



2026-2027

Model Arab League BACKGROUND GUIDE

Special Council on Media and Journalism

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Original draft by Ninel Martinez-Macedo, Chair of the Special Council on Media and Journalism at the 2027 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the Special Council on Media and Journalism for the 2027 National Model Arab League! My name is Ninel Martinez-Macedo, and I am a senior at Converse University in South Carolina. I am honored to serve you all as your Chair. I am a double major in Politics and Creative & Professional Writing, with a minor in English, and I look forward to my fourth and final year at this conference.

This council is truly different from the others in Model Arab League since it changes each year. Moving forward, media and news outlets in the MENA region are going to be your stepping stones to understanding this council. Knowing what is trending and looking at the news and the person behind the article is a focus in many of these topics in various ways. I recommend looking at the additional resources below each topic and keeping your own country's policies in mind when reading about these interconnected issues.

The world of journalism is under attack, and how the current reporters on the ground have their livelihood, nation, and public at risk when they speak up. Additionally, look at current events in journalism and investigate and question the traction of some articles versus others,

I am excited to hear your solutions, which I hope are produced through collaboration and the respectful process of debate. Whether this is your first year or you are a veteran of the conference, I understand that the setting can feel unnatural at times. Please know that you are not alone; we are all constantly learning, and we can grow together. Please do not hesitate to reach out about any questions or concerns you may have about the conference or your preparation.

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Chair of the Special Council on Media and Journalism

Topic I: Investigating propaganda agents and media censorship throughout the MENA region.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

There are many aspects to propaganda and the media censorship risks within Arab League member states. Propaganda is a form of persuasion through sharing ideas and information to purposefully influence. With technologies creating a platform for information to go mainstream, ideas, ideology, and techniques have evolved from the physical.¹ Misinformation and disinformation, inaccurate or false information, all of which are magnified by algorithms and social media posts. Three different bot and sockpuppet networks that disruptors use are Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs). For example, these TTPs are specific to behaviors, processes, and patterns of activity that give leeway to threaten the design, scale, and execution of disinformation campaigns.² An example of this is the evolved technology and interference with governments, such as campaigns. With that, both propaganda and censorship can be used to control narratives with the goal of a collective belief for a group of people.

Media censorship is when there is a purposeful restriction on a specific event or subject to repress its importance. Documentation during times of conflict is essential and is usually a high-risk job for reporters, so when they are often limited in their outreach on conflicts. In Sudan, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) had internet blackouts four times, which left not only reporting vulnerable but also emergency lines, humanitarian aid services, and communications.³

Back in 2011, the Arab Spring brought many protests around the region, which tore infrastructure and slowed development. This triggered a harsher enforcement of stricter expression laws in the name of national security. Creating a hard definition of what propaganda is and media censorship, when the matter of “who” is part of a nuanced conversation. In Tunisia, the revolution created high tension around the right to express oneself, while in Lebanon there are reforms only to be halted by the political crisis.⁴

¹ Manzarria, Johnnie, and Jonathon Bruck. 2019. “Media’s Use of Propaganda to Persuade People’s Attitude, Beliefs and Behaviors.” In *Stanford.Edu*. https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/war_peace/media/hpropaganda.html

² Jones, Marc Owens. 2026. “Enabling Atrocity in the Mena and Sudan: Sockpuppets, Bots, and Digital Information Harm in Wartime .” University of South Carolina. https://cms.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/cic/docs/pdfs/unesco_2026.pdf.

³ “Digital Violence in MENA : Impunity and Internet Shutdowns in 2024 - Access Now.” 2025. In *Access Now*. <https://www.accessnow.org/press-release/mena-keepiton-internet-shutdowns-2024-en/>.

⁴ Article 19. 2026b. “MENA Region: Persistent Threats to Journalism and Media Freedom - ARTICLE 19.” May 6. <https://www.article19.org/resources/mena-region-persistent-threats-to-journalism-and-media-freedom/>

B. History in the Arab World

With modern media, the MENA region has not had much uncensored coverage due to propaganda agents. The relation of these two subjects stems from the long history of how the MENA region has progressed with online surveillance. Apps that have emerged since then, like Kawi, Baaz, ToTok, and Botum, have been promoted through the official governments of the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, countries without media laws with surveillance and censorship, like Sudan, are left without any legislation or regulations to fall back on.⁵ For example, even twenty years after the first cyber-related legislation, which is inspired by the European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) and opening up risks in target areas to state censorship, which is not only a problem for companies but also citizens.

