MEDIA

SUSTAINABILITY INDEX—

MIDDLE EAST AND

NORTH AFRICA

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MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2005

The Development of Sustainable Independent Media in the Middle East and North Africa

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USAID provides assistance in four regions of the world: Sub-Saharan Africa; Asia and the Near East; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Europe and Eurasia.

With headquarters in Washington, DC, USAID's strength is its field offices around the world. They work in close partnership with private voluntary organizations, indigenous organizations, universities, American businesses, international agencies, other governments, and other US government agencies. USAID has working relationships with more than 3,500 American companies and over 300 US-based private voluntary organizations.

MEPI

The United States Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative provides tangible support to reformers in the Middle East and North Africa so democracy can spread, education can thrive, economies can grow, and women can be empowered. In four years, this presidential initiative has devoted $293 million to more than 350 programs in 15 countries and the Palestinian territories to support the aspirations of those working to build a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East. Examples of the initiative's work includes campaign schools, independent media training, civic education, entrepreneurship skill building, youth leadership development, trade transparency promotion, business hubs for women, and judicial and legal reform training.

UNESCO

UNESCO, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, maintains a Communication and Information (CI) sector that is guided by the principles of freedom of expression and freedom of the press as basic human rights. Since 2003, the CI sector has supported the Iraqi people in their transition to democracy. Among other projects, UNESCO facilitated initiatives to develop a national media policy and provided practical guidance for journalists and civil society prior to the elections. Training and networking opportunities were made available to more than 550 media workers and professionals.

IREX

IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development.

Founded in 1968, IREX has an annual portfolio of $50 million and a staff of over 500 professionals worldwide. IREX and its partner IREX Europe deliver cross-cutting programs and consulting expertise in more than 50 countries.

AS SHOWN BY THE MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX (MSI), IRAQ HAS ONLY BEGUN TO DEVELOP THE FREE-SPEECH PROTECTIONS, JOURNALISTIC PROFESSIONALISM, MEDIA MANAGEMENT SKILLS, AND SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS NECESSARY FOR A ROBUST MEDIA SECTOR THAT MEETS THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF CITIZENS AND CONTRIBUTES TO GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY.
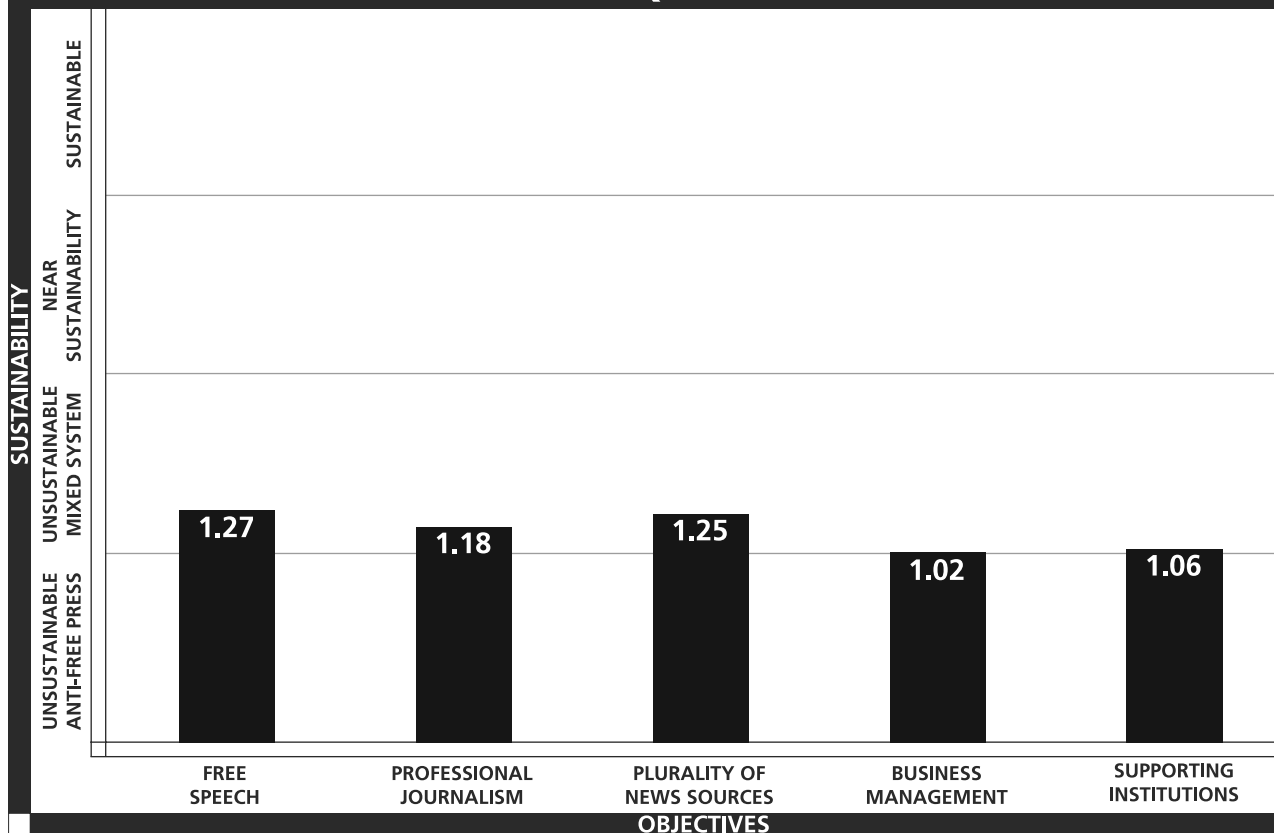
IRAQ

The tightly controlled media system functioning as a propaganda tool to extol the virtues of Saddam Hussein's rule of Iraq has been replaced by a crammed market of newspapers and broadcasters offering a myriad of perspectives. Satellite dishes, printing presses, and foreign news sources are legal for all, the Internet is widely accessed, and media outlets can be privately owned. It is possible for journalists to question officials, publish opposing viewpoints, and pursue topics once utterly off-limits. The Iraqi media industry currently employs some 50,000 people, 10,000 of whom are journalists and other content providers. The independent National Communications and Media Commission (NCMC) estimates that the growth rate of Internet subscriptions in the coming years will exceed 500 percent year to year.

However, as shown by the Media Sustainability Index (MSI), Iraq has only begun to develop the free-speech protections, journalistic professionalism, media management skills, and supporting institutions necessary for a robust media sector that meets the information needs of citizens and contributes to government accountability.

In assessing the Iraqi media sector, the MSI panelists scored the country's overall progress at 1.16, only minimally meeting the conditions required for a strong and professional media system. The assessment found the legal provisions for media freedom and the plurality of available news services to be marginally stronger than the other elements, with the business management of media outlets and supporting organizations particularly weak.

