



MEDREGION UPDATE

MAY 2012



MedRegion Office, Tunis

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**We welcome your
comments and
suggestions**

May 3rd World Press Freedom Day

2012 Theme: "New Voices-Media Freedom Helping to Transform Societies"

"On this World Press Freedom Day, the United States honors the role of a free press in creating sustainable democracies and prosperous societies."

— President Obama, May 3rd, 2012.

May 3rd of each year marks World Press Freedom Day, an occasion that provides MEPI with the opportunity to highlight MEPI-funded projects that support independent and sustainable media in the region. Seizing upon the tremendously important role media plays in the democratic societies, MEPI partnered with local and international organizations to implement a series of pilot projects to empower and train media professionals, promote media freedom, and bring young voices to the forefront of public debate. Activities include those that provide training opportunities for professionals on issues including journalistic ethics, basic reporting skills, objective and impartial reporting, and blogging. As democratic transition gripped the region these projects come to the fore. For instance, MEPI partnered with the Andalous Institute in Egypt to launch

Horytna.net news, an information website and web radio station that provides vital news coverage of events in Egypt for Egyptian citizens. Horytna.net news provided live coverage of the protests in Tahrir Square, and carried timely updates of events as they happened on the ground during the country's historic revolution. In Tunisia, MEPI partnered with Club Unesco-Bardo to launch the "I am Tunisian 2.0" a web radio station. This is a youth-run web-radio station empowering young Tunisian citizens to share their ideas with national and international audiences and to discuss political and social issues and governmental actions. Throughout this issue of the MEPI newsletter we feature recent work implementers are accomplishing to support journalists and activists as they advocate for freedom of the press in their home countries. ■

MEPI Partner Promotes Tolerant Discourse in Egyptian Media

Incidents of sectarian strife in Egypt have increased after the euphoric cross-confessional celebrations following the Egyptian people's uprising on February 25, 2012. Media has been blamed for igniting sectarian violence and accused of biased news coverage. In order to address this issue, the Vision Center for Development and Media studies approached MEPI with the project "Eradication Initiative on Sectarian Sedition of Media" project.

Through this project,

Vision Center developed and promoted the principle of constructive and positive dialogue in the media to create a platform to spread and consolidate a culture of tolerance and to reject violence and extremism. The project works to eliminate religious tension and defend freedom of belief.

Prominent journalists and academics took part in this project. They contributed articles to training manuals and moderated training sessions.



The cover page of the guidebook "Say and don't say"

As part of this project, thirty journalists practiced impartial and objective writing on topics related to religions and sects in Egypt. The

experience of these journalists moves the Egyptian media closer to international norms of civility and tolerance.

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During the training, journalists learned how to recognize common biases and deficiencies in Egyptian media's coverage of sectarianism, and portrayals of sectarian issues. They learned about best practices for promoting tolerance by their reporting.

The training workshops were followed by a series of consultative panels that were led by a selection of six prominent senior media professionals, journalists, and academics in Egypt.

During the first panel, consultants identified key issues and deficiencies in Egyptian media's coverage of religion. During the second panel, consultants identified ways to monitor the media and dealt in depth with the role of religious media outlets in disseminating stereotypes.

Participants discussed these outlets' role in inciting sectarian strife, especially after the Egyptian people's uprising on February 25th.

Following the workshops, Vision Center issued a report entitled "Case study for media tools used in handling religious discrimination topics". Vision Center has also developed three manuals on professionalism in media, citizenship and journalism, and freedom of religion in Egypt. An educational booklet was also produced on journalistic best practices and principles of tolerance and civility entitled "Say and Don't Say".

Vision Center has also issued an educational booklet on journalistic best practices and principles of tolerance and civility as part of this grant. ■

Welcome to New MEPI Staff

MEPI Regional Office in Tunis is very pleased to introduce two new MEPI Administrators Najla Abbes and Samir Ikhlef.

A warm welcome to our new colleagues!



