
MEDIA PLURALISM IN LEBANON

Between Political Influence and the
Promise of Reform



Report on Media Pluralism in Lebanon: Between Political Influence and the Promise of Reform, produced by Maharat Foundation within the project “Mobilize and strengthen the coalition on information and democracy in order to promote the implementation of democratic safeguards in the global information and communication space.”, in partnership with The Forum on Information and Democracy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy paper underscores the importance of media pluralism as a foundation for information integrity and democratic life. While Lebanon appears to have a diverse media landscape, political and sectarian control continues to dominate ownership and content. Outdated media laws, restrictive licensing, and a lack of enforcement mechanisms hinder the expression of pluralistic voices. The national regulatory authority remains politically co-opted and ineffective, with no real independence.

Public service broadcasting, though vital for inclusive representation, suffers from chronic neglect and institutional stagnation. The proposed media law presents a timely opportunity to enshrine pluralism, enhance regulation, and revive public service broadcasting. Drawing on international models such as AVMSD, ARCOM, and OFCOM, this paper sets out key directions for reform. It concludes with targeted recommendations urging the state, civil society, donors, and tech platforms to support the development of a more pluralistic media landscape.

MEDIA PLURALISM: A PREREQUISITE FOR INFORMATION INTEGRITY



01

Information integrity is only achievable with an independent, free and pluralistic media.

According to Reporters Sans Frontieres, media pluralism can either mean a plurality of voices, of analyses, of expressed opinions and issues (internal pluralism), or a plurality of media outlets, of types of media (print, radio, TV or digital) and coexistence of privately owned media and public service media (external pluralism) [1] .

This plurality of editorial lines and analyses enables citizens to confront ideas, make informed choices, and engage meaningfully in democratic processes.

1- Reporters Sans Frontières. (2016). Contribution to the EU public consultation on media pluralism and democracy. European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2016-44/reporterssansfrontiers_18792.pdf

**THE LEBANESE
MEDIA
LANDSCAPE: AN
ILLUSION OF
PLURALISM ?**



02

Lebanon has always been considered a beacon of free speech in the Middle-East region, with a vibrant, open and diverse media landscape, characterized by various newspapers, TVs and radio stations reflecting various viewpoints. However, this apparent pluralism in Lebanon often masks deep issues.

Since the Taef Agreement, Lebanon has lacked a coherent policy or vision for managing media pluralism and diversity. Instead of fostering a pluralistic media ecosystem, broadcasting licenses were distributed in a way that reinforces political and sectarian divisions.

According to Reporters Without Borders, the Lebanese media sector is "controlled by a handful of individuals directly affiliated with political parties or belonging to local dynasties. " [2] As a result, it reflects the country's political structure, which is marked by political and sectarian divides.

A study conducted by the Maharat Foundation in 2021 highlighted that Lebanese traditional media are highly politicized and centralized, which has widened the gap between Lebanese people and traditional media. [3]

However, the digital revolution, coupled with the October 17 uprising, played a pivotal role in the growth of independent content and disrupted the dominance of traditional media outlets. This transformation was driven by the rise of alternative online media platforms.

Nevertheless, legal, financial, and structural challenges have profoundly impacted independent media projects and hindered the development of startups in the media sector. Additionally, the rise of digital platforms provided opportunities but also challenges to media pluralism, as platform design choices, algorithmic content curation, recommendation systems, filtering mechanisms, and the micro-targeting of users with specific content have limited exposure to diverse and plural sources of information. [4]

2- Reporters Without Borders. (n.d.). Lebanon. RSF. <https://rsf.org/en/country/lebanon>

3- Internews & Maharat Foundation. (2021). Media and information landscape assessment: Advancing diverse voices in Lebanon. <https://maharatfoundation.org/media/1943/internews-final-20-10.pdf>

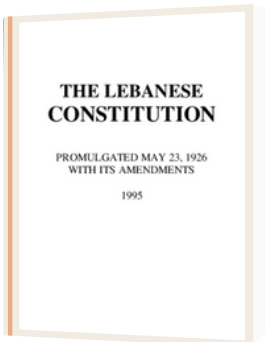
4- Dabbous, D. (2015). Assessment of public service broadcasting in the Southern Mediterranean region. MedMedia Project. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275640772_Assessment_of_Public_Service_Broadcasting_in_the_Southern_Mediterranean_region

