

LAW ON THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION: JOURNALISTS DESCRIBE THE REALITY



A report on the Law on the Right of Access to Information: Journalists Describe the Reality

Maharat Team:

Rola Mikhael, Executive Director

Layal Bahnam, Program Manager

Bilal Yassine, Journalist and Researcher

Habib Akiki, Media Officer

Law on the Right of Access to Information: Journalists Describe the Reality

© Beirut 2025



1- Introduction

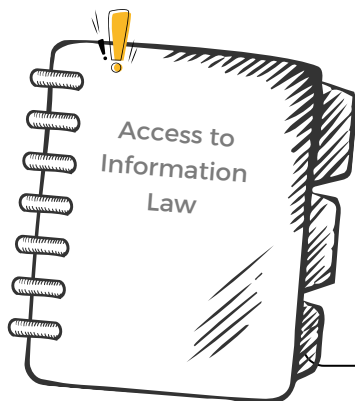


Access to information as an entry point to transparency, good governance, and accountability

Over the past five years, Lebanon has faced a series of escalating crises – beginning with the economic collapse and ongoing financial turmoil, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its health repercussions, then the Beirut Port explosion with its devastating human and material toll, and most recently, the Israeli war on Lebanon, which has brought severe political, economic, and social consequences.

As these crises persist, the international community continues to pressure the Lebanese authorities to implement necessary economic and financial reforms as a prerequisite for attracting funds, projects, and investments to help pull Lebanon out of its crisis and set it on the path of financial and economic recovery. In this context, the Law on the Right of Access to Information has gained importance as a key tool in the reform process. Structural reforms and sectoral governance cannot be meaningfully pursued without full and transparent access to information by the public and all stakeholders, in order to reinforce transparency and allow for oversight of the performance of public authorities and administrations responsible for public spending.

The law guarantees the right of any legal or natural person – regardless of identity or interest – to access and review documents and information held by public administrations without the need to justify the request or explain its intended use. Public administrations are obligated under the law to automatically publish certain categories of information as specified in Articles 6 to 9, and to receive and respond to information requests through designated personnel within 15 days, extendable once if the volume of information is large, as detailed in Chapter IV of the law.



the right of any legal or natural person – regardless of identity or interest – to access and review documents and information held by public administrations without the need to justify the request or explain its intended use.



Access to information as an entry point to transparency, good governance, and accountability

Thus, based on the law, its critical role in enabling oversight of public spending and sectoral management becomes clear. The greater the availability of information, the more it reflects transparency in administration. Moreover, access to information enables journalists to fulfill their role in monitoring public expenditures, thereby reinforcing sectoral governance and reducing administrative corruption — a longstanding issue that has contributed to Lebanon's deep economic and financial crisis, ongoing since 2019.

Despite the law's significance in steering Lebanon toward reforms, transparency, and economic recovery through improved governance, the reality remains starkly different. To date, implementation of the law remains weak and faces numerous challenges that hinder access to the information necessary for accountability and oversight of public institutions and their spending of public funds. Oversight is not possible without access to accurate and transparent information, and sectoral transparency cannot be achieved without guaranteeing information transparency.

This report is based on the experiences of journalists who participated in Maharat Foundation's fellowships over the past two years. These fellowships addressed various themes such as fiscal transparency, governance, reform, accountability, and security coverage. The report draws on the testimonies and experiences of these journalists, whose names have been withheld by Maharat to respect their privacy.

2- Automatic Publication in the Law: Challenges Hindering Journalists' Work

The law upholds the principle of "automatic publication" for all circulars, memos, decrees, and decisions that provide legal interpretations or have regulatory nature. These must be published in the Official Gazette in an accessible electronic format and made available on the official website of the concerned administration, in a searchable, copyable, and downloadable format.

In addition to these documents, the law also requires administrations to publish any transaction involving the disbursement of public funds exceeding 50 million Lebanese pounds, within a month of the transaction (or one of its installments). This disclosure must include: the amount disbursed, the method of payment, the purpose of the expenditure, the beneficiary entity, and the legal basis for the disbursement (such as tenders, negotiated contracts, or implementation of court rulings).