Samir Ikhlef is our new MEPI administrator in Algiers. Samir graduated from the University of

Algiers and has bachelor's degree in applied linguistics, American and British literature. Prior to joining MEPI, Samir was working with the English and education team of the British Council as a project officer. He was in charge of implementing projects in Algeria to support youth employment, active citizens and kids' English skills development. Samir was also in charge of the Chevening Scholarship Program promoting UK education.



Najla Abbes is the MEPI Administrator in Tunisia. Prior joining MEPI, Najla worked as an Arabic Language instructor at the Foreign Service Institute Tunisia (FSI) and the School for International

Training (SIT). For the years 2007-2008, she was a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant at Pfeiffer University,

North Carolina.

Najla has a Master's degree in English Literature from the Higher Institute of Languages in Tunisia.

Najla is a co-founder and a board member of the *League of Tunisian Women Voters* (LET), an association founded in 2011, after the Tunisian revolution of January 14th. Its mission is to improve women's ability to effectively participate in public affairs, and in politics, as voters and candidates. ■



Quarterly Reports and Payment Requests

By MEPI Grants Unit

Quarterly Reports are due to the Regional Office any time after the end of the period they report on, but no later than 30 days after the end of the corresponding calendar quarter. We advise your payment request for the following quarter be submitted with the report for the previous quarter. The following matrix may be useful in understanding the time line:

Column A below is the reporting period. The RO advises that a payment request be submitted for the next period as early as the first day of the next period as shown in Column C, but only AFTER the report for the previous period has been submitted, as shown in Column B. So in the highlighted example, a payment request for Jul to Sept is submitted on 1 July, preferably after the Quarterly Report for Apr to Jun 2012 has been submitted.

Column A	Column B	Column C
Reporting Period	Reports for the period in Column A due No Later Than:	Payment Request may be submitted:
Oct - Dec	30 Jan (of the next year)	1-Oct
Jan - Mar	30-Apr	1-Jan
Apr - Jun	30-Jul	1-Apr
Jul - Sept	30-Oct	1-Jul
Oct - Dec	30 Jan (of the next year)	1-Oct
Jan - Mar	30-Apr	1-Jan

Please note that you can submit your report and payment request the first day after the end of the appropriate quarter.

There are several advantages in submitting your report early. Most importantly, this will help us get your payment out to you quickly. Also, if there are any issues, we can resolve them more quickly. Finally, those who get their reports in earlier find the RO has more time and fewer distractions allowing faster and more personal service. Lesson to take away: the earlier you submit your QR and PR, the better for you.

As is always true, do not hesitate to contact your GA if you have any questions or concerns. ■

Tunisian Activists Hone their New Media Skills

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, MEPI partners Club Unesco-Bardo in Tunisia and the Development and Institutionalization Support Center (DISC) in Egypt partnered to train Tunisian journalists on the use of new media in advocacy and lobbying. The three-day workshop entitled “Citizen Journalism Workshop: New Media Tools for Advocacy and Lobbying,” brought together 21 journalists keen to hone their new media skills to effectively advance their activism.

Kamal Sedra Nabil, DISC Managing Director, conducted the workshop. Kamal Sedra is an international geo-mapping consultant, cyber-activist, and digital media expert working to promote democratic values worldwide. Participants had an enriching debate on the use of new media in advocacy, as well as discussions on best practices and lessons learned from the use of social media and online activism in the Arab Spring countries, notably Egypt and Syria. Participants viewed and discussed videos published by Egyptian and Syrian activists during the Egyptian revolution and the Syrian uprising.

Sedra went in depth to explain how to document an event, report on it, and protect it using advanced media tools. Participants were exposed to security measures and audiovisual documentation of the violations against activists, young journalists, and human rights defenders.



Kamal Sedra Nabil is the founder and managing director of Development & Institutionalization Support Center (DISC), as well as a senior technical adviser for ICT4Peace, a Geneva-based organization focusing on the role of information and communication technologies in crisis management. Kamal Sedra is an international geo-mapping consultant, cyber-activist, and digital media expert working to promote democratic values worldwide.