The MSI panel described a fundamental lack of understanding of the principles of media freedom on the part of political leaders, who are proving uncommitted to putting them into practice. More broadly, the panelists said, Iraqi society does not fully understand the importance of media independence or act to defend it. Legal protections for free speech exist in spare terms in the newly approved Constitution but have not been elaborated or tested as the Iraqi political situation evolves, and an Iraqi-backed regulatory framework for broadcasting has not replaced the one introduced by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority via its Orders 65

OVERALL SCORE 1.16

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: IRAQ

SUSTAINABILITY (y-axis)

- SUSTAINABLE
- NEAR SUSTAINABILITY
- UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM
- UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS

FREE SPEECH	PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM	PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES	BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS
1.27	1.18	1.25	1.02	1.06

OBJECTIVES

Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1): Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2): Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3): Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4): Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

and 66. The Iraqi Media Network's transformation from state media to true public-service outlets insulated from political pressure remains incomplete. Al-Iraqiya TV, however, has introduced a number of true public broadcasting programs, including "Our Constitution," a prime-time talk-show series providing a platform for live debate of controversial issues by experts and a 60-member studio audience.

In 2005, there were more than 200 newspapers published regularly in Iraq, and more than 15 satellite television channels and 30 radio stations. Only a few could be rated as independent, including the radio stations Dijla and Al-Yawm in Baghdad, Nawa in Sulaymaniyah, and Al-Mirbad in Basrah; Al-Sharqiyah, Fayha, Ashur, and Bagdhadiya television stations; and the newspapers *Azzaman*, *Addustour*, *Al-Mada* in Baghdad, *Hawlati* in Erbil, and *Al-Manara* in Basrah. The MSI panelists describe a media sector that is pluralistic but partisan, with outlets largely developed and supported to present the views of specific political, economic, and societal forces rather than to communicate a broad spectrum of opinion. Journalists and editors, new to the field or transitioning from the strict limitations of media under the previous regime, are subject to bias, inaccuracy, and sensationalism. The panel reports that resources are available to improve journalists' professionalism, but needs far outstrip the supply. Even with new skills, journalists may be subject to significant pressure from higher-ups whose positions are linked to factional elites. Community and religious pressures also affect coverage.

With many media outlets still perceived mainly as tools serving partisan purposes, little priority is put on management and business development, according to the MSI panel. Some advertising exists, but its pursuit is not considered key and few media managers have the skills to develop their outlets according to a strategic plan. Tools for researching the media market and building audiences are meager and rarely used.

Like all Iraqis, journalists face a disorganized telecommunications system with three competing cell phone companies in different parts of the country, long hours of queuing for petrol, electricity available only a few hours daily, innumerable roadblocks, car use restricted to alternating days for vehicles with odd- and even-number plates, and military and police operations in many neighborhoods after mounting sectarian killings. The darkest shadow cast over Iraq's media is the ongoing insecurity. Journalists have found themselves particularly vulnerable, knowing that any story could offend the wrong person or draw dangerous attention. Some have taken up arms, or

used false names. The toll of journalists killed continues to mount.

Media professionals are beginning to identify the need for professional and industry organizations. The MSI panel identifies the necessity within the sector for training, legal protection, and advocacy for press freedoms and journalists' rights.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Iraq Objective Score: 1.27 / 4.00

Although the potential for ensuring media independence has expanded enormously since the end of Saddam Hussein's regime, the legal structure to protect and promote free speech, ensure access to public information, and enable effective journalism is not in place. Journalists operate without protection, the regulatory framework is yet to be developed, and society has not grasped fully the importance of media freedom. The 2005 MSI panel scored Iraq at 1.27 for this objective, with the country only minimally meeting the criteria

Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

> Legal/social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.

> Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.

> Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.

> Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.

> State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.

> Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and the offended party must prove falsity and malice.

> Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.

> Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.

> Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

against a backdrop of unresolved insecurity and political turmoil, a new and untested Constitution, and much work remaining to establish regulatory mechanisms.

A key discussion is under way about independence of the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) and in particular the broadcaster Al-Iraqiya, a subject that has moved up the agenda from when IMN was widely seen as a hopeless government mouthpiece irretrievably lost for reform. The advocacy group Iraqis for Independent Public Broadcasting drafted a PBS law that seeks to secure IMN's independence by excluding government from appointing the board members, leaving this task exclusively to parliament. The initiative has been reported on by top Iraqi newspapers and broadcasters and has won backing from significant numbers of parliament deputies and media unions.

> *"The security condition is imbalanced, the laws are suspended, the Constitution is not executed yet, and the new officials do not understand or do not differentiate between a piece of news and the essay, in addition to their ignorance of the meaning of media freedom," said Huda Jassim Almaieny, chief Iraq correspondent for the* Al-Sharq Al-Awsat *newspaper.*

Overall, however, the MSI panel described a political elite uncommitted to putting free-media principles into practice, widespread dangers for journalists including multiple killings, a state broadcasting system that has not yet transformed into an apolitical role, and politicized limits on access to information.

Iraq's political powers do not differentiate between journalistic reporting of facts and viewpoints and the information and opinions themselves, and the fledging Iraqi legal system does not protect journalists in this context, the MSI panel said. "We must understand the general political condition," said Huda Jassim Almaieny, chief Iraq correspondent for the *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* newspaper. "The security condition is imbalanced, the laws are suspended, the Constitution is not executed yet, and the new officials do not understand or do not differentiate between a piece of news and the essay, in addition to their ignorance of the meaning of media freedom."

As an example, she described what happened after her newspaper published a statement by the American ambassador in which she said he suggested the Interior Minister was promoting sectarian interests: "Immediately, the minister ordered an investigation opened against the newspaper with the accusation of libel. He should have sued the American ambassador instead because he was the one who had accused him. The newspaper did not commit any crime when it published the statement, but the minister did not comprehend that." Another panelist, Umar Salahud-Deen, political editor at the *Ash-Shura* weekly newspaper, recalled being summoned by the official responsible for transportation in the Nineveh governorate and being accused of defamation for publishing a citizen's comments about local situation.

Journalists are fearful of official abuse of power, the panel said. A journalist might be called in by the authorities or detained without any reason beyond an official's misinterpretation of a piece of news. Iraqi media professionals are not respected by government officials. By contrast, a panelist noted the public expressions of concern from top Lebanese officials when journalists there were killed or maimed and said no similar response occurs in Iraq when Iraqi journalists are slain. Huda Jassim Almaieny added, "The foreign reporter is preferred to the Iraqi one. If an Iraqi and a foreign journalist go to interview a minister, the minister will prefer the foreign one."

