

MEDIA

SUSTAINABILITY INDEX—

MIDDLE EAST AND

NORTH AFRICA



MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2005

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

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USAID

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency that provides economic, development, and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign-policy goals of the United States. The agency works to support long-term and sustainable economic growth and advances US foreign-policy objectives by supporting economic growth, agriculture, and trade; global health; and democracy, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance.

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.

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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.

IN MARCH 2005 THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION ORGANIZED A NATIONAL FORUM THAT ALLOWED MOROCCAN JOURNALISTS AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY TO DEBATE PROBLEMS FACING THE PRINT MEDIA. THE COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY AND THE FEDERATION OF NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS SIGNED A CONTRACT AIMED AT ASSISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA THROUGH FUNDING, TRAINING, AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT.

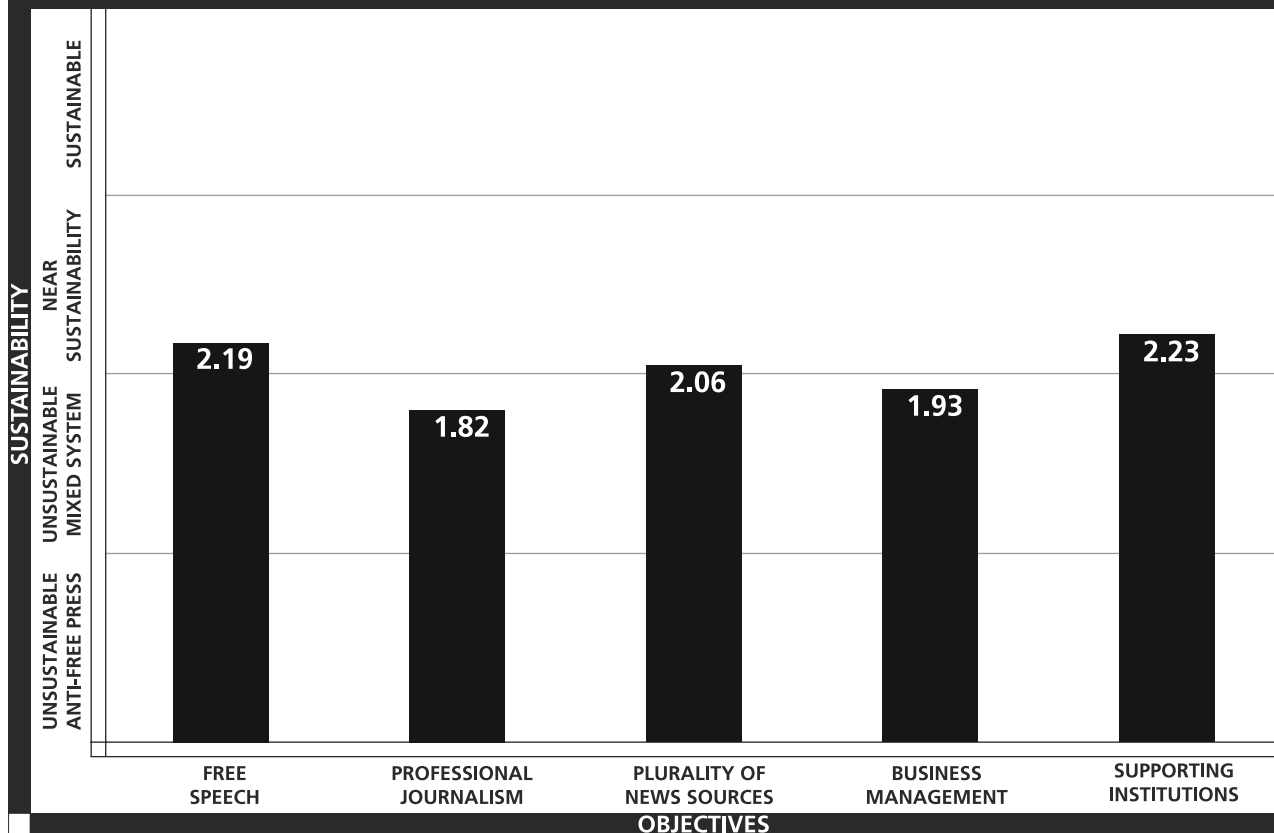


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roccan media-sector development in 2005 was highlighted by the promulgation of a new law liberalizing broadcasting. This law aimed to turn state broadcasting into a public service and allow the licensing of new private radio and television stations. The Higher Broadcasting Authority (HACA, la Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle), set up by a royal decree in 2002, launched a call for tenders to obtain private broadcasting licenses. HACA also worked on the transition of the state television station into a public-service broadcaster and intervened in several conflicts between broadcasters and political parties, associations, and private companies.

On the print media front, in March 2005 the Ministry of Communication organized a national forum that allowed Moroccan journalists an unusual opportunity to debate problems facing the print media. The Communications Ministry and the Federation of Newspaper Publishers signed a contract aimed at assisting in the development of the media through funding, training, and management support. The forum was also an opportunity for the National Press Syndicate to win the endorsement of the Ministry of Communication and the Federation of Newspaper Publishers for its collective-bargaining convention, which defines obligations for publishers vis-à-vis their staff and sets certain rights for journalists such as a minimum salary, holidays, health insurance, and further training. The Ministry, the Association of Advertisers, and the Federation of Newspaper Publishers approved an accord establishing the first office responsible for measuring the circulation of newspapers (OJD, Office de Justification de la Diffusion). The year also witnessed a series of consultations by the Ministry of Communication with political parties and media professionals regarding the reform of the 2002 Press Law, especially relating to the provisions on defamation and prison sentences for press infractions.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MOROCCO



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.

