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MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

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IREX Europe
19, Avenue Philibert Gaillard
Fleurieu sur Saône
Lyon
France, 69250
Tel: + 33 (0) 870 44 65 86
www.europe.irex.org

IREX
2121 K Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20037
USA
Tel: +1 202 628 8188
www.irex.org

Project managers: Mike de Villiers, Drusilla Menaker, Dalen Todd

Editorial support: Drusilla Menaker, Mike de Villiers, Joe Raffelberg

Layout: Xavi José

Printer: Pereda Impressor S.L

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IREX EUROPE

IREX Europe is an international nonprofit development organization specializing in designing and implementing civil society, independent media, education, and Internet access programs.

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.

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.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX – IRAQ

Introduction

Iraq's media have changed fundamentally since the fall of Saddam Hussein. Replacing a tightly controlled propaganda operation are multiple newspapers and broadcasters reflecting a wide array of subjects from a myriad of perspectives. Media outlets now may be privately owned, and journalists are allowed to ask questions and publish dissenting views. Satellite dishes, printing presses, and international media are legal for all, and the Internet can be freely accessed.

However, the assessments of Iraqi media professionals participating in the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) process show 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 citizens' information needs and contributes to government transparency and accountability.

The first MSI conducted in Iraq shows that the plurality of news sources is viewed as the strongest feature of the country's nascent media sector. Iraqis have many ways to get information now, although most of the new media outlets are highly partisan. Censorship, both overt and self-imposed, as well as little experience in balanced and accurate reporting, result in weak journalistic professionalism. While there is legal basis for press freedom in the new but as yet evolving Constitution, the lack of a regulatory framework and a chaotic judicial system leave journalists with little confidence that media independence will be protected. The government and political leaders lack commitment to putting free-press principles into practice, and society at large is not yet protective of media freedom.

The weakest element of the media sector shown by the MSI, however, is the lack of the business management skills, professional associations, advocacy organizations, and industry services needed to build a strong media. Media outlets remain viewed primarily as propaganda tools, albeit for a wider range of interest groups, rather than businesses supported by advertising and built on credibility and customer service. Advertising, distribution services, and market research are barely present as tools for the strategic development of media companies. Journalists and managers seeking new skills, professional support, or advocacy for press freedom find few resources in the weak industry and trade associations and few professional development opportunities.

As the MSI panelists noted, these weaknesses are typical of media systems undergoing complete transformations. And they are all the more understandable considering the extraordinary insecurity with which journalists—and all Iraqis—must cope. The death toll among media workers continues to mount, and every day on the job brings a wide range of risks.

The MSI is designed to offer a comprehensive gauge of a nation's progress toward the goal of a professional and sustainable independent media sector. The MSI methodology uses quantitative and qualitative means to assess the degree to which a country's media system meets five objectives:

- Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.
- Journalism meets professional standards of quality.
- Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.
- Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.
- Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.

The MSI represents the contributions of more than 50 Iraqi journalists, editors, media managers, and civil society activists. Three panels were regionally based, reviewing the media systems in the northern and southern areas of Iraq and in Baghdad. The fourth panel represented a national perspective and evaluated the Iraqi media sector as a whole. All panelists were Iraqis, and they analyzed the media system in which they work as it serves their country. This initial assessment for Iraq provides a baseline; subsequent annual implementations will detail in what areas there has been progress, or regression.

The MSI is a resource for journalists, media managers, free-press advocates, policymakers, development professionals, and donors seeking to strengthen the media—a goal increasingly recognized as fundamental to advancing good governance, transparency, poverty reduction, economic development, gender, health, and other development priorities.

IREX prepared the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) methodology in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a tool to assess the development of independent media systems over time and across countries. IREX staff, USAID, and other media development professionals contributed to the development of this assessment tool.

The MSI assesses five "objectives" in shaping a successful media system:

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

2. Journalism meets professional standards of quality.

3. Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.

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

5. Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.

These objectives were judged to be the most important aspects of a sustainable and professional independent media system and served as the criteria against which countries were rated. A score was attained for each objective by rating seven to nine indicators, which determine how well a country meets that objective. The objectives, indicators, and scoring system are presented below.

The scoring is done in two parts. First, a panel of experts is assembled for the country, drawn from representatives of the country's media, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, and others involved with the development of the media.

