTV (0.92%), and Tunisie 7 (1.15%).

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<sup>7</sup> "Frequency of appearance" of news agents in Table 3.b.6. was calculated by counting every time a news agent appeared in the first four news segments in each of the 14 evening bulletins broadcast in May 2010, regardless of the duration of this appearance (or speaking time) within this segment. For instance, if news agent X appeared in three different segments in the same evening news, this agent X has a frequency of 3 on that evening. This also means that two news agents A and B might score the same in terms of the total duration of their "appearance time", but have very different frequencies of appearance over the two weeks of news: this is so if news agent A appeared in only one news segment over a period of two weeks, for an extended period of time, while news agent B appeared for very brief periods of time in various news segments over several days. In this case, agent B will get a significantly higher number (and percentage) than agent A in Table 3.b.6 about frequency of appearance. Calculating the "frequency of appearance" allows us to gauge, as much as possible, the extent to which some news agents "dominate" the evening news through the recurrent, consistent use of their image and/or voice.

Although Morocco's two public broadcasters seemed to offer balanced access with respect to majority and opposition MPs in the country (a combined average of 2.99% and 3.53% respectively), results showed pro-government bias when the presence of ministers (through their speaking time) was also taken into consideration: with a combined average of 14.5% on both channels, Moroccan ministers were granted 5 times as much speaking time as majority or opposition MPs in the country. This unequal access (with respect to these 3 major political groups) becomes even more disproportionate when officials from the various ministries in Morocco (i.e. members of government administration) are added to the group of ministers who spoke on the news. On Al Aoula, for instance, the speaking time of both majority and opposition MPs was almost exactly the same (4.06% and 4.28% respectively). Ministers and officials from the various ministries, by contrast, got 44.74% of the total speaking time for all news agents/speakers on this public broadcaster, coming second only after ENTV (where ministers and officials from ministries got 68.75% of all speaking time). TL, by contrast, seemed to have achieved, during the two weeks in December 2010, the perfect balance with respect to giving access to Lebanese ministers, majority MPs, and opposition MPs (19.75%, 16.62%, and 18.66% respectively).

As for the inclusion of members of civil society as news agents, results show that, in general, some important groups under this general category were practically excluded by almost all public operators included in this study. This is the case with members of trade unions, which were not heard at all in the evening news, with the exception of Morocco's 2M (1.89% of total speaking time for all national news actors) and Jordan TV (1.53%). Representatives of minority groups were also entirely absent, with 0% speaking time on all Arab public broadcasters except on Al Aoula (0.16%) and Al Masriya (0.14%). Members of national NGOs were also very rarely heard speaking on the news on Al Masriya (0.27%), Jordan TV (0.41%), Tunisie 7 (0.78%), ENTV (1.15%), TL (1.21%), and Syrian TV (4.77%). They fared better on PTV (8%), but mostly on Morocco's 2 channels (an average of 8.8%). In sum, news on these Arabic public channels was not only predominantly about politics, it was also about high-ranking politicians in each country (particularly ministers and heads of state). Members of parliament, as well as members of civil society, particularly national NGOs and trade unions, were practically excluded.

The case of Syria is as an exception (or aberration?) in terms of giving members of the "public" (independent experts and ordinary citizens) more access to the evening news than politicians (table 3.b.5). With 28.25% and 14.37% respectively, "experts" and people "randomly" interviewed on the street (or vox populi) were the main news agents and speakers on the evening bulletin, surpassing by far President Assad (who did not speak at all), the Syrian prime minister (3.19%), and all the Syrian ministers grouped together (5.78%). Indeed, these "independent experts" and "ordinary people" were allowed to speak and shape the news whereas members of parliament (whether majority or opposition MPs) were not given any airtime whatsoever (0%).

This is the type of quantitative result that casts doubt on the validity of reaching conclusions based on a single criterion (e.g speaking time of news actors). Screen presence and speaking time may be important indicators when it comes to assessing the content of



news, but they do not suffice to paint a complete picture about who has access to the news and who doesn't. Equally important with respect to knowing "who" is speaking in the news is an appraisal of "what" they are saying. In the context of the present study, various news actors may have had access to the news, while some others were totally excluded. But those who were included in the news as "speakers", and who hold a given "representative" position in society (i.e. they represent trade unions, or academia, or NGOs, or minority groups, or ordinary citizens, etc.), do not necessarily speak truth to power, and may even reiterate dominant, hegemonic, and pro-government views on controversial or sensitive matters. Worse yet, they may be included (or carefully selected) as news agents precisely because of the ideological function they can play in this respect: i.e. to legitimize and reinforce the views held by the power elite, because these views are presumably "accepted" and "expressed freely" by members of "the public", as we are going to see next. Perhaps no recent example illustrates best the ideological role of the "approving" and "cheering masses" than the nationally televised rallies held in support of President Assad in Damascus throughout the recent popular uprising against his regime, while his army was cracking down brutally on unarmed civilians and members of the opposition, who were nowhere to be seen on Syrian TV.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the real test for "diversity" and "inclusiveness" in news coverage by a public broadcaster is not only the extent to which news agents are varied (in terms of the position they occupy in society or their "representativeness"), but also the extent to which their views about events are actually different and even contradictory. The results in table 3.b.9 about diversity of opinions within each news segment are particularly revealing. ENTV had the highest percentage of news segments which consisted of a single, pro-government point of view or perspective, with 78.55%. In terms of (speaking) news agents, government ministers represented the largest category of news speakers on ENTV (41.68%), and dominated the national public screen more than their counterparts in any of the other Arab countries. Based on this statistical result only, it can be argued that, in the case of ENTV, the dominance of government speakers is somehow positively correlated with the dominance of pro-government views and perspectives. However, this presumed correlation (between government speakers and pro-government views) is seriously weakened when one examines the results for Syrian TV and Tunisie 7.

Syrian TV had a very high percentage of Syrian experts (28.25%) and ordinary citizens (14.37%) who spoke in the news (a combined total of 42.62% of all speaking time for news agents, practically double the speaking time for all Syrian politicians, see Table 3.b.5). However, it had the highest percentage of news segments which expressed only pro-government views (63.32%). In the case of Tunisie 7, the combined percentage for Tunisian experts and citizens (vox pop) as news speakers was 42.58% of the total speaking time for all news agents on this channel – a result almost identical to that of Syrian TV (42.64%). Not only did Tunisie 7 allow "randomly" selected, ordinary citizens to express their views on the news, the percentage of speaking time for this group was higher than

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance "Pro-Assad rally as more die in Syria" in the *Daily Star* newspaper, November 1st, 2011, available at <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2011/Nov-01/152807-pro-assad-rally-as-more-die-in-syria.ashx#axzz1ov6P4Z5B>

any other group on Tunisia's public channel, including ministers, MPs, and members of various government administrations combined. In the case of both Syrian TV and Tunisie 7, not only was the percentage of pro-government views very high (63.32% and 38.69% respectively), in both countries, just like in Algeria, there were no contradictory views expressed in the same segment (0%), and not a single segment which contained views critical of national government (0%) (see Table 3.b.9).

In Egypt, where nearly one fifth of all speaking time for news agents went to Egyptian experts, news segments which featured these experts did not contain views critical of the Egyptian government. In one news segment or item about human rights standards in Egyptian prisons (25 May 2012), the expert quoted was Mokbel Shaker, vice president of the National Council of Human Rights (NCHR). He didn't express any views critical of government concerning the standards within Egyptian prisons, despite the regular reports published by national and international NGOs which documented human rights abuses in these prisons. In a similar fashion, citizens who were quoted in the news (vox pop) expressed views that served to reinforce the dominant state position on the issues discussed in the news. For instance, throughout the extensive coverage of the opening of the Rafah crossing (13, 15, 19, and 20 May 2010), several citizens were interviewed on site. All of them expressed their support and gratitude to the Egyptian authorities for opening the crossing.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, it seems that the correlation between the inclusion of non-governmental (national) news speakers in the evening bulletin and the expression of views critical of government is very weak to say the least. Regardless of who the national news speakers are (whether government officials, "independent" experts, or ordinary citizens), public TV in most Arab countries is not a space for the expression of views critical of national government. Indeed, 6 out of the 9 broadcasters did not allow any views critical of their national government whatsoever on public TV (0%): Jordan TV, Palestine TV, Syrian TV, Al Masriya, ENTV, and Tunisie 7. By contrast, news on these public broadcasters contained many segments which were either neutral or where different opinions were expressed (this was especially true with respect to national sports and some other national cultural events, and with respect to several non-sensitive regional and international news items).

Morocco and Lebanon offered a refreshing, interesting contrast to the above-mentioned countries, though in very different ways. To start with, 2M and Al Aoula were the two Arab public broadcasters which allowed, more than any other broadcaster, two or more news agents to express contradictory views in the same news segments (respectively 7.36% and 10.17% of the total news segments) (Table 3.b.9). This means that viewers could observe contradictory constructions or interpretations of one and the same event by various news actors. In that respect, Morocco seems to be the only country with public broadcasting that fulfilled, to some extent, a public service mission whereby critical thinking and diversity of views are encouraged (or at least accepted) in its news genre. In section 3A on general

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<sup>9</sup> For more details about the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel\\_and\\_Egypt%E2%80%93Gaza\\_Strip\\_barrier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_and_Egypt%E2%80%93Gaza_Strip_barrier)

programming, we also saw how Morocco was the only Arab country that provided daily coverage of parliamentary activities and debates on its public broadcasters. Interestingly, while 2M and Al Aoula allowed a measure of contradictory views to air within the same news segments, they did not allow anti-government views to air throughout their news bulletins: segments with anti-government views made up only a (negligible) combined average of 1% of their total news time throughout the two weeks in May 2010.

By contrast to Morocco's 2 public broadcasters, TL seemed to have chosen a different "approach" to promoting diversity of opinion in its evening news bulletins. It allowed opposing political factions to express their diverse views separately, each group or politician in their own separate news segment, hence the 0% result for "contradictory views expressed", and the relatively high percentage (14.13%) for segments which contained "only one point of view: anti-government". Indeed, TL seems to be the only Arab public broadcaster which allowed news segments with "anti-government views" to air during the evening news. No other Arab broadcaster included in this study did.

**Table 3.b.4: Distribution of news speakers  
(% in terms of appearance –photo/video time)**

|  | Jordan           | Lebanon   | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco   |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|--|------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|  | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i> | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i> | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Head of state (president or king)          | 4.35             | 5.9       | 3.76                | 6.95             | 16          | 2.33      | 7.54            | 22.03            | 5.99              |
| Member of the royal or presidential family | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 2.02      | 0.62            | 0.47             | 1.76              |
| The king's consultant                      | 0                | N/A       | N/A                 | N/A              | N/A         | 0.89      | 0.22            | N/A              | N/A               |
| Prime minister                             | 2.81             | 5.3       | 3.43                | 8.27             | 0.19        | 1.94      | 3.71            | 1.46             | 1.52              |
| Speaker of parliament                      | 0                | 1.78      | 0                   | 1.74             | 0.2         | 0         | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| Upper House parliament                     | 5.3              | N/A       | N/A                 | N/A              | N/A         | N/A       | N/A             | N/A              | N/A               |
| Ministers                                  | 19.77            | 13.85     | 4.59                | 11.48            | 34          | 7.59      | 20.64           | 9.97             | 13.19             |
| Government administration                  | 12.18            | 3.58      | 38.05               | 10               | 19.69       | 14.92     | 16.88           | 12.64            | 9.72              |
| Opposition to government                   | 7.84             | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0.55      | 0.33            | 0.88             | 0                 |
| Non-recognized opposition                  | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| MP majority                                | 1.15             | 14.5      | 1.29                | 0                | 1.63        | 1.74      | 4.11            | 2.47             | 0.23              |
| MP opposition                              | 0                | 10.74     | 0.16                | 0                | 1.04        | 2.52      | 4.52            | 0.58             | 0                 |

|  | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|--|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|  | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Other politicians                      | 0                | 8.18       | 5.56                | 0                | 0           | 0.51       | 3.45            | 0                | 0.91              |
| National governmental organization     | 2.76             | 0.78       | 7.82                | 0.93             | 1.51        | 0.68       | 0.43            | 3.67             | 1.93              |
| Justice administration                 | 0.23             | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0.71       | 0.4             | 0                | 3.24              |
| Religious leader or institution        | 0                | 13.64      | 4.79                | 0                | 0           | 0.25       | 1.44            | 0                | 0.09              |
| Business organization                  | 6.84             | 0.58       | 0.07                | 0.23             | 0           | 6.23       | 3.04            | 1.96             | 0                 |
| International organization             | 3.41             | 1.42       | 0                   | 0.66             | 2.93        | 0          | 0.62            | 3.99             | 1.18              |
| International government or politician | 15.25            | 14.85      | 3.12                | 25.41            | 8.33        | 8.37       | 4.98            | 10.64            | 26.28             |
| Professional association               | 0.26             | 0.23       | 0.21                | 0.62             | 4.65        | 3.14       | 2.91            | 0.12             | 0.73              |
| Minorities                             | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0          | 0.16            | 0                | 0.1               |
| Trade unions                           | 1.34             | 0.1        | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 1.71       | 0.94            | 0.48             | 0                 |
| National NGO                           | 0.36             | 1.59       | 7.95                | 2.7              | 0.81        | 9.16       | 7.15            | 0.39             | 0.2               |
| International NGO                      | 0                | 0.17       | 0.63                | 3.29             | 0           | 2.59       | 1.57            | 0.19             | 0.22              |
| Expert                                 | 6.2              | 1.16       | 8.72                | 14.08            | 6.49        | 12.94      | 5.61            | 7.56             | 14.23             |
| Vox populi                             | 9.54             | 1.65       | 8.05                | 6.76             | 2.16        | 11.3       | 6.53            | 17.26            | 2.77              |
| International expert                   | 0.4              | 0          | 1.65                | 1.85             | 0.37        | 6.9        | 1.44            | 3.24             | 15.17             |
| Other                                  | 0                | 0          | 0.15                | 5.03             | 0           | 1.02       | 0.76            | 0                | 0.55              |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

**Table 3.b.5: Distribution of news speakers (% in terms of speaking time)**

|  | Jordan           | Lebanon   | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco   |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|--|------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|  | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i> | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i> | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Head of state (president or king)          | 3.54             | 1.75      | 3.8                 | 0                | 0           | 0.37      | 0.12            | 0.78             | 0                 |
| Member of the royal or presidential family | 0                | N/A       | N/A                 | 0                | 0           | 0.7       | 0.35            | 0                | 1.16              |
| The king's consultant                      | 0                | N/A       | N/A                 | N/A              | N/A         | 0.98      | 0.18            | N/A              | N/A               |
| Prime minister                             | 1.60             | 2.47      | 3.47                | 3.19             | 0           | 0.75      | 3.51            | 0                | 0.54              |
| Speaker of parliament                      | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0.28        | 0         | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| Upper House parliament                     | 5.72             | N/A       | N/A                 | N/A              | N/A         | N/A       | N/A             | N/A              | N/A               |
| Ministers                                  | 20.7             | 19.75     | 4.64                | 5.78             | 41.68       | 7.23      | 21.82           | 2.16             | 10.74             |
| Government administration                  | 13.43            | 5.19      | 38.53               | 13.42            | 27.07       | 16.04     | 22.92           | 23.84            | 12.04             |
| Opposition to government                   | 8.91             | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0.69      | 0.32            | 0                | 0                 |
| Non-recognized opposition                  | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| MP majority                                | 1.31             | 16.62     | 1.31                | 0                | 0.5         | 1.92      | 4.06            | 3.99             | 0.31              |
| MP opposition                              | 0                | 18.66     | 0.17                | 0                | 0.92        | 2.78      | 4.28            | 1.15             | 0                 |
| Other politicians                          | 0                | 8.89      | 5.62                | 0                | 0           | 0.56      | 3.69            | 0                | 0.47              |
| National governmental organization         | 3.14             | 1.7       | 7.86                | 1.69             | 2.15        | 0.75      | 0.43            | 5.07             | 2.64              |
| Justice administration                     | 0.27             | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0.59      | 0.43            | 0                | 2.34              |
| Religious leader or institution            | 0                | 11.18     | 3.68                | 0                | 0           | 0.28      | 1.26            | 0                | 0.12              |
| Business organization                      | 7.77             | 0.75      | 0.07                | 0.46             | 0           | 6.38      | 3               | 2.16             | 0                 |
| International organization *               | 3.88             | 0.24      | 0                   | 0                | 4.34        | 0         | 0.61            | 5.78             | 1.62              |
| International government * or politician   | 9.63             | 5.86      | 3.16                | 12.35            | 1.88        | 8.84      | 4.9             | 7.59             | 22.36             |
| Professional association                   | 0.3              | 0         | 0.22                | 0.85             | 7.14        | 3.27      | 3.05            | 0.23             | 1                 |

|                      | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|----------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                      | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Minorities           | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0          | 0.16            | 0                | 0.14              |
| Trade unions         | 1.53             | 0.25       | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 1.89       | 0.96            | 0                | 0                 |
| National NGO         | 0.41             | 1.21       | 8.04                | 4.77             | 1.15        | 10.13      | 7.52            | 0.78             | 0.27              |
| International NGO    | 0                | 0          | 0.63                | 4.45             | 0           | 2.17       | 1.25            | 0.73             | 0.3               |
| Expert               | 7.04             | 2.63       | 8.82                | 28.25            | 9.41        | 12.8       | 5.73            | 11.16            | 18.94             |
| Vox populi           | 10.84            | 2.84       | 8.17                | 14.37            | 2.95        | 12.97      | 7.31            | 31.42            | 3.49              |
| International expert | 0                | 0          | 1.67                | 2.95             | 0.53        | 6.94       | 1.67            | 3.17             | 20.75             |
| Other                | 0                | 0          | 0.15                | 7.47             | 0           | 0.97       | 0.45            | 0                | 0.76              |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

**Table 3.b.6: Distribution of news speakers  
(% in terms of frequency of appearance) for the top 4 news segments/items**

|  | Jordan           | Lebanon   | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco   |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|--|------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|  | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i> | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i> | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Head of state (president or king)          | 17.28            | 12.5      | 13.79               | 13.41            | 16.67       | 5.22      | 6.21            | 25.74            | 9.52              |
| Member of the royal or presidential family | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 2.24      | 2.76            | 1.98             | 0                 |
| The king's consultant                      | 0                | N/A       | N/A                 | N/A              | N/A         | 0         | 0.69            | N/A              | N/A               |
| Prime minister                             | 11.11            | 4.17      | 6.9                 | 2.44             | 0           | 0.75      | 4.14            | 3.96             | 2.38              |
| Speaker of parliament                      | 0                | 5.83      | 0                   | 0                | 1.85        | 0         | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| Upper House parliament                     | 9.88             | N/A       | N/A                 | N/A              | N/A         | N/A       | N/A             | N/A              | N/A               |
| Ministers                                  | 18.52            | 11.67     | 0                   | 2.44             | 31.48       | 9.7       | 11.72           | 9.9              | 11.9              |
| Government administration                  | 11.11            | 9.17      | 31.03               | 3.66             | 25.93       | 17.91     | 15.17           | 18.81            | 7.94              |
| Opposition to government                   | 1.23             | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0.69            | 0                | 0                 |
| Non-recognized opposition                  | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| MP majority                                | 0                | 10.83     | 0                   | 0                | 1.85        | 4.48      | 8.97            | 0                | 0                 |
| MP opposition                              | 0                | 2.5       | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 5.22      | 9.66            | 0                | 0                 |
| Other politicians                          | 0                | 12.5      | 20.69               | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0.69            | 0                | 0.79              |
| National governmental organization         | 2.47             | 0         | 6.9                 | 1.22             | 0           | 0.75      | 0               | 3.96             | 0.79              |
| Justice administration                     | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 1.49      | 0.69            | 0                | 2.38              |
| Religious leader or institution            | 0                | 6.67      | 6.9                 | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0.69            | 0                | 0                 |
| Business organization                      | 1.23             | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 4.48      | 0.69            | 2.97             | 0                 |
| International organization                 | 1.23             | 1.67      | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0               | 6.93             | 2.37              |
| International government or politician     | 9.88             | 17.5      | 3.45                | 29.27            | 7.41        | 6.72      | 4.83            | 9.9              | 35.71             |
| Professional association                   | 0                | 1.67      | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 1.49      | 5.52            | 0.99             | 0                 |
| Minorities                                 | 0                | 0         | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0         | 0.69            | 0                | 0                 |

|                      | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|----------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                      | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Trade unions         | 6.17             | 0.83       | 0                   | 0                | 0           | 0          | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| National NGO         | 0                | 0.83       | 3.45                | 2.44             | 0           | 8.21       | 7.59            | 0.99             | 1.59              |
| International NGO    | 0                | 1.67       | 0                   | 12.2             | 0           | 5.22       | 4.14            | 0                | 0                 |
| Expert               | 1.23             | 0          | 3.45                | 8.54             | 3.7         | 5.97       | 4.83            | 3.96             | 7.14              |
| Vox populi           | 8.64             | 0          | 0                   | 13.41            | 9.26        | 18.66      | 9.66            | 7.92             | 8.73              |
| International expert | 0                | 0          | 3.45                | 3.66             | 1.85        | 0.75       | 0               | 1.98             | 8.74              |
| Other                | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 7.32             | 0           | 0.75       | 0               | 0                | 0                 |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

**Table 3.b.7: Groups of news agents (% in terms of appearance – photo or video time)**

|   |  | Jordan           | Lebanon      | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria      | Morocco      |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|---|--|------------------|--------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|   |  | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>    | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i>  | <i>2M</i>    | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| <b>National agents</b>                    | National politicians (head of state & family members, ministers, MPs, etc.)            | 41.22            | 60.26        | 18.79               | 28.44            | 53.06        | 20.09        | 45.15           | 37.86            | 23.59             |
|   | National civil society groups (trade unions, experts, NGOs, professional associations) | 8.16             | 3.08         | 16.88               | 17.4             | 11.95        | 26.95        | 16.61           | 8.55             | 15.16             |
| <b>International</b>                      | International organizations  | 3.41             | 1.42         | 0                   | 0.66             | 2.93         | 0            | 0.62            | 3.99             | 1.18              |
|   | International governments or politicians   | 15.25            | 14.85        | 3.12                | 25.41            | 8.33         | 8.37         | 4.98            | 10.64            | 26.28             |
|   | International NGOs   | 0                | 0.17         | 0.63                | 3.29             | 0            | 2.59         | 1.57            | 0.19             | 0.22              |
|   | International experts  | 0.4              | 0            | 1.65                | 1.85             | 0.37         | 6.9          | 1.44            | 3.24             | 15.17             |
| <b>Total of international news agents</b> |  | <b>19.06</b>     | <b>16.44</b> | <b>5.40</b>         | <b>31.21</b>     | <b>11.63</b> | <b>17.86</b> | <b>8.61</b>     | <b>18.06</b>     | <b>42.85</b>      |



**Table 3.b.8: Groups of news agents (% in terms of speaking time)**

|   |  | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco      |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|---|--|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|   |  | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>    | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| <b>National agents</b>                    | National politicians (head of state & family members, ministers, MPs, etc.)            | 41.77            | 68.14      | 19.01               | 8.97             | 43.38       | 15.98        | 38.34           | 8.08             | 13.22             |
|   | National civil society groups (trade unions, experts, NGOs, professional associations) | 9.28             | 4.09       | 17.08               | 33.87            | 17.7        | 28.09        | 17.26           | 12.17            | 20.21             |
| <b>International</b>                      | International organizations  | 3.88             | 0.24       | 0                   | 0                | 4.34        | 0            | 0.61            | 5.78             | 1.62              |
|   | International governments or politicians   | 9.63             | 5.86       | 3.16                | 12.35            | 1.88        | 8.84         | 4.9             | 7.59             | 22.36             |
|   | International NGOs   | 0                | 0          | 0.63                | 4.45             | 0           | 2.17         | 1.25            | 0.73             | 0.3               |
|   | International experts  | 0                | 0          | 1.67                | 2.95             | 0.53        | 6.94         | 1.67            | 3.17             | 20.75             |
| <b>Total of international news agents</b> |  | <b>13.51</b>     | <b>6.1</b> | <b>5.46</b>         | <b>19.75</b>     | <b>6.75</b> | <b>17.95</b> | <b>8.43</b>     | <b>17.27</b>     | <b>45.03</b>      |

**Table 3.b.9: Diversity of opinions in each news segment (% in terms of duration)**

|  |            | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|--|------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|  |            | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Different opinions are expressed         | 24.37      | 39.5             | 55         | 0                   | 4.74             | 24.33       | 23.61      | 26.33           | 37.89            |                   |
| No points of view are expressed          | 38.65      | 27.45            | 17.28      | 36.68               | 16.71            | 21.8        | 6.93       | 34.98           | 25.81            |                   |
| Only one point of view (anti-government) | 0          | 14.13            | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 1.66        | 0.29       | 0               | 0                |                   |
| Only one point of view (pro-government)  | 30.2       | 18.93            | 27.72      | 63.32               | 78.55            | 44.84       | 59         | 38.69           | 33.27            |                   |
| Contradictory opinions are expressed     | 6.78       | 0                | 0          | 0                   | 0                | 7.36        | 10.17      | 0               | 3.04             |                   |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       |                   |

### ***3.b.2.d. Field reports and coverage of rural areas***

Identifying the existence of field reports in the national news was needed in order to find out the extent to which national news is a “national product” produced locally, with the help of local professionals. It was also needed as an indicator of the extent to which a given operator was investing financially and professionally in this very important news format, where national interests, perspectives, and concerns are usually included. Moreover, classifying news items in terms of their geographical coverage (rural vs. urban) was one way of assessing the extent to which a public operator is catering to all segments of the population, in all its social and economic classes, over the entire national territory. This is especially important considering the tendency among advertising-driven private operators to usually target a (concentrated) urban population with some degree of affluence, at the expense of more scattered, lower income rural populations.

Quite expectedly, TL scored the lowest in both respects, with only 1% of its coverage dealing with urban areas and 13% of its total news time consisting of field reports. This result is most probably a reflection of the dire financial situation this publicly-owned television has been in since the beginning of the civil war, over a quarter of a century ago (please see Part 2 on the regulatory framework for details). Though TL in the present analysis was found to reflect political diversity and views critical of government in its news, against great odds (all other Lebanese private broadcasters are highly partisan and politicized), its lack of resources is seriously affecting its ability to offer first-hand, on-the-spot, field coverage of events in the country. It also probably explains why TL is not covering events and occurrences outside of the capital Beirut, where its main building is located (only 1% coverage of rural areas).

Morocco’s two public operators stood out with the overwhelming majority of their news segments consisting of field reports (a combined average of 71.7% of total news time for both operators). Tunisia came second, with 63.97%.

Syrian TV offered the highest coverage of rural areas (18.2% of the total), though many of the news items about these areas reflected interest in covering the achievements of the regime there more than anything else (e.g. official inauguration of health institutions, social centers, etc). Egypt came second, with 15.41% of its coverage dealing with rural areas, and half of its news segments featuring field reports (52.79%). Once again, these results have to be interpreted carefully when it comes to these public operators.

Rather than jump to the conclusion that these public operators are actually catering to the interests of rural populations and investing in field reports in order to reflect a genuinely national, pluralistic perspective, one needs to look more closely at the content of these segments. Indeed, an examination of the form and content of some of these reports reveals that it is not enough to have field reports to assume that a public broadcaster is investing financially in the production of (quality) national news, or that a genuinely national perspective on events is being offered to the public. To start with, Tunisie 7 had the second highest percentage of field reports, but these were mostly video recordings of the head of state and other officials, with a journalist’s voice-over providing information

about the visual content of these reports. In other words, not only were viewers denied the opportunity to see the journalist reporting live from the scene (of action) and interviewing various news agents and so on, they did not even get to hear these news agents speak for themselves (a recorded voice-over provided the audio part of the field report). The Egyptian field reports, likewise, were very formally static and lacked variety in content: they were centered around high-ranking government officials (especially President Mubarak) and served to highlight and record their achievements, without offering a variety of interviews and perspectives which can increase the public interest value of these reports. Obviously, a quantitative approach alone cannot suffice when assessing the quality and nature of the output on these public broadcasters. A more in-depth examination of the content of these public channels is needed –one that takes into account the “why” and “how” of events and themes, not just the “what”, “who”, and “for how long”, as we are going to see in the following section (Section 3.C).

**Table 3.b.10: Coverage of rural vs. urban areas (% in terms of duration)**

|              | Jordan           | Lebanon    | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco    |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|--------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|              | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i>  | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i>  | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| Urban        | 97.26            | 98.93      | 85.91               | 81.79            | 87.33       | 91.36      | 89.13           | 95.99            | 84.59             |
| Rural        | 2.74             | 1.07       | 14.09               | 18.21            | 12.67       | 8.64       | 10.87           | 4.01             | 15.41             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>          | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b>      | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>        |

**Table 3.b.11: Field reports**

|   | Jordan           | Lebanon   | Palestine           | Syria            | Algeria     | Morocco   |                 | Tunisia          | Egypt             |
|---|------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|   | <i>Jordan TV</i> | <i>TL</i> | <i>Palestine TV</i> | <i>Syrian TV</i> | <i>ENTV</i> | <i>2M</i> | <i>Al Aoula</i> | <i>Tunisie 7</i> | <i>Al Masriya</i> |
| % of field reports with respect to total duration of news | 26.56            | 13.08     | 41.22               | 20.93            | 50.56       | 64.52     | 79.04           | 63.97            | 52.79             |

### 3.c. Qualitative analysis of information magazines

#### 3.c.1. Introduction

The purpose of this section of the analysis of content is to complement the two previous quantitative assessments of the programming schedules and news bulletin (sections A and B of Part 3) by offering an in-depth look at one of the most important information genres on TV, especially from a public service perspective: the information magazine (more commonly referred to as “talk show” on Arab television).

When information magazines deal with timely and relevant societal issues, give access to guests from a wide political spectrum, and represent a diversity of opinions on matters of public interest in order to stimulate independent thinking and debate, they act as flagships for the TV station broadcasting them, giving it both visibility, credibility, and popularity. Al Jazeera with its *Al-Itijah Al-Mo'akes* (against the current) is a case in point. Information magazines have been chosen for the present section of the analysis because they can reflect, in terms of their set up, execution (production quality), type and quality of guests, and content (i.e. kind of issues they deal with), the extent of the commitment of the public broadcaster to uphold several principles and values which characterize PSB.

Although quantitative analyses of news are invaluable with respect to the nature of data they yield (i.e. numerical/statistical results which are objective, verifiable, replicable, and so on), they are limited in terms of uncovering the various layers of meaning embedded in news and other programs.<sup>1</sup> A qualitative analysis, while suffering from its own (yet different) set of limitations, can be very insightful and go beyond the “who” (i.e. who gets to speak on television) and “what” (what they say and for how long). It can unravel the “how”, by examining the entire context of the speech of news agents/sources (in the case of news bulletins) or of guests (in the case of information magazines).

The qualitative approach used in this section of the analysis of content, it should be noted, adapts some strategies of textual analysis from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a method of linguistic analysis which seeks to unravel (unequal) structures of power as embedded in various formats of expression and communication (written texts, journalistic pieces, TV programs, news bulletins, etc.).<sup>2</sup> For instance, merely noting the presence and duration of talking time of guests or news sources, as was done for the quantitative analysis of news, cannot fully account for the nature of their presence on the screen, why they are selected, or how their talk is framed (by the producers of the show, the host, etc.). Not only does

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1 For an explanation concerning the uses, strengths, and limitations of content analysis as a media research method, please check Dominick, J. (2003), *Mass Media Research: an Introduction*, 7th edition, by R. Wimmer and, Belmont: Thomson Learning Inc.

2 For a detailed discussion of the importance of using a qualitative approach (mostly critical discourse analysis or CDA) for the analysis of talk shows, see Dabbous-Sensenig, D. (2010) “Speaking in His name? Gender, language and religion in the Arab media”, in *Shari'a as Discourse: Legal Traditions and the Encounter with Europe*, edited by Jurgen S. Nielsen and Lisbet Christofferson, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 179-198; Van Dijk, T. (2001) “Critical Discourse Analysis” in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers; and Fairclough, N. (1995) *Media Discourse*, London: Arnold.

a critical, qualitative analysis of content provide more nuanced answers in this respect, it helps in identifying the presence (or absence) of views which are alternative or critical of government on issues of relevance to the public interest.

The information magazines analyzed in the present study include all the magazines which were broadcast by all 9 public operators during two consecutive weeks in May 2010.<sup>3</sup> Considering that programming schedules varied among the Arab broadcasters included in this study<sup>4</sup>, the number of information magazines (or talk shows) was not the same in each country during May 2010. Not only that, the nature and format of these shows also varied greatly, depending on the financial resources of the station and the general political culture of the country. For instance, in some countries (e.g. Syria), these information magazines are highly controlled and preclude diversity of opinion because they avoid the live format, interaction with the audience, and hosting guests who hold views critical of government. By contrast, some of these magazines can deal with controversial issues, be recorded live, and allow callers to intervene, as was the case on PTV. A close, qualitative examination of the content and structure of these shows (choice of topics and angles for discussing them, number of guests, type of opinions allowed to be expressed, moderating role of host, use of pre-recorded segments, etc.) yielded results that were in many ways more revealing about the nature of broadcasting in each country than what the standard quantitative analysis of “who speaks” and “for how long” could do.