Paralleling these positive developments, 2005 was also a record year for the number of cases brought to court by individuals or the public prosecutor against journalists and media outlets. Citizens and the public prosecutor filed 31 complaints against 17 different publications, charging them with defamation, insulting a foreign head of state, undermining public order, or publishing false information and photographs of the royal family without authorization. Despite these cases, the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) panel viewed 2005 as a year when many free-speech taboos were broken—provoking new calls from the government for respecting journalism ethics. For their part, media professionals sought adoption by the government of a law that guarantees the right to access public information and the abolition of prison sentences for defamation.

The MSI panel assessed the Moroccan media sector as approaching the first stages of sustainability, rating it at 2.05 overall. The panel considered the supporting institutions to be the strongest aspect of the sector at 2.23, and the professionalism of journalists the weakest at 1.82.

is government interference in due process and the lack of independence for courts. Driss El Ouali, journalist and publisher of the regional newspaper *Sadae Taounate*, noted that freedom of the press in Morocco is variable according to the geographic location of the newspapers. “Greater freedom is available in the cities than elsewhere in the country,” he said. The panel agreed that the absence of specialized press magistrates is

Abdelmouneim Dilami, president of the Federation of Newspaper Publishers, said, “Financing the press is an issue that we have discussed with the authorities who have come up with subsidies, but the banks’ requirements are different. They give loans to profitable and solvent enterprises, and unfortunately the majority of the press in Morocco are not.”

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Morocco Objective Score: 2.19 / 4.00

Article 9 of the 1996 Moroccan Constitution provides that “the Constitution shall guarantee all citizens the following: (b) freedom of opinion, expression in all its forms, and public gathering.” The same article adds, however: “No limitation, except by law, shall be put to the exercise of such freedoms.” It is this exception that allowed the Moroccan legislature to adopt an array of laws limiting freedom of expression. The 2002 press code, the penal code, the anti-terrorism law, and the public-service code contain provisions that limit free speech or prohibit access to public information. Despite the liberal licensing system in the Press Law, the MSI panel agreed that it provides sanctions against any criticism of “sacred” issues such as the monarchy, Islam, and territorial integrity. The Press Law also protects various public institutions and foreign heads of state against defamation and restricts reporting on cases under judicial deliberation.

According to lawyer Mohamed Karam, “Morocco is endowed with relatively valid laws on press issues in comparison with other countries, but the essential factor in assessing the validity of this legal setting remains the manner in which the government and the justice system apply the laws.” The panel agreed that the main problem during the trials of journalists

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.

a problem in that press trials are handled by judges who also deal with criminal cases. Mohamed Karam noted that “it is necessary to create a specialized chamber for media mainly at the level of the courts in Casablanca and Rabat, where most media cases are currently judged.” Criminalization of free speech and the high awards granted by the courts to plaintiffs in defamation cases were cited by multiple panelists as urgent issues that the government should address in

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the new press law that is being drafted.

The panelists also criticized the secrecy that surrounds public documentation and information. In all Moroccan legislation, the right to access information is

mentioned only in Article 1 of the Press Law, which states, “Citizens have the right to information. All media have the right to access information from different sources, except if the information is confidential by virtue of law.” However, in practice, the panel agreed that the implementation of this provision is stymied by other statutes. Indeed, the penal code and the General Statute of Public Servants (GSPS) contain provisions prohibiting the circulation of public information. Article 18 of the GSPS requires civil servants to adhere to professional discretion regarding facts and information related to their jobs. The provision also prohibits transfer of any documents to a third party without the authorization of the minister in charge of the department that holds the information. Article 187 of the penal code bans the publication of a long list of military, diplomatic, economic, and industrial documents and information, while classifying them as national security secrets. The code includes potential sentences of five to 30 years of imprisonment if information is leaked during wartime, and one to five years with a fine between \$1,000 and \$10,000 MAD (\$116–\$1,162) during times of peace.

There were a record number of trials of journalists and media during 2005, with 31 cases put to trial for defamation of public institutions and individuals as well as for the publication of false information.

In one case, *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* was sued by the Brussels-based European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center for defamation after the magazine

published a critical article about a study published by the Center on the Polisario Front, which is in conflict with the Moroccan government over sovereignty in the Sahara. *Le Journal* claimed that the study favored the official Moroccan line and suggested that it could have been paid for by the Moroccan government. Claude Moniquet, president of the Center, demanded 5 million MAD in damages to his reputation, and the state prosecutor sought the same amount for the plaintiff.

The Casablanca Appeals Court ordered *Tel Quel* magazine to pay 500,000 MAD (\$58,055) to the president of the Moroccan Association for Children in Dangerous Situations for reporting inaccurately that she was under police investigation for misappropriating funds.

The same magazine was fined 800,000 MAD (\$92,888) in damages to a parliament member for labeling her with a pejorative term given to traditional female singers and dancers, and two-month suspended sentences were issued against two staff members.

In April, Ali Lamrabet, correspondent for *El Mundo*, was banned by a court from exercising journalism in any Moroccan publication for 10 years for defamation after he wrote an article arguing that the Saharawi people in the Algerian city of Tindouf are refugees, and not prisoners of Polisario, as the Moroccan government claims.

