

## Law on the Censorship of Works of Artistic Composition

### Definitions

#### Article 1

Unless the text states otherwise, the following terms shall be understood in this law as they are defined below and shall designate what shall be collectively referred to as 'works of artistic composition':

'Film' means any cinematographic or video recording of moving images that is imported into the Sultanate of Oman or originates in the country and any sound recording tape.

'Play' means any performance, recital or other artistic presentation given by an individual or a group of individuals before the public.

### The principle of censorship

#### Article 2

The production, presentation or sale of every film and the production or presentation of every play in the Sultanate of Oman shall be subject to censorship as provided in this law. All forms of advertising, including pictures, symbols or words, publicizing films or plays shall also be subject to censorship. The purpose of this measure is to protect popular literature and preserve the general order and higher interests of the State.

#### Article 3

It shall not be lawful, except with the permission of the Ministry of Information and Culture, to:

1. reproduce or perform plays or similar works for commercial gain;
2. show films or similar works in a public place;
3. broadcast or perform plays or similar works in a public place;
4. sell sound recordings in the form of tapes or discs or the like;
5. export any of the works of artistic composition referred to in the preceding paragraphs that have been reproduced, produced or recorded in the Sultanate of Oman.

The provisions of this article shall be applicable to second or subsequent presentations of films and plays, even if such films and plays were subjected to censorship on the occasion of their original presentation.

#### Article 4

The Ministry of Information and Culture shall have full authority, within its terms of reference, to supervise the production, presentation and sale of films and the production and presentation of plays. Without prejudice to the general application of the foregoing, the Ministry shall be competent to:

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1. authorize the production or presentation of any film or play or the sale of any film;
2. prohibit the production or presentation of any film or play or the sale of any film;
3. order the deletion of any part of any film or play;
4. prohibit anyone under the age of 16 from attending a presentation of any film or play;
5. specify where necessary places where films or plays may be presented;
6. organize procedures for the censorship of films and plays, and in general ways and means of realizing and implementing the provisions of this law.

#### Article 5

Authority to censor films and plays shall be vested in a body to be known as the 'Censorship Board' which shall come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Information and Culture and shall be made up of knowledgeable and experienced persons to be appointed at the discretion of the Minister of Information and Culture. The offices of the Censorship Board shall be located in the capital, and other censorship bodies may be set up elsewhere in the Sultanate if the Minister of Information and Culture so decides.

#### Article 6

The provisions of this law shall apply to every play or film shown or performed in any public place or any building belonging to any private company or public body within the Sultanate, with the exception of:

1. films and plays presented for educational purposes exclusively, or for purposes of cultural advancement, inasmuch as the Ministries concerned exercise a responsibility for censorship in these matters;
2. films and plays presented in places enjoying diplomatic immunity;
3. the Radio and Television Directorate, which is responsible for censorship in respect of various matters in accordance with its terms of reference under the Ministry of Information and Culture.

#### General provisions regarding procedure

#### Article 7

Applications for licences shall be sent by registered letter to the Ministry of Information and Culture (Culture Division), which is responsible for censorship, stating the date and venue for the presentation. The text of the play, or a summary of its subject-matter where a written text is not available, shall be attached to the application. In the case of films, the title of the film, the number of parts and the name of the establishment when the print was made shall be indicated. The Ministry of Information and Culture shall examine every licence application within thirty days from the date of submission. A licence shall be deemed to have been issued if the applicant has not been notified of the decision within the said period.

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#### Article 8

Every foreign-language film shall be provided with Arabic subtitles before being shown.

#### Article 9

Every licence shall be valid for one year from its date of issue for purposes of reproductions and recordings and five years from its date of issue for purposes of presentations and performances. The Ministry of Information and Culture shall have the authority to specify areas where the licence shall be valid. For purposes of exporting, every licence shall be valid for one month and only for the country or countries specified in the licence.

#### Article 10

Every licence shall be renewable for a further period of validity, provided application for such renewal is made 30 days before the expiry date of the licence as set forth in the previous article. The Ministry of Information and Culture shall decide on every such application 15 days before the expiry date of the licence concerned; where it fails to do so, the licence shall be deemed to have been renewed for a further period of validity equal to the preceding period of validity.

#### Article 11

No licence holder shall make any amendment, alteration or addition to any work of artistic composition in respect of which a licence has been issued, or use any material which has been ordered deleted from any such work for purposes of advertising the work in question.

#### Article 12

Every licence holder shall:

1. indicate the serial number and date of the licence in any public announcements about any work of artistic composition in respect of which a licence has been issued;
2. print the words 'licensed for presentation' and the serial number and date of the licence prominently on the work of artistic composition.

#### Article 13

The Ministry of Information and Culture may withdraw a previously issued licence at any time where new circumstances make such action necessary. The Ministry may subsequently re-issue the licence in respect of the work of artistic composition concerned, without exacting any fee, after effecting such deletions, additions or amendments as it may deem appropriate.