### ***3.c.1.a. Structure of the analysis***

Three (inter-related) levels/steps in the analysis were mostly adhered to:

1. Overview of the national context with respect to the themes discussed in each episode.
2. Evaluation of the main topics discussed in each episode.
3. Evaluation of the views of the guests and of the role of the host.

First, the socio-political background of the main topic in each episode was examined, in order to identify, as much as possible, the various viewpoints (related to the specific issue dealt with in the episode) that are held by various groups in society. In other words, an attempt was made to study “text in context”.<sup>5</sup> Such initial mapping of the larger contextual background allows us to establish connections between this larger, contextual level and the micro-level or actual content of each episode (i.e. at the level of choice of guests and their views, position of the host, language use, etc), in order to assess the extent to which each episode is able to cover an issue by being inclusive and representing the diversity of opinions on a given topic. This was done mostly by identifying the views of the guests and hosts, and seeing whether these views merely echoed the dominant/elite position on the issues at hand, or whether they represented alternative, new perspectives on them.

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3 Lebanon's Télé Liban is the only exception in this case considering that the entire month of May 2010 was dedicated to covering municipal elections in the country. The month of December was chosen instead.

4 For technical reasons, it was not possible to conduct a qualitative analysis of information magazines in Tunisia.

5 Titscher, S., Mr. Meyer, R. Wodak, and E. Vetter (2000) *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*, London: Sage Publications, p.7.

Next, the analysis involved a close examination of the type of people involved in each show. Were there one or more guests? Were they chosen to fairly represent both genders? Were they independent experts and critical members of civil society or politicians and government people? Were ordinary citizens included as guests/participants in the shows or as members of the studio audience? Or were they shown through the vox populi type of reporting? Were viewers allowed to phone-in and ask questions freely? If yes, were their opinions critical of dominant positions or in line with the government stance concerning the issues being discussed?

It should be noted that the presenter/moderator plays a very important role in orchestrating the show, allocating airtime to different participants (guests or callers-in or studio audience); and deciding what is going to be discussed on the show, how it is going to be discussed, and for how long. Moreover, the presenter might already have a position on the issue being discussed (i.e. be biased), or might attempt to be impartial by giving his/her guests the opportunity to express their different views on the same topic. Questions which were considered while analyzing the role of the presenter included the following: does the presenter/host allocate airtime fairly to all participants and treat them equally? Does he or she take sides with one guest instead of another? Does he or she comment negatively or positively on what some guests say? Does he or she interrupt and contradict some guests or some callers more than others? Which views does that presenter, in case of biased intervention, seem to promote or comment positively on? Pro-government views or critical, alternative views?

Additional attention was paid to the existence of interactivity with the audience (e.g. direct shows with the possibility to call in and intervene by viewers) and the use of reports (where external experts or regular citizens are called upon to support one view or another about the issue at hand).

All the above steps or levels of analysis allowed us to assess, overall, the extent to which information magazines on each public broadcaster were able to uphold several PSB values: i.e. whether they allowed the expression of critical and alternative perspectives on issues of public interest, by hosting a variety of guests who reflect cultural diversity and political pluralism in each country.

### 3.c.2 qualitative analysis of information magazines: country analysis

#### ***3.c.2.a. Algeria***

The last two decades have been marked by a complete boycott by Algerian TV (ENTV) of issues of major concern to Algerian society, in contrast to a relatively free printed press which has been more able to reflect Algerian reality. Between October 1988 and February 1992 (date of the introduction of the emergency law), as part of the “reform movement”, ENTV broadcast shows which included debates among actors of different political leanings. These shows were not really open to all currents of society but they contained the basic elements which allowed them to develop in that direction. In any case, this period of Algerian tele-visual memory remains an important benchmark every time a study of ENTV is undertaken.

Considering that ENTV shuns the discussion of societal and political problems, it was difficult to identify, during two consecutive weeks in May 2010, programs which could adequately qualify as “info magazines”. However, two different programs were selected: *Fi Dairat Al-Daou* (in the spotlight) and *Irshadat Tubbyya* (medical advice).

*Fi Dairat Al-Daou* deals exclusively with the international issues of the week. These issues are not of direct concern to the citizens and require a certain amount of knowledge of international affairs from those spectators who are interested in decoding the official position on these issues on Algerian TV. The same presenter of the evening TV news also hosts this information magazine, and usually invites 2 or 3 experts or academics to comment on the international issue or event of the week.

In the episode broadcast on 18 May 2010, the issue dealt with was the “Sahrawi” cause and the right to self-determination. The choice of the topic was motivated by the visit of Christopher Ross, special UN envoy to the region. A clear financial investment in the show could be seen in the provision of a satellite link throughout the show in order to include guests from geographically remote areas. Although there were two guests, only one point of view was put forth throughout the episode; that of the Polisario Front. The participants criticized the UN plan and promoted the Sahrawi (official Algerian) position, to the exclusion of all other positions, including Morocco’s. The tendency to promote a single, pro-government view was reinforced by the inclusion of a short report titled *Fi Asseyak* (in the same context), a 10 mn pre-recorded interview with a politician or expert. In this interview, the guest was none other than the ambassador of the Polisario Front in Algeria. Even the comments of the host, who gave his own opinion frequently, reiterated the same official (Algerian) view on the Sahrawi question.

The other info magazine of the week, *Irshadat Tubbyya*, is an informative show dealing with medical issues. It usually has one or two guests per episode, offers the possibility of direct intervention from callers by phone, and includes of vox populi segments. In general, this medical show is useful, informative, and fulfils to some extent the mission of PSB in terms of raising awareness about issues of hygiene and public health.

To conclude, the talk shows broadcast on ENTV showed that the openness of the format to debate was dependent on the kind of topic dealt with in each show: the political shows were the most closed (to debate), in both content and form (all guests, including the host, reiterated the government view on the issue being discussed, with no possibility of intervention by the public). By contrast, the practice of including callers in and viewers’ responses (e.g. vox populi) was mostly allowed when the subject matter was politically “neutral” or “safe”. There were exceptions, however: the selective inclusion of ordinary people’s views (i.e. vox populi), when dealing with a controversial topic, sometimes served as a political tool in order to support the government’s position. For example, on the evening of February 19 2011, when a (repressed) demonstration took place in Algeria, ENTV broadcast a news bulletin showing a sequence filmed in the street area of the “place du 1er Mai”. All the citizens/inhabitants of the neighborhood who were interviewed expressed the same view that the demonstration was a nuisance and that the demonstrators were “trouble makers”.

One was even quoted saying that he resented the “public disorder created by those who come from “elsewhere” [ailleurs]”, and that “those who want to demonstrate should do it at home” [chez lui].<sup>6</sup>

### **3.c.2.b. Egypt**

*Masr El-Naharda* (Egypt today) was Al Masriya’s flagship daily talk show, broadcast every evening at 10:00 p.m. for two hours (except on Friday). The program competed with popular talk shows on other private channels (e.g. *El-Ashera masa’an* on Dream II, *90 minutes* on El-Mehwar, and so on.). The show dealt with various issues of concern to the Egyptian public (social, cultural, economic, and political). It included a variety of guests: intellectuals, politicians, artists, athletes, and so on, in addition to featuring a daily news report related to the latest events dealt with in the show. Its set-up largely resembled that of other shows on private channels, though its approach lacked the boldness and critical edge which characterized the other shows. It should be noted that *Masr El-Naharda* did not have a single host, but a number of presenters who took turns throughout the week. More importantly, the openness (or by the same taken, degree of self-censorship) on the show depended on the personality of the presenter and his/her own degree of professionalism. For instance, host Mahmoud Saad, before he quit the show in protest during the popular uprisings in Egypt stood out as the most popular presenter of the show by promoting views which were more critical of government than any of those of his counterparts and by championing the cause of ordinary citizens. Considering that the show did not have a single host, a number of episodes with different hosts were selected for the purpose of the present analysis. Thus, not only the public service mission of these episodes could be assessed, but also the extent to which this mission depended on the hosting style of the presenters themselves.

The May 12 episode of *Masr El-Naharda* was dedicated to the rights of people with disabilities in Egypt. Discussing this specific topic is a rare occurrence on Egyptian television, especially during prime time. According to the (official) Central Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), there are approximately 5.7 million people with disabilities in Egypt, a number which represents about 7% of the total population for the year 2006.<sup>7</sup> Although Egypt signed a number of international treaties with respect to improving the conditions of disabled citizens as far back as 1971, and in 1975 introduced a quota to increase the employment of people with disability in the private and public sector, in practice very little has been done to improve the lot of disabled citizens or to ease their integration into society.

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6 For more details, please check “Algeria’s long haul towards liberty” by Karima Bennoune, 19 February 2011, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/19/algeria-middleeast>

7 “Rights of Disabled Persons in Egypt”, October 2008 available at [http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=mohamed\\_abdel\\_sadek&sei-redir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com.lb%2Fsearch%3Fhl%3Den%26source%3Dhp%26q%3DYouth%2Band%2BSpecial%2BNeeds%2BEgypt%26gbv%3D2%26oq%3DYouth%2Band%2BSpecial%2BNeeds%2BEgypt%26aq%3Dl%26aqi%3D%26aqi%3D%26gs\\_sm%3D12%26gs\\_upl%3D4312110984011326512912610113113115001229712-6.1.0.11810#search=%22Youth%20Special%20Needs%20Egypt%22](http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=mohamed_abdel_sadek&sei-redir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com.lb%2Fsearch%3Fhl%3Den%26source%3Dhp%26q%3DYouth%2Band%2BSpecial%2BNeeds%2BEgypt%26gbv%3D2%26oq%3DYouth%2Band%2BSpecial%2BNeeds%2BEgypt%26aq%3Dl%26aqi%3D%26aqi%3D%26gs_sm%3D12%26gs_upl%3D4312110984011326512912610113113115001229712-6.1.0.11810#search=%22Youth%20Special%20Needs%20Egypt%22)



This specific episode was characterized by a wide spectrum of guests (six in all). These included two young people with special needs, the mother of a mentally disabled young man who is both a musician and an athlete, a specialist who works with people with mental disabilities, a founder of an NGO for people with special needs, and a counselor for Handicap International. These guests, throughout the episode, were able to represent different sides of the main issues being discussed and the episode was an exception in terms of the diversity of opinions that were expressed.

This episode was also unique because one of the co-hosts (journalist Amal Fawzi), who is not a regular on the show (she only appeared in this episode) but who had an interest in the topic and was instrumental in preparing for the show, doing background research and conducting interviews with some people with disabilities and their families. The other co-host, celebrity Mahmoud Saad, often took the back seat and let Amal Fawzi moderate most of the discussion. Whenever Saad participated in the discussion, his intervention served to frame the rights of disabled people as a charitable issue rather than a human rights issue. For instance, Saad repeatedly pleaded with different ministries and wealthy audience members (i.e. businessmen) to offer logistical and financial help to people with disabilities, indirectly absolving the Egyptian government from any responsibility towards this group of citizens. In the case of this particular episode, however, the presence of a good panel among the guests was able to bring balance to the show: the counselor of Handicap International effectively countered the position of Saad, insisting on more than one occasion that the issue is not about asking ministers “for a favor”, but the need to introduce policies and laws which could effectively integrate this group into society.

In sum, not only was this episode a rare exception with respect to the subject matter dealt with (discussing the rights of people with disabilities in Egypt), it did so by putting together a representative panel of guests who were able to bring a diversity of views into the discussion. The presence of a specialized journalist as co-host and the level of preparation involved only served to increase the quality of the discussion.

Another episode broadcast during the same week, also with host Saad (22 May 2010), was another exception for *Masr El-Naharda* due to the choice of its subject matter and the fact that it was shot on location, a rare occurrence on this talk show. The episode focused on the life and religious practices of an important minority group in Egypt (the Christian Copts) and the filming took place on location, at the Coptic Monastery of Saint Anthony. It should be noted that the Christian Coptic minority of Egypt is often neglected in the Egyptian mainstream media or, when occasionally covered, it is associated with tensions and sectarian strife. Moreover, this particular episode aired at a time when Egyptian society was preoccupied with a court ruling following the massacre of Christians which had occurred in the village of Nag Hammadi a few months earlier.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For more details, check [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag\\_Hammadi\\_massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_massacre)

With this controversial background in mind, host Saad managed to present a very informative, spiritual episode which highlighted the peaceful and harmonious aspects of Christian Monastic life, the whole accompanied by a voice over recitation of Gospel verses by Saad. At times, the host himself reacted spontaneously to the information covered, admitting to his own ignorance (about Christianity) while simultaneously appearing pleasantly surprised to learn what he did about the Christian religion and life in the monastery.

The fact that the two above episodes covered two different minority groups in Egyptian society was an exceptional occurrence on *Masr El-Naharda*. Interestingly, in both cases the host was none other than Mahmoud Saad, Al Masriya's star host up until his resignation following the popular uprisings in the country and his subsequent inability to work freely and air views critical of government.<sup>9</sup>

The May 15 episode of *Masr El-Naharda* invited (then) Minister of Education Ahmed Zaki Badr and dealt with the state of public education in Egypt and the problems which characterized this sector. The episode did not include other guests (experts, educators, etc.) who could have debated the minister's views, had no field reports, and offered minimal interactivity with the audience members. Their intervention was limited to one e-mail question and 3 phone calls that were personal inquiries rather than critiques of government policy. However, since the episode was co-hosted by Mahmoud Saad and Mona El-Sharqawi, the different ideological perspectives of the two hosts surfaced: Saad tried to play the devil's advocate by representing the views of the opposition or taking the side of ordinary citizens and voicing their concerns. For instance, the minister was introduced in that episode as a person with a very strict work ethic and as someone who makes unannounced field visits to schools. Saad, however, questioned the value of these spot checks by the minister himself and whether such visits were effective or helped solve the problems plaguing the sector. He also attributed the existing problems to a lack of strategic vision by the government. Host El-Sharqawi, by contrast, supported the minister's view that the main problem with education in Egypt is due to the lack of accountability in the schools. In the process, the minister did not forget to praise First Lady Suzanne Mubarak for sponsoring educational projects in the country.

In sum, despite the fact that host Saad tried to challenge some of the assumptions put forth by the minister and to question the government educational strategy (or lack thereof), he remained a sole figure in this endeavor, outnumbered by a minister (who had the full duration of the episode to defend his government's policy) and a female host who took the side of her high-ranking guest. As a result, not only was the minister barely challenged by the hosts, the entire episode dealt with generalities and failed to tackle specific problems and solutions about an issue of great public interest.

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<sup>9</sup> *Prominent media figure resigns from state TV talk show*, posted on 27 January 2011, available at <http://www.egyptindependent.com/node/306724>

The episode of 16 May 2010 epitomized best the inability of Egyptian public TV to offer information on current affairs in a debate-like format which can tackle important political issues from a variety of perspectives and thus foster critical, independent thinking among citizens. The episode dealt with a very important topic, one that is closely connected to democratic practice and the rule of law: the formation of a committee to assess the performance of the media coverage of the Shura Council in Egypt. Theoretically, such a committee would be responsible for monitoring the coverage of Shura elections on both public and private media in order to ensure neutrality, transparency, balance, and accuracy in coverage. The committee was formed and supervised by Minister of Information Anas El-Fiqi. Members were said to be “independent” media experts and professors, and were selected by the minister in order to develop standards for election coverage and appropriate monitoring methodologies. Owners and managers of private media were called upon in order to sign a document whereby they pledged to abide by the committee’s standards, knowing that at no point in the process were they involved in the discussion or drafting of the document itself, the standards, or monitoring methodologies.

Considering that the Shura Council elections were approaching, the topic of the May 16 episode was very timely and relevant. However, a closer examination of the sub-topics which were discussed, the manner in which they were discussed, and who was involved in the discussion (and who was not), revealed an entirely different picture, one that had very little to do with the public interest. For instance, the discussion throughout this episode was conducted in isolation from the larger political context, and totally neglected to bring up the issue of election fraud and bullying, despite the frequency of these complaints by members of civil society and NGOs (e.g. *Shayfenkom*) and the fact that some of the fraud accusations were substantiated by the Egyptian courts.<sup>10</sup>

The choice of guests reinforced the pro-government slant of the episode (all the guests were members of the committee) and the problem was compounded by the deceitful way in which some of the guests were presented to the viewers of the show. To start with, one of the guests, Hassan Rateb, was introduced as the owner of the El Mehwar channel and the president of the Union of Private Channels. It was only later on, in the course of the discussion, that it was mentioned that Rateb was also a prominent member of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Farouk Abu Zaid was introduced as an independent mass communication expert and the chairman of the committee entrusted with assessing the media coverage of elections. The only human rights activist invited on the show also turned out to be a member of the same committee (Hafez Abu Saada). No independent media or human rights experts (who were not also members of the committee) were invited on the show or allowed to intervene by phone.

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10 See more details about the *Shayfenkom* movement in the study made by Jennifer J. Jones titled “Virtual community: formation and mobilization of a collective, democratic identity in Egypt”, 22 April 2011, University of California, Irvine, available at <http://www.democracy.uci.edu/files/democracy/docs/conferences/grad/2011/Virtual%20Egyptian%20Communities-%20J.Jones.pdf>

The host himself (Tamer Amin) played an important role in keeping the discussion “sanitized” and free of controversy or substance: his questions were general and avoided embarrassing the guests with accusations concerning fraudulent practices during elections. Rather than seek to probe the guests and bring out various points of view with respect to an issue as important as that of monitoring elections, he focused on their commonalities and shared perspectives. When at some point Abu Saada and Rateb seemed to (mildly) disagree when trying to define the principle of separation between ownership and editorial policy within media institutions, host Amin was joined by Abu Zaid in order to gloss over these differences in opinion, iron them out, and bring the discussion back to a more general nature, away from any controversy. Worse yet, host Amin directed his criticism instead towards the private media, accusing TV coverage of being “biased, to some extent, towards the opposition”, and newspapers of resorting to sensationalism (he used the word “yelling”) in order to boost circulation. Rateb, himself owner of EL-Mehwar private satellite channel and head of the Union of Private Channels, concurred, noting the “increase” in the “dictatorship of the opposition” in the private media in Egypt.

In sum, due to the choice of guests, the choice of topics, the angle through which they were discussed, and the pro-government stance of the host, controversial issues related to the elections were avoided: i.e. discussion of the committee itself, the process by which it is formed, its makeup, its objectives, and the means available to it in order to carry out its monitoring activities. Indeed, this episode of *Masr El-Naharda* seemed to be a platform for praising the committee and its pioneering role with respect to monitoring elections, while the private media were attacked for being unprofessional and “pro-opposition”. In that respect, this episode, like several episodes of *Masr El-Naharda* hosted by Tamer Amin and other presenters like him, served to promote the one-sided, official perspective on many important issues, without serving the public interest.

### ***3.c.2.c. Jordan***

In total, 4 episodes from 3 different talk shows broadcast on Jordan TV (JTV) throughout two weeks in May 2010 were examined: *Taht Al Daou'* about social issues, *Ara' Wamawakef* about politics, and *Majales Al-Adab* about culture. All three weekly talk shows were broadcast live during prime time (9:00 p.m.) in 2010 and included one or more guests in the studio, without allowing viewers to call in and participate in the discussion. Some of them featured vox pop segments.

The *Taht Al Daou'* episode of 13 May 2010 dealt with the amended personal status law of 2010. This law materialized after a long period of discussion and input by civil society organizations, especially women's groups who wanted to amend the law in order to give women more rights when it comes to inheritance, marriage, and divorce. It should be noted that the opinion of civil society groups about the amendments was divided. While some thought the changes were a step in the right direction, others thought that they were superficial and did not embody the ambitions of Jordanian women or secure them more rights.

The guests consisted of one male *shari'a* judge and two lawyers (one of them a female). All guests expressed the same point of view vis-à-vis the amendments: a conservative and/or pro-government stance. Views by various civil society groups and women who were going to be affected by the law were totally absent. Even when the female lawyer presented counter-views which were pro-divorce, unlike the other guests, she did it very briefly and only in the context of supporting the divorce-related amendments introduced by the government. It should be noted that, in the process, she was repeatedly interrupted by the host.

Indeed the host herself agreed with the views of the 3 studio guests, who were all in favor of the amendments introduced by the government. Totally excluded from this episode on JTV were views by women's groups and members of civil society that were critical of the amendments (but were transmitted by other media in the country).

The *Taht Al Daou'* episode of 20 May 2010 dealt with the government strategy concerning developing school education. While in general public criticism of this strategy was scarce around the time of its implementation, another event occurred simultaneously: public teachers voiced their demand for a pay raise and the permission to have their own union. However, the government rejected this decade old yet legitimate demand due to the great number of teachers in the sector (80 thousand teachers) and the rising popularity of the Islamists among them.

Only one guest was invited, Minister of Education Ibrahim Badran. No one from the opposing camp (i.e. the teachers) was included in the show to debate him or directly challenge his views. The female host, who seemed to sympathize with the teachers, brought up the fact that they were underpaid and worked under unfavorable conditions. She also alluded to the scandal which recently hit the ministry about the content of official school exams being leaked to some students. Moreover, she questioned the validity of the government strategy vis-à-vis education in general and criticized the school curriculum which she described as being "stuffed with information which the students have to memorize for no actual benefit". Finally, the host showed sympathy for the parents who send their children to private schools and want the government to exercise more quality control over these schools. Although the host was able to raise most of the controversial issues related to the topic – issues already covered in other national print media, her interviewing style was not confrontational and did not seek to challenge her guest. Consequently, the minister had ample time to explain the government's education policy without any contradiction or interruption by the host, or participation by the viewers (as studio audience or callers-in). Only one field report was broadcast during the show, where several schoolchildren were asked their opinion about the issue of changing the color of their current uniform – an issue which was neither controversial nor relevant to the main topic of the episode.

The May 15 episode of *Majales Al-Adab* dealt with the issue of culture and globalization – a controversial issue where the rift between generations in Jordanian society becomes clear. On the one hand, we have a young generation which is open, with varying degrees,

to Western cultures. On the other hand, we have an older generation where conservatives are worried about the loss of the Arabic language and culture, and the threat posed by Western cultures.

All the sub-topics dealt with in the episode revolved around the various “threats” posed by globalization such as the monolithic nature of global culture, the dominance and politicization of American culture, and the role of cultural imperialism in weakening Arab culture and language and replacing them with other (Western) cultures.

Two of the four guests are regulars on the show: the former president of the University of Jordan and the vice-president at the same university, which is the biggest public institution for higher education in the country. The choice of these two high-ranking public servants as guests gave a preponderant weight to the official perspective in the discussion. Moreover, all four guests were older intellectuals and public officials with strong anti-Western and pro-Arab culture and language views (the other guests were the Tunisian ambassador and the Libyan ambassador in Jordan). This choice of guests was problematic for two main reasons. First, it excluded the voice of the younger generation which constitutes the overwhelming majority in the country (people over the age of 45 make up only 15% of Jordan’s population).<sup>11</sup> Second, the cultural practices of Jordan’s youth reflect different degrees of influence and appreciation of Arabic and Western cultures, and the inclusion of younger, more diverse guests would have reflected a wider spectrum of views on the topic of the show. Instead, all 4 guests were in agreement, and reiterated the same view which equated globalization with “American cultural imperialism” whose “political aim is to weaken the Arab/Muslim nation” and benefit from the existing “division among Arabs”. These views were also shared by the host, who is a professor of Arabic language at Petra University.

The May 22 episode of *Majales Al-Adab* dealt with the sensitive issue of minority groups in Arab/Islamic cultures. Various ethnic and religious groups make up Jordanian society. Apart from the dominant Arab urban population, there are Bedouins, Circassians, and Chechnyans. The numbers of the latter groups are exceeded by other minority groups such as Iraqis (mostly refugees), Egyptians, and migrant workers from East Asia, who remain largely underrepresented in Jordanian society. In addition to being ethnically diverse, the Jordanian population includes people from different religious backgrounds. In addition to the dominant Sunni Moslem population, there are Shi’ites, Druzes, Baha’is (a combined 2% of the population), and Christians (3.5% of the population).

The episode dealt with the challenge of preserving cultural diversity in the world. It also dealt with the obsession of politicians with the issue of minorities and compared the status of minority groups in the modern world with their status during the early period of Islam. Guests on the show insisted that the “problem of minorities” is a problem which existed in other (Western) cultures as well and was exported to the Arab world, as part of a

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11 For statistical details concerning the make-up of Jordanian society (breakdown by sex, age-group, geographical location, etc) please go to [http://www.dos.gov.jo/sdb\\_pop/sdb\\_pop\\_a/chsaat/alsokan/2004/2010/2-5.pdf](http://www.dos.gov.jo/sdb_pop/sdb_pop_a/chsaat/alsokan/2004/2010/2-5.pdf)

number of Western “political strategies aimed at suppressing Arab cultures in the context of globalization”. They also agreed that minority groups, such as the Kurds and Amazighs, “used to consider themselves as Arab” and that Christians and Jews were “integrated in Muslim societies, until discord [*fitna*] penetrated Arab societies”. Moreover, they believed that “cultural diversity is enriching” but that the “bringing up of this subject by the West is intentional” and “masks political intentions”. The regular guest on the show (from the University of Jordan) concluded by saying that the early Islamic model, during the life of the Prophet is the ideal one, when non-Muslims (i.e. *dhimmi* people) were considered part of the Muslim nation.

Once again, the views expressed on the show were the same, and reflected the perspective of a generation of older intellectuals, most of whom were university professors and Arab language specialists who were biased towards Arab/Islamic culture and lacked sensitivity towards other cultures and religions. Moreover, their understanding of Arabic culture was static and limited, and expressed mostly in terms of an appreciation of the standard classical Arabic language. Totally excluded were views by members of minority groups in Jordan (ethnic or religious) or views expressing the idea that all cultures are essentially hybrid and exhibit both local and foreign influences.

It should be noted that the topic selected by producers of the show dealt with Arab/Islamic cultures in general and not local/Jordanian culture. This also meant that the episode (conveniently) evaded the more sensitive topic of minority groups in contemporary Jordan. Moreover, all views expressed reiterated the idea that the issue of “minorities” is a Western construct exported to Arabo-Islamic cultures for political ends, is motivated by “hidden [Western] agendas”, and is a means to sow chaos and discord in the Arab world. The host himself repeatedly concurred with the guests, saying that “the West benefits by dividing up the Arab region”. This was basically the same view about the existence of a Western conspiracy against the Arab world that was expressed a week earlier on the same show, in the context of discussing “cultural imperialism”.

In sum, the choice of topics in all these Jordanian talk shows reflected an attempt by JTV to fulfill a public service mission by dealing with various national and often controversial issues of relevance to the Jordanian public and its quality of life: education, cultural diversity, personal status laws and women’s rights, etc. However, a closer examination of the content of the JTV episodes, the sub-topics dealt with, and the views put forth by the guests and the hosts showed the dominance of a one-sided, pro-government perspective on the various political, economic, and social issues discussed. This was the case despite the fact that Jordanian society itself is quite diverse, that various interest groups hold different (and sometimes contradictory) views on these issues, and that they have been able to express them in various other national media (newspapers, radio stations, social networks, etc.). This dominant, pro-government, conservative (and sometimes reactionary) perspective on JTV talk shows was mostly the result of inviting a restricted number of (recurrent) members of the (older) intellectual and political elites (university professors, ambassadors, ministers, and top government administrators), at the exclusion of members

of civil society and representatives of groups directly affected by government policies. It was also the result of having hosts who mostly supported the official perspective prevented members of the audience from direct participation in these discussion shows.

### ***3.c.2.d. Lebanon***

In 2010, Télé Liban (TL) presented, on a daily basis at 12:30 p.m., a political information magazine titled *Lubnan Al-Yawm* (Lebanon today) where a single guest was invited and asked questions about a variety of issues related to important events taking place in the country. Two TL hosts/journalists alternated on the show (one male and one female) which was shot in the same studio used for the news bulletins. This particular location made it impossible, for lack of space, for the audience to participate by attending the show physically on the set, as is the case with many other talk shows on other private Lebanese TV stations. Moreover, the show did not take any calls from viewers, despite the fact that it was broadcast live, and did not include any field reports or recorded segments, which made it lack visual appeal and variety. Content-wise, the show was characterized by a calm, non-confrontational atmosphere as opposed to other talk shows, due to the presence of a single guest and the absence of “opposing views”, despite some attempts by the hosts to play the devil’s advocate.

All eleven episodes broadcast between 13 and 28 December 2010 were included in the present analysis. During this period, four MPs, two former ministers, two journalists, and three members of civil society were invited on the show. These guests covered a wide range of the political spectrum and represented various societal actors (members of the legislative branch, executive branch, and civil society). The only exception to this political and occupational balance related to gender: not a single female guest was invited during this period. The 4 MPs were equally divided between the two major political camps/alliances that dominate the Lebanese political scene (March 8th and March 14th camps). Each guest expressed his/her own views concerning the (mostly controversial) national issues that were discussed in each episode.

Throughout the period studied, the episodes dealt with major political themes and issues which were gripping the nation at the time. The most recurrent theme was that of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (or STL) which was set up in order to convict and try the murderers of late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. This theme, which continues to be a very divisive issue in the country and currently threatens to bring about the end of PM Mikati’s government (*Daily Star*, 21 October 2011), was dealt with in depth in 5 of the 11 episodes. The STL was utterly rejected by the Lebanese opposition camp led by Hezbollah and its main Christian ally, the Free Patriotic Movement, while the government led by Rafic Hariri’s son strongly supported it. A related, corollary, and equally divisive theme was that of the “false witnesses” used by the Tribunal and it was dealt with in 7 episodes (4 Lebanese officers were accused of the Hariri murder by “false witnesses” and were eventually exonerated by the STL). In sum, the general topic of the Special Tribunal (and its corollaries) was probably the most dominant one, and was dealt with almost daily, in 9 out of the 11 episodes.



The second main theme concerned the political crisis that the country was undergoing (i.e. the paralyzed government), the repercussions of this crisis on the government's performance, and the threat it posed on the internal security of the country. Another major divisive and controversial theme dealt with in most of the episodes was the issue of Hezbollah's weapons (i.e. whether the party should disarm or not). These 3 main themes, with their related sub-themes, dominated the discussions in all 11 episodes, at the expense of discussing other important issues of interest to the Lebanese public, i.e. the socio-economic situation in the country which had reached a critical level but was barely dealt with in the episodes broadcast during two weeks in December 2010.

To start with, all the major themes dealt with recurred (at least partially) on almost all of the episodes analyzed. This is quite an unusual situation for a talk show, as the norm is to have a different topic for each episode. This also means that assessment of pluralism and public service themes on this TL talk show cannot be carried out effectively at the level of each episode. If the guest and content of individual episodes were to be analyzed separately, then the result of the analysis would be, unequivocally, that each episode is very biased, representing exclusively the views of its single guest. However, when looking at all 11 episodes, one notices that the guests came from different professional and political backgrounds and held often diametrically opposed views on the same issues. This also means that the talk show, while clearly one-sided at the level of the individual episodes, was not at all so when all the episodes were taken into consideration. Together, these episodes of *Lubnan Al-Yawm*, which deal more or less with the same controversial national issues, reflected a plurality of views and diversity, albeit in an unusual way (for a talk show). For instance, on the highly controversial and nationally divisive issue of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), the guest in one of the episodes thought that the Tribunal was "unconstitutional" because it was not approved by the president of the republic or parliament, while another guest (in another episode) found it "bad" and "invalid", having led to the arrest of 4 innocent people and having "resulted in the current division in the country". A third guest described the STL as "a fait accompli", a fourth said it was "non-politicized", and a fifth said it was "impartial", "at equidistance from all parties", and "a necessity because it is the gateway to stability in the country". While each of the STL-related episodes was clearly one-sided and served as an exposé of the views of its single guest, *Lubnan Al-Yawm*, as a daily talk show, cannot be described as a biased, one-sided show. It guaranteed pluralism (with respect to access of speakers) and promoted diversity of opinion on very important and controversial national issues, though one day at a time. Not only that, strong criticism of the Lebanese state was also allowed to air (e.g. episode with former Minister Issam Naaman, 13 December 2010).

In sum, TL, through its daily talk show or information magazine, was able to fulfill an important public service mission: serious political issues were discussed openly and freely by guests who represented different political currents and who reflected the spectrum of views held by various members of the Lebanese public. As such, TL proved that, despite being under the authority of the Ministry of Information, it is not a de facto mouthpiece of the Lebanese government, does not represent one-sided, official views on relevant and controversial political matters, and is a platform for free expression, able to compete in that

respect with the national private media. This qualitative assessment is compatible with the quantitative results of the previous section on evening news (i.e. 3.B) where TL was found to give access to opposing political views and political groups, more than any other Arab broadcaster included in the present study.