The media professionals on the MSI panel were particularly concerned about the suspension of laws, in particular elements of the penal code regarding crimes against journalists, in the context of Iraq's tumultuous reshaping of its legal and security systems. The Constitution approved in the Oct. 15, 2005, referendum still requires elaboration through the drafting of regulations, execution of various provisions, or testing of its provisions in courts. Mohammed Sahi Awad, an investigative reporter at *Ad-Dustoor* newspaper, said the new Constitution, in Chapter 2, Article 36, ensures the freedom of journalism, printing, media, and publishing but spends only a few words doing so and conditions this on not contradicting "public morals."

The panelists concluded that regardless of what protestations are made by government officials speaking of freedom or the provisions of the nascent Constitution, nothing protects the media or prevents abuses of journalists. Notably, the government has banned newsgathering by the satellite broadcaster Al Jazeera since July 2004, claiming it was a mouthpiece for terrorists and contributed to instability. The influential political parties, the United States and other foreign forces, and the Iraqi military and security operations may mistreat or detain journalists virtually without consequences, the panel said, and

offered numerous examples. Nahla Ghazy Al Loza, vice president of the Journalists Union in Babel, described how a journalist working for a human-rights organization was detained after publishing criticism of raids in the Babel area. Zena Al Ubaydy Kadhim, an editor at the *Ishtar* weekly newspaper, said that after writing about a university student and his problems, "a university official called me and told me that I was not allowed to enter the university again."

The MSI panel members agreed that the laws in force in northern Iraq—including the Law No. 10 of 1993, which regulates the media under the Kurdistan Ministry of Culture and Information—state that there is no prior control on the media and journalists are free to write whatever they like. But the problems start immediately after publication. The panelists said that if the item offends an administrative official or political partisan, the journalist will be exposed to problems: being fired, imprisoned, or even killed for trespassing certain "red lines." The factional outlets include satellite and terrestrial Kurdistan TV and the *Kabat* daily newspaper of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) from Erbil, and Kurdsat TV and the *Kurdistani Nuwe* daily newspaper of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) from Sulaimaniya.

"There is no freedom in its proper sense," said journalist Viyan Abdulbaqi Taqyaddin, a supervisor at the radio and television of the Conservative Party of Kurdistan in Sulaimaniya. "I may write about the party I am a member of, but I cannot write about the other parties. I am afraid I might have troubles with them, and then I'll be fired." She offered the example of an economics discussion program called "The Two Guests," broadcast on Kadihi Kurdistan TV, a party-supported outlet in Sulaimaniya, until it was stopped in August 2005 after four episodes. The program's producers received sharp warnings from the PUK about criticizing government economic policy and stirring up a discontent among citizens, she said.

The MSI panelists reflected on a broad sense of chaos in the country as contributing to the lack of protection for the media. They referred not only to the insecurity but also to the weakness of legal and judicial institutions functioning to enforce laws that exist. "The continuous change in the state policy, instability, and the fact that the Constitution has not been activated have deprived media professionals of freedom of expression and left them open to violations," said Nahla Ghazy Al Loza.

In addition, the panelists noted the lack of effective professional associations and unions for journalists and the absence of the sense of unity needed to defend themselves and freedom of expression. Many new journalists have entered the profession, and "there is a

disagreement among the journalists who used to work with the former regime, and the ones who work with the new regimes," said Nahla Ghazy Al Loza.

The broader society also has not come to understand the value of these freedoms and what is needed to protect them, the panel said. There is little public concern about the many media professionals killed, wounded, or detained, even on a human level. A panelist noted that people are satisfied with silence when a journalist is killed but will go out onto the streets en masse if a religious leader is injured. "Is killing a journalist because of his opinion less important than offending religious leaders or politicians on air on TV," asked Abdul-Husayn Abdul-Razzaq, head of the Freedoms Committee at the Iraqi Journalists Union. "Killing a human being is the ugliest crime one can imagine."

> *"During the former regime, a journalist used to face one body—the Ba'ath Party," said Hala Abdul-Hady Sultan, a broadcaster with Karbala FM Radio. "Nowadays, he faces more than one, such as the numerous political parties and fanatic religious currents. As a result, he does not know whom to pay respects to. He may be threatened twice within a week by unknown persons."*

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) documented at least 22 journalists and three media workers killed on the job in 2005. That brought the total to 60 journalists and 22 media support staff killed since the US-led invasion began in March 2003, the international organization said. Other organizations list an even higher toll, but all agree that the majority of the victims were Iraqi. Among the many open cases cited by the panel was the assassination of the Kurdish editor Ahmad Sawkat, who was killed in 2003 before he could issue the 12th edition of his independent newspaper *Bila Ittijah*.

Other crimes against journalists, including kidnappings, detentions, blackmail, and threats of various kinds were committed largely with impunity, the panelist said, with few investigations leading to any action against those responsible. Umar Salahud-Deen described cases in which the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of media workers were displayed in public squares and death threats lodged, but the source of the information was never determined. In Kurdistan, panelists

reported, the most common form of aggression against journalists is blackmail. The usual scenario is this: Influential individuals contact the journalists or their editors and question the reason for publishing an article on a particular topic. The threat of a lawsuit, often for defamation, is raised, only to be foregone if there is a retraction or a payment offered.

Also endangering media professionals are elements of the security services, party militias, and military wings. Several journalists have been killed by US forces or have come under attack, including several cases involving military checkpoints, CPJ and other monitoring agencies have reported. In addition, CPJ's annual census of imprisoned journalists conducted Dec. 1, 2005, showed at least four held in US custody in Iraq, and noted that Justice Minister Abdul Hussein Shandal in September criticized the prolonged detentions.

"During the former regime, a journalist used to face one body—the Ba'ath Party," said Hala Abdul-Hady Sultan, a broadcaster with Karbala FM Radio. "Nowadays, he faces more than one, such as the numerous political parties and fanatic religious currents. As a result, he does not know whom to pay respects to. He may be threatened twice within a week by unknown persons." She describes covering a demonstration against the governor in Karbala: "I reported the event as it was. The governor then sent me a reproach in polite language. That reproach, however, soon turned threatening."

The regulatory structure is only now being put into place. The concept of a broadcasting licensing procedure was unknown under the former regime. The National Communications and Media Commission was established by Order 65 of the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in March 2004 to regulate broadcasting, among other tasks. The commissioners were charged with coordinating use of the radio broadcast spectrum, regulating and licensing broadcast outlets, and developing regulatory policy for the government, although their duties also extended to telecommunications and other areas unrelated to the media.

With the initial intent of opening the airwaves, the commission imposed only a $500 fee for obtaining a license. The MSI panel said this has proven to provide insufficient regulation of the broadcast sector, and several panelists put forward examples they said showed bias in granting or delaying licenses, or indicated that political goals were at play in the process. A new series of statutes to replace Order 65 and ensure the transparent, impartial development of Iraqi broadcasting has not yet been completed.

