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BREAKING THE CHAINS

Press Freedom Campaign

Arab World and Iran



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International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19.

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.
2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
 - (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;
 - (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

The Covenant allows derogations on this right for the protection of national security, public order (Article 19-3/b) and in a situation of "a public emergency which threatens the life of the nation...to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation." (Article 4-1).

Members include:

Algeria, signed 1968, ratified 1989

Bahrain, accession 2006

Egypt, signed 1967, ratified 1982

Iran, signed 1968, ratified 1975

Iraq, signed 1969, ratified 1971

Jordan, signed 1972, ratified 1975

Kuwait, accession 1996

Lebanon, accession 1972

Libya, accession 1970

Morocco, signed 1977, ratified 1979

Syria, accession 1969

Tunisia, signed 1968, ratified 1969

Yemen, accession 1987

Introduction

The Middle East remains region oppression against media is one of the most intense. Conflicts have created an extremely dangerous environment for journalists, resulting in a total of 65 media workers killed in Iraq in 2007

Seeking to silence moderate opinion, radicals attack reporters everyday. At the same time, conflicts and internal political battles have become useful smokescreens for governments trying to crack down on journalists. The imposition of state of emergency or excuses based upon security, are standard alibis to justify the jailing of journalists.

In a region hungry for peace, stability and democratic development, key elements for change are more open government, more pluralism in politics and the press, and more engagement in the public information space by citizens at all levels. Writing about politics, social, religious or economic issues in a tense global environment, requires sensitive and careful handling, it does not imply muzzling public debate.

In a 2003-42 resolution, the United Nations High Commission for Human rights "*Calls upon States to refrain from the use of imprisonment or the imposition of fines for offences relating to the media which are disproportionate to the gravity of the offence and which violate international human rights law.*"

In July 2007, the Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ) launched in Morocco its Observatory on press and media freedom, to monitor the state of press freedom and document the social and professional conditions of journalists throughout the Arab world. This event was welcomed as a huge Leap forward by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the international media community.

Despite these positive developments, optimism was short-lived. In February 2008, Arab governments agreed to give state control over satellite broadcasters operating in their countries. Governments of the Arab League adopted a charter that mirrors repressive laws already in place in some countries which limit free expression and permit the prosecution of journalists who criticise their governments. Qatar and Lebanon are the only two countries who did not sign up the charter.

The Breaking the Chains' campaign urges a general decriminalisation of press offences and condemns arrest, disproportionate fines, kidnappings and violence against media employees and employers. It demands eliminating imprisonment as a radical sanction used to intimidate journalists and to silence independent media.

This report lists the main legal obstacles to freedom of speech in the Arab World and Iran and records cases of sentenced and jailed journalists. These cases give a flavour of the conditions in which journalists work. They create an intolerable atmosphere of intimidation and fear that currently accompanies the exercise of journalism throughout the region.

Breaking the Chains is an initiative of the IFJ and its affiliates in the Arab World and Iran. Launched in June 2007, this campaign is not just about exposing bad laws and poor governance; it is also helping to build professional solidarity among the journalists in the region. Working together, journalists and their unions are building a new and vigorous reality about the future of ethical and independent journalism. Change will not happen overnight, but it will come fast and more effectively when journalists and other media professionals stand up for their rights.

Aidan White
General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists

Methodology

This report records the main legal repressive laws for media and cases of attacked journalists. It is not exhaustive. We mention cases of journalists being charged, sentenced, arrested illegally for a few hours or a few days, or those unlawfully held in prolonged pre-trial detention. We rely on the information provided by the IFJ affiliates in the region and verify it with other sources, including recognised press freedom, human rights and media support agencies. Triangles in the tables indicate journalists that were, according to our information, still in prison in April 2008.

ALGERIA

In a country emerging from a difficult period of extremist violence, in which the media were prominent among the victims, the press is often seen as free, but a series of measures in recent years reveal how fragile is this freedom. In the frame of the national peace and reconciliation charter, a February 27th 2006 decree was enacted providing for up to five-year prison terms and fines for those who speak or write to “exploit the wounds of the national tragedy, tarnish the country’s international image or its officials’ reputation”. The wording maintains the danger of legal abuse first established in 2001, when the Penal Code (1990 law) was amended to strengthen sentences of so called press offences.

The law provides for jail terms for offending religion through writing, cartoons, or speech, (up to five years jail terms and €1,300 fine - Art 144 bis2); for offending the parliament, officials, judiciary authorities or armed forces (up to two years jail sentences and €6,500 - art 144). Article 144bis provides for up to one year jail sentence and €3,000 fine, for anyone who offends the President of the Republic...” In case of repetition of the offence the sentence is doubled. Art. 144 bis1 exposes the editor and author of the offence to up to one year imprisonment terms and €3,000 fine, and the publication up to €30,000 fine. In case of repetition of the offence, the sentence is doubled.

The state of emergency decree allows legal action against what is considered a threat to the state or public order. Persons charged with acts against the security of the state may be held in pre-trial detention for up to 20 months, according to the Code of Penal Procedure. Although defined as an exceptional measure by Article 123 of the Penal Procedure Code, pre-trial detention is often used.

In June 2006 Mohammed Benchicou, director of former daily *Le Matin* was released after serving a full two year sentence. On 5 July, a presidential amnesty was granted to 200 journalists convicted of defamation, leaving journalists involved in ongoing prosecutions ineligible for pardon; 17 journalists were given jail sentences during the year.

In January 2007, during a regional meeting of IFJ affiliates in the Arab world, the IFJ and the National Syndicate of Journalists (SNJ) called on the government to fully decriminalise defamation by erasing article 144 of the penal code. The Algerian Minister for Information offered to consider the issue. However, journalists were charged throughout the year, under the penal code for press offences. During an IFJ mission in February 2008, organised to support the work and strengthen the organisation of its affiliate, the Syndicat National des Journalistes (SNJ), the Ministry of Communication reaffirmed the government’s willingness to amend the penal code articles providing for journalists’ imprisonment for press offenses. In April 2008, a decree defining labour relations between journalists and media employers was adopted, providing Algerian journalists from private and public sectors with a legal framework defining their profession and guaranteeing their basic rights.

Since the reopening of its solidarity center in 2004, the IFJ and the SNJ, have been urging authorities to decriminalise press offences, ensure fair trials for media and withdraw prison sentences against journalists. That work continues.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Omar Belhouchet	<i>El Watan</i>	Director	04.03.2008 The Appeal Court of Jijel handed down two months jail sentences to the two journalists, and a € 10 000 fine, for insulting, the wali (state official) of Jijel (300 km East of Algiers). The appeals court confirmed the decision on first instance on 27 May 2007. The charges against Belhouchet and Amari stem from an article published in <i>El Watan</i> exposing fraud in the Wilaya.
Chawki Amari		Columnist	
Ouahid Oussama	<i>Al Bilad</i>	Correspondent	19.11.2007 the correspondent appeared before the court to face defamation charges brought by the Director of the Department of Education of Djelfa. The journalist criticised in an article the failures of the education system in Djelfa.