Panel participants are provided with the objectives and indicators and an explanation of the scoring system. Each panelist individually reviews the information and scores each objective. The panelists then assemble to discuss the objectives and indicators, and to devise combined scores and analyses. The panel moderator, an expert media analyst from the country, prepares a written analysis of the discussion, which is subsequently reviewed and edited by IREX representatives locally and internationally.

Objectives and Indicators

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

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.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

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).

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

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.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

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.

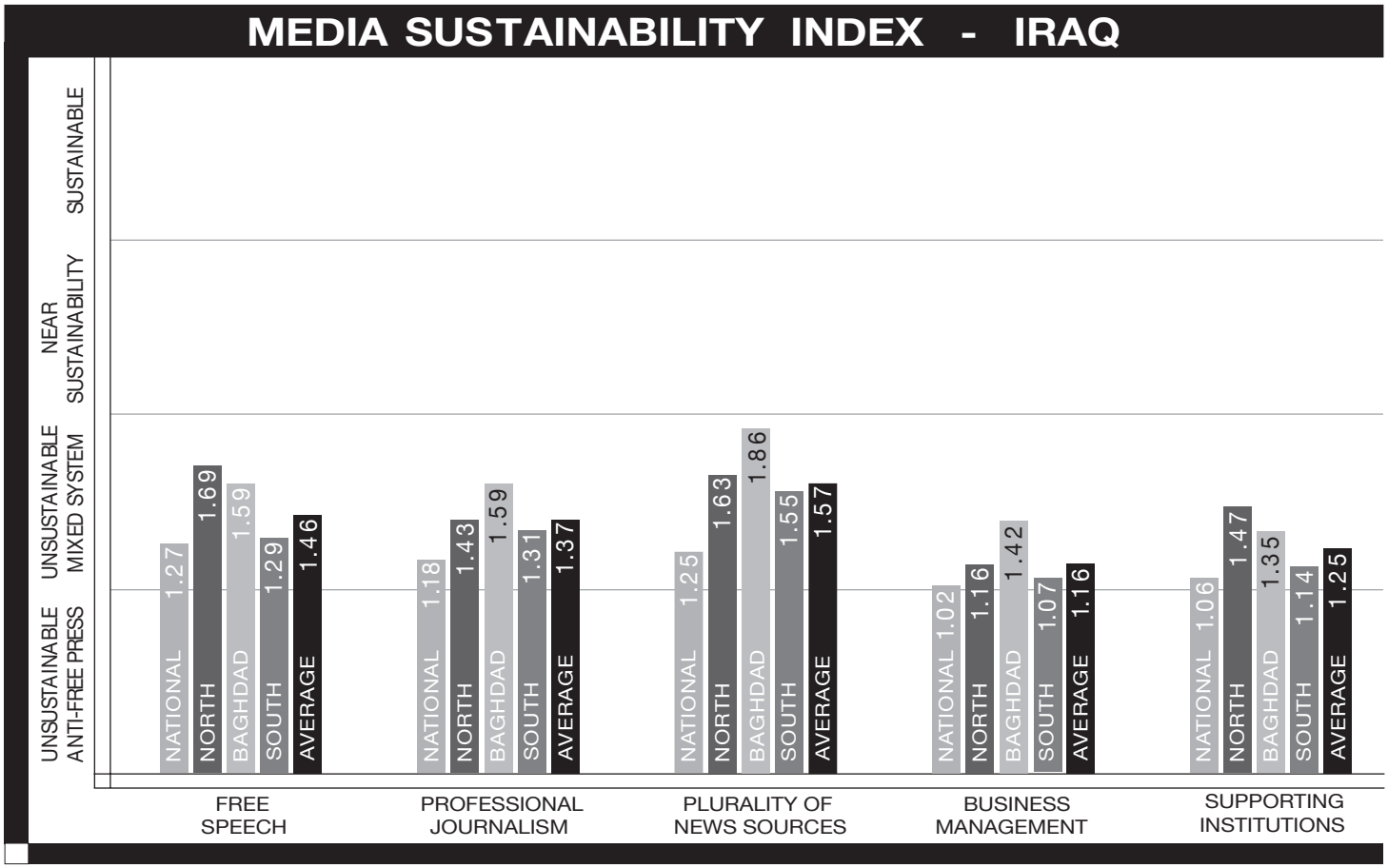
> NGOs support free speech and independent media.

> 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.



Indicator Scoring

Each indicator is scored using the following system:

0 = Country does not meet the indicator; government or social forces may actively oppose its implementation.