In 2023, the Arab League announced its social media regulation strategy, which involves legal representation nationally, the removal of content based on national law, reassigning revenue to media outlets, and a commitment to combating Islamophobia and Arabic language. Followed by nations drafting their own media laws, which raises concerns about involvement and silencing.⁶

Meta, for example, has been reported by Human Rights Watch to be silencing Palestinian content on Instagram and Facebook since October 7th, 2023. Over 1,049 posts and content were suppressed, flagging Palestinian political posts in violation of its Dangerous Organizations and Individuals (DOI) policy. Meta still does allow pro-Palestinian content; its restrictions and patterns in removing stories, comments, disabling accounts, and other features in the media apps.⁷

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Propaganda and media censorship have main issues with barriers on platforms and the regulations that come with them. Looking at ways in which safety and security are incorporated into national security and sovereignty, yet following through with the concerns and regulations. Today, frameworks involve family values, guiding social conflicts, and modest behavior to share,

⁵ Naseem Tarawnah. 2025. "A Fragile Ceasefire, Rising Digital Threats, and Transnational Repression in MENA." IFEX, February 6. <https://ifex.org/a-fragile-ceasefire-risingare-barriers-digital-threats-and-transnational-repression-in-mena/>.

⁶ Aymen Zaghdoudi. 2026. "The Game Is up: How MENA's Social Media Regulations Silence and Control." Access Now, July 16. <https://www.accessnow.org/mena-social-medbarriersare-barriersia-censorship/>.

⁷ Human Rights Watch. 2023. "Meta's Broken Promises: Systemic Censorship of Palestine Content on Instagram and Facebook." *Human Rights Watch*, December 21. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/12/21/metass-broken-promises/systemic-censorship-palestine-content-instagram-and> d.

which relates to the freedom of expression and its ability to be exercised with an understanding of media censorship followed by rhetoric that is influenced by propaganda.⁸

Understanding these rules through an example is Saudi Arabia which created Media Rules in 2025. The ban revolves around certain language that would be defined as vulgar, disruptive, and divisive content. Regulations like this impede the future of digital expression and the long-term relationship between government domain and freedom of expression. Many human rights groups look at these changes as a threat since some influencers have been limited by values and specific content allowed.⁹

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What other emerging digital obstacles can magnify the influence and perception of institutions, and how does that affect factual information in the Arab League?
- How much intervention with propaganda and censorship can interrupt media freedoms?
- What is identifiable as propaganda in a nation, and what is the effect of media censorship in your country?
- How much does this contribute to extremist beliefs, and what institutions are worth considering in solutions?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What focus does your country have as a priority when it comes to propaganda agents?
- What legislation or lack thereof has been a foundation for the Arab League, and how will they move forward?
- How do countries handle and prepare for media catastrophes and the dangers of media censorship?

IV. Additional Resources

[Transnational Digital Repression in the MENA Region - Project on Middle East Political Science](#)

This research covers media censorship examples, along with how digital repression has affected many nations. It was able to pinpoint censorship, surveillance, cyber mercenaries, and social media platforms being weaponized.

⁸ News, Mimeta. 2025. "Latest Articles on Mimeta News." In *Mimeta*. Mimeta News on Censorship of Arts. <https://www.mimeta.org/mimeta-news-on-censorship-in-art/2025/10/21/saudi-arabias-2025-media-rules-tighten-online-expression>

⁹ News, M. (2025). *Latest articles on mimeta news*. Mimeta News on Censorship of Arts. Mimeta. <https://www.mimeta.org/mimeta-news-on-censorship-in-art/2025/10/21/saudi-arabias-2025-media-rules-tighten-online-expression>

[State and Public Media in MENA Region in 2025 – State Media Monitor](#)

With 84 researched media institutions, this resource will be able to bridge any gaps in statistics on the public and media. There are also overviews of past years that will be able to assist with the context of their relationships.