Noureddine Boukraa	Ennahar	bureau chief	12.11.2007 , the journalist was detained overnight in Annaba (East), on a complaint from an industrialist, Ahmed Zaim, who had been accused of bribing judges in a 2005 article in the daily newspaper Echourouk. Later in March, the journalist is formally charged for libel.
Dhif Talal	Al Fadjr	Correspondent	15.10.2007 , the correspondant in Djelfa was sentenced under the penal code to six months in jail after he was convicted on defamation charges brought against him by the Ministry of Agriculture. The charges stemmed from an article Talal wrote exposing huge losses of public funds due to poor administration in the local Department of Agriculture. Talal plans to appeal his sentence.
Arezki Aït-Larbi	Le Figaro Ouest France	Correspondent	26.04.2007 Aït-Larbi was arrested in Algiers airport, on the basis of a 1997 sentence related to an article he had written criticising the indifference of the authorities to prisoners' torture in Lambese prison. Authorities refused to renew his passport at the end of 2006. The journalist, who should have benefited from the presidential Amnesty of July 2006, was only cleared on May 30, 2007.
Saad Lounès	El Ouma	Former editor	18.04.2007 Lounès was given a one-year jail sentence for tax fraud after a complaint was brought by the tax department. His newspaper and printing company Sodipress, were closed down.
Ali Fodel	Ech-Chourouk el Youmi	Managing editor	04.04.2007 both had been sentenced in October 2006 by Algiers court to six months in prison and €200 fine, for defaming Libyan president Gaddafi. The paper was suspended for two months and fined €5,500. Appealed, the sentence was turned into a suspended jail term of six months and a small fine on 4 April. The appeal court also rejected the prosecutor's request for the newspaper to be suspended for a year.
Naila Berrahal		Journalist	

BAHRAIN

Bahrain is one of the Gulf States in which there is an active debate led by journalists, about durable changes to strengthen press freedoms. Press Law 47, passed in 2002 includes 17 categories of offences and provides for sentences ranging from six months to five years imprisonment for criticising the state's official religion, the king and inciting actions that undermine state security: articles 160, 161 and 168, prescribe prison sentences for up to five years for possessing or disseminating thoughts that insult Islam, criticise the Monarchy or could "damage public interest".

In addition, the law allows fines of up to €6,000 for 14 other offences, including publishing information related to any case that is under investigation or being tried, reporting any offence against the head of a state that maintains diplomatic relations with the country or its accredited representatives, etc. Additional restrictions to press freedom came with the anti-terrorism law enacted in August 2006 and a number of online publications, mainly of political content are kept under close monitoring.

Founded in 2000, the Bahrain Journalists' Association represents the broad range of media and is predominantly concerned with protecting press freedom and defending individual journalists from prosecution through legal assistance, public protests and lobbying.

It is active in helping draft the new media law lobbying for over 40 amendments to the original. It has proposed recognition of electronic media in the new law, its statute, rights and obligations. It also monitors the introduction of Bahrain's new labour law, which will enable it to transform to a trade union and defend journalists working as well as professional rights.

A strong campaign spearheaded by BJA to make the deputies amend the law, failed after Islamist MPs in the Lower House insisted on including a clause to imprison journalists who criticise officials or parliamentarians. A new press law draft prepared and endorsed in May 2007 by the more liberal Upper House (Majlis Al-Shura or Consultative Council) is scheduled to be debated by the Council of Representatives.

In latest developments, the Bahraini government has introduced on 4 May 2008, amendments to press law 47/2002, of which the most important eliminate imprisonment sentences for journalists and prior censorship on publications. However, it is still possible to charge and jail journalists on the basis of the penal code and anti-terrorism law.

BJA plans to launch a strong campaign to lobby the Council of Representatives in order to improve further the law and developing it, to meet journalists' demands.

King Hamad Bin Eisa Al Khalifa appears to be supportive of "progressive laws that guarantee the independence of the press and the freedom of honest and responsible expression ." No journalists have been imprisoned since he became the country's leader in 1999.

For further information visit BJA site: <http://www.bja-bh.org/en>

EGYPT

In spite of its traditional leading role, professionally and politically in the region, a number of laws severely restrict press freedom in Egypt, including the emergency law (applied since 1967, extended until May 2008), laws regarding imprints (1936) and Sovereignty of the press (1996). But it is mainly the Penal Code governing the press (law58/1937) that has been targeted by Egyptian journalists, union and press freedom organisations, for its numerous articles providing for excessive fines and jail sentences for journalists.

To pressures exerted for a change, both at national and international levels, the government responded in February 2004, promising an amendment of the law and the withdrawal of these penalties. Media were greatly disappointed as the amendments brought in July 10 2006 to the Penal Code, left the text with considerable restrictions.

Signed by the President Husni Mubarak in January 2007, the law provides up to five years in prison for journalists convicted of slandering a foreign head of state and maintains articles that allow for detention of "whoever affronts the President of the Republic" and journalists whose work "disturb public security or harm public interests." Under the law, embassies may bring law suits against Egyptian journalists by writing a letter to the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which may assist them in bringing charges to court.

The Code provides for fines and jail terms for deliberately diffusing news calling for the change of the constitution or the public institutions (Art. 174, up to five years), offending public morality (Art. 178, up to two years and €1,400), vilifying the president of the Republic (Art. 179) or the king/president of a foreign country (Art. 181), or its representative in Egypt (Art. 182, up to one year), the parliament or the army (Art. 184).

Article 188 provides for up to one-year imprisonment for whoever "*deliberately diffuses false news, tendentious rumours, or publicity that disturbs public security, spread horror among the people, or harms public interests*". Art 178 and 190 make editors-in-chief and publishers accountable for negligence leading to libels contained in their newspapers.

Among many incidents including attacks or condemnations of journalists, the most symbolic has been Kareem Suleiman's (or Kareem Amer), a blogger who was arrested in November 2006 and sentenced in February 2007 to four years in jail on charges of disparaging religion (3 years) and defaming the Egyptian President (one year). He is held at Borj El Arab detention center, near Alexandria.

In 2007 lawsuits and attacks against journalists, editors and bloggers peaked; more cases were filed by government officials or members of the NDP ruling party. Major newspapers' editors were charged and condemned to jail sentences for criticising top officials or simply covering topics such as the president's health.