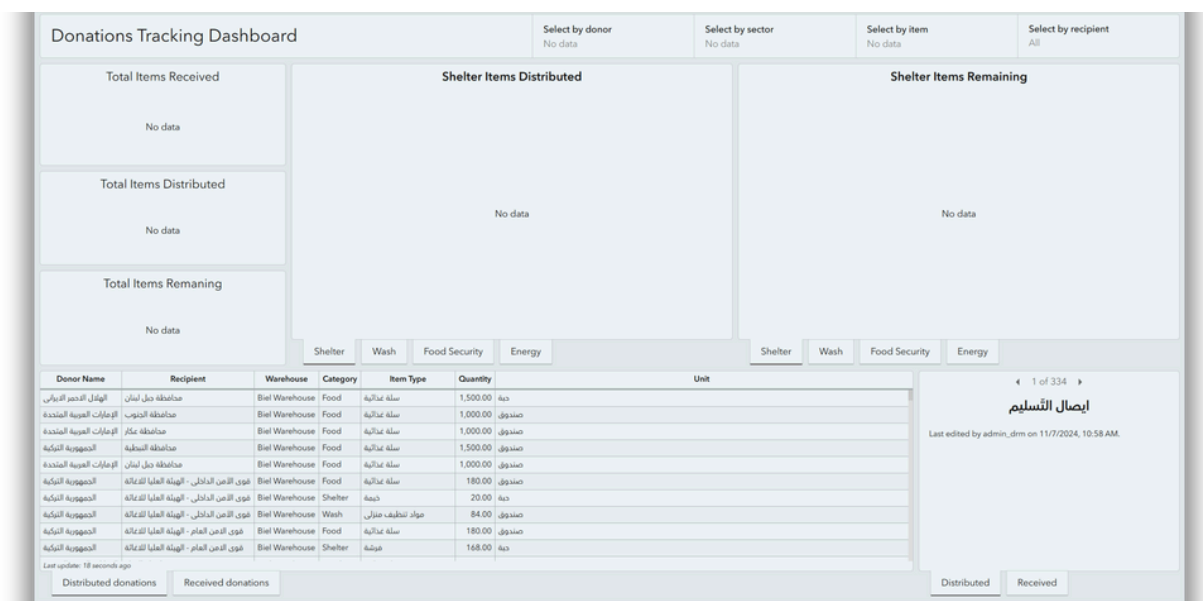


However, several challenges emerge. Journalist Edmond Sassine explains that, "the first and most fundamental problem today is that most administrations and ministries do not comply with the legal requirement of automatic publication, which could otherwise spare journalists and oversight actors the burden of trying to obtain information."

Sassine adds that, "the failure to publish information is often due to a lack of technical readiness – many administrations lack updated websites for publishing this information. And even when information is published, it's often in formats that are not searchable or copyable, which presents an additional challenge, compounded by the generally poor state of public institutions."



Nonetheless, there are some successful examples. For instance, the Public Procurement Authority regularly publishes tender announcements and procurement operations involving public funds, facilitating journalists' efforts to monitor public spending and assess transparency.



Additionally, during the Israeli war on Lebanon, the Government Emergency Committee launched a digital platform designed to track the transparency of aid received by the country. Journalists participating in Maharat Foundation's fellowships, particularly the "Fiscal Transparency" fellowship, used this platform. However, the platform included several shortcomings that hindered access to information, such as the lack of centralized data. It was limited to tracking aid managed solely by the Emergency Committee, while other entities – such as the South Lebanon Council and the High Relief Committee – were also receiving aid. Another key challenge was the absence of a unified measurement system for the aid, as well as the lack of advanced search functionality, both of which complicated the analysis of the data available on the platform.

Despite the existence of such platforms, journalists' use of them remains limited.

”

Sassine Added that “many journalists in Lebanon are either unaware of these platforms or do not use them. As a result, they are not fulfilling their watchdog role over public administration performance. Instead, they tend to work in a traditional manner, lacking the time or institutional support to pursue investigative or in-depth journalism.”

“

This underscores the responsibility of journalists to be familiar with the tools that can help them access information vital for transparency and public oversight. It also highlights the duty of newsrooms to provide basic training for journalists on the relevant laws and tools that can enhance their journalistic role.



Official Gazette: Non-Compliance with the Law

Looking at the history of the Official Gazette in Lebanon, it remained available only in its printed version until 2005, when the website of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers began publishing it, making it accessible to the public.

However, in 2018, Decree No. 2420 was issued, and its first article set the subscription fee for the electronic Official Gazette at 550,000 LBP, meaning it has no longer been free since 2018.

In relation to the Gazette's free access, Article 7 of the Law on the Right of Access to Information stipulates the obligation to publish decisions in the Official Gazette in a free, electronic, searchable, downloadable, and copyable format.

/550.000/ L.L

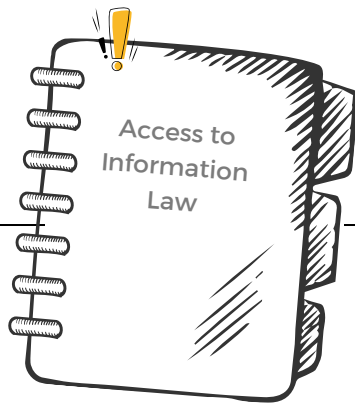
**The subscription fee for the
electronic Official Gazette**

Browsing the Gazette's page on the Presidency of the Council of Ministers' website, one finds that current and past issues are indeed freely available – but paradoxically, they are not searchable, downloadable, or copyable.

Explaining the legal obligations regarding automatic publication in the Official Gazette and its required format, lawyer Tony Mikhael states that the recent amendment to Article 7 of the Access to Information Law requires administrations to publish information on their own websites in formats that are searchable, copyable, and downloadable. However, when it comes to the Official Gazette, the law only mandates that its issues be made available in an accessible electronic format, without specifying the same technical requirements.

Nonetheless, the digital version of the Official Gazette that includes search, copy, and download functions is not available to the public, as it is behind a paywall. This, Mikhael argues, necessitates another amendment to the law to unify electronic publication standards, ensuring that the right to access and electronically search information is fully upheld.