IMPEDIMENTS TO MEDIA PLURALISM



03

3.1 Legal and Regulatory Background on Pluralistic Expression



Paragraph (c) of the Lebanese Constitution's preamble stipulates that "Lebanon is a democratic parliamentary republic founded on respect for public liberties, primarily freedom of opinion and belief, as well as on social justice and equality in rights and duties without discrimination."

Additionally, paragraph (g) provides that "Balanced development across regions on cultural, social, and economic levels is a fundamental pillar of the unity of the state and the stability of the system." Moreover, Chapter Two of the Constitution affirms the "equality of all Lebanese citizens in civil and political rights without distinction among them."

The aforementioned provisions, along with Article 13 which guarantees freedom of expression reflect a clear intention to safeguard freedom and pluralism within Lebanon's diverse society. This diversity is manifested in sectarian, cultural, and social pluralism, as well as in ideological currents and media orientations. Diversity has long distinguished Lebanon, shaping its people and constitutional frameworks throughout its history.

While Lebanon's constitutional framework affirms freedom of expression and pluralism, the legal and regulatory systems that govern media in practice create significant structural barriers to media pluralism. These barriers manifest in licensing restrictions, outdated and restrictive laws, and the lack of safeguards against political interference. A further barrier to media pluralism is the lack of transparency and the concentration of media ownership; however, this issue falls outside the scope of this paper. A dedicated analysis of ownership transparency is available in a separate publication.

The Press Law, still in effect today, does not explicitly address the need for pluralistic expression. It operates under the assumption that pluralism is ensured through the aggregate ownership of newspapers by individuals, parties, and interest groups. [5]

5- Sciacchitano, F. (2015). Assessment of media legislation in Lebanon. MedMedia Project. https://lebanon.mom-gmr.org/uploads/tx_lfrogmom/documents/2-1409_import.pdf

However, the current licensing regime restricts access to the print media market. According to Legislative Decree No. 74 of April 13, 1953, no new political publication licenses can be issued if Lebanon already has more than 25 daily newspapers and 20 weeklies. The only legal way to launch a new political newspaper is by acquiring licenses for two existing publications and ceasing their operation permanently. This system favors wealthy and politically connected actors and presents a significant barrier for new political movements or civil society groups seeking media access. [6]



In the audiovisual sector, the 1994 Broadcast Law does make explicit reference to pluralism. Article 7 of the law requires licensed broadcasters to reflect the “pluralistic character of expression and opinions” in their programming. This obligation is further specified in Decree No. 7997/1996 (the Book of Specifications), which requires broadcasters to air at least one political program per week that is objective and avoids presenting a single perspective. While this appears to endorse pluralism, it is noticeable that the concept of pluralism in Lebanese media is interpreted in its most basic form and reflects a narrow approach, falling short of the broader meaning of diversity and pluralism as referenced in Article 13 of the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty Protocol on Public Service Broadcasting, which includes considerations such as sex, ethnic or racial origin, sexual orientation, and so forth.

Additionally, article 10 of the law seeks to ensure access to media by stipulating that license holders must represent all societal groups and cover all Lebanese regions. However, the right to access media is not limited to the public's right to receive information; it also includes the ability to express opinions through these outlets.

6- Sciacchitano, F. (2015). Assessment of media legislation in Lebanon. MedMedia Project. https://lebanon.mom-gmr.org/uploads/tx_lfrogmom/documents/2-1409_import.pdf

Human Rights Committee



It is worth noting that misalignment of the Broadcast Law with international human rights law has been clearly highlighted in the Concluding Observations of the UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR) regarding Lebanon's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), specifically due to the absence of reasonable and objective criteria for the award of licences, which is inconsistent with Article 19.