The Egyptian Journalists Syndicate' (EJS) has consistently supported journalists or newspapers against the charges unfairly brought against them, and reports yearly on these activities. The IFJ General Secretary during his visit in Cairo in May 2007, expressed the IFJ full support to the EJS and the Federation of Arab Journalists in their demands for repeal of the laws that criminalise journalism. The IFJ has also supported the legal defence of Egyptian colleagues, including the case of *Ibrahim Eissa*, editor in chief of daily *Al Dustur*.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Ibrahim Issa	<i>Al Dustour</i>	Editor	26.03.2008 The Cairo Criminal court condemned the editor to a six months jail sentence for allegedly publishing false news about the President's poor health. He was found guilty of "harming the country's stability".
Anwar Al-Hawari	<i>Al Wafd</i>	Editor	28.10.2007 The daily's editor and correspondent in Assyout were sentenced to one-month forced labour for "publishing false news" about alleged fraud by two NDP ruling party members.
Younes Darwish		correspondent	
Anwar al-Hawari	<i>Al Wafd</i>	Editor	24.09.2007 The three journalists were sentenced in Cairo to two years jail and €650 bail, for "harming the reputation of the justice system". The charges were introduced by a group of lawyers, members of the ruling party, for an article quoting severe comments of the Justice Minister, Mamduh Marii, about Egyptian judges.
Amir Othman		Journalist	
Mahmud Ghallab		Journalist	
Adel Hammouda	<i>Al Fagr</i>	Editor	13.09.2007 The editors were each sentenced to a year forced labor for their articles, which criticised President Hosni Mubarak, top officials and the President's son. The articles were published during summer 2006. In addition to paying € 1300 for conditional release during their appeals, they also face fines of €2600.
Wael Ibrashi	<i>Sawt Al Umma</i>	Editor	
Ibrahim Issa	<i>Al Dustour</i>	Editor	
Abdel Halim Qandil	<i>Al Karama</i>	Editor	
Howayda Taha Matwali	<i>Al Jazeera TV</i>	Producer	02.05.2007 Tried for "harming national interest" in a documentary exposing torture in Egypt and shortly detained in January, the journalist was released after paying a bail of € 1400. In May, she was condemned by the state security court to six months jail and a fine of € 3,500.
Adel Hammouda	<i>Al-Fagr</i> <i>Sawt Al Umma??</i>	Journalist	21.03.2007 Journalist and editor were convicted for defamation against Naguib Sawiris, president of Orascom, the Egyptian telecommunications group. The decision was appealed. UPDATE
Essam Fahmy		Editor	
Ibrahim Issa	<i>Al Dustur</i>	Editor	27.02.2007 , appealing a one-year imprisonment decision, they were sentenced in Cairo to €3,100 for "insulting the President" and "spreading false rumours." Charges stem from an article reporting a lawsuit against senior officials.
Sahar Zaki		Journalist	
▲ Abdelkareem Suleiman (Kareem Amer)		Blogger	22.02.2007 , sentenced in Alexandria to four years in prison on charges of disparaging religion (3 years) and defaming the Egyptian President (one year). This decision was appealed. Kareem Amer was arrested on 6 November, 2006.

For further information see EJS website: <http://www.ejs.org.eg>.

On 25 October 2007, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning victimisation of journalists and human rights violations in Iran. The Parliament expressed deep concerns at "the deterioration of the human rights situation", notably the "dramatic increase in the repression of civil-society movements in Iran over the past year". It urged the authorities "to honour their obligations in accordance with international human rights standards and instruments ratified by Iran" and "to fully respect its Code of Criminal Procedure and to grant the right to a fair trial to all individuals", including access to a lawyer from the start of the judicial process. Furthermore, the authorities are asked to release all prisoners of conscience unconditionally, notably journalists named in the resolution: Adnan Hassanpour (condemned to death sentence), Said Matinpour, Mohammad Sadegh Kaboudvand, Kaveh Javanmard, Emadoldin Baghi, Ako Kurdnasab, Ejlal Ghavami, Mohammad Hassan Fallahieh and Abdolvahed Botimar".

The Constitution guarantees press freedom as long as "fundamental principles of Islam" and "the rights of the public" are respected (Art 24). As per article 168 "*political and press offences will be tried openly and in the presence of a jury in courts of justice*". However, the Constitution and other legal guarantees for press freedom, have routinely been ignored. Numerous journalists were arrested in 2007, often leading through irregular procedures, to unfair sentences.

Article 34 of the 2002 press law requires that press offences should be prosecuted in a general court before a specially constituted press jury. However, Islamic Revolutionary Courts who normally only deal with major crimes, have been used to prosecute publishers, editors and journalists for their press activities, in contradiction to the constitution's stipulation in article 168. Revolutionary courts are empowered to try "any offence against internal or external security." Their procedures allow them to hold defendants for indeterminate periods of time. Proceedings are held in secret, and the defendant has no right of access to defence lawyers: this is in contravention with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Iran ratified in 1975.

The 2002 press law provides for up to one year in jail for undertaking "any form of propaganda against the state". It forbids any offences against the country's leaders or clerics, publishing material that "creates divisions among the different strata of society," or "harms the bases of the Islamic Republic." (Art 6). Crimes against the state, insults toward Islam or espionage (Art. 501 of the Criminal Code) can lead to the death penalty.

Press courts can impose criminal penalties on individuals and order closures of newspapers and periodicals (Art 12 and 36). A Council within the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance may initiate prosecutions and is empowered to refer cases to the press court.

According to the Association of Iranian Journalists (AoIJ), in 2007, at least 15 journalists were arrested, 13 publications closed down and Supervisor Board for Press cancelled the permits of more than 36 news media. At the end of the year, 10 journalists were jailed often in appalling conditions, often with no access to medical treatment. One of them, Adnan Hassanpour faces the death penalty on charges of espionage.

Women activists and journalists continue to play a remarkable role protesting publicly and reporting attacks against journalists and women particularly. Their peaceful demonstrations provoked violent reactions from the authorities leading to the imprisonment of 33 of them in March 2007, and more throughout the year.

