

FREE VOICES

ADVANCING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
IN LIBYA AND LEBANON

#ASWATHORRA



Aswat Horra

THE “**FREE VOICES**” INITIATIVE

Led by ten active civil-society organisations, “Free Voices”, “Aswat Horra” in Arabic, is a joint Libyan-Lebanese initiative that advances freedom of expression (FoE). Libya and Lebanon are very different but, at the same time, are witnessing common challenges with freedom of expression such as: violations and intimidations against independent media, civil society, and critical voices; the spread of hate speech and disinformation; and the overall restriction of fundamental civil liberties.



“Free Voices” aims to protect, empower, connect and amplify democratic voices in Libya, Lebanon, and other fragile countries in the Middle East and North Africa, by building local capacities and resilience to threats to freedom of expression.





“Free Voices” was launched as a unique [UK Aid](#)-funded project that, for the first time, brought together civil society, the media, the legal profession, and reform-minded officials to build resilience to threats to freedom of expression. Since 2019, six Libyan and four Lebanese organisations have been advocating for the rights of citizens, journalists, and human rights defenders, through projects supported by the [Institute for War and Peace Reporting \(IWPR\)](#) in consortium with [Reporters without Borders \(RSF\)](#), [Media Defence \(MD\)](#), and [Binda Consulting International \(BCI\)](#).

“Free Voices” in Lebanon:

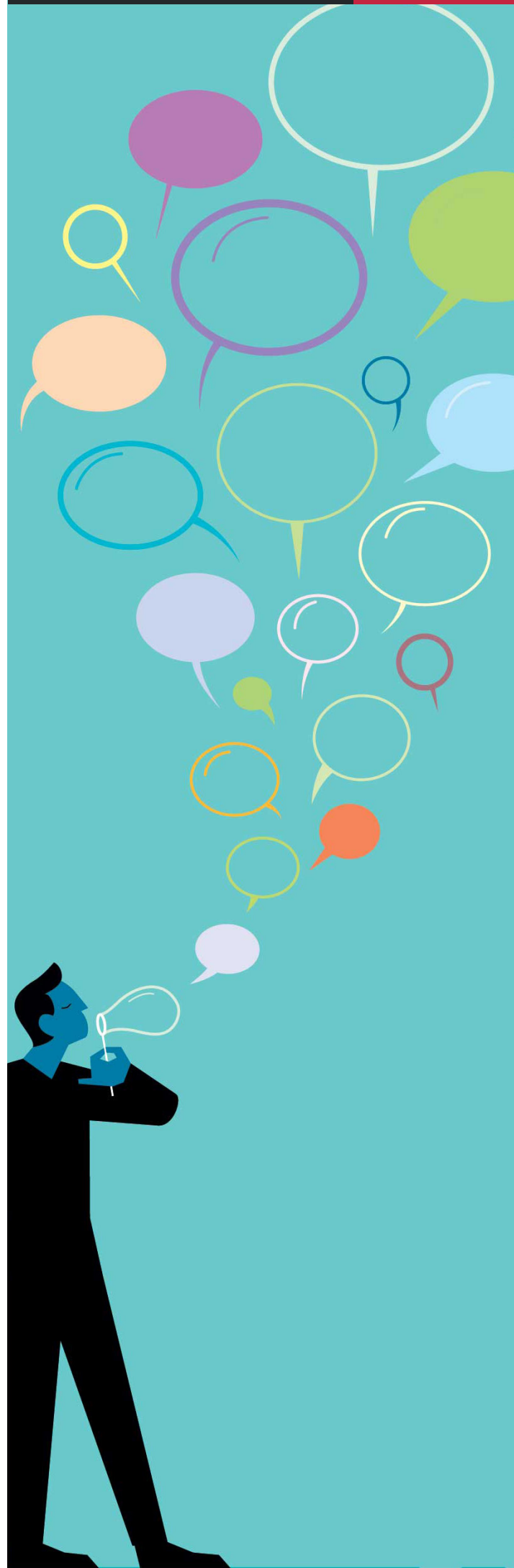
the [SMART Center](#), the [Maharat Foundation](#), the [Media Association for Peace \(MAP\)](#), and the [Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections \(LADE\)](#).

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“Free Voices” in Libya:

the [Fezzan Libya Organisation \(FLO\)](#), the [Atwar Organisation for Research and Community Development](#), the [Libyan Organisation for Development \(LOD\)](#), the [Tafat Foundation for Media and Culture](#), the [Libyan Center for Freedom of Press \(LCFP\)](#), and the [Women Forum for Development \(WFD\)](#).