The trainer Kamel Sedra Nabil

“It was a great workshop. I learned a lot. Now I know how I to use the social Media and how to design a campaign and advocate for a cause.”
— Nader Blel, a journalist

The workshops also covered effective New Media skills including how to carry OUT an online advocacy campaign.

The theoretical sessions were followed by a practical session, during which participants presented three different project ideas using Facebook to advocate for their causes and generate support.

The closing activity was devoted to sharing tips on how to protect one’s internet ID using effective anti-viruses, passwords and open source programs.

The training ended with the participants’ evaluations of the workshop and the distribution of the certificates of completion. ■

Background information on MEPI Partners Club Unesco Bardo and DISC

The Ana Tounsi 2.0 (I am Tunisian 2.0) project is empowering young Tunisian citizens to share their ideas with national and international audiences and to discuss political and social issues and governmental actions through a youth-run web-radio station. With MEPI support, Club UNESCO-Bardo launched the first Tunisian community radio run by youth to help young Tunisians create a space for discussing a wide range of issues related to their future and to Tunisia’s democratic transition. Ana Tounsi radio seeks to instill in youth the values of democracy and the rule of law through trainings and civic engagement activities relating to youth rights and election management.

MEPI grantee the Development and Institutionalization Support Center (DISC) recognizes the potential benefits of the internet in empowering individuals, grassroots organizations, and civil society, and has developed Activism 2.0 project to extend the reach of the Civil Society 2.0 initiative to NGOs. Activism 2.0 is a capacity development project to empower Egyptian civil society organizations to utilize cyberspace as a venue for activism, advocacy, and advancing reforms. Activism 2.0 is a project that has been working since June 2010 and has been able to develop capacity of more than 100 different Egyptian civil society organizations. ■

MEPI Local Grant Building the Capacities of Social Actors

The Center for Studies and Training on Citizenship and the Civic Culture (CEFCCC) recognizes the role of journalists in the Tunisian democratic transition. With MEPI support, CEFCCC is building the capacities of young Tunisian journalists to better serve the democratic transition in Tunisia.

In October 2011, (CEFCCC) launched its MEPI-funded project “Building the Capacity of Young Social Actors to Effectively Participate in the Democratic Transition in Tunisia” project. Through this project CEFCCC is mobilizing a core group of young Tunisian researchers, journalists, activists and bloggers to develop investigation techniques and analysis tools to address issues related to the democratic transition and political

and social reforms.

CEFCCC held four seminars, training workshops and awareness raising sessions for journalists, bloggers and young civil society activists from different Tunisian governorates: Beja, Bizerte, Nefta and Hammamet. The workshops introduced the concept of democracy and rule of law, the role of NGOs and citizens in the Tunisian democratic transition period, traditional justice and accountability. Participants shared best practices and successes.

On May 12, CEFCCC organized a seminar, which took place in Sfax in partnership with Majida Boulila association highlighted the electoral code and parity between women and men. Three intertwined themes were discussed in the



event. The first theme, a progressive reading of the electoral law in Tunisia, was presented by the jurist Bassem Karray. Ms. Monia Abed, a lawyer and a former member of the ISIE, The Tunisian Higher Independent Elections Committee, discussed the subject of parity in the electoral law. As for the third theme, women and political violence, it was presented by Ms. Monia Ben Salem, a lawyer and Human

Rights activist.

In partnership with the Tunisian Observatory for Democratic Transition the trained journalists launched an interactive specialized virtual observatory to promote the values of democracy and citizenship. The observatory serves as an educational, communication and networking tool for journalists.

The observatory serves to follow the

political debates on Facebook during the period of democratic transition and develop a guide for best practices for online communication.

The page of the observatory targets the most commented and published stories during over the week. These publications are being a basis for developing a good practical guide for virtual communication. ■



Middle East Partnership Initiative

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed in the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the MEPI Regional Office Tunis administers MEPI local grant projects in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and West Bank/Gaza. Each year, MEPI provides a significant number of local grants directly to local organizations based in the Middle East and North Africa. These Grants promote reform and civic activism at the local and national levels in the Middle East and North Africa, build the institutional capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and strengthen civil society.

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