Despite the positive aspects of *Lubnan Al-Yawm* and its ability to respect and promote a number of PSB values and serve the public interest, one cannot but wonder why the show avoided the confrontational, debate-like format which is essential for the formation of a critical, informed public opinion (the absence of contradictory views within news segments also characterized the news genre at TL, see Section 3.B.). By not allowing several guests to challenge each others' ideas, by not offering pre-recorded segments where various perspectives on the same issue are presented (e.g. vox pop), by not allowing audience members to be present on the set and by not including phone-ins, *Lubnan Al-Yawm* was not only formally dull, it also inevitably paled by comparison with other political talk shows on competing private Lebanese stations: their shows reflect high production values (in terms of studio set up and design, filming, etc.) and capitalize on live debate and direct confrontation among guests in order to cover hot issues and attract viewers' attention.

It could be the case that *Lubnan al-Yawm* is a reflection of the state of affairs at TL: a publicly-owned station which is committed to diversity and pluralism but which, on the one hand, wants to avoid "confrontation" and fuelling divisions in the country, and on the other hand, lacks the financial means to do it adequately. The show is obviously keen on following up on current affairs in the country (with a clear emphasis on politics at the expense of pressing economic and social issues) and on representing a diversity of views on matters of public interest. However, its "single guest" set up and poor production values make it a failure in terms of being a forum for "discussing" and "debating" important national issues. Viewers can only listen to what a single one politician or expert has to say in each episod.

### ***3.c.2.e. Morocco***

A total of eight information magazines which were shown on Al Aoula and 2M and broadcast between 12 and 25 May 2010 were included in the present qualitative analysis. In general, these shows reflected a choice of topics of great public interest to the viewers in Morocco, such as marriages for minors (*Ousra Wahouloul*, 25 May 2010, on Al Aoula), the creation of a new Green Party in Morocco (*Tayyarat*, 17 Mai 2010, on 2M), school dropouts (*Ousra Wahouloul*, 13 May 2010, on Al Aoula), financial auditing and corruption in public institutions (*Cho'oune Barlamanyyah*, 16 May 2010, on Al Aoula), violence by sports fans (*Mubachara Maakum*, 19 May 2010, on 2M), lay-offs in the public sector (*Tahqiq*, 20 May 2010, on 2M) and human rights abuses in Morocco during the period 1956-1999 and the efforts of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (*Commission Equité et Réconciliation* or IER) to close a dark chapter in the modern history of Morocco (*Hwar*, 18 May 2010, on Al Aoula). Not only were the topics highlighted in these episodes timely and relevant to Moroccan citizens and catered to their informational needs, they were for the most

part topics which elicited controversy in society at large and were greatly debated in the national printed press. Indeed, with regards to all the topics dealt with in these shows, public opinion was either divided or at odds with the position of the government.

Not only was the choice of topics in these episodes in line with a mission of PSB (in terms of variety and relevance), the treatment of these topics, mostly through the choice of guests, also reflected a serious attempt at respecting pluralism and including views that are diverse, contradictory, and critical of government. Thus, politicians from both ends of the political spectrum, government officials, and various members of civil society were invited to appear on these shows. There were even a couple of episodes where representation of members of the political opposition tipped the scales, giving more prominence to views critical of the government. For instance, in the 20 May 2010 episode of *Tahqiq* (i.e. investigation) about the government's massive controversial layoffs, the lion share went to anti-government views, as represented by the two experts who were invited to speak on the show. They criticized the government policy, accusing it of causing the loss of qualified personnel, and gave examples which supported their views. They also outnumbered the pro-government guest (i.e. the minister in charge of modernizing the public sector, Saad el-Alami) who represented the official perspective on the issue. The 22 May 2010 episode of *Majallat Al-Barlaman* on 2M was also openly critical of government policy. It pitted the minister of communication and a public official (who defended the government's political, economic, and social policies) against two MPs from the Islamist opposition (one was invited as a main guest and the other appeared in a pre-recorded report).

Despite a clear attempt to respect and promote political pluralism on public TV –an attempt best exemplified by dedicating an entire episode to the new leftist Green Party of Morocco (*Tayyarat*, 17 Mai 2010, on 2M), there were episodes where the treatment of the topic clearly reflected a pro-government bias. This bias was achieved through the framing of the issues discussed, the choice of the guests, the nature of interventions by the host, and the type of pre-recorded reports included in the episodes. For example, the episode of *Ousra Wahouloul* of 13 May 2010 about the serious problem of school dropouts featured four guests whose choice reflected both gender balance and balance in terms of background (the guests included members of civil society and of government). However, the framing of this complex and serious societal and educational issue by the host, in addition to her style in moderating the episode, reduced the complexity of the issue being discussed and shifted the blame away from government. To start with, her interventions did not seek to bring out differences of opinion among the guests. More importantly, her questions and comments exclusively sought to blame individual citizens and families for this serious social problem, despite the existence of many reports by national and international organizations which highlighted the responsibility of the Moroccan government for one of the highest rates of school dropout in the world. When one of the guests, the director general of a private organization working in the area of education, tried to bring up the findings of the international reports and to highlight the role of the government in this national crisis, the host interrupted his line of argumentation and reminded him promptly that “it is the family we are concerned with here”. She was immediately backed by another guest, who, keen on exonerating teachers as well, repeated twice that “we should not blame the dropping

out on school teachers”. In this particular episode, the host played a decisive role in the promotion of particular frames and discourses which excluded the role and responsibility of the government and conveniently blamed parents instead for this national crisis, when they themselves are victims of complex socio-economic conditions in the country.

In sum, the qualitative study of the eight information magazines on Morocco’s two public broadcasters demonstrated the existence of pluralist views when discussing topics of direct concern to the public. Experts and politicians (pro-government and opposition) were regularly invited/pitted against each other, and often, though not always, the hosts played a reasonably neutral role while moderating the shows. As such, these two public broadcasters were found to be fulfilling their public service mission of promoting pluralism.

However, a few weaknesses/omissions were detected (over the two-week period) which negatively affected the quality, the public service value, and perhaps the public appeal of the 8 episodes included in the qualitative analysis. To start with, there was a clear imbalance in terms of gender representation. Women were much less represented than men and were absent in the political and sports magazines. In the two magazines where women were invited, the issues discussed were exclusively social, and not political. By excluding women from the political debate genre, the societal stereotype about the political incompetence of women was being reinforced. The HACA has been seeking to improve the representation of women on Moroccan television, but its intervention so far has focused on the “image” of women being promoted on TV, whereas their “presence” or direct participation in political shows is what also needs to be paid attention to.

Another criticism concerns the quality of the interventions by the guests and not their “representational value”. Whereas access and diversity of opinion (through the inclusion of a variety of guests) have been largely observed, the degree of expertise of these guests was sometimes unequal and served to decrease the public service value of some episodes. There were instances when the “lack of expertise” among guests – especially those whose role was to question government policy, played in favor of pro-government guests whose views went unchallenged. This was the case with the May 18th episode of *Hivvar* on human rights on Al Aoula which was celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Moroccan human rights consultative council (*Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l’Homme*, CCDH). Invited was the president of the CCDH, Ahmed Harzeni, along with 3 other guests whose role was to ask questions and comment on his interventions (two journalists and one academic). The episode revolved around the role of the CCDH in transitional justice in Morocco. Harzeni, adopting a pro-government stance, praised the achievements of the CCDH while blaming “other immature actors” for its shortcomings, and insisted that “the page was turned” and Morocco has been able to move forward as planned. It should be noted here that the CCDH was strongly criticized in the Moroccan press by human rights activists and both national and international NGOs. They accused it of failing to operate at arm’s length from the government and of not achieving its objective of fighting against impunity and for the truth: the case of the disappeared was never solved, some of those responsible for human rights violations were left with impunity, and material compensation to victims was not completed. However, because the other guests were not knowledgeable with respect

to this specific and highly specialized subject (i.e. transitional justice), they were unable to challenge the main guest who was thus able to promote his pro-government views. Had the show invited instead human rights activists and members of national NGOs who are directly involved in the process of transitional justice in Morocco, Harzeni would have had a harder time praising the CCDH and its “success”. It should also be noted that no woman was invited to speak in this episode of *Hiwar*, despite the fact that Moroccan civil society is buzzing with competent women who are active in the field of human rights.

There were also instances when a particular host failed to act impartially, aligned him/herself with one guest against another, and failed to give all guests on the show equal time to express their views. This was the case in the 25 May 2010 episode of *Ousra Wahouloul* which dealt with marriages among minor females. At some point, the female host showed some hostility towards one of the guests (an expert on religious issues). Not only did she repeatedly interrupt his explanations, showing a clear lack of interest in what he had to say, she also prevented him from giving concluding comments, unlike the case with other guests.

Finally, none of the information magazines with political content offered the possibility for viewers to participate in the shows and interact with the guests. Members of the public were not invited to be on the set nor were they given the possibility to intervene by calling in. Only a small number of these information magazines allowed some “feedback” in the form of SMS messages scrolling at the bottom of the screen. Even these written messages were ignored by the host who did not use them in order to challenge the guests in the studio. This raises a question concerning the value of these messages, and whether they serve the informational interest of the public or the economic interests of the operator. The only glimpses at the views held by the public were pre-recorded short reports, mostly in the form of vox-pop segments. But even these were highly controlled TV formats that conveniently excluded unwanted and embarrassing comments by the public.

Some of the most popular political talk shows in the Arab world are the ones that involve the public, such as the flagship shows on the very popular (and atypical) Al-Jazeera television station and a number of private Lebanese channels. In these shows, members of the public are allowed to express different views on matters of interest to society, and their critical comments (via studio presence or live phone calls) not only add to the diversity of opinions expressed, but also force a degree of accountability on politicians and public officials who appear in these shows. On Moroccan public television, this glaring lack of interactivity with the public in political debate shows either signifies a lack of interest in truly serving the public, or fear of facing public criticism and of acting in an accountable manner. Either way, this situation has to change if 2M and Al Aoula were to fully respect their public service mission and compete with the more interactive, popular pan-Arab channels.

### ***3.c.2f. Palestine***

Between 14 and 27 May 2010, 23 information magazines which covered various political, cultural, social, and sports themes were broadcast on Palestine TV. A preliminary look at these shows revealed that most of them dealt with political issues (more than 50% of the

shows), followed by cultural/social shows, then sports shows. Totally absent were shows about the economy, health, religion, and children or youth. The political shows dealt predominantly with the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation, at the expense of other pressing national issues of relevance to the daily lives of Palestinians. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of all 23 shows, even those which were broadcast live, did not include callers-in. Finally, it should be noted that several of these shows were produced by the private sector and in partnership with civil society institutions.

A qualitative analysis of these information magazines revealed that they were generally open to hosting different types of guests, many of them intellectuals and professionals from civil society. However, rarely did these shows adopt a confrontational set up where guests with opposing views could debate controversial issues. For instance, in the episode of 16 May 2010 of *Maa Al-Hadath*, the theme was *al-naqba* (i.e. disaster) which befell the Palestinian people when the state of Israel was created in 1948. Two guests were invited, one of them was a top official from the PLO and the other was a writer and political analyst. The entire episode was dedicated to this national occasion and was devoid of any stimulating discussion or debate. Both speakers seemed to have been offered a platform each to expose their views—views which were not contradictory in any way and which echoed greatly the official position vis-à-vis *al-naqba*. Both speakers thus spoke at length about “the dream of return to the land” for all Palestinians in the Diaspora. No attempt was made to include diverse views on the issue at hand by people in the street (e.g. vox pop) or to mention that for some Palestinians other options exist: e.g. the idea of giving up the “right of return,” or that compensation is acceptable as an alternative, or that refugees and Palestinians in the Diaspora have the right to seek citizenship in the host countries, etc. Moreover, the show failed to offer an evaluation of the performance of the Palestinian leadership in the last 26 years and whether this leadership, over the decades, was not itself in some way responsible for the ongoing effects of the *naqba* on the Palestinian people.

As for the host, his questions did not seek to challenge the guests or probe their thinking in order to extract fresh views and perspectives on the issue of Palestinian refugees. Rather, his questions focused the attention on the plight of the generic, abstract “Palestinian refugee” and the inability of UNRWA, the United Nations agency responsible for the Palestinian refugee camps, to offer good services. Indeed, his question “what is needed in order to help these refugees hold on?” is perhaps indicative of a general tendency by this host to divert the refugee issue away from government responsibility and to focus instead on individual cases of suffering among refugees and the need to “reinforce the steadfastness of these refugees and help them wait for their return, whether they are outside of Palestine or inside it”, as he put it in one of his interventions.

It is worth noting that one of the information magazines, *Nazra Mena Al-Dakhel* (a look from the inside), is a weekly debate show where a controversial issue is discussed by giving two opposing points of view: one by a Palestinian guest and the other by an Israeli guest. For instance, the episode of 22 May 2010, which dealt with the issue of destroying Palestinian homes in Jerusalem and the Iranian nuclear file, featured Issam Makhoul, a former Knesset Arab member, and an Israeli political analyst, Benchetz Ambari. Both

guests were able to express their views freely, with the Palestinian guest denouncing the “provocative Israeli position [to destroy homes in Jerusalem] which seeks to undermine any chance to find a political solution”. The Israeli guest, by contrast, insisted that “Jerusalem is not occupied because its [Arab] inhabitants hold the Israeli card”, that it is the position of the “Palestinian side...which created the conflict”, and that “it is the bias of the Obama administration towards Palestinians which is creating pressure on Israel”. What was very unusual and quite innovative for Palestine TV was to include an Israeli guest who held views which totally contradicted the Palestinian official view on issues of national importance. However, the host was clearly biased in his questions, and took the side of the Palestinian guest. For instance, throughout the first part of the episode, the Palestinian guest repeatedly interrupted the Israeli guest without this prompting the host to intervene and restore balance in terms of airtime given to each guest. Rather, the host took this opportunity in order to support the Palestinian guest by asking questions which reinforced the views of the latter. When, during the second half of the show, the Israeli guest was finally given the opportunity to respond, both the other guest and the host started interrupting him, prompting one website to comment on the show and the fact that it contained a “heated debate marked with interruptions and arguments which lasted throughout the show” (27 March 2010).<sup>12</sup>

By contrast to the political shows broadcast on PTV, shows which dealt with cultural issues seemed to include more diversity of views. They invited a comparatively large number of leftist Palestinian writers, some of whom expressed ideas which were critical of and contradictory to the Palestinian Authority. This was the case in the show titled *Wamdat Thakafyya* (cultural lights) which highlighted major cultural events in various Palestinian territories. On 17 May 2010, for instance, an interview was conducted with writer Mohamad Batrawi, a Palestinian intellectual known for his leftist leanings and the fact that he dares to speak truth to power. The following week, on 24 May 2010, the same show invited leftist writer Waddah Zaktan, who is well known for his views that are critical of government. Indeed, in this episode, he said the following: “I do not believe that the PA has a cultural policy...It is not enough to build a ministry of culture and to announce the appointment of a minister or of a council of ministers or a series of plans if you want to have a cultural policy...I believe this absence is related to the gap between Palestinian intellectuals and their institutions”. What is also distinctive about this show is the fact that it is presented by two media professionals, one male and one female, and that its female host is herself an intellectual and human rights activist. Moreover, the show succeeded in dealing with issues that are relevant to citizens and their rights, combining a literary approach with a human rights approach, and giving relatively ample space to cover women and their cultural activities.

In sum, whereas information magazines broadcast on PTV during the two weeks in May 2010 showed a relative diversity in themes which are of interest to the Palestinian public and sometimes invited different guests with different views, they fell short of fulfilling a public service mission.

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<sup>12</sup> Please check details on the Arabnet website, available at <http://www.alarab.net/Article/269995>

To start with, political themes dominated, at the expense of other public service themes which are often of equal concern to the Palestinian public: the economy, health issues, women's issues (only one show out of the 23 dealt with women), and the environment were totally absent.

Moreover, the existence of the debate-like structure or set up was very conditional upon the themes dealt with and did not characterize these shows in general. Thus, political shows were the most closed, controlled format in this respect. They did not allow the expression of views critical of government and avoided hosting Palestinian guests who did not endorse the official position on controversial and important national issues. The only exception was an information magazine which regularly hosts an Israeli guest and pits him against a Palestinian guest who naturally holds oppositional views.

To exclude Palestinian critical voices from shows dealing with political themes and to restrict debate within them to confrontations with Israeli speakers (who are surely to be met with hostility by Palestinian viewers) seem to be strategies for containment which have the appearance of openness to diversity of opinion on Palestine TV. Political pluralism is practically absent and diversity of opinion on cultural matters, a much safer area where different guests can express dissent, is allowed. Unless Palestinians who hold critical views are allowed to express themselves freely and engage in debate on shows which deal with a wide range of sensitive issues of interest to the public, it is doubtful it can be said that Palestinian TV is adequately fulfilling a public service mission in its information magazines.

### *3.c.2.g. Syria*

The absence of pluralism and the debate format not only characterized the information magazines broadcast on Algeria's ENTV but also similar shows on Syrian TV. Although more than one guest can be invited on a given show, these are mostly government officials (when the topic is political) or pro-government experts (when the topic is non-political). Almost all of them are men. Regular citizens appear almost exclusively in field reports (vox pop). Representatives of civil society organizations are absent from these shows. Throughout the two weeks of monitoring, although a number of shows dealt with political issues (regular, oft repeated topics on Syrian TV talk shows are about US imperialism, the Palestinian cause, and socialism), all views aired were non-critical, one-sided, and pro-government.

In one such talk show, *Qadaya Wa houloul* (issues and solutions), the topic was "city entrances" and their aesthetic value. Four guests (one of whom a traffic officer) from four different locations were invited, each representing a different Syrian city. A field report talked about the entrances to the city of Damascus, and there were two taped interviews with people from outside the studio. All those interviewed (on set or on location) praised the achievements of the government and its future plans, and tackled very superficially the traffic problems and congestion that the city of Damascus suffers from. Not only that, the entire show avoided the debate format and instead was purely descriptive/narrative in the way the information flowed: the host asked questions, to which each guest in turn responded. There was no dialogue or interaction between the guests themselves or between the guests and the audience (which was neither present on the set nor allowed to call in and participate).



## **4. Assessment of Arab Public Broadcasting by Civil Society**

### *4.a. Introduction*

This part documents what activists and members of civil society think of the performance of public broadcasters in their own country. It is based on the oral testimonies and responses of representatives of civil society who were interviewed on the basis of their expertise in their own field of work, as well as their practical knowledge of and direct experience with the media environment in their country.

Knowing what these individuals think of and expect from public service broadcasting (PSB) has served to enrich the present study; the quantitative and qualitative analyses of each publicly-owned broadcaster could thus be complemented with the personal views and experiences of these individuals (about 12-15 in each country) who deal with public television in one way or another, and are also members of the “public.” In other words, these interviews, in addition to shedding light on what members of civil society think of their own public television, provided an added level of analysis and perspective which made it possible to validate, to some extent, the results yielded by the other, more formal and systematic methods of assessment used in this study.

Moreover, the recommendations of the interviewees, coupled with the quantitative and qualitative assessments of Arab public TV provided in the present study, will help concerned activists make a stronger case when lobbying for an improved performance of public television in their respective country.

Between 12 and 15 persons were interviewed in each of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia (a total of 111 interviewees). An attempt was made to make the sample in this qualitative part of the study as representative as possible, in order to ensure the diversity of opinions collected. Thus the profile of the interviewees was the following:

- Persons who work for NGOs and who are not directly involved in their national media institutions (members of NGOs working on human rights issues).

- Persons who have expressed publicly (through traditional or social media) an opinion or criticism about their national public television through a press release, an interview, blog, or report (researchers, academics, human rights activists, etc.).
- Persons who have submitted a complaint to the regulatory authority in their own country in order to protest against specific harmful or discriminatory programs in their national media.
- Persons whose job consists in commenting on and criticizing TV programs: they include media critics, journalists or other media professionals.
- Persons who regularly scrutinize the management and employment policies of national broadcasters, such as trade unionists.

Although not considered to be members of civil society, a small number of current and former public administrators and employees who are in some way involved in public broadcasting institutions in their country were included. Their professional, official status proved invaluable in providing specific “insiders’ views” about the public channel and its relationship with the governing elites.

The interview questions revolved mostly around two main issues:

- Whether the national broadcaster was providing a mission of public service through its general programming
- Whether the diverse societal groups and important social issues were adequately represented on the public television channels

Each interview followed a semi-structured format, lasted between one and one and a half hours, and was based on the two main issues mentioned above. It included an average of twenty questions which focused on the following topics:

- The frequency with which interviewees watch public television in their own country, and whether they have favorite shows
- Their definition of PSB and its value (especially in comparison with commercial, private TV)
- Their personal assessment of the performance of their national public broadcaster, and to what extent they think it is fulfilling a public service mission, such as promoting political and ethnic pluralism or fostering national production.
- Their personal experience with public TV in their country, especially with respect to access to programming and coverage of their own activities
- Their recommendations for reform and change

#### *4.b. Results of the interviews*

##### 4.b.1. About the interviewees

In both Algeria and Syria, where a single party ruled with an iron fist, all interviewees insisted on remaining anonymous for security reasons and out of fear of reprisal. In Morocco, three out of the fifteen persons interviewed wished to remain anonymous, while in Tunisia two out of fourteen respondents refused to be identified. By contrast, interviewees from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine accepted to be fully identified.

As mentioned above, 111 people were interviewed in the eight Arab countries, as per the following breakdown by gender: 13 from Algeria (five women and eight men); 14 from Egypt (seven women and seven men); 12 from Jordan (two women and ten men); 11 from Lebanon (four women and seven men); 15 from Morocco (two women and 13 men); 17 from Palestine (six women and 11 men); 15 from Syria (seven women and eight men); and 14 from Tunisia (five women and nine men).

Most respondents came from the civil society sector, and reflected a wide variety of professional expertise: members of human rights NGOs, medical doctors, media professionals, writers, artists, academics, and trade unionists. There were also members of parliament from Jordan, Palestine, and Tunisia; a few public TV employees from Lebanon, Morocco and Syria; and the former chairman of the board of Télé Liban, from Lebanon; current and former members of ERTU's Board of Trustees in Egypt; as well as two former members of Algeria's now defunct *Conseil Supérieur de l'Information* (CSI). These non-civil society actors were especially included for their critical, insiders' views on national public broadcasting in their country.

#### 4.b.2. Viewing patterns and public television

The interviews revealed that several respondents did not watch their national, publicly-owned broadcaster. For instance, interviewees from Algeria admitted that they did not watch ENTV at all, because it was “hard to digest”, as one respondent put it. Similar to respondents from the other countries, Algerian respondents said they preferred to watch foreign channels.<sup>1</sup>

Most Egyptian respondents said that they did not watch Egyptian public TV regularly because they did not find it interesting or worth their while.<sup>2</sup> The only exception was the evening talk show *Masr El-Naharda* before it was taken off the air, especially those episodes presented by Mahmoud Saad. Most of those who did watch other channels, such as Al Masriya or the news on Channel One said they did so in order to know how the government was portraying events for the Egyptian people.

In Jordan, respondents said they did not watch national television. As one of them explained, even though the channel was aimed at the public, “we turn to other satellite stations which provide a platform for the expression of diverse opinions and which have a following not only in Jordan but also internationally” (Zaki Ben Rashid).<sup>3</sup>

With respect to Lebanon's public television, Télé Liban, most respondents (six out of eleven) said they did not watch it at all, and included current and former high-level employees at TL. The former chairman of the board and the former news editor watched it occasionally, and only two respondents watched it regularly.<sup>4</sup>

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1 All personal interviews in Algeria were conducted during September 2010

2 All personal interviews in Egypt were conducted between February and July 2011.

3 All personal interviews in Jordan were conducted in December 2010.

4 All personal interviews in Lebanon were conducted between January and May 2011.

These responses reflect the crisis that TL is undergoing, and its near-absence from the national media landscape. None of those who viewed TL watched the evening newscast. Former Chairman of the Board Jean Claude Boulos said that he only watched it when a friend was going to appear in the news bulletin. Others limited their viewing to one specific show, to the exclusion of all others.

The Moroccan respondents stood out as the only national group that said it watched both Moroccan public channels (2M and Al Aoula) regularly. They did so because they felt the need to follow news about their country, and to stay informed about events directly related to their work. Unlike respondents from other countries, they said that their favorite shows were local news programs and political debate shows.<sup>5</sup>

Most Palestinian interviewees said that they watched their national channel regularly, particularly the evening news, because it allowed them to follow local and national events, especially with respect to the Israeli occupation. They also watched a number of political shows, such as *fi da'irat al-hadath*, *fi baitina munadel*, and programs addressing youth issues.<sup>6</sup> In Syria, five out of the thirteen interviewees said they mainly watched Al Jazeera, describing it as their “favorite” channel. Only two respondents watched Syria’s public channel regularly. Moreover, all interviewees agreed that they preferred Arab satellite channels, and that very few Syrians watched national TV due to its lack of credibility.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to the Tunisian revolution, most respondents said they did not watch public television.<sup>8</sup> The very few who did said they watched mostly Tunisie 7, and that their favorite programs on this public channel were produced by Cactus Production, whose major shareholders were close to the government. They watched Tunisie 7 for a variety of reasons: out of “professional necessity,” because they were media professionals themselves; because they were asked to do so by friends, for example by feminist organizations when a show dealt with women’s issues; and because it was one way for them to find out about “official policy in the country” and how public television covered national events. As a case in point, one respondent gave the example of the commuter train collision on 24 September 2010 south of the capital, which resulted in one death. This newsworthy event, as this respondent explained, was barely covered in the national media, which instead hosted officials who “trivialized it, by repeating that these things happen everywhere in the world”.<sup>9</sup>

According to another respondent critical of the news media in Tunisia, on 17 December 2010, following the attempt at self-immolation by a young Tunisian in Sidi Bouzid, a fight broke out between the police and local residents, resulting in several injuries and material damage. Local media, unlike Arab satellite channels (notably Al Jazeera), ignored the

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5 All personal interviews in Morocco were conducted during October and November 2010.

6 All personal interviews in Palestine were conducted during December 2010 and January 2011.

7 All personal interviews in Syria were conducted during November and December 2010.

8 All personal interviews in Tunisia were conducted between October and November 2010.

9 For more information, check “*Tunisie. L’information, victime collatérale de l’accident de Bir El Bey*”, at <http://kapitalis.com/polemik/55-debat/1327-tunisie-linformation-victime-collaterale-de-laccident-de-bir-el-bey-.html>, accessed on 15 November 2011.

incident, prompting a Tunisian MP to ask the following in parliament: “why did our media not cover these events? Why must our citizens resort to foreign satellite media in order to be informed?”<sup>10</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that most respondents said that they watched Tunisian public TV during the month of Ramadan, as a “family obligation,” and also in order to follow, in local dialect, the many national drama series and variety shows aired during that month.

#### 4.b.3. Interviewees' definition and understanding of PSB

In Algeria, many respondents gave general definitions for “public service broadcasting,” such as “serving the public interest”, “being at the service of the public”, and “being a mirror of society.” They also noted that public broadcasters are funded by citizens, as opposed to private channels which “are primarily after commercial gain” and which “design their programs to make a profit from advertising and funders.”

A few respondents showed a more detailed understanding of PSB, such as a physician who was a student union leader and who said: “It is a public institution which satisfies the social needs of all its users and citizens, who should also have equal access to it.” According to a university student, PSB should provide complete information (political, educational, religious, etc.) to all citizens, regardless of their opinions and social class.

Egyptian respondents defined PSB as a type of public broadcasting which serves the interests of the people above all else, including those who cannot afford private media (e.g. paying for cable TV or acquiring a satellite dish). They added that PSB focuses on developmental programs instead of commercially driven shows, and some said that it “highlights common values” and acts as a voice for all, especially for marginalized segments of the population. For most respondents, the UK’s British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the US Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) were the most prominent examples of public service broadcasters that came to mind.

As for Jordan, respondents seemed to concentrate on the pluralistic mission of PSB. According to one respondent, public service TV should reflect all the intellectual and political currents in society, and provide the various groups with a platform for expression—a service which Jordanian public TV (or JTV) has been unable to offer to its viewers because it remains completely closed to views that contradict government policies.

All the above definitions combined seem to capture, albeit in vague terms, the most essential role that a public service broadcaster should play: to serve the interests of the people and not those in power. However, one important omission remains: the role that a public service broadcaster should play in fostering and reflecting cultural diversity and in addressing the concerns and needs of the various linguistic and ethnic communities living in the country, such as the Armenians in Lebanon, or the Christian Copts in Egypt.

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<sup>10</sup> *Le Temps de Tunisie*, 22 December 2010.

Indeed, most often the concepts of pluralism and diversity were reduced in the interviews to “political pluralism”, i.e. expressing the views of the different political parties in a given country.

In Lebanon, respondents made a clear distinction between private and public media, one mostly based on financial differences: whereas private stations exclusively sought profit, public service media should work “for the public interest”, to “serve society and not people in power”, “carry a cultural and societal mission”, “deal with people’s problems”, and “reflect the concerns of Lebanese youth and the role of women in all fields.” Public service media should also “address all Lebanese with all their differences”, and their broadcast news should be “balanced and objective”, “without partisan mobilization.”

Perhaps the most complete and comprehensive understanding and definition of public service broadcasting came from the Moroccan interviewees. In addition to the general definition placing public service broadcasting at the heart of democratic practices, some interviewees said that PSB promotes the values of citizenship, equality, democracy, freedom, and tolerance, and identified it in line with its meaning in established democracies. For instance, PSB was defined in terms of the ability to “provide access to the entire population without geographical exclusion”. Media expert Bachir Znagui found that PSB also meant “highlighting the diversity of the political and ideological opinions in society and presenting pluralistic and diversified information, without bowing to political and economic pressure.”

When asked about the difference between public and private media, most of the answers reiterated the understanding that private media obey the laws of the market and concentrate their efforts on sensational programs that will sell, even if they are of poor quality and target only a portion of the population. Another main difference lay in the books of specifications which define the operation of national channels, such as requiring them to offer diverse, balanced programming and to cater to the needs of all segments of the population. As Bachir Znagui explained, public channels have to take into account minority groups and preserve the rights of all citizens, whereas private channels have their own priorities that do not necessarily include the public interest.

It should be noted that some of the (more skeptical) Moroccan respondents did not see any real distinction in practice between the two types of broadcasting, and insisted that the only difference lay in the mode of financing the operations of a given broadcast station. They also believed that the margin of freedom was greater in the private broadcasting sector. Surprisingly, according to one TV employee who wished to remain anonymous, public TV, as opposed to private TV, “has to align itself with the policies of the state,” a definition which, if meant in the normative sense, seems to entirely contradict the essential mission of public service broadcasting.

In Palestine most of the civil society representatives defined public service broadcasting as one that is independent from the government, reflects all opinions in society and is run by an independent body. No further elaboration of what exactly characterizes PSB was offered by any of the respondents.

According to the Syrian respondents, public service television should express “public opinion”, reinforce “national ties” among the Syrian people, and provide them with quality local and international news. They also thought it should “convey the regime’s point of view and its position to the Syrian people and to the world”, and “reinforce understanding between the people and those in power.” Another role of PSB was to “present Syria and its history to the world.” Interestingly, none of the interviewees mentioned any of the PSB roles (or ideals) identified in this study. Rather than see the role of PSB as one meant to *serve the public, in its diversity*, and to act as a forum for the expression of critical opinions (including criticism of government actions and policies), public service television was regarded by several Syrian respondents as a “normalizing”, “homogenizing” tool which serves to bring together the Syrian people and their rulers. Moreover, publicly-owned TV was seen as a “public relations tool” that the Syrian state can use to promote a positive image of itself. Clearly, most of the above-mentioned “roles” do not fall within a public service remit. They actually reflect how publicly-owned media can conveniently serve as a propaganda tool for regimes in authoritarian countries.

It is not possible at this stage to say why none of the Syrian respondents showed an understanding of what a public service mission in television consists of. Was it because these specific respondents lacked knowledge of and experience about PSB? Or were they reluctant to express themselves freely out of fear of reprisal from the authorities in this police state?

Tunisian respondents gave different answers that could be classified into four categories: One group demonstrated confusion, and even ignorance about the definition of PSB and its mission, and some respondents admitted that the concept and mission of PSB were never publicly debated among members of civil society. As the former president of the Tunisian Association for Democratic Women (*Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates*, ATFD) Bouchra Belhadj Hamida put it: “this question has never been debated in our organization...really, not a single collective reflection on that matter has been launched among us.”

Another group of respondents, just like their Syrian counterparts, equated the definition of PSB with that of government TV, and were totally unaware of the possibility that public TV could be independent from government. Some of these respondents were also unaware of the positive experience of PSB in other countries, including in neighboring Morocco. For instance, they were surprised to learn that Morocco had set up a functioning, independent regulatory authority to oversee the media (the HACA).