- **In its 2018 review**, the Committee urged Lebanon to review and amend both the Radio and Television Broadcasting Act No. 382/94 and Decree No. 7997/96, and to establish an independent broadcasting licensing authority with the power to grant licenses based on reasonable and objective criteria. [7]

Furthermore, according to Paragraph 2 of Article 72 of the Electoral Law: "The Supervisory Commission for Elections ensures respect for freedom of expression of various opinions and ideological currents in media programs during the electoral campaign period, by issuing binding recommendations to these media outlets in order to guarantee fairness, balance, and neutrality in the treatment of candidates and lists".

Nevertheless, this law remains insufficient in managing and safeguarding pluralism in the media sector, as its scope is limited to the electoral campaign period and ends with the announcement of election results. This is in addition to the various shortcomings observed in its implementation.

3.2 The Lebanese National Regulatory Authority: Undermined by Political Influence and Institutional Weakness

The National Council for Audio-visual Media was established by the 1994 Broadcast Law. It is entrusted with several responsibilities, including monitoring the performance of media bodies, providing regular reports to the Ministry of Information regarding television, radio programs, and news content, offering recommendations to the Council of Ministers, working on developing new laws and regulations, and conducting studies on licence applications. [8]

The Council has consultative powers, limited to providing “consultative opinions” to the Council of Ministers concerning broadcasting applications, fines and the suspension of licenses. In the end, the Council of Ministers retains the ultimate authority to impose sanctions and make decisions about licensing, including granting or withdrawing licenses. [9] However, the Council lacks independence. Its members are primarily selected along sectarian lines, based on political deals and nepotism, similarly to other Lebanese institutions. [10]

In practice, the Council was widely regarded by media professionals as ineffective and politically co-opted, even at its most active [11]. Additionally, its legal mandate expired more than 25 years ago, rendering it outdated. Hence, it has been unable to play any meaningful role in safeguarding media pluralism in Lebanon.

Reflecting these persistent shortcomings, the UN Human Rights Committee noted in its 2018 review that Lebanon had failed to implement previous recommendations to establish an independent broadcasting licensing authority. Additionally, while there is no legal framework explicitly governing online news outlets in Lebanon, the National Audiovisual Media Council has nevertheless invited them to register with it – a move that exceeds its mandate.

It is also worth noting that as mentioned before, during electoral periods, the Supervisory Commission for Elections is involved in media regulation. It receives requests from visual, audio, print and electronic media wishing to participate in covering the process of voting and sorting along with handing the necessary permits, and establishing codes of conduct for media coverage. It also monitors the compliance of the media with the provisions of the electoral law. However, it lacks resources and does not fully fulfill its role. [12]

8- Samir Kassir Foundation, Media Ownership Monitor Lebanon, 2018, <https://lebanon.mom-gmr.org/en/context/law/followpage00/>

9- Sciacchitano, F. (2015). Assessment of media legislation in Lebanon. MedMedia Project. https://lebanon.mom-gmr.org/uploads/tx_lfrogmom/documents/2-1409_import.pdf

10- Ayoub, N. (2024.). Media regulation in Lebanon: Facts and perspectives. Maharat Foundation. <https://maharatfoundation.org/media/2732/dr-nidal-ayoub-eng.pdf>

11- Ayoub, N. (2024.). Media regulation in Lebanon: Facts and perspectives. Maharat Foundation. <https://maharatfoundation.org/media/2732/dr-nidal-ayoub-eng.pdf>

12- Maharat Foundation, (2022). The Electoral Media Performance During the Parliamentary Elections 2022. https://maharatfoundation.org/media/2288/100322-en_final-tv-monitoring-report.pdf

3.3 Challenges Facing Public Service Broadcasting

Public service broadcasters such as Télé Liban (TL) have chronically suffered from underfunding, mismanagement, and a lack of political will to reform. Since the post-Taef era, there has been no neutral public broadcaster capable of supporting peacebuilding or inclusive representation. Despite TL's mandate to serve the public interest, successive governments have largely neglected it since the end of the civil war, leaving it to operate in a quasi-legal vacuum following the 1994 liberalization of broadcasting.