[MENA False News](#)

False News, misinformation, and propaganda are all agents that can distort reality and relationships without media literacy. It is also important to note that it provides the 2017 Joint Declaration on disinformation and propaganda.

[Abolish censorship and adopt critical media literacy: A proactive approach to media and youth in the Middle East](#)

The importance of future journalists rests partly on the unjustified regulations on media freedom, since in this age it is inevitable for journalists to take part. Media literacy is a part of the process so that youth can engage in spaces without being arrested.

Topic II: Addressing the arrests and detentions of journalists and investigating their impact on media freedoms.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Historically, journalists have been targets, especially during conflict or times of tension. This is because their duty lies with the public, which involves an unfulfilled beneficiary relationship with bodies of government and foreign involvement. Arrests and detentions have been used as a means to restrict reporting and intimidate other journalists as a message.¹⁰ Under these circumstances, journalists can be subjected to surrendering their assets, harassment, and even death. UNESCO defines media freedom as the rights of journalists and media organizations to act independently without censorship or interference from government authorities or other entities.¹¹ Reporters have become increasingly restricted in the environment in the MENA region, while it is simultaneously a crucial time to preserve the act of journalism.

Palestine has been at the forefront of this conversation, as it was described and reported as one of the most dangerous states for journalists to exist in the world currently and one of the most extreme cases of targeting journalists to death. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) predicts that more than 220 reporters have been killed since 7 October 2023, including 70 who were most likely targeted because of their work.¹² Farah Abu Ayash, a Palestinian broadcast reporter, was arrested twice in 2025 and was one of 27 reporters held for arbitrary detention and suffered from neglect, beatings, and verbal abuse.¹³

In Egypt, at least 18 journalists are currently tied to cases of detention because of their work, with charges including terrorist group membership, false news, or misusing social media.¹⁴ In 2025, about one-third of imprisoned journalists reported mistreatment, including 20% reporting claims of torture or beatings, or even having their term never being sentenced at all, serving

¹⁰Article 19. 2026. "MENA Region: Persistent Threats to Journalism and Media Freedom - ARTICLE 19." May 6. <https://www.article19.org/resources/mena-region-persistent-threats-to-journalism-and-media-freedom/>.

¹¹ "Media Freedom." 2024. In *Unesco.Org*, 2024, <https://www.unesco.org/en/query-list/m/media-freedom>.

¹² "Palestine | RSF." n.d. In *Rsf.Org*. Reporters Without Borders. Accessed August 5, 2026. <https://rsf.org/en/country/palestine>.

¹³ "2025 Journalist Jailings Remain Stubbornly High; Harsh Prison Conditions Pervasive - Committee to Protect Journalists." 2026a. In *Committee to Protect Journalists*. <https://cpj.org/special-reports/2025-journalist-jailings-remain-stubbornly-high-harsh-prison-conditions-pervasive/>.

¹⁴Article 19. 2026. "MENA Region: Persistent Threats to Journalism and Media Freedom - ARTICLE 19." May 6. <https://www.article19.org/resources/mena-region-persistent-threats-to-journalism-and-media-freedom/>.

almost five years and experiencing delays in their sentencing.¹⁵ Regardless of the accusations, the disregard for the legal frameworks in many cases against journalists falls short and creates obstacles for the media sector. This creates pressure and undermines topics of public interest to be informed of and creates a complex concern where journalists are limited in recording events independently and have difficulty navigating sensitive information.

B. History in the Arab World

Journalists have historically been vulnerable because of the shaky pillars of media freedom within the region, with the first interruption being early significant new organizations. In 1996, this changed when Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar, created Al Jazeera.¹⁶ Today, Al Jazeera has grown to become one of the biggest news outlets for the Arab world and its direct ownership by the Qatari government has raised questions regarding the amount of independence news outlets could have in the future. With the ongoing tensions with Palestine and conflicted nations, reporters are left more vulnerable and without proper protections to lean on regarding their rights. On May 13th, 2025, Ahmed Rashid Khattabi, Assistant Secretary General of Media and Communication in the Arab League, upheld the League's solidarity, recognizing the importance of reporting without the restriction of involvement.¹⁷