In June, Abdelaziz Koukas, editor of the Arabic-language weekly *Al-Ousbouia Al-Jadida* was charged with insulting the monarchy after the weekly ran a front-page interview with Nadia Yassine, the daughter of Abdelsalam Yassine, who is the spiritual leader of the banned Islamist group Al-Adl Wal Ihsan. Nadia Yassine stated in the interview that the monarchy model of government was wrong for Morocco and that she would prefer a republic regime. It is believed that the authorities stopped pursuing the case in order to avoid bad publicity abroad and conflict with the Islamist group.

On November 24, the judicial police in Casablanca summoned Nouredine Miftah, director of the weekly magazine *Al-Ayyam*, and the reporter Moukrim for questioning on an article the magazine published entitled “Secrets of the Palace Harem among Three Kings,” based on an interview with a French national who was the personal physician of the late King Mohamed V. The journalists were also questioned by the Public Prosecutor for photographs they published of the royal family without authorization, according to a 1956 law that had never been applied. On the basis of the questioning, the prosecutor charged the journalists under Article 42 of the press code with “disturbing the public order” by publishing, “in bad

faith," "false information." This offense is punishable by a prison term of between one and 12 months and a fine of between \$140 and \$11,600. The case was still pending in 2005.

These and others cases prompted a lively debate among journalists, writers, politicians, and leaders of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) about journalism ethics and free speech. "Some called for more restrictions, believing that freedom of expression is misused, and others wanted journalists to uphold high standards of ethics. Others criticized the interference of the government in court proceedings and called for the independence of the justice system and reform of the press law," said Bachir Znagui, a media consultant. However, this debate "was limited to the elite, and society as a whole does not yet appreciate the value and importance of the media in the democratic process," said Malika Malak, a freelance journalist.

The HACA is the authority with the legal power to license new private radio and television stations. The organization's tender for those seeking new licenses received dozens of bids for radio stations and a few for television, but it had not decided on any by the end of 2005. HACA is run by a nine-member council, five of whom are appointed by the king, including the president. The prime minister appoints two, and the last two are named by presidents of the two chambers of the parliament. Several issues were raised by the MSI panelists concerning this system. "The appointments were made without consulting the representatives of the media, and the members of the council are largely non-experts in media issues," said Omar Lebchirit, a journalist at the Arabic weekly *As-Sahifa*. Panelist Driss El Ouali also stated that the nomination of the council members reflects a political choice by the government—not a positive development. However, HACA published on its website the required documents and the conditions that candidates must meet in order for their projects to be considered. One important aspect of the law is the exclusion of associations and political parties from ownership. "But, this has not provoked any reaction from those excluded, especially the association community, which at the time the law was drafted did not intervene to ensure recognition by the state for the fundamental right of community radio stations," said Salah Sbyea, editor-in-chief of *Sawt An-Nass*.

The print media market is open to any Moroccan investor, but foreigners are barred by law from investing in publications registered in Morocco. Foreign investors can set up their own publications under different regulations, one of which requires prior authorization of the Ministry of Communication and

the publication of a decree in the official bulletin.

The conditions imposed on the Moroccan publications are liberal, and rarely is a registration request denied. Mohamed Karam believes that due to the political liberalization in Morocco, a simple request from the district attorney, who authenticates the application documents, is needed for a publisher to start activity. Driss El Ouali noted that "since anybody can create a newspaper, the state deals with publications as it deals with any other kind of companies—without distinction. In addition, the regional press has to pay all kinds of taxes, such as 20 percent VAT [value-added tax], patent fees, the tax on revenue, etc."

However, there are some instances of discrimination between the press and other businesses regarding their capacity to generate loans from financial institutions. Abdelmouneim Dilami, president of the Federation of Newspaper Publishers, said, "Financing the press is an issue that we have discussed with the authorities who have come up with subsidies, but the banks' requirements are different. They give loans to profitable and solvent enterprises, and unfortunately the majority of the press in Morocco are not." He also said that fiscal regulations for start-up ventures are not the same. Other businesses enjoy reductions in the VAT and other taxes as part of national development programs, and the panelists agreed that the press should have the same benefits. Bachir Znagui pointed out that contrary to other businesses, "Moroccan and foreign publishers cannot launch joint press ventures because the law does not authorize this kind of ownership unless the publication is registered according to the foreign publication code." He added that "the Moroccan press cannot by law receive foreign financial assistance, but other businesses can without problems."

Regarding broadcasting, the panelists agreed that the US-funded Radio Sawa received an exceptional authorization from the government to broadcast in Morocco. Otherwise, no laws allow the station to enter the Moroccan market. However, negotiations between Radio Sawa and HACA are underway to regularize the station's legal situation according to the broadcasting law.

The public broadcast sector does not receive any legal preferential treatment, and the new broadcasting law guarantees in theory its editorial independence. Article 4 of the broadcasting law provides that, "subject to the preservation of the pluralist character of expression, the broadcasting companies freely conceive their programs and assume responsibility for them." "Although the law obliges the public broadcasters to open up to all political and ideological voices in the country, the programs give priority to the activities and speeches

of the king as well as the activities of the government. Excluded are those socio-political forces and individuals who are challenging the regime,” said Omar Lebchirit, a journalist with *As-Sahifa* weekly. Malika Malak added that “political parties and businesses do not interfere in public broadcasting. They know that is a domain reserved for the state, but the independence of journalists working at the public broadcaster is a myth. No one can work without the influence of the broadcasting administration, which dictates the content of the reports.” She informed the panel that she left 2M because of the lack of freedom at the station.

