

Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists Reveals Worrying Results on Information Status in Jordan

98.2% of media persons do not use the request for information template.

62% Depend on communicating through phone calls to acquire information. 81% request information through other means.

Journalists depend on verbal statements rather than documented statements.

13.6% Receive answers to their e-mail addresses, 9.7% through direct communication, 2.9% through fax.

95.8% do not report rejection of their request for information.

Media persons get confused between law and traditional methods of receiving information.

44% of requested information are sent to ministries, information is used for news.

Foundations and ministries do not apply law to guarantee rights of access to information.

3 out of 163 journalists have officially requested access to information.

According to a survey conducted by Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) on implementing access to information law, 81% journalists stressed that they did request information using several methods.

The survey was conducted on 163 journalists working at public and private organizations in which they were distributed into two categories based on weight. First category was members of Jordan Press Association (JPA) of 59.1% and the second category was non-members forming a 40.9%. Survey

samples encompassed 607 journalists active in field works, reporters, anchors and presenters, working at various media entities of audio visual, print and online portals.

The survey was carried out as part of the Civil Society Program that is put into practice by CDFJ and revealed that journalists prioritized access of information to matters related to government, committees, governmental foundations, and were less concerned about information regarding judiciary, Royal Court, Parliament and international organizations.

Confusing terms, traditional methods

The survey revealed that journalists still use traditional methods in getting information without referring nor implementing the access for information law, it was also indicated that governmental and semi-governmental organizations do not show any concern towards applying this law or recognizing the official form of access for information. The study also indicates that 62.2% receive information via phone, 1.8% via official access for information form.

However, 9.8% stated that they received information through direct interviews and 3% were gathering information personally and without filling out the access for information form.

As for personal contacts, 1.2% journalists stated that they request information via personal relations, 0.6% got information through official letters and communication, and 19% through other means.

Journalists lack sense of initiative

The Poll results showcase that 1.8% of journalists already initiated to get the official access for information form for prior knowledge of this template, while 98.2% did not ask for this form.

One out of three journalists, 0.6%, stated that any governmental or semi-governmental entity documents a log to facilitate the process of journalists and reference purposes. While 2 (1.2%) stated that these

entitled do not host this log, while other 160 (98.2%) responded that they are not familiar with this log in the first place.

This indicates that most entities do not apply nor implement access for information law that entails payment in return for information.

According to the survey, greater percentage asks for access for information for purposes of publishing news, news reports, then investigative reports, then article, then investigation.

Prioritizing Press Releases

A high percentage of 50.5% journalists stated that they requested information for press releases purposes, news report came second in motive of 25.8%, investigative report came third in 15.9%.

Requesting information verbally

Verbal request for information reached 58.3%, while 17.4% used official and documented request for information, while 12.5% referred to statistics, studies and researches for information.

5.6% of information is kept online 4.2% of which is photographed and documented. Period taken to receive information varies between 12 hours and 150 days.

64.1% of samples received answers through phone calls, while 13.6% through e-mail, and 9.7% through direct communication, 9.7% in hand, 2.9% through fax. The poll indicates that the most popular method of request for information is through phone calls.

Requesting information verbally

The survey indicated that 58.3% of journalists use verbal request for information, while 17.4% use official and documented request for information, while 12.5% referred to statistics, studies and researches for information.

As well as that, 61% journalists indicated that they received the information they asked for, 18.9% did not, and 19% refused to answer whether they have received the information or not.

Period taken to receive information varies between 12 hours and 150 days. And 64.1% of journalists received answers through phone calls, while 13.6% through e-mail, and 9.7% through direct communication, 9.7% in hand, 2.9% through fax. The poll indicates that the most popular method of request for information is through phone calls.

Information depending on approval of authority

Some authorities refused to declare information and give it to journalists that requested access for information and justified this rejection with reasons that are irrelevant to access for information law, and most of the time gave incorrect statements based on personal efforts.

Illegal justifications

The poll showed that 95.% of journalists that did not receive access for information did not report this law-abiding act against authorities in charge.

It is also clearly observed that answers were broad and not based on any legal content that guarantees right of request for information and exceptions stated in article 13 of law. These excuses were declared by authorities and are not sufficient to be treated as legal reasons that enable the person in charge to reject request for information. 2.4% journalists were harassed and faced disturbing obstacles due to their request for information. 97.6% stated otherwise.