Arrests and detentions are not a unique problem to Palestine or globally. All across the Arab League, member nations have experienced an impact. In Algeria, journalist Abdelei Mezghiche was arrested over an expression of social media content on Facebook that was claimed to “harm the national interest,” while reporting on imprisoned local figures, all while having six more journalists imprisoned because of their work in journalism.¹⁸

Another example is Ismail Alexandrani, a journalist in Egypt who was arrested more than once on the charge of being in a terrorist group, without there being a clear narrative on the timeline of events, but with the clarity of restricted freedoms to do their work. Most importantly, currently Saudi Arabia and Egypt hold the highest statistics in the incarceration of the press and have 4 of 10 biggest jailers for journalists. These tactics have varied to restrict the press in the capacity in which it is functioning.¹⁹

¹⁵ “2025 Journalist Jailings Remain Stubbornly High; Harsh Prison Conditions Pervasive - Committee to Protect Journalists.” 2026a. In *Committee to Protect Journalists*.

<https://cpj.org/special-reports/2025-journalist-jailings-remain-stubbornly-high-harsh-prison-conditions-pervasive/>.

¹⁶ *The Role of the Media and Journalists in Arab Affairs*. 2023. ODU United Nations Society .

<https://www.odu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/arab-league-journalists.pdf>.

¹⁷ Article 19. 2026. “MENA Region: Persistent Threats to Journalism and Media Freedom - ARTICLE 19.” May 6.

<https://www.article19.org/resources/mena-region-persistent-threats-to-journalism-and-media-freedom/>.

¹⁸ Article 19. 2026. “MENA Region: Persistent Threats to Journalism and Media Freedom - ARTICLE 19.” May 6.

<https://www.article19.org/resources/mena-region-persistent-threats-to-journalism-and-media-freedom/>.

¹⁹ McCarthy, Roisin. 2022. “‘We Are in Crisis’: Middle East Rights, Journalists on Censorship, Imprisonment and Exile.” In *Middle East Monitor*.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The nature of journalism has always created the risk of scrutiny from various groups and institutions like politicians and local leaders. This conflict dynamic, for example, makes it difficult to define what a “crime” is. UNESCO’s Global Media Defense Fund has invested in looking into crimes against journalists in Arab nations in order to investigate common patterns to protect journalists from detention.

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Zaynab Al-Khawaja expressed, “...I have been overwhelmed by how much my colleagues on the ground have faced and overcome, and I am very scared for them.” Presenting the problem of young press reporters being taught to accept censorship without being able to comfortably challenge the government without fear.²⁰ This goes against the tradition of journalism and its freedoms.

All the while, the repercussions mean law enforcement and 82% of journalists feel a high risk in their work. Journalists have not stopped reporting even with potential dangers, including events like natural disasters, crucial conflict information, and investigations.²¹ When creating long-term solutions, there need to be various things considered: safety, legitimacy, and current legislation expansion or lack thereof.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How many safeguards are there for the safety and security of journalists for media freedom?
- Has your country created a precedent on how to treat journalists, and during what times are their shifts?
- What circumstances are taken into account in the treatment of justice with journalists in the Arab League?
- What can arrests and detentions mean for journalists and their future in country policy?

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220213-we-are-in-crisis-middle-east-journalists-on-censorship-imprisonment-and-exile/>.

²⁰ GCHR. 2023. “Challenges Facing Journalists in the MENA Region.” Gulf Centre for Human Rights, May 3. <https://www.gc4hr.org/challenges-facing-journalists-in-the-mena-region/>.

²¹ GCHR. 2023. “Challenges Facing Journalists in the MENA Region.” Gulf Centre for Human Rights, May 3. <https://www.gc4hr.org/challenges-facing-journalists-in-the-mena-region/>.

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How could solutions your country has worked on be applicable with expertise in certain areas?
- What shared ideas do nations have on media freedom and its ability to be responsible?
- What role do journalists play in legislation and in the bigger picture of things for the MENA region?
- How does the impunity of harsh consequences faced by journalists affect institutions and governments going forward?

IV. Additional Resources

[Protection of Journalist Report - Maharat Foundation](#)

The Maharat Foundation conducted a report that includes testimonies from journalists on the threats they are facing today, with current threats that echo throughout the MENA region. It encompasses all of the issues journalists face, including armed conflicts, legal constraints, and safety, etc. Something important is Article 79 of the Geneva Convention for journalists and the dangers they encounter.

