

# THE 1998 PRESS AND PUBLICATION LAW

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*Following is an unofficial translation of the Jordanian Press and Publications Law of 1998, as published in the Official Gazette on 1 September 1998.*

## Article 1

This law shall be called "The Press and Publications Law of 1998." It shall come into force as of the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

## Article 2

Wherever they occur in this law, the following words and terms shall have the meanings stated hereunder, unless the context indicates otherwise:

- Ministry: The Ministry of Information.
- Minister: The Minister of Information.
- Department: The Press and Publications Department.
- Director: The Director General of the Department.
- Association: The Jordan Press Association.
- Person: The natural or corporate person.
- Publication: Any media in which meanings, words, or ideas are expressed in any way whatsoever.
- Periodical: A specialized press publication of all types that is issued regularly and includes:

A. Press publication, including:

i) Daily publication: A publication issued daily and regularly under a certain name and serial number and is prepared for distribution to the public.

ii) Non-daily publication: A publication issued weekly or at longer intervals, and is prepared for distribution to the public.

B. Specialized publication: A publication specialized in a specific area and is prepared for distribution as stipulated in its issuance license.

C. News agency bulletin: A bulletin that is prepared to provide press institutions with news, information, articles, pictures, and drawings.

- Journalism: The profession of preparing, editing, and issuing, and distributing press publications.
- Journalist: Every person registered as member of the Jordan Press Association and takes journalism as a profession in foreign press, and other news media correspondent: Every person, of any nationality who practices journalism by dealing with non-Jordanian publications and other news media.

- Printing Press: The place and equipment used to produce publications of various types, forms, and in all their stages. This definition does not include printing machines, typewriters, photocopiers and photographic equipment used for purposes other than publication.
- Publishing house: An institution undertaking the preparation, production, and the sale of publications.
- Distributing house: An institution undertaking the distribution or sale of publications.
- Publishing and distributing house: An institution undertaking the work of the publishing house, and the distributing house at the same time.
- Bookstore: A commercial enterprise licensed to sell books, stationery, newspapers, magazines, and other publications.
- Studies and research centre: An institution that conducts or publishes studies and research and gives advice in political, social, cultural, economic, humanitarian, and other areas.
- Public opinion polling centre: An institution in charge of conducting research with the aim of surveying public opinion trends on any specific subject through questionnaires and other methods.
- Translation house: An institution undertaking translation from one language into another, including simultaneous translation.
- Publicity and advertising agency: A bureau undertaking advertisement and publicity, producing their materials and publishing or transmitting them by any means.

### **Article 3**

The press is free and freedom of opinion is guaranteed to every Jordanian. Jordanians have the right to express their opinion freely through speech, writing, photography, drawing, and all other means of expression and information.

### **Article 4**

The press shall freely exercise its task of presenting news, information, and commentaries and shall contribute to the dissemination of thought, culture, and science within the limits of the law and within the framework of preserving public liberties, rights and duties as well as respecting the private life of others.

### **Article 5**

Publications shall respect the truth and refrain from publishing anything that conflicts with the principles of freedom, national responsibility, human rights, and values of the Arab and Islamic nation.

### **Article 6**

Freedom of the press shall include:

- A. Informing citizens of events, ideas, and information in all fields.

B. Enabling citizens, parties, unions, and cultural, social and economic institutions to express their thoughts, opinions, and accomplishments.

C. Obtaining information, news, and statistical reports of concern to the citizen from the various sources, and analysing, circulating, publishing, and commenting on them.

D. The press publication and the journalist have the right to keep secret the sources of their information and news unless the court decides otherwise while investigating lawsuits in order to protect state security, prevent crime, or enforce justice.

### **Article 7**

The code and ethics of journalism are binding on the journalist. They include:

A. Respecting public liberties, safeguarding the rights of others, and refraining from encroaching on their private life.

B. Considering the freedom of thought, opinion, expression, and access to information an equal right for the press and the citizen.

C. Maintaining balance, objectivity, and honesty in presenting press material.

D. Refraining from publishing anything that might incite violence or discord among citizens.

### **Article 8**

Official agencies shall allow journalists to get acquainted with their programs, projects, and plans, and facilitate the task of the Jordanian Studies and Research Center.

### **Article 9**

A. The correspondent of foreign periodicals and other news media should be a Jordanian, Arab, or foreign journalist allowed by the Press Association Council to perform that job with the approval of the minister.

B. Accrediting foreign news media correspondents shall be organized in accordance with regulations issued for this purpose.