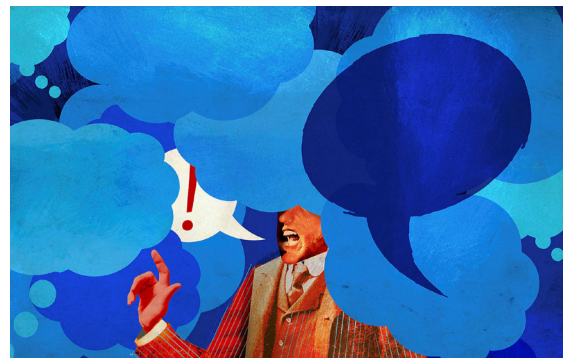
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As a result of their work, the civil-society organisations, involved in the “Free Voices” initiative, have crafted policy solutions for enhancing freedom of expression, strengthening independent media, protecting journalists, curbing hate speech, fostering a culture of tolerant debate, improving women’s presence in the media beyond stereotypes, and enhancing free and fair elections.

Since 2022 would be an election year for both Lebanon and Libya, the “Free Voices” civil-society organisations have joined together to advocate for enhancing freedom of expression and of peaceful gathering, and to bring the proposed recommendations to the forefront of political debate to influence the legislative agendas.

The “Free Voices” advocacy campaign is also targeted to the international community to shed light on the systemic challenges that Libyan and Lebanese societies are facing with the freedoms of expression, of speech, and of assembly, as well as with the media sector’s independence.



PRESSING CHALLENGES TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Countries across the Middle East are witnessing an alarming shrinking of civic space as FoE violations become increasingly sophisticated. Clampdowns on independent media and civil society, threats and attacks by state and non-state actors, and the spread of hate speech, disinformation and propaganda aim to repress dissenting voices, intimidate critics, and fuel division or fear.

Beginning in 2019, the “Free Voices” CSOs implemented IWPR-funded projects to support journalists, activists and citizens in holding governments to account. Through extensive field work in Libya and Lebanon, the organisations have solicited inputs from a variety of stakeholders including media professionals, officials, researchers, and citizens and have synthesised the most pressing priorities in both countries that require a policy response:

in Libya:

- Amending key legislation to enhance freedom of expression and of assembly;
- Creating a legal basis for the protection of journalists and for curbing hate speech; and
- Enhancing women’s presence and participation in the media beyond traditional stereotypes.



in Lebanon:

- Promoting the culture of debate to create a permissive environment for expressing different opinions in a tolerant manner;
- Amending key legislation to enhance free and independent media; and
- Raising citizens’ awareness of the electoral framework and processes.



This Publication outlines the priority challenges to freedom of expression in Libya and Lebanon and puts forth specific recommendations for addressing them. The policy prescriptions were developed to provide policymakers, elected representatives, election candidates, and the international community with insights as to the FoE-related needs and priorities of Libyan and Lebanese citizens.

The partner organisations from the “Free Voices” project will continue working to raise awareness among citizens and decision-makers of the importance of freedom of expression; encourage policy debate opportunities; and build consensus on the need for reform.



LIBYA

AMENDING KEY LEGISLATION TO ENHANCE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF ASSEMBLY

Although the right of peaceful assembly is constitutionally protected in Libya, widespread violence and insecurity deters citizens from assembling. The legal framework includes a number of regulations that grant the Government prerogatives to limit freedom of expression and of assembly, as well as access to information. The COVID pandemic has further restricted the fundamental civil liberties and has often been used to curtail the rights of freedom of expression and peaceful gathering, attack or detain critics, close down media outlets, and criminalise free speech. Many legislative pieces do not abide with the Constitution and with the international human rights standards, and therefore require substantial amendments.



[Law No. 65](#) of 2012 on freedom of assembly regulates the right to peaceful demonstration. Although it is generally compatible with international human rights principles, the armed conflict and related disorder seriously deter peaceful assemblies in many areas. The Law allows peaceful protests to be prohibited on the grounds of “protecting national security”. A protest can be dispersed by the authorities