On March 8th 2002, in compliance with Article 41 of Law No. 383 of 1994 (and following the recommendations of the minister of information and the minister of finance), the Lebanese Council of Ministers issued Decree No. 7576 with the aim of restructuring TL. However, the decree was never fully implemented. TL's board remained in place long after its legal mandate had expired, and successive governments demonstrated their inability or unwillingness to enforce the required reforms. This lack of institutional renewal has contributed to TL's governance stagnation and further undermined its capacity to operate as an effective public service broadcaster. [13]

While the appointment of a new chairman in 2013 brought signs of positive change aimed at distinguishing TL from politically driven private channels, these efforts have been limited and lack systemic support. As noted by media experts, these changes largely reflect the initiative of a single individual rather than a broader policy shift. With no real political commitment to funding or equipping TL to compete with private stations, the broadcaster has lost much of its audience, becoming increasingly irrelevant to the Lebanese public.

Recently, the Minister of Information, Paul Morcos, included the revitalization of TL among his top priorities, highlighting plans to modernize its content and secure international funding.

This aligns with long-standing calls by media scholars and civil society actors, who argue that reviving TL remains vital. With proper investment, independent management, and the creation of a regulatory framework that guarantees autonomy from the Ministry of Information and political interference, TL could still fulfill its role as a public service broadcaster. Its vast national archive and potential for fostering inclusive, pluralistic dialogue make it worth preserving and reforming.

13- Dabbous, D. (2014). Assessment of public service broadcasting in the Southern Mediterranean region. MedMedia Project.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275640772_Assessment_of_Public_Service_Broadcasting_in_the_Southern_Mediterranean_region

**A NEW LEGISLATIVE
VISION:
OPPORTUNITIES IN
THE DRAFT MEDIA
LAW**



04

New Media Law Proposal



A new media law proposal has been before parliament since 2010, when it was submitted by Maharat and former MP Ghassan Moukheiber. It was discussed in the Media and Telecommunications Parliamentary Committee until 2016, after which it was transferred to the Justice and Administration Committee. As part of the latest legislative development, the Parliamentary Committee of Justice and Administration convened on January 9, 2024, to review the media law proposal in light of feedback from the Ministry of Information and UNESCO.

Subsequently, a subcommittee, led by MP George Okais was formed to delve into the proposal and deliver a report.

The revised draft of the new media law further defines media pluralism as a central aim of the regulation, embedding it as a guiding principle in the law's introductory provisions. The draft eliminates the outdated distinction between political and non-political print publications and lifts restrictions on their formation, extending this liberalization to electronic news websites, which will not require restrictive licensing. In terms of licensing for TV and radio, the law introduces a dual mechanism: terrestrial frequency licenses will be granted through a bidding process, allowing for greater transparency and fair competition, while other audiovisual services will follow a simple notification system. It is to note that Lebanon had joined the Regional Agreement for the European Broadcasting Area (Stockholm 1961), as amended by the Regional Radiocommunication Conference (Geneva 2006) in 2007, but did not abide by the obligation to transition from analog to digital broadcasting till date. [14]

14- International Telecommunication Union. (2006). Final Acts of the Regional Radiocommunication Conference for the revision of the Stockholm 1961 Agreement (RRC-06-Rev.ST61). Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.akos-rs.si/fileadmin/user_upload/Final-Acts-RRC06-revizija-ST61.pdf

Crucially, the revised draft includes clear provisions for the formation of a National Media Council, designed to ensure the independence, competence, and financial autonomy of media regulation in Lebanon.

The revised text also proposes a more participatory approach to developing ethical standards, emphasizing collaboration between the Council and media stakeholders.

Regarding public service broadcasting, the draft introduces a transformative vision by explicitly stating that public media should serve the public interest, not function as a government mouthpiece. It includes clear principles promoting diversity and pluralism, and mandates representation for women, children, and marginalized communities.