Journalists who request public information through official channels are often disillusioned, said Omar Lachhab. Often written requests for information remain unanswered, he added. Another problem is that public administrations and ministries do not have any spokespersons. Professional journalists rely on their personal contacts who pass them information on the condition of anonymity. “There are several levels of discriminatory access to public information,” said Omar Lachhab. Ahmed Ifzaren, a journalist and editor of *Al-Khadra Al-Jadida* in Tangiers added, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, delivers first-hand information to a foreign Arab publication, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, because the minister has a friend in that newspaper. The foreign press also receives information first in cases like the Sahara dispute. The king, for example, never gave interviews to the Moroccan media. The palace often responds to requests by the foreign press, especially from France.”

The king’s official trips abroad are covered exclusively by the public television stations and the national news agency, and occasionally by foreign journalists working with friendly foreign media. The local activities of the king are covered by Moroccan journalists who are known to the palace. “Moroccan journalists do, through the SNPM [a publishers’ group], express their concern about the lack of access to public information.... Some newspapers also publish editorials about the subject or mention difficulties they have faced when writing their reports,” said Bachir Znagui, former editor-in-chief of *Liberation*. The public authorities, noted Omar Lachhab, “do not perceive the information they hold as belonging to the public. They treat it as their own property that can only be distributed with prior authorization from the high-ranking officials.”

Regarding international news and news sources, however, Moroccan journalists do not face any restrictions except for access to the websites belonging to the separatist movement Polisario, the group that disputes Moroccan

sovereignty in the Sahara. “The Internet has become a major source of information on Moroccan issues that journalists reprint, even on subjects for which information is rarely available inside the country—like the army, for example,” said Omar Lebchiret. The use of the Internet applies to media like any other business, and it is now very affordable in Morocco.

Entry into the journalism profession does not require any specific certifications. The profession is free, and the government does not influence the hiring of journalists, except for the appointments of key positions at the public media, the panelists agreed. However, a press card is required to attend official events. It is issued by a special committee within the Ministry of Communication, on which sit representatives of the Press Syndicate and the Federation of Publishers. Directors of publications submit names of the journalists to be licensed by the Commission, and the last word in the decision process is that of the Minister of Communication, explained Bachir Znagui.

Foreign journalists based in Morocco must also be accredited by the Ministry of Communication in order to be able to practice their craft. Even the press card does not guarantee its holder access to information. For coverage of special events, such as royal activities or visits by foreign dignitaries, only a few designated journalists can get access. But, in general, the press card is the sole document by which the government defines the journalism profession. The law on the Statute of Journalists defines a journalist as one who works full-time for one or several media outlets. However, there are many people who write regular opinion pieces or articles on certain issues like the economy and education for the press while practicing other functions, such as teaching or law.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Morocco Objective Score: 1.82 / 4.00

The MSI panelists noted room for improvement in the quality of Moroccan journalism, the objective that received the lowest score from the assessment. Focus on accuracy and multiple sourcing are not common, and political bias affects nearly all media organizations. Bachir Znagui noted three styles: “The journalism that challenges everything and anything until it falls into slander, the populist journalism that capitalizes on the misery of people, and finally the journalism that serves the interests of the most powerful among the political and economic powers.” Omar Lachhab, editor-in-chief of state news agency MAP’s Arabic service, said, “Journalism in Morocco does not yet satisfy the criteria

of quality that are required by the profession, despite progress achieved during the last few years.”

A collective of the major Moroccan NGOs, including the publishers’ group SNPM, adopted a code of ethics for journalists in 2002 inspired by international standards, but most Moroccan journalists do not even know it exists.

The most common unethical journalism practices are accepting payments and gifts from private companies, individuals, and even public officials. Some journalists have reported about people who have tried to bribe them for articles and others who have been fired by their editors for taking money from individuals for coverage. “The sport press, journalists believe, is the one area where corruption is widespread,” said Omar Lebchirit.

Journalists practice self-censorship on issues concerning the monarchy and big companies that provide advertising, panelists said. The partisan press is known for practicing self-censorship on issues in relation to their parties’ leaders, and Bachir Znagui said private media owners also “impose limits or constraints on their staff.” There are cases when editors of certain newspapers prevent their journalists from covering certain events, such as meeting opposition parties, or problems regarding certain companies, such as strikes.

The panelists described many topics that are difficult to find sources for, such as the Sahara conflict,

unemployment, security, and subjects related to the monarchy. One of the panelists declared that there is absolutely no freedom in covering topics regarding internal and external security in Morocco. But on these issues, Omar Lebchirit said, “We always look for published reports and information on the Internet on Morocco, and if we find it, we publish it.”

Many issues that were considered taboo in the past are now treated without fear, such as the need for constitutional reform, the powers of the monarchy, the Sahara conflict, corruption, prostitution, pedophilia, and public mismanagement, the panel agreed. Journalists are

even starting to take the risk of covering national security issues, such as interviewing leaders of the Polisario movement. However, coverage of anti-terrorist activities and leaders of extremists groups is rare. In August 2003, two journalists from the Oujda-based weeklies *Al-Sharq* and *Al-Hayat Al-Maghribiya* had their papers suspended for their coverage of underground Islamist militants that was judged to contravene the anti-terrorism law. The king issued a pardon for the journalists in January 2004, but a year later, the Ministry of Justice suspended the publication for three months on the grounds that the king’s pardon did not cover the newspapers. Bachir Znagui stated, “This case warned journalists that any coverage of militant Islam in Morocco can be interpreted as publicity and can therefore be sanctioned.”

The average salary for print media journalists varies among newspapers and within the public media. At some dailies, journalists earn very low wages, around \$150 per month. At other more established newspapers, the average can reach \$500 per month.