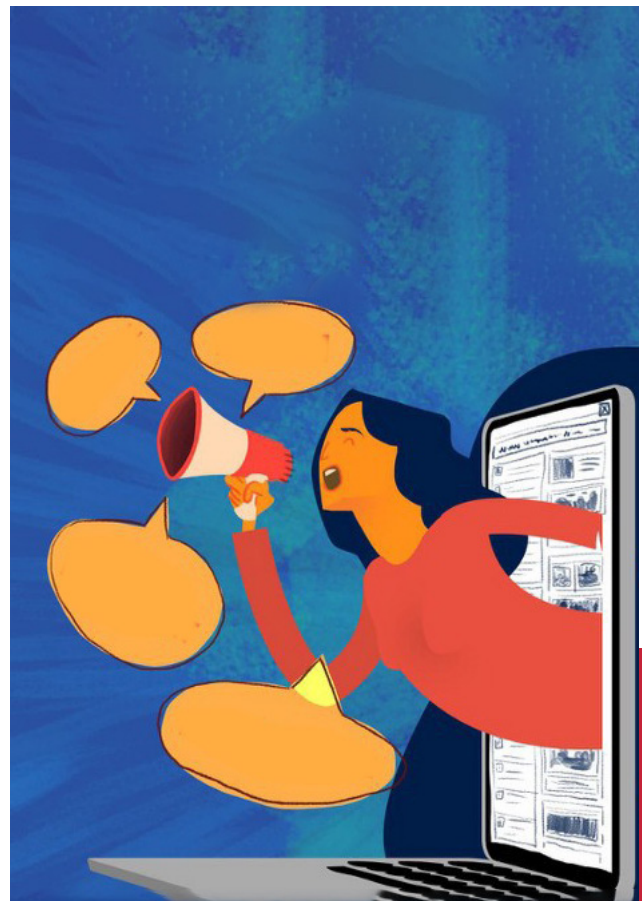
merely for failure to comply with minor bureaucratic requirements. Civil-society groups have called upon the Libyan authorities to adopt clear guidelines to govern the use of firearms by law enforcement officials during assemblies.



In October 2021, the Libyan House of Representatives ratified the Law on combating cybercrime without public consultation with Libyan civil society and the expert community. Human rights defenders have [criticised](#) the law for its broad and ambiguously drafted articles that are in violation of the human rights standards. The law restricts freedom of expression, curtails press freedom, legalises mass surveillance of speech online, and allows for warrantless blocking of websites and content.



Libya lacks legislation that protects the reputation and privacy of individuals rather than those of the state and its institutions. Politicians and public figures should accept criticism more than the ordinary citizens and should use legitimate and non-violent means for refuting allegations against them.





The Libyan civil society has called on public institutions to enhance transparency, make available online their decisions, and publish all the information and documents of public interest, related to their work. Rights groups have insisted for all citizens, without discrimination, to be granted access to public information; and for clear mechanisms for protecting individuals and journalists who report violations to be put in place. Many FoE defenders have raised concerns that the laws allow for imprisoning the authors of journalistic content even if it does not violate the legislative requirements.



RECOMMENDATIONS

■ The House of Representatives' legislative drafting process should be conducted in consultation with Libyan civil society, ensuring that all current and future laws and decrees comply with FoE principles and standards. At the same time, the Executive should ensure that FoE legislation is adequately enacted.

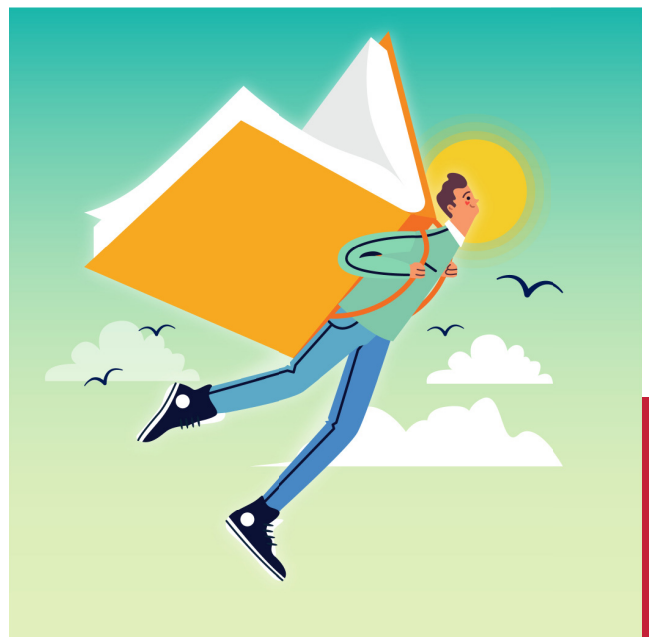
■ The Government and the House of Representatives should ease the restrictions on the freedom of expression and assembly that have been imposed as a result of the COVID pandemic.

■ The Government and the civil society should undertake joint efforts for raising citizens' awareness of the notion of freedom of expression and its value for social cohesion and for democratic governance.





- The civil society organisations should further enhance dialogue with local community leaders and authorities on measures for creating a safe environment that protects activists, journalists, and rights defenders.
- The professional community of education should integrate the notions of citizenship, human rights and freedoms, democracy, and free speech in the school curriculum.
- Through various projects, the civil-society organisations should embrace and promote the fundamental principles of freedom of expression.



