

'Media strengthening requires ongoing re-examination of law and policy'

By Hani Hazaimeh

AMMAN — Media strengthening in Jordan requires an ongoing re-examination of law and policy and an attitude of internal discourse and healthy self-criticism, according to a primer compiled as part of the Jordan Media Strengthening Programme (JMSP).

In spite of steps taken to support freedom of expression and to ensure that regulations governing the media are in line with international and local standards, Jordan is struggling with many competing and complex interests as changing geopolitical realities and new technologies to transform the production and distribution of information, the primer said.

It recommended lifting press association membership requirements for journalists and removing any other aspects of law that permit detention and jail

sentences for the expression of opinion and the practice of journalism.

The primer, which was prepared by several international and local experts, also called on the relevant authorities to abolish taxes on printing press production inputs, adding that the government should phase out its ownership of print media outlets and remove any licensing restraints on the printed press.

It also called for amending the 1971 Protection of State Security, Secrets and Documents Law, the 2007 Right of Access to Information Law and Article 19 of the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights based on the principles of maximum information and fewer exceptions, noting that such steps would facilitate journalists' performance and enhance their work.

In addition, the primer encouraged the public sec-

tor to be more open and transparent by publishing their rules and decisions online.

With regard to audiovisual media, the primer highlighted the importance of amending the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation Law and the necessity of abolishing government control on the corporation.

Furthermore, it said the development of audiovisual media requires an independent regulatory party to develop a broadcast code of content in consultation with the industry and a monitoring and compliance mechanism based primarily on complaints from the public to enhance production.

The JMSP is a USAID-funded initiative seeking to strengthen media independence by building professionalism among emerging and mid-career journalists.