3- Information Requests: Forgotten in Administrative Drawers



According to the law, any legal or natural person has the right to access and review information and documents held by public administrations, regardless of their identity or interest, and without needing to state the reason for the request or its intended use.

Administrative documents include all files, reports, studies, minutes, statistics, directives, circulars, memos, contracts conducted by the administration, and other documents specified in Article 3 of the law.

The law requires a response to the request within an initial period of 15 days, extendable by an additional 15 days if the volume of information is large. Even in cases of rejection, the refusal must be justified in writing. Failure to respond within the legal time frame is considered an implicit denial of the request.



Journalist Ali Awada recounts his unsuccessful attempts to obtain information from the High Relief Commission regarding aid during the war, saying:

“It felt as though they were deliberately avoiding providing the information through legal means, and in the end, they even refused to accept the request, claiming that the information was available on the website.”

He noted that this delay poses a major challenge for journalists.



”

Journalist Azza El-Hajj Hassan also states:

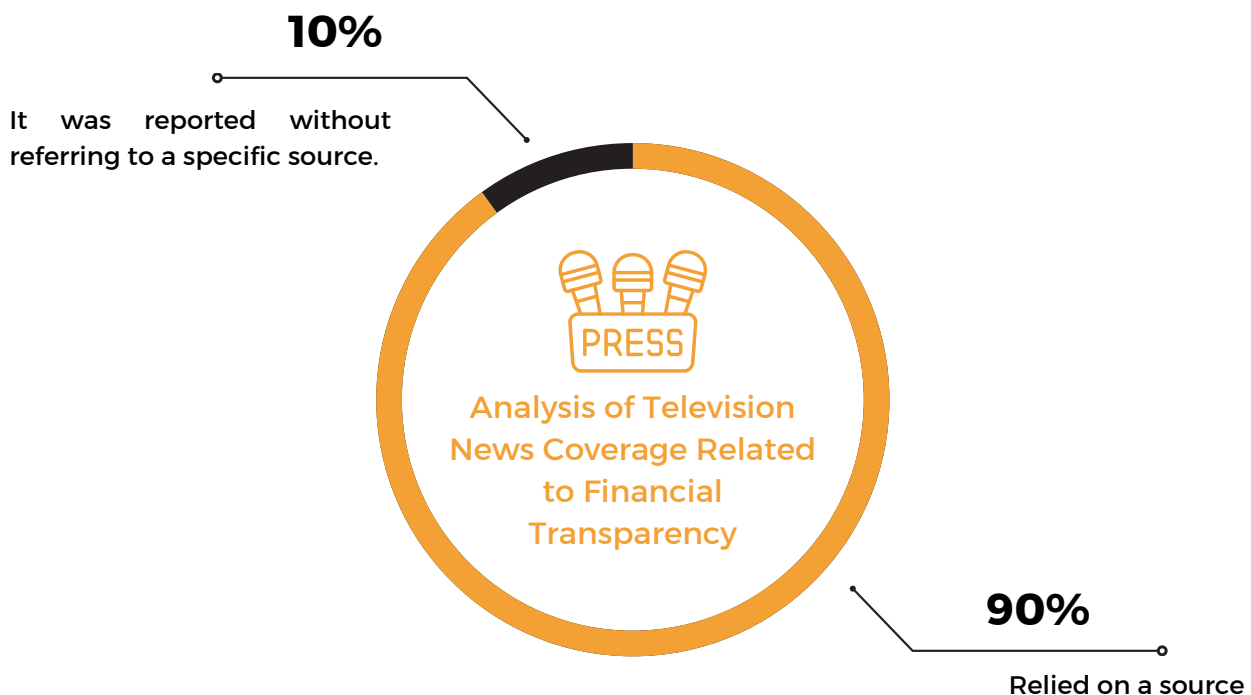
“I submitted an information request to the Ministry of Finance regarding all treasury advances in 2022 and 2023, but I received no response within the legal deadlines. When I followed up, they told me the request had been rejected – without even providing a justification – which forced me to obtain the information through my private sources inside the ministry.”

”

This reveals another major issue in addition to the lack of response from administrations: the failure to justify refusals, which constitutes a legal violation. Article 19 of the law states that decisions to reject access to information must be written and reasoned, and the administration must notify the applicant of the refusal.

It is worth noting that many journalists in Lebanon resort to anonymous sources, especially when covering fiscal transparency issues. This was highlighted in Maharat Foundation’s **study on media coverage of fiscal transparency**, which found that 90% of TV news coverage on fiscal transparency did not cite a specific source, while only 10% relied on identified sources. The percentage was slightly higher in print journalism, reaching 15%.

This occurs at a time when relying on credible, specialized sources is considered an essential part of journalistic practice and a key indicator of professionalism.