The AoIJ provides legal support for journalists who are falsely charged, sentenced or fired. The AoIJ thoroughly addressed the Judiciary system and Supervisor Board for Press and the ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance and other responsible authorities about journalists' harassment or prosecutions. It issues quarterly publications on the status of journalists and journalism in Iran, and reported in 2007 the ban of *Shargh*, *Ham Mihan* and *Kargozaran* newspapers, the cancellation of licences of others like *Mosharekat*, *Sedaye Oroomiye*, *Nedaye Azar Abadegan* and *Iran Mehr*, the filtering of ILNA (Iran Labor News Agency) and many blogs and websites such as Baztab.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Masud Rafai Taleghani	Farhang Ashati - daily	Journalist	13.04.2008: the journalist was arrested in his home. The reason of his arrest was kept secret
Hassan Nobakhtian	Nosazi website	Editor	26.02.2008 the editor was arrested in Tehran, nearly two weeks after the website's ban. Charged for insulting political figures, he was freed on 14 March.
Nahid Keshavarz	Zanestan	Journalist	14.02.2008 The two journalists were charged of "violating national security", for their writings in the the two women's rights publications.
Jelveh Javaheri	WeChange	Journalist	
	Zanan		28.01.2008 <i>Zanan</i> , Iran's leading women and pro-reform magazine, was closed in Tehran, after authorities said it provided a "dark picture" of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The magazine has been defending women's rights for 16 years.
	Ashtai		03.12.2007 Closure of <i>Ashtai</i> , a weekly published in Kurdish and Farsi languages.
	Arzesh		03.12.2007 Closure in Tehran of <i>Arzesh</i> , a conservative quarterly.
Abolfazl Abedini Nasr	Bahar Khozestan weekly	Journalist	13.11.2007 journalist arrested by intelligence agents in Khozestan province. Arrested in September, he was charged with "activities against national security" and "dissemination of false news," for a report about a strike by thousands of workers in the south. He was released on January 18, after payment of € 50,000 bail.
Arash Bahamani	Gylan Emroz Daily	Editor	12.11.2007 , editor and journalists were convicted by a court in Rashat (north) on several charges including insulting an imam. Bahamani was sentenced to 16 months in prison. The two reporters got four months.
Babak Mehdizadeh		Journalist	
Sied Kohzad Esmaili		Journalist	
Yaghoub Salaki Nia		Journalist	31.10.2007 , the journalist was arrested and spent seven weeks in Evin jail in Tehran without charge. She was freed on 19 December 2007 after payment of € 80,000 in bail.
	Golestan-é-Iran		15.09.2007 Closure in Tehran of the progressive daily suspended in 2004, for "offences against decency" and content "hostile to the Islamic regime". Editor Frozan Assafi Nakhei sentenced to a two-year professional ban.
Parnaz Azima	Radio Farda Czeck Republic	Journalist	04.09.2007 An Iranian-American journalist summoned by Intelligence officials. Her passport was confiscated when she arrived in Iran in January 2007. Charged with anti-revolutionary propaganda and activities against state security. She left the country in September but was condemned in absentia to one year jail term in March 2008.
Soheil Assefi	Freelance	Journalist	04.08.2007 The journalist was arrested when appearing before court as summoned a few days earlier. On 1 August after agents searched his home, taking electronic files. Charged with "publishing false news likely to disturb public opinion", he had been held in Evin prison, in extremely poor health conditions and was only released on October 6, after payment of a € 80,000 bail.

▲ Emadoldin Baghi	Jomhouriat (banned)	Editor	31.07.2007 , Tehran revolutionary court condemned Baghi to three years jail on charges of "activities against national security", linked to his publications and activism against the death penalty. Baghi has served a three-year prison sentence for similar charges. In September he faced new charges of "propaganda against the government" and was arrested. Held in solitary confinement in Evin prison, he suffered a heart attack on 26 September but was returned a day after to prison. Due to his poor health, he was allowed a temporary leave from jail in January.
Farshad Gorbanpour	<i>Freelance Roozonline</i>	Journalist	31.07.2007 , arrested in Tehran. Bastani was kept a few hours and asked to appear before court a day later. In 2003, he was condemned to six months in jail sentence and banned from working as a journalist for five years. Gorbanpour was transferred to Evin prison, charges against him kept secret. He was released 25 Aug 2007.
Masoud Bastani		Journalist	
Ako Kurdnasab	Karfto Weekly Banned	Journalist	21.07.2007 journalist arrested at his newspaper by intelligence agents. Held in custody in Sanandaj prison, he was condemned on 20 September by the revolutionary court in Sanandaj, to three years jail on charges of "espionage", converted in a 6 months jail sentence on November 13. He completed his sentence on 17 January 2008
▲ Adnan Hassanpour	Asou Banned in 2005	Journalist	16.07.2007 , the journalist was sentenced to death by a revolutionary tribunal in Marivan, in Iran's Kurdish northwestern region convicted of "activities subverting national security" and "spying." Arrested on 25 January 2007 Hassanpour is still in Evin prison.
▲ Mohammed Sadeqh Kabovand	Payam-e mardom-e Kurdistan banned in 2004	Editor	01.07.2007 , the journalist was arrested by intelligence agents, his personal files seized, and immediately taken to Evin prison. Kabovand has already been sentenced in 2005 to a one year jail term. The charges against him were not revealed.
Said Mohamadi	Al-Alam Arabic-language service of the public radio and TV broadcaster	Editor	22.06.2007 , the editor was arrested by intelligence agents at Tehran airport and freed two days later on bail of € 80,000. Although charges against him were secret, his passport was confiscated.
▲ Ejlal Ghavami	Payam-e mardom-e Kurdistan (banned)	Journalist	09.06.2007 , Sanandaj revolutionary tribunal (Iranian Kurdish region), sentenced Ghavami to three years and Saedi to two and a half years in prison for "inciting revolt" and "undermining national security." A few days earlier, the tribunal sentenced Toloui to six months. The three journalists were arrested while covering a peaceful demonstration in Sanandaj on 30 July 2005 and were held for several months before being freed on bail. Ghavami, imprisoned in another case in 9 July, was given a two-year suspended prison sentence for "publishing false news".
Said Saedi		Freelance	
Roya Toloui		Resan Banned in 2005.	
Bahaman Ahmadi Amoe	Sarmayeh	Journalist	06.06.2007 The journalist was tried in Tehran by the revolutionary court, for covering a feminist demonstration a year before. He was given a six-month suspended prison sentence and two years probation on 26 September for "taking part in an illegal demonstration", "acting against national security" and "publicity against the Islamic Republic".

Said Matinpour	Yarpagh Azeri weekly - Tehran	Journalist	28.05.2007 , the journalist and his wife were arrested in city of Zanjan. Held in Evin prison, he has not been charged. Matinpour was released on 26 February 2008 after paying a € 500,000 bail.
▲ Kaveh Javanmard	Karfto	Journalist	17.05.2007 arrested on 18 December by Ministry of Intelligence agents, he was sentenced to two years imprisonment by a court in Sanandaj (Iranian Kurdistan).
	Baztab.com		30.04.2007 - Tehran: Ban of conservative news website, on several charges among which publishing "false news" and threatening "national unity." <i>Baztab</i> reported on corruption and nuclear issues.
▲ Mohammad Hassan Fallahieh	Al-Alam	Journalist	29.04.2007 , the journalist was tried by a revolutionary tribunal on "spying" charges and sentenced to a three years jail term. Arrested in November, he is according to some reports held in Evin prison, in poor health condition.
▲ Ali Farahbakhsh	Sarmayeh	Journalist	26.03.2007 , the journalist was sentenced by a Tehran revolutionary court to three years in prison and a fine of €50,000 on spying charges. Arrested on 27.11.2006 on return from abroad, he has been held incommunicado for 40 days, which seriously damaged his condition. He is held in Evin prison, reportedly in poor health.
Mansur Teyfuri	Ashiti weekly	Journalist	12.03.2007 , arrested in the Marivan region near the border with Iraq, on spying charges, he was freed on 5 April, after paying a bail of € 240,000.
Mohamad Bagher Abassi Samali	Salam Jonob weekly	Journalist	11.03.2007 , arrested in Bushehr for insulting the prophet and Islam. The newspaper has been closed down since his arrest. He still is waiting for trial. He was released two weeks later.
Aso Salah	Didgah Weekly	Journalist	08.03.2007 The journalist was arrested in Sanandaj, for covering a demonstration on International Women's Day. He was freed on the 18 March after paying bail of € 90,000.
Shadi Sadr	Zanan-e Iran	Journalist/ Women activist	04.03.2007 Director of <i>Raahi</i> a legal consulting centre for women, she launched <i>Zanan-e Iran (women of Iran)</i> , the first website dedicated to the work of Iranian feminists. As a lawyer she defended a number of women activists and journalists facing death sentences. Held at Evin prison for 2 weeks, she was released after a hunger strike and payment of a bail of € 170,000.
Kia Jahani	Kurdistan TV	Journalist	24.02.2007 , the journalist was arrested at Marivan western Iraqi border. No charges have been brought against her.
Mehrnoushe Solouki		Journalist student	17.02.2007 the French-Iranian journalism student was accused of "trying to produce a propaganda film" for making a documentary about the 1988 ceasefire between Iraq and Iran. Jailed for a month, she was freed after payment of a €80,000 bail. Her passport was returned in January 2008, but she still faces charges in Iran.
Tala't Taghinia	Zanestan We change	Blogger	27.01.2007 the three bloggers and women's rights campaigners, were arrested at Tehran airport on their way to India to undergo journalism training. They were released the following afternoon after being interrogated at Evin Prison.
Mansoureh Shojaie		Blogger	
Farnaz Seify	Sarmayeh	Blogger	
Shirko Jahani	Euphrates News agency	Journalist	27.11.2006 Arrested for giving interviews to foreign media on human rights in Kurdistan. He