In Kurdistan, participants agreed that the law does not pose obstacles for those seeking broadcasting licenses, but the trouble lies in the execution. "In Kurdistan, there are four bodies that issue licenses, the Ministry of Culture in Erbil, Ministry of Culture in Sulaimaniya, and Interior Ministry in each governorate," said Yahya Omer Fatih, editor-in-chief of *Al-Ufuq Al-Jadeed*, a political newspaper published weekly in Erbil.

The Iraqi Media Network (IMN), established with US backing after the 2003 invasion, includes the widely watched Al-Iraqiya satellite channel, *Al-Sabbah* newspaper, and radio stations. Its planned transition to a true public broadcaster run by a board of governors selected for their independence and insulated from the government and its political leaders, envisioned in the CPA's Order 66 of March 2004, dragged on incomplete. The MSI panel said IMN continued to come under criticism during 2005 for succumbing to a role as a mouthpiece for the government and getting caught up in sectarian power struggles. The panelists said this government role is evident in the way the network is provided with news and its reporters are invited to accompany official delegations, which contrast dramatically with how other outlets are treated.

Equal and open access to information is not the norm for Iraqi journalists, especially those outside the state broadcasting system or not aligned with those holding the information. The MSI panel said reporters for private television channels and newspapers may be denied access to officials or to their statements, whereas the Al-Iraqiya representative is treated differently. Certain officials refuse to be interviewed by an independent outlet on the grounds that it is "suspicious" or financed by a foreign body. No legal provisions are enforced to emphasize the right to access official information, panelists said.

Political partisanship in the media also increasingly results in inequality in information access, MSI panelists said. A government minister may provide his own party's newspaper alone with special news items. During the October 2005 constitutional referendum, some panelists said, it was noted that certain journalists presented prepared news pieces reflecting a particular political position. "Freedom to access information has started to decrease gradually," Hala Abdul-Hady Sulatan said. "Narrowing the media freedoms and the hiding of information away from certain journalists gradually increases." She recalled trying to prepare a program on ownership rights and being told by an official that he could not participate because "the party to which he belonged did not authorize him to do so."

Several panelists said important news is reported to Iraqis mainly by foreign channels, citing in particular the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and other cases of torture that were presented by US and European media channels before Iraqis or the Iraqi media heard about them. However, access to foreign news is widely available on the Internet, through foreign newspapers, or on radio and satellite channels. Journalists complain about the high cost of Internet access, especially because the media outlets at which they work do not provide them with this service and they generally have to absorb the cost if they make use of foreign sources.

Iraqi law addresses libel through both criminal and civil codes. As a crime, libel can be punished according to the Penal Code No. 11 of 1969, Article 434, which is still in force. The Civil Law No. 40 of 1950 also includes the possibility of judgments for damages from defamation in the media. MSI panelists noted, however, that the law does not include discussion of journalistic freedom, including the right to commentary and criticism regarding public figures. Additionally, the panel noted, the law considers use of the media in cases of defamation as an aggravating circumstance in response to which the courts should impose the harshest punishment. Overall, the legal system is in flux and cannot be relied upon to enforce existing laws fairly and consistently, panelists said.

The government does not license journalists and does not seek to. Many new people have entered the profession since Saddam Hussein's control over the media ended. International news organizations in particular have recruited entrants from other fields, sometimes simply because they had cars, spoke foreign languages, or were connected to someone who allowed them access to a particular official site or ethnic neighborhood. The panelists differed over whether this phenomenon was harmful to Iraqi journalism.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Iraq Objective Score: 1.18 / 4.00

Iraqi journalists, either making the transition from strictly controlled government media or newly entering the field, have not yet reached a high standard of professionalism, the MSI panel concluded. The number of media outlets has expanded rapidly, but there is virtually no experience in media at international standards among the editors and journalists joining these publications and broadcasters. At the same time, most of the new outlets are backed by political or other interests, and there is substantial pressure on

their staffs to reflect the sponsors' perspectives. The MSI panel scored the professionalism of journalists at 1.18, minimally meeting the objective at the beginning stages of improvement.

Credibility and balance fall victim to the drive to publish sensationalism that it is thought will attract Iraqi readers, the panel said. Ethics codes are not in place or widely agreed, and there are cases of bribery and blackmail. Particularly problematical is the partisanship of the many media outlets run by the government or political parties, most of which do not follow exacting technical or accuracy standards. As an example of partisanship by a media outlet, MSI panelists cited a report by *Al-Sabbah* newspaper, part of the government-backed Iraqi Media Network, that 90 percent of citizens support closing Al Jazeera offices in Iraq.

Dhamia Hassen Al Rubaay, correspondent at Al Iraq Al Hur radio in Baghdad, said: "Inside each one of us, there is a policeman who watches our movements and behaviors. Fear has not gone since the change in regime."

In Kurdistan, the control of the political parties over the media outlets leaves little space for the journalists

Journalism meets professional standards of quality.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

> Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.

> Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.

> Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.

> Journalists cover key events and issues.

> Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.

> Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.

> Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.

> Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

to check the credibility of the information they get, the MSI panel concluded. "We hear or read about how foreign journalists comply with the professional criteria," said Faris Khalel Mohammed, editor of the monthly *Al Hewar* magazine in Mosul. "In order to maintain their credibility, the foreign journalists do with only the smallest signs of cordiality in the offices of the officials in their countries. Contrary to this, we find some of our journalists receive residential lands in return for publishing or broadcasting a program." Because the influence of the political parties and government on the media outlets is well understood by journalists, there is significant self-censorship, the MSI panelists agreed.

"We need free and honest media," said Faris Khaleel Mohammed Ali, chief editor at Al Hewar *magazine. "There are media professionals who want to work freely. But the entities that own the media institutions place red lines for the media professionals which they should not trespass."*

Self-censorship remains commonplace among journalists across Iraq, even after the lifting of the official government controls on the media, the MSI panel said. Dhamia Hassen Al Rubaay, correspondent at Al Iraq Al Hur radio in Baghdad, said: "Inside each one of us, there is a policeman who watches our movements and behaviors. Fear has not gone since the change in regime."

Religious and tribal traditions have strong holds, as does the influence of the community in which the journalists live and work. If the journalist writes on a subject that contradicts social, religious, or even partisan traditions, he may expose himself to threats or even death. Another influence is the editorial system inside the media outlet. Journalists may face great pressures from their editors-in-chief or department heads that can be attributed to these managers' relationships with political officials, allegiances that significantly limit the role of the journalists within their institutions. They may collect the information from their sources and fact-check it but then find it edited or excised in accordance with the viewpoint of the party or the sponsor with which the outlet is aligned. "For this reason, some journalists have resorted to a new style in order to pass on some of the ideas they want: They give headlines that support the sponsor and insert the opposing news within the details or at the end," said Huda Jassim Almaieny of Al-Sharq *Al-Awsat*. "We need free and honest media," said Faris Khaleel Mohammed Ali, chief editor at *Al Hewar* magazine. "There are media professionals who want to work freely. But the entities that own the media institutions place red lines for the media professionals which they should not trespass."