Lack of Unified Mechanisms and Employee Training: A Barrier to Implementing the Law

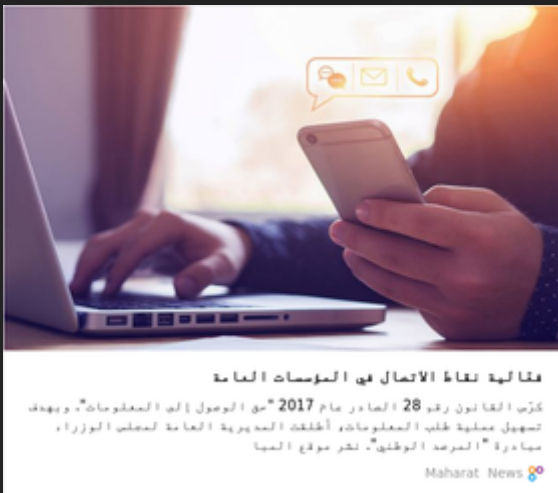


Amid the prevailing disorder in public administrations, the absence of coordination between directorates within a single ministry has become evident. Journalist Maria Mansour recounts her experience: "I submitted an information request to the Ministry of Finance, which was received by an employee. The request concerned tax collection in 2023 and 2024. The request then started circulating from one directorate to another – from the Directorate of Revenues to the Directorate of Treasury – and each time, the reference number changed without informing me."

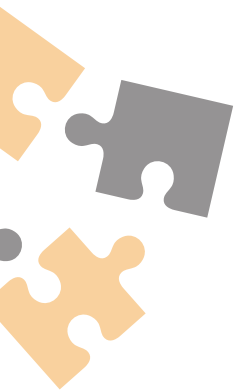
Mansour adds: "The delay caused by the transfer of the request between directorates posed another challenge, as the request was being moved through internal mail rather than electronically. When I asked how to speed up the process, I was told to deliver it myself from one directorate to another – and to this day, I have not received the information."



This highlights the many challenges within public administrations related to the personnel in charge of handling information requests. The law clearly defines the role of designated information officers within each administration: they must keep a register of submitted requests, review requests for information, have the necessary authority to search for and access the requested information, and deliver it to citizens.



Maharat Foundation had previously issued two reports in two consecutive years, assessing the responsiveness of information officers in a sample of public administrations, based on contact details listed on the National Observatory for Access Points and Information. The findings revealed low responsiveness in the first year, and a similar situation in the second year.



This situation appears unchanged today, particularly regarding the human resource challenges in public administrations — either **due to the absence of designated officers for handling information requests, or the lack of training on how to manage these requests** and interact with applicants. This was made evident by the unprofessional responses journalists encountered within administrations — responses that exceeded the powers granted by the Access to Information Law, coupled with the absence of a standardized mechanism across public bodies for handling information requests.



Journalist Judy Al-Asmar describes this challenge when recounting her experience submitting an information request to the Ministry of Energy and Water, saying: "Obtaining information from the Ministry of Energy and Water is like navigating a maze — it's a waste of time, met with inappropriate behavior — and in the end, I left empty-handed."

She goes on to describe an incident she encountered when submitting the request: "On December 27, 2024, I arrived at the ministry's registry office with a request for information about the Ministry of Energy's detailed plan for rehabilitating the water network after the war. But the office was closed. After waiting, I discovered that the employee was absent from her official duties on the grounds that it was a Friday and she had prayers — even though all other government departments operate a full schedule on Fridays."

Al-Asmar adds: "When I returned on January 2, 2025, I found the employee present, and she began criticizing the information request — saying things like, 'You didn't address the request properly to the ministry,' even though I had done so. After several criticisms, she claimed that the ministry does not have the information I requested — clearly overstepping her role as defined by the Law on the Right of Access to Information."

After nearly 25 days, Al-Asmar returned to the ministry and recounts: "The employee told me that my request is ready. After a long search for the paper, it turned out that they had returned my request with a note saying, 'The request should be directed to the relevant administrations and bodies' — even though the ministry is supposed to have a consolidated report on post-war damage, especially since the minister had addressed this damage in a press conference. After much stalling, more than a month passed, and I still received no information."



Similarly, journalist Ali Awada recounts submitting an information request to the High Relief Commission about aid and its distribution during the war, saying: "I went to the Commission and couldn't find a single employee. After the delay, we returned several days later and submitted the request, but we never received any response."



Lack of Transparency and Selective Responses to Information Requests

Analyzing the journalists' testimonies and the outcomes of the information requests they submitted over the past year as part of various fellowships with Maharat Foundation — focused on reform and fiscal transparency — it becomes clear that there is a significant lack of responsiveness from public administrations to such requests.

From the experiences shared by the journalists, another challenge also emerges: the inconsistency and selectiveness in how information requests are handled.



Journalist Ali Awada states: "During my attempt to submit an information request — which I ultimately never received a response to — I realized there is a selective approach in dealing with journalists submitting such requests. If you have the right connections, the process is facilitated. But if you work for a lesser-known media outlet, you're simply ignored."

He adds: "When I told them I worked for Al Arabiya, the treatment changed completely — it became very professional. But once they understood the type of information I was requesting — an in-depth investigation into war aid and its distribution — the employee began mocking me and stalling, and I ended up empty-handed."



Selectivity in the way journalists submitting information requests are treated.

