

# WORKSHOP



## **The Media's Role in Shaping Political Culture in the Middle East and North Africa**

Hosted by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

Monday, 25 June 2012, 2:30 – 4pm

The Arab Spring powerfully uprooted several long-standing authoritarian governments in the Middle East and North Africa, led to elections in Tunisia and Egypt and motivated some states to initiate reforms. A free and responsible media have been and are still crucial in helping the Arab states on their path to democracy. But while social media played an important part in the uprisings, they do not seem to be able to promote active political participation, generate real leadership and form alliances, leaving a gap between the virtually connected youth and the obsolete political institutions.

So what role do both traditional and social media play in the process of shaping a new political culture in the Middle East and North Africa? What needs to change in the political and societal framework so that they can assume their role? What is the perception of Arab media in comparison with Western media in this process? What is different in how social media are used to shape the political culture after as compared to before and during the uprisings? How are the new regimes handling the media? And what effect does the change in the political

landscape have on the training of journalists and the quality of news reporting?

Participants representing civil society, politics and the media from Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco will discuss these questions and analyze the situation in their respective countries, offering interesting insights and perspectives.

**Shahira El Rafei**, Senior Editor, Al Ahram Newspaper, Cairo, Egypt

**Oraib Al Rantawi**, Director of Al Quds Center for Political Studies, Amman, Jordan

**Lina Ben Mhenni**, Blogger, Activist, Correspondent for Global Voices, Teacher of Linguistics at Tunis University, Tunis, Tunisia

**Omar Abassi**, PhD Student and Researcher in Political Science, Administrator at Ministry in Charge of Relations with Parliament and Civil Society, Member of Istiqlal Party, Rabat, Morocco

*Moderator:* **Anne Allmeling**, Freelance Journalist and Editor

*Organizer:* **Angelika Mendes**, Media Programme Coordinator, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

- **Shahira El Rafei**

Shahira El Rafei is Senior Editor of Al Ahram Newspaper in Cairo, Egypt. From 2007 - 2010 she was Director of the Civil Society Media Project at the American University in Cairo. She also created and was editor of [Mogtamana](#), an internet portal for the civil society in Egypt. Prior to this El Rafei was Managing Editor of the Egyptian business magazine *Al Ahram Al Iktisadi*. Since 1995 she is a frequent commentator on Egyptian TV and radio on economic, social and media issues. In her capacity as a founding member of the Euromed & Media Task Force and the European Neighbourhood Journalism Network she is involved in many initiatives and activities dealing with media issues in the European and Mediterranean region. El Rafei is secretary general of the Austrian Egyptian Association, member of the Egyptian European Business Council and member of the Journalists Syndicate and the Association of Economic Editors. Throughout her journalism career El Rafei has lectured and taken part in national and international conferences in Egypt as well as in major European countries.

- **Oraib Al Rantawi**

Oraib Al Rantawi is the founder and director of the Al Quds Center for Political Studies in Amman, Jordan, which he founded in 2000. Since 1995 he has also been political editor and day to day columnist of Ad-Dustour Jordanian daily. Born in 1955, he studied political science and later lived in Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus and Jordan where he held

positions as correspondent, editor and editor-in-chief with various newspapers, including Falastin Al Thawra, Al Aswaq Jordanian daily and "Strategic Studies" biweekly magazine. As a political writer, commentator and analyst, he has frequently participated in TV programs and written numerous articles for local and Arabic magazines. He is the author of several books on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian cause and democracy in the Middle East. Al Rantawi is a member of a number of associations including the International Organization of Journalists and the Jordanian press association.

- **Lina Ben Mhenni**

Lina Ben Mhenni is a 28-year-old Tunisian blogger and internet activist. Her blog, [A Tunisian Girl](#), gained world wide fame during the Tunisian revolution 2010/11. She keeps writing about issues concerning freedom of speech, human rights and challenges facing Tunisian society. Since 2008, she is also the Tunisia Correspondent for Global Voices. In 2009, after obtaining her master's in English Language and Literature, she started teaching linguistics at Tunis University. From 2001 onwards she has worked as a freelance translator for Arabic, French and English for [Kalima Radio](#), among others, where she also briefly worked as a journalist. Mhenni has received many awards, including the Deutsche Welle International Blog Award and El Mundo's International Columnist Prize.

- **Omar Abassi**

Omar Abassi was born in 1980. He studied political science and received his masters' degree in 2007. From January 2008 until today he works in the Ministry in Charge of Relations with Parliament and Civil Society. From February 2007, he has been president of the forum of research in political science at Université V - Agdal Rabat. He has carried out various research projects and studies, e.g. on "the role of the independent press in Morocco – between media and political opposition" and on "the administrative management of the elections". He is currently preparing his PhD about integrating international norms into Moroccan legislation to advance the fight against corruption. Abassi is a member of the Istiqlal (or Independence) Party's central committee and of the executive office of its youth organization. He has participated in a large number of international conferences and youth congresses.

- **Anne Allmeling**

Anne Allmeling works as a freelance journalist for *Deutsche Welle (DW)* and *Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR)*, concentrating on international politics and the Middle East. She graduated with an M.A. in Modern History and English Language and Literature from Heidelberg University, Germany. Anne received her journalistic training at *WDR*, where she went on to work as an editor and reporter for radio and television. In 2009, she was awarded the Axel-

Springer-Prize for young journalists for a feature on a bomb attack in Lebanon. In 2010/2011, Anne spent six months as a freelance journalist in Muscat (Oman) and Dubai (United Arab Emirates).