These positive reforms are particularly significant in a country where media outlets are deeply embedded in political and sectarian interests, and where no independent media council currently exists to ensure balance, diversity, or pluralism. As such, the draft law should be adopted to enable the formation of an independent media council, and support a participatory process for drafting a code of ethics that truly reflects the values of pluralism and inclusivity. Finally, Lebanon must uphold and apply its existing electoral law and institutionalize the role of public media in both the new media law and national political strategy. In a society marked by conflict and division, media pluralism is not only a democratic necessity but a tool for peacebuilding and inclusive representation.

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES FOR NATIONAL REGULATORY AUTHORITIES (NRAS)



05

5.1 Independence and accountability of NRAs: The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)

A key factor in media pluralism is the role of National Regulatory Authorities which must remain independent from political and commercial influences and accountable through clear legal frameworks to ensure their mission.

Concrete regulations, such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) which regulates the audiovisual sector in the EU, are crucial in this regard. Indeed, one of the key elements of the AVMSD focuses on the role of National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs).

While the Member States have some say about the form and the breadth of the sectoral remit of their NRAs, there are three essential features that the NRAs should exhibit: independence, accountability, and quality of conduct. [15]

According to article 30 of the AVMSD, “Member States shall ensure that national regulatory bodies or authorities are legally distinct from the government and functionally independent of their respective governments and of any other public or private body”.

The AVMSD also stipulates that the Member States shall ensure that the competences and powers of the national regulatory authorities or bodies, as well as the ways of making them accountable are clearly defined in law.

They should exercise their powers impartially and transparently in order to achieve the objectives of the directive, in particular media pluralism, cultural and linguistic diversity, consumer protection, accessibility, non-discrimination, the proper functioning of the internal market and the promotion of fair competition.

15- Aslama Horowitz, M. (2024). A balancing act: EU media regulation, co-regulation, and self-regulation in the digital age. Maharat Foundation. <https://maharatfoundation.org/media/2730/minna-aslama-regulation-eng.pdf>

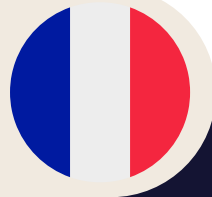
A study of selected European National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) highlights that political independence can take various forms. It may be reflected in the legal designation of the authority as independent, in the independence of its appointed members, and in the agency's financial autonomy. Accountability, on the other hand, can be ensured through a range of mechanisms such as clearly defined regulatory objectives, transparent decision-making, procedural clarity, and regular stakeholder communication. Publicly available reports and periodic performance evaluations are also key tools for ensuring accountability.

While the effectiveness of an NRA depends on its specific national context and legal mandate as well as how stakeholders perceive its role, the study finds that independence and accountability can effectively co-exist. When both are robustly applied, they can mutually reinforce each other and lead to higher-quality regulatory outcomes. As such, regulators should actively pursue stronger independence and accountability standards. [16]

5.2 Overview of the role of Regulatory Authorities in promoting pluralism: France, UK, Germany

To establish an effective national regulatory authority, policymakers can draw from other models in democratic contexts, particularly France's ARCOM, the United Kingdom's OFCOM and state media authorities in Germany.

16- Aslama Horowitz, M. (2024). A balancing act: EU media regulation, co-regulation, and self-regulation in the digital age. Maharat Foundation. <https://maharatfoundation.org/media/2730/minna-aslama-regulation-eng.pdf>



ARCOM is France's independent regulatory authority for audiovisual and digital communication. One of ARCOM's missions is to ensure respect for the pluralistic expression of currents of thought and opinion. This mission requires the Authority to guarantee balanced speaking time for political figures in audiovisual media. [17]

Arcom also ensures that audiovisual media comply with ethical obligations concerning programming, particularly regarding the integrity and independence of information, as well as respect for individual rights, freedoms, and human dignity.

Ensuring a fair representation of the diversity of French society in audiovisual media (television and radio) and across all platforms is an essential mission for ARCOM. Fair representation of women and men on air, as well as combating gender-based discrimination, are also key missions for ARCOM.

Arcom is composed of a board of nine members: its president and eight members, four men and four women. Five distinct authorities make the appointments to ensure their independence and promote diversity in profiles.