			undertook a hunger strike in protest. He was freed in February 2007 from Mahabad prison (Northwestern Iran), after paying bail of € 4,500.
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For further information, visit AoIJ website <http://www.aoij.ir/en/>

IRAQ

For the last three years the escalation in numbers of killings of media staff can be traced to the continuing tragedy of Iraq. In the first weeks of 2007 the targeting of journalists reached new horrifying levels. The country has been the deadliest for journalists since the US invasion in 2003, and claimed at least 65 journalists and media staff in 2007, slightly down on the 69 who were killed during 2006. According to the Iraqi Union of Journalists Syndicate (IUJ), more than 273 journalists and media staff have died since 2003. Of those who died in 2007 all but one was an Iraqi national.

This painful experience was made tragically vivid on 27 February 2008, with the assassination of Shihab Al-Timimi, the President of the Iraqi Union of Journalists. This caused deep shock and pain for the Iraqi and international media community. Shihab, 75 succumbed to wounds sustained in a targeted attack by gunmen a few days earlier in Baghdad. The IFJ has challenged the Iraqi authorities to find the killers.

The IFJ also remains concerned over the lack of proper investigation into cases of media deaths at the hands of United States soldiers. Around 20 journalists and media staff have been killed by US troops since March 2003 and the IFJ has reiterated calls for an independent process of investigation and reporting. Currently, the US military carries out its own investigations and normally produces reports which, if they are published at all, are unconvincing and full of self justification.

In this state of occupation, civil and sectarian war, hundreds of newspapers and tens of broadcasters operated. Efforts to intervene to support Iraqi journalists included the establishment of a national safety programme in May 2007. The two IFJ affiliates in Iraq organised a meeting on security for Iraqi journalists. Hosted by the Kurdish Journalists' Syndicate (KJS) in Irbil, and co-organised with the IUJ, the meeting saw the launching of the Iraq Media Safety Group (IMSG) which brings together media representatives from throughout the country. Together with the International News Safety Institute (INSI) and the IFJ, the IMSG aims to develop a national safety plan for Iraqi journalists. The number of media killings in Iraq began to fall towards the end of the year as targeting by warring factions in the country's sectarian disputes began to subside raising hopes that new safety initiatives may see a downturn in the number of media killings.

The Iraqi Press law provides for up to seven years jail for publicly insulting the government, the national assembly or public authorities. It prohibits publishing stories that libel public officials and incitement to violence and civil disorder. In practice, the law is a powerful tool of intimidation used by the authorities to crack down on the few independent media left in the country.

In the region of Kurdistan, the KJS which works in a much more settled environment has a strong ability to work with journalists and exert influence on media legislation. It proposed a draft law to the Kurdish Parliament, but the latter passed a new media law which threatened imprisonment for journalists. The syndicate recorded a notable achievement, when its successful lobbying resulted in a Presidential veto in January 2008, forcing the Parliament to reconsider the bill.

In the first days of 2008, the IFJ sent an urgent mission to Baghdad to help develop and define the new programme with the different national stakeholders. The key conclusions of the mission's work are that while the threat of sectarian violence and terrorism remains, a corner is being turned in Iraq with fresh opportunities to promote independent journalism and to strengthen the work of journalists' unions. Media need to be encouraged to develop open and pluralistic public information, crucial if talk of a durable peace and reconciliation is to have any meaning.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Richard Butler	CBS	Reporter Interpreter	10.02.2008 The journalist and his interpreter were kidnapped from a hotel in Basra by unidentified gunmen. The interpreter was freed two days later and the journalist found safe on 14 April.
Abid Aref	Hawlati Weekly	Editor	01.02.2008 the editor was tried in Suleimaniyah, on defamation charges brought by President Jalal Talabani. The editor had criticised a number of Kurdish political figures in a report published two weeks earlier. He was freed after paying bail of €600. If convicted the journalist faces up to one year jail.
Rashid Majid Al-Sari	Al-Fatah	Editor	18.01.2008 Arrested by US military forces in Baghdad for unknown reasons. His newspaper, Al-Fatah, is backed by a Shiite party.
Fayçal Ghazala	Kolsat TV station	Correspondent	19.11.2007 Arrested in Mosul by Kurdish police and freed a month later, with no charges, after being questioned on his coverage of bombings in the region.
Mohammed Mazhar Al-Shaheen Al-Shumari	Al-Fayçal Weekly	Editor	17.11.2007 Released by US military forces, after having been arrested in October, in Tikrit without known charges.
Imad Al-Khaza'i	Al-Baghdadiyah Privately-owned TV station in Diwaniya	Correspondent	28.06.2007 , Was detained for several hours by Iraqi security forces for not respecting a ban on approaching the scene of a bombing. The ban was decreed last month by Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki.
▲ Rabiaa Abdul Wahab	Dar Al Salam Radio station	Journalist	26.10.2006 , the US army arrested the two journalists, for suspected links with armed groups.
▲ Ali Burhan	Dar Al Salam	Journalist	
Ahmad Hamas Obaidi	Ali al-Dar Al Salam	Journalist	05.08.2006 , arrested at his Baghdad home, for suspected links with armed groups.
Bilal Hussein	The Associated Press	Freelance Photographer	12.04.2006 Taken into custody by US forces in Ramadi for "security reasons" and held on the accusation of involvement in the kidnapping of two journalists in Ramadi. Hussein shared a 2005 Pulitzer Prize with other AP photographers for work in Iraq. He was released on 16 April 2008, ending more than two years in U.S. military custody after Iraqi judges dropped all legal proceedings against him.

For further information see:

IFJ killed List 2007 www.ifj.org

IFJ Report mission to Iraq, January 2008 "Beyond the Violence, a Challenge to Journalism Emerges."