Ultimately, in Iraq, there is one core reality that all journalists share: They work in unstable security conditions, and a certain article or broadcast may bring the death of its author. Not surprisingly, there is a keenness to prepare material that will be the least offensive to officials or influential political powers.

MSI panelists noted that some journalists cannot cover all the key events—for example, in cases in central and southern areas of the country, where religious parties have greater control. According to a panelist, a Najaf station did not broadcast a presentation on the constitutional referendum because the lecturer wore an ordinary scarf on her head rather than one viewed as more traditionally Islamic. "In Najaf and Karbala governorates, we have this issue, too," said Hala Abdul-Hady Sultan. "If a woman is sitting in a conference without wearing a scarf, we do not broadcast the conference for religious reasons." Another concern for journalists is coverage of demonstrations and protests directed at government officials. They fear that police will destroy their equipment or take them into detention. Imad An-Naqshabandy from Radio Dar As-Salam in Mosul said this happened to him when he covered the killing of a member of the governorate council.

Salaries for journalists tend to be low. Newspaper salaries generally do not exceed $150 monthly; at satellite television channels they may reach $500. Some panel members reported that they had gone for months without being paid at all due to financial mismanagement at the outlets.

Political news and other public-affairs programming have more prominent status than entertainment shows, MSI panelists said. Some attributed this to the political turmoil in Iraq overshadowing all other concerns of citizens. Breaking news, such as bombings and government developments, is very important to most audiences. Some participants suggested that certain outlets limit their entertainment broadcasts, especially of music and comedies, due to religious requirements.

Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient at some outlets. However, the training of workers may not be sufficient to allow full utilization of the equipment. Broadcast transmission capacity in

some governorates is weak, outmoded, or limited to the Internet. Fearing theft or sabotage amid unstable security conditions, certain media outlets refuse to invest in expensive transmission equipment for fear of theft or sabotage.

Specialized journalism is nearly nonexistent, and not encouraged by media outlets, according to the MSI panel. There are few professional training opportunities for journalists seeking to develop skills in particular reporting niches.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Iraq Objective Score: 1.25 / 4.00

The number and variety of media produced in Iraq has expanded enormously since the tight control of Saddam Hussein's government ended. However, availability varies significantly from one region to another, and reliability and objectivity also fluctuate, the MSI panel said. The new and positive developments are that there are many more local publications in the governorates, and Internet use has expanded rapidly. Additionally, there are no controls on citizen access to news media, both Iraqi and internationally produced. Overall, the MSI panel ranked Iraq's progress toward this indicator at 1.25.

Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

> A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.

> Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.

> State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.

> Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.

> Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.

> Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.

> A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

Newspaper circulation is primarily an urban phenomenon in Iraq, with rural areas relying more on radio and satellite television, the MSI panelists said. The print-run of key dailies like *Al-Sabbah* and *Azzaman* hardly exceeds 50,000, if that. Reliable figures are unobtainable due to the lack of circulation auditing organizations. Distribution systems for print media are largely limited to Baghdad and other major cities. Newspapers produced in the capital do not have national circulation, reaching only larger cities because no specialized companies are in place to bring publications to more remote areas. Some localized publications are distributed for free in rural communities because there are no outlets for selling them. Ali Mahmood As-Sa'eedy from *Al-Haq*, a newspaper issued there by the Human Rights Organization in Babel, said that in his area, "many people do not buy newspapers because the satellite channels communicate every single piece of news. Moreover, some people's trust in the newspapers has been shaken by the numerous fabricated news and the refutations."

> *Ali Mahmood As-Sa'eedy from* Al-Haq, *a newspaper issued there by the Human Rights Organization in Babel, said that in his area, "many people do not buy newspapers because the satellite channels communicate every single piece of news. Moreover, some people's trust in the newspapers has been shaken by the numerous fabricated news and the refutations."*

In addition, given the security situation, people are fearful to be on the street, even to buy a newspaper. A civil-society–backed distribution company worked in cooperation with the Iraqi Newspapers Association to start a pilot project under which 1,000 letter boxes were installed in a Baghdad neighborhood to allow for a more secure home delivery of newspapers. The experiment could foster newspaper subscriptions over retail sales.

The Kurdish region of Iraq, including the three northeastern governorates of Erbil, Sulaimaniya, and Duhok, emerged after the first Gulf War in 1991 semi-autonomous from the central government in Baghdad, and this gave the media sector greater opportunity to develop. However, by far, most outlets were and still are under the control of the administrations dominated

by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The factional outlets include satellite and terrestrial Kurdistan TV and the *Kabat* daily newspaper of the KDP from Erbil, and Kurdsat TV and the *Kurdistani Nuwe* daily newspaper of the PUK from Sulaimaniya. There are some exceptions: *Hawlati*, a weekly founded in 2002, is among the newspapers presenting itself as independent in the north. However, circulations are rather limited. Despite a regional population of about 5 million people, the *Kurdistani Nuwe* of the PUK and *Kabat* of the KDP do not exceed 4,000 copies each a day, according to panelists' estimates.

In Basrah, southern Iraq's main city with about 2 million of the region's 6 million people, there are now more than a dozen daily, weekly, or bimonthly newspapers. There is access to satellite television and increased terrestrial broadcasting, including Al-Mirbad, an independent outlet with satellite television and radio broadcasts, and Basrah TV, which belongs to the state Iraqi Media Network. There are more than a dozen FM radio stations, some relatively independent and others belonging to political parties. The Internet is increasingly seen as an important means to access information, and there are perhaps 50 Internet cafés in Basrah alone and 30 in Nasiriyyah.

Added Faris Khaleel Mohammed Ali, "The public media is partisan and misleading the public. It reflects the viewpoints of the parties that share the government."

The government does not impose limits on citizen access to information resources. The only limit is financial, and many people, including journalists, face this. Browsing the Internet in particular is expensive, and the cost may be prohibitive to follow news and cultural reports fully. Another issue is time, with the unstable security situation limiting the hours people can spend at Internet cafés.

MSI panels said there is some partisanship on the part of the state media outlets. Imad An-Naqshabandy contended that the state broadcaster Al-Iraqiya presents people from his city of Mosul as terrorists and exaggerates events there. Nahla Ghazy Al Loza said the governorate of Babel interferes in the details of what is published in media outlets there. Two weekly newspapers, *Sada Babel* and *Babel Al-Yawm*, have been established under the sponsorship of the governorate at a high cost and with no task other than covering activities of the government, she said. Added Faris Khaleel Mohammed Ali, "The public media is partisan and misleading the public. It reflects the viewpoints of the parties that share the government." In his view, in covering the December 2005 parliament elections, the satellite channels showed the outcome as a victory.