A third group of respondents was aware of the existence of successful models of PSB in other countries. They knew that public service television should be independent of the government and should reflect cultural and political diversity, including views by minority groups. It should also cater to all social strata without any discrimination, be neutral in covering national events, and offer a space for debate and contradictory views. It also has an important role with respect to education, culture, and entertainment. When asked to compare private and public television, they said that the main difference related to

the license fee, and the fact that private Tunisian channels catered to a specific segment of the population (i.e. affluent viewers) and broadcast in both Arabic and French. These respondents also noted that public service in general does not exist in authoritarian regimes. They said that public TV, like any other public institution in Tunisia, was controlled by the government and was not used to serve the people. They concluded that there cannot be any PSB in Tunisia before the public space itself was democratized.

Lastly, some respondents believed that there was no need for national PSB because foreign satellite channels were providing this service in terms of quality information, education, and entertainment.

#### 4.b.4. interviewees' assessment of the performance of national public TV

In Algeria, most respondents agreed that the country's public TV did not fulfill a public service mission, and that there was a marked absence of plurality in its programming. According to a journalist, "there is an iron clad rule that only one message can get through: that of the government". A university professor noted that "ENTV was conceived as a tool to legitimize government policies rather than provide a mission of public service." For other respondents, the creation of the Tamazight language channel (for the Amazigh ethnic minority) two years ago reflected an improvement in terms of catering to the needs of the public, but this was still not sufficient. More means have to be put at the disposal of ENTV in order to improve the quality of its programming and fulfill a public service mission.

A different, scathing comment came from a former member of the CSI, who blamed members of civil society and the intelligentsia for failing to advance the public service mission of TV in Algeria. "There is a lot of work to be done," he said. "Those who are complaining are those who want to impose solutions from above, through the official political institutions. They hold no dialogue together, as if each one holds exclusive power over Algeria." According to the same respondent, these critics also make no mention of the book of specifications that governs ENTV operations – an attitude which reflects "little consideration to the law or the institutions that need rehabilitation".

Although the Information Act of 1990 called for the creation of private production companies, only a handful were able to survive financially, due to the corrupt practices of ENTV officials, such as allocating more funds for the purchase of imported programs than for national ones. According to an ENTV producer who wished to remain anonymous, the publicly-owned broadcaster commissions programs from favored producers in Algeria or abroad with no internal supervision, leaving many ENTV professionals without work. He also added that the director of ENTV has total freedom in selecting programs and that the tendency is to buy them "at any price, as long as they do not include pornography or touch on religion and state politics."

Although a new draft law for audio-visual and film production was being introduced at the time of the interviews, an ENTV producer commented that this law would actually serve to control production content: "One of its first articles stipulates that films about national



liberation will be submitted to prior authorization by public officials. This will only result in reinforcing the official version of history.” The bill stipulates that filming without authorization from the Ministry of Culture is a breach of Article 4 and is punishable by a fine of 500,000 to 1million Algerian Dinars (or 5,000 to 10,000 Euros).

According to a senior employee at the Ministry of Communication, “ENTV is an organism that devours budgets, with a personnel too poorly qualified to manage an institution whose main objective should be to foster modernity and efficiency. It is a channel of the Third World, with all the burdens resulting from the geographical position of the country.”

According to the former chairman of the ERTU Board of Trustees, Hassan Hamed, Egypt’s public TV (Al Masriya) has been operating as a commercial enterprise with the primary aim of attracting viewers and advertisers. Several other respondents confirmed that Al Masriya was not performing as a public service broadcaster, concentrating instead on entertainment and sports at the expense of culture and information. Louis Greiss, an ERTU board member, said that former President Mubarak had, through the Ministry of Information, instituted a policy of providing a heavy dose of entertainment in order to distract people away from politics: “Mubarak did not want the public to meddle in politics, nor to have a say about essential and crucial issues.” Others pointed to the lack of diversity in most Egyptian TV programs, which were biased towards the government and catered to an affluent, Westernized segment of the population. Another problem identified by one of the respondents related to overstaffing. According to veteran publisher and CEO of United Group, Hisham Kassem, “the public media in Egypt cost the state more than health, education, and transportation altogether...there are more people working at the ERTU than in the broadcasting sectors of all of Africa.” Not only is a huge number of people employed in this public sector (estimates range between 45,000 to 46,000), but most of them do not have professional qualifications. Interestingly, interviewees did not believe much had changed after the January 25, 2011 revolution, and both Greiss and Ghada Shahbender, board member of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, said that the same supporters of the old regime were still in their positions at the ERTU.

In Jordan, most respondents believed that only one point of view was represented: that of the government, with rare exceptions. Ahmad Awad, director of the Centre for Economic and Financial Research, described how Jordan TV often hosts several guests with pro-government views, and one “weak” guest from the opposition to act “as a token” representative. According to Zaki Ben Rashid, of the *hizb jabhat al amal al-islami* political party, guests on Jordan TV are selected for their views “which are in line with the objectives and policies adopted by JTV.”

The secretary-general of a leftist opposition party, Said Ziab, said that whenever members of the opposition were invited on JTV, they were “instructed to use a discourse that complied with the policy of the TV station” – a practice which he described as “dangerous”, and an attempt to mute people or “force them to express themselves in a way that is different from how they think”. According to Areeb al-Rantawi, a former board member at JTV and a journalist at *Ad-Dustour*, JTV has a black list of unwelcome guests created by managers and

producers. One of the interviewees summed up the situation by saying that “JTV is far from functioning like an institution”, believing it functioned more like someone’s personal property.

Areeb al-Rantawi also pointed out that the government is not the only branch interested in controlling JTV and that many other officials and departments have direct, privileged lines of communication with the channel in order to secure enough space for themselves in the evening news. As a result, he said, managing the evening news bulletin was “a nightmare” because of the “clash of competing priorities”. Mustafa Hamarneh, former chairman of the board of *Jordanian Radio and Television*, concurred and said that the problem with JTV lay with its “multiplicity of controlling authorities”, which also included the government security services. Fakher Daas, coordinator of the National Campaign for Students’ Rights, said that JTV has become a “government institution, integrated within the system and serving the policies of the government. Therein lies the real problem.”

Consequently, JTV is facing the challenge of losing its audience who prefer to switch to the Internet and pan-Arab satellite channels in order to inform themselves about events in their own country. According to al-Rantawi, this is mostly due to the poor professional standards at JTV, where employment is based on “appointments by prime ministers and managing directors,” at the expense of qualified people. “The crisis is a political one par excellence, it is the failure of political reform,” he added.

In Lebanon, few interviewees considered Télé Liban to be a mouthpiece of government. Indeed, half of the respondents agreed that TL offered a space for diverse views. The other half, including the three interviewees who worked at TL, believed that TL overlooked many societal issues and views, and lacked diversity. Nonetheless, the significant number of respondents who believed that TL was neutral indicated that the channel has, to some extent, challenged the common belief that an Arab public broadcaster is necessarily a government mouthpiece.

Most respondents, however, criticized the lack of coverage of relevant social issues on TL, such as citizenship, socio-economic conditions, youth issues, and women’s rights. They said that the channel had no specific “national mission or role.” Respondents were aware of the dilemma facing public broadcasters when trying to address serious social, economic, and cultural issues at the risk of losing viewers, and of the financial pressure to schedule cheap and popular shows which often have little cultural or national relevance.

In Morocco, respondents differed in their views on the capacity of public TV to reflect independent, free, and pluralistic opinions. According to Taoufiq Nadiri, a journalist at *Al Massae* daily, national public television was incapable of addressing sensitive issues, while media expert Bachir Znagui found that it operated “according to a logic that preserves the state apparatus at the expense of the citizen.” Bousalham Daif, a producer at the Ministry of Culture, accused Moroccan public TV “of erasing personal opinion.” Abdalilah Hassanine, secretary general of *Mouvement de l’enfance populaire*, disagreed, believing that

public TV in Morocco was attempting to encourage independent public opinion about national issues such as the Western Sahara question, even though, in general, it served to reflect the official position.

Opinions were also quite divided concerning the ability of Moroccan public television to promote political, religious, social, and economic pluralism: some interviewees gave it credit for trying to reinforce the various national identities, while others accused it of failing to do so. Political pluralism was only respected during electoral campaigns, based on instructions set by media regulators, according to a senior manager at a public TV channel who preferred to remain anonymous. Media expert Znagui concurred, saying that “pluralism as set by the High Commission for Audiovisual Communications (*Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle*, or HACA) and defined by the law is respected, but that it is not enough. A lot more needs to be done.” Mostapha Benali, president of an association for the protection of viewers, believed that respect of pluralism existed only in theory, and cited the frequent demonstrations and protest movements that public television did not cover because they were politically sensitive. *Al Massae* journalist Taoufiq Nadiri believed that failing to impose punitive measures when violations of the law on pluralism occur have led to a lack of balance in news coverage. However, one respondent defended the work of the HACA, saying that it was “very serious with respect to the issue of pluralism, and had published reports that revealed the domination of television newscasts by government and majority parties beyond their allotted quotas,” at the expense of time allocated to opposition parties and women. Other respondents accused the HACA of not including in its reports the absence of coverage of civil society and trade union activities.

Some interviewees, including Ministry of Culture official Bousalham Daif, lamented the absence of programs on cultural minorities in Morocco and the domination of a nationalist discourse that promotes national cohesion. Mokhtar Laghzioui, a journalist at the *Al Ahdath Al Maghribia* daily, was more specific in his criticism: “(public) Television does not allow minorities to express their ideas and views. For the unsuspecting observer, public TV shows these minority groups, but only in the framework of expressing allegiance to the monarchy, or living in a peaceful setting, or following traditional, ancestral ways of life. Moroccan Jews, for instance, are never visible on TV.” Media expert Znagui added that the coverage of minority groups was not balanced, and “served to reinforce the hegemony of one group over another - such as the Arab versus the Amazigh identity.” A respondent who requested anonymity said that public television “either has a very narrow view of Moroccan reality, or is forced to follow specific political directives. For example, businessmen and experts on culture and religion are marginalized because they hold views deemed radical by those in power...there is even talk of the existence of a black list.”

Most Moroccan respondents expressed disappointment with what they called “dysfunctional programming” at the heart of public TV, and blamed both the government and advertisers for their negative influence on content. Mohamed el-Ouafi, an engineer and trade unionist at 2M, lamented the dearth of cultural and educational shows and the dominance of pro-

government programs. According to Nadiri, program selection was dictated by the drive to increase advertisement revenues, therefore more time was dedicated to musical evening shows than to cultural shows of national interest.

Moroccan respondents in general said that national production was not being sufficiently promoted. Some, while acknowledging an increase in the quantity of nationally-produced drama, sitcoms, and films, believed that this increase was achieved at the expense of quality, due to the lack of technical expertise and the pressure to increase production. Znagui accused public channels of commissioning productions from “friends or intermediaries” and unqualified production companies, while el-Ouafi said that the budget for national productions allocated by the state was irregular and insufficient, leading to a situation in which up to seven imported productions could be aired in a single day. This, he added, was in total contradiction to the books of specifications which require public television channels to produce 60% of their own programs, of which 30% must be national feature films.

According to one respondent who wished to remain anonymous, 80 percent of the budget for national production at the 2M channel depends on advertising, which makes “national production subject to the desires and pressures of advertisers”. The same respondent criticized the lack of transparency in the process of commissioning programs, assigning budgets for them, and broadcasting them. Production is also at the mercy of viewer ratings, and public channels decide which program genres to repeat in order to satisfy advertisers, which was the case with the reality show *Lalla laâroussa* (the bride) on the Al Aoula channel. In Palestine, respondents were divided in their assessment of the performance of Palestine TV (or PTV). Some believed that there was no noticeable improvement in the quality of news and information programs. One program in specific, *ala al-makshouf* (in the open), was cited by several respondents as a good example of a show that dealt boldly with political issues and contained a good measure of freedom of expression. Other positive comments focused on cosmetic changes, such as the new PTV logo, improved quality of production, the addition of a direct satellite link which made it possible to include guests who live outside of the PA territories, and the hiring of new presenters. These changes were introduced despite the channel’s young age, its poor funding, and the ongoing Israeli military occupation which impedes the work of journalists. Other respondents found that PTV was partisan in its outlook, and was an instrument in the hands of specific groups instead of being a broadcaster for all Palestinians. They also criticized the parochialism of the channel, suggesting that it should have a more regional and international outlook, and pointed to the lack of qualified personnel and the recurrence of the same guests on talk shows.

Respondents were also divided over the extent of political and cultural diversity on PTV. Some noted some improvement in this respect, with a wider margin of freedom of expression allowed in the last two years. For some other respondents, political diversity was not an issue since Palestinian society was united by the struggle against occupation. For these respondents, this cohesion was reflected in cultural and social programs shown on PTV. By contrast, some respondents denounced the partisan character of the channel. As

publicist Salem Khalleh noted: “PTV is the de facto channel of the PLO. I support the idea of an impartial, non-partisan, and independent channel which can truly reflect society”. May Nayef, from the media section of the National Council, also agreed that there was no political diversity at PTV: “It is practically the TV of the West Bank, from an economic and social perspective, and viewers can see that its cultural programs do not correspond to the reality in Gaza”. For writer and researcher Mostafa Ibrahim, the problem of partisan public channels was more pervasive: PTV covered the Palestinian Authority perspective in the West Bank, while the Al-Aqsa satellite channel expressed the equally partisan views of the Hamas government in Gaza.

Regarding news coverage in particular, critics denounced the lack of impartiality on PTV. Ibrahim al-Barghouti, general manager of *Musawat*, gave as an example the way PTV refrained from covering important Wikileaks information when it dealt with Palestinian officials. By contrast, respondents praised PTV’s role in promoting local film production by co-operating with the private sector and producing a number of local, quality films which were eventually shown on TV. However, they believed more efforts were needed in order to improve the overall quality of programming on PTV.

Syrian public television was described by a former employee as being the mouthpiece of the government and of being totally subservient to the latter due to the lack of democracy and absence of laws and regulations that can ensure its independence. According to the director of a center for media research, Syrian TV covers cultural and artistic events from various perspectives, but when it comes to politics, its approach is to “cover up, censor, and only highlight the government’s point of view”. Similarly, only Sunni Islam, the religion of the majority of the population, is highlighted, while very little air time, if at all, is allocated to other religious denominations. In a similar vein, Syrian TV was criticized for only addressing the Arab ethnic majority population while overlooking other linguistic and ethnic groups, such as Armenians, Kurds, and Circassians. According to a producer at Syrian TV, any staff member who tries to change the channel’s policy or to gain some independence from the government is either fired or threatened with suspension. He gave the example of Nidal Zaghbour who was removed from his position as general manager of Syria’s public channel only seven months after his appointment. Another TV employee explained how Bashar al-Assad’s regime had tried to increase the budget and improve the professional standards of personnel in order to better compete with Arab satellite channels. However, he added, the security regime, in addition to tightened press freedoms, self-censorship, and widespread corruption, have made change impossible. Another interviewee who worked for five years at Syrian TV concurred, blaming the low rate of viewership on a lack of creativity and strict censorship, and concluded by stressing the need to “recreate the TV institution in order to make it independent and capable of dealing with social problems and issues, and of exposing state corruption.”

Prior to the 2011 revolution, Tunisian respondents were highly critical of the performance of their public channel, Tunisie 7, and some went as far as observing that the national private channels can sometimes be more daring in addressing non-political content than the national public channel. Tunisie 7 was deemed to be generally of low quality

and unattractive in both form and content, and was seen as being “one-sided” and not independent, which, according to Zeinab Farhat, director of *El Teatro* cultural space, was why “Facebook was so successful.”

A journalist at Al Jazeera, Bassam Bounemmi, described Tunisie 7 as “a space which excludes dissident voices,” and Raouf Dakhlaoui, owner of an established literary bookshop, saw it as “a channel for government propaganda with intermittent sports and music shows.” According to Rachid Khechana, director of the democratic Progressive Party (*Parti Démocrate Progressiste*) and editor-in-chief of *Al-Mawkef*, even when opposition figures appeared occasionally, they were in reality “pseudo-opposition figures” co-opted by the power elites, while public debates with government ministers were nothing more than “masquerades”. A journalist found that the only freedom of expression allowed on Tunisie 7 was in the area of sports and culture, whereas diverse political or ideological views were prohibited.

#### 4.b.5. Assessment of public TV's coverage of public service themes

Because of the exclusion of society and its representatives from Algeria's ENTV, most respondents said they did not consider it a space for the expression of public issues, and preferred to resort to the print media instead. A trade union member said that invitations were regularly sent to ENTV to cover union activities but to no avail.

One respondent related the case of a students' union representative who was interviewed on ENTV about the brain drain among youth in Algeria. As he related, the interview was never aired: “The entire interview was censored, because I spoke about how the state should keep students in Algeria by providing means for professional development and the necessary socio-economic and security conditions.” The majority of Algerian respondents noted that ENTV did not offer any programs that fulfilled a public service mission, unlike the situation decades earlier, between 1989 and 1992.

However, interviewees identified a number of programs with a public service function, such as the health show *Irchatat tebbia*, the religious *Fatawa ala el hawa*, and a show on international relations, *Fi dairat el-dhaou*. All three are live shows, are broadcast during prime time, and exclude debate. The first two offer advice and allow for audience intervention, and the third one provides information on current international events and is part of the evening newscast.

As one respondent summed up the situation at ENTV, “in general, the best shows or freest shows or the most promising ones are the ones that are dedicated to youth and entertainment, presented by young people who are not yet touched by censorship... these are mostly entertainment and game shows and they bring a breath of fresh air to programming, in contrast to the ‘serious’ shows that are out of sync with the expectations and aspirations of spectators/citizens”.

Egypt's ERTU charter, code of ethics, and other founding documents contain no provisions that ensure diversity of content or allocate quotas for certain types of programming genres or themes, such as minorities, youth, and children. As a result, human rights issues, in particular torture, are absent on public TV. According to Noha Atef of the Arab Network for Human Rights Information, "when they produce a segment about the Ministry of Interior, it is systematically favorable to it." Several respondents described the coverage of elections in 2005 as "slanted", "scripted", and "farcical". They also noted that corruption was rarely discussed; some parts of the country were neglected or shown in a disparaging light, such as Upper Egypt; while some topics were completely off limits, such as the Baha'i faith and the Egyptian military establishment.

Jordanian public television seemed to avoid a number of topics that are usually addressed on satellite channels. According to In'am al-'Ashi, a lawyer and human rights activist, the coverage of women's issues is weak, and according to Zuheir Abu Fares, former president of the doctors' union, health issues are not featured enough. Other respondents noted the lack of coverage of university elections and related campus violence, the little airtime dedicated to people with disabilities, and the absence of local programs for Jordanian children. With respect to cultural diversity, several respondents noted the absence of many ethnic and religious groups from JTV programs, which were dominated instead by one national group, the East Jordanians, "as if other cultures simply did not exist", as respondent Ahmad Jawad put it.

Most Lebanese respondents were critical of their public broadcaster, Télé Liban (TL), finding that it was isolated from society and unresponsive to the needs and concerns of civil society and the public in general. Many of the interviewees, who were themselves journalists and media professionals (including a director of a morning show on TL), complained that the channel systematically ignored their suggestions for improvement. However, a representative from a local NGO found that access to the channel was possible and that civil society had some influence on the content of public television.

In Morocco, youth and children's issues are not sufficiently covered by public operators, according to Abdalilah Hassanine, secretary general of *Mouvement de l'enfance populaire*. When they are, he explained, it is a "form of window dressing to show that public TV is dealing with the citizens of the future." Hassanine also pointed to examples of wrongdoing, such as exposing children to obscene language and using them to transmit intolerant messages on TV. In his capacity as secretary general of the *Mouvement de l'enfance populaire*, he was often interviewed on TV, but his "message was censored or not broadcast at all." Another respondent, who preferred to remain anonymous, criticized children's programs for their superficiality and for the dominance of imported cartoon shows with violent content.

Khadija Riadi, President of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (*Association Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme*, AMDH) found that human rights issues get little attention, "except on special occasions, which gives them an irregular and ephemeral character". She added that her NGO "was the subject of defamatory statements during one of the episodes of *Hiwar*, which hosted the president of the Consultative Council on Human

Rights (*Conseil Consultatif des Droits de L'Homme*, CCDH) (see Part 3, Section C on the qualitative analysis of talk shows in Morocco). In that episode, a participant in the show “hurled serious accusations against [her] organization,” which indicated to her that the channel was being used in order to settle political scores with human rights organizations. Although she filed a complaint with the HACA, it rejected it “under the pretext of freedom of expression for the [participant] journalist,” she added.

Environmental issues were well addressed on public television, according to Zakrotti Yassine, chief of energy and environmental resources in Marrakech: “Programs dedicated to this issue are treated and analyzed in a fairly competent manner, but not all problems are addressed”. His personal intervention in a TV show was broadcast, and his organization was able to mobilize TV around a campaign on the use of plastic bags. Another respondent, however, found that environmental issues were handled in a selective manner that favored the official discourse. As he explained, the degradation of the environment is always blamed on the citizens, never on the state, and very rarely on private companies which are greatly responsible for this pollution, with the complicity of public authorities. Moreover, sensitive topics, such as the impact of tourism on the environment or the impact of some industries (e.g. phosphate production) on the health of the population, are never addressed on public TV which avoids showing victims of harm resulting from state policies or industrial practices.

In Palestine, many respondents saw an improvement in the performance of Palestine TV, particularly in its approach to important social and cultural themes. They cited the example of a show called *nazra menal dakhel* (an inside look), which deals with the Palestinian citizens of Israel, as well as some entertainment and information shows. One respondent noted that there was a marked leap in program quality due to the production of shows that invited guests from across the political spectrum, including Hamas officials. However, respondents agreed that such exceptional examples did not break the rule: PTV is still dominated by the Palestinian Authority, and many issues remain neglected, such as education and the environment.

With respect to the theme of human rights, several respondents noted that the issue is narrowly defined on PTV: human rights issues refer exclusively to Israeli violations against Palestinians, and are exploited politically. Sha'wan Jabareen, director of the NGO *Al-Haq*, noted that “there is a clear lack of courage to deal with human rights violations on an internal, Palestinian level”. According to political analyst Yehya Rabah, there is a “seasonal approach” to covering human rights issues, such as on the occasion of “remembrance day”, but no short term or long term media strategy to deal effectively with this issue on a regular basis.

Women are generally absent from PTV, with few exceptions. Women are also hardly ever consulted in political shows or debates, and are generally shown in a stereotypical, traditional framework, according to Amal Khreisheh, director of an NGO for Palestinian working women. Wafaa Abdel Rahman, from the NGO *Falestiniyyat*, noted the absence of women during peak viewing times, from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., and concurred that they



were excluded from political shows: “I want to see women discuss reconciliation and speak about negotiations from a feminist perspective. Women have the capacity to do so in all fields and this is a criticism that applies to all Arab television channels, not just to Palestine TV”.

However, other female respondents were less critical. Mona Mansour, a former MP, saw a positive trend at PTV to host women in leadership positions, and Lubna al-Ashkar, media officer at a Palestinian NGO, noted that PTV has now female correspondents and anchors. Many Palestinian respondents said they were able to participate in some programs, either directly or by phoning in with comments or questions during debates with civil society representatives. However, this participation was limited, and these shows rarely addressed human rights or women’s issues. Salem Khalleh, PR officer at a human rights NGO in Ramallah, recalled being invited to comment on the recuperation of the body of a martyr, Mashhour al-Arouri, but was not given the chance to “get the message across”. He was also invited several times to discuss Israel’s withholding of bodies of martyrs, “but the issue was not dealt with from a human rights perspective. This is not enough”, he concluded.

Prior to the 2011 revolution, many Tunisian respondents found that Tunisie 7 was more inclusive in cultural programs than in political shows. All politicians and members of civil society interviewed said that they had never been invited to appear on Tunisie 7, whereas respondents engaged in various cultural activities said that they had been occasionally solicited by producers at this public channel to appear on cultural shows. Even then, they complained that their TV appearance was highly controlled: they were barely given enough time to deliver information and no time at all to discuss or express an opinion. Movie director Hichem Ben Ammar said that he was invited a number of times to speak about his films on Tunisie 7 but the films themselves were never shown on this public broadcaster.

Dissident voices were totally excluded on Tunisia’s public TV. For instance, Rachid Khechana, head of the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), said that although his party was legally registered, it was never mentioned on Tunisie 7. Likewise, opposition parties and a major human rights organization, the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights (*Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l’Homme*, LTDH), are entirely excluded from public television. According to opposition MP Adel Chaouech, the activities of opposition MPs, such as the initiative for the abolition of the death penalty or lobbying for some bills, were totally ignored. When views by opposition MPs were broadcast, this was done in a selective manner, airing only those views which were not critical of the government. Mokhtar Trifi, president of the LTDH, agreed with this assessment and said that when public TV dealt with human rights issues, this was done in order to attack activists or praise the actions of the government.

Tunisian female activists expressed similar discontent with the performance of Tunisie 7 with respect to covering and framing women’s issues on TV. According to Sana Ben Achour, president of the ATFD, “although the discourse of national television is politically monolithic, it does address, once in a while, some public service themes”, such as domestic

violence and the issue of inheritance. However, she criticized the lack of a human rights perspective in these debates which, as she conceded, find “resonance within some social strata of Tunisian society”. Ben Achour added that minority communities in Tunisia were not represented on public television, as though Tunisian Jews and black people did not exist.

Finally, human rights activists and public interest groups said that they were denied access to their national public TV, and that the invitations and press releases they regularly sent to Tunisie 7 journalists were consistently disregarded, to the point where they could only express themselves on Arab satellite channels, such as Al Jazeera and Al Hurra.

#### 4. b. 6. Interviewees' recommendations for improved performance on public TV

Recommendations were synthesized in order to avoid duplication, as several interviewees, though coming from different national and political backgrounds, often had very similar suggestions with respect to improving the performance of public TV in their own country. Recommendations were classified into broad categories: regulation (liberalizing the media sector, abolishing the ministry of information, and setting up independent regulatory bodies); improving management within the public operator; improving type and quality of programming; and spreading general awareness about the nature and mission of PSB. Whenever country-specific recommendations were noted, they were separately highlighted as such.

### **General recommendations:**

#### ***4.b.6.a. With respect to broadcast regulation***

Most respondents believed there was a need:

1. To abolish the ministries of information (or communication) and to replace them with fully independent regulatory bodies following the model of the FCC in the US, the OFCOM in the UK, or the CSA in France.
2. To liberalize the audiovisual sector, break the government monopoly, and introduce laws that can guarantee a fair distribution of the airwaves
3. To restrict membership of the regulatory authorities to experts and members of civil society and introduce adequate provisions that would ensure their independence from the government.
4. To liberate the national media (private and public) from the hold of the government and the security apparatus with respect to production (program content), distribution, and advertising.
5. To introduce books of specifications with respect to public TV which is still operating in a legal vacuum and without any clear programming policies and guidelines in many Arab countries.

6. For the power elites to have the political will to introduce and/or promote public service broadcasting. In addition to freeing public broadcasters from the control of government, this means providing them with the necessary budget to achieve their public service mission.
7. Wherever this is still not the practice, to introduce a nominal license fee in order to help establish independent public operators and make them accountable to the people (ownership and funding by the people) and not the government.
8. To amend existing media laws and remove all restrictions imposed on freedom of expression and the press.
9. To make clear the rules based on which censorship is to be exercised.
10. To protect journalists by enforcing fair judicial procedures, eliminating “red lines” and prison penalties, and instituting a right of access to information.
11. To introduce and implement a code of ethics for the media.

#### ***4.b.6.b. With respect to management of public television***

1. To have upper management in public operators nominated by parliament in order to allow the direct representatives of the public to exercise control over public broadcasting.
2. To ensure that the board of trustees which oversees the administration of the public TV is independent of government in order to operate according to international professional and ethical standards.
3. To upgrade the management of public operators and ensure their administrative independence.
4. To ensure that public TV functions with transparency and publishes annual reports about its administration, financial status, etc.
5. To create a department for Human Resources to improve the quality of recruitment and retain and promote qualified personnel.
6. To make the editorial team in public TV independent of government.
7. To cancel job appointments based on favoritism and to recruit new personnel based on merit.
8. To improve the work conditions of journalists and to train them about human rights issues.
9. To improve the quality of equipment and create state-of-the-art studios.

#### ***4.b.6.c. With respect to programming***

1. To promote local production and to create informative and cultural shows that reinforce citizenship. Introduce a new programming policy for the station, along with the budget needed to implement it.
2. To create quality programs for public TV without being influenced by commercial considerations.
3. To create shows that can educate and cultivate the public, and encourage critical, independent thinking.
4. To create shows that allow for the expression of diverse opinions, and cater to the needs of all sectors of society (ethnic and religious minorities, women, youth, rural and underprivileged populations, etc.)

5. To open up public television to those sectors of society who are normally deprived of their right to expression in the media, and to allow access to national associations, parliamentary and political parties, trade unions, etc.
6. To establish independent, reliable, and scientific ratings methods compatible with international standards in order to properly gauge audience needs and expectations.

***4.b.6.d. With respect to creating general awareness about PSB***

1. To create awareness about PSB within the population in general, and national NGOs and journalists in particular, by designing campaigns and conducting media workshops.
2. To make the concept of PSB part of the political culture, and to highlight best practices from around the world, but especially from the Arab world (e.g. Lebanon, Morocco, etc.).
3. To create a centre for professional development within the institution that administers public media, and to provide in-house training for journalists on the principles of PSB.
4. To create partnerships between specialized NGOs and media institutions in order to train media practitioners and improve their performance and their professional ethics.
5. To upgrade journalism and law programs in universities and integrate the concept of PSB in the curricula.

Although the above list of recommendations applies, with varying degrees, to most of the eight Arab countries included in the present study, there were a number of recommendations that reflected the specificity of some of the national contexts. For instance, whereas most respondents insisted on the need to enact legislation which would liberalize the media sector, this particular recommendation was not presented by interviewees from Lebanon or Morocco, where such laws have already been introduced and implemented. Instead, the Moroccan respondents sought to strengthen the independence of the country's highest regulatory authority, the HACA, and to improve its performance by calling for a revision of the statutes related to its role and its prerogatives.

As for Lebanon's TL, the public broadcaster that suffers the most from acute financial problems, respondents recommended saving its rich and unique archive from decay, because, as Magda Abu Fadel, journalist and director of AUB journalism training program put it, "the country's cultural heritage is threatened with extinction."

Some of the recommendations for Egypt reflected the unique situation at ERTU: with close to 46,000 employees on its payroll (Télé Liban represents the other extreme with less than 100 employees currently), ERTU is burdened by a large number of employees most of whom are unqualified or unmotivated, and by a huge and unjustified gap in salaries. Consequently, several interviewees recommended offering early retirement packages to 90% of ERTU personnel, hiring qualified personnel, and narrowing the salary gap (reportedly, some employees are paid a few hundred Egyptian pounds while others are getting millions).

## **5. Summary of findings and concluding comments**

### *5.a. Introduction*

In June 2010, a major regional study on how to strengthen public broadcasting in 8 Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Syria, and Tunisia) was launched. Despite the general awareness among participants that the “public” model for broadcasting which prevailed in the Arab world was not in any way comparable to that which exists in many European and North American contexts (e.g. the BBC), and that “the public” in “Arab public broadcasting” is the entity least catered to by these broadcasters, there was consensus about the urgent need to assess the actual performance of public broadcasters in all 8 countries of the MENA region, in order to effectively lobby for change. It was also clear that only by documenting areas of strength and weakness with respect to regulation, management, and production, and by developing and applying research methodologies which can yield detailed and reliable results with respect to actual output or content, can civil society activists identify problems and suggest solutions for change. Indeed, the strength and uniqueness of the present project lies in its comprehensive, multi-levelled approach to studying Arab public television: in addition to covering a total of 9 public broadcasters from 8 different Arab countries<sup>1</sup>, it includes several levels of analysis and a variety of methodological approaches to studying content: an overview of the regulatory framework in all 8 countries; a quantitative and qualitative analysis of various program genres; a comparative analysis of seasonal programming schedules; and an evaluation of public television in the 8 Arab countries by a relatively large number of members of civil society (a total of 111 qualitative interviews). In addition to filling a (serious) gap in the research literature on Arab public broadcasting, it was hoped that the various findings of this regional study would provide activists and members of civil society with the adequate tools that would enable them to lobby for a democratic, pluralist, quality public service broadcasting in their respective countries.

However, it was also clear at the time of launching this ambitious project that lobbying for change, from a grassroots perspective, was precisely the kind of political activism which is “restricted”, banned or simply ineffective and futile in a region controlled by authoritarian regimes intent on preserving the status quo and maintaining their grip on national media - a basic tool for social and political control. Little did anyone involved in this major and pioneering enterprise suspect that, before the year would come to a close, the winds of change were going to sweep many Arab countries, overthrow a number of autocratic regimes, and threaten others with collapse. Suddenly, new possibilities for political reform emerged, especially in the public sector. Working on documenting the state of public broadcasting in the Arab world suddenly acquired a dimension and value beyond the initial expectations of anyone involved in the project. The need to understand what was wrong with Arab public broadcasting made more sense than ever. In other words,

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<sup>1</sup> Morocco has two generalist, terrestrial public broadcasters: 2M and Al Aoula.

what started mostly as an academic *exercise* in studying a social and political phenomenon which was badly in need of reform, ended up as a blue print for serious political activism to democratize public broadcasting in the Arab world.