ARCOM Initiatives to Promote Diversity Representation:

To promote diversity in audiovisual media, ARCOM has launched two key initiatives: the Observatory for Equality, Education, and Social Cohesion, which brings together experts to address issues such as diversity, gender equality, and media education through regular meetings and proposals; and the annually published Diversity Barometer, which measures the representation of diversity on television.

17- Arcom. Garantir le pluralisme et la cohésion sociale. <https://www.arcom.fr/nous-connaître/nos-missions/garantir-le-pluralisme-et-la-cohesion-sociale>



OFCOM, the UK's independent communications regulator, plays a key role in safeguarding media pluralism. It is mandated to ensure a sufficient plurality of television and radio providers and a broad range of high-quality services catering to diverse tastes and interests. OFCOM enforces media ownership rules to prevent concentration and reviews them every three years. It supports PSB obligations that ensure the provision of trusted and high-quality content, granting regulatory benefits to broadcasters like the BBC. Additionally, it oversees broadcast licensing to maintain a plurality of providers and requires news to be reported with accuracy and impartiality, especially during politically sensitive periods. OFCOM also monitors news consumption trends to inform its regulatory role in maintaining media plurality. [18]

die
medienanstalten



c-State media authorities in Germany

As supervisory authorities, the 14 state media authorities ensure the diversity of opinions, offerings and providers in private broadcasting and telemedia in Germany. They work together on key tasks and projects in joint commissions under the umbrella brand "die medienanstalten". [19]

The 14 state media authorities in Germany are the central supervisory authorities for the regulation of private broadcasting and telemedia in Germany. The core mission of the media authorities is to ensure the plurality of media offerings and opinions, and to protect media freedom.

18- Ofcom. (2022, November 16). Annex 1: Media plurality regulatory framework. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/234823/annex-1-legal-framework.pdf

19- Die Medienanstalten. Key tasks and projects of the Media Authorities. <https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/en/tasks-projects/>

German media authorities play a key role in maintaining pluralism by:

- **Regulating Media Intermediaries:** Ensuring that platforms like search engines and social media operate transparently and without discrimination, given their influence over opinion formation.
- **Overseeing Platforms and Interfaces:** Guaranteeing non-discriminatory access for editorial content providers and ensuring diverse content is easy to find on digital platforms.
- **Designating Public Value Content:** Identifying media offerings that significantly contribute to public opinion and ensuring their visibility on user interfaces.
- **Monitoring Media Concentration:** Preventing dominance in the private television market to ensure a plurality of independent content providers.
- **Supporting Technological Innovation:** Tracking how digitalisation impacts media diversity and guiding developments to align with pluralism objectives.
- **Issuing Broadcasting Licences:** Granting licences for private broadcasters and allocating transmission channels to ensure fair and diverse media representation.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING: A PILLAR OF PLURALISM AND DIVERSITY



06

Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) are indispensable to the promotion of pluralism and diversity. Their unique mandate—to serve all citizens without political interference and pressure from commercial forces—positions them as key instruments for fostering inclusive public discourse. Unlike private media, which often prioritize profitability and cater to specific political or sectarian interests, the role of public media is to reflect the diversity of society and to serve as a platform for all citizens and groups wishing to express their opinions. [20]

According to UNESCO, the defining characteristic of PSBs is that they are protected from interference, particularly of a commercial or political nature, in respect of their governance, budget and editorial decision-making. When guaranteed with pluralism, programming diversity, editorial independence, appropriate funding, accountability and transparency, public service broadcasting can serve as a cornerstone of democracy. [21]

In Lebanon, this role is especially critical given the country's complex sociopolitical fabric. As highlighted in the Media Viability in Lebanon report [22] by DW Akademie, respondents consistently identified government-owned Public Service Broadcasting (PSB)—such as Télé Liban and Radio Liban—as the least partisan sources of Arabic-language news. Their relatively neutral stance is attributed to their governance under a multi-party coalition, which discourages overt political capture. However, despite this neutrality, public broadcasters remain chronically underfunded and nearly invisible in a media landscape dominated by politicized and commercially driven outlets.