Panelists also noted that the availability of news media does not mean that all events will be covered. Journalists often are selective in the events that they cover due to their own partisanship, or that of their editors, the panelists said. Demonstrations and strikes are not always reported. In a case discussed by the panelists, Iraqi journalists who covered a demonstration in Mosul regarding election results and fuel prices said they filed reports but not all their outlets carried them.

A number of news agencies work in Iraq, including the National Iraqi News Agency (NINA) and Voices of Iraq, but they are new and cannot yet cover all events in the country with limited staff, panelists said.

Transparency of media-outlet ownership is not high, and the financial backers of many are not known to most people—including some who work at them. Some panelists said that not revealing the identities of owners was realistic for security reasons. Others said the secretiveness was due to concern that their audiences would reject the media due to the owners' affiliations. "I have worked in this station for a period of time," said Hala Abdul-Hady Sultan from Karbala radio, "and I know neither its owner, nor its sponsors. I do not know whether this can be attributed to the security conditions or other interests. There are interferences in the work of the staff. When we intend to interview a personality, we have to obtain approval" of a ranking manager.

Most participants emphasized that because the Iraqi media is largely religious and partisan, it cannot cover certain sensitive topics, especially if it concerns minorities or the numerous religious sectarian issues in Iraq. Imad An-Naqshabandy gave as an example the raid on the Kurdish radio station that belongs to the Islamic Union Party in Mosul, an ethnically mixed city contested by Arabs and the large Kurdish minority.

The Internet, severely restricted during Saddam Hussein's regime, has broken the information monopoly and represents a major advance in the availability of multiple news sources. However, with no copyright law enforced and the Internet increasingly available, journalists have begun to plagiarize and newspapers to increasingly depend on the Internet as an information service. This practice has become so extensive that some newspapers have begun to look alike, even leading managers to fire editors to cut costs, panelists said.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Iraq Objective Score: 1.02 / 4.00

In Iraq, business at media outlets is unplanned and inefficient. The management and strategic development skills needed to run successful media businesses have not yet developed. The MSI panel considered Iraq to have made the least progress toward this objective among the five assessed, scoring it at 1.02 with virtually no outlets skillfully managed businesses able to support editorial independence.

The Iraqi media market's rapid expansion has resulted in too many media outlets to be sustainable. Major newspapers financed by the state or sponsored by major partisan forces are the only ones able to make money, and they cut the market share of those striving for a degree of independence. There is little use of market research or other planning tools for business development. Most printing facilities are private but rather primitive, with the most modern dating to about 2000.

"In Iraq, there is inefficiency in the printing and distribution," Nahla Ghazy Al Loza says. "There is *Babel*, a newspaper which should be issued on Monday, yet its printing is not finished before Tuesday and it is not distributed until Wednesday."

Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

> Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.

> Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.

> Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.

> Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.

> Independent media do not receive government subsidies.

> Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.

> Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

Distribution of newspapers in urban areas is developing into a profitable business with the power to promote or retard the circulation of various publications, according to the MSI panelists. Some newspaper managers have suffered from preferential treatment for other publications by the distributors, the panel said. "There is a mafia of distribution," Huda Jassim Almaieny said. "No newspaper should disregard it. The mafia hides newspapers for the benefit of others."

> *"In Iraq, there is inefficiency in the printing and distribution," Nahla Ghazy Al Loza says. "There is* Babel*, a newspaper which should be issued on Monday, yet its printing is not finished before Tuesday and it is not distributed until Wednesday."*

In Baghdad, newspaper distribution occurs through an auction system on a public square. After the 1991 Gulf War weakened the Iraqi economy, the government department that had controlled distribution was forced to give up its fleet and transfer the task to a private-sector agent. The current system is controlled by three companies that sell newspapers to wholesalers who, in turn, distribute them to retailers. The daily auction takes place at dawn, just after the curfew ends, on a garbage-strewn street with folding tables holding the newspapers and personal bodyguards protecting sellers. The print-run from some 20 Baghdad printing presses, including those of major newspapers such as *Al-Sabbah* and *Azzaman*, is offered for sale, and on days when the weeklies and dailies come out, the combined circulation is about 150,000 copies. On days with only dailies on offer, it is about 100,000. *Al-Sabbah*'s wholesale price is 150 Iraqi dinars, about 10 cents, and its retail price, printed on the front page, is 250 Iraqi dinars. Most other papers are priced between 120 and 180 dinars, the latter only if a particularly sensational story is on the front page.

In southern Iraq, panelists said, distribution is conducted not by specialized companies but by small shops, and sales techniques are primitive. A panelist said that only 900 newspapers are taken by the local distributor to the city of Imara, which has a population of 800,000. In the governorates, panelists said, there are political forces that interfere in the distribution of newspapers when they feel threatened. They said the *Azzaman* newspaper was banned for a period after printing a headline critical of a particular religious party.

With main sponsorship of most outlets coming from a party, a political body, a religious group, a neighboring state, or an international source, commercial advertising takes less prominence in the financial structure of the media companies. Some managers do not differentiate between ads and political propaganda. MSI panelists said that numerous newspapers published essays and photos calling for support of one or another candidate in the December election under the pretext that these were ads, when in truth they were political propaganda.

Some editors-in-chief intent on bringing in advertising have assigned editors to task, at times putting a condition that each must sell a specified number or face unemployment. It has turned out that some editors are better selling advertising than doing journalistic work, but the development of specialized advertising staffs clearly differentiated from editorial functions is not well advanced.

> *"I believe advertising is the greatest danger that threatens the Iraqi media," Abdul-Husayn Abdul-Razzaq said. "Ads participate in destroying the journalist's honesty."*

There are a few young advertising agencies starting up in Baghdad.

In southern Iraq, advertising agencies are not specialized but are in the main satellite offices linked to the main Baghdad dailies, and advertising is not developing as an important source of media revenue. Some outlets run by powerful groups, including religious sects, are able to pressure companies into advertising with them, according to panel members.

In Kurdistan, MSI panelists said, the political-party leaderships confine their idea of commercial business to trade in goods, which they also dominate, and consider the media as dependent on subsidies. These subsidies can be used to keep the outlets in line, panelists said, whereas private investment in media businesses is seen as a threat that would reduce control of the information sector.

Although the economy of Kurdistan is expanding rapidly, with new businesses opening and a degree of investment returning, the concept of advertising is not well developed, especially in the media. Panelists noted the lack of specialized advertising agencies. Due to limited technical capacity, television commercials are designed and prepared outside of Kurdistan.

The MSI panel concluded that it is unlikely that any newspaper has not received some form of governmental support, whether directly or indirectly. The ads published in newspapers are examples of that support in addition to the donations given every now and then. Nizar Abdul Wahid, an editor at *Al-Sabbah* newspaper's office in Missan, said that "in supporting the state media, the government destroys the independent media" by distorting the market. *Al-Sabbah*, which is subsidized by the state as part of the Iraqi Media Network, costs 1,200 Iraqi dinars per copy to produce but is sold to the distributor for perhaps a quarter of the price, he said.