C. The journalist is prohibited from committing himself to any work relationship with any foreign quarter contrary to the regulations stipulated in paragraph B of this Article.

### **Article 10**

it is impermissible for any person who is not a journalist to practice journalism in any form, including corresponding with foreign press and other news media, or presenting himself as a journalist. This shall not apply to persons whose work is confined to writing articles.

## **Article 11**

A. Every Jordanian and every company owned by Jordanians shall have the right to issue a press publication.

B. Every registered Jordanian political party shall have the right to issue its press publications.

C. The Council of Ministers, at the recommendation of the Minister, shall grant a license to the following quarters for the issuance of publications:

i) The Jordanian News Agency.

ii) A non-Jordanian news agency, provided that the principle of reciprocity is observed.

## **Article 12**

The application for obtaining a license to issue a press publication shall be submitted to the minister, enclosing the following documents:

A. The name of the applicant, his place of residence, and address.

B. The name of the publication and its printing and issuance place.

C. The times of its issuance.

D. Its specialization.

E. The language or languages in which it is published.

F. The name of its responsible chief editor.

## **Article 13**

Notwithstanding the provisions of any other legislation, the press publication seeking a license must, with regard to its capital, meet the following conditions:

A. Its paid-up capital must not be less than 500,000 dinars, if it is a daily.

B. Its paid-up capital must not be less than 100,000 dinars, if it is not a daily.

C. Its paid-up capital must not be less than 5,000 dinars, if it is a specialized publication.

D. A daily or non-daily published by a potential party is exempt of the minimum capital stipulated in Paragraph A and B of this article.

## **Article 14**

Specialized publications issued by ministers, official departments, universities, and general-welfare private institutions, at the recommendation of the minister, shall be exempted from the capital stipulated in Article 13 of this law.

## **Article 15**

A. The application for the license to establish a printing press, a publishing house, a distributing house, a studies and research centre, a public opinion polling centre, a translation house, or a publicity and advertising agency shall be submitted to the Minister, using the form that has been prepared for this purpose.

B. The statements and procedures for submitting an application to obtain a license, which is stipulated in Paragraph A of this article, including introducing any changes or amendments to the contents of the license, as well as the procedures for giving up the license, shall be specified in the regulations which will be issued under this law.

## **Article 16**

Each institution mentioned in Article 15 of this law shall have a responsible director who must meet the following conditions:

A. He must be Jordanian and permanent resident of the Kingdom.

B. He must not have been convicted of a crime or misdemeanour violating honour or morality.

C. He must be a full-time employee. It is impermissible for any person to serve as responsible director for more than one institution.

D. He must have acquired the academic qualifications, expertise, and experience that are appropriate for the work in the institution he will run, in accordance with the instructions issued by the minister for this purpose.

## **Article 17**

A: The cabinet shall, at the recommendation of the minister, issue its decision on the application for licensing the press publication within a period of not more than 30 days as of the date of submitting the application. The applicant shall be informed of the decision within 15 days of its issuance at the latest.

B. The minister shall issue his decision on the application for licensing a specialized publication or any of the institutions mentioned in Article 15 of this law within 30 days from the date of its submission. The applicant shall be informed of the decision within 15 days of its issuance at the latest.

## **Article 18**

in consideration of conditions stipulated in this law, a license is granted for a press publication to the owner, who can transfer this license in part or whole to others on condition that the Council of Ministers' prior permission is obtained in accordance with the following:

A. That the party wishing to cede ownership and the new recipient inform the minister 30 days in advance of the transfer.

B. The recipient of the license prescribes to the conditions of this law, allowing partial or whole ownership of the publication.

C. The two parties submit a copy of the concession agreement registered at the official quarters to the department. 25

D. Selling people's shares in public share-holding companies issuing press publications shall be exempted from the provisions of this article.

### **Article 19**

A. The license of a publication is deemed cancelled by law under the following conditions:

i) If it was not published within six months from the date of obtaining the license.

ii) If the daily stopped publication for three consecutive months.

iii) If the non-daily, which is published regularly once a week, stopped publication for 12 consecutive issues.

iv) If the non-daily, which is published regularly within an interval of more than one week, stopped publication for four consecutive issues.

v) If its proprietor concedes it wholly or partially, contrary to the provisions of Article 18 of this law.

vi) If the conditions for its licensing have been violated, such as its specialization, without the prior approval of the Minister, provided that it has already been warned twice due to its violation of these terms.

B. The press publications issued by the registered political parties shall be exempted from the terms stipulated in Paragraph A of this article.