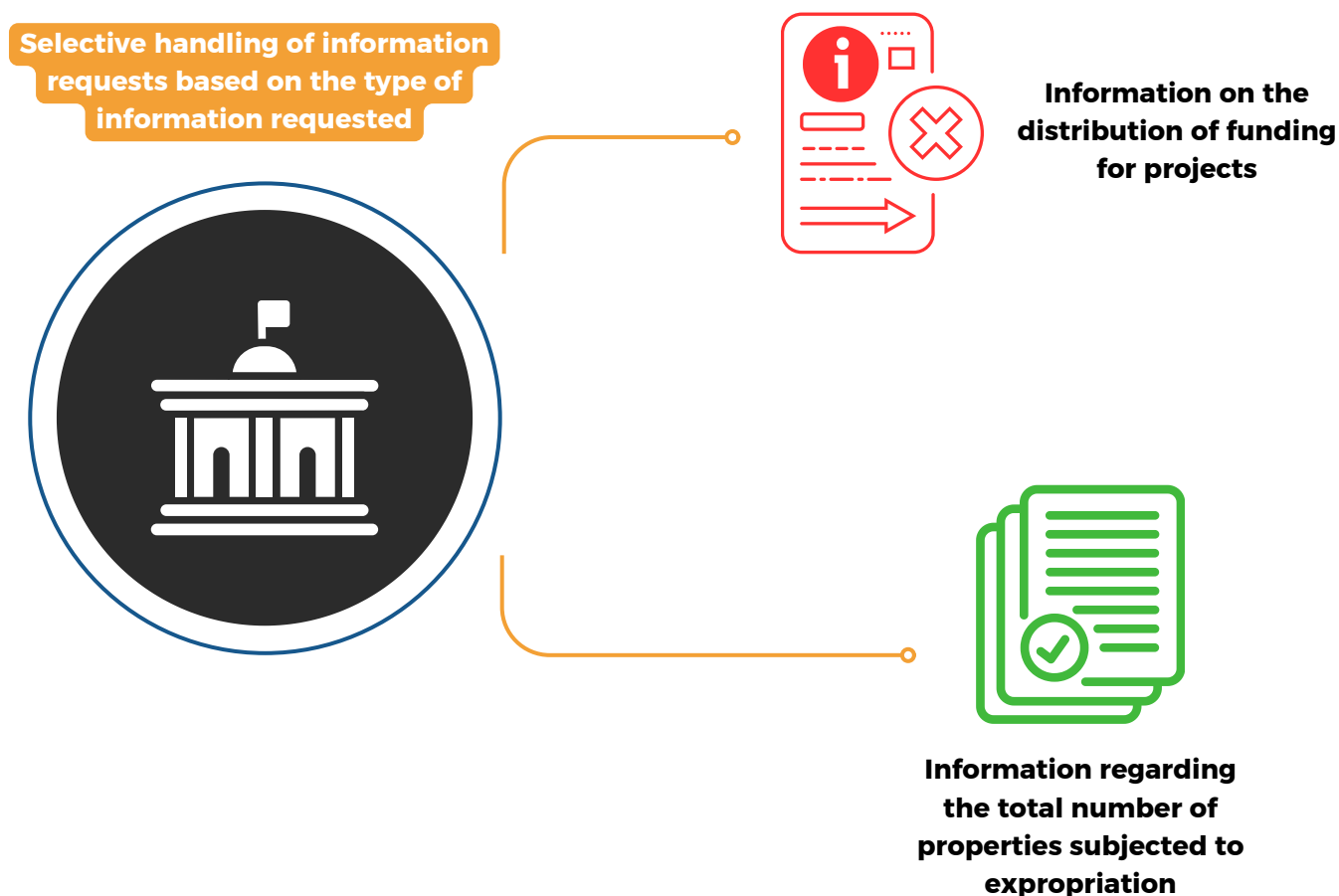


Thus, a journalist's background, media affiliation, and the nature and sensitivity of the requested information constitute additional barriers to the proper implementation of the law.

Similarly, the Ministry of Finance, which refused several information requests — such as the one submitted by journalist Maria Mansour regarding tax collection in 2023–2024 — is the same ministry that positively responded to another request from journalist Myriam Balaa regarding public finance figures and public debt for 2022–2023. According to Balaa, the response was delivered within the legal deadline, the treatment was very professional, and they even apologized for a slight delay.

As another example, the Council for Development and Reconstruction responded within the legal timeframe to a request for information regarding the total number and value of properties that were expropriated for the implementation of the Bisri Dam project. However, it did not respond to other requests, such as those related to the sources of funding for post-July 2006 war reconstruction and the distribution of those funds, documents concerning the share of public investment in government spending for the years 2023–2024, and documents on road and infrastructure projects that were supposed to be completed but remain unfinished.

This indicates that administrations may handle information requests selectively, depending on the type of information requested—something that negatively impacts transparency and undermines journalists’ ability to effectively perform their oversight role.





Monitoring and Analysis of Information Requests Submitted Over the Past Year Within Maharat Foundation Fellowships



19 OUT OF 27

19 information requests were not answered during the year 2024.