Iraqi Media Safety Group <http://www.iraqmsg.org/indexen.php>

JORDAN

Jordan is seeing significant progress in consolidation of press freedom. There has been progress in the press industry with the emergence of new publications and broadcasting stations over the two last years. The media enjoy one of the region's best records of press freedom.

Until March 2007, journalists faced imprisonment if their publications were considered "harmful to the country's diplomatic relations" or tarnished the royal family. According to the Penal Code, "Insulting the King" and "stirring sectarian strife and sedition" exposes its authors to the threat of three years in prison and a fine of €600. Citizens may be prosecuted for slandering the government or foreign leaders, and for offending religious beliefs.

A reform of the Press and Publications law, presented to the lower house in January 2007, although enacting long awaited measures, triggered condemnation from local media, and opposition parties. The bill reduced the number of restrictions on the content of what may be published and eliminated the possibility of closure of publications as a criminal sanction. It abolished imprisonment for press offences, and yet, referred to other pieces of legislation, indirectly providing for journalists' imprisonment, if they "defame any religion protected under the constitution", "offend the prophets", "insult to religious sentiments and beliefs, fuelling sectarian strife or racism," or "libel" any individual.

Approved as a whole on 4 March by the lower house, the controversial clause calling for journalists to be jailed for certain "publication offences", was scrapped by the Parliament on 21 March 2007. The Jordanian Press Association, an IFJ affiliate, played a significant role in this achievement.

The new law however, provides for excessive fines - 20,000 Jordanian Dinars - for journalists who break the law. The threat of such a high penalty has a serious chilling effect and violates international standards on the right to freedom of expression.

For further information visit JPA website: <http://www.jpa.jo>

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Taher al Edwan	<i>Al Arab Al Youm</i>	Editor	18.03.2008 announcement of the judgment taken a few days earlier sending the two editors and three other journalists (two of the mentioned papers and one from Al-Rai) to jail over articles criticising court decisions and a government official.
Osama al Sharef,	<i>Al Dostor</i>	Ex-editor in chief	

KUWAIT

Another Gulf State that is making efforts to promote and strengthen press freedom, Kuwait has a constitution that provides for speech and press freedoms, in limits defined by national laws. On March 6, 2006, the parliament passed a new Press and Publications law that eased the process of licensing new newspapers and transferred to the courts print media related cases, until then under the responsibility of the Ministry of Information. The courts can impose administrative sentences, as confiscation, closure, and withdrawal of licenses

The new law allows political daily papers to be launched, forbidden under the old 1963 press law that limited the press to five dailies. However, the awaited decriminalisation of press offences did not come through. The law still prohibits publishing material that criticises Islam and religious sensibilities, public morality, the emir, the constitution, the judiciary system and the "basic convictions of the nation." It strengthens punishments for criticising Islam and provides on this charge, for up to one-year imprisonment and a fine of €60,000. The Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) established in 1964, actively promoted improvements in the law and continues to

lobby for reductions in fines on journalists. It provides unfairly charged journalists with legal support through a voluntary team of lawyers.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Hamed Turki Abu Yabes	<i>Al Shaab</i> Weekly	Editor	08.03.2008 A Kuwait City criminal court cancelled the weekly's licence, for publishing articles of political content while it only holds authorization to cover cultural and art topics. The decision has been appealed. Another licence is needed to publish political issues.
Mansur Muhareb Al-Hayni	<i>Al Abraj</i> Weekly	Editor	08.03.2008 A Kuwait City criminal court cancelled the weekly's licence and gave a € 20,000 fine for publishing articles blaming the authorities for the development of corruption in the country.
Bashar Al-Sayegh	<i>Aljarida.com</i> website	Journalist and blogger	19.08.2007 Arrested after an anonymous comment was posted on his website that insulted the emir, the journalist was freed on bail three days later after the person who anonymously posted the comment was identified. The case against Sayegh was dropped.

For further information visit KJA website: <http://www.kja-kw.com>

MOROCCO

For years Morocco has been viewed as one of the most pluralistic countries for media in the region, but freedom of the press faced repeated attacks in 2007, which underlined the importance of red lines and taboo topics set by the authorities for the media not to cross. Under the press law, journalists can still be jailed.

Nichane editor Driss Ksikes and journalist Sanaa al-Aji were arrested in January charged with offending Islam in their articles. *Al Watan Al An* editor Abderrahim Ariri and reporter Mustapha Hurmatallah, were arrested in July for quoting a military memo deemed confidential. In August 2007 the authorities confiscated issues of Arabic-language weekly *Nichane* and French-language weekly *TelQuel* for publishing an editorial and articles considered by the government as "disrespectful" of the King, against public morality, and offending Islam. Their editor Ahmed Benchemsi was held for questioning.

The Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine (SNPM), an IFJ affiliate, made forceful protests against these decisions. Supported by the IFJ, it led the campaign for the release of Ariri and Hurmatallah and organised on 24 July a day of solidarity involving all its members throughout the country.

The 2002 press law and the 2003 anti-terrorist law provides for financial penalties and up to five-year jail sentences on journalists and publishers who libel, defame, criticise the monarchy, Islam or discuss territorial integrity. The press law provides for up to five years imprisonment and up to €11,000 for causing offence to the royal family. Similar provisions are applicable when the publication attacks Islam, the monarchy or territorial integrity (Art 41). Defamation of the courts, armies, ministers and national administration, is punishable with up to one year imprisonment and €11,000 fine (Art 45 and 46). Similar provisions punish defamation of heads of foreign states, prime or foreign affairs ministers.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Rachid Niny	Al-Massae	Director	25.03.2008 a Rabat court found the director guilty of libel and ordered him to pay damages to four plaintiffs in the amount of six million DH (€524,000) and a 120,000 DH to be paid to the state. The four plaintiffs, all of them judges, took action after Al-Massae in a November article quoted a police source as saying a local judge (without naming) had attended a "gay wedding" in the town of Ksar el Kebir. UPDATE
Mostapha Hurmatallah	Al Watan Al An	Journalist	17.07.2007 , editor and reporter were arrested in Casablanca after their publication ran a feature entitled "The Secret Reports Behind the State of Alert in Morocco" quoting military intelligence documents. They were both convicted of "handling stolen documents" on August 15 and given jail sentences. Later Ariri was freed provisionally while Hurmatallah was kept in prison. On 21.02.2008 , the Moroccan Supreme Court rejected Hurmatallah's appeal forcing him to complete a seven-month jail sentence
Abderrahim Ariri		Managing editor	
Azzedin Gaiz	Yawmiyat Ennass	Journalist	13.03.2007 , the journalist made a complaint to the prosecutor's office in Khénifra after he received several anonymous death threats. He wrote several articles about local embezzlement and illegal cedar trade in the region.
Driss Ksikes	Nichane Weekly Magazine	Publisher & Director	15.01.2007 both journalists were given a three-year suspended sentence and a fine of €5,400 by a court in Casablanca for publishing an article on Moroccan jokes on Islam, sex and politics. Their magazine was banned for two months and their website shut down on December 21
Sanaa al-Aji		Reporter	

For further information visit SNPM website: <http://www.snpm.ma>

PALESTINE

The continued crisis of the Israeli occupation and the deterioration of the political situation between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas movement trapped Palestinian and foreign journalists in a very dangerous environment, making them targets for different political factions, family militias and the Israeli Defence Forces.