LEBANON

AMENDING KEY LEGISLATION TO ENHANCE FREE AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Lebanon once had the reputation of a beacon of free speech in the region. Over the past few years, the country's media freedoms have considerably deteriorated. Various laws and regulations allow those in power to impose [censorship](#) or other forms of repression against free speech.

Media workers and activists in Lebanon have been facing increasing verbal and physical threats and online violence by state and non-state actors. Physical attacks on journalists have alarmingly increased: in 2019, 15 assaults were registered, compared to 175 in 2020. On the first anniversary of the protests in Lebanon on October 17, 2019, Lebanese civil-society organisations [documented](#) the recent trends and found a growing repressive pattern by political and security authorities. While the attackers go unpunished, an increasing number of journalists and activists are being prosecuted and called in for interrogation on vague criminal defamation charges.





The Publications Law's [definition of journalists](#) narrows down the profession to only those who possess a registration with the press syndicate: the others do not receive legislative protection for practising the journalistic profession. These provisions make journalism dependent on political power. A new Media law is being debated in parliament but without consultation with civil society, while rights groups have been calling for prohibition of pre-trial detention of journalists and elimination of prison sentences. The Access to Information law was adopted in January 2017 but is not yet effectively enforced.



In general, the legislative framework is outdated and prohibits the media from publishing articles that “endanger national security, national unity, or that insults high-ranking Lebanese officials”. In March 2022, a [digital legislative](#) atlas was created to document, assess and visualise the entire legal framework, pertaining to freedom of expression and media in Lebanon. The atlas contains a database of laws and regulations, tracks their compliance with constitutional and international standards, and highlights gaps, ambiguities, and [restrictions](#).



Lebanon's Penal Code regards [defamation](#) and the dissemination of [false information](#) as crimes and defines them very broadly, which leaves the door open for politically-biased interpretations by courts and authorities with a risk of easily crossing the line between restricting hate speech and limiting freedom of speech. These provisions are used to prevent journalists and citizens from questioning or criticising the political establishment. In recent years, the courts have harassed TV presenters who have allowed guests to criticise officials on the air. The Penal Code also prohibits [critical opinions on religion-related matters](#) under the pretext of “hurting religious feelings”, which limits the freedom of artistic expression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- CSOs call on the government to align legislation with the constitutional and international standards for freedom of expression and access to information.
- In response to calls by rights groups, the authorities should consider de criminalising defamation and the abolishment of disproportionate punishments for reputational harm. At the same time, the Civil defamation and Criminal incitement laws should be amended to include adequate protections for both people's reputations and freedom of expression.
- The institutions should adopt a zero-tolerance approach with regards to attacks against journalists and should hold accountable those responsible for such attacks.
- The security agencies should refrain from arresting people solely for peacefully expressing their opinions, while the number of criminal defamation complaints by government officials should also be curbed.





LIBYA

CREATING A LEGAL BASIS FOR THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS AND FOR CURBING HATE SPEECH

[Crimes](#) committed against journalists and activists in Libya are in constant increase, while the security and judicial institutions are unable to effectively prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes. Cases of unidentified radical militias intimidating or exerting other forms of violence against journalists are on the rise, but the judicial system's limited functioning has left such cases unanswered. Libyan journalists work in vulnerable conditions that make them permanently exposed to professional and social pressures without adequate mechanisms for legal protection of their profession. Journalists are subject to arbitrary dismissal by media outlets' owners and are often forced to work without employment contracts and medical or social security insurance.



The Libyan press and media sector is in a state of confusion and fragmentation due to the absence of regulations and coherent media policies. Censorship rules on journalists and media houses are often imposed: state broadcasters are primarily propaganda instruments, while private broadcasters are often funded from abroad and have their own political agenda. Structural and legal reforms are needed to grant transparency of the ownership of the Libyan media outlets. The restrictive provisions and the practices by regulatory bodies undermine the legal foundation to the right to freedom of expression and put the media's independence at risk – for example, the recently-introduced registration requirements for the media are unpopular and contradict with the Libyan media's demands for self-regulation.

At the same time, the Libyan media are highly polarised and partisan, fueling [hate speech](#) and inciting to violence by taking sides in conflicts or using inappropriate language that stirs division among social groups. Online hate speech and disinformation have long incited violence, and often mass atrocities.