[Observatory of Killed Journalists | UNESCO](#)

UNESCO has a database tracking journalists' deaths. The database provides filters to find your country and how it relates to your position.

[MENA Violence Against Journalists](#)

Violence is part of the topic, and how retaliation can transcend physical and online, while the risk of prosecution under surveillance. Expression is the duty journalists take, but documented assault, inhumane treatment, unlawful detentions, and death. Solutions to this should have these factors considered.

[UNESCO Warns of Serious Decline in Freedom of Expression](#)

This updated page has a link to the World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development Report 2022-2025 and information on the current concerns and foundational solutions to them.

Topic III: Discussing the Right to Information throughout the MENA region and the need for information accessibility.

V. Introduction

A. General Background

The Right to Information (RTI) is a promoted right through Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is a worldwide advocate for access to information, which is an essential part of expression and action. Information affects many areas of life, such as health, poverty, and the environment, influencing citizens.²²

Some of the most restricted areas of information and digital rights are not a high priority because they are not usually seen as human rights.²³ Algeria and Egypt currently lack RTI legislation, and Tunisia, Lebanon, and Jordan have RTI laws, but the strength varies. Having discussions on this at a time when the press has been so important for coverage during times of crisis and conflict. It produces necessary information for citizens when combating abusive institutions.²⁴

Countries like Jordan were able to make an information law back in 2007, but its creation is very vague, making it limited, and a majority of Jordanians are unaware of this law. This would be a recurring demand from citizens to secure. Many countries in May 2004 signed the Arab Charter on Human Rights, in which Article 32 was a part of it.²⁵ Article 32 seeks to bridge the right to information regardless of location and boundaries. Showing the protection it has over opinions and informational freedom.

B. History in the Arab World

The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media and Innovation for Change has gathered studies to identify what policies have improved citizens and regions. Reform and changes are different in theory than in practice, and the long-term effects of the legislation have been close to nonexistent. This goes for both digital and physical spaces. Computers, laptops, and mobile

²² "Right to Information." 2024b. In *Unesco.Org*.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/query-list/r/right-information#term-definition>.

²³ *Cyber Laws and Digital Privacy in the Middle East*. n.d.-a. Amman Center for Human Rights Studies. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://www.achrs.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Report_November23.pdf.

²⁴ Almadhoun, Said. n.d. "Access to Information in the Middle East and North Africa Region: An Overview of Recent Developments in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia." World Bank Organization. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/931011467994646396/pdf/80668-WP-Almadhoun-ATI-in-MNA-Region-ENGLISH-Box-377295B-PUBLIC.pdf>.

²⁵ Almadhoun, Said. n.d. "Access to Information in the Middle East and North Africa Region: An Overview of Recent Developments in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia." World Bank Organization. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/931011467994646396/pdf/80668-WP-Almadhoun-ATI-in-MNA-Region-ENGLISH-Box-377295B-PUBLIC.pdf>.

devices are all examples of the way accessibility has changed the modern world. Yet, it has also been harder to navigate without the proper framework that is able to address the lack of public awareness and regional efforts being more of an everyday consideration. National awareness must be maintained so nations can naturally progress to reflect the collective.²⁶

So far, Arab countries have not progressed as fast with legislation for RTI but are gaining traction. Jordan was the first country in the region to address the issue back in 2007, so far advocating for RTI with their society organizations.²⁷

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The Right to Information is directly tied to transparency and accountability. This changes the social dynamics of communities, which would be able to have direct ties to empowering themselves. To do that, evaluate all documents and the countries which are claimed as “one of the most progressive access to information laws in the world” by the Tahrir Institute.²⁸

The implementation of RTI is where countries like Jordan have had unsuccessful attempts despite the progression towards the rights. It is important to note that journalists take on the leftover duties of RTI, which can put them in danger because of this responsibility.²⁹ It takes legislation, functionality, and accessibility. Comparison of frameworks and international standards that would reexamine many things like security and consistency with public authorities. The right to information covers information for various scenarios, publications, and legislation information. Note that there is a rating system that is widely known internationally, known as the RTI Rating, that measures how well nations can communicate information like procedures, protections, and appeals. Some Arab countries have unclear processes in the authoritative frameworks, and some criteria in the rating do not accurately reflect more concerns of citizens. In Morocco, legislation excludes national defense and security information, which could affect the economic choices of leaders and citizens.³⁰

²⁶ *Cyber Laws and Digital Privacy in the Middle East*. n.d.-a. Amman Center for Human Rights Studies. Accessed August 14, 2026. https://www.achrs.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Report_November23.pdf.