1 = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not actively oppose its implementation, but business environment may not support it and government or profession do not fully and actively support change.

2 = Country has begun to meet many aspects of the indicator, but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces.

3 = Country meets most aspects of the indicator; implementation of the indicator has occurred over several years and/or through changes in government, indicating likely sustainability.

4 = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; implementation has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion, and/or changing social conventions.

Objective and Overall Scoring

The averages of all the indicators are then averaged to obtain a single, overall score for each objective. Objective scores are averaged to provide an overall score for the country. IREX interprets the overall scores as follows:

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.

MSI - IRAQ NATIONAL

The tightly controlled media system functioning as a propaganda tool to extol the virtues of Saddam Hussein's rule of Iraq is gone, 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.

However, as shown by the assessments of Iraqi media professionals participating in the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) process, 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 from a national perspective, the MSI panelists scored the country's overall progress at 1.17, meaning it minimally meets the objectives required for a strong and professional media system. Segments of the government and the legal system work against media freedom, and it is too early to judge the sustainability of initial progress in journalistic professionalism, increasing availability of news sources, media business management, and establishing supporting institutions.

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, Iraq 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 the regulatory framework for broadcasting is not in place. The Iraqi Media Network's transformation from state media to true public-service outlets insulated from political pressure remains incomplete. In 2005, there were more than 200 newspapers published regularly in Iraq, and more than 15 satellite television channels and 30 radio stations.The MSI panelists describe a media sector that is pluralistic but partisan, with media 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 there are resources 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 for building audiences are meager and little used.

The darkest shadow cast over Iraq's media is 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

National 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 has yet to be developed, and society has not fully grasped 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 against a backdrop of unresolved insecurity and political turmoil, a new and untested Constitution, and much work remaining to establish regulatory mechanisms.

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 fledgling 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 the 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 that 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."

> ***"Is killing a journalist because of his opinion less important than offending religious leaders or politicians on air on TV?"***

The media professionals on the MSI panel were concerned about the suspension of laws—particularly 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 October 15, 2005, referendum has yet to be elaborated through the drafting of regulations, execution of various provisions, or testing of its provisions in courts. Mohammed Sahi Awad, an investigative reporter at the *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 that it 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 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 the 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."

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) documented at least 22 journalists and three media workers killed in action 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 a higher toll, but all agree that the majority of the victims were Iraqi.

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.

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 on December 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 that 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.

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, is far from complete. 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 ground 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 Sultan 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 Gharib 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 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

National 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 upon, 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 the *Al-Sabbah* newspaper, part of the government-backed Iraqi Media Network, that 90 percent of citizens support closing Al-Jazeera offices in Iraq. Self-censorship remains commonplace among Iraqi journalists, even after the lifting of the official government controls on the media, the MSI panel said. Religious and tribal traditions have strong holds, as does the influence of the community in which the journalist lives and works. 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 because of 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, because of religious requirements.

"We need free and honest media, 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."

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

National 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.

Newspaper circulation is primarily an urban phenomenon in Iraq, with rural areas relying more on radio and satellite television, the MSI panelists said. 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 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."

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 is particularly 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.

"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."

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 parliamentary 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),

Aliraqnews, and Iraqsound, 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 they concern 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.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

National 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 being 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."

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."

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 establishing a condition that each must sell a specified number or face unemployment. It has turned out that some editors are better selling advertising than in journalistic work, but the development of specialized advertising staffs clearly differentiated from editorial functions is not well advanced.

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. However, 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 only 100 Iraqi dinars, 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 no use of market research or other strategic planning tools to build audiences or improve business performance. All the resources spent in this regard are concentrated on administering the newspaper, the panel said. There are firms that offer advertising services, but they do no work to develop their industry. No organizations exist for measuring broadcast viewership.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

National Objective Score: 1.06 / 4.00

Plurality and private ownership in Iraqi media is so new that no industry associations have yet formed to represent the interests of publishers, owners, and top managers. 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 Syndicate was formed. In April 2003, a second Iraqi Journalists Union was established. Neither of these organizations has proved to be a defender of media professionals' 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 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 that provide 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, 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. The need, however, far outstrips the number and duration of these programs, and security concerns limit expansion of programming. 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.