Numerous media and their journalists have been attacked, particularly in Gaza, where Hamas, after winning the 2006 elections, took control in June 2007. As a result, state owned or pro Fatah media were shut down, continuing to operate from the West bank only. Hamas-owned TV station Al Aqsa gained ground in Gaza, but prevented from broadcasting from the West Bank.

Two foreign journalists were kidnapped: AFP reporter Jaime Razuri, for a few days in January and BBC journalist Alan Johnston, who was held for nearly four months before being released in July 2007. His abduction led foreign based correspondents to flee Gaza, but galvanised divided local journalists, who led a unified campaign for his release, supported by the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate (PJS).

Throughout the Territories, tens of journalists were arrested, other incidents included death threats, abductions, ransacking media studios, seizure of newspapers. On 13 May, editor Suleiman Abdul-Rahim Al Ashi, and manager Mohammad Matar Abdo, who work for the Hamas-affiliated *Palestine* daily newspaper, were killed by gunmen who stopped their taxi in southwest Gaza city. Two days later Mohaamad Awad Al Joujou, a journalist for the *Palestine Live* website, was shot by gunmen in Gaza City while on his way to cover clashes between Fatah and Hamas factions.

In July Israeli troops crossed into central Gaza, killing tens of Palestinian civilians. Al-Aqsa TV cameraman Imad Ghanem, was injured in the fire exchange and shot again twice in the legs by IDF while lying on the ground. Both his legs were later amputated. This shocking attack in violation of international law was a clear breach of the resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council at the end of 2006 condemning attacks on media in conflict zones and calling for an end to impunity.

General provisions in the law guarantee freedom of conscience and expression, but there is no Press law nor specific media related regulations. The laws that govern journalism in the region are still emergency provisions, dating back to the British mandate and superimposed by the Israeli occupation.

The 1995 Print and Publications law provides for jail terms for publication of news that "threatens national unity or incites crime, division and steers sectarianism in the community ." In practice, the breakdown of law and order in Palestine makes existing regulation largely irrelevant and instead direct appeals are made to the Prime Minister or President on journalists' cases. This context makes it extremely difficult for the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate (PJS) to work, and undermines the ability of the West Bank and Gaza branches to work in unity. The Gaza branch has been particularly targeted by Hamas who shut down in August its office, after the journalists' union had criticised the Hamas crackdown on the media. The party created a Government Committee for the Media, announced the unanimously contested decision to dissolve the PJS and arrested journalists who did not carry new Hamas press cards.

The IFJ is engaged with the PJS in stimulating internal reform and future actions to create an environment that ensures freedom of journalistic work in Palestine.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Hafez Barghothi	daily Al-Hayat Aljadeeda	Editor	Details on trial
Akram Haniyeh	Al Ayyam	Editor	06.02.2008 both journalists were given six months prison suspended sentences. They were charged with defamation for a cartoon published in Al-Ayyam newspaper, banned in Gaza.
Bahaa Al-Boukhari		Cartoonist	
Munir Abu Rizq Mou'in Abu Rizq	Al Hayat Al-Jadida	Gaza bureau chief	15.01.2008 the two journalists were arrested and detained by Hamas security forces. The newspaper closed its Gaza bureau a few days later, but the journalist was held till 4 February 2008.
Omar Al-Ghul	Al Hayat Al-Jadida	Journalist	14.12.2007 arrested by Hamas security forces in Gaza, Ghul, journalist and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad adviser, was only released on 1 February 2008.
Mou'taz Al-Kurdi	Al Amal TV station Ma'an Network	Director	09.11.2007 arrested by security forces in Al-Khalil (West Bank) for broadcasting a speech given five days earlier by Ismail Haniyeh, he was released a day later.
Ossayd Amarneh	Al Aqsa TV	cameraman	05.11.2007 both were arrested for filming security locations. They were released on bail on November 24. Trial is awaited
Ala Al titi		Journalist	
Faeq Jarada	Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation	Journalist	10.09.2007 the PBC journalist was severely beaten and questioned by Hamas' military forces. He was released two days later from Gaza City prison.
Tawfik Abu Jarad	Sawt Al Hurriya radio	Gaza correspondent	02.09.2007 was arrested by Hamas security agents in Gaza and held two days for questioning. Sawt Al Hurriya radio was closed in June.
Sakher Abu El Oun	AFP PJS	Journalist PJS Gaza board member	26.08.2007 The IFJ reacted after a day of drama and protest involving the Palestine media community across Gaza and the West Bank following a failed attempt to arrest Palestine Journalists' Syndicate Gaza branch board member Sakher Abu El Oun, who also works for the news agency Agence France Presse.

Imad Ghanem	Al Aqsa TV station	Cameraman	06.07.2007 , the reporter was injured in an exchange of fire between Israeli Defense Forces and Hamas militants. He was shot again twice in the legs by IDF while lying on the ground. Both his legs were later amputated.
Alan Johnston	BBC	Correspondent	04.07.2007 , the journalist was released in Gaza after a worldwide campaign and a national one led by the PJS. He was held hostage for 114 days.
▲ Abdel Jabbar Abu Sneineh	Siraj Radio station	Director	07.12.2006 arrested by IDF during their raid on the media headquarters in Hebron city.
▲ Jamal Farraj Israel		Journalist	October 2004 , jailed at Al Naqab Desert prison by IDF, his administrative arrest is periodically extended.
▲ A'sri Faiyad Israel		Freelance	2003 Held by IDF, his administrative arrest is regularly extended by an Israeli Military court.

TUNISIA

Journalists in Tunisia engage in a real battle for press freedom in their country. In January 2008, they created a national trade union, the Syndicat National des Journalistes Tunisiens (SNJT), dissolving and succeeding in the process to the Association of Tunisian Journalists. The lifting of a ban on the IFJ's web-site occurred at this same occasion. Access to the IFJ's web-site was barred in Tunisia two years ago following criticism of the Government by the IFJ at the World Summit on the Information Society which was held in Tunis at the end of 2005.

Another step forward was taken when the members of the Union of Tunisian Journalists (SJT) (created in 2004) joined the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT), in an order to unify Tunisian journalists' efforts to defend a professional and independent journalism. This unification of Tunisia's two journalist unions in a move to strengthen the defence of journalists' rights was welcomed by the IFJ.

On May 3rd, the SNJT issued its detailed press freedom report that covers the most important violations that journalists faced in their work. The union raised attention on the punitive aspects of the press law and asked for a change in its roots, reminding that a normal situation is a situation of freedom, and the absence of laws that prevent journalists from doing their job.

For publishing this report, the SNJT executive board faced a strong campaign of attacks and defamation from newspapers close to the government, and its members responsible for drafting the report were accused of being a "group of losers and trouble makers that compromise with foreign groups in order to harm Tunisia". The government continues to control media licences, preventing pluralism and development of the media in the country.