Even some MSI panelists were not ready to accept the role of ordinary advertising in media independence, however. "I believe advertising is the greatest danger that threatens the Iraqi media," Abdul-Husayn Abdul-Razzaq said. "Ads participate in destroying the journalist's honesty."

All agreed that there is virtually no use of market research or other strategic planning tools to build audiences or improve business performance. Resources spent in this regard are concentrated on administering the newspaper, the panel said. A few organizations exist for measuring broadcast viewership, including the Iraqi Center for Research and Studies and the Tawasul Company for Research, Publishing and Distribution.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Iraq Objective Score: 1.06 / 4.00

Plurality and private ownership in Iraqi media is so new that few industry associations have formed to represent the interests of publishers, owners, and top managers: the Iraqi Publishers Association, the Private Broadcasters Association, and the Association of Publishing Houses. There also are associations for cinema owners and movie importers. Professional associations for journalists exist, but both new and old ones have shown little strength to date. Some training is offered for new and mid-career journalists, but opportunities are not sufficient in number or quality to meet the need. As a result, the MSI panel recorded little progress toward developing the supporting institutions required by a strong media sector, scoring Iraq at 1.06 for this indicator.

The first professional union in Iraq was established 46 years ago, when the Iraqi Journalists Union was formed. In April 2003, the Journalists Union was established. Neither of these organizations has proved

to be a defender of the media professional's rights, in the view of the panelists. The old union is seen as an extension of the previous regime, and the leaderships of both groups have been weak, subject to in-fighting, and more focused on individualized concerns. For example, neither has taken significant action regarding the great threat to the safety of journalists.

The Journalists Union in Kurdistan is the only professional society. The MSI panel reported, however, that the organization is viewed as partisan, and individuals in the governing parties bring in supporters regardless of whether they meet the membership rules. This lack of transparency, the panelists said, has led to rejection of membership applications from some young journalists, even though they are practicing professionals currently employed at functioning newspapers.

The nascent Iraqi nongovernmental organization (NGO) community does not yet include organizations strong enough to offer significant support to independent media or potent advocacy for freedom of expression, the MSI panelists said. Similarly, there remains a need for substantial organizations providing training for young and mid-career journalists. Some Iraqi NGO efforts also are plagued by weak management and allegations of favoritism, partisanship, or corruption.

Journalism faculties exist at Baghdad University and others in the country, including Sulaimaniya and Erbil

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Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

> Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.

> Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.

> NGOs support free speech and independent media.

> Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.

> Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.

> Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

> Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

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in the north, but they have not been significantly updated in terms of curriculum or equipment since the end of government control of the media, panelists said, and are struggling to meet the new needs of students preparing for a rapidly changing media sector.

Some international NGOs, among them IREX, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, and the BBC World Service Trust, have offered training and development programs in Baghdad, in northern and southern Iraq, and outside the country. IREX, through the Iraqi Civil Society Program, has conducted content

> *The nascent Iraqi nongovernmental organization (NGO) community does not yet include organizations strong enough to offer significant support to independent media or potent advocacy for freedom of expression, the MSI panelists said.*

development and media management training across the country. The BBC World Service Trust was funded by the British government to provide training and equipment to support the startup of Al-Mirbad's television and radio operations, including building a 100-meter transmitter. The need, however, far outstrips the number and duration of these programs, and security concerns limit expansion of programming, panelists said.

While printing and distribution are not controlled by the government, they also are run as businesses independent of the media companies themselves. This means that the services they provide are not fine-tuned to meet the specialized development needs of the media industry, the MSI panelists said. For example, Iraq has become freer in allowing the importation of printing equipment without restrictions or taxes. However, the work of these printers does not follow a scientific approach in dealing with the new technologies, the owners have limited experience, and they are not attuned to meeting publishers' needs.

Newspaper distribution services are limited. In Basrah, with a population of more than 2 million, there are only two offices for distributing newspapers, a panelist said. The panel noted that the mechanisms for distributing the newspapers from Baghdad to the other governorates are very deficient. This can be attributed to insecurity as well as the absence of expertise. In cases described by the panel, US soldiers distribute papers,

editions are photocopied for circulation, or an editor-in-chief takes care of the distribution task himself.

Internet and satellite reception are not controlled by the government. Transmission facilities are both privately and government owned, the latter including substantial infrastructure developed for the Iraqi Media Network by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority. In Kurdistan, the regional government strictly controls broadcast transmissions as well as the transmitters themselves, panelists said. In one case cited by a participant, a broadcasting channel belonging to an Islamic party conducted a campaign to collect donations for the poor on air, but the governor's office called to stop the charitable fundraising. In another case, Radio Nawa finds that its hour-long afternoon broadcast of a program during which citizens phone in to report administrative corruption is jammed frequently, causing listeners to miss parts. However, the government exerts no control over Internet access.

> *While printing and distribution are not controlled by the government, they also are run as businesses independent of the media companies themselves. This means that the services they provide are not fine-tuned to meet the specialized development needs of the media industry, the MSI panelists said.*

MSI Participants

IREX, with the support of UNESCO, conducted three regional MSI panels in addition to the national assessment to produce a more detailed analysis of the media sector in Iraq. Key findings from the regional panels, held for northern and southern Iraq as well as Baghdad, are included in the report.

Moderator: Dr. Jihad K. Daher, media analyst, Baghdad

National Panel

Huda Jassim Almaieny, chief Iraq correspondent, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, Baghdad

Ala Al Hadad, editor, *Al Mustaqila* newspaper, Baghdad

Mohammed Sahi Awad, investigative reporter, *Ad-Dustoor* newspaper, Baghdad

Abdul-Husayn Abdul-Razzaq, chairman, Freedoms Committee, Iraqi Journalists Union, Baghdad

Reham Majeed, correspondent, Kurdistan Satellite TV, Basrah

Haleem Farag Al Abiday, chief editor, *Al Nada* newspaper, Basrah

Sadaq Majeed Majed, editor, *Al Fyha* newspaper, Basrah

Hala Abdul-Hady Sultan, broadcaster, Karbala FM Radio, Karbala

Nizar Abdul Wahid, editor, *Al-Sabbah* newspaper, Missan

Nahla Ghazy Al Loza, media specialist, Iraqi Civil Society Program; vice president, Journalists Union, Babel

Ali Mahmood As-Sa'eedy, member, *Al-Haq* newspaper of Human Rights Organization, Babel