Social media are becoming a new battlefield in the conflicts and disinformation campaigns are increasing in number and scope. Issues of censorship, online hate speech, and disinformation during conflict are a serious concern given their potential to exacerbate violence and erode election integrity. There are a number of instances of media outlets echoing information and rumours spread on social media without fact-checking and abiding to the principles of objectivity and neutrality in journalism.



Often, ungrounded accusations are disseminated, which leads to insults, defamation, and incitements to revenge, stigma, and humiliation. The Libyan Penal Code criminalises various forms of expression and much work remains to be done to define the balance between measures against the unpunished use of hate speech and incitement to violence, and the principles of freedom of expression.

The prospects of holding elections and of drafting a new Libyan Constitution could offer an opportunity for consolidating clear legal protections for freedom of expression and for media independence, as well as for agreeing on a robust roadmap for adopting a new Press and Publications Law, and for establishing a Supreme Council for Media and Press.



The Supreme Council for Media and Press is meant to be a decentralised institution to regulate media, ensuring the independence of the public media outlets from the executive, and the independence of the private media from political influences. Operating with integrity, competence, and independence, the Council will be tasked with overseeing the transparency of procedures for licensing radio and television broadcasters and preventing the monopoly or concentration of media ownership. CSO groups have called for the Internet to not be subject to any censorship or tracking by state institutions; and for putting an end to shutdowns of media outlets, whose content does not harm the public order and morals.



The community of media professionals has started a wide-range consultation on developing a [Code of Conduct](#) that should guide both public and private media outlets in adhering to democratic standards and principles of work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The media professional community and lawmakers should analyse the legal vacuum regarding the duties, functions and rights of Libya's public and private media and develop a robust and clear legal framework.
- The restrictions on media, designed to shield authorities from criticism, should be lifted. The state institutions should create conditions for a pluralistic media system.
- To be able to work for the public interest, the public media institutions should enjoy editorial, administrative and financial independence. They should be subject to financial oversight by the monitoring and accounting institutions and to accountability from citizens, not the government or the dominant political parties.
- The public media should obtain public funding, and ensure equal opportunities and political pluralism for the audience. Their production should be provided to all components of society.
- The media professional community should finalise the Code of Conduct and adopt it with consensus to serve as a self-regulatory tool, promoting the profession's standards and good practices.
- [A Media and Journalistic Syndicate](#) should be empowered to protect the rights of media professionals as they exert their work.
- The media professionals, jointly with civil society, academics, and all other relevant stakeholders should join efforts to promote dialogue and to curb hate speech, discrimination, incitement to violence, and disinformation in the media.



LEBANON

RAISING CITIZENS' AWARENESS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES



Lebanon's first parliamentary elections since the mass uprising of 2019 that sought to change the government's status quo are due to take place in mid-May 2022, as the country has spiralled into its worst economic crisis in decades. The vote also comes after the August 2020 Beirut port blast, which killed more than 200 people in the heart of the capital.

Observers fear that the elections would be marked by high levels of corruption, vote-buying and coercion, and a generally low turnout, stemming from voters' scepticism that the traditional and emerging political entities would have the political will to influence reform once the new parliament is elected. Recently-announced boycott by major players on the eve of the election campaign's launch also raises concerns about further undermining the electoral process's legitimacy.





The country's electoral systems need to be substantially improved. In November 2021, the parliament passed a set of amendments to the electoral law that significantly raised both the campaign spending ceilings as well as the nomination fees, increasing financial barriers to participation. The campaigning and spending provisions generally discriminate against the less-established candidates and favour the wealthy and institutionalised parties.

In particular, providing services or material support to voters is not considered a form of [bribery](#), as long as candidates and their parties have been consistently providing these benefits for three years prior to the election. This provision paves the way for [clientelism](#) and enables old-guard and sectarian parties to garner influence on the electorate through patronage networks.





Civil-society organisations have [warned](#) about numerous uncertainties and a general confusion related to administering the electoral process that may affect its integrity and fairness. Two common examples include challenges in candidate registration and depositing the required fees because of the shortened working hours of the respective institutions; and reluctance by the Lebanese banks to allow candidates to open campaign accounts. Rights groups have called on the ministries of finance and of the interior to urgently address those challenges. In addition, voting and ballot counting may be at risk of manipulation, since many polling centres would be unable to secure electricity and reliable internet during and after Election Day.



Despite a strong push from civil society to improve Lebanon's poor track record for women's parliamentary representation and political participation in general, no gender quotas were included in the law. A CSO-led [research](#) shows that women are constantly absent from the media's coverage of elections and politics: in February 2022, only 5% of the Lebanese TV newscasts featured women, and only 8% of the guests on political talk shows in that period were women. The proposals for improving accessibility to polling stations for people with disabilities were not passed either.

