

September 10th, 2011

## Media and Political Development

WARREN ALTOUNIAN  
DR. MARTIN BECK  
NIDAA AL SHRAIDEH

**Event:** Round Table Discussion  
**Date/Place:** September 10th, 2011, KAS Amman Office  
**Concept:** Mr. Maher Madieh, Dr. Martin Beck  
**Organization:** KAS Amman, First Media Company

### 1. Program Overview

**Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

First Media Company  
Amman-Jordan

Mr. Maher Madieh

Resident Representative of the  
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung  
Amman-Jordan

Dr. Martin Beck

Minister of Political Development  
Amman-Jordan

HE Eng. Musa Al Maáitah

#### **First Session: Media and the Political Development**

HE Eng. Musa Al Maáitah

Minister of Political Development  
Amman-Jordan

#### **Second Session: The Role of Media in Raising Political Awareness of Youth**

Mr. Emad Nuseir

Journalist  
Jordan Radio & TV  
Amman-Jordan

#### **Third Session: The Role of Youth in Political Participation**

Mr. Emad Nuseir

Journalist  
Jordan Radio & TV  
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### 2. Objectives:

Government reports indicate that 3.8% of Jordan's population is over the age of 65. In contrast, 12.3% of the population of the United States of America, 14.7% of Europe, and 17.2% of Japan's population are over the age of 65. This data shows that the Jordanian society is comparatively young.

Due to their rising political awareness and access to social media, the Jordanian youth are more cognizant of their rights and duties as citizens than before. On September 10, 2011, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman hosted a round table discussion entitled "Media and Political Development," in cooperation with the First Media Company and under the patronage of the Minister of Political Development HE Eng Musa Al Maaitah.

The meeting was attended by distinguished groups of young people that work in various political fields and whom are committed to promoting political participation. In addition, politicians and officials of Jordanian ministries, journalists and media professionals, as well as students of the School of Journalism and Media from various Jordanian universities were in attendance.

In light of the recent events in Egypt, Tunisia, and elsewhere in the Arab world, it is important to enable and support young Jordanians demanding freedom and democracy. As Jordan enters a new era under the constitutional amendments, the exigency for democracy has become even more important to this generation. Media in all its forms plays a pivotal role in the political development of Jordan's national comprehensive reform; it frames the platform which mobilizes public support.

The roundtable's objective was to open and promote discussions about the importance and the role of the media in spreading political awareness throughout Jordanian

society. It was especially focused on developing knowledge of constitutional rights in the younger generation. The presence of media experts and politicians aspired to improve the opportunity for participation in political development and to establish politically active communities in Jordan.

### 3. Details:

**Mr. Maher Madieh**, Director of the First Media Company, opened the round table by thanking the Minister of Political Development, HE Eng. Musa Al Maaitah, to whom this topic is of significant importance. He further thanked all experts and participants as well as Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman with its hosting representative Dr. Martin Beck, for their support and commitment to the topic. Mr. Madieh gave a brief introduction of the program and stressed its importance. In order to achieve the goals of the program it requires the activation of the youth through political participation. Mr. Madieh further emphasized the important role of the media in political development and the dissemination of information in times of political movement. He also noted its role in raising political awareness with regard to popularly supported constitutional amendments.

**Dr. Martin Beck**, Resident Representative of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman, welcomed once again HE Eng. Musa Al Maaitah and pointed to the role of the government in supporting political participation of the Jordanian youth. He emphasized that this generation is able to participate effectively in future community building and in taking responsibility to overcome existing obstacles. Dr. Beck also welcomed the attending experts and lauded the ambitious young activists. Thus, Dr. Beck commended the efforts which were made by the First Media Company, represented by Mr. Madieh, General Director of First Media Company, and

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Mr. Emad Nuseir, news moderator of Jordan. Dr. Beck also underlined the importance of such workshops which are intended to educate young people regarding their rights and duties in Jordanian politics. He stressed the increasing role of electronic media in political culture not only among the youth of Jordan, but around the world.

Thereafter, Dr. Beck added that he welcomes such workshops as they combine youth, media, and political development - three core working areas of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. He noted that these aspirations and visions should be promoted in various ways and utilized in the development of policy. Dr. Beck further added that the major political changes which occurred in Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab countries were seeking reform and started due to the will and determination of the youth. The Jordanian government is today, prepared to receive feasible ideas on the topics of political development and the fight against corruption. With young and conscious intellectuals on one side and the presence of an impartial and free press on the other side, each of us can express his or her opinion uninhibited. Governments should take the desires of its citizens into account and promote them.