### **Article 20**

A. For revenue, the periodical or specialized publication must depend on legitimate sources. It is prohibited from receiving any financial support from any foreign state or quarter.

B. The proprietor of the press or specialized publication must provide the minister with a copy of its annual budget and reports on its revenues, sources of finance, and financial status during the first four months of the next year.

### **Article 21**

The proprietor of a press or specialized publication must meet the following conditions:

A. He must be a Jordanian or a company owned by Jordanians or a registered Jordanian political party.

B. He must not have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanour violating honour or morality.

## **Article 22**

The proprietor of the press publication shall publish very clearly in a prominent place in the publication his name, the name of its responsible chief editor, the place and date of its issuance, the subscription rate in it, and the name of printing press in which it is printed. He shall also inform the director of any change or amendment in that information within 15 days from the date of that change or amendment.

## **Article 23**

A. Every press publication must have a responsible chief editor who must meet the following conditions:

i) He must be a journalist.

ii) He must be Jordanian and permanent resident of the Kingdom.

iii) He must have worked as a full-time journalist for a period of not less than 8 years and must have been a member of the Press Association for not less than three years.

iv) He must not be responsible chief editor in another publication.

v) He must be fluent in the language of the publication in which he serves as responsible chief editor, both reading and writing. If the publication is issued in more than one language, he must be fluent in the main language of the publication and adequately conversant with the other languages.

vi) He must not have been banned by court from practising journalism.

B. The provisions of Paragraph A of this article shall apply to the responsible chief editor of the publication which is published by a political party, with the exception of the provisions of Clauses i and iii.

C. The chief editor is responsible for what is published in the publication he heads. He, together with the writer of an article published in his paper, shall be held responsible for that article.

D. It is impermissible for the periodical to have more than one chief editor.

## **Article 24**

A. The responsible chief editor in the press publication shall lose this capacity under any of the following situations:

i) Resignation.

ii) If he fails to meet any of the conditions stipulated in Article 23 of this law.

B. When the responsible chief editor's post becomes vacant or when the responsible chief editor is absent for any reason, the proprietor of the publication shall appoint a caretaker qualified to perform the chief editor's work for no more than two months and notify the director of this. If the responsible chief editor does not return to work within that period of time, the proprietor must appoint a new responsible chief editor. Otherwise, the minister shall issue a decision suspending the publication until this is done.

C. The proprietor or publisher of the press publication shall be fully responsible for what it publishes until the new responsible chief editor assumes his work.

## **Article 25**

Every specialized publication must have a responsible chief editor who must fulfill the following conditions:

1. He must be Jordanian.

2. He must have acquired an academic qualification that is directly pertinent to the publication's field of specialization, or has certified experience of not less than five years in that field that can be accepted by the Minister upon the recommendation of the Director.

3. He must not have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanour violating honour or morality.

## **Article 26**

A. It is prohibited for a specialized publication to write on any field other than the licensed one or to change the field of its specialization without the prior approval of the minister, upon the recommendation of the Director.

B. Every specialized publication shall provide the Department with three copies of every issue.

## **Article 27**

A. If the press publication publishes an incorrect report or article that contained incorrect information, the person affected by the report or article has the right to reply to the report or article, or demand its correction. The responsible chief editor is duty-bound to publish the reply or correction free of charge in the following issue and in the same place and with the same print in which the original report or article was published in the press publication.

B. If the press publication published an incorrect report or an article containing incorrect information affecting the public interest, the responsible chief editor must publish, free of charge, the written reply or correction which he receives from the competent quarter of the Director in the following issue and in the same place and print in which the original report or article appeared in the press publication.

C. The provisions of Paragraph A and B of this article shall also apply to any foreign press publication distributed in the Kingdom.

## **Article 28**

The responsible chief editor of the press publication may refuse to publish the reply or correction which he received according to Article 27 of this law under any of the following conditions:

- A. If the press publication had already corrected the report or article in an accurate and adequate manner before receiving the reply or correction.
- B. If the reply or correction carried a pseudonym signature or was sent by an unconcerned quarter or was written in a language different from the one in which the report or article was written.
- C. If the contents of the reply or correction were contrary to the law, public order, and public morals.
- D. If received two months after the publication of the news report or article.

## **Article 29**

if the party responsible for any foreign publication distributed in the Kingdom declines to publish the reply or the correction in accordance with the Provisions of Article 27 of this law, the Director has the right to ban the entry of the publication into the Kingdom for a maximum of two weeks. The Minister may extend the ban for a longer period upon the recommendation of the Director.