²⁷ Chehayeb, K. (2021, June 23). *Access to information laws in MENA: Spotlight on Jordan, Tunisia, and Lebanon*. The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy -. <https://timep.org/2021/06/23/access-to-information-laws-in-mena-spotlight-on-jordan-tunisia-and-lebanon/>

²⁸ Chehayeb, K. (2021, June 23). *Access to information laws in MENA: Spotlight on Jordan, Tunisia, and Lebanon*. The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy -. <https://timep.org/2021/06/23/access-to-information-laws-in-mena-spotlight-on-jordan-tunisia-and-lebanon/>

²⁹ Chehayeb, K. (2021, June 23). *Access to information laws in MENA: Spotlight on Jordan, Tunisia, and Lebanon*. The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy -. <https://timep.org/2021/06/23/access-to-information-laws-in-mena-spotlight-on-jordan-tunisia-and-lebanon/>

³⁰ Zaanoun, A. (2024). The right to information access in the arab region: Reality of gains and failures. *Rowaq Arabi* - 03)29. (رواق عربي). <https://doi.org/10.53833/vhuq5421>

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How does this affect public service and health announcements and overall information that changes the nation?
- How does public data transparency address sectors and growth?
- How many portals are there for information besides virtual and material?
- What steps or initiatives has your nation taken to address the regional and national aspects of RTI?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How has the underdevelopment of Right of Information access restrained social, economic, and political standpoints?
- What educational resolutions can be incorporated to develop accessible news and data?
- What kind of studies have been conducted by the Arab States to address ROI?
- How could international articles and declarations be incorporated into the decisions that intertwine with Arab declarations?

VI. Additional Resources

[Arab Charter on Human Rights | Article 32](#)

Article 32 is your first point of contact for the commitment to this fundamental idea that has evolved into modern-day accessibility. The article will allow you to understand how freedom of expression is defined in a recognized document in the Arab League.

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

Article 19 in the Universal Declaration was used as inspiration for Article 32 so looking at the similarities and differences will help your understanding of the priorities each organization holds.

[Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan & Pakistan Economic Update: Challenges of Conflict and Industrial Policy for Development](#)

When looking into why the Right to Information is an underdeveloped sector, consider the development challenges. Especially when all of the nations in the Arab League are in different stages of development.

[The UN Convention against Corruption – UNCAC - UNCAC Coalition](#)

The United Nations has a Convention to combat corruption that addresses the possible dangers to the public importance of information.

Topic IV: Investigating media funding and means of expanding the financial sustainability of independent journalism initiatives.

I. Introduction

A. General Background

Funding is a core necessity in order to preserve the support and long-term sustainability of independent journalists. In the media sector there is economic pressure with the uncertainty of journalists day to day depending on the restrictions that conflict zones can bring to journalists, increasing and thus making it hard to become a solo voice if they face the fear of danger and unstable income.³¹ Being independent drives the reliance of digital reporting since challenges on the ground are to not be able to carry the information to all of the public. Funding comes from capable initiatives to launch there privately and from the private sector. There are other works that can involve the public funding of decrees in the Arab League, like Decree No.2.18.139 and the requirements they have to be fulfilled. It is easier to have a digital life than a paper one when it comes to publishing. A report in 2021 said that newspaper sales dropped and have been dropping steadily.³² Government-controlled journalism is usually tied back to their institution, so they not only follow regulations but also are usually the main source of finances other than donors.³³

B. History in the Arab World

Independent journalism has notoriously been harder to support with investigative journalism, research, and policies. Public internet pulls harder as a stance for journalists because it is a way for independent voices who do not bend to a certain narrative and instead serve the public good. Private media businesses are a threat to state security when it becomes only a limited opportunity.³⁴

³¹ Welle, Deutsche. 2025. "Media Development Challenges in the MENA Region." Deutsche Welle, September 19. <https://akademie.dw.com/en/media-development-challenges-in-the-mena-region/a-74030570>.