Salaries for journalists at the public media are comparable to wages for administration officials,

However, low income in the journalism profession has triggered three phenomena, noted Malika Malak: “The first is the movement of journalists between newspapers, the second between newspapers and the broadcast media, and the third, and most damaging to media professionalism, is the migration of very qualified journalists to the Gulf satellite media, such as Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Dubai.”

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).

with certain bonuses for journalists. The second public television channel, 2M, offers the best wages for its journalists, a practice inherited from when the station was a private company. These journalists receive an average minimum of \$800 per month, and an internal collective-bargaining agreement governs the wages. This agreement inspired journalists of TVM to negotiate their salaries, and a new scale was organized for 2006. Meanwhile, a collective agreement was signed in December 2005 after protracted negotiations between the Journalists Syndicate and the Federation of Newspaper Publishers. The accord foresees a minimum wage of \$580 per month.

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News programs at both public channels have fixed schedules, and the entertainment programming varies from one day to another. Nevertheless, entertainment dominates the programming, as it is a source of advertising and sponsorship. Moreover, as advertising is getting more competitive, the percentage of entertainment programs is increasing. Chakib Ben Omar, a producer with TVM, concluded that the public is generally inclined to watch entertainment rather than news and any increase in the news will push the audience to satellite television.

Not all publications are equipped with modern equipment. Some journalists, especially those working at the regional press, use their own mobile phones and do not have PCs or tape recorders.

While some panelists criticized the lack of multiple points of view and sources of information in public broadcasting, they commended it for opening up to many social and political issues and starting to produce some good investigative reporting. 2M and the public national radio station have taken the lead in covering and debating socio-economic issues live. A few newspapers have invested in investigative journalism, such as the Arabic daily *Al-Ahdath Al-Maghribiyya* and the weeklies *Al-Ayyam*, *As-Sahifa*, *Le Journal*

Hebdomadiare, and *Tel Quel*. Business reporting is also covered by the daily *l’Economiste*, *Finance-News*, *Maroc Aujourd’hui*, and some monthly economic publications, as well as by the two public channels.

However, the majority of newspapers cannot afford to engage in investigative journalism because of the cost and lack of qualified staff. Niches such as rural issues, poverty, Islamic militancy, and the condition of women and children are largely unexplored.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Morocco Objective Score: 2.06 / 4.00

Morocco’s print media are largely private, and the new broadcasting law that liberalized the airways will allow for more private television and radio stations in 2006. According to the Ministry of Communication, the Moroccan media sector comprised 438 publications in 2005—280 in Arabic, 151 in French, six in Tamazight, and one in Spanish. The private press constitutes 85 percent of all publications, with the “partisan” or political party press, trade unions, NGOs, and state institutions making up the rest. Casablanca and Rabat have the highest concentration of print media, but the regional press has increased, as have publications dealing with human rights, immigration, and social issues, the panelists said.

The broadcasting sector in 2005 was made up of two public broadcasters, the Société Nationale de Radio Television (SNRT) and 2M-Soread. SNRT is composed of a national terrestrial channel, TVM, and three satellite television stations: the educational channel al-Rabi’a (the Fourth), al-Maghribiyya (the Moroccan), a joint venture with 2M catering to Moroccans living abroad, and as-Sadissa (the Sixth), a religious television station. There is one regional station in the city of Laayoun in the Sahara area. The public radio network is made up of one national and 10 regional stations. Medi 1, located in Tangiers, is the sole private station, and US-funded Radio Sawa is also active.

“Roughly five million Moroccans can afford to buy newspapers with prices fixed at around 30 cents,” said Mohamed Berrada, president of the distribution company Sapress. “But only 300,000 copies are sold every day, which puts Morocco among the lowest Arab countries in terms of newspaper circulation per 1,000 inhabitants.” According to UNESCO data, there are 13 newspapers for each 100,000 people. The panel agreed that newspaper distribution to rural areas is sluggish due to the poor state of the infrastructure and very low income of the population. Villagers and townspeople

have access to radio and television, and the use of satellite dishes is increasing. "People in the major cities are better served, but limited income is still a major factor that determines the level and quality of access to media," added Mohamed Berrada. The government does not restrict citizens' access to media such as foreign radio stations or satellite television, but literacy does, panelists said.

Foreign publications are available but are only purchased by the elite. People also have access to the Internet, through direct subscriptions or in some of the thousands of private Internet cafés spread around the country. Those who are interested in online media can access it freely. The only sites that are inaccessible from Morocco, even via proxy, are those belonging to the Polisario separatist movement, such as www.arso.org, www.cahiersdusahara.com, www.sahara.net, and www.spsrasd.info.

Although the broadcasting law requires public broadcasters to offer objective and pluralistic information without any bias toward a political party, interest group, or association (Article 8), it also requires these broadcasters to cover the speeches and the activities of the king, debates in parliament, and other government activities as a priority. In addition, public

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.

broadcasters must produce programs that respect the religious values, public order, and the good behavior and the preservation of national security (Article 3).

Panelists said state broadcasting does not reflect the views of the entire Moroccan political spectrum. Some political movements and NGOs, despite their strong presence in society, are still not visible in the public media because they have

challenged the monarchy. These groups include the Islamist movement al-Adl wal Ihsan. But public media have extended their coverage to many political currents and interests, especially through talk shows. Although there is still criticism of the news programs that devote most of their time to the

"Roughly five million Moroccans can afford to buy newspapers with prices fixed at around 30 cents," said Mohamed Berrada, president of the distribution company Sapress. "But only 300,000 copies are sold every day, which puts Morocco among the lowest Arab countries in terms of newspaper circulation per 1,000 inhabitants."

official perspective on events, cultural and educational programs have been increasing, and there is a balanced view of the traditional and modern cultures of the country, with an emphasis on regional culture.