Hasan Zaer, representative, Iraqi TV and Broadcasters Union, Babel

Umar Salahud-Deen, political editor, *Ash-Shura* newspaper, Mosul

Imad An-Naqshabandy, director, Radio Dar As-Salam, Mosul

Faris Khaleel Mohammed Ali, chief editor, *Al Hewar* magazine, Mosul

Zena Al Ubaydy Kadhim, editor, *Ishtar* newspaper, Najaf

North Panel

Karwan Mahdi Osman, assistant to editor-in-chief, *Khwendny Lebral* newspaper, Erbil

Khalid Ahmed Waly, media department, Kurdistan Human Rights Institute, Erbil

Faris Khalel Mohammed, editor-in-chief, *Al Hewar* magazine, Mosul

Yahya Omer Fatih, editor-in-chief, *Al-Ufuq Al-Jadeed* newspaper, Erbil

Dilzar Hasan, correspondent, *Kurdistani Nuwe* newspaper, Erbil

Luqman Sherwany, Erbil bureau chief, Center of Youth Activities Development, Erbil

Banaz Rasoo hamad Amin, editor-in-chief, *Pega* magazine, Sulaimaniya

Hemn Baqir Abdol, editor, *Leven* magazine, Sulaimaniya

Abdulrazzaq Ali Mahmood, director of political programs, Kurdistan satellite TV, Erbil

Bashar Hamed Keeky, editor-in-chief, *Avro* newspaper, Dohuk

Viyan Abdulbaqi Taqyaddin, supervisor, TV & Radio of the Kurdish Conservative Party, Sulaimaniya

Parwin Abdulaziz, correspondent and editor, Kurdistan TV (local), Dohuk

Baland Mustafa Omar, correspondent, Radio Nawa, Erbil

Kassim Hussain Kassim, director, UTV, Dohuk

Hedaya Rahim Karim, public relations director, Kirkuk TV, Kirkuk

Harish Yossif Ismael, manager, Aveline advertising company, Erbil

Baghdad Panel

Mohammed Walled Al Saloon, news editor, *Almashriq* newspaper, Baghdad

Mohammed Sahi Awad, reporter, *Ad-Dustoor* newspaper, Baghdad

Kadhim Nazar Al Rikabi, deputy director, Iraq Civil Society and Media Support Program, Baghdad

Salaam Raheem Zanjel, editor, *Alsiyasawalgarar* newspaper, Baghdad

Raqad Mahsen Yasser, editor of women's section, *Al-Sabbah* newspaper, Baghdad

Kadhim Daaer Al Kuzae, news editor, *Al Ariba* magazine, Baghdad

Abid Al Hhussen Razaq, editor, Al-Hurra TV; member of IFJ Freedom Committee, Baghdad

Rasha Sahib Mehdi, editor, *Al Sahafa* newspaper, Baghdad

Mohammed Abid Alazez Al Ubaydi, Iraqi Human Rights Organization, Baghdad

Mayada Muki, editor, *Dijla* magazine, Baghdad

Abid Al Kareem Zalan, presenter, Al Nahreen TV, Baghdad

Dhamia Hhassen Al Rubaay, correspondent, *Al Iraq Al Hur* radio, Baghdad

Humza Ali Al Jazery, advertising executive, Al Hwar Company, Baghdad

Amair Abid Aljaleil, radio director, Baghdad Radio, Baghdad

Ahmid Abid Almajeed, editor-in-chief, *Azzaman* newspaper, Baghdad

Sallah Taieh, editor, National Iraqi News Agency, Baghdad

South Panel

Anwar Mohammed Ridha Al Jabur, director, Basrah Radio, Basrah

Yasir Jasim Qasim, program producer, Basrah Radio, Basrah

Faris Jameel Jassim, director, Al-Mirbad TV, Basrah

Ahmed Zaidan, representative, Inter SOS human-rights organization, Basrah

Saad Nadum Jassim, director, Al-Mirbad Radio, Basrah

Zaynab Jassim Kassim, program editor, Al-Mirbad Radio, Basrah

Ro'ya Mahmood Ghalib, editor, *Al-Sabbah* newspaper, Basrah

Kadhim Hassan Saed, editor, Shnasheel Radio, Basrah

Majid Mahmood Al Brekan, correspondent, Basrah TV, Basrah

Edward George Seral, director, Al-Fayhaa TV, Basrah

Salih Badir, editor, *Sumer* newspaper, Nasiriyah

Abdul Hussein Dawood Shenawa, correspondent, *Sumer* newspaper, Nasiriyyah

Ahmed Kareem Ahmad, correspondent, Al Iraqiya TV, Missan

Nazar Abdul Wahid, editor, *Al-Sabbah* newspaper, Missan

Faris Hamza, correspondent, Al Iraqiya TV, Samawa

Arif Shaheed, correspondent, Al Iraqiya TV, Samawa

IRAQ AT A GLANCE

GENERAL

■ **Population:** 27.1 million (World Bank, 2004)

■ **Capital city:** Baghdad

■ **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Arab 75-80%, Kurd 15-20%, other 5% (www.nationsencyclopedia.com, 2006)

■ **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 97% (60-65% Shi'a, 32-32% Sunni), 3% Christian and other (www.nationsencyclopedia.com, 2006)

■ **Languages (% of population):** Arabic 79%, Kurdish (official in Kurdish regions), Assyrian, Mandaean, Turkomans, Armenian (www.nationsencyclopedia.com, 2006)

■ **GDP:** $25.5 billion (2004 est., World Bank)

■ **GNI per capita:** $942 (2004 est., World Bank)

■ **Literacy rate:** 60% of population age 15 and above (World Bank)

■ **President or top authority:** Iraqi Transitional Government President Jalal Talabani

■ **Next scheduled elections:** N/A

MEDIA SURVEYS IRAQ, 2006

90% of households (hh) have one television set, half of them more

98% of hh have a radio

20% of hh have cable television

75% of hh have VCRs (video recorders)

41% of hh have a home computer; 23% of hh have Internet access at home

Television sets are turned on for an average of 13 hours each day

The average Iraqi spends six hours (20%), four hours (51%), three hours (29%) a day in front of a television set

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

■ **Total number of print publications:** 70

Number of daily (quality) newspapers: five (circulation: *Al-Sabbah* about 50,000, *Azzaman* about 15,000)

Weeklies: four

Monthlies: 0

■ **Radio stations:** 24 (including IMN, Dijla/Baghdad, Nawa/Sulaimaniya, Mirbad/Basra)

■ **Television stations:** 23

■ **Iraq mobile telephony:** Three companies (Iraqna, Atheer, and Asia) provide for 3.5 million mobile subscriptions in March 2005, (i.e., mobile penetration is 12.5 percent of the population, which is unprecedented in the MENA countries). (MTC Group–sponsored survey, quoted in *Daily Start,* Beirut, Feb. 16, 2006)

Sources: NCMC, Iraqna, IMN

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: IRAQ

	FREE SPEECH	PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM	PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES	BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS
	1.27	1.18	1.25	1.02	1.06

OBJECTIVES