³² Leone, Sierra, and Sarah Zaarour. 2022. *Commissioned from the National Media Viability and Investment Conference PUBLIC FUNDING for PRIVATE MEDIA in the MENA REGION*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/documents/primed-research-public-funding-for-media-mena-zaarour.pdf>.

³³ "Mapping of Media Assistance and Journalism Support Program in the Levant Region." 2025b. <https://gfmd.info/h-content/uploads/2025/03/Mapping-of-media-assistance-and-journalism-support-programmes-in-the-Levant-region-gfmd.pdf>.

³⁴ Sabbagh, Rana. 2026. "Independent Journalism – Can It Survive in the Arab World?" Gijn.Org. <https://gijn.org/stories/independent-journalism-can-it-survive-in-the-arab-world/>.

More than 320 Arab journalists for Arab Reports for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) are worried about regressing in democratic freedoms with disinformation.³⁵ All about being able to go into zones and have a voice against any group without the fear of being victim to certain criteria to report on for the benefit of a government. The UN Arab Human Development Reports (UNAHDR) warned more than a decade ago that regions faced critical demographic pressures, failures in economic development, and a mixture of challenges related to poverty, deep problems with corruption, nepotism, and discrimination. UNAHDRs warned that these factors were creating a pre-existing agitation over a lack of freedom. This threatened regional stability and created significant challenges for the given countries. Currently, the UN, World Bank, IMF, CIA, and World Economic Forum data and reports on journalism are getting worse with conflict states.³⁶

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

There are many programs today that are working on promoting Arab voices, which are focused on the storytelling aspect that investigative journalism can reward. The International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) is an example of a program that is working on training and creating effective journalism out in the field.³⁷

Independent media is a form of resistance to the many techniques that emerge from the threatening field of reporters. Yet it is important to remember the divide within the journalist community between those who involve themselves in human rights and those who are publicists.³⁸ Many projects are looking towards education, but ensuring employment in economic environments that will not be able to sustain them should be a priority for future reporters.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How can localized support grow the independent creation of journalists?
- Which group, governmental or intergovernmental bodies, is more common in the field?
- When is the shift expected to change into a journalist to have current initiatives that increase coordination of reporting?

³⁵ Sabbagh, Rana. 2026. "Independent Journalism – Can It Survive in the Arab World?" Gijn.Org. <https://gijn.org/stories/independent-journalism-can-it-survive-in-the-arab-world/>.

³⁶ Sabbagh, Rana. 2026. "Independent Journalism – Can It Survive in the Arab World?" Gijn.Org. <https://gijn.org/stories/independent-journalism-can-it-survive-in-the-arab-world/>.

³⁷ International Center for Journalists. 2026c. "Engage: Training for Journalists and Creators in the MENA Region | International Center for Journalists." <https://www.icfj.org/our-work/engage>.

³⁸ El-Issawi, Fatima, and Nicholas Benequista. 2020. "Building Regional Strategies for Media Development in the Middle East and North Africa Building Regional Strategies for Media Development in the Middle East and North Africa." https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CIMA_MENA-Regional-Strategies_web150ppi.pdf.

- What type of support can your nation provide for stable income?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What projects can prepare for the future obstacles that these independent journalists will be facing?
- What initiatives have been worked on nationally or internationally with your state to organizations?
- How does my nation navigate government-owned press houses?
- What economic barriers are tied to journalism? How do they relate to the social environment they live in?

VI. Additional Resources

[Safety of Journalists in the MENA Region Amid the Turmoil PDF](#)

The research from 2023 highlights the importance of independent journalism being a safe practice, with proper guidelines where the infrastructure is able to withstand conflict on the self-reporting journey they are a part of.

[Center for International Media Assistance](#)

13 countries were able to provide experts who show the history of media coverage that can come from journalists throughout different situations.

[MENA Regional Strategies](#)

Use this as a guide to look into ways and areas that are proposed by researchers and how they recommend and predict countries to move forward.

[The State of Media Development: Middle East and North Africa](#)

This will be financially educational on how development happens in the MENA region and how to be guided on the funding aspect.