MSI: NORTHERN REGION (SUMMARY)

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 with a degree of stability and international protection. This gave the media sector greater opportunity to develop. Although satellite television channels, local radio stations, and newspapers were established and the environment was relatively freer for the press, only a few outlets in Kurdistan could have been considered independent. By far the majority were under the control of the administrations dominated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). After the ouster of Saddam Hussein, Kurdish leaders asserted even greater self-rule politically, and the media sector continued to expand rapidly. However, according to the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) regional panel, the most limiting factor for the media in northern Iraq continued to be control by political parties and the politicians' desire to use the outlets as tools of propaganda. In part, this phenomenon had origins in the Kurdish struggle for self-rule. But it continues today even as autonomy increases and economic development expands in the region, panel members said.

There are exceptions: *Hawlati*, a weekly founded in 2002, is among the newspapers presenting itself as independent in the north, and diversity of information sources also is bolstered by expanding use of the Internet. But the MSI regional panelists put the overall ranking for the sustainability of the region's media at 1.48, indicating minimal meeting of media sustainability objectives, with segments of the power structures and legal system opposed to a free media and professionalism underdeveloped. The MSI panelists considered the weakest feature to be the business management of the outlets (1.15), while giving the highest ranking to the free-speech indicators (1.69) and the plurality of news sources (1.63).

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Northern Objective Score: 1.69 / 4.00

The MSI panel members agreed that the laws in force in northern Iraq, including the Law No. 10 of 1993 that 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 possible problems—being fired, imprisoned, or even killed for trespassing on certain "red lines." The key 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 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 discontent among citizens, she said.

"There is no legal protection for journalists ... only the presence of a representative from the Journalists Union to keep the accused company in court."

There may be some space for freedom of expression in practice, but journalists cannot be sure that it will be upheld in court in a given case. "The legal provisions of the legal text comply with the international criteria of human rights," said Abdulrazzaq Ali Mahmood, the director of the political programs at Kurdistan TV, the satellite broadcaster of the KDP in Erbil. "When applied, however, they are contravened completely. There is no legal protection for journalists … only the presence of a representative from the Journalists Union to keep the accused company in court."

The most common form of aggression against journalists is blackmail, the panelists said. 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. There is little expectation that attacks on journalists or infringements on their rights will be investigated or prosecuted because many involve influential forces, the panelists said. 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*.

Most participants agreed that the law does not pose obstacles for those seeking broadcasting licenses, but again 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 weekly in Erbil.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Northern Objective Score: 1.43 / 4.00

The control of the political parties over the media outlets leaves little space for the journalists to check the credibility of the information they get, the panel concluded. "We hear or read about how foreign journalists comply with professional criteria," said Faris Khalel Mohammed, editor of the monthly *Al Hewar* magazine in Mosel. "In order to maintain their credibility, foreign journalists give only the smallest signs of cordiality to officials in their countries. Contrary to this, we find some of our journalists receive gifts of land 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, panelists agreed.

Wages are higher at partisan and government media, compared with independent outlets. The salary of a journalist in a partisan outlet may reach $300 monthly, whereas the wages of a private one may be as little as $75. As a result, some work at more than one media outlet at the same time.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Northern Objective Score: 1.63 / 4.00

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 in northern Iraq, the MSI panelists concurred. However, Kurdistan's mountainous topography imposes limits on newspaper distribution and terrestrial broadcasting.

In Erbil, there are two daily, nearly 100 weekly and monthly newspapers, and one monthly magazine, panelists said. In Sulaimaniya, Abdulrazzaq Ali Mahmood, director of the political programs at Kurdistan TV, said more than 120 publications are issued. However, circulations are rather limited. Despite a regional population of about 5 million people, the Kurdistani Nuwe of the PUK and Kahbat of the KDP do not exceed 4,000 copies each a day, according to panelist estimates. *Hawlati*, the weekly based in Sulaimaniya, is owned by a businessman and is seen as relatively independent within the Kurdish context. It claims a circulation of 15,000. However, its editor resigned in late 2005 and formed a competing independent weekly, *Awene*, which debuted at the start of 2006 with a claimed circulation of about 6,000 copies.

The partisanship of the media and societal taboos limit the degree to which the media tackle social issues, panelists said. Sexual issues are among the most hushed. Baland Mustafa Omar of Radio Nawa said that when he reported on the sex trade, "The religious scholars in mosques condemned the article in which we interviewed prostitutes."