### *5.b. Overview of the legal context of audiovisual media in the 8 Arab countries*

A review of the audio-visual landscape in the 8 Arab countries included in Part 2 of the present study showed that the development of the sector in these countries followed distinctly different paths, especially with respect to the development and nature of the regulatory process which applies to national broadcasters.

However, some common trends with respect to the mission and regulation of the Arab public broadcasters could be identified: in most countries, television broadcasting in the region started a number of years after independence (from the French or British colonizers), was placed under state control from the very beginning, and was part of the nation-building project in post-colonial countries. In the only Arab country where TV was first introduced as a private venture, i.e. in Lebanon, government control (prior to the state acquisition of all shares of TL in the early 1990s) was only imposed on the news bulletin and political programs, whereas management of the private TV stations was allowed to decide freely with respect to the production and broadcasting of entertainment and educational shows. In all 8 Arab countries, state control was secured by placing public television directly under the tutelage of the Council of Ministers or the Ministry of Information or both (e.g. TL and Syrian TV), the president (e.g. Palestine TV), or the king (e.g. Morocco's 2M and Al Aoula, and Jordan TV). In Tunisia, up until the recent toppling of President Ben Ali's regime, a very tight grip over public television was guaranteed by placing this public institution simultaneously under the tutelage of 3 different ministries, two of which are "security-related": the Ministry of Telecommunications, the Ministry of National Defence, and the Ministry of the Interior. In both Algeria and Egypt, emergency laws which lasted for decades (and were only recently repealed) served to tighten state control and guarantee the exclusion of political pluralism and diversity from public TV.

Not only was public TV "managed" by various entities related to the executive branch (and the security apparatus), a combination of laws and administrative procedures (including state control of budget allocation) were enacted and applied in order to make sure that publicly-owned TV in these countries functioned effectively as a mouthpiece of government. The various laws which controlled national television included press laws, audio-visual laws (when they existed), penal codes, and emergency laws (in cases like Egypt and Algeria).

In short, public TV in these 8 countries is synonymous with government TV. Its main role is to serve the government agenda and not the interest of the public. Interestingly, this "conceptual" equation between "public television" and "government television" is not only how Arab governments view public TV. Interviews conducted with members of civil society in the 8 Arab countries revealed the extent to which this (erroneous) view was

also prevalent among citizens in the Arab world. With the exception of Morocco, where regulation of public service television was found to be, comparatively, more advanced than anywhere else in the Arab countries included in the study, the concept of public service television seemed to be quite alien in the Arab world. In Part 4, several members of civil society interviewed for the purpose of this study defined PSB as the medium through which governments can communicate their activities and perspectives on issues and events to the public. In other words, public television was understood (and accepted) by many respondents as a state apparatus where a top down model of communication takes place (this equation of public TV with government TV was the strongest in Syria). Other respondents, however, were able to identify some very general PSB ideals such as neutrality of information and diversity of opinion and programming. Even when some of these ideals were cited, such as diversity or pluralism, their understanding was generally limited in scope: both diversity and pluralism meant almost exclusively the “representation of the various *political* factions or parties” in a given society. In other words, various social, economic, and ethnic groups who actually make up “the public” were left out (women; children; economically underprivileged groups; religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities; people with disabilities; rural populations, etc.). What these findings actually mean for grassroots activists is that efforts have to be undertaken at all levels when reforming Arab public broadcasting, starting with the public itself: lobbying for legislative change at the level of decision makers cannot be fully effective unless accompanied by efforts to raise public awareness about what PSB is about among Arab populations, whose experience with television has historically been based on the exclusion of the “public interest” from public broadcasting by the successive Arab governments. For the latter, public, national, terrestrial television is there to maintain the status quo and win support for the policies and actions of the ruling elites.

Indeed, as the overview of the regulatory framework has shown (Part 2), with the exception of the Palestinian territories and Lebanon (Lebanon being the first Arab country to liberalize the sector in 1994), this total monopoly status continues to be secured well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, either through legislation which (still) does not make room for private *terrestrial* broadcasting, or through lack of implementation (in cases when laws to liberalize the sector do exist), or through “regulatory authorities” which reject applications for private terrestrial broadcasting. It should be noted that, by contrast, rules and regulations with respect to licensing private *satellite* channels have been more “lax” in some of the same countries where private terrestrial TV is still non-existent (e.g. Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria). This is probably due to the limited threat to the central authorities posed by satellite channels when compared with terrestrial, free-to-air TV (satellite channels are more expensive to operate than terrestrial TV and have limited access to national audiences).<sup>2</sup>

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2 Sakr, N. (2008). “Egyptian TV in the grip of government”, in *Television and Public Policy: Change and Continuity in an Era of Global Liberalization*, edited by David Ward. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, p. 272.

As for the licensing process itself (for both private terrestrial and satellite channels), it is opaque in general, inaccessible to the public, and therefore shielded from public scrutiny and accountability. It is also mostly the result of political considerations rather than technical ones, and often depends on arbitrary government decisions in the absence of clear rules and regulations with respect to liberalizing the audio-visual sector.

Interestingly, whereas several common trends could be identified, the differences were sometimes as great as the commonalities: though official (and unofficial/indirect) censorship, government control, and lack of transparency in the management of public broadcasters were found to be the norm in all 8 countries, the *extent* of this censorship or control varied significantly from one case to another: the audio-visual landscape in Syria, for instance, is still characterized by complete and continuing state monopoly over the broadcasting sector in the country, while neighboring Lebanon occupies the other end of the spectrum with respect to privatization of the audio-visual sector, diversity of ownership, and pluralism in media content.

Other divergences are illustrated by the case of Morocco and Jordan. As the only two Arab kingdoms included in the present study (one North African, the other Levantine), and despite the fact that the two countries started liberalizing the audio-visual sector around the same period (Morocco in 2005 and Jordan in 2002), they have followed completely different paths with respect to regulating the sector and defining the mission of public service broadcasting in specific. Unlike Jordan, where public television is still unabashedly treated by officials as an organ of the state and is operated and regulated as such, Morocco has been able to develop legislation with respect to its public TV (Law No. 77-03 of 2005) that reflects a relatively comprehensive and universal understanding of PSB – one which echoes to a large extent the principles listed in the UNESCO handbook about public service broadcasting.<sup>3</sup>

Other differences involve the legal instruments introduced in order to regulate the audio-visual sector, especially public broadcasters. Lebanon was the first Arab country to abolish, in 1994, TL's monopoly over the airwaves, and to legalize several private TV channels which presented serious competition to Lebanon's public broadcaster, without introducing in parallel a law which specifies the mission and objectives of TL, or mechanisms for financing it and organizing its production of national programs. By contrast, the Lebanese 1994 audio-visual law contains specific requirements with respect to content on private terrestrial TV channels, especially in its related books of specifications (e.g. universal access, quotas for different program genres, promotion of national production, etc.). TL, to date, is still operating in a legal vacuum, almost two decades after the introduction of the audiovisual law of 1994. Morocco's case in this respect represents the antithesis of how the Lebanese executive and legislative branches dealt with the national public broadcaster. Not only does law No. 77-03 of 2005 deal with the mission, objectives, and content-related duties of Morocco's public and private broadcasters, it has also introduced a regulatory authority (the HACA) which, despite its shortcomings as an independent regulatory

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, *Public Service Broadcasting: A Best Practices Sourcebook*, edited by Indrajit Banerjee and Kalinga Seneviratne, Paris, 2005, p.15.



authority (as documented in Part 2), surpasses, in terms of mandate, powers, responsibility, structure, management, and achievements, all other Arab regulatory authorities identified in the present study.

Whereas national legislation with respect to other public broadcasters is characteristically (and intentionally?) vague when it comes to content related to a public service mission (i.e. ensure a public service, develop the audiovisual sector, promote national creativity, etc.), Morocco stands out with the most comprehensive, detailed, and concrete efforts to seriously promote a mission of public service on its public broadcasters. The country's regulatory authority, the HACA, through its power to develop books of specifications (*cahiers des charges*) for all broadcasters, was able to translate general guiding principles such as "promoting pluralist and accurate information", or "refraining from privileging any political party or interest group", or "encouraging local production" and "Moroccan artistic creation", into specific and concrete guidelines which are measurable and quantifiable (e.g. "*La règle des trois tiers*" or "rule of 3 thirds", see Part 2).

In sum, despite some common general trends (mostly in terms of ongoing state control over all national audio-visual media), the regulatory framework for public television is quite different with respect to the 8 countries included in the present regional study. It should be noted in this respect that no attempt was made to draw comparisons and parallels between the various laws and policies governing public TV, since this was not the purpose of the present study. The main objective, instead, was to understand first the extent to which each state was committed to promoting a public service mission on national TV through appropriate regulation and administrative procedures, and second, and most importantly, to assess the nature of programming on each public broadcaster (Part 3 about the analysis of content).

There was no attempt either to infer causal relationships between existing laws which regulate public broadcasters and their actual output/content in each country. Indeed, the results obtained in the present regional study showed the difficulty in trying to establish such relationships. For instance, although in most Arab countries publicly-owned media are tightly controlled, serve as a mouthpiece of government, and seek to promote the ideology of the ruling party or elites through their content, the same cannot be said about Lebanon's public television. Political pluralism in TL's content exists despite the fact that its administration is not structurally or financially independent, that it is not mandated by any legal text or book of specifications to promote political pluralism, that it functions directly under the umbrella of the Ministry of Information, and that it is ultimately controlled by the Council of Ministers (see results of sections 3.B and 3.C with respect to content).

Moreover, although public broadcasters in Lebanon and Morocco operate within entirely different legal and financial contexts (Morocco representing the most sophisticated case for regulating and financing PSB in the Arab world, and Lebanon being the Arab country where public TV is the worst off financially and operates in a legal limbo), the various analyses of content (Part 3) revealed that TL surpassed Morocco's public broadcaster in terms of promoting political pluralism on the news and in information magazines.

In sum, whatever the historical and political circumstances which shaped the differences between the various Arab public broadcasters, they are such that one cannot simply speak of “Arab television”, or “Arab media landscape”. Given the divergences and similarities which cannot be attributed or reduced to region (North Africa vs. Levant), political systems (i.e. monarchies, military dictatorships, one-party dictatorships, or parliamentary republics), or nature of existing audio-visual laws, any such attempt at blanket categorization will simply fail to capture the complexity which characterizes development, regulation, and performance of television in the 8 Arab countries included in the study.

### *5.c. What content on Arab public television?*

#### *Summary of the main findings*

**General programming:** In the present regional study, 3 different distinct areas with respect to content were considered for analysis: the overall programming schedule, the evening news bulletin, and the information magazines (also referred to as “news & public affairs shows”, and more commonly known as “talk shows” in the Arab world). More than one methodological approach was adopted for this multi-levelled study of content, depending on the nature of the research question asked with respect to each area of enquiry. Not only did the study apply a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of textual analysis, these methods were applied to different popular program genres (the evening news bulletin and the topical information magazines). Moreover, a quantitative assessment of the seasonal program schedule for each broadcaster was undertaken, in order to evaluate the programming policy of these broadcasters (from a public service perspective), and the extent to which they are offering a variety of programs which cater to a variety of national audiences.

Results showed that “entertainment” programs, as a general category which mostly consists of drama series, game shows, films, and variety shows, was very dominant and exceeded in terms of weekly duration all other categories of programming (e.g. information and education). Morocco’s 2M stood out with the highest percentage of weekly programming (i.e. 55.62%) going to entertainment, and the lowest percentage going to information magazines, when compared to all other public broadcasters.

Within the general category “entertainment”, drama series were allocated the highest percentage of broadcast time, accounting between one fifth and one third of all weekly programs on Jordan TV, TL, Syrian TV, 2M, and Al Aoula. However, when the origin of these drama series was factored in, results showed that for all countries (except for Egypt and to a lesser extent Syria –both of which have a thriving national drama production), drama series on Arab public television are predominantly imported and/or reruns. In the same “entertainment” category, films received minimal (often negligible) airtime in countries like Jordan, Tunisia, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Algeria, and Syria. When the origin of these films was also taken into consideration, the percentage of “locally produced” films became nil (0%) in all of the above-mentioned countries. In sum, with the exception of Egypt (a regional hub for the production of both drama series and films) and Morocco (where the books of specifications impose a quota for nationally produced films),

Arab public broadcasters are failing to promote national culture and heritage through the production of film and drama series, and to provide employment opportunities to local talent (actors, playwrights, directors, producers, cinematographers, etc.). Both these ideals are essential to a public service mission on national public television.

By contrast to drama series (whether imported or local), very little air time was dedicated to programs targeting children and youth, cultural and artistic shows, and documentaries. As such, Arab public broadcasters failed not only in terms of offering a balanced variety of program genres, but also in terms of catering to all age groups (children programs varied between 0% and 4.5% for all 9 broadcasters, with most of these programs consisting of imported cartoons).

In the “information” category, “news bulletins” and “information magazines” (both topical and general), similar to drama series, dominated the public screens in many Arab countries. They accounted for nearly half of all weekly programs in countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. Whereas news and information magazines are clearly national productions with local content (this is especially true of information magazines), the percentage of airtime allocated to these two informational genres can be said to fulfill at least the (single) public service requirement of promoting national production. However, the screen presence or duration of these “national audio-visual products” says nothing about their quality, their ability to represent a wide range of national issues of relevance to the public, giving access to different national societal groups, or expressing diverse opinions in order to promote a healthy debate on issues of public interest. The detailed quantitative and qualitative analyses which were undertaken respectively in Section 3B (about news bulletins) and Section 3C (about topical information magazines) made it possible to further assess the extent to which the above-mentioned public service ideals were fulfilled (or not) in these two “nationally produced program genres” .

**Evening news bulletins:** A quantitative analysis of the evening news on the 9 Arab public broadcasters included in the study revealed the extent to which news is first and foremost an informational genre which focuses on political issues involving the national political elites and is covered predominantly from the (pro-government) perspective of male politicians, government administrators, and experts. To start with, a breakdown of the evening news bulletins which were broadcast over two weeks in May 2010 in terms of various public service themes (politics, economy, human rights issues, women’s rights issues, environment, health, education, minority issues, etc.) showed a great imbalance in the news time dedicated to each of these themes. The theme of “politics” was by far the most dominant theme on all 9 channels: the time allocated for covering this theme alone was nearly half of the total time dedicated to the entire evening news bulletin on 5 public channels, and exceeded three fourths of all news time on TL and Palestine TV. The theme of “economy” was a distant second, followed by the “sports” theme. Despite the existence of a general trend to give extensive coverage to the above-mentioned 3 themes, country-specific variations could be noted: Tunisia 7, for instance, barely covered economic issues

(5.64% of total news time), preferring instead to dedicate one fifth of its total news time to sports. By contrast, sports coverage was practically non-existent on TL and Palestine TV (0% and 1.93% respectively).

With the exception of the theme of “art & culture” which received modest coverage on all these broadcasters (a combined average of 9.3% of their total coverage), all other public service themes identified for the purpose of the present study were generally absent from the evening news: human rights, minority issues, children and youth, women’s issues, health, environment, education, and science and technology. Although Morocco’s two public broadcasters stood out with their news coverage of issues/themes which were entirely neglected by the other Arab broadcasters (i.e. minority issues and women’s issues), this coverage was very low in and of itself, and did not exceed 0.96% of the total news duration in the case of minority issues and 3% in the case of women’s issues. Whereas the very low percentage dedicated to minority issues on Morocco’s generalist public channels can be explained by the existence of a specialized public channel for the country’s Amazigh native ethnic group, the low interest in covering women’s issues is hard to explain in a country where the women’s movement is one of the oldest, best organized, and most politically active in the Arab world.

Two public broadcasters covered important themes that were neglected by the other broadcasters included in the study. Tunisie 7 dedicated 6.18% of its total news time to covering the theme of “science and technology”, and Syrian TV dedicated 15% of its total news time to covering “human rights issues”. These (and similar) results should be used with caution, especially when “sensitive” political issues are involved (e.g. human rights). In the case of Syrian TV, the significant amount of airtime dedicated to covering human rights issues cannot be read as an indication of the government’s interest in this important issue. “Human rights issues” on Syrian TV meant exclusively human rights abuses by the Israeli state, never human rights abuses within Syria (mostly against political dissidents in Syrian prisons, for instance). This specific “angle” or “focus” was also the same one adopted exclusively by Palestine TV in the very few segments where it covered human rights issues, despite the existence of human rights abuses within the Palestinian territories, perpetrated by the national authorities against their own people. Similarly, on Egypt’s Al Masriya, when coverage of the human rights issue was regional, it referred exclusively to abuses by the Israeli state. In the very few instances where the theme of human rights was covered as a national issue, the news segments were positive, and highlighted the progress that the Egyptian government had made in terms of meeting international standards of human rights in Egyptian prisons. In sum, by equating every mention of human rights abuses in the region with Israel, and by neglecting to cover this issue on a national level when an Arab government was perpetrating abuses against others (usually its own people, such as members of the political opposition, ethnic and religious minorities, and so on), interest in covering human rights issues on Arab public TV proved to be highly selective, ideological and self-serving.

Even in news segments dealing with seemingly “neutral” or “a-political” issues such as “culture” and “science and technology”, the “public interest” was rarely served. Instead, such non-political segments provided Arab heads of state with additional opportunities to dominate the news and document their multiple achievements in all walks of life. In the case of Tunisia, for instance, news items about technology in the classrooms (a recurrent news item on the evening news) were covered in such a way as to highlight the role of President Ben Ali’s regime with respect to modernizing the schools in Tunisia. The same was true of (the very few) news items related to “health”, “culture”, or “the environment” in Egypt, Syria, Algeria.. Whatever the nature of the theme covered in the various news segments by national public TV, it seems that Arab heads of state were ever-present on the screen, a constant reminder to the population of their “omniscience” and the extent and scope of their achievements and success in governing the country.

The results with respect to the function of news agents who are covered in the news confirm the above observation with respect to Arab heads of state. In the case of most heads of state in the 9 public broadcasters studied, presidents and kings appeared (through photo or video images) very frequently and for relatively long periods of time on the evening news. Moreover, the frequency of their screen appearance rose dramatically when only the first top 4 news segments were considered. Not only did national heads of state dominate (visually) the opening section of the evening news over two weeks in May 2010, they also overshadowed all other news agents, including high ranking national politicians such as prime ministers and speakers of parliament. The most extreme case was that of Tunisia’s Ben Ali: one fourth of all appearances by news agents/speakers were attributed to him. As a single news agent, he appeared in the top 4 news segments more frequently than any other news agent or group of agents (i.e. ministers, MPs, public officials, etc) throughout the two weeks studied.

Interestingly, when “speaking time” of news agents was also taken into consideration, results varied dramatically with respect to most Arab heads of state. Although their photo or video appearances were found to dominate the evening news, they rarely spoke, with the exception of Palestine TV and Jordan TV (where speaking time and photo time were almost a perfect match in the case of President Abbas and King Abdallah). For instance, President Assad of Syria, President Mubarak of Egypt, and President Bouteflika of Algeria were *never* heard speaking in the evening news, although their visual presence was very strong for a single news actor. Bouteflika was the most dominant single news agent on the evening news on ENTV (16% of the duration of all photo/video appearances by news agents), but he was never heard speaking in the evening news (0% speaking time). The gap was even greater in the case of Tunisia’s Ben Ali (22.03% photo/video time vs. 0.78% speaking time on Tunisie 7).

These results seem to confirm the “personality cult” with respect to heads of state in the Arab world, who are always in the headlines and in the opening segments of the news, regardless of the existence of a newsworthy occurrence or event to justify the predominance of their photo/video appearance on the news.

Whereas government members (i.e. ministers) were, to varying degrees, represented on the evening news in all 8 countries, members of parliament -whether majority or opposition MPs, were barely seen or heard. Opposition MPs in particular were totally absent (with respect to speaking time) on Jordan TV (0%), Syrian TV (0%), Egypt's Al Masriya (0%), Palestine TV (0.1%), Algeria's ENTV (0.9%), and Tunisie 7 (1.1%). Public broadcasters in Morocco and Lebanon were the exception in this respect. Morocco's two public broadcasters offered balanced access with respect to majority and opposition MPs (an average of 2.99% and 3.53% respectively for the two parliamentary groups). However, pro-government bias became apparent when the speaking time of ministers was taken into consideration (an average of 14.5% for government on both channels, almost 5 times as much as the time given to MPs in each category). TL, by contrast, seems to have achieved, during the two week period analyzed, the (near) perfect balance in giving access (in terms of speaking time) to ministers (or government), majority MPs, and opposition MPs (19.75%, 16.62%, and 18.66% respectively).

Whereas politicians in power, especially heads of state, ministers, and members of government administrations, received the lion's share as news agents in the evening news bulletins on Arab public broadcasters, members of civil society were hardly ever interviewed or solicited for their views. To start with, with the exception of Jordan and Morocco where they got an average 0.9% of the total speaking time, trade unions were absent on public TV news in all other countries. Members of minority groups (ethnic, linguistic, or religious) were also absent, except on Egypt's Al Masriya and Morocco's Al Aoula, where they barely spoke (0.1% of all speaking time). National NGOs fared slightly better: whereas they were rarely heard speaking on Al Masriya (0.2%), Jordan TV (0.4%), Tunisie 7 (0.7%), Algeria's ENTV (1.1%), TL (1.2%), and Syrian TV (4.7%), their average speaking time was 8% on Palestine TV and 8.8% on Morocco's two public broadcasters. Interestingly, "national experts", as a sub-category of "civil society" which included various types of professionals (lawyers, doctors, academics, and political analysts who did not have any clearly identified political function or affiliation), were by far the largest group to be quoted on the news in this category. Whereas "experts" got at least 50% of all news speaking time reserved to the general category "civil society" in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Algeria, and Morocco (specifically 2M), as a single category they were the overwhelming majority of "civil society" speakers on Jordan TV, Syrian TV, Tunisie 7, and Egypt's Al Masriya (between 75% to 95% of all civil society speakers on these public channels). For the latter 4 public broadcasters, the speaking time of "experts" was so high (nearly one fifth of all news speakers on Al Masriya and one third of all news speakers on Syrian TV), it exceeded the percentage of speaking time allocated to all government ministers and members of parliament combined in each of these broadcasters. Moreover, on Tunisie 7 and Syrian TV, "ordinary citizens" interviewed on the street (vox populi) had far more speaking time than ministers, MPs, and members of NGOs combined (respectively 31.42% and 14.37% of all speaking time on the news).

Once again, these results should be read with extreme caution. The assumption that giving voice to "independent experts" and "ordinary citizens" would contribute to pluralist views and diversity of opinion on the news is simplistic to say the least: it does not take into

consideration the “ideological role” played by supposedly “independent” societal actors (e.g. experts) and by people “randomly” selected off the street who are asked to give their perspective on current events on the evening news. It should be noted here that the quantitative (content) analysis applied to the evening news, as a research method with its own epistemological assumptions and limitations, does not make room for examining the news content in terms of how events and speakers are framed, or how information is carefully packaged in order to promote specific perspectives (at the exclusion of other perspectives and constructions of reality). The qualitative, critical approach to analyzing text, which was applied to topical information magazines (or talk shows dealing with a single theme or issue in each episode), is more suited to exploring the *quality* of TV content and the extent to which a plurality of views and perspectives are allowed to be expressed. It helps to unravel the unequal power structures and relationships between the various participants in these shows, mostly by examining the content of their speeches and the dynamics of their interactions, especially with the host. Indeed, the critical, qualitative analysis of information magazines revealed (as we are going to see below), the extent to which caution has to be exercised before equating “diversity” of news agents or TV guests with “diversity of opinion”.

With respect to the evening news on the Arab public broadcasters, suffice it to say that a general evaluation of their content which strictly sought to identify the presence or absence of views critical of (national) governments, revealed that, regardless of who the news speakers were (whether ministers, public officials, experts, lay people or other), the result was practically the same: over two consecutive weeks in May 2010, not a single news segment on public television aired views critical of government in Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, or Egypt. Morocco’s two public broadcasters barely did so during the same period (an average 1% for both broadcasters). Lebanon’s TL was the only exception in this respect, with 14.13% of its news time consisting of views critical of the Lebanese government – a result largely consistent with the fact that it is the only public broadcaster which allocated a significant amount of news time to members of the parliamentary opposition, as we have already seen.

Whereas all the above results dealt with the position or function of news speakers, and variations were noted with respect to the news time allocated by the 9 public broadcasters to the various societal groups and news agents, a breakdown of news agents/speakers by gender revealed a more uniform, consistent result: women are severely underrepresented in this news genre on all 9 public broadcasters. They are rarely seen and heard as news agents/speakers in 5 of the 8 countries studied (Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Algeria, and Egypt), where, on average, they make up only 6.3% of all news speakers solicited for their views on the evening news. Egypt scored the lowest in this respect (with only 4.36% of its news speakers being female). Tunisia 7 came first with the highest percentage of women appearing as news agents (23.2%). Paradoxically, it barely covered the theme of “women’s issues” over the entire period studied (only 0.6% of the news time over two weeks dealt with women’s issues)

A more detailed analysis of female representation, which considered their speaking time *by theme*, and not as a percentage of the total time for speakers during the two weeks studied, showed more differentiated results. Women as news speakers were thus found to be more present in some news segments than others, depending on the theme of the news segment. To start with, women were almost entirely absent from those news segments which covered areas considered to be part of the “male domain”, i.e. politics, the economy, and sports. As news agents/speakers, they seemed to be more solicited when the theme dealt with was consistent with the traditional/stereotypical role assigned to them: i.e. in health, education, art and culture, and, predictably, women’s issues.

Morocco’s public channels were, by far, the two broadcasters with the highest percentage of female speakers when a thematic approach to gender representation was taken into consideration: with respect to the theme of “children and youth”, 56.52% of the news speakers were female on Morocco’s Al Aoula. When it came to the theme of “education” on Morocco’s 2M, 68.57% of news speakers were women. Women as news agents/speakers in these two public broadcasters become a significant majority when the theme was “women’s issues”: 72.76% of news speakers on Al Aoula were women, vs. 63.32% on 2M. Although the percentage of female speakers in segments dealing with women’s issues was sometimes higher on other broadcasters (where women made up 100% of all speakers in news items about this theme on Jordan TV, Palestine TV, and Syrian TV), this cannot be read as an indication of a more inclusive policy on the part of these broadcasters. Women may have been the sole news speakers on the above mentioned broadcasters, but the segments in which they spoke did not exceed 1% of the total news time over two weeks in May 2010. Indeed, in terms of total duration, their “speaking time” was often limited to a few seconds. For instance, Tunisie 7 allowed women to be the majority of news speakers in the very few news segments about women’s issues: 63.41% of speakers in these segments were women. However, when total speaking time, and not percentage of speaking time (i.e. 0.6%) was taken into consideration for this theme, one realizes the extent to which women were “silent” or “absent” (or both), even when they were the majority of speakers about women’s issues on Tunisie7: they spoke for only 26 seconds during the two weeks of evening news in May 2010. Morocco’s two broadcasters fared slightly better in this respect: not only did they solicit a majority of women to speak in news segments dealing with women’s issues, they also had (comparatively) the highest percentage of news time dedicated to this theme (3.01% on 2M, and 2.25% on Al Aoula).

If TV news on Arab public broadcasters were to be truly gender-inclusive, not only should women’s voices permeate all topics and themes covered in the news (especially political and economic issues), but societal areas where women are already very present, active and influential (such as education, health, human rights, culture, and so on) should receive significantly more coverage. Only then can the news bulletins be balanced both in terms of the themes covered and the gender of news speakers.

**Information magazines:** Although a quantitative analysis of news is invaluable with respect to the nature of data it yields (i.e. numerical/statistical results which are objective, verifiable, replicable, and so on), it is limited in terms of uncovering the various layers of



meaning embedded in news and other programs. By contrast, a qualitative analysis, while suffering from its own (albeit different) limitations, can be very insightful and go beyond the technical, straightforward “who” (i.e. who gets to speak on television), “about what” and “for how long”, to reveal the “how”: it examines the framing of events and interventions by speakers (including the anchor or host), and helps to bring to the surface the often subtle and unequal power relationships between various participants in a given show by analyzing the context and content of their speech. Moreover, the qualitative analysis of content helps in identifying the presence (or absence) of views which are alternative or critical of government on issues of relevance to the public interest, as the inclusion of such views is part and parcel of a public service mission. By adding this qualitative dimension to the other two quantitative analyses of content in the present regional study – a combination rarely if ever found in other studies about the content of Arab broadcast media, it is hoped the present study will contribute to filling a research gap with respect to assessing the content and performance of Arab public broadcasters.

The topical information magazines (more commonly referred to as talk shows in the Arab world) that were included in the present study were broadcast during two consecutive weeks in May 2010, during the same period which was selected for the quantitative analysis of evening news.<sup>4</sup> The issues dealt with in the episodes included in the present regional study were quite diverse, often controversial, and reflected a wide array of important public service themes needed for an informed citizenry. To cite only a few, these episodes dealt with intra-regional conflicts (e.g. the Moroccan/Algerian divide over the Sahraoui issue), the monitoring of human rights abuses and early marriage for girls in Morocco, the Copt minority and the rights of people with disability in Egypt, the status of minorities and the legal rights of women in Jordan, the Israeli destruction of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem, cultural events organized in the Palestinian territories, Hezbollah’s weapons and the legitimacy of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and so on.

Whereas the choice of topics and the title of the episodes, as the above examples demonstrate, reflect (at least on the surface) an interest by the public broadcasters to deal with thorny and often controversial national political issues, Syrian TV, which regularly offers its viewers a diet of talk shows which focus on a limited number of self-serving ideological issues (e.g. American imperialism, benefits of socialism, and the Palestinian cause), dealt with a number of non-political issues in its talk shows during this period. One such show (titled “problems and solutions”) discussed “the entrances to the city of Damascus” - a topic which can potentially raise relevant, public interest issues with respect to the daily life of commuters and visitors in this overcrowded capital. However, the episode concentrated on the aesthetic aspects of this theme, and barely touched upon the serious traffic problems plaguing the city. All four guests, who represented

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<sup>4</sup> In the case of Lebanon, the same period in May 2010 was not suitable for the analysis of programming on TL, considering that most of the month was dedicated to the coverage of municipal elections throughout the country, and that the normal scheduling of programs was often interrupted. In other words, programming during that period (including news) was “extraordinary” and not representative of TL’s regular content.

different Syrian regions, in addition to the two participants who appeared in a pre-recorded report, praised the achievements of the government and discussed its future plans to improve life in the city. There was no discussion or disagreement among the various participants (including the host), and the audience participation was totally excluded: members of the public were neither present in the studio set nor were they given the possibility to intervene by calling in.

The Syrian sample talk show discussed above demonstrates the importance of examining the content of information magazines beyond merely recording which themes are discussed; the number, position/function, and gender of participants; and the duration of their interventions. A qualitative assessment of the content of these shows can yield results that are in many ways more revealing of the nature of public broadcasting in each country than the standard quantitative analysis of “who speaks” and “for how long” (as was the case in the previous section on the quantitative analysis of the evening news).

The qualitative analysis of content undertaken in the present study entailed an examination of the following: the choice of topics and the perspectives/frames used for discussing them; the typology of the guests (who they are, what and who they represent, and their individual position *vis-a-vis* the topics discussed); the extent to which the opinions which are allowed to be expressed are diverse, critical, and alternative; the moderating role of the host (and whether he/she is neutral, playing the devil’s advocate, or siding with one guest against another); and the possibility for audience members to intervene/participate in the show (either by sitting in the studio, or calling in during a live show).

The qualitative analysis applied to the topical information magazines broadcast on most Arab public broadcasters revealed some general trends, with some notable exceptions (Lebanon and Morocco). To start with, the extent of the openness of the format to debate and genuine discussion was largely dependent on the kind of topic dealt with in the shows. Thus, the political shows on Algeria’s ENTV, Egypt’s Al Masriya, Jordan TV, and Palestine TV were the most closed (to debate), in both content and form. For instance, all guests - many of whom were high ranking politicians and public officials, including the host, reiterated the dominant government view on the issue being discussed, with no possibility for dissent or live intervention by the public. By contrast, the practice of inviting different guests with diverse views, and of including occasionally callers in and viewers responses (e.g. vox pop) characterized those shows or episodes which dealt with a subject matter that was politically “neutral” or “safe” (e.g. discussing cultural events, national heritage, sports, etc).