## **Article 30**

- A. It is impermissible for the chief editor to publish an article for any person under a pseudonym unless its writer has supplied him with his real name.
- B. If a publication published a press report for any quarter against a fee, the publication must mention clearly and frankly that this is an advertisement.

## **Article 31**

- A. The proprietor of a distributing or publishing house must submit to the director two copies of each publication he imports from outside the Kingdom for his approval before distributing or selling them.
- B. The Director may ban the entry of the publication into the country if it contains anything contrary to the provisions of this law.

## **Article 32**

Each publication shall carry the name of its writer and publisher and their addresses, the printing press in which it is printed, and the date of its printing.

### **Article 33**

The provisions of this law on banned import of publications do not apply to the copies that are obtained by government institutions, universities, and scientific research centres, provided prior approval for their importation is obtained from the Director. These copies shall be put in special places for the sake of academic research.

### **Article 34**

The proprietor or responsible manager of the printing press must observe the following:

- A. Keep a record of the names of the periodicals and the number of issues that are printed from each publication.
- B. Keep a record, in an alphabetical order, of the titles of the books that are printed and the names of their authors, as well as the number of issues that are printed from each book.
- C. Produce these records to the manager or his deputy when requested.
- D. Deposit with the department two copies of each non-periodical printed in his printing press before its distribution.

### **Article 35**

- A. Whoever wishes to print a book in the Kingdom must submit two copies of the manuscript of this book to the department before printing it. The Director may allow or disallow its printing if the book contains anything that conflicts with the law, provided he communicates his decision to the author of the book within one month from the date of its submission.
- B. The Director may cancel the license given to any book or manuscript if its author violates any condition of the license by adding or deleting anything. The director may also confiscate all issues.

### **Article 36**

- A. It is prohibited for the proprietor or the responsible manager of a printing press to print any publication whose printing, publication, distribution, circulation, or sale has been banned, or print any publication whose issuance or distribution has not been authorized.
- B. It is prohibited to print any book, leaflet, or material without obtaining a written authorization from its original owner.

### **Article 37**

- A. It is prohibited for the printing press to publish the following in any form:
  - i) What disparages the King and the Royal family.
  - ii) Any information on the number of the Jordanian Armed Forces or their weapons, hardware, locations, and movements unless the publication of such information has been

authorized by a responsible authority in the Jordanian Armed Forces; or any report, picture, or commentary that is harmful to the Armed Forces or security organs.

iii) What infringes on the judiciary or undermines its independence.

iv) What contains any contempt or harm to any of the religions and denominations whose freedom is guaranteed under the Constitution.

v) What harms national unity, incites crime, provokes grudges, or sows the seeds of hatred, divisions, and estrangement among the members of the community.

v) What harms the dignity, personal freedoms, or reputation of individuals.

vii) Articles or reports containing personal insult to the heads of Arab, Islamic, or friendly states, or the heads and members of diplomatic missions accredited to the Kingdom, provided that the principle of reciprocity is observed.

viii) What encourages perversion or lead to moral corruption.

ix) What contains false information or rumours.

x) What contains the proceedings of the secret sessions of the parliament without prior permission.

xi) State secrets and documents that are protected under the provisions of the law.

xii) What leads to shaking confidence in the national currency.

xiii) Advertisements promoting medicine and medical supplies whose publication is not authorized by the Health Ministry.

xiv) All that incites strikes, sit-ins, or public gatherings in violation of the provisions of the law.

B. The entry of foreign publications containing material whose dissemination is banned under the provisions of this law shall not be allowed into the country.

### **Article 38**

Reproduced or quoted press material shall be treated as authored or original material.

### **Article 39**

A. The publication is prohibited from publishing anything pertaining to any stage of the investigation into any case or crime in the Kingdom, unless it has been authorized by the public prosecution.

B. It is prohibited to publish the minutes or deliberations of the courts in any case that is still under consideration and before the final sentence has been announced, except with the permission of the court.

C. The provisions of Paragraph A of this article shall apply to foreign news media correspondents. They shall be subject to the penalties stipulated in Paragraph C of Article 47 of this law.

#### **Article 40**

The proprietor, chief editor, managing editor, journalist, or regular writer of any press publication is prohibited from receiving or accepting, by virtue of his ownership of, or association and relationship with that publication, any financial aid or grant from any Jordanian or non-Jordanian quarter.

#### **Article 41**

Studies and research centres, public opinion polling centres, or anyone working in them are prohibited from receiving or accepting, by virtue of their work, any financial aid or grant or any financing from a Jordanian or non-Jordanian quarter. This does not include the financing of joints ventures, studies, or research approved by the Minister.

