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<http://www.rsf.org/jordan-international-free-expression-08-10-2013,45296.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Jordan

Open appeal

International free expression groups call for an end to Internet censorship in Jordan

8 October 2013

The following letter was sent to King Abdullah II, urging an end to restrictions on websites and amendments to the country's media laws:

His Majesty King Abdullah II
The Royal Palace
Amman, Jordan
cc: His Excellency Abdullah Ensour, Prime Minister

7 October 2013

International free expression groups call for an end to Internet censorship in Jordan

Your Majesty,

We the undersigned are deeply concerned about the continued restrictions placed on dozens of news websites in Jordan and provisions in the Press and Publications Law that enable the government to block Internet news media.

According to the information available to us, nearly 300 websites have been affected by the restrictions that were imposed on 1 June 2013 by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission and many continue to be blocked to users within Jordan. We consider these moves by government authorities to prevent the distribution of news and information to be out of line with internationally accepted press freedom standards and practices. They also contravene Jordan's longstanding commitment, under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the national Constitution, to respect freedom of expression and access to information. Many Jordanians believe these restrictions are in violation of the principles of press freedom and guarantees made in the Jordanian Constitution.

Despite the commitments made by high-level representatives of the Jordanian government during the International Press Institute (IPI) World Congress, which was held in Amman in May, and promises they made during an emergency press freedom mission by representatives of several of our organisations, including ARTICLE 19, Human Rights Watch and IPI, there is little evidence that your government is taking any steps to redress the restrictions placed on information sites. No draft amended law has been discussed by the government and no attempt has been made to communicate with affected media and civil society to discuss possible solutions.

To end any doubt about Jordan's commitments to press freedom and a pluralistic media environment, we urge your government to immediately end the blockage of news websites within and outside Jordan. Furthermore, we urge the government to amend provisions of the Press and Publications Law that require the licensing of all news websites.

By reversing policies that effectively silence independent voices of information Your Majesty would send a strong message that Jordan respects its international commitments to freedom of information and expression, and would underscore your ministers' stated commitment to press freedom in the country.

We thank you for your personal attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

International Press Institute
Active Watch – Media Monitoring Agency
Africa Freedom of Information Centre
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information
ARTICLE 19
Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression
Bahrain Center for Human Rights
Canadian Journalists for Free Expression
Cartoonists Rights Network International
Centre for Independent Journalism - Malaysia
Committee to Protect Journalists
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Foundation for Press Freedom
Freedom House
I'lam Media Center for Arab Palestinians in Israel
Independent Journalism Center - Moldova
Index on Censorship
Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information
Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
Media Foundation for West Africa
PEN International
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