Civil-society organisations have developed [electronic](#) platforms and [voter guides](#) to enhance citizens' knowledge of the basic concepts related to democracy and elections, and political and human rights. Such platforms are an innovative tool for raising voters' awareness of the electoral framework and processes.

- As early as the adoption of the election rules, the state institutions and civil-society organisations should conduct robust voter education initiatives to raise citizens' awareness of the different contestants and their policy platforms, the electoral processes and procedures, and the importance of elections in democratic societies.
- Specific awareness-raising measures should be targeted to first-time voters in particular.
- The public debate on amendments to the election law should continue, bringing together all stakeholders to jointly define provisions that would guarantee free, fair and transparent election rules.





LIBYA

ENHANCING WOMEN'S PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION IN THE MEDIA BEYOND TRADITIONAL STEREOTYPES

Women groups and civic activists have played an important role in the 2011 revolution and, ever since, have strived to lead change and reform, but have constantly been threatened because of their activism. In a deeply-fragmented society, Libyan women's insecurity, the conservative social stereotypes, and the deepening economic crisis are the key challenges to gender equality that hinder women's participation in the reconciliation and peace processes. Socially, women are viewed as able to work in a limited number of capacities only, while economically they face discrimination in the hiring process and workplace. Female participation in the political process also faces major obstacles.



Media professionals in Libya are forced to operate under extremely difficult conditions. Often their most elementary professional rights such as freedom of expression and free access to information are restricted. Personal attacks on journalists, including women, have been increasing in a worrisome speed: intimidations, detentions, threats and incidences of physical violence are happening on a daily basis.



In Libya, the presence of [women in the media](#) has expanded, but their growing number is not reflective of a general trend towards women's empowerment or an engagement in defending issues important to women. Rather, the media outlets use the women's presence as a marketing tool for attracting audiences. Women's voices are still missing in news coverage; and women are far from being empowered in the media workforce. Despite the abundant opportunities for female journalists in new media outlets, especially TV stations, most people still believe that journalism is a man's job.





The mainstream media hold a responsibility for entrenching stereotypical gender roles in Libyan society. TV and radio shows usually depict women as mothers and housekeepers, while political shows tend to invite male commentators, even if some political parties do count female members in their ranks. As [Fadwa Kamel](#), a famous Libyan journalist and women's rights defender points out, "Indeed, Libyan women's representation in politics and media lags far behind men. This is not due to their lack of skills, but lack of opportunities. While there are more women in the media sector today, they mostly play certain stereotypical roles such as co-presenters or assistants. Senior media positions are still largely held by men".

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Through a gender assessment of the legislation, the civil-society organisations defending women's rights and equality should identify the existing gaps and recommend amendments to specific laws, regulations, and practices.
- The new Libyan Constitution should specifically define the principle of equality between men and women in all aspects of public, social and economic life.



- When drafting or amending laws, the Libyan legislators should ensure that provisions are set up for an adequate representation of women in all sectors, including the media.
- A collective effort on all levels should be made to enhance women's participation in peace and reconciliation processes and the political discourse.
- All the stakeholders with an interest in, and responsibility for women's rights should analyse the growing number of instances of online and offline defamation against women activists as they defend human and political rights, and should propose practical measures for curbing defamation, intimidation, and gender-based hate speech.
- The women's rights groups and organisations should seek to work jointly and form advocacy coalitions in order to maximise the impact of their efforts.
- The media outlets should strive at providing more coverage of women's causes and educate their audiences on gender equality.
- The national educational curriculum should introduce the notions of equality between men and women to teach the new generations overcome the conservative stereotypes.





LEBANON

PROMOTING THE CULTURE OF DEBATE TO CREATE A PERMISSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR EXPRESSING DIFFERENT OPINIONS IN A TOLERANT MANNER

During a period of uncertainty and transition in Lebanon, independent and objective media are of vital importance for enabling the Lebanese citizens to hold officials to account. Lebanon's media are outspoken but also extremely politicised and polarised, defending particular political parties or businessmen. As a result, citizens – specifically youth – grow dissatisfied with the narratives pushed by the major media outlets and are turning to alternative sources for news, debate, and analysis. New media have started emerging over the past year and during the 2019 demonstrations.

Since the 2019 protests, the taboo on criticising public figures has been lifted, but attacks on media and journalists have intensified. Legitimate criticism of politicians or religious figures can be met with harassment and even legal proceedings. Often, online publications or media reports elicit complaints by prominent public figures. Overall, the public has become increasingly distrustful of the objectivity and neutrality of journalistic content, which fuels divisions and polarisation.