According to Ministry of Communication data for 2005, there are 18 foreign news agencies represented in Morocco, five of which specialize in photojournalism. The one state news agency, Maghreb Arab Press (MAP), has its headquarters in the capital (Rabat), 12 regional bureaus, and offices in 18 countries. It distributes news in Arabic, French, English, and Spanish, and Moroccan newspapers can get a 30 percent discount for the agency's services.

The only existing private broadcaster in Morocco is the Medi 1 radio station located in Tangiers. It covers Morocco and all of North Africa and can be accessed through the Internet and satellite. Medi 1 is owned by French and Moroccan interests, 51 percent to 49 percent. It produces its own news programs in Arabic and French. These programs differ from public radio programming because Medi 1 includes news about different North African countries. The news is not influenced by political or business interests, panelists said.

The opacity of media ownership concerns the private publications. Most publications do not reveal

their ownership, despite a law that specifies that the majority owner should be the director of the publication. People know that banks, insurance firms, and companies operating in other sectors own shares in many publications, but the publications do not publish this information, with the exception of l'Économiste Group, which publishes the names of its shareholders in its online version, and the *Al-Ahdath* daily paper. Transparency of ownership is also an issue with partisan publications. The public knows only that these publications are owned by political parties, but in fact, they are either registered in the name of a party, the secretary general of the party, or a limited company,

Villagers and townspeople have access to radio and television, and the use of satellite dishes is increasing. "People in the major cities are better served, but limited income is still a major factor that determines the level and quality of access to media," added Mohamed Berrada.

noted Bachir Znagui.

There is no resistance for the inclusion of different social issues in most media. However, partisan newspapers often play down the social impact of the policies of their leaders represented in the government.

Private newspapers owned by businesses also ignore the social implications of the policies of the companies owned by their shareholders and their partners, said Mustapha Laraki, editor-in-chief of the daily *Al-Ittihad Al-Ichtiraki*.

The panel agreed that minority issues are not perceived as such in the Moroccan media. Tamazight, spoken by nearly half of the Moroccan population, has been recognized by the state media, which now broadcasts programs in that language. There are also six publications that cater to the Berber population. The Jewish community does not have its own broadcasting or publications.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Morocco Objective Score: 1.93 / 4.00

Most of the private print media sector is made up of small companies that are managed by informal or traditional methods. Often the director controls all the operations, including editorial, human resources, and financial management. Very few of these publications generate significant profit; they survive thanks to good

contacts the owners have with advertisers, the MSI panel agreed.

The agreement signed between the Ministry of Communication and the Federation of Editors in 2005 strives to modernize the management of these outlets. But owners of these small companies, which constitute the majority of the print press, perceive this as interference and resist calls for reforms. "They are scared of transparency, especially of their finances, because this may reveal lots of wrong doings," said Malika Malak.

Two major distribution companies dominate the market. Société Arabe et Africaine de l'Édition et de la Diffusion de la Presse (Sapress) is owned by a private company and a number of political parties, like Istiqlal, USFP, and PPS. La Société Chérifienne de Distribution et de Presse (Sochepress) is a private company owned by the French group NMPP (Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse Parisienne) and a Moroccan family.

Sapress director general Mohamed Berrada mentioned that his company "distributes 21 dailies, 72 weeklies, and 320 magazines. Sapress uses modern technologies that enable it to know exactly the volume and the distribution points for each publication. It has 8,000 points of distribution around the country." Sochepress distributes mainly imported newspapers, magazines, and books and has 3,600 distribution points. The sales

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.

points are made up of newsstands, kiosks, terrassiers (sales stands on the café terraces), small bookshops, grocery stores, bakeries, tobacco shops, street vendors, and seasonal salesmen.

Although these two distribution companies are well-managed, they face some external factors that limit their profitability. As examples, the panelists pointed to several obstacles: the limited skills of vendors, low readership of newspapers in Morocco, the poor state of the infrastructure, and the cost of transporting products to isolated geographic areas. Also, vendors pocket proceeds by renting newspapers to customers for a few hours at a fraction of the newsstand price, and it is estimated that 30 percent of newspaper revenues are lost through this system, said Abdelmouneim Dilami. Also, kids sell photocopied crossword puzzles and horse-racing information in the popular cafés for small sums.

Media draw their revenue mainly from three sources: sales, advertising, and state subsidies. According to Ministry of Communication information, the financial resources of the SNRT are composed of a subsidy from the state, television license fees collected as an indirect tax added to the public electricity bill, excess revenue from the public advertising company SAP, and from other sources generated by services rendered to diverse clients. The state has granted the station 2.5 billion MAD (\$290 million) for 2006–2008, divided into 1,170 million MAD (\$135,445) from the state general budget, 556 million MAD (about \$64 million) from the fund for promoting broadcasting production, and 820 million MAD (about \$95 million) from the television license collected from the public. For 2M, revenue collected in 2005 was 391 million MAD (about \$45 million), an increase of 130 percent compared with 2004. The revenue from advertising and sponsorship reached 550 million MAD (about \$64 million) in 2005. In the same year, the channel made a net profit of 75 million MAD (\$8.7 million), an increase of 14 percent in comparison with 2004 and a 60 percent jump in comparison with 2003. The state gave the channel a financial subsidy amounting to 133 million MAD (\$15.4 million) in 2005.