20- Maharat Foundation. (2014, December). دليل التنوع: وسائل الإعلام وإدارة النوع. Beirut, Lebanon. <https://maharatfoundation.org/media/2928/media-diversity.pdf>

21- UNESCO. (2008). Media development indicators: A framework for assessing media development. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000163102>

22- Hollifield, A. (2021, May). Media viability in Lebanon: Applying DW Akademie's Media Viability Indicators (MVIs). DW Akademie. <https://static.dw.com/downloads/58220613/dw-akademie-media-viability-indicators-lebanon-2021.pdf>

Yet, public media continue to demonstrate their relevance during key democratic processes. Lebanon's current electoral law guarantees free access to public broadcasters for all candidates—an essential provision for equitable media visibility. Maharat Foundation's media monitoring during the 2018 and 2022 parliamentary elections confirmed that Télé Liban provided the most diverse coverage among all outlets. Notably, Maharat's advocacy helped ensure that women candidates benefitted from this access, reinforcing the role of public media in correcting imbalances in representation.

Strengthening public service broadcasters—both through legislative reform and renewed political commitment—is a strategic imperative for building a just, inclusive, and democratic society. As platforms free from political or commercial pressures, PSBs play a vital role in managing media diversity and transforming societal tensions into opportunities for constructive dialogue. By reflecting the full spectrum of societal voices and promoting freedoms of belief, expression, and participation, public media help defuse internal conflicts, foster democratic values, and encourage mutual acceptance. When pluralism is effectively managed within a unified national framework, it becomes a source of cultural enrichment and civic strength—rather than a trigger for division. In this way, public media not only protect the rights of minorities and promote genuine citizenship but also contribute to long-term social cohesion and stability.

RECOMMENDATIONS



07

FOR THE LEBANESE STATE



- **Adopt a New Media Law to Safeguard Pluralism and Regulatory Independence:** Pass the new media law, ensuring it includes enforceable provisions that promote pluralism of content across public and private media, limit media ownership concentration, reform the licensing process to achieve pluralism, and protect journalistic freedoms. The law should also guarantee the independence and accountability of the new regulatory authority through clearly defined legal safeguards.



- **Support the Growth of Media Startups:** Improve the enabling environment for independent media initiatives by removing market entry barriers and streamlining registration procedures to make them more accessible and affordable. Introduce indirect financial support mechanisms—such as tax exemptions, reduced VAT on media products, and lower social security contributions—to incentivize innovation and ensure the sustainability of emerging media ventures.



- **Strengthen and Revive PSB:** Enshrine in the new media law clear and enforceable provisions that recognize PSB as a cornerstone of democratic life, mandated to serve the public interest and reflect Lebanon's full diversity. Establish an independent and professional governance structure, and secure PSB's financial autonomy by allocating a dedicated and protected budget within the national budget law. Institutionalize pluralism and inclusion as core responsibilities of PSB, and reinforce this mandate through sustained political will and institutional commitment.

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS



- **Participate in Legal Reform:** Organize national consultations on media legislation including various stakeholders.



- **Support Emerging Independent Media:** Launch support or funding programs targeting local independent outlets.

FOR INTERNATIONAL DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



- **Align Funding with Pluralism Goals:** Ensure media sector funding portfolios support independent, inclusive media projects.



- **Encourage Institutional Reform:** Provide technical assistance and peer learning exchanges to Lebanese regulators and legislators.



- **Support Public Service Media:** Increase financial and technical support to public media institutions, recognizing their perceived neutrality compared to highly politicized private outlets.

FOR DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND TECH COMPANIES



- **Ensure Algorithmic Transparency:** Publish annual transparency reports that disclose how ranking, recommendation, and content moderation systems operate, ensuring accountability and public understanding of platform influence on the information space.



- **Disclose Selection Criteria:** Platforms and recommender systems should disclose to a user the selection criteria that determined the sorting and presentation of the content they are seeing, in an accessible and easily understandable manner.



- **Support High-quality Content Visibility:** ensuring the visibility and findability of independent, trustworthy, and public interest-driven media online. This can be achieved through practical measures such as algorithmic prioritization, content labeling, and search ranking adjustments.

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