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Northern Objective Score: 1.16 / 4.00

In Kurdistan, media still is not generally considered a business. The media are seen mainly as means that serve political aims and as platforms for the parties or government, and these entities do not think of investing in the media sector to turn it into a professional, revenue-producing undertaking. The MSI panelists said the party leaderships confine the 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, TV commercials are designed and prepared outside of Kurdistan. The panel reported that there are no specialized market research studies conducted to build advertising. There also are no independent organizations conducting ratings or circulation measurements. There are government and private printing presses, but newspapers do not have their own facilities. There is only one distribution company, Kurdistan Co., for newspapers, magazines, and books. It distributes to book shops in the cities, and customers come to these venues to buy their papers.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Northern Objective Score: 1.47 / 4.00

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 governmental educational institutions do not fully meet the needs for journalistic studies, with one department at the University of Sulaimaniya and another institute in Erbil. Journalism training courses are very few, and mostly held for a few days only. Out-of-the-country scholarships are limited, and officials who work in the Ministry of Information or are close to the parties tend to get them, panelist said.

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. However, the government exerts no control over Internet access.

MSI: BAGHDAD REGION (SUMMARY)

Baghdad rooftops are now dotted with once-forbidden satellite dishes. Its 6 million people once had 15 newspapers, all controlled by the state, but now can choose among well over 100 publishing very different material. Radio and television options are multiple, and Internet cafés increasingly common, if still expensive and sometimes difficult for women to access. The regional Media Sustainability Index (MSI) panel assessing the Baghdad-area media sector ranked this plurality of news sources to be its strongest aspect with a score of 1.86, minimally meeting the standards of this objective and moving toward the first stages of attaining sustainability. The overall ranking for the Baghdad region was 1.56, however, indicating minimal meeting of media sustainability objectives, with power structures and the legal system opposed to a free media and professionalism weak. The MSI panelists considered the lack of supporting institutions for the media to be the most acute problem for the Baghdad media sector, with a score of 1.35 for that objective.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Baghdad Objective Score: 1.59 / 4.00

The MSI Baghdad regional panel agreed that there is little in the way of legislation that provides protection for journalists. The panelists noted that Articles 433 and 434 of the Penal Code of 1969, still in force, consider defamation and libel by the media a crime, with the possibility of three years of imprisonment if there are aggravating circumstances. According to Article 136, such aggravating circumstances can include libel or defamation by the editor-in-chief or attempts by journalists to blackmail those they are writing about. Muhammad Sahi, a journalist at the independent daily *Ad-Dustoor*, said this poses a real threat and described his own experience: A July 2005 article he wrote on administrative corruption in a ministry prompted a suit claiming 1 million Iraqi dinars (about $680) in damages. Unable to pay the sum, the editor-in-chief offered an apology to the minister, who then referred the case to criminal court. Despite evidence of the truth of the report, the journalist said, the court ruled against him and the case remains pending. The panelists also noted the impunity with which crimes are committed against journalists. The case of Mohamed Haroun, the Union of Iraqi Journalists general secretary shot in October 2005 while driving in Baghdad, has not been resolved, for example.

The panel said that there are many obstacles to accessing information, and government institutions may trade information for positive coverage. It is readily apparent that media outlets backed by parties siding with the government have better access than independent or opposition ones, panelists said.

The panel agreed that there are no real barriers to becoming a journalist. Ahmid Abid Al Majeed, editor-in-chief of the daily *Azzaman* newspaper, said that this has led to deterioration in professional standards. But the panel also noted that it has allowed the emergence of numerous talented journalists who would have had no opportunity to work during the previous regime.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Baghdad Objective Score: 1.59 / 4.00

Journalistic professionalism has not matured, panelists agreed, and there is bias and inaccuracy in the reports. However, they said, this is to be expected in a transitional period, and it also has given readers the opportunity to understand the differences among newspapers of higher and lower quality. Ethics codes have not been agreed upon. Practices such as charging fees for covering events or accepting gifts have emerged, and panelists said editors do not necessarily set a high standard for their staffs.

> ***"Inside each one of us, there is a policeman who watches our movements and behaviors. Fear has not gone since the change in regime."***

Self-censorship is widespread, with journalists avoiding conveying criticism about any group in any way related to their outlets. 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."