To start with, the episode of 16 May 2010 of *Masr el-Naharda* (or Egypt Today) on Al Masriya dealt with a very important and timely topic, one that is closely connected to democratic practice and the rule of law in the country: the formation of a committee to assess the performance of the media coverage of the (upcoming) Shura Council elections in Egypt. However, a closer examination of the sub-topics which were discussed, the manner in which they were discussed, and who was involved in the discussion (and who was not) revealed an entirely different picture, one that confirms the lack of commitment of this Egyptian public broadcaster to adequately inform the public and serve its interests. For

instance, the choice of guests reinforced the pro-government slant of the episode (all the guests were members of the media monitoring committee, whereas independent experts and members of NGOs involved in monitoring the media and elections were excluded from the episode). The host himself played an important role in keeping the discussion “sanitized” and free of controversy or substance: his questions were general, and avoided probing the guests with respect to claims (by human rights activists) concerning fraudulent practices during elections. Instead, the host directed his harsh criticism towards the private media in Egypt, and was joined by one of the guests when he accused them of being biased towards the opposition. In sum, serious issues related to the elections, the discussion of the role of the committee vis-a-vis these elections, the process by which it was formed, its make-up, its objectives, and the means available to it in order to carry out its monitoring activities were conveniently avoided, while another “culprit” (or scapegoat) was identified: private TV channels and newspapers in Egypt. Rather than fulfil an informative, public service mission, this episode of *Masr el-Naharda* became a platform for praising the committee and its pioneering role with respect to monitoring elections. In that respect, it echoed the one-sided, pro-government stance of many other episodes of *Masr el-Naharda*.

When the same talk show dealt with the topic of the rights of people with disabilities, the show hosted a wide spectrum of guests, many of whom were activists and members of NGOs and civil society in general. Throughout the episode, these guests were able to represent different sides of the main issues being discussed and to disagree with the host with respect to the government’s role vis-à-vis this group of citizens with special needs. Whereas the host framed the issue as a “charitable” one and pleaded with government officials and wealthy audience members to offer logistical and financial help to people with disabilities, one of the guests representing a prominent NGO openly disagreed with the host, and insisted on more than one occasion that the issue is not about asking ministers “for a favor”: what is needed instead is to get the government to act responsibly and introduce policies and laws which can effectively integrate this group into society.

This trend (or strategy) of opening up spaces for dissent and of inviting guests with opposing views on shows which discuss relatively “safe” societal issues (as we have seen in the case of Al Masriya above), and of expressing exclusively pro-government views through guests who are members of the power elites when political issues are discussed, also characterized most of the Palestine TV talk shows which were aired in May 2010. The 24 May 2010 episode of *wamdat thakafyya* (cultural lights) featured a leftist writer who is well known for his views that are critical of the Palestinian government. Indeed, he openly accused the PA of being unable to introduce adequate cultural policies in the country, when asked to give his opinion by the host. This show was also characterized by the fact that its female host is herself an intellectual and human rights activist. By contrast to *wamdat thakafyya*, other talk shows focused on political issues (e.g. the Palestinian-Israeli conflict), hosted pro-government guests, and excluded audience intervention. The 16 May 2010 episode of *maa alhadath* (with the events) dealt with the plight of Palestinians in the Diaspora and their “right of return”. There was no attempt at including diverse views on the issue at hand by people in the street (e.g. vox pop), or at showing that for some Palestinians other options are preferred (e.g. the idea of letting go of the “right of return”),

that compensation is acceptable, and that refugees and Palestinians in the Diaspora have the right to seek citizenship in the host countries. Instead, both guests were joined by the host in their portrayal of the “right of return” as a “dream” shared by all Palestinians – thus echoing a position held firmly by the Palestinian leadership.

Another strategy used by these public broadcasters to avoid airing dissenting views and opinions critical of government, while still dealing with sensitive political issues, seems to consist of “depoliticizing” these political issues by treating them as cultural issues, or by discussing them as if they were “external” phenomena that do not exist on a national level (when in fact they do). This was the case with two talk shows which dealt with the issue of minorities, one on Al Masriya and the other on Jordan TV (both aired on 22 May 2010). The Egyptian episode was one of the very rare times when the Coptic minority, which is usually neglected in mainstream media, was discussed on public TV. It dealt, rather poetically and a-politically, with spiritual life and rituals at the Monastery of Saint Anthony in the Eastern desert in the Suez Governorate, and aired at a time when Egyptian society was preoccupied with a court ruling following the massacre of Christian Copts which had occurred in the village of Nag Hammadi a few months earlier.

When Jordan TV dealt with the issue of minorities in its information magazine of 22 May 2010 (*Majales al-adab*) (literary circles), no mention was made of Jordan’s various ethnic and religious minority groups and the various problems of integration and access to power structures facing some of them (e.g. Bedouins, Circassians, Chechnyans, Christians, Shi’ites, Druzes, and Baha’is). The focus of the discussion instead was on the Western anti-Arab conspiracy which aims at suppressing Arab cultures and stirring strife by creating a “problem” with respect to the status of minorities in the Arab world. The guests, none of whom belonged to a minority group, also agreed that existing ethnic minorities in the Arab world (e.g. Kurds and Amazigh) have always considered themselves as Arabs, and that Christians and Jews (as religious minorities) have historically been well integrated in the fabric of Muslim societies. The episode concluded by citing the early Islamic model, i.e. during the life of the Prophet, as the best model for integrating non-Muslims (or dhimmi people) in the Muslim nation (or umma).

In contrast to the one-sided, pro-government, often a-political handling of political themes in information magazines broadcast on most Arab public broadcasters, TL and Morocco’s 2 public broadcasters offered different, relatively more positive models for handling political issues and expressing political pluralism in this TV genre. Not only was the choice of topics in Morocco’s information magazines in line with a mission of public service broadcasting (in terms of variety and relevance), the treatment of these topics, mostly through the choice of guests, also reflected a serious attempt at respecting pluralism and including views which are not only diverse, but also often contradictory and critical of government. Thus guests representing the government position and the views of various members of civil society were often invited. There were even a couple of episodes where representation of members of the opposition was strong, and prominence was given to views critical of government (e.g. the 22 May 2010 magazine shown on 2M and titled *Majallat al-barlaman* or the “Parliamentary Magazine”). This episode on 2M was openly

critical of government policy. It hosted the Moroccan Minister of Communication and a government spokesperson (to defend the government's political, economic, and social policies), and two MPs from the Islamist opposition (one was invited as a main guest and the other appeared in a pre-recorded report). Another episode was entirely dedicated to the new leftist Green Party of Morocco, where the party's main representative (also a single guest on the show) was able to promote the Green party unchallenged.

This is not to say, however, that information magazines on 2M or Al Aoula did not suffer in general from some weaknesses and shortcomings which limited the extent of their public service mission. Whereas diversity of opinion (through the inclusion of a variety of guests) was duly observed in some cases, there were episodes where the lack or expertise among some guests - whose role was to question government policy, played in favor of pro-government guests whose views were not effectively debated. This was the case with the 18 May episode of *Hiwar* on human rights on Al Aoula, which was celebrating 20 years since the creation of the Conseil Consultatif des Droits de l'Homme (CCDH). Invited was the president of the CCDH, Ahmed Harzeni, along with 3 other guests whose role was to ask questions and comment on his interventions (two journalists and one academic). The episode revolved around the role of the CCDH in transitional justice in Morocco. It should be noted here that the CCDH is strongly criticized in the Moroccan press by national and international NGOs for not operating at arms' length from the government and for failing to achieve its objective of fighting against impunity and for the truth. Throughout the episode, Harzeni, adopting a pro-government stance, praised the achievements of the CCDH while blaming "other immature actors" for its shortcomings. His uncritical, pro-government position basically went unchallenged because the other guests showed, to a large extent, a lack of knowledge about the subject at hand and were unable to contradict him or prove him wrong. This raises questions concerning the choice of guests and the extent of their "expertise" when they are invited to speak on a given topic. Had the show invited instead human rights activists and members of national NGOs who are directly involved in the process of transitional justice in Morocco, Harzeni would have had a harder time praising the CCDH and justifying its work and "success".

In the case of TL, political pluralism on talk shows took on a different aspect. In 2010, TL presented, on a daily basis, at 12:30 p.m., a political information magazine titled *Lubnan al yawm* (or Lebanon today) where a single guest was hosted in the studio and asked questions about a variety of issues related to important events taking place in the country. Two TL hosts/journalists alternated on the show (one male and one female). The show did not have a live audience, nor did it accept calls from viewers, although it was broadcast live. Each episode was characterized by a calm, non-confrontational atmosphere, due to the hosting of a single guest and the absence of "opposing views", despite some attempts by the host to play the devil's advocate.

Throughout the eleven episodes included in the study, 4 MPs, 2 former ministers, 2 journalists, and 3 members of civil society were hosted. All the guests reflected, *combined*, a variety of political leanings and views, and a balanced representation of various societal actors (members of parliament, of government, and of civil society). The only exception to this balance was the stark absence of female guests. The 4 MPs were equally divided

between the two major political camps/alliances that dominate the Lebanese political scene (March 8 and March 14 camps). Each guest expressed his/her own views freely concerning very pressing (and often controversial) political issues which polarized the country throughout 2010 (e.g. disarming Hezbollah, the legitimacy of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the split within government, etc.).

Interestingly, all the major themes dealt with in each episode recurred on almost all of the episodes analyzed. This is quite an unusual situation for a talk show, as the norm is to have a different topic for each episode. This also means that assessment of political pluralism and of the public service mission of this talk show cannot be done effectively at the level of each episode. If only the single guest and the content of individual shows were to be evaluated, then the result of the analysis would be, unequivocally, that each episode is very biased, representing the views of this single guest. However, when looking globally at all eleven episodes, one notices that the guests came from different professional and political backgrounds, and held often diametrically opposed views on the same issues. This also means that this talk show, while clearly one-sided at the level of the single episodes, is not at all so when all the episodes are taken into consideration. Together, these episodes of *Lubnan al-yawm* which all dealt more or less with the same controversial national issues, did reflect pluralism of views and diversity of opinion, albeit in an unusual way (for a talk show): i.e. without back and forth argumentation, face-to-face confrontation, or live debating of hot issues between various participants in the same show.

#### *5.d. Concluding comments*

The objective of this study of public broadcasting in 8 Arab countries was to first map the existing regulatory landscape and then to analyze the content of each public television station, in order to evaluate the situation in each country with respect to public service broadcasting. It was hoped that the rich primary data collected and the detailed research findings, especially with respect to content, would not only serve to enrich our understanding of broadcasting in the Arab world, but to enable activists and stakeholders to lobby for a much needed reform of the sector, based on as accurate an assessment of the problem as possible. Moreover, detailed comparative analyses were done with respect to the quantitative assessment of content (overall programming and evening news bulletins, Sections 3A and 3B), where results were presented in the form of (comparable) statistics. Such comparisons make it possible for researchers and civil society activists to identify areas of weakness and strength within the same broadcaster or among the 9 Arab broadcasters, to cite concrete examples of “best practice” (e.g. political pluralism on TL, 2M, and Al Aoula), and to effectively lobby for change.

Considering that the Arab uprisings against dictatorships started while work on this project was already underway, such results could not have been more timely, relevant, and needed. It is our sincere hope that the findings in this unprecedented, large-scale, coordinated effort to assess publicly-owned television in the Arab world will contribute to turning the many countries of the Arab region into states which have the interests of their publics at heart, starting where it really matters: public broadcasting. Hopefully then, the word “service” will take its rightful place next to the word “public”.

**Supervision and regulation  
of audiovisual telecommunication in the  
Mediterranean countries.  
The challenges of a balanced relation between  
States, regulating bodies and broadcasters.**

**By Juan Montabes Pereira**

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Globalization, as a spectacular event of the 21st century, has exponentially taken on aspects of social, political and economic life, turning, in just a few years after it began, at the end of the last century, into the most outstanding and determining factor of this new world. The sphere of communication has not been alien to this process of globalized extension on the world scene, quite the contrary, it has been the cornerstone on which this whole process has developed and grown.

When, in November 1989, the resistance of the Berlin wall was cracking, very few people could imagine that they were, witnessing, mostly through live television, the beginning of the collapse of a model of social and political organization which, had determined a unique way of understanding reality for over seventy years.

When, only a few months ago, we witnessed the fall and fleeing of President Ben-Ali from Tunisia (14<sup>th</sup> January 2011) or, just after that, the toppling of President Mubarak in Egypt (11<sup>th</sup> February 2011), it was a real challenge to try and figure out the national and international relevance of these events which began with the rallies in Tunisia or the demonstrations in Tahrir Square in Cairo.

More recently, when on the 20<sup>th</sup> of last October, we could see images taken on mobile phones showing the arrest and worried face of the, until then, Libyan leader Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi, during his last minutes of life, we were actually about to watch live one of the key events in the last fifty years. We were then also able to see, just a few hours –if not

minutes– later, how a large queue of Libyans waiting in front of the refrigerated store-room of a supermarket, waiting to have their picture taken, with the late colonel and uploaded onto a social network.

In all these instances we have received information on these events within a few hours, or even simultaneously, when they actually took place. These events which, respectively, put an end to established political regimes in these places, happened while, in many cases, they were being recorded nearly simultaneously by the media which had great reverberation in the local context and abroad.

These events are a confirmation that, in effect, we are living in a globalized world. A world where the spectacular development of new technologies has resulted, when speaking about communication, into a practical disappearance of all barriers. It is a scenario that allows us, day by day, not only to get to know what is happening in our closest surroundings, but also what is happening on the other side of the world.

This speedy flow of constant information we get through the media generates in each and every one of us, an imagery of our own and a specific outlook on the world. In this context, for some years now, the feeling that there is a growing gap and misunderstanding between societies has grown; these societies themselves have exacerbated mistrust, fear and a lack of mutual understanding.

Today, in the Western world, it is perceived among certain sectors, that there are ever growing feelings of rejection towards Arab and Islamic values, considered by many to be intolerant and to represent a threat to their way of life. Not to mention the worrying link some establish between these values and violent actions, even terrorism.

In parallel to this, the Western world is portrayed by some spheres of Arab and Islamic society as an aggressor, –for its willingness to make use of its military superiority;– discriminatory, –in the way it applies international legality,– and insensitive towards lawful political claims, for example in the case of Palestine.

Faced with this situation, some initiatives have emerged from several political and civil society forums, to create and consolidate a Mediterranean space for peace and stability, among which I would like to mention the Barcelona Declaration in 1995, the Alliance of Civilizations in 2004, and the “Union for the Mediterranean” in 2008.

The Barcelona Declaration was adopted at the Conference of Barcelona which took place in November 1995, in the presence of fifteen Foreign Affairs Ministers of the EU member States back then, and twelve third countries of the Mediterranean with a to create a global Euro-Mediterranean association.



This declaration rests on three main axis of social, cultural and human association. It was promoted to foster rapprochement and understanding between the peoples of the Mediterranean and to improve mutual perceptions. In this sense, it stresses the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the role of the media to foster mutual and reciprocal understanding and knowledge between cultures.

The next initiative took place in 2004 with the creation of the “Alliance of Civilizations”, under the auspices of the former Spanish Prime Minister, José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero, it was then included into the National Plan of the Kingdom of Spain for the Alliance of Civilizations, approved in January 2008.

This Alliance responds to the need of the international community to make a concerted effort, at an institutional level and also within civil society, to overcome the prejudices, false ideas, errors of judgment polarization. In this regard the media hold a great responsibility.

The Alliance of Civilizations suggests revisiting the role of the media in society and promotes a responsible use of them.

The latest political action aimed at conceiving a Mediterranean space for peace, tolerance and cooperation came with the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) when, in July 2008, the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean took place, under the auspices of the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. This Union, which was a continuation to the Barcelona Declaration, brings together 43 countries and over 756 million citizens of the European Union, North Africa and the Middle East.

The Union fosters a closer relationship between the European Union and the countries on the Southern shores of the Mediterranean, so as to accelerate their development and to foster cooperation through joint actions to solve common problems, thus transforming good intentions into actions. This is all framed in a renewed association for progress in all spheres, among which the media and information society.

To these initiatives we must add many others which all have the same objective, including the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities.

They are all closely related, since they work for an active promotion of values such as tolerance, solidarity and equality among men and women, avoiding the induction of patterns of behavior leading to violence, among others.

And they all call for a responsible use of the media, so as to combat programs that feed hostile, violent or discriminatory perceptions and stereotypes given the ability of television, as has been seen over the past decades, to create stereotypes, models or trends that the public may perceive as norms of conduct.

Ultimately, it is necessary to have independent and plural authorities that “supervise” the media, and in this scenario, the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities can and must play a vital role.

Sharing experiences and establishing new links between institutions is essential to achieve a greater progress in bringing cultures closer to one another and to foster the values of tolerance, solidarity, human rights and equality between men and women. These are the principles that encourage the regulatory authorities of Mediterranean countries to unite under a network whose main feature is social, political, religious and cultural diversity.

The Network was created at the instances of the French Higher Audiovisual Council (CSA) and the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC) in Barcelona on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1997, with the objective to strengthen cultural and historical ties between the two shores of the Mediterranean and to enable regulatory authorities in the Mediterranean region to identify, in a context of globalization, the shared challenges that they are faced with in the audiovisual sphere.

The aim was to establish a platform for discussion, a regular sharing of information and research on issues relating to audiovisual regulation.

This network currently includes 19 regulatory authorities in 16 countries. Some are from the European Union, others are potential candidates to join the EU, such as Albania and Turkey, and the remaining countries are represented in the Arab League, except for Israel. Necessarily, all the countries that are part of the RIRM are part of the aforementioned Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), but unfortunately, not all the countries that are part of the Union are in the Network. This is because some States do not yet have an independent audiovisual regulatory authority, and this is a necessary condition to be a member of our network; this was the case of Algeria or Tunisia until 2011. Besides the members, some countries such as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or Tunisia participate in meetings of the network as permanent observers.

As for the way in which the network works, it meets once a year in a plenary assembly, which is organized by the member State holding the vice-presidency.

The contents of this meeting are prepared in advance by a technical commission that includes the Presidency, the Vice-Presidency and the Permanent Secretariat. This latter is made up by four regulatory authorities: the French CSA, the Cyprus radio and television authority, the Catalan Audiovisual Council and the Moroccan High Audiovisual Communication Authority.

The network has held a total of 12 plenary assemblies. The first working meeting after its creation was in 1998 in Athens, followed by Lisbon, Naples and Malta in 1999, 2000 and 2001, respectively. These first meetings worked mainly on the creation of a common internal action for regulation, without leaving aside important aspects such as the protection of minors, diversity in multicultural societies and the plurality of media, among others.

As a result of this work, at the meeting held in Marrakesh in 2007, the general framework of intervention was established in what is known as the Declaration on the regulation of audiovisual content, adopted unanimously at the tenth meeting in October 2008 in Reggio Calabria, Italy.

In order to give this declaration concrete contents, at the eleventh plenary assembly held in Granada, in October 2009, another declaration was adopted, in this case a declaration of intent, regarding the protection of minors and the fight against violence in the media. In this regard, the mechanisms used to reach a sufficient level of awareness by the media required actions along three main axes.

The first is the respect of the values, principles and fundamental rights including respect for people, the concept of otherness, and the preservation of law.

The second axis focuses on protecting childhood against sexual and violent contents, while fostering the development of children and educating in the respect for human rights.

The third and last axis is aimed at honest information and the plurality of opinions.

To have an effective implementation of these axes, Mediterranean regulatory authorities have committed to apply their regulatory principles to audiovisual contents and to ensure, through international cooperation, a concerted and effective regulation.

From this concerted and effective regulation, emerges a second declaration containing the concrete actions aimed at achieving the protection of minors and the fight against violence in the media.

It is also worth pointing out the attention given by the network to the protection of minors and, more recently, for broadcasting targeting an audience of 0 to 3 years old. Many experts agree that in this age group, an excessive and uncontrolled consumption of television contents may be damaging for their development.

Among the measures adopted, first and foremost we find the harmonization of the symbol used to signal for programs targeting children and youths.

Secondly, undertaking systematic information campaigns towards parents about the dangers and prejudices that these types of programs may pose to children under the age of 3.

Thirdly, strengthening cooperation between regulatory authorities by creating a common list of experts on the protection of minors and by organizing, in some countries within the network, a training workshop for people in charge of protecting minors in the media. And finally, launching a Mediterranean alliance for education in the media to improve the information and to serve parents, teachers, educators and children. This is all done to reach an adequate level of media literacy as established in the European Directive on audiovisual communication services.

Ultimately, the network brings to light a collective awareness process on the huge influence that communication media have on our current society, a society where audiovisual communication affects the life and training of citizens, their way of thinking and valuing things, and the socialization of culture and knowledge.

Both on television and in new audiovisual formats (the Internet, mobile devices, etc.), is where there is a largest consumption of information and leisure; and this is why they are extremely important tools for social, cultural and territorial cohesion and democratization (as has been the case in the recent events in Egypt, Libya or Tunisia).

We can therefore understand that the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities, using its own initiatives and the independent actions developed by each Audiovisual Council in their respective areas of action, can play a very important role in building a Mediterranean audiovisual space based on the values of freedom, tolerance, mutual respect and diversity.

# **Inter-Mediterranean relations in the region's televised information. Institutional and narrative players**

**Teresa Velázquez<sup>1</sup>**

President, Mediterranean Observatory of Communication

## *Introduction*

In his intervention at the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Spanish Parliament in May 2008, the then Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Minister pointed out ten issues for a consensus on foreign and cooperation<sup>2</sup> policy, of which we underline the sixth issue bearing the title “Mediterranean, Barcelona Process, Union for the Mediterranean” in which the minister stated:

“Our firm outward vocation leads us to consolidate a Euro-Mediterranean area as a space of peace, prosperity and progress through developing the Barcelona Process, framing the proposal of the Union for the Mediterranean”

and the seventh issue, with the name: “The Middle East, Maghreb, Western Sahara” that declares:

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2 <http://www.asesoriaparlamentaria.maec.es/Noticias/Documents/Comparecencia%20Ministro%20CAE-Congreso%20%2822-05-08%29.pdf>, page 6

“We will dedicate all our political and diplomatic efforts to achieve a visible and lasting peace in the Middle East, as well as establishing an effective collaboration to create a united Maghreb, along with consensus and dialogue solutions to overcome, once and for all, the dispute over the Western Sahara, via a fair agreement respecting the principle of self-determination within the framework of the United Nations”.<sup>3</sup>

These proposals and commitments in the framework of a committee of the Spanish Parliament to try and reach a consensus among the political forces represented there do not differ substantially from other projects dealing with the countries in the region.

Also, both the Barcelona Process-Union for the Mediterranean (BP-UfM) and the Alliance of Civilizations (AC) underline, as part of their objectives and recommendations, the crucial role of the media in achieving a mutual and reciprocal process for each of the different cultures and religions to get to know each other, for the BP-UfM; and voluntary codes of conduct, specific training for journalists on the international and intercultural reality, a greater financing of contents encouraging mutual understanding between cultures, collaboration in promoting the Internet as a tool for multicultural dialogue, financing to counteract tabloid and stereotyped media, and initiatives to monitor the media by the AC. All this leads to underline the importance communication and the media have as generators of public opinion and promoters of dialogue or conflict, depending on how the content relating to a certain issue is dealt with, hence the importance to conduct analysis of the media phenomenon across the region.

Moreover, we think it would be appropriate for the Audiovisual Regulating Authorities, as part of their monitoring of the media<sup>4</sup>, to also pay attention to the news items that may not be so much the focus of attention by the media. From our point of view, this would be a way of contributing to the objectives and recommendations suggested by supra-national institutions for the media as well as a way of cooperating with the Alliance of Civilizations’ “Alerts” Programme (Rapid Response Media Mechanism).

Our own specific contribution to this regional report is relevant because it deals with the mention of issues connected to inter-Mediterranean relations among the issues as they get mentioned by the national television channels in the region, one year after the statements quoted above in the introduction to this document, and one year before a regional study gathered data from eight public television channels in the MENA region in May 2010. These studies actually observe and analyse the events that occurred before the so-called “Arab Spring”. We believe the results of both these studies may, in relation to the analysis of the content of news programmes’, be of a great interest for investigations and reports at a later stage, in the sense that they may prove useful to observe possible changes introduced to the issues included in the programming grid of the television broadcasters. Of course, the regional study conducted in May 2010 included four more national broadcasters. In any

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<sup>3</sup> See also : <http://www.maec.es/es/Home/Paginas/Diezpuntosconsenso.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> In this sense, the work of Ricardo Carniel on the cooperation initiatives between regulatory authorities of Mediterranean countries through the MNRA (Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities) seems to go in the same direction. Besides, the study entitled « Media regulation : principles, origins, goals and methods » by Jean-Claude Guyot and Luc Adolphe TIAO and published by PANOS PARIS in 2007 is also a reference text on that point.

case they provide the quantitative results that are perfectly correlative and complementary.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore important to give due consideration to the topical areas highlighted by the organisations quoted above in order to monitor the extent to which they become part of the remit of the broadcasters.

For this reason, this contribution presents the findings of the research titled “The social construction of the Euro-Mediterranean space in the media. Information in the press and on television” (CSO2008-01579/SOCI; 2009-2011)<sup>6</sup> contents broadcast on the main channels of Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Syria<sup>7</sup>, during two weeks on the month of March 2009. The sample was taken from prime time news bulletins in these channels and comprised of 248 segments of information.<sup>8</sup> The configuration of the final sample and the data analysis correspond to the issues of concern for the following instances: Barcelona Process-Union for the Mediterranean; EU Neighbourhood Policy and the Alliance of Civilizations.

The issues on Inter-Mediterranean Relations pointed out in this contribution can be categorized along with others such as Politics and legislation; Peace and security; Human Rights, Social and human development; Economic and Financial Cooperation; Cultural and religious diversity; Migration; Gender; the Media and Information Society. The present article also looks at aspects linked to the formal structure in which information appears and who are the narrative actors and protagonists in the the segments analyzed.

### *1. The Television broadcasters monitored and the scope of airtime dedicated to the issue in their news bulletins*

As indicated, the channels selected for the study are the national channels of four south of the Mediterranean. The following chart represents the percentage of segments analyzed per national broadcaster:

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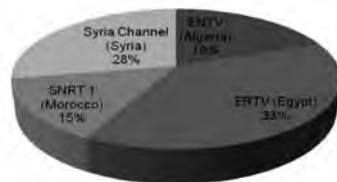
5 It is interesting to mention here the study led by Jean-Claude Guyot and Marie-Soleil Frère, *Media monitoring manual*, published by PANOS PARIS in 2009.

6 Researchers by alphabetical order: Hassan Abbas, María Luz Barbeito, Tayeb Boutbouqalt, Ricardo Carniel Bugs, Carmina Crusafon, Olga del Río, M<sup>a</sup> Pilar Diezhandino, Natalia Fernández Díaz, Abdelouhad Elimrani, Elisabet García Altadill, Juan Antonio García Galindo, Francisco Martín, Carmen Martínez Romero, Lucía Molina, Nieves Ortega, José María Perceval, José Manuel Pérez Tornero, Fernando Sabés, Susana Tóvías, Sahar Taalat. Teresa Velázquez (Main Researcher). Doctoral students associated to the project: Cristina Marques & Valentina Saini.

7 The analysis also takes into account the first European channels such as: Spain, France, Italy, and United Kingdom. For this contribution, we selected a sample of four countries that are part of the region called “MENA”(Middle East and North Africa) which correspond to four of the countries analyzed in the regional report accompanying this work.

8 The total of the sample analyzed, including European channels, was 371. It is interesting that the total of analysis units of the European channels on this theme was 123 vs 248 of the Arab channels analyzed.

Graph 1: TV Channels



The percentage distribution by country is as follows: Algeria 19%; Egypt 38%; Morocco 15%; Syria 28%.

The representation of issues linked to the Inter-Mediterranean is more extensive in the agendas of television channels in the Mashreq than in the Maghreb. We will be seeing which areas lead to these differences in percentages.

We believe that the region and the issues linked to it are vitally important for coexistence with regard to the changes that are currently happening there. Issues lead to the construction of symbolic universes that are in turn the object of special attention in the media. Let's take a look at how the analyzed issues are reflected, grouping them in categories, based on the objectives, concerns and recommendations of the supra-national bodies we have followed in this study.

## *2. News on television, hierarchies and decision-making in the national channels with regard to the information segments analysed*

The tradition of the journalistic structure applied to news items on television determines that the most relevant fact must appear first, meaning that the primordial facts will be found in headlines and the lead. In televised information, a news item usually consists of a presentation (introduction), the body (or development) and the conclusion.<sup>9</sup>

The presentation may equate to the "lead" of print news and it is read live by the anchorman/woman. As we know, in the written press, both the headlines and the leads contain the most relevant data of the news item; for televised news, the presentation must contain the newest information and the most noticeable facts to catch the attention of the audience, thus it should contain the essential points of the information, that will later be expanded on. Therefore, and due to the quantitative nature of the results presented in this contribution, they have been taken from the structural and formal section of the televised news. The full news item, and therefore its body, is taken into account for formal aspects involving it as a unit, and others which are linked to how it is processed. Finally, the total duration of a news item varies from 30" to 2'.

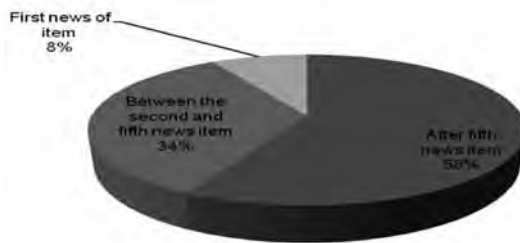
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<sup>9</sup> The support material developed by researchers Ricardo Carniel and Elisabet Altadill was adapted to people who didn't make communication or journalism studies in order to unify the criteria for analysis.



Now let's take a look at the findings as they relate to decision-making as a production routine. This point is extremely important to observe how decisions are made in the media generally, and particularly in television, when information about events is presented. This is why it is important to analyze the position of the segments in the news bulletins, among others, if they are mentioned in the opening summary or not, or their duration, as well as the focus adopted for the analysis. It reflects the importance given to a news item by the medium and how decisions are taken accordingly. Let's see some results below:

Graph 2: Position of analysis unit in news bulletin



We observe that 8% of analysis units are at the opening of the bulletin, and 34% are to be found between the second and fifth news item. This means that, for these television stations, the issue we are dealing with is highly important, since 42% of the analysis units can be found among the first five items.

Another relevant aspect in this section is the percentage weight of units that are mentioned in the opening summary. Out of the 248 analysis units in the study, 62 are highlighted in the summary, meaning 26% of the total number on analysis units, compared to 75% that are not. The following chart shows the order in which this 26% of news items appear:

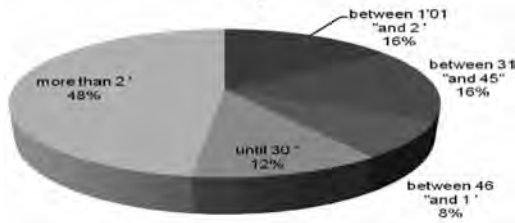
Graph 3: Position in the opening summary



From the results we observe that, focusing on the percentage of news item appearing in the opening summary or positioned between the first and third place in the bulletin,

hierarchies established in the monitored channels regarding these items are significant enough to determine the importance given to these issues and to assess the decision-making process involved.

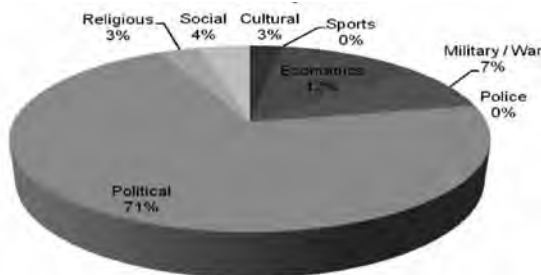
Graph4: Duration of analysis unit



Earlier on we said that the duration of the news item in the news bulletins varied from 30'' to 2'. Through our analysis we can see that 48% are distinctively longer than 2'. A qualitative analysis of these items, such as a text or semiotic analysis, can give a detailed vision of narrative and textual differences within these analyzed segments and would give a more detailed answer for the reasons behind the weighting allocation of a specific duration to these segments, leaving aside possible differences between professional cultures, which may lead to specific journalistic styles.

To conclude on this section about decision-making, we will provide findings on the focus placed by the media on the selected units.

Graph 5: Focus of the analysis unit



Results show that 71% of the news segments analyzed focus on political aspects, a considerably higher percentage than Economic and Military/War aspects, 12% and 17% respectively, which points to the fact these categories of news are a priority, especially political aspects. The remaining 10.8% correspond to Society, Religion, Culture and Sports; whereas Police issues account for 0.4%. We see that issues relating to “Culture” only account for 3%, as well as Religion. These findings indicate that during the period under consideration, these television channels didn't consider these these issues to be newsworthy.

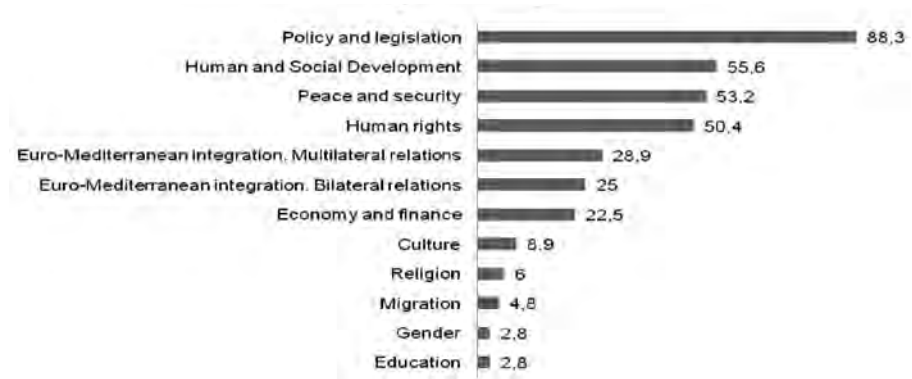
The location, position and duration of news items, together with the focus given to them by the media, account for their hierarchy and, therefore, for an initial decision-making, and then a second one, which relates to the selection of topics, or, to put it differently, the agenda setting, paving the way for public debate on these topics. We will come back to this point later on.