In the media environment and in political reports and broadcasts, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between the objective presentation of different, well-argued points of view and the one-sided propaganda of beliefs and viewpoints, ignoring or minimising the opposing side. It is not uncommon that journalists cross the line between the right to freedom of expression and the principle of providing unbiased coverage. As a result, and especially ahead of elections, the audience is deprived of access to all the viewpoints and of opportunities to watch genuine debates with solid arguments, expressed in a tolerant manner.

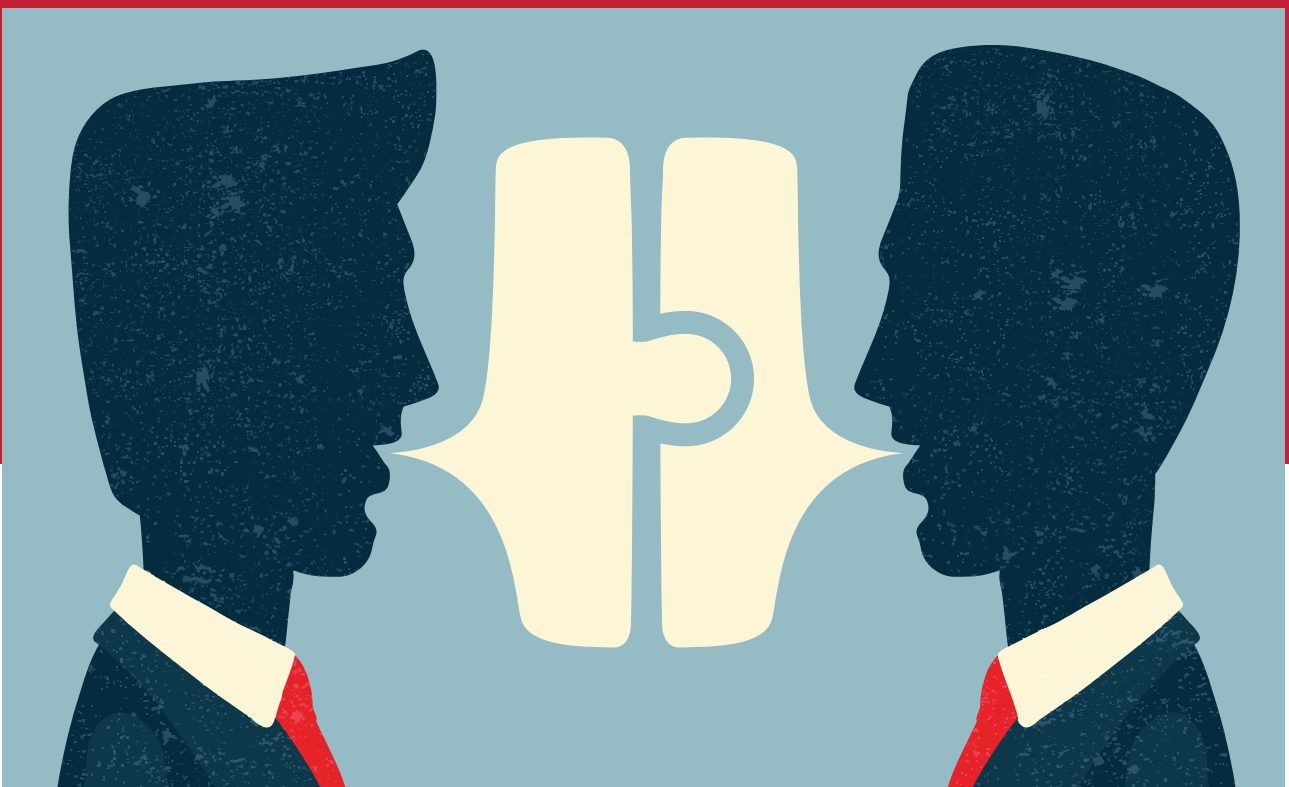




In addition, candidates and MPs generally avoid engaging in debates with their political opponents and prioritise one-on-one interviews or direct political advertisements instead. CSO-led monitoring of [media coverage](#) of the election campaign reveals that one-on-one interviews dominate the media landscape, while debates are almost nonexistent. For February 2022, only 3% of the TV programs about elections have been in the form of debate between candidates, while 88% of the coverage was in the form of interviews with one guest from one political party.

In the absence of debate platforms, neutral spaces, and a permissive environment, young people tend to refrain from expressing their opinions freely, fearing from legal constraints or oppressions, or missing the culture of debate. In addition, Lebanon's youth and women are underrepresented in parliament with just 5.4% of MPs being under the age of 38, and 3.4% being women.