Up-to-date technology is reasonably available at Baghdad media outlets. Panelists said some is left from the former Ministry of Information while more has been brought in recently since import barriers have been lifted and taxes canceled.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Baghdad Objective Score: 1.86 / 4.00

Baghdad news consumers have a wide choice of information sources, and panelists agreed on the ability of media outlets to cover events relatively completely. Publications are relatively cheap and easy to get for capital dwellers, though low incomes keep some from buying a daily paper. There is a wide choice of satellite and radio channels covering Baghdad and neighboring governorates.

Government media are considered somewhat biased at times and not to reflect the views of all sectors of society, according to some panelists. More broadly, media outlets tend to convey the perspectives of their sponsors in their content, although readers generally do not know precisely who the owners are. With no copyright law enforced and the Internet increasingly available, journalists have begun to plagiarize, and newspapers depend increasingly 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

Baghdad Objective Score: 1.42 / 4.00

Media management is weak in Iraq, with the editor-in-chief often also serving as the director general supervising all administration, marketing, and general management. Market research is not used, panelists said, with most publications political creations aimed at pushing the views of their founders. Overall, the media industry is in its infancy, with virtually all outlets newly established since the fall of the former regime.

Advertising in particular is in its early stages. Most media professionals are unaware of the importance of advertising in generating income, and also do not know how to attract advertisers. Some ministries and companies do not advertise

in newspapers that criticize their political viewpoints, or may seek to influence editorial policy, panelists said. Media outlets tend to rely more on parties, factions, or business interests for sponsorship, rather than seeking revenue through commercial advertising.

Independent newspapers suffer particularly from weak finances and the inability of their managers to work in the market. This has forced some to stop printing in spite of their high professional and technical standards, the panel claimed.

Humza Ali Al Jazery, an advertising executive from Al Hwar Co., said there are only two distribution companies and that they may use their hold on the market to go as far as influencing editorial content.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Baghdad Objective Score: 1.35 / 4.00

The panel viewed institutions supporting the professional interests of independent media as particularly weak. This included trade organizations representing media owners and professional associations for journalists. The Union of Iraqi Journalists was established in accordance with Law No. 178 of 1969 and is seen as being an extension of the previous regime. The panel had a low opinion of the capacity of the Iraqi nongovernmental organization community active in the media field to provide real services for journalists. It also viewed education programs for journalists to be very limited and receiving little support from the government. Dhamia Hassen Al Rubaay said graduates of the College of Information have little opportunity for practical training, and many media outlets will not support efforts from staff to secure training. Some will not cooperate with international organizations that are providing training.

Presses have entered the country since the fall of the previous regime, and these are now being used at private printing houses for the majority of publications. Older government presses were largely destroyed during the war.

MSI: SOUTHERN REGION (SUMMARY)

Media outlets have spread across the governorates of southern Iraq since the change of regime. 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 TV and increased terrestrial broadcasting, including Al-Mirbad, an independent outlet with satellite TV 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 accessing information, and there are perhaps 50 Internet cafés in Basrah alone and 30 in Nasiriyyah. The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) regional panel for southern Iraq evaluated this new media plurality with a score of 1.55 as the strongest feature of the media sector in the region. Overall, the sustainability of southern Iraq's media sector was put at 1.27 by the MSI panelists, who considered the weakest element to be the limited degree to which effective business management of the media ensured editorial independence, scored at 1.07.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Southern Objective Score: 1.29 / 4.00

The MSI panelists generally agree that there is little correlation between existing legislation related to the Iraqi media, and the reality of daily working conditions. The greatest pressure on journalists is exerted by the region's political factions, which are closely tied to tribal allegiances. Panelists described how focused fear of the state has been replaced by multiple demands of parties, religious leaders, tribes, sheikhs, businessmen, and even individual citizens.

"In the southern governorates, we undergo great pressures because the citizens know the journalist and he cannot use pen names," said Nazar Abdul Wahid, who represents the *Al-Sabbah* daily in Imara. "He has to shut up to avoid probable troubles." The killing of journalists and other crimes against them as well as official detentions and harassment cause little concern among the public, panelists said. Protection comes mainly from the backing of powers within the political establishment.

Information access is not equally available, and bribes or presents may be necessary. Majeed Mahmood Al Brekan, a correspondent for Basrah TV, said public officials do not consider themselves obligated to be accountable and personal connections are necessary. "I can know the news of the assassination of any person through knowing a person who works in the mortuary," he said. Some officials give preference to television because it offers greater recognition than print or radio. The lack of news agencies in southern Iraq also reduces information flows, panelists said.