There are other categories of interest that will determine and describe some characteristics of the monitored information channels, such as the use of live images or images taken from archives; the presence of correspondents or special envoys in places where the events unfold, having guests on stage, using information sources, etc. Our research includes findings for all these categories but owing to limited space, we will not present it here. However we can mention that most of the images used come from own sources, new and archived; 32% of recorded presentations are from special envoys, vs. 3.6% live. Also 44.7% recorded interviews with guests, vs. 4.4% live interviews.

### *3. Issues dealt with in relation with the objectives and recommendations of supra-national bodies.*

The following chart highlights the issues that contribute to setting the agenda of the broadcasters monitored during the period of monitoring. The units may refer to more than one issue. As for the topics referenced by these media during the studies period, the graph below shows the topics making up the agenda setting. Also, analysis units may refer to more than one topic.

Graph 6: Agenda-Setting



This chart shows the topics on the thematic agenda of the television channels monitored and percentages for each of them. It is worth noting the space dedicated to topics on Gender and Education, with a low 2.8% each, as well as Migration (4.8%).

Therefore, consistency between the focus we presented in graph 5 and the topics of interest in the news bulletins analyzed can also be seen in this graph. If we concentrate on topics related to Politics and Legislation, or Peace and Safety, we see a very high percentage,

meaning that the media give these topics a lot of importance. As for Euro-Mediterranean Integration, both Multilateral and Bilateral Relations constitute 53.9%. This aspect mainly links political and economic topics, whilst cultural and education topics, lag far behind.

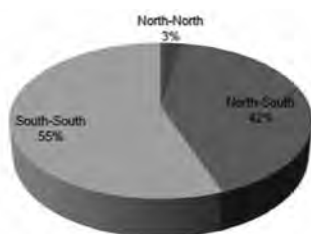
The results shown in the preceding graphs provide us with some guidelines to recognize how public debate on these issues of public interest may evolve for audiences exposed to these television channels. As is already known, the moment when public opinion becomes divided is part of the stages of opinion. In this regard, based on the finding shown in the previous chart, we can infer the process of theme building<sup>10</sup> that may have occurred among the audiences and how it may have generated public debate on these topics. We highlight this point because it has without any doubt contributed to raise the awareness of the viewers of these channels about the issues under consideration.

#### *4. Euro-Mediterranean Integration and multilateral and bilateral relations.*

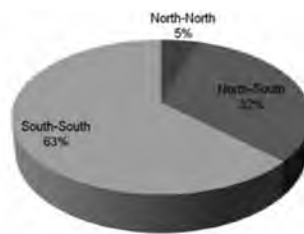
The issue of Euro-Mediterranean integration is frequently mentioned with regard to economic<sup>11</sup> and political relations between countries in the region. One of the fundamental concerns can be found in the area of free trade, even if it is not the only priority interest. We also find aspects related to the environment, transport, communications and sustainable development, which are all underlying issues in multilateral and bilateral relations. The media reflect these topics in their agenda.

In our study, out of 248 news items, referring to multilateral relations in the region, 72 focus on this topic (28.9%). As for bilateral relations, there are 62 items reflecting on the issue (25%). For both these kinds of relations, the percentage distribution is seen in the two following graphs:

Graph 7: Euro-Mediterranean integration. Multilateral relations



Graph 8 Euro-Mediterranean integration. Bilateral relations



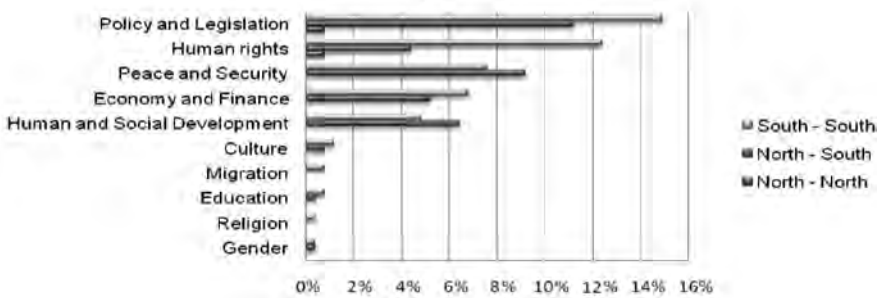
<sup>10</sup> The theme concept refers to the discussion process on topics of public interests which triggers their programming in the news. On these topics of public interests, see Teresa Velazquez 1992.

<sup>11</sup> See the work of Jose Maria Casado Raigon « La Union Europea en el Mediterraneo », in *El futuro de la economia española*, written by Juan Velarde Fuertes and published by CAJAMAR Caja Rural, Cooperative credit, 2010 :257-268.

It is interesting to point out that multilateral and bilateral relations between countries from the South are of a greater interest for the television channels monitored, compared to North-South relations and, of course, North-North relations.

On what areas of interest are these relations focusing? If we take a look at the following chart we will see what topics articulate multilateral relations:

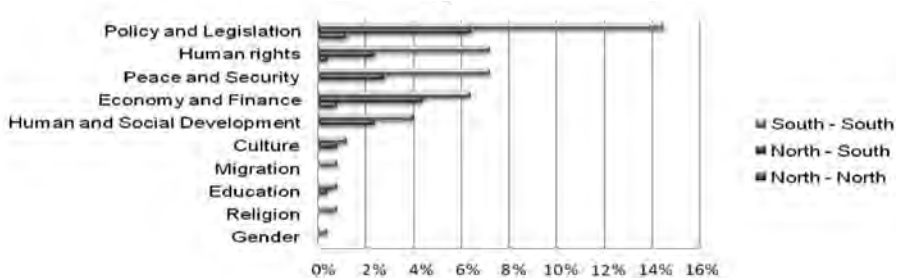
Graph 9: Euro-Mediterranean integration. Multilateral relations



It is worthy to note that news item dealing with multi-lateral relations between countries of the North of the Mediterranean only represent a very low percentage of the news segments during the period under consideration. One would think that news of this type could be of interest in the sphere of international news. We could attribute the scarce presence of this type of news items to the fact that these television channels actually dedicate this space to relations between countries in the South and, to a lesser extent, to North-South relations. Also, it is worth noting how these television channels pay little or no attention to migration, when it is an issue that appears frequently in the news. We understand that, as for the audiences of these countries who are aware of the situation of their fellow immigrants, and with regard to the European Neighborhood Policy, this issue should be included in thematic agendas. Another point that should not be overlooked is all that has to do with the sections on Culture, Education, Gender and Religion. The objectives of bringing cultures closer together and cultural dialogue are not at all a part of the thematic agendas of these television channels, and have a minimum presence in this section.

As for sections on Politics and Legislation, Economics and Finance, Peace and Security, and Human Rights, which are the underlying topics for Bilateral Relations? Let's take a look at how these topics are related based on the results shown in the following graph:

Graph 10: Euro-Mediterranean integration. Bilateral relations



As for Bilateral relations, we see that the topics that the monitored channels link to Inter-Mediterranean Integration have an essentially Political component (here we also include Peace and Security and aspects on Human Rights) and Economics, followed by Human Development, and far behind, by the remaining topics. There is a slight difference when comparing it with Multilateral relations, where Economic issues rank in second position on the thematic agendas.

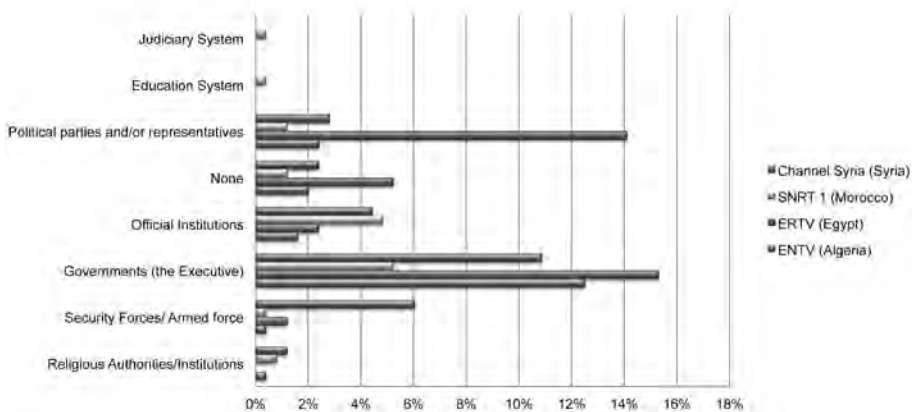
### 5. Relations between Institutional and Narrative players

The sections that are more closely related to how the message is dealt with, and therefore, from a perspective of discourse at who the institutional players appearing in the news are and what their acting role is. Finding out how the media describe in the headlines and lead, who plays the role of Subject/Hero in journalistic narration or who is portrayed as the Traitor/opposition and with what institutional player he can be identified, are all extremely important elements to determine the opinion that the media contribute to create on topics, players, actors..., we believe this discloses the relevance that these media give to these figures. Of course, the starting point is the institutional player, and then, following the norms of semiotic narrative, linking this institutional player to the roles and functions in which the media make them act.

For the quantitative analysis we present, these categories apply, as we said before, to headlines and the leads. We would also like to point out that the value “Non-existent” refers to another type of Player, which we have labeled as a Social Player (6.5%) in our study; this would include civil society organizations and also individuals (4.9%), with a joint weighting of 10.9% compared to 89.1% for institutional players.

Obviously, a semiotic and discourse analysis must take into account the analysis unit as a whole. However, looking at the percentage weighting that the media give to these figures is of great interest. In the following graph we can see some relevant results for the type of institutional player by channel:

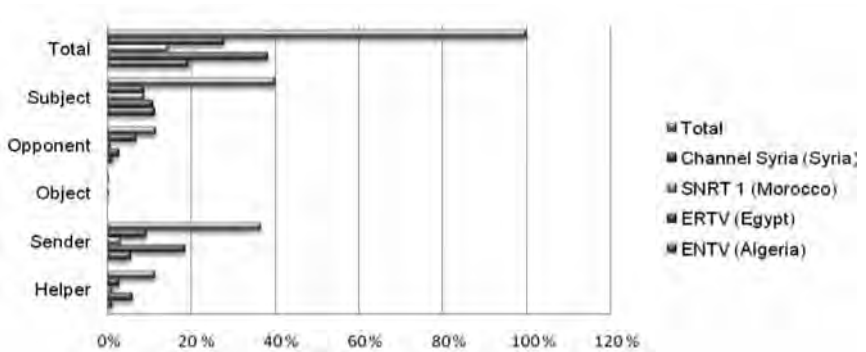
Graph 11: TV Channel and Institutional Actor



Governments, the Executive and Political Parties are the institutional players with the predominant presence in the studied media.

Below we are interested in showing the percentage results on narrative figures. These show that, both the Subject (the one hoping to achieve something) and the Sender (the one sending a message) are a majority.

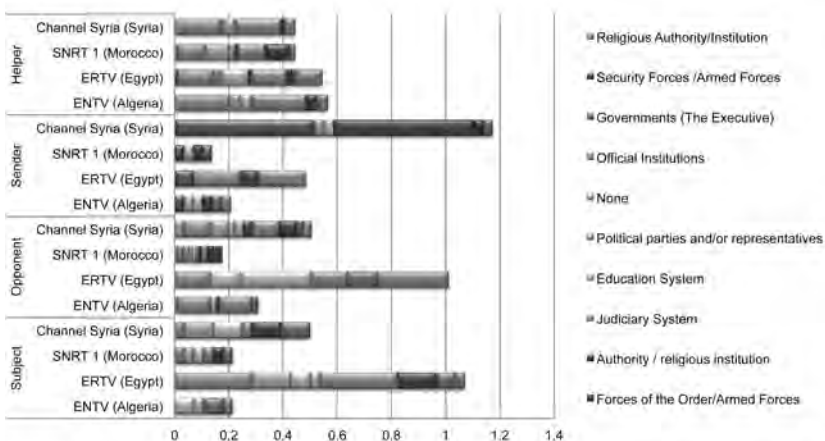
Graph 12: TV Channel and Narrative Actant



The global results from the point of view of the actuating role fulfilled in the news segments analyzed can be categorized into the role of Subject (39.9%); Sender (36.7%), followed far behind by the Oppositionist (11.7%) and the Auxiliary (11.3%).

Let's look at the results grouped by channel, institutional player and actuation role:

Graph 13: TV Channel, Institutional, Narrative Actant



The results shown in the previous graph reinforce the fundamentally political profile linked to the information on television in these countries. The presence of an institutional role and the actuation role of Subject or Receiver hold the largest percentage in the studied sample. The ones taking the floor in news bulletins are basically the representatives of Governments or politicians. It also serves to show the institutional character given to the information. The social players and individuals as the protagonists of the facts do not appear in the selection of players and agents of news.

### *Conclusion*

The results shown indicate that for the monitored media outlets, Inter-Mediterranean Integration focuses on Multilateral and Bilateral Relations to a slight extent for North-South relations and to a greater extent for South-South relations. The determination of topics is linked to Politics and Legislation; Peace and Security; Economics and Finance; and Human Rights.

#### Inter-Mediterranean Integration and Multilateral Relations<sup>12</sup>

**Politics and Legislation.** The sub-topics dealt with are International Law and human rights (4% for North-South and 1.2% for South-South); and Multilateral/bilateral policies (6% North-South and 12.9% South-South). Also, aspects relating to Democracy and good governance; Regional integrity and/or the self-determination of peoples; and Responsible political leadership. Political parties have a very low or no presence in the thematic agendas of these television channels.

In the case of **Peace and Security**, the sub-topics highlighted in these media are Armed conflict (1.2% for North-South, with no special reference to the same topic for South-South relations); the promotion of peace and coexistence (2.8% North-South and 4.8% South-South). Also aspects linked to Diplomatic conflicts; military and/or police cooperation; and obstacles for peace and coexistence. Nationalist/Independence Terrorism has a very low or no presence in the thematic agendas of these television channels.

As for **Economics and Finance**, the sub-topics listed and that have a presence in the thematic agendas are the World economic crisis, with 1.6% for North-South relations and no presence for South-South relations, which may be seen as an indication that, at the time when the sample was taken, the crisis was not yet on the agendas; and Natural resources and the Environment (1.2%). As for South-South relations, the associated sub-topics are related to Sustainable development (1.2%); South-South economic integration (2%); and energy resources, also 2%. These sub-topics do not appear to be linked to news on North-South relations. The sub-topics on Business/Industry Cooperation; Infrastructures

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<sup>12</sup> The results analyzed in this section are taken from the total sample, except for references to human rights to information, communication and cyberspace, civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, the percentages relating to these rights come from some cases in the sample.



and Transport; Poverty and/or Economic inequality; Financial Reforms; Investment Promotion or a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area have little or no presence in this section.

As for **Human Rights**, we find that the associated sub-topics are present in the thematic agendas. Thus, for North-South relations, the protection of HR accounts for 4.8%, compared to 4.4% for the violation of rights; in the case of South-South relations, these figures are 6% and 1.6% respectively. We would like to stress that, when these media talk about the violation of Human Rights, they never refer to violations occurring in their own country, but in other ones. On the contrary, when it is about protecting human rights, they do refer to their own countries as protectors of the rights of citizens from other countries. In our research we were especially interested in observing the presence of the Right to Information, Communication and the Cyberspace<sup>13</sup>, since we were convinced that there would be news on these topics.

We found 38.3% of analysis units made a reference to these types of rights. For Civil and Political Rights, the reference rate is 44.4%; for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Right to Development, the figure is 44%.

As for topics such as Migrations, Gender, Education, Culture or Religion in Multilateral Relations, there is an extremely low or no presence.

We can conclude that the topics that are given importance are underpinned by aspects that, even if interesting for the countries, leave aside all other aspects that could promote human and social development of their peoples, their rights, sustainability or the environment, education and culture.

#### Inter-Mediterranean Integration and Bilateral Relations<sup>14</sup>

**Politics and Legislation**, the sub-topics dealt with are Multilateral/Bilateral Policies (6% for North-South relations and 10.9% for South-South relations). As for the topic on International Law and Human Rights, it is only reflected with 1.6% in South-South relations. This is also the case for Multilateral Relations, aspects on Democracy and good governance; Regional Integrity and/or the self-determination of peoples; and Responsible political leadership. Political parties have a low or no presence in the thematic agendas of these television channels.

In the case of **Peace and Security**, the underlined sub-topics by these television channels focus on armed conflict (1.2%), the Promotion of Peace and coexistence (5.2%), only for South-South relations. Other sub-topics like Diplomatic conflict; military and/or police cooperation; Obstacles to peace and coexistence; and Nationalist/Independence Terrorism have a low or no presence in the thematic agendas of television channels; neither for North-South relations.

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<sup>13</sup> We believe it is interesting to mention here the text of Olga del Río, titled '*TIC, Derechos Humanos y desarrollo: nuevos escenarios de la comunicación social*' published in the Specialist Journal on Communication *Anàlisi. Quadern de Comunicació i Cultura*.

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 13.

**Economics and Finance** the associated sub-topics which are present in the thematic agendas are the World economic crisis (1.2% in North-North relations) and also 1.2% for Infrastructure and Transport in South-South relations. Other sub-topics such as Natural Resources and the Environment; Sustainable Development; Economic Integration; Energy Resources; Business/Industrial Cooperation; Poverty and/or Economic Inequalities; Financial Reforms; Investment Promotion or a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area have little or no presence in this section.

**Human Rights**, we find that associated sub-topics are only reflected in 1.2%; as well as rights' violations (1.2%); for South-South relations, this figure is 5.2% for the protection of rights and 2% for rights' violations. The observations made regarding this topic for multilateral relations also apply to this section.

#### A final reflexion

The countries to which the broadcasters and sample pertain are part of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean and the Alliance of Civilizations. The results shown do not allow us to confirm that the information on television contributes towards a reflection conducive to open up new perspectives for understanding and collaboration that “leads to the consolidation of a fairer international order, the promotion of democracy, national cohesion and human rights”.<sup>15</sup>

If we bring together the results obtained from the items on Culture, Education and Migrations, for aspects like ‘... the promotion of dialogue between cultures, strengthening shared values and studying and treating shared threats, dealing with migration flows adequately, reinforcing cultural integration models, preventing discrimination and racial or ethnic violence...The perception in the media. Modes and ways of promoting a better understanding free of prejudice...Education as a way of promoting dialogue between civilizations and preventing intolerance and conflict. Sharing university experiences. School education and textbook programmes’ (MAEC Alianza de Civilizaciones, 2005:6), from our observations our conclusion is that, there is still a long way to go to reach the objectives set out by the different international initiatives promoting dialogue between the cultures and peoples of the Mediterranean.

Nevertheless, we believe that studies of this type done by researchers from both sides of the Mediterranean that take into account the media, can contribute to a global view of the professional activity and generate awareness on the importance of “Perceptions in the media. Modes and ways to promote a better understanding free of prejudice” mentioned above.

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15 See MFAC Alliance of Civilizations : 6

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# How can civil society mobilize in support of pluralist and independent media?

## *Introduction*

Civil society on the Southern flank of the Mediterranean showed signs of increasing restlessness even before the Arab revolutions of 2011 and by now it is witnessing continual turmoil. All the actors commonly grouped under the generic term «civil society» are more than ever mobilizing to contribute to political and social change in the countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East.

The «Arab street», a term used by Samir Kassir (a Lebanese journalist who was assassinated in June 2005), has been shaping itself up for some time but many independent voices were deliberately marginalized by the rulers to the benefit of more compliant NGOs. Today, the Arab revolutions have opened up new spaces for public protest and the expression of popular demands is no longer limited to streets and squares. A new civil society is emerging.

Civil society activists play a key role in domains where they actually stand in to make up for the shortcomings of failing public service institutions. This is particularly true in the strategic and vulnerable sector of the public media. The public media outlets are alternatively accused of being subservient or called upon to live up to their mission to support freedom of expression and the process of democratisation.

In this new set up the reform of the information sector has become a priority for the sponsors of international cooperation. The vast majority of calls for proposals launched by donors, promotes the freedom of expression and support to the media sector.

Before the Arab revolutions, more than twenty national and transnational NGOs were active in the media sector alone, in North Africa and in the Middle East, fighting to achieve freedom of the press and / or working for the independence and pluralism of the media and the professionalization of journalists. So many new projects have been launched since January 2011 that it is not easy to keep abreast with all of them.

Over fifty projects are currently engaged in the field of media development in Tunisia alone.<sup>1</sup> Along with established media operators, such as television channels, radio stations, regulatory bodies and schools of journalism one can witness the emergence of a number of national and transnational of the civil society organisations in support of freedom of the press, pluralism and professionalism.<sup>2</sup>

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1 At the initiative of bilateral cooperation, a group of donors supporting the Tunisian media sector was formed and has so far collected at least 32 operators.

2 For instance, The European Union, the major donor of public development aid in all countries of the region supports numerous projects related to the media sector.

Yet the present situation with regard to the media is a serious cause for concern. The media hype during the Arab revolutions may have created the impression that pluralism of opinion and free speech had eventually gained ground in the Arab world, this proved to be a short lived illusion. A real evolution of the media sector in the countries of the region will not come about without fully fledged legal and structural reforms and this implies a long-term involvement. However, only few projects are presently providing real alternatives to the structural deficiencies of the media sector.

Cosmetic and temporary measures will do little to respond to the outstanding need for structural changes. To what extent can civil society activists organised as NGOs, trade unions and lobbying groups effectively contribute to introduce reforms and under what conditions?

The success and sustainability of any measures of reform in the media sector are dependent on a number of basic safeguards. The intervention of international operators, regardless of their nature (TV channels, NGOs, organisations of cooperation) should be built upon a partnership approach and fully include the in-country groups and organisations of civil society.

It is vital to build up the capacities of national groups and organisations that are actively involved in the local scene with a view to ensure that they can rapidly support, the fight for freedom of expression, pluralism and independent media with as much autonomy as possible because reform will only come about with credible and effective advocacy.

Civil society organisations are struggling to shake off the image they gained over the years when they could only stand in opposition and appear to be permanent complainers and ineffective counter-powers. It is true that the discontent caused by decades of censorship, by gagging journalists and broadcasting futile programs on the so-called public service channels, stirred up anger. To organise demonstrations in protest and to protest and to deliver harsh speeches is one option but is it the most efficient at this stage?

A united front of activists and organisations of civil society might stand a better chance to speak and be heard when they raise the cause of the national media.

The Arab revolutions have eventually made it clear that censorship and media control was no longer sustainable. There is no further alternative to the Government than to admit to listen to their population. Stifling dissent, as the Syrian government has been doing for years, is not only a crime against humanity but also a short-sighted strategy.

Time is ripe to build bridges between policy makers and civil society actors and the present project, an informal network made up of seasoned actors of the civil society, has invested into real expertise with a view to analyze the flaws of public service broadcasting and to make concrete suggestions for realistic, achievable and essential structural reforms. Sustainable change will only come about when the leaders of media outlets will be convinced of the relevance of proposals for reform., it is therefore essential to develop an appropriate lobbying strategy, adapted to the contingencies and practice in each country.

The dispatch of a press release or of a personal mail message to a group of MPs may prove efficient in a specific context, whereas face to face interviews with selected movers and shakers may yield better results in another place.

Thus, the NGOs and the personalities who joined efforts to conduct the present study are now carrying their own revolution forward as they engage into a challenging dialogue with Government authorities in support of change in the regulation and operation of the national media.

We cannot close this chapter dedicated to the role of civil society, without taking a critical look at our own actions. We have therefore consulted with the partners to the project and with media professionals to take their recommendations and expectations into account. The contributions of three personalities from the Arab media environment are included here.

### **Interview of GHAZALI Ahmed,**

President of the High Authority of Audiovisual Communication (HACA)

The defence of the interests of people is increasingly organized in a variety of groups that may range from small lobby groups to transnational non-governmental organizations and include national associations. They are often grouped under the generic term “civil society actors”. In the media sector, there is lot of stake holders: Unions of journalists, newspapers editors, press clubs, national associations, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

*You certainly receive requests from most of the above stake holders, are there opportunities for dialogue to take into consideration their request?*

The Dahir, which established the High Authority, in keeping the liberalization of audiovisual communication, which is one of its cornerstones, emphasizes in its preamble that “... *the right to information... must be ensured, in particular, by an independent press, audiovisual communication outlets that can be freely developed and expressed, a public service broadcasting able to ensure the pluralism of various currents of opinion, respecting the fundamental values of civilization and the laws of the Kingdom*”. It means that there is a clear need to open audiovisual spaces for free and responsible public debate, accessible to all components of Moroccan society in its fullness and diversity.

However, in order to ensure institutional efficiency, this text also provided filtering mechanisms to overcome the inevitable congestion logically generated by this new dynamic, stating through its Article 4 that “*The High Council for Audiovisual Communication can receive complaints from political organizations, Unions or associations of public benefit, relating to violations by the audiovisual communication bodies, of laws or regulations related to the sector of audiovisual communication.*” Obviously, this prudential rule will be interpreted flexibly by the High Council for Audiovisual Communication (HCAC) which, as evidenced by its extensive case law (available on the website of HACA: [www.haca.ma](http://www.haca.ma)), will involve the self-referral procedure

whenever a complaint will have to be supported, even though the component of civil society or professionals do not justify the conditions legally required to complain to the HCAC.

*The term of “civil society actors” usually refers to a group of actors who may have different goals and specializations. What is your interpretation of this nebulous term? Do you make a thematic distinction (minorities, political pluralism, gender issues) or do you treat the issue of civil society as a whole?*

In fact, being myself from this microcosm called “civil society”, and having produced academic works as a professor at the Law Faculty of Rabat but also as a consultant for various international organizations ([http://81.192.48.236:8080/pmb/opac\\_css/index.php?css=bueil&lvl=author\\_see&id=294](http://81.192.48.236:8080/pmb/opac_css/index.php?css=bueil&lvl=author_see&id=294)), I’ve never had difficulty convincing the High Council or my technosstructure’s staff of the complexity of such a sociological phenomenon. However, substantial efforts have been made by the High Authority to apprehend and understand this dynamic complexity, which were then translated into concrete actions, ranging from spontaneous thematic integration of these components (such as gender and youth under 40 years old previously neglected) in the monitoring system of audiovisual pluralism designed and operated by the regulator, until the establishment of an innovative and appropriate classification, which will serve as a tool for making Decision of the HCAC No. 27-11 of June 16, 2011.

Adopting the Recommendation on ensuring pluralism of expression of thinking and opinion in audiovisual communication services during the referendum of that year, this decision will recall, just before the constitutional recognition of the concept of “civil society”, that the High Council is above all “... *concerned about promoting, within the public and private services of audiovisual communication, the implementation of a free public debate, frank and accountable, open to all actors in politics and civil society involved in the constitutional referendum.*”

*Whose interests are they defending? What are the major concerns brought by these various actors?*

It is now easy for the informed observer to assert, without going too far, that the Moroccan civil society has reached a mature stage because most of socio-political, economic and environmental or cultural identity issues which are not dealt by the State, in its Bodin’s concept, find expression by transverse channels belonging to internal or external NGOs. Most of the concerns of Moroccan society are now free to be expressed, either by the normal channels, or through electronic media which enjoy a large degree of freedom in Morocco, but still depending on the necessary efforts of adaptation to new constraints of the intangible and global environment. Thus, when issues of Human Rights in general, or more specifically issues such as ecology, consumer protection or professional ethics are invoked, many legitimate concerns but also less rational ones often came to the regulator with noble purposes, sometimes with hidden lobbying objectives, as it is the case in most contemporary democracies. Faced with potential overflows and confusions, the High Authority adopted very quickly a “legalistic” and unbiased approach. Indeed, as I said recently in an interview with a Moroccan daily newspaper, I consider that the High Authority, as an agent of change, must contribute to the rule of law, which implies a systematic reference to the legal

standard, the only approach actually being able to immunize the decisions of the regulator, to consolidate its case law and to reinforce its institutional position. But on one condition: the interpretation of the law must be flexible, generous and intelligent. In other words, the idea is to use the law to move forward.

*Are they in a conflict or proposal stand? Do you think that their arguments are compelling?*

It is common knowledge that the actors of civil society can legitimately act on both registers, protest and enunciation, without calling into question the origins and the relevance of their action, while the regulator must adopt a strict duty of reserve and is expected to maintain impartiality, which require him to refer systematically, let us recall it once again, to a normative and impersonal objectivity to be able, if it is within the scope of his duties, to decide on the legitimate and compelling character of a particular argument about where the law remained vague or unclear. Nevertheless, it is sure that the action of the High Authority begins to be felt, the unexpected degree of media coverage is an example of this change, in the deepest part of the political class and civil society in Morocco. By Interacting with them, the regulator tries to position himself in the global dynamics, in order to carry out his mission of accompanying the process of liberalization of audiovisual communication.

*Does the HACA take their demands into consideration?*

Absolutely, when they are legally justified or could help changing the constructive interpretation of the law for regulation in favor of democratic development of the audiovisual sector and society as a whole. Because, beyond our regulator mission, we remain men and women committed to the progress of our nation on the basis of postures and beliefs. Each brings in his/her own beliefs, culture, aspirations... the nine board members are not all lawyers. Thus, there is a dimension of firm conviction which also plays a role. But it is limited by a legal framework to ensure freedom and democratization of the audiovisual media. From this point of view, I always made sure that our decisions are finely argued.

Besides, the multidisciplinary and unbiased composition of the Supreme Council, the deliberative body of the High Authority, is also a real guarantee of efficiency and equity when complaints are “filtered” and assessed.

Indeed, as an independent administrative body, the High Authority of Audiovisual Communication is a special institution which offers all guarantees of impartiality, neutrality and technical, legal and moral authority, to regulate the public and private sector of audiovisual communication. Its creation to His Majesty the King and its new constitutional status is away from any political and economic pressures that could interfere with its independent role of regulator. In this sense, it embodies the hope of neutrality and impartiality.

*In your opinion, are they legitimate interlocutors?*

As I said before, it is the law that determines the legitimacy of the regulator’s interlocutors and when the legitimacy of the council is the subject of the complaint itself, the legality of the referral is replaced by the legality of the self-referral.



*Do they contribute to advance the debate for media pluralism?*

Of course! When they make a request to the regulator about the non-compliance of broadcasters with the fundamental obligation to ensure pluralist expression... and the equitable access of parties, they contribute largely to establish the culture of political, cultural and linguistic pluralism, in the public and private Moroccan audiovisual media. To be totally convinced, a simple overview of the numerous decisions taken by the HCAC on these referral's issues is necessary: political parties, non-profit organizations or ordinary citizens who have received responses to their requests by the HACA.

However, in the beginning, the regulatory activity was faced with constraints from actors of this sector, who have been forced to make a radical break with the mentality and methods of governance that existed at the time of State monopoly. The regulator's decisions have often been held hostage by the level of civic maturity of the different actors who have, by definition, some interests in a sector that represents a unique forum to speak to the electorate. But fortunately, on this aspect too, enormous progress has been made in just a decade, which has undoubtedly contributed greatly to advance the debate but also the praxis of broadcasting pluralism. Thus, with the normative production of the Supreme Council, regulating permanently pluralism in the audiovisual media during elections or not, some specific decisions, taken at the instigation of important actors of the Moroccan civil society as AMDH or OMDH, contributed to the consecration of important case-law principles on this specific issue.

*The HACA carries out an intense monitoring activity, are the actors of civil society involved in these monitoring? Do you think the action of the HACA may be complementary to monitoring activities conducted by civil society actors?*

One thing is certain: the major actors of this society are part of the database of this monitoring through their representatives and spokesmen. As for complementarity issue, even it has not been yet experienced, the idea per se deserves to be analyzed if it can help consolidate the performance of broadcasting regulation in Morocco.

*The answer of Nacer Mehal,  
Algerian Minister of Information, to the questions asked*

The mission of Algeria's public service broadcasting is to guarantee the citizen's right to information under the new Constitution and the Organic Law on information. Thus, the Algerian Television aims to ensure the three main missions of audiovisual media-to inform, entertain and educate. In this context, we deployed the necessary resources by providing heavy investments to meet this demand. The Algerian TV is open to all trends and thoughts. It tries, whenever possible, to support our rich cultural diversity. Of course, the situation is far from being perfect.

Material resources are not sufficient to reach the appropriate quality of service. We accept criticism wherever it comes from if it is constructive and well founded. Therefore, we are listening to citizens, experts, professionals who give their opinion on specific issues relating to communication, including audiovisual. We opened an interactive website in the Ministry that allows me, personally, to receive e-mails from citizens who want to draw my

attention to a given problem, make suggestions or criticize. Moreover, we regularly inform ourselves through national press headlines to be aware of the citizens and organizations concerns. The true ideas, the well-founded critics are obviously taken into account when we take decisions.

