

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/jordan-jordan-blocks-access-to-nine-more-09-07-2014,46607.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Jordan

Mass blocking

Jordan blocks access to nine more news websites

9 July 2014

Licensing system again used to curtail online freedom of information

A year after blocking access to 263 websites, Jordan's Media Commission has blocked another nine news and information websites on the grounds that they failed to obtain the required licence.

They include *Ziber*, a site that promotes free speech and media freedom, which had changed its URL after being blocked a year ago.

The blocking is based on the [Press and Publication Law, as amended in 2012](#). Article 49 says that any site that publishing "news, investigations, articles, and commentary related to the Kingdom's internal or external affairs must obtain a licence from the Press and Publication Department".

Under article 49, sites that fail to comply can be blocked by the Media Commission Commission without referring to any court.

"The Jordanian government aims to use this licensing system to ensure that it controls the Internet and the information published on it," said Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles. "It must urgently repeal the Press and Publication Law provisions that are incompatible with Jordan's international obligations."

Ziber editor in chief, **Lina Ejeilat**, told Reporters Without Borders "We refuse to apply for a license because we believe this is a form of censorship and that websites should not have to obtain permission from the government to operate. The editor in chief has to have been a member of the Jordan Press Association for at least four years, a condition that is obviously very hard to meet." Ejeilat added. "This licence is a way for the government to control the news reported by websites."

The eight other news sites that, like *Ziber*, were blocked on 30 June for "failing to meet the required conditions," had filed applications for licences.

The Media Commission gave similar grounds for the earlier [blocking](#) of 263 websites, including *Ziber*, on 1 June 2013. Like *Ziber*, some had since become [accessible again after changing their URL](#).

[The Press and Publication Law amendments](#) were widely criticized by the media when they were passed in 2012. While many media accepted the need for Internet regulation, they did not see the need for news websites to be licenced, regarding it as a restriction on online freedom of information and expression.

"We point out that the UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression specifically said in a report in May 2011 that there are no grounds for requiring online publications to be registered or licenced," Reporters Without Borders added.

In an [open letter to King Abdullah](#) on 18 June 2013, Reporters Without Borders voiced concern about the website blocking and urged him to repeal some of the draconian provisions of the amended version of the Press and Publication Law that had been promulgated by royal decree in September 2012.

Jordan is ranked 141st in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders [press index](#), seven places lower than in 2013.