3 Information Request

received responses, but outside the legal timeframe (15 days from the date of receipt) and the exceptional period stipulated by law (an additional 15 days)



5 Information Request

out of 27 information requests were answered within the legal timeframe.



Monitoring and Analysis of Information Requests Submitted Over the Past Year Within Maharat Foundation Fellowships



"No response, no response, late response, no response, response, no response"



this phrase summarizes the reality of the Right of Access to Information Law. Through various fellowship projects conducted by Maharat Foundation with journalists from both alternative and traditional media outlets – focusing on tracking financial reforms, wartime aid, post-war reconstruction, and highlighting challenges through in-depth investigations – a total of 27 information requests were submitted to various public institutions and ministries.

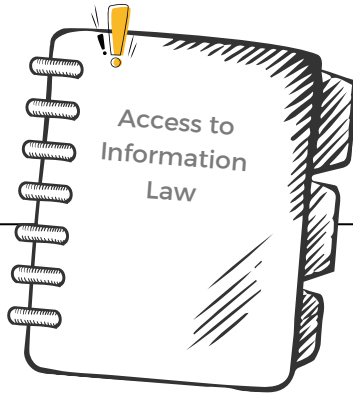
Out of these 27 requests, 19 received no response. These requests were directed to various ministries, institutions, and public administrations, including the Council for the South, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Energy, the Council for Development and Reconstruction, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Public Procurement Authority, the Higher Council of Customs, Électricité du Liban, and the High Relief Committee.

Despite the diversity of institutions approached, all these requests went unanswered. As highlighted in the journalists' testimonies mentioned earlier, the challenges varied – from selectivity and discretionary practices by public administrations, to technical limitations, the absence of unified and transparent mechanisms, and the lack of trained personnel capable of applying the law.

The outcome remained the same: journalists were unable to access information, creating serious obstacles to conducting oversight and holding public administrations accountable for the transparency of their operations.



Responses Outside the Legal Timeframe



Article 16 of the Law on the Right of Access to Information states that: "The employee must respond to the request within fifteen days from the date it was submitted. This period may be extended once for no more than fifteen additional days if the request involves a large amount of information or if access to the information requires consulting a third party or another administration. Failure to respond within this period is considered an implicit refusal of the request."

Three requests were answered beyond both the legal deadline (15 days from the date of receipt) and the exceptional extension allowed by law (an additional 15 days). These requests were addressed to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Government Emergency Committee, and the Council for Development and Reconstruction.



Journalist Carla Semaha states: "I submitted an information request to the Council for Development and Reconstruction on July 11, 2024, regarding the sanitation project in Tripoli. I was told it wouldn't take long, but the opposite happened. After repeated follow-ups and being passed from one department to another without any result, I informed them that I would write in my investigation that the Council did not respond. Only then did they send the reply on September 2, 2024 – which was outside the legal timeframe." This raises serious questions about the administration's seriousness in complying with the Right of Access to Information Law.





Journalist Fouad Jamil recounts:

"I submitted an information request to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers on December 18, 2024, regarding post-2006 war reconstruction, specifically the sources of funding and how it was allocated. I received a response on January 24, 2025, stating that the information was ready for collection." In this case, the response came several days beyond the legal deadline.



Thus, different administrations handle information requests under varying conditions, influenced by factors such as the type of information requested and the administration's seriousness in applying the law. This inconsistency poses major challenges to journalists, particularly due to the absence of a fixed time limit for obtaining information, which results in significant delays in monitoring the performance of public administrations and ensuring transparency in public spending.



Compliance with the Legal Deadline: 5 Information Requests out of 27

Through the information requests submitted by journalists as part of various fellowships with Maharat Foundation focused on fiscal transparency and reforms within different sectors, it was found that only 5 out of 27 requests were responded to within the legal deadline. This indicates the weak implementation of the law by public administrations, and consequently, the weakness of transparency and the effectiveness of oversight and accountability by stakeholders.

The administrations that responded to the information requests are: the Council for the South, the High Relief Committee, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Council for Development and Reconstruction, and the Ministry of Finance.

Notably, some of these administrations ignored certain requests while responding to others. For example, the Ministry of Finance responded to a request for information on public finance performance and public debt levels in 2022-2023, but did not respond to a request regarding treasury advances granted in the same period, raising questions about the ministry's handling of information requests.



Information Request Addressed to Three Administrations: A Different Story for Each

Among the information requests submitted was one by journalist Nourhan Sharafeddine, concerning the quantity of sanitary pads that arrived in Lebanon during the war. The request was directed to three entities – the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Council for the South, and the High Relief Committee— as they were the bodies that received aid during the war.



The handling of the request varied significantly. Sharafeddine recounts that the Presidency of the Council of Ministers did not allow entry, claiming that the emergency committee no longer convenes at the Grand Serail. The High Relief Committee refused to receive the request, arguing that the information was available online. “When I checked what was available online, the aid details were vague and not clearly itemized,” she said.

Sharafeddine added, “I had to submit the request through the Gherbal Initiative on December 24, 2024. I received the information from the Council for the South and the High Relief Committee within the legal deadline – on January 3 and January 10, 2025, respectively. However, the emergency committee provided the information past the legal deadline, on February 25, 2025.”