Civil society organisations have piloted successful [initiatives](#) for creating open platforms for young activists from across Lebanon's political and social spectrum to gain debate skills, present well-researched and evidence-based arguments, practice public speaking and listening skills, and learn to respect opponents' viewpoints. The policy debate format introduces youth and women to responsible and informed decision-making through researching and understanding the different aspects of controversial issues.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- The public institutions and the civil society should enhance initiatives engaging youth in freely expressing their informed opinions and presenting strong arguments and counter arguments.
- The political parties should consider strategies for cultivating the culture of tolerant debate among their members and supporters, youth and women's wings, and aspiring politicians.
- The media outlets should prioritise producing debate programs and encouraging their audiences to express opinions and ask questions to those in power.
- The election candidates should participate in debates to enhance an informed choice by citizens.



ABOUT US

Find out more about the partner organisations from the “Free Voices” project, in alphabetical order:

The [Atwar Organization for Research and Community Development](#) is a volunteer-run, Tripoli-based organisation that works for creating community awareness for the promotion and consolidation of the values of democracy in Libya. It also works on women’s economic and political empowerment, researching youth issues, promoting youth’s engagement in community development, social justice, and cultural diversity.



The [Fezzan Libya Organization \(FLO\)](#) is based in Sebha, South-western Libya. Founded in 2012, it works to serve communities in the country’s Southern region through participation and youth-led reporting on the events in Fezzan. FLO is a community-based initiative that carries out peace building work through its three subdivisions: Fezzan Libya Media Group, Fezzan Libya Civil Group and Fezzan Libya Aid Group. Its mission is to encourage information-sharing between the South, the rest of Libya, and the world.



The [Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections \(LADE\)](#) works on electoral reform issues in Lebanon to enable citizens to effectively participate in the political process. Established in 1996, LADE conducts large-scale election monitoring and voter education work, analyses the legal framework, and develops recommendations for improvement of the electoral processes. The organisation has a volunteer base across Lebanon that engages in election monitoring efforts.



LCFP

Libyan Center For Freedom of Press
المركز الليبي لحرية الصحافة

The [Libyan Center for Freedom of Press \(LCFP\)](#) is a Tripoli-based civil organisation, established in 2013 by journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders to combat violence and intimidation experienced by journalists and various media outlets in Libya. LCFP also works to end the state of impunity for perpetrators of crimes, and to deter attempts of silencing and politicising the media discourse. LCFP's vision is to achieve a safe environment for journalists and consolidate the principle of freedom of media and journalism in Libya.

المنظمة الليبية للتنمية
Libyan Organization For Development



The [Libyan Organisation for Development \(LOD\)](#) is committed to the values of democracy, neutrality and gender equality. Based in Benghazi, the organisation operates several regional branches across Libya. LOD identifies and guides strategies for national development programmes with a strong focus supporting the empowerment of women and youth. LOD conducts research, workshops, training, and advocacy campaigns.

مهارات

The [Maharat Foundation](#) work to strengthen the development of independent journalism in Lebanon. It is a Beirut-based organisation advancing the societal and political conditions that enhance freedom of expression, access to information, and the respect for human rights. Maharat's strategic goals include media literacy, policy, advocacy, and providing progressive communities with knowledge and skills necessary to create a change.



The [Media Association for Peace \(MAP\)](#) is a Lebanese civil-society organisation that promotes peace journalism and works on involving the media in peace-building processes, reconciliation, human rights, and dialogue. MAP also works on raising awareness about issues related to press freedom, accountability and democracy in and through the media in Lebanon.

The [SMART Center](#) is a Beirut-based organisation that fosters development, democracy, citizenship, and peacebuilding by developing a better media environment and creating objective media platforms. Established in 2007, SMART works to empower civil society organisations, youth, and women to become agents of change and to contribute effectively to the sustainable development of their countries.



The [Tafat Foundation for Media and Culture](#) is a largely volunteer-led organisation based in Zuwara, Western Libya. It aims at spreading a culture of reading and discussion with an emphasis on freedom of expression and opinion. Tafat seeks to raise awareness and improve the cultural and educational level of citizens, particularly with regards to their rights. Tafat conducts advocacy campaigns and events on the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples.



The [Women Forum for Development \(WFD\)](#) is a Zawiya-based advocacy organisation focusing on women and youth in Libya. It works to empower women to participate efficiently in social, economic and political development. WFD provides practical skills training for women, including the capacity to positively influence decision-making processes. Through various awareness-raising activities, the organisation seeks legal provisions to guarantee women's rights and the enforcement of ratified conventions in the area of social justice.



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