**HE Eng. Musa Al Maáitah** concluded the welcoming speeches by thanking Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman and the First Media Company for their efforts. He praised the workshop because of its significant role in giving young people an opportunity for serious dialogue and a forum to present their ideas and aspirations. He mentioned the value of establishing such workshops that are able to sharpen the senses of political rights and duties, as well as the role of the electronic media.

**First Session: Media and Political Development**

Following these remarks, **HE Eng. Musa Al Maáitah** opened the first session of his lecture on "Media and Political Development". He highlighted the close relationship between the media and Jordan's comprehensive reform. He further emphasized the decisive role the media plays in contemporary life through text, audio, and visual formats. Hence, the media has established a crucial role in all facets of political life. It is an instrumental and strategic tool for individuals, societies, and nations in affecting policy and popular opinion.

HE Eng. Musa Al Maáitah further emphasized the importance of cooperation between media organizations, civil society, and international organizations that support and sponsor media forums. This cooperation helps foster the process of democratic transformation. Each plays a role in providing access to the objectives of political pluralism: property, respect of state institutions, the rule of law, justice, and equality. The media has become an instrument for the state to deliver messages of reform, development, and modernization, as well as a voice for the citizens in a participative democracy.

HE Eng. Musa Al Maáitah confirmed that the new election law, which will be discussed in the House of Representatives in the coming period, will introduce powerful parties to the parliament able to represent the diversity of the Jordanian people. HE Eng. Musa Al Maáitah also argued for the role of the youth in the composition of the parliament, necessary in order to represent all parts of society. He added, in this framework that during the process of constitutional amendments, the government was responding to the various expectations of the people regarding parliamentary performance.

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### **Second Session: The Role of Media in Raising Political Awareness of Youth**

During the second session, **Mr. Emad Nuseir**, Journalist at Jordan Radio & TV, gave some words about the "Role of Media in Raising the Political Awareness of the Youth" in educating young people about Jordanian politics. He began the session with a summary of the modern development of electronic media. He noted that almost every citizen has become an essential, active, and influential part of the media through the internet. Online journalism, for instance, has proven to be a valuable asset in following events in real-time, compared to the delay which newspapers and magazines contend with. The rapid evolution of information technology has made freedom of expression much more tangible for the individual. It has further become an important part in crafting social and intellectual culture. Traditional news sources, although limited, still have a significant influence on various political decisions. But they do not have the same impact as social media. This in turn gives leaders an idea about public opinion and, subsequently, gives citizens the ability to have a direct impact on decision makers. The more opportunities and mediums citizens have to access and share information, the more reluctant they are to keep silent on problems within the political system. There is a growing sentiment against misinformation by the political establishment and the internet is a powerful tool in countering it. The electronic media plays an active role in this process of change and democratisation.

### **Third Session: The Role of Youth in Political Participation**

During the third session, "The Role of the Youth in Political Participation", journalist **Emad Nuseir** talked about the role of the youth in political participation. According to Nuseir, the youth frequently participate through social media websites discussing

events regarding their communities and issues of their daily lives. Today they have the opportunity to contact media institutions and offer suggestions or create their own solutions, independent of an established system. This alone might strengthen them and their community in the concept of democracy.

**Mr. Nuseir** pointed out that news websites which allow users to interact support the promotion of democracy in societies. Regardless of their restrictions, these websites succeed in limiting the state's control over the conscience of people. In this context, it should be mentioned that the number of subscribers on the Internet is unsurprisingly low in authoritarian countries, where internet is under firm control, whilst that number is much higher in liberal systems.

The most prominent feature of interactive websites lies in their ability to break the censorship and the tyranny of authorities – hence, they can overcome the prosecution of the state. The revolution of information and communication technologies plays a major role within society. This factor is evident in observing, criticizing, guiding, or supporting decisions made by all elements of government. The internet can be a platform for free writing. It offers much more than the rest of the media: the prospect for exploiting, highlighting, or strengthening existing movements while being receptive to the needs of a society.

### **4. Conclusion:**

Media plays an important role by motivating citizens and intellectuals and raising their awareness for important and sensitive changes in the society. Through participating in this wide and unprecedented margin of freedom, internet media pushes policymakers towards the required change.

The roundtable discussion enriched the general debate. The participants expressed

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their interest in the topic and appreciated the role of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in holding these meetings. This event was published by various online journals and daily newspapers. **Mr. Emad Nuseir** thanked all recommendations that were given by the participants and promised to follow up these outcomes by delivering them to policy-makers and to publish them on the website of the First Media Company (Scoopat).

***HYPER LINKS***

The joint workshop of KAS Amman and the First Media Company received a high coverage from national media. It was covered by several renowned daily newspapers. An overview of the press coverage can be found at:

<http://www.kas.de/jordanien/en/pages/6609/>