Newspapers generate a large portion of their revenues from advertising. For some newspapers, advertising represents up to 90 percent of their overall revenue. For these outlets, many are actively using the services of private agencies. A few private publications, like the daily *Al-Ahdath Al-Maghribia* and *As-Sabah*, report substantial revenue from sales. However, there are several publications, like the weeklies *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* and *As-Sahifa*, which lost a huge amount of revenue from advertisers because of

their outspoken and critical editorial line vis-à-vis the government and the monarchy. These papers struggle to make ends meet with the support of their owners and some foreign advertisers.

State subsidies were granted in 2005 to 35 private and partisan publications—18 dailies, 19 weeklies, and five monthlies—and

amounted to around \$4 million. The amount disbursed for each publication is determined by a 12-member committee made up of six government representatives and six representatives from the Federation of Editors. The state subsidies contribute to the lower cost of newsprint; telephone, fax, and Internet operations;

and reductions in the transportation of journalists and publications inside Morocco. The cost of subscription for the state news agency MAP is also reduced by 30 percent. Public administrative, judicial, and legal announcements also constitute a source of revenue for more than 20 publications (private and partisan). In 2005, these announcements generated \$620,000, the majority of which went to partisan publications that receive little advertising.

The advertising sector in Morocco is underdeveloped. According to available data, small- and medium-size companies that constitute 92 percent of the Moroccan economy do not advertise their products. Foreign corporations and 10 national companies monopolize 60 percent of the advertising at the two public broadcasters. Maroc Telecom, Med Telecom, Unilever Maghreb, Coca-Cola, and Nestlé Maroc are among the top advertisers in the country. According to the Ministry of Communication, the overall spending on advertising for all media sectors was \$262 million in 2005. Of this, 56.9 percent went to the two public channels; the press attracted 20 percent, radio 7.5 percent, and the

The agreement signed between the Ministry of Communication and the Federation of Editors in 2005 strives to modernize the management of these outlets. But owners of these small companies, which constitute the majority of the print press, perceive this as interference and resist calls for reforms. "They are scared of transparency, especially of their finances, because this may reveal lots of wrong doings," said Malika Malak.

rest was divided between the cinema and billboards, according to published data.

A few advertising agencies dominate the market. The leading agency is Regie 3, which attracts more than 50 percent of the advertising accounts in Morocco and is the exclusive ad provider for the second public channel, 2M, and private radio station Medi 1. Regie 3 controls 76 percent of television advertising and 95.5 percent of radio ads, but only 9 percent for the print media. SAP is a second agency that controls 24 percent of advertising in television broadcasting. It mainly serves the first public channel, TVM.

Advertisers now recognize the OJD as a reliable source for circulation statistics. However, many publications have yet to accept the control of the OJD. "Perhaps their managers do not want to reveal to the public their poor circulation figures," noted Bachir Znagui.

To monitor circulation data, the Office of Justification de Distribution (OJD) was created in 2004 by the association of advertisers, l'Union des Agences Conseil, and the Federation of Editors. In 2005, with assistance

of the French OJD group, OJD Morocco certified the circulation of nine dailies, 12 weeklies, and nine monthlies or bi-monthlies. Advertisers now recognize the OJD as a reliable source for circulation statistics. However, many publications have yet to accept the control of the OJD. "Perhaps their managers do not want to reveal to the public their poor circulation figures," noted Bachir Znagui. In addition, the panelists noted, advertisers seem guided by other criteria, often political, rather than results of audience or readership research. For example, the results of the OJD newspaper circulation process in 2005 did not result in any significant adjustments in advertising distribution in newspapers.

For broadcast ratings, a number of organizations operate in Morocco. The most important of them are Creargie, Mediascan, and Sigma Conseil. However, media ratings are still a controversial issue in Morocco. The results are rarely published, as studies are often compiled for specific clients who prefer to keep information out of the view of their competitors. Even when some results are published, media outlets often reject them for their lack of objectivity. In 2005, HACA launched a call for an international tender to establish a unified system of audience rating for broadcasting.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Morocco Objective Score: 2.23 / 4.00

The Federation of Newspaper Publishers is the only association representing editors and directors of private as well as partisan press. It is managed by an elected board and is the sole interlocutor vis-à-vis the Ministry of Communication with regard to the interests of newspaper owners. In 2005, the Federation signed a "convention" with the government that aims to modernize the press sector. In addition to state subsidies, the convention contains proposals for management training. The Federation organized training for commercial managers at newspapers aimed at introducing new methods to increase readership.

The SNPM is the major trade union of professional journalists in public and private media. It is managed by an elected national bureau that elects a national committee, and the union has elected branches in several Moroccan cities. The SNPM is represented in the executive committees of the International Federation of Journalists and the Arab Federation of Journalists. In recent years, it lobbied the government and the parliament to reform the press code, and has campaigned for collective bargaining. This agreement was adopted in 2005 by the government and many private media, ensuring a minimum salary for

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.

journalists, a pension scheme, and other economic and social rights. The SNPM also intervenes when freedom of expression and press freedoms are violated. It organizes seminars and workshops to raise awareness about freedom-of-expression issues and to train journalists. The SNPM has released public statements calling on media professionals to adhere to the principles of professional journalists.

A number of NGOs are active in defending freedom of expression, including the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights, the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, and the Lawyers Association. The Moroccan branch of Transparency International is also engaged in advocating for a law on access to information. A number of national coalitions were formed in 2005 to defend freedom of expression and support journalists. Among these are the Collective for the Defense and Promotion of the Public Service Broadcast and the Committee for the Support of Prosecuted Journalists. These coalitions are not well structured and intervene occasionally on press-freedom issues. However, NGOs also participate in reviewing media legislative frameworks and proposing alternative laws and regulations to the government and parliament. The promotion of media freedoms in Morocco is still not structured around full-time advocacy. Most people involved are volunteers and in Casablanca and Rabat, and there is sometimes resistance to dialogue from government and parliament.