#### Article 14

Fees shall be charged in respect of all works subject to censorship under this law. The Ministry of Information and Culture, in agreement with the General Directorate of Finance, shall determine the fees chargeable for examining every work of artistic composition in respect of which a licence application has been made, and for issuing and renewing the licence.

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#### Article 15

Exemption from the fees mentioned in the previous article may be granted in whole or in part, in the case of films imported for scientific, educational or cultural purposes or films imported as part of an exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and other countries pursuant to cultural agreements, subject to the condition of reciprocity. The Minister of Information and Culture shall be competent to decide on such exemptions.

#### Article 16

No publicity for any work of artistic composition as described in Article 2 of this law shall be lawful until a licence has been obtained for that purpose from the Ministry of Information and Culture. For the purposes of this law publicity means the use of any method such as publication in newspapers or advertising by means of a sign made of wood, metal or any other material designed to carry or display a message which can be seen from the public road.

Every licence to advertise shall be non-transferable and valid for the period of time, not exceeding one year, stated in the licence. Advertisers who have hitherto been unlicensed shall, within six months of the date of coming into force of this law, apply to the competent authority for the licence referred to above.

#### Article 17

It shall not be lawful to establish premises for the presentation of films or plays, except with the approval of the ministries competent to ensure that health and sanitation conditions are satisfactory, that appropriate measures have been taken to maintain the safety and peaceable enjoyment of the public, and that suitable technical equipment has been provided. The Ministry of Information and Culture shall be empowered to inspect such premises to ensure that these conditions have been met before granting its approval.

#### Article 18

Appeal from decisions issued by the Ministry of Information and Culture shall lie to a committee to be established by the Ministry of Information and Culture, the said committee to consist of:

- an accredited representative of the Ministry of Information and Culture;
- the Director of the Radio and Television Directorate or his duly authorized representative;
- a legal adviser.

#### Article 19

Every appeal to the committee shall specify the subject of the decision in respect of which the appeal is brought and the reasons for the appeal. Every appeal shall be brought within not more than one week following the date at which the appellant is notified of the decision. Every appeal shall be sent to the committee by registered letter and shall include documentary evidence in support of the appellant's position. Appellants may appear in person before the committee or submit depositions in writing.

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#### Article 20

The committee shall rule on the subject of every appeal within not more than 30 days following the date at which the appeal is brought before it, and its decisions shall be final and binding. Appellants shall be notified of the committee's decisions by registered letter.

#### Penalties

#### Article 21

Every person who

- (a) sells, presents or produces a film or play without a licence, or
- (b) exports films produced in the Sultanate of Oman without a licence, or
- (c) presents a film or play in an unauthorized place, or
- (d) contravenes the provisions of Article 16 of this law,

shall be fined not less than 200 and not more than 500 Omani rials, imprisoned for not less than ten days and not more than six months, or receive both of these punishments.

#### Article 22

In the case of the offences referred to in the previous article, the public place may be closed for a period of not less than one week and not more than one month, and the film or work of artistic composition and the tools and equipment used in committing the offence may be confiscated.

Once the offence has been proved and the necessary official report written, the reproduction, recording, presentation, performance or sale may be stopped by administrative measures, pending legal proceedings before the appropriate law court.

#### Article 23

The Minister of Information and Culture shall appoint persons to be responsible for enforcing the provisions of this law. The said persons shall have the status of legal police and shall be empowered to enter public buildings to ascertain whether those provisions are being observed.

#### Interim provisions

#### Article 24

Within six months after the coming into force of this law, the Ministry of Information and Culture shall rule on applications for licences or renewals of licences in respect of works of artistic composition which have not previously been subject to censorship or in respect of which licences have been issued by the appropriate authorities before the promulgation of this law. During this six-month period it shall be lawful to display, perform and sell such works of artistic composition unless the Ministry of Information and Culture issues an order to the contrary. In such cases, such displays, performances or sales shall cease immediately until a decision is reached on the licence application.

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Decree of the Sultan  
No. 69/77

On the accession of the Sultanate of Oman to the International Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

We, Qaboos bin Sa'id, Sultan of Oman,

Having examined the Law of 1975 on the Organization of the Administration of the State, promulgated by Decree No. 26/75, and amendments thereto,

Having examined the International Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which was adopted at the sixteenth session of the General Conference of Unesco in Paris on 14 November 1970,

And having regard to the public interest.

Do hereby issue the following decree.

I

The Sultanate of Oman shall accede to the International Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit, Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property referred to above.

II

The Minister of National Heritage shall apply the provisions of the above-mentioned convention with regard to depositing the instrument of accession with Unesco.

III

This decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall be effective from its date of publication.

12 Du'l-ga'da 1397/25 October 1977  
Qaboos bin Sa'id  
Sultan of Oman