Internet plagiarism is a new problem, with Yasir Jasim Qasim from Basrah Radio saying that some newspapers "have become printouts of the Internet." Access to the profession is open, which some panelists found problematic: "Now it has become the employment of all and sundry," said Ahmed Kareem Ahmad, a correspondent from Al Iraqiya TV.

The lack of broadcasting regulations to replace Order No. 66, which opened the airwaves after the US invasion, has led to licenses granted without planning for the sector's sustainable development and problems with frequency interference, said Saad Nadum Jassim, director of Al-Mirbad Radio.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Southern Objective Score: 1.31 / 4.00

The panel agreed that most journalists do not verify sources of information and don't have much experience in doing this. Journalists may be biased or may fear publishing controversial information. "Officials do not yet comprehend tolerating differences in opinion about matters of public welfare," said Saad Nadum Jassim of Al-Mirbad Radio. "Some officials think that any journalist who covers activities of his office is trying to get him out of his post." The panel said there is little understanding of ethics codes and no influential journalists' union, and many media workers receive gifts or take hush money. There is censorship and self-censorship, with going beyond an outlet's "boundaries" opening the possibility of firing or lost bonuses.

Public-affairs programming far exceeds entertainment because of interest in Iraq's political turmoil and, some panelists said, influence of religious leaders who disapprove of certain entertainment programming. But some viewers have become bored, and commercial media outlets, such as Al-Mirbad TV, have responded by starting lighter shows. Terrestrial broadcasting and presses are outdated, and newspapers may choose to print in Baghdad, sometimes delaying distribution up to three days and making following news developments more difficult in the south, especially in rural areas. The one printing press in Basrah also is subject to periodic inspections by the security forces, a panelist said.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Southern Objective Score: 1.55 / 4.00

The panel agreed that there are multiple sources of news and information in the south, a reflection of the various political groups and parties that support media outlets. This has helped to create an atmosphere of competition among journalists, but individual outlets do not present viewpoints across the political spectrum. The public generally does not know who owns particular media outlets. Some panelists said the numerous satellite channels reaching southern Iraq may be funded by foreigners or used as tax dodges.

There is local news coverage by terrestrial radio and television, but their range is limited to about 40 square kilometers and broadcast only part of the day. There are no legal restrictions on access to media, including foreign print and satellite outlets, but there are economic limits. Many people do not know how to use the Internet despite the wide availability of Internet cafés. Women generally have less access to Internet cafés because of social customs, and connections in private homes remain relatively rare and expensive, panelists said.

The panel agreed that there is opposition from the government, powerful factions, or editorial managements to coverage of many social issues such as women's rights and tribalism. Faris Jameel from Al-Mirbad TV said the station was unable to raise the topic of orphans because even the government minister responsible refused comment.

The concerns of religious minorities also are sensitive and sometimes forbidden in the main media, though they may be allowed to issue newspapers circulated only in their communities, panelists said.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Southern Objective Score: 1.07 / 4.00

Panelists said the resources for managing media business are very limited in the south. 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. There are also no advertising agencies—only 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. There is virtually no market research.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Southern Objective Score: 1.14 / 4.00

Panel participants agreed that there are no fully functional associations supporting media in southern Iraq. The Broadcasters Society collected fees and issued IDs for members, a panelist said. The Journalists Union in Basrah was viewed by panelists as a partisan organization affiliated with a party, and the Iraqi Journalists Union as ineffective. The panel said that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are formed to accept grants from foreign organizations. "There are tens of such NGOs," said Ro'ya Mahmood Ghalib, an editor at *Al-Sabbah* newspaper. "Not one, however, has offered any support to journalists."

Basrah has no institute that specializes in media studies. A limited number of short-term courses are sponsored by international organizations, but some panelists suggested that these may be too basic or not always targeting the right participants. 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.

PANEL PARTICIPANTS

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, and vice president, Journalists Union, Babel
Ali Mahmood As-Sa'eedy, *member, Al-Haq* newspaper of Human Rights Organization, Babel
Hasan Hady 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

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 Hussen Razaq, *editor,* Al-Hurra TV and 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 Hassen 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,* Iraqi News Agency, Baghdad

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

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, *programme 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 Hassan Badir, *editor, Sumer* newspaper, Nasiriyah
Abdul Hussein Dawood Shenawa, *correspondent, Sumer* newspaper, Nasiriyah
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