The High Institute for Information and Communication (ISIC) is one public institution that provides training for journalists. It accepts students on a competitive basis, and the students then spend four years learning journalism and communication in theory and practice. Fourth-year students are required to spend two days per week at a media outlet as trainees. Three private institutes of journalism are concentrated in Casablanca, but media managers have mentioned the poor language abilities and lack of practical skills of these graduates.

One of the problems facing the professional development of journalists in Morocco is the lack of professional training that would allow journalists to upgrade their skills. Most print media do not have any training programs for their staff and are reluctant to allow their journalists to take advantage of the rare training opportunities even when free. Public broadcasters and the national news agency, MAP, have their own internal training programs, but they are basic and target entry-level journalists. Training for career journalists or managers is rare, although there are many small training centers that provide courses on

human-resources management, marketing, accounting, technology, and so on.

Newsprint is imported and is in the hands of the private sector. However, some panel members said the newsprint market is opaque, as some newspapers are allowed to import more than what they need so that they can resell it on the black market or to other printers. This practice was endemic in the past with the partisan press and has extended to some private media. According to the press law, a unit inside the Ministry of Communication should normally control the use of newsprint by newspapers, but this unit has never been activated.

Printing is a free enterprise in Morocco. In 2005, there were 200 private printing houses and several state-owned and semi-public printing houses. Only a dozen printing houses specialize in printing newspapers. Some political parties have their own printing houses where they print their publications, such

as the Istiqlal party and the Socialite Union of Popular Forces. Some private newspapers also operate their own presses, like *Le Matin* and *l'Économiste*. Printers are not allowed by law to print banned publications, and some have come under pressure to cease printing publications that oppose the authorities. For example, *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* was obliged a few years ago to print in France. The regional press suffers from the lack of printing outside of urban areas.

The Internet providers are privately owned. The main Internet provider is Maroc Telecom, owned by the French company Vivendi Universal (51 percent), the Moroccan state (34.4 percent), and private shareholders. In December 2004, Maroc Telecom had 104,800 Internet subscribers, of which 57 percent used broadband. The second, much smaller provider is Wanadoo (Maroc-Connect), owned by Miditel.

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MSI Participants

Salah Sbyea, editor-in-chief, *Sawt An-Nass* daily newspaper

Mustapha Laraki, editor-in-chief, *Al-Ittihad Al-Ichtiraki* daily newspaper

Chakib Ben Omar, producer, national public television TVM

Bachir Znagui, member, National Committee of the National Press Syndicate

Ahmad Ifzaren, director, *Al-Khadra Al-Jadida* regional weekly (Tangiers)

Driss El Ouali, director, *Sadae Taounate* regional weekly

Mohamed Berrada, president and director general, Sapress Distribution Company

Mohamed Sabri, newspaper distribution expert

Malika Malak, journalist, Al-Houra Television

Noouaydi Abdelaziz, lawyer and human-rights activist

Omar Lachhab, Arabic-language editor, Maghreb Arab Press

Omar Lebchirit, journalist, *As-Sahifa* weekly

Abdelmouneim Dilami, president and director general, l'Économiste Group; president, Publishers Federation

Moderator

Bachir Znagui, CMF MENA

MOROCCO AT A GLANCE

GENERAL

- **Population:** 30.6 million (2004 est., World Bank)
- **Capital city:** Rabat
- **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Arab-Berber 99.1%, other 0.7%, Jewish 0.2% (www.nationsencyclopedia.com, 2006)
- **Religions (% of population):** Sunni Muslim 99% (www.nationsencyclopedia.com, 2006)
- **Languages (% of population):** Arabic (official), Maghribi Arabic dialects, Berber dialects, French (often the language of business, government, and diplomacy) (www.nationsencyclopedia.com, 2006)
- **GDP (purchasing power parity):** \$50.1 billion (2004 est., World Bank)
- **GNI per capita (purchasing power parity):** \$1,520 (2004 est., World Bank)
- **Literacy rate (% of population):** male 63.3%, female 38.3% (2004 est., UNICEF)
- **President or top authority:** King Mohamed VI (since July 30, 1999)
- **Next scheduled elections:** 2007 parliamentary elections (Chamber of Representatives)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- **Number of publications:** 438 publications—280 in Arabic, 151 in French, six in Tamazight, and one in Spanish (Ministry of Communication, 2005)
 - **Newspaper circulation statistics:** 300,000 total (Sapress)
- Arabic dailies *As-Sbah* (60,595) and *Al-Ahdath* (48,250) (Office of Justification of Diffusion, 2005)
- **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
 - **Number of broadcast outlets:** SNRT is composed of TVM terrestrial, the educational channel Al-Rabi'a (the Fourth), Al-Maghribiyya (the Moroccan), a joint venture with 2M catering to Moroccans living abroad, and As-Sadissa (the Sixth), a religious television station. 2M is a regional station based in the city of Laayoun in the Sahara area. The public radio network is made up of one national and 10 regional stations. Medi 1 (in Tangiers) and Radio Sawa are private broadcasters.
 - **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** \$262,444,482.90 (Ministry of Communication, 2005)
 - **Number of Internet users:** 3,500,000 (www.internetworldstats.com, 2005)
 - **News agencies:** MAP (Maghreb Arab Press)