This case illustrates how the same information request can take different paths depending on the administration involved, raising questions about the seriousness of institutions in implementing the law and the challenges they face in doing so. It also highlights how journalists are sometimes forced to rely on third parties to submit requests, despite the law granting any natural or legal person the right to request information and receive a response within the legal time frame.

4- The National Anti-Corruption Commission: Between Lack of Trust in Oversight Bodies and the Need to File Complaints

Given the weak responsiveness of public administrations to the provisions of the Law on the Right of Access to Information – whether in terms of automatic publication or timely responses to requests – and the many challenges journalists face in accessing information, it is essential to consider the oversight frameworks stipulated by the law.

If any administration fails to comply with the law or to provide information within the legal deadlines, the requester can file a complaint with the National Anti-Corruption Commission, which is tasked with a wide range of responsibilities. These include receiving and investigating complaints, issuing binding decisions, advising relevant authorities on matters related to the implementation of the law, and other duties outlined in Article 22 of the law.

Upon reviewing a submitted complaint, the Commission must issue a binding decision within two months from the date of the appeal – either approving the release of the documents or rejecting it. The decision is then immediately communicated to the concerned administration. If the two-month period passes without a decision, the silence is considered an implicit rejection, enabling the requester to appeal before the State Council.



Responding to the challenges highlighted in this report, the head of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, Judge Claude Karam, stated in an interview with Maharat Foundation that “the administrative body of the Commission has not yet been formed due to logistical issues hindering the Civil Service Board from organizing the recruitment exam, in addition to the low salaries, which make it difficult to attract qualified candidates.”

Within the Framework of Challenges, Judge Claude Karam points out that “the main challenge is that many public administrations and municipalities have not appointed an Information Officer as required by the law. We have sent official correspondence to all administrations stressing the need to appoint Information Officers.”

On the issue of whether information is even available within administrations, Karam explains that “the information does exist, but in many cases it is in paper format. Additionally, many administrations and municipalities – including some relatively large ones – do not have websites. This is due to a lack of sufficient revenues, and in some cases, they are not even aware that they are required to appoint an Information Officer.”





Regarding journalists filing complaints with the Commission, a general lack of trust prevails. Journalist Maya Eid commented, “I submitted an information request but received no results, so I assumed that submitting a complaint to the relevant authorities would also yield no results.”



In response, Karam noted that “since the beginning of its work, the Commission has reviewed around 40 complaints and issued decisions — the majority of which required administrations to release the requested information. However, this number remains low. There is a need to raise public awareness about their right to access information, and to ensure coordination among stakeholders — including public bodies, private entities, civil society, and the media in Lebanon — to strengthen the implementation of the law.”



Karam concluded by announcing that the Commission’s first report on the follow-up and implementation of the law has been finalized and will be published in April 2025. The report includes a broad survey of public administrations and municipalities, identifying key gaps and deficiencies. Based on these findings, a list of recommendations has been prepared for all administrations to guide their adaptation and compliance with the law.

5- Multiple Challenges, One Outcome: No Information

Based on the above, a list of challenges can be identified at both the administrative and journalistic levels, hindering access to information:



Non-compliance with Automatic Publication by Administrations

- Most ministries and public administrations do not adhere to the legal requirement of automatically publishing key information, making it difficult for journalists and citizens to access it easily.
- In cases where information is published, it is often in non-searchable or non-copyable formats, limiting its usability.
- Many public bodies lack updated websites for publishing such information.



Lack of Responsiveness to Information Requests

- Numerous administrations either refuse to receive information requests or ignore them entirely without providing any legal justification.
- Information requests are often "forgotten" in office drawers, forcing journalists to rely on unofficial or indirect sources.
- The legal deadline of 15 days (extendable once) is frequently ignored. Requests are either delayed or not responded to at all, without any explanation.



Absence of a Unified Mechanism for Processing Requests

- Weak coordination between departments within the same administration often leads to lost requests or changes in their reference numbers, making follow-up difficult.
- Reliance on non-digital, manual processes to handle requests causes significant delays in response.



Lack of Training and Designated Staff

- Many staff members responsible for receiving information requests are not trained on how to handle them.
- In some administrations, the absence of employees officially designated for this task results in requests being lost or rejected without justification.



Lack of Transparency and Selective Handling of Requests

- Journalists report that information requests are handled selectively — based on who the journalist is, the media outlet they represent, and the nature of the requested information.



The law does not provide for access to the digital version of the Official Gazette in a searchable, downloadable, and copyable format free of charge.

- The law requires that decrees, decisions, and other information be published electronically and free of charge, in searchable, downloadable, and copyable formats on the websites of the relevant public administrations, in addition to the Official Gazette. However, concerning the Official Gazette, the law does not explicitly stipulate free access to its issues, particularly its indexed and searchable digital version.



Technical and Administrative Challenges Hindering Implementation

- The absence of necessary digital infrastructure prevents effective online publication and submission of requests.
- There are no electronic systems in place to manage and regularly update information efficiently.