In general, the bills initiated by our sector are always the result of a close cooperation with all stakeholders. This was the case during drafting the organic bill on information, which required more than 70 work meetings. I take this opportunity to say that this law dedicates its title VI to audiovisual activity. It opens up the framework of audiovisual activity for the Algerian private sector and provides the creation of a regulatory authority of audiovisual. It expressly states that “audiovisual activity is a public service mission.”

Within this framework and in accordance with this organic law, we will initiate thinking to develop a law on audiovisual. A wide debate will be open with all parties without exception.

To improve the performance of public sector broadcasting, to prepare it for competition from private, we initially made a diagnosis, which confirmed that the sector’s problem is more clear today and can be summarized as follows:

- A weakness of the service provided by the National Television
- Inefficient human resources
- A legal framework which is in some ways obsolete.
- The provision of radio is appreciable
- The current process of modernization of broadcasting equipment is a great contribution to the audiovisual development

Today, like most countries of the world we are aware of the challenges in the field of communication:

#### Political Challenges

There are at least three problems in this sector- the need to make known the projects of economic development carried out, show that citizens’ concerns are taken into account and that international standards of democracy and freedom of expression are respected.

#### Cultural challenges

The promotion of national culture and its defense relies heavily on audiovisual communication.

#### Organizational and legal challenges

The effectiveness of media is highly dependent on their organization, the legislation and regulations related to communication.

#### Technological Challenges

The rapid growth of ICT and digital technology led to a new global competition and a race to digital.

We initiate some workshops to meet these challenges and enhance the quality of public broadcasting to fit to the aspirations of citizens. Our main goal is to reach a quality public service, strong, efficient, and able to strengthen freedom of expression in our country. We want the media to play a role in socioeconomic development of the country and serving citizens.

Finally, as part of the consolidation of the communication sector, we work to achieve the following main objectives:

- Rehabilitating communication to inform citizens, to listen and encourage their participation in economic and social development;
- Strengthening and consolidating the Algerian media to improve their quality at the regional and global level;
- Enhancing the role of information and communication in the implementation of the national strategy of development;
- Making our means of communication effective and competitive;
- Completing the digitization of technical means and the development of the Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT);
- Completing the modernization of legal texts;
- Development of the institutional communication of the government;
- Developing public service and local communication;
- Ensuring media coverage of the entire national territory;
- Training of journalists and employees of the communication sector;
- Improving the distribution system of the national press throughout the country;
- Expanding the sphere of printing and distribution of print media;
- Promoting the local press, specialized press and electronic media.

We need to organize ourselves, to adopt modern methods of management, to think differently to achieve our goals. For this, only the adoption and proper implementation of the triptych “Organization-Technology-Management” can lead to better results.

In today’s world, communication is undoubtedly a means of development. To deal with it, three things are necessary:

- Having the technological means needed
- Mastering the use of these means, that is to say, having skilled human resources
- Having skills in management, design and innovation.

Even if we have significant technical means and made heavy investments thanks to the financial effort of the State, we unfortunately still have weaknesses in human resources and managerial abilities.

To achieve our performance goals, we decided to focus on training. Thus, a major program of training and professional development of journalists and other categories of media professionals will be implemented in cooperation with national and foreign partners

(training establishments). A credit of 400 million dinars is planned by the Finance Act for 2012 to fund training activities. Furthermore, we are thinking about the creation of an institute of audiovisual activities to meet our needs in skilled human resources.

The enactment of the organic law on information in January 12, 2012, paves the way for the drafting of the specific legislation related to broadcasting and the establishment of an independent regulatory authority, without forgetting to mention the two laws that will govern the advertising and opinion polling.

# **Democratic Governance and the Media. Reflections about the Arab Spring**

**By Marc BOU I NOVENSA<sup>1</sup>**

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## *Democracy, human rights and media: a necessary relationship*

When can we declare that a country is democratic? The answer to this question isn't straightforward. It depends of what we mean by democratic system, and the conditions that it should fulfill. Despite the intensity of this academic debate, a kind of consensus seems to exist to admit that democracy must meet a minimum of substantial conditions and procedures. Therefore, for instance, the political changeover must be guaranteed by genuine, free and periodical elections as well as by a separation of powers, while protecting minorities' rights and opposition rights. But beyond the respect of a set of elementary rules, democracy must also work. And when we say work, we mean that it must be able to bring about political stability and to reduce social and economic inequalities. Otherwise, with time, democracies risk to lose legitimacy in the eyes of citizens.

On the other hand, very few of us doubt that human rights and democracy are the two sides of a single coin. There wouldn't be a democracy without recognition and effective protection of human rights, just like human rights cannot exist without a natural environment of democracy.

Among all human rights, we are going to focus here on the right to freedom of opinion and expression. As stipulated in article 19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." In the light of this precept, the media's

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role is really important. The reason is simple: it is thanks to the media that the exercise of freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the right to receive plural information, becomes a reality and gains a practical dimension.

The contribution of free, plural and independent media to democratic health includes various aspects. Firstly, they provide a wide range of information presenting an interest for readers or viewers. Secondly, they grant citizens the opportunity to exercise the right to vote, being well informed, aware and responsible. Thirdly, they control the activities of governments, public institutions and interest groups and denounce abuses of power when they occur. Fourthly, they provide inputs to political leaders on the performance of their management and require them to be more receptive to people's needs and concerns. Finally, they provide public spaces where many sensibilities and opinions meet each other and they do in this way foster public debate.

Thus, the media have a significant influence on public opinion and on confidence in institutions. Their capacities to promote political change are huge; hence they are often considered to be the fourth power. But we are all aware that the functions mentioned earlier will only be carried out if freedom of opinion and expression, and therefore press freedom, are protected by law and by an independent judiciary. But that is not enough. Media require also good journalists and professionals, as well as codes of conduct aiming at the promotion of democratic principles and values. They also require independent regulatory authorities ensuring pluralism, transparent and fair licensing procedures, an educated society, the absence of political interferences and of physical or technological barriers affecting the flow of information and opinions.

With the outbreak of new technologies, the informational and communicational environment changed dramatically at least for two main reasons. On one hand, because Internet and satellite television channels had put a stop to the monopoly of Governments and of powerful local media operators that controlled the flow of information until recently. On the other hand, because citizens aren't passive and simple media consumers anymore, but also producers of news and information that reaches out to society through blogs, YouTube, Twitter and ad hoc cooperation with the media. We are witnessing the emergence of a new kind of citizens' journalism. The broadcasting of messages is no longer in the hands of a few and no longer characterized by its unidirectional or linear nature. Communication today is multi-directional and the border between transmitter and receiver of messages has become blurred.

This transformation of the communication space, with more diversified information sources and contents offering a better accessibility to information and different points of view, has obvious implications for the political process. Among other things, because it renders any attempt to censor the information rather pointless as well as because bad practice is now more easily unveiled. This results in an erosion in terms of legality, and at times it can be the fuse that will hasten the political change.

*Freedom of opinion and expression  
and press freedom in the Arab countries:*

As it happens unfortunately elsewhere worldwide, countries of the southern Mediterranean suffer from a big gap between the existing laws and their implementation in real practice know. Freedom of opinion and expression, as well as freedom of press aren't exceptions. These freedoms are constitutionally recognized but their implementation in practice is less than certain. To varying degrees Governments of the countries of North Africa as well as those of the Middle East were characterized by their indirect or direct control over local media and by their very great distrust of the foreign press.

Restrictions to freedom of expression and opinion as well as to press freedom are frequently imposed in the shadow of a vague normative framework that makes it possible to inflict excessive penalties fines and even prison sentences on professionals of journalism who cross certain red lines. For example, those who criticize or decry the establishment, especially royal families or presidential figures, and those who, according to the rulers, infringe rules relating to vaguely defined concepts such as public order, morality, traditions or national security or those who investigate into possible cases of corruption or other issues deemed sensitive politically (situation of human rights, territorial integrity, dispute with minorities...) are taking major risks. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that self-censorship has become widespread to avoid problems under emergency laws or in fear of the arbitrary interpretation of the existing laws. In extreme cases, such as Egypt under Mubarak, Libya under Gaddafi or Tunisia under Ben Ali, cases of harassment or physical assaults on journalists were recurrent, and many of them were imprisoned in violation of minimum procedural guarantees.

Governmental interferences with the running of print media, both State owned or private ones are also economic. In their dealings with state-owned publication or quasi state-owned ones. South Mediterranean's governments for instance in Egypt or in Algeria have often played on institutional promotion or funding in order to control contents and editorial lines, rewarding the « friendly » media and boycotting « enemies ». These kind of funds represent - for most of the newspaper and magazine - the biggest part of their income. Moreover a major part of the printing and distribution market has been monitored by the government directly which inevitably affected the freedom and independence of the press.

Historically, TV and radio channels were used by the Governments as tools to promote their ideology advertisement. Many radio and TV stations owned by governments characteristically broadcast biased information in order to play down and minimize social conflicts. They supported the Heads of States, and in doing so, attempted to discredit opposition parties and dissidents. Even though some of these Governments eased up the rules in the 90s, they nevertheless maintained firm control on the media and the licensing procedures. Licences were sometimes granted on the condition that the new outlet shouldn't treat political issues but limit its content to music and entertainment. In a little more than a decade, pan-Arab channels like Al Jazeera - broadcast by satellite -

have opened the opportunity to access alternative information. However, these satellite television channels suffered from temporary censorship and even from the withdrawal of journalists' accreditation when they tried to report about unwanted subjects.

The monopoly of the Governments on the flow of information came to an end with the emergence of new information technologies and the development of the Internet and mobile phones. The number of independent news portals denouncing electoral fraud or covering mass demonstrations or even the number of blogs created by human right activists have continued to increase. Nevertheless, Governments did not sit on their hands, and stayed aware to watch and control these protests by tracking and reporting e-mails, infiltrating their network and arresting activists whenever they wanted. Governments stepped up efforts and succeeded in restricting access to sensitive websites; they blocked Facebook, Twitter, Blogspot and Skype. Yet, a full and final blocking of the Internet was and is still impossible.

### *The Arab Spring in the digital age*

Even though analysts and research centers have been warning about the persistence of serious structural problems in North Africa and the Middle East, nobody was able to predict the rapid spread of Arab revolutions: in only few weeks, movements of mass protes had the ability to bring down the Tunisian and Egyptian Governments, led Syria to a civil war and led to the lynching of Muammar El Gaddafi. In order to respond to social discontent, the Governments in Morocco and in Jordan were forced to engage in massive structural reforms.

The Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation will remain in history as the trigger to spontaneous Arab revolt. This act also is the reflection of the collective frustration of a whole generation facing the lack of opportunities and future prospects.

In spite of the fact that people are better trained and educated than two decades ago and that the number of university students has grown, Governments in this area were unable to provide secure, stable and adequately-paid employment to the young generations. The leading elites and their cliques became richer and richer thanks to the strict control on lucrative markets while youth had to choose between work in the informal economy - without tax and social security laws - and emigration. The WikiLeaks revelations only confirmed what the *vox populi* revealed about the elites' way of life.

The existence of police States – which can be defined by increasing inequality, lack of hope and continuous restrictions on political rights and civil liberties - has spread a general sensation of impunity. These factors provided the backdrop of the Arab Spring, the ground of the conflicts, that led to political change.

Arab revolts are distinct from other revolts because of the decisive role played by NICT. Without the use of Internet, mobile phones or social networks, these revolts and might not have spread so rapidly. Some people have tried to minimize the impact of the Internet



giving the low 30% of household access to Internet in this area as a reason. But these same people forget about the use of Internet; people don't only surf at home but also at their workplace, in research centers or in Internet Cafés.

It is clear that Facebook, Twitter and many blogs have been flooded by messages from young Tunisians and Egyptians, as well as text message and video on YouTube and Dailymotion. These messages called for more civil liberties and political rights. They also challenged the legitimacy of the Government in calling for an end to the quasi lifelong presidencies of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak. NICT had a multiplying effect, like reflector, because they transmitted and amplified the outraged generation's calls. Furthermore, some of these tools were used to organize street demonstrations and they occasionally served to help people escape from the repression of the State's security forces. Satellite TV also fed the revolts: Al Jazeera widely covered the Arab Spring and broadcast the statements and declarations of demonstrators all over the world.

Thanks to NICT, Tunisian and Egyptian youth were able to speak up and to denounce social injustice and humiliation thereby generating a climate of solidarity – or mutual empathy. This served to enhance the potential of mass demonstrations that eventually brought down Governments, yet this supportive atmosphere did not always ensure success to the protest movements. The Iranian, Syrian and Yemeni examples showed us that mobilization could be violently suppressed or denied, but that doesn't mean that protests are definitively over. Anyway, paraphrasing Professor Manuel Castells, new communication technologies represent new opportunities for society to self-organize and self-mobilize. It also enables opponents and critics to escape the censorship and persecution from States.

The experience of the Arab Spring has demonstrated one thing: it is pointless to try and block access to the Internet and website and to shut off mobile phone coverage: It only causes economic losses, and besides, there always is a way to reconnect the service.

Public TV minimized the revolt while these events were happening. Like the Tunisian public TV, channels tried to prevent the fall of their government. Meanwhile other public TV channels, like the Egyptian and Syrian ones attempted to impose an information black out on street demonstrations as they were happening and only showed images of Government supporters. Even very recently, news contents were filtrated by the censorship of the ministry of Information, or other Government authorities who tried to promote their own biased views of events. However, thanks to wider access to the Internet, mobile phones with video cameras and the use of satellite dishes, it is no longer an option to try and cover up reality or to sing the praise of the Head of Government.

### *Playing a part in quality public media*

The Arab rebellions have highlighted the existing divorce or at least, the disconnection between Government-supervised TV channels and radio stations and the audience. Arab citizens generally consider the public media as instruments loyal to the Government and

bound to spread its political orientations and not as a quality public service serving people's interests and concerns. This loss of credibility, as a consequence of a lack of independence, has resulted in many cases in significant drops in audience ratings and has relegated the national broadcasters to second rank players on the regional media map dominated by satellite channels.

As mentioned earlier, the media are essential to a healthy democracy. Even more so if we talk about public media for they are the ones which, more than any others, must protect information diversity by giving a voice to women or young people and to different opinions and by reflecting society's complexity (for instance by representing national or religious minorities). They must eventually support cultural and democratic values. For this reason, the public media in North African and Middle Eastern countries need an urgent and deep transformation. This is all the more true that there is a real risk of seeing the public media edged out of the market by much more dynamic private media driven by economic principles of maximization or by business interests. This time of political changes and reforms which the region is going through represents an amazing opportunity to address this current issue.

International organizations, private foundations, development agencies, companies, among others must provide an active support in order to turn this challenge into a concrete reality while always keeping in mind the principles of the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership. But this is also a challenge for the donor community. Apart from a few exceptions such as USAID and UNESCO and last years' efforts to put together practical guidelines and indicators, international development agencies have under-estimated the free press as a major or central component of a good governance. However a lot more people are becoming aware of the benefits of independent media on human development and on poverty reduction.

Development cooperation can help in many respects and in many fields. The countries of this region must take up major challenges such as, for example, adjusting general standards and codes of practice to international human rights standards or set up independent regulating agencies. Some donors could share their experience and give their technical help in this field while being careful not to give in a "standard fetishism" and think that all problems will be immediately solved just by changing standards. Taking the easy way out of institutional isomorphism must be avoided as well as thinking that applying legal standards or performing organizations from other countries will give identical results. On the contrary, national systemic diagnoses must be elaborated, resulting benefits must be identified and key players and their motives must be well known in order to avoid possible resistance to reform. It is therefore essential to set every reform back in context.

Also donors can contribute to improving the quality and the dignity of public service. This basically goes along with the training of journalists committed to democracy. Journalists from the South of the Mediterranean generally don't have all the necessary qualities to do their job within a fully democratic system. This is mainly due to a bad socio-political context spread over many years. Exchange programs, seminars, classes and partnerships between

universities and research centers of the South and the North should make them aware of their role in society, of their rights and duties and of what is expected of them. Focus should also be put on the improvement of those professionals' theoretical and practical skills in fields such as Human Rights, gender equality, investigative journalism, production of balanced reports, media coverage of elections or the use of NICT. Regarding the hiring of staff, selection processes will obviously have to follow objective and transparent criteria.

Donors could thus promote journalists' social rights and strengthen them with organizational capacity building and lobbying capacity building of their unions or professional associations; they can advise them regarding the layout of educational and recreational materials and the production of documentaries or create a space for South-South cooperation where the different actors of the area could exchange experiences and share good practices. The list of cooperation opportunities can of course go on and on.

Apart from the work that still needs to be done, donors should be aware of at least four things. First, promoting independent quality public media doesn't happen overnight, the commitment of the international community must, as a matter of fact, be honest and focused on the long term. It is therefore essential that development cooperation should not create a strong dependency. Second, the impact of this shared effort should not be evaluated without a holistic approach or in a more concrete way, without a clear and simultaneous will to work according to the whole agenda put up together in order to promote a democratic governance (free elections, independent judiciary power, respect of opposition, etc.) Third, the success or failure of any action in this field will depend on how much the national key players will have put of themselves into it and consequently how much they will have identified with the project and on the resulting large consensus. And, in the end, coordination and the search for complementary actors of development cooperation are essential in order to avoid duplication and unwanted consequences.

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## **Conclusions and recommendations**

The first findings of an extensive process of evaluation stand out clearly: the call for a mission of public service broadcasting (PSB) is unanimously supported.

Over 300 people in eight Arab countries targeted by the research have responded to interviews and contributed to consultations, each in his/her relevant capacity as a media operator, regulator, journalist or representative of a civil society organisation.

They all agree that the proliferation of private and independent satellite television channels and the concomitant multiplication of sources of information can in no way be a substitute for the mission of public broadcasting of national television channels. It is part of the State's responsibility to deliver a mission of public service broadcasting for which it is accountable to its citizens.

In this regard the first lesson that can be drawn from the research conducted has to do with the very notion of public service broadcasting. Even though television viewers and media professionals may only have a rather vague grasp of the concept itself, some of them – including the less experienced - have in general come up with characteristics and definitions that point to a universal ideal. The large array of expectations expressed by contributors to the study converge towards the commonly agreed definition. This serves to demonstrate that cultural, religious and geographical specificities do not have any major bearing on the universally agreed notion of the mission of public service broadcasting (PSB).

The supply of information is an essential service that the State must guarantee without interfering with the actual modalities of its production.

It is therefore necessary to give due consideration to the conditions that must be met for mission of Public service broadcasting to become a reality.

The present research sought to assess the extent to which a mission of public service is actually being delivered. Some of the elements of responses collected provide ground for optimism.

At some points across the region one can see the embryos that could develop into a mission of public service broadcasting. Morocco is even ahead of this stage and has laid the foundations that will lead to a full fledged mission of PSB. Moroccan broadcasting legislation, for instance, clearly states the obligations of the media operators in terms of accountability and transparency and defines precise requirements in books of specifications. In spite of the fact that legislations remain inadequate in Egypt, Algeria, Jordan and Lebanon, programmes about issues of general social concern (health, handicaps, sports) are broadcast and that these issues are sometimes debated on air.

Most interviewees in Palestine welcomed recent developments on their national channel. Tunisia is planning to establish an independent regulatory authority and this is a positive signal. Yet in spite of the ongoing trend towards reform it is obvious that one can not anticipate the outcome of the present negotiations about the governance of the national television channel (set up of the board of directors, appointment of the management).

Even these positive examples are a reminder that one should remain cautious and not indulge into premature conclusions. These examples are in no way sufficient to hide the fact that the mission of PSB remains largely indistinct and that the actual programmes of national television channels are mostly inadequate and do not stand up to the requirements of a mission of public service.

This first inventory shows that the existing legal frameworks remain insufficient and that the definition of PSB is vague, or even nonexistent. In most countries there is no legislation to ensure that a real mission of PSB will be delivered. Public companies established to manage radio and television broadcast have strong links to the ruling regime and in many cases are utterly dependent on it.

In the course of the study it became evident that many elements of information related to the governance and the management of these channels were not readily available. This goes a long way to show the lack of transparency in the management of the channels, the awarding of contracts, the recruitment and compensation procedures and the selection of tenders.

Even though media regulation actually stands for the right of the public to have access to cross-checked and objective information and for the right of the media professionals to liberty of the press, practically none of the countries has an independent mechanism of media regulation. The few attempts by some countries in the region to regulate the media are a positive development but they still lack some or many of the mechanisms that should serve to guarantee real independence. An examination of the performance of the few existing regulators also showed that their decision making process the nomination of their members and their accounting should become more transparent.

It has also proven difficult to obtain relevant information about the strategic plans made in view of the transfer to digital broadcasting and its impact on the future of PSB.

The quality of the programmes broadcast by the national channels analysed in this project is by and large rather weak. In Syria and in Algeria the national channels are actually losing audience because people consider them to be instruments of the ruling authorities that are in full control of the audiovisual broadcast: Yet expectations run high in Algeria as reforms have been announced. Morocco has the most sophisticated legislation but this is in itself not enough unless adequate manpower and financial means are made available to deliver a mission of PSB.

It is a real challenge to conduct an objective and detailed analysis of the content of television programmes to assess the extent to which they satisfy the requirements of public service broadcasting. A programme may in appearance be dealing with issues of general interest, provide opportunities for interaction with the public and generally correspond to the concept of PSB. Yet an in-depth analysis of the extent to which this programme handles the issue in an exhaustive and neutral manner and reaches out to the largest audience possible is required to see if a programme meets the PSB criteria.

The analysis of information magazines and talk shows has demonstrated that a televised debate featuring multiple guests is not necessarily an opportunity for a free exchange of views where all aspects of an issue can be debated. The studio debate is too frequently used to create the impression that opposed views are being expressed and that a debate is taking place.

It is important to clarify that the purpose of this research was not to pass judgement upon programmes but rather to compile information in order to examine them impartially. We have therefore observed numerous aspects and dimensions of the PSB with a view to highlight shortcomings and potential improvements.

How can these findings then be put to good use with a view to go beyond the mere analysis of the mission of PSB today?

These findings are meant to serve as the launching pad for lobbying, information and awareness raising activities about the PSB in the hope that it would help foster reform in the countries under review in this study.

Alongside this regional report, eight country reports provide individual recommendations that are meant to improve the status of PSB in each country. These recommendations will be submitted to all the public operators, to the relevant Ministries and to the regulation authorities wherever they exist.

This first balance sheet is meant to provide a reference against which future developments will then be measured. The analysis process was launched before the revolutions of 2011 in the Arab world. Facts related to PSB have not yet changed drastically and therefore the information provided here remains up to date. It will then be possible to benchmark progress made and to compare the phases of development in the coming years.

The road leading to a mission of PSB will be a long one as the list of recommendations attached shows. The history of PSB is nearly one century old in Europe and yet it is still being vividly debated amongst the public.

These recommendations have already been discussed with media professionals from all the countries targeted by the study. In December 2011 a conference convened in Amman brought together seventy journalists, trade unionists, managers, representatives of regulatory authorities under the auspices of the Jordanian Ministry of Information to initiate an exchange of views.

In Palestine discussions have been ongoing with the general management of the national Palestine Television prior to the Amman conference and during a workshop held in Ramallah in January 2012.

This feed back from the field encourages all participants to keep up with the regular monitoring of the national public broadcasters and to hold them accountable to their duty to deliver quality information for all. Turning national broadcasters into public service broadcasters is a tall order but one that will serve to foster real change in the Arab media environment.

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*Recommendations for the enhancement of the mission  
of public service broadcasting (PSB) in the countries  
of the Middle East and North Africa*

The main objective of the research that underlies the present report is to contribute to the enhancement of the mission of public service broadcasting in the Middle East and North Africa region. This endeavour aims at proposing a roadmap to support the media professionals in their efforts to boost the capacity of national television channels to deliver a mission of public service for the benefit of all citizens.

It goes without saying that public service broadcasting should operate independently and be free from interference and from any form of control and censorship by the ministries of information. The Ministries of information should ultimately be replaced by independent monitoring and regulating bodies.

Whereas the Government should refrain from controlling the operation of the public broadcaster, there should be clear rules to regulate the ownership of commercial television stations with a view to prevent conflict of interests and any monopoly of media ownership.

The following recommendations comprise of a vast array of approaches that serve to guarantee access to information for all. The list is not exhaustive and will need to be updated regularly according to need because the recommendations target the eight countries under review from a variety of angles:



1. The legal framework that regulate audiovisual broadcast
2. Issues of transparency, good governance and accountability
3. The programming of public broadcasters
4. The training of journalists and their awareness to the concept of PSB
5. The role of civil society organisations

Legal frameworks to guarantee the mission  
of public service broadcasting

In order to set up an environment that guarantees the independence and the pluralism of the media, the State should give up its monopoly and its control of the media. This also means that it will be necessary to develop adequate legal provisions to safeguard the liberty of expression, the freedom of the press and the right of access to information.

It is therefore necessary to draft a new media legislation with a view:

- to guarantee the right of citizens to information and communication within the framework of the liberty of expression and to prevent obstruction to the liberty of the press.
- to reckon with the relevance of the role of television broadcast for social development.
- to define the legal framework that regulates the administrative management of the national broadcasters.
- to define the obligations of the public service broadcaster and the rules in case of breach of the said obligations.
- to set up adequate recruitment and appointment procedures for the top management of public broadcasters by an independent and collegial body operating in full transparency and independence.
- to define the rules of competition between audiovisual broadcasters.
- to establish a transparent model of funding, both on the level of collecting licence fees and on the level of managing the budget of public broadcasters.
- to allow for the import of international audiovisual products whilst protecting the national audiovisual production.
- to set up mechanisms to ensure the protection of children, teenagers and other vulnerable categories of audience.

The operation of the media environment is conditional upon the existence of independent mechanisms that guarantee their independence as well as the respect of the fundamental rules of ethics of journalism. It is therefore necessary that Governments give up their control of the media and that independent regulatory mechanisms be set up with the following tasks:

- to ensure that media broadcasters operate within respect of the law
- to develop rules and procedures for the regulation of broadcast content
- to define and to implement clear and transparent procedures for the attribution of frequencies and broadcast licences to media operators
- to supervise the proper implementation of the PSB, the compliance with the book of specifications, by public operators

- to monitor the output of the national broadcaster in order to ensure that it is not manipulated or used by any Government authority
- to monitor the objectivity and the respect of balance and pluralism in the way information is being handled
- to ensure that the political parties have fair access to the public service broadcaster and during electoral campaigns to establish clear rules for the production, programming and broadcasting of sponsored programmes
- to regulate the broadcasting of advertisements
- to respond to queries and complaints from viewers and to take relevant measures.
- to define and to characterize the role of civil society organisations with respect to the revision and the updating of the mission of public service broadcasting.

To sum up it can be said that the set up of regulatory mechanisms for public communication must result from the will of the nation to better organise and to protect the freedom of information and the rights of the public so that the media in general, and the public broadcasters in particular, be able to play their part in the ongoing process of democratisation.

Public broadcasters operating according to the rules of transparency, good governance and accountability

Over and beyond the legal framework that regulates the mission of PSB, it is essential to set up modes of management that will ensure that the public broadcasters operate in full transparency and enjoy the highest possible level of autonomy in particular with regard to budget, administration and editorial management.

It is therefore necessary

- to grant a proper juridical status and full independence from the Government to the public broadcaster
- to set up an adequate funding system that guarantees stability and foresees the possibility to diversify sources of funding
- to set a maximum limit to the advertising revenue and to make precise provisions with regard to the funding by any single advertiser
- to draft a manual for the establishment and the management of public broadcasting companies
- to design adequate policies for the recruitment and management of human resources in accordance with the needs and the means of the broadcasters
- to ensure that newsrooms operate in full independence and to ensure that administrative and editorial services are managed separately
- to establish rules of transparency and to uphold the obligation of accountability to the public
- to organise a mechanism to listen to and to consult with the audience

The above recommendations also apply to the set up of independent mechanisms of regulation. In addition to the endeavours of the broadcasters and of the independent regulators, it remains necessary to support the creation of independent monitoring organisations that can provide reliable viewing statistics.

Programming that caters to the needs of a variety of audiences

The relevance of programme content lies at the heart of the mission of public service broadcasters and it is part of their responsibility to ensure that they respond to the legitimate expectations of their audiences. This includes the following responsibilities:

- to develop programming that is consistent with the needs of viewers and with the responsibility of the public broadcaster to inform, to educate and to entertain
- to promote programmes that respect the principles of pluralism and diversity
- to raise the awareness of media operators and journalists about the representation of genders and about the need to foster equity between men and women both as actors and as subjects of the information
- to elicit the active participation of the public in the production of media content
- to foster the emergence and the development of channels and of programmes in local languages and to boost the production of original products in local languages
- to encourage participation by viewers, through representatives consultations of the population, to train them and to listen to their views on programming

In addition there is room for cooperation with the ministries of culture (or similar institutions) in order to foster local production in cooperation with local initiatives as well as to encourage the creation of local media outlets and community televisions.

Building up the professional capacities of journalists and media operators with a view to uphold the ethics of journalism and to boost the mission of public service broadcasting

It is obvious that developing and upgrading the capacities of staff members within the media outlets and in particular the national broadcasters can contribute to enhancing their sense of corporate responsibility and their readiness to contribute to the mission of PSB.

It is therefore urgent to work towards the emergence of a new generation of journalists who will be aware of the principles and values of PSB and support the right to information and the freedom of expression.

Journalists can become actively involved in the set up of mechanisms of self regulation to ensure that the mission of PSB becomes a reality and that the principles of journalistic ethics are upheld.

In order reach these objectives it will be necessary

- to raise the awareness of media professionals about the concept of PSB
- to train journalists in the implementation of principles of self-regulation
- to train staff members at the public broadcasting outlets so that every one of them can become an agent of change
- to organise training sessions for the managers of the media outlets
- to strengthen academic education in the several fields of communication.

These training sessions should become part of the contractual objectives and of the books of specifications of public broadcasters.

Public service broadcasting and due consideration  
to the expectations of civil society

Whilst public broadcasters have a responsibility to cover the activities of civil society organisations, the members of such organisations have a task to raise the awareness of the media to their role and presence with a view to highlight issues of general social concern.

There is a need to raise public awareness about the right of access to information, about freedom of expression as well as about the concept of public service broadcasting.

In order to reach these objectives it will be necessary

- to educate the public and to highlight the distinction between Government media and public service media
- to inform the public about the variety of tools that can be used to intervene, to act, to express expectations and to file complaints
- to organise public debates at the national level in order to highlight the issue of PSB

Civil society must participate actively in the reform process of the legal framework that regulate the media so that the expectations and legitimate needs of all layers of society be taken into account, including youth, women, minorities etc.

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The participants in the present research project will monitor the implementation of the above recommendations and will ensure that the regional network of specialists is upheld and strengthened so that specific capacities are put to good use in activities of lobbying, awareness raising, monitoring and technical support.

They will in particular join efforts with a view

- to raise the awareness of elected representatives (members of Parliament) so that they engage with the promotion and the protection of PSB and propose draft laws to support its emergence and implementation
- to suggest tools and methods to promote the concept of PSB
- to offer methodological advice and support on media regulation
- to support media monitoring studies and in particular thematic monitoring about gender, youth, sports etc.
- to develop programmes aiming at educating the public about the role of the media
- to train media professionals about the notions and issues relevant to PSB.

The present publication is the outcome of research undertaken at a time when the national broadcasters in the eight countries under review were run as direct emanation of the Ministries of Information. The Arab spring has opened up new perspectives and all the participants in the present project are engaging each in his/her own country so that the public broadcasters may enter a new era in which they will safeguard the right of access to information and the freedom of expression.

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## Organisation of the bibliography

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2. Paper (including articles available on line)
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*While information is free from control in Maghreb and Machrek countries with Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, many question the role of "traditional" media. Despite this trend, this work deliberately focuses on an omnipresent media which, after failing to its responsibilities for some time, has lost the central position it should have: public television in the Arab world.*

*Far from being anachronistic, the scope of this book falls rather in the heart of current issues: pluralism and independence of the media require the implementation of quality public service broadcasters in tune with citizens' expectations. However, the increase in number of TV and channels is not necessarily a guarantee of democratization of the media space.*

*Rather than merely acknowledging facts and in order to suggest concrete recommendations and reforms, a network of NGOs and media experts from around the Mediterranean has been working since 2009 to carefully analyze the situation of "public service broadcasting" in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria and Tunisia.*

*This book reports the assessment work made on public service broadcasting, makes numerous recommendations and invites public media professionals to think about the future of their profession.*

*The synthesis of the evaluation work carried out at national levels is accompanied by contributions which put the results at the regional level in perspective. Journalists, regulators, academics, media experts and civil society actors analyze in this collective work the future of public service broadcasters in the countries of the region, the role of the different stakeholders and the responsibility of NGOs in developing a pluralistic, independent and sustainable media landscape.*