#### **Article 42**

A. The Court of First Instance shall look into all crimes that are committed contrary to the provisions of this law, and shall give precedence to all press cases.

B. A lawsuit in the case of periodicals' violations shall be filed against the responsible chief editor of the publication, the writer, or the person who prepared the material in it in their capacity as the initiators. The owner of the publication shall be responsible collectively and equally for the personal rights stemming from those crimes as well as the court expenses. He will not be held responsible unless his actual participation or involvement in the crime is proven.

C. A lawsuit in the case of crimes by non-periodicals shall be filed against their author as the initiator and the publisher as the accomplice. If the author or publisher of the publication is unknown, both the proprietor and the manager of the printing press shall be prosecuted under the criminal law.

#### **Article 43**

The prosecutor general shall investigate any violation of the provisions of this law upon his own initiative or according to a notification from the director or official quarter or a complaint filed by the person harmed from that violation.

#### **Article 44**

The proprietors of printing presses, publishing and distributing houses, studies and research centres, and public opinion polling centres are considered responsible for personal rights and court expenses resulting from sentences issued against their employees in publication cases which are subject to the provisions of this law.

#### **Article 45**

The court which issues the sentence may order the convicted party to publish the text or the summary of the final sentence free of charge in the first issue of the periodical that follows the announcement of the sentence, and also in the same place and with the same print where the contested article was published. The court may, if necessary, order the publication of the text or the summary of the sentence in two other papers at the expense of the convicted party.

#### **Article 46**

A. If the responsible chief editor of the press publication violates any provision of Paragraphs A and B of Article 27 of this law, the lawsuit shall be filed against him by the aggrieved party or the director.

B. If a foreign publication violates the provisions of Paragraph C of Article 27 of this law, the lawsuit against it shall be filed by the director.

#### **Article 47**

A. If the publication violates the provisions of Paragraph A of Article 20 of this law, or if any of those mentioned in Articles 40 and 41 of this law violate the provisions of these two articles, they shall be penalized by a fine of not less than double the amount of money received.

B. If the proprietor of the periodical fails to implement the provisions of Paragraph B of Article 20, he shall be penalized by a fine of not more than 500 dinars. If failure persists, the Court shall suspend the issuance of the publication for any period of time it deems fit.

C. If the periodical publishes any material violating any provision of Articles 37 and 39 of this law, it shall be penalized by a fine of not less than 5,000 dinars and not more than 10,000 dinars. Paying the fine shall not prevent the prosecution of the responsible one according to the valid provisions of the law.

D. The maximum fine shall be doubled if the violations mentioned in Paragraphs A, B, and C of this article are repeated.

#### **Article 48**

A. If the convicted party violates the provisions of Article 45 of this law, he shall be penalized by a fine of not less than 100 dinars and not more than 1,000 dinars. The sentence shall be published at his expense.

B. Whoever brings a publication into the Kingdom in an illegal manner and helps in its distribution shall be penalized by a fine of not more than 1,000 dinars. This is in addition to confiscating the issues of the publication.

C. Whoever violates the provisions of this law, where penalties are not stated, shall be penalized by a fine of not more than 1,000 dinars.

#### **Article 49**

Whoever issues a periodical or runs any of the institutions mentioned in Paragraph A of Article 15 of this law without obtaining a license shall be penalized by a fine of not less than 5,000 dinars and not more than 10,000 dinars.

#### **Article 50**

The court shall decide to suspend the issuance of the publication, while looking into the case for any period of time it deems fit, if it finds that this is in the interest of public welfare and national security.

#### **Article 51**

A. The proprietor of every periodical that is subject to the provisions of this law must adjust his conditions according to the provisions of this law within 90 days from the date of the enforcement of this law.

B. The issuance of any press publication which fails to adjust its conditions under Paragraph A of this article shall be suspended. Its license shall be revoked if its conditions continue to be unadjusted for a period of 90 days after its suspension.

C. If any of the institutions mentioned in Article 15 of this law fails to meet any of its licensing conditions, the Director shall ask it to adjust its conditions within 90 days. Otherwise, he will order it closed. If it continues to be closed for 90 days without adjusting its conditions, its license shall be deemed revoked.

D. The institutions mentioned in Article 15 of this law shall adjust their conditions in accordance with its provisions within a period of not more than 90 days as of the date of its enforcement.

#### **Article 52**

The cabinet shall issue the necessary regulations for the implementation of this law, including specification of the fees which will be charged by the department in the application of this law.

#### **Article 53**

Press and Publication Law No. 10 of 1993 is hereby cancelled.