Lack of Journalists' Awareness of the Access to Information Law

- Many journalists are not sufficiently familiar with the law, which limits their ability to use it as a tool for accessing information and holding administrations accountable to their legal obligations

6. Recommendations

First: Ensuring the Implementation of the Right to Access Information Law

- **Provide financial and technical support** to public administrations to establish and maintain updated websites that enable the automatic publication of information, thereby enhancing transparency and reducing the burden of handling individual information requests.
- **Digitize public administrations** by developing electronic systems for storing administrative documents in a way that facilitates timely access and responses to information requests within legal deadlines.
- **Issue binding administrative decisions** to mandate the appointment of dedicated Information Officers in all ministries and administrations, and provide them with regular training on how to handle requests effectively.
- **Adopt standardized templates** for submitting and processing information requests to ensure transparency, efficiency, and reduced discrepancies between different public bodies.
- **Establish a centralized electronic registry** within each ministry to document requests and responses, with search and analysis capabilities that can create a database to facilitate oversight and performance evaluation.

Second: Advancing Administrative Digital Transformation and Digital Governance

- **Launch and implement a national digital transformation plan** led by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, based on a comprehensive vision that ensures sectoral integration and aligns with media, education, economic, telecommunications, technology, privacy, and intellectual property laws.
- **Update the digital legislative framework** to keep pace with the evolving digital environment, through the adoption of a modern data protection law that safeguards users' rights against the growing data collection by both the state and the private sector.
- **Balance digital transformation with human rights principles** by adopting policies that reconcile digital security with individual privacy, freedom of expression, and human rights.

Third: Strengthening Accountability and Empowering Social Oversight

- **Support the digitization of administrative documents** and convert them into open data that can be searched, analyzed, and used by the media, researchers, and civil society.
- **Activate the role of the Anti-Corruption Commission** by providing it with the necessary human and technical resources, and launch awareness campaigns targeting citizens and journalists to encourage filing complaints when administrations fail to cooperate.
- **Publish an annual and public report by the Commission** or relevant oversight bodies, assessing the level of compliance with the Access to Information Law and providing clear performance indicators.
- **Create a unified electronic complaint portal** that allows citizens and oversight bodies to submit and transparently track complaints effectively.
- **Establish a follow-up unit within the Ministry of Administrative Development** to monitor the implementation of the Access to Information Law across ministries and public administrations, and ensure commitment to digital administrative reforms.
- **Develop a national framework law for strategic planning**, led by the Council of Ministers, to serve as a foundation for legislation related to administrative and digital reform, ensuring consistency and sectoral coherence in public policy.

Fourth: Training and Supporting Journalists in Submitting Information Requests

- Media institutions must provide **internal training for journalists** on the Law on the Right of Access to Information in order to encourage its use.
- Journalists should be **aware of their rights** as stipulated by the law and **follow up on the progress of their requests**, including filing complaints with the National Anti-Corruption Commission to obtain the requested information and to put pressure on public administrations to take the implementation of the law seriously.

Fifth: Enhancing Public Communication Within Public Administrations

- **Develop a national public communication plan within public administration**, based on principles of transparency and dialogue with citizens. The plan should define the role of each administration in producing communication content that clearly explains policies, decisions, and services.
- **Mandate ministries and public administrations to adopt institutional media strategies** integrated into their annual plans, to be regularly evaluated. These strategies should focus on simplifying information and presenting it in language accessible to the public.
- **Appoint official spokespersons or media communication officers in each ministry**, trained to interact professionally with the media and citizens, with clearly defined responsibilities within the administrative structure.
- **Transform public administration websites into interactive and regularly updated platforms** that go beyond publishing formal statements and provide up-to-date information on public policies, services, procedures, contact details, and complaint or appeal mechanisms.
- **Utilize social media as a dialogic tool**, not just for formal announcements, by sharing interactive content that explains administrative procedures and updates, responds to citizens' inquiries, and enhances transparency during crises or challenges.
- **Develop a unified public communication guide**, outlining key standards for public communication in administrations and offering practical, adaptable templates based on the specific needs of each ministry or public institution.
- **Engage journalists and civil society in evaluating public communication performance of administrations**, through regular surveys or participatory monitoring mechanisms, to build trust and improve communication quality.
- **Integrate public communication as a core component of any reform or digital transformation plan**, to ensure that digitization is not only technical, but also a tool to strengthen transparency and citizen engagement.

At the Level of Public Administrations:

- **Provide necessary training** for administrations and employees on the obligations under the law, including automatic publication requirements, the handling of submitted information requests, and the provision of written justifications for any administrative decision to deny access to information.
- **Ensure financial and technical support** for administrations to create dedicated websites focused on the right to access information.
- **Digitize administrations by supporting and developing systems** for storing administrative documents, facilitating easier access and enabling timely responses to information requests within the legal deadlines.
- **Advocate for making the Official Gazette freely accessible online**, in a format that is searchable, downloadable, and copyable, as mandated by the law.

Maharat Foundation

Address:

Jdeideh, Matn
Lebanon

Contact Information:

Website: maharatfoundation.org

Email: info@maharatfoundation.org



© Beirut 2025