The Press law provides for up to five years imprisonment for defaming the president of the Republic and up to three years for similar statements against the government, its members and administrations, the parliament and constitutional councils.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Handa Al Arfaoui Rachid Hasni Arbi Samti Mahmoud Al Arousi		Journalists	The journalists faced arbitrary dismissal.
TV Team	<i>Channel Tunis 7</i>	Journalists	06.04.2008 the team faced violent attacks from the security agents in the Olympic stadium during a game facing Tunisian Taraji and Al Ifriqi football club.
Sihem Bensedrine	<i>Kalima</i>	Journalist	03.03.2008 Tunisian customs officials detained both journalists for six hours, on their arrival in Tunis. During this detention, they reportedly were violently physically assaulted. In another case (August 2007), the IFJ supported Mestiri's defence in a defamation affair. The charges stem from articles published in Kalima criticizing a decision of the Tunisian Bar Association to rehabilitate a lawyer who had been barred from practising.
Omar Mestiri	<i>Kalima</i>	Editor-in-chief	
Ayman Al Rezki	<i>Al Hiwar Chanel</i>	Journalist	03.01.2008 the journalist was attacked more than once by police forces and was barred from working.
Δ Slim Boukhdar	<i>Alarabiya .net</i>	Correspondent	04.12.2007 The journalist received a one year jail sentence for verbal attacks on security agents, disorderly conduct and for refusing to show identity document when asked. Boukhdar was arrested on 26 November in Sfax as he was travelling to Tunis in a collective taxi.
Lotfi Hajji	<i>Al Jazeera SJT</i>	Correspondent	September 2007 Hajji was physically intimidated on several occasions during the month. He was denied access to a professional card as correspondent, preventing him from performing his work.
Mohamed Fourati	<i>Aqlma Online</i>	Journalist	09.03.2007 , condemned in absentia by a court in Gafsa to 14 months jail for two articles he wrote in 2002, that would have revealed his links with political prisoners.
Tahar Ben Hassine	<i>Al-Hiwar Attounsi</i> TV station	Director	08.02.2007 arrested in Tunis after visiting freelance journalist Taoufik Ben Brik, he was held for one day.
Rachid Khechana	<i>Al Mawkif</i>	Editor in chief	The newspaper has been regularly attacked for its publications criticizing the government and. Its director and editor in chief must appear before court on 31 May 2008 .
Néjib Chebbi		Director	

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In November 2007, Dubai (free media city) authorities prevented two Pakistani channels from broadcasting for allegedly violating their licensing agreement with the authorities. The two channels, Ary One World and Geo News, had early been banned in Pakistan during the 'state of emergency' announced by President Musharaf and were using Dubai as a base to be able to continue their broadcasting. According to Geo News, permission to broadcast was restored two months later.

Article 30 of the Constitution guarantees speech and press freedoms, but a range of legal provisions restricts these rights. The Press and Publications Law provides for prosecution under the Penal Code for listed categories of offences: criticism of the government and ruling families, statements that endanger public order, etc.

In January 2006 the government passed the Information and Privacy "cyber crime" law, which provides fines and prison terms for common "cyber crimes" (hacking, financial fraud, etc.) but also contains penalties for Internet users who oppose Islam, insult any religion or its rituals, or broadcast immoral material or private items in breach of public decency.

However, a major step was taken towards more freedom of the press in September 2007, when a decree was issued by United Arab Emirates Prime Minister, Mohammad Bin Rashid All Maktoom. The latter provided that journalists should not be jailed for their work, setting a precedent for the decriminalisation of media law in the region. The Prime Minister decreed that there are procedures to be taken against any journalist committing an offence but jailing is not one of them.

► Cases

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Shimba Kassiril Ganjadahran	Khaleej Times Daily	Journalist	23.09.2007 two Dubai-based journalists were sentenced to two months in jail after being convicted of libel for an article exposing a private trial. The two journalists, an Indian and an Egyptian were released on bail and reportedly appealed their sentence, according to press reports. The condemnation was overturned in November by Dubai appeal court.
Mohsen Rashed		Journalist	
Muhammad Rashed Shehhi	Majan website	Editor	12.09.2007 A court of Ras al Kaima Emirate sentenced both journalists to five months jail term for defamation. The charges were brought by Dr Yasser Al Nuaimi after a comment about medical practices was posted anonymously on the website. Dr Al Nuaimi withdrew the charges later in October.
Khaled Alasley		Journalist	

For further information visit UAE Journalists Association website <http://www.uaejournal.org.ae>

YEMEN

Various violations of media freedom were observed during the year, including blocking of websites, ransacking of media offices, physical assaults, abductions and death threats against journalists reportedly by groups close to the government. Inside or outside the legal framework, the country's security apparatus has threatened and harassed journalists to influence press coverage.

Journalists have been tried and sentenced for reporting on political and social issues or writing articles critical of the authorities, as the case of Abdul Karim Al-Khaiwani, editor of Al Shura, shows (see case below). The Ministry of Information influences the media through control of printing presses, subsidies to newspapers, and ownership of the country's sole television and radio outlets. It has also filtered information in and out of the country, particularly to prevent broadcasting by foreign media of issues related to the country's economic and political problems.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press "within the limits of the law". The 1990 Press and Publication Law criminalises criticism of the "head of state" and the "goals of the Yemeni Revolution", as well as publication of "false information" that may spread "chaos and confusion in the country". Article 103 of the press law bans publication of anything "harming the Islamic faith or denigrating a monotheistic religion".

Despite that, Yemen enjoys a broad range of printed media representing different political factions in the country. The Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate (YJS) represents journalists working in Yemen and defends their rights. The union has strongly condemned recent government policies and abuses against the press and provided for legal assistance when needed. Backed by the IFJ, it strongly supports Abdul Karim Al-Khaiwani in his ongoing case.

► **Cases**

Name	Media	Position	Facts
Abdul Karim Al-Khaiwani	<i>Al Shura</i>	Editor	25.08.2007 Arrested in June and released three weeks later due to his poor health. Repeatedly harassed by the government for his critical views, he was attacked in August by unknown assailants suspected of being security officers, and was taken to the hospital after the assault. Al Khaiwani is awaiting trial on terrorism charges stemming from his contact with the a supporter of Zaidi-Shiite Leader Badr al-Deen al-Houthi in Saada, who gave him some photographs of the remote region that has been the location of fighting between the government and al-Houthi's group. The verdict is due to be announced mid-May 2008.
Nayef Hassan	<i>Al Shaari'</i>	Editor in chief	07.07.2007 The Yemeni Ministry of Defence filed a complaint against <i>Al Shaari'</i> after the newspaper published a series of articles about the war between Yahya and Abulmalik Al-Houthi and the Yemeni army in Sa'da. The paper was accused of damaging national security and the case brought to a criminal court. On 30July, ten armed military agents raided the office looking for Nayef Hassan, who was absent, and threatened to kill him in front of the newspaper staff.

For further information visit YJS website: <http://www.yemenjournalist.org>