

## **Joint Statement: The Blocking of News Websites in Jordan is a Grave Violation of Freedom of Expression and the Right to Access Information**

**23 May 2025**

On 14 May 2025, the Jordanian Media Commission issued an order for ISPs to [block at least 12 news websites](#), most of which are independent media outlets. The decision lacked an official detailed announcement, including the legal basis for the blocking. Instead, authorities provided vague justifications through media channels, invoking broad and imprecise terms such as “spreading media poison” and “targeting national symbols,” without specifying the facts or evidence upon which the ban was based. There has been no indication that affected outlets were offered any opportunity to appeal or challenge the decision before an independent court, raising serious due process concerns.

The undersigned organizations condemn this action as a direct violation of Article 15 of the Jordanian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of opinion and states that “every Jordanian shall be free to express his opinion by speech, writing, photography, and other means of expression,” within boundaries that must not be interpreted arbitrarily or politically. The decision also breaches Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information. Jordan acceded to the ICCPR in 1975 and is therefore bound to uphold its provisions in both law and practice.

According to international standards, particularly General Comment No. 34 by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, any restriction on freedom of expression must meet three cumulative conditions: it must be provided by law, pursue a legitimate aim, and be necessary and proportionate. It is evident that the Jordanian decision to block these websites fails to meet any of these conditions.

The timing of the ban strongly suggests it was in direct response to [investigative reports](#) alleging that official Jordanian institutions profited from the coordination of humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza. Following these reports, the media outlets involved faced a smear-and-intimidation campaign. Access to some sites was gradually restricted, until, on 14 May, authorities imposed a total ban. This sequence of events suggests the ban was not the outcome of a neutral legal process, but rather a politically motivated attempt to suppress independent reporting. To date, there has been no indication that the judiciary was involved in issuing, reviewing, or upholding the blocking decision, nor that the measure was subject to any form of independent oversight or legal appeal.

Statements from public officials accusing the blocked sites of spreading false news further reflect the lack of any procedural framework that would enable these outlets to respond or defend themselves. There is no evidence of judicial oversight regarding the decision, nor has there been any formal publication of the list of banned sites or the legal basis for their censorship.

In parallel, [Cybercrime Law No. 17 of 2023](#) has increasingly served as a central tool to restrict digital freedoms in Jordan. Its broadly worded provisions grant administrative and security authorities extensive powers to block websites and [detain individuals for online expression](#). During

the same period, journalists and political commentators were detained for their posts, reflecting an alarming trend in the criminalization of peaceful expression and digital activity, outside the bounds of independent judicial oversight.

The impact of this decision extends beyond the media sector and into Jordan's broader civic space. Independent media constitute a vital part of civil society's infrastructure and serve as essential platforms for public accountability and the formation of public opinion. When access to information is restricted and independent outlets are silenced, the public's ability to engage in meaningful debate, scrutiny, and collective decision-making is severely undermined. The erosion of press freedom signals a broader deterioration in the conditions for civic engagement, weakening democratic participation that is based on knowledge and awareness.

These practices reflect a deliberate policy of censorship that goes beyond media regulation. They aim to monopolize public discourse and suppress the independent production and circulation of information. Blanket website bans imposed without due legal process violate fundamental rights and erode public trust in institutions, contributing to a hostile environment for journalism, one where media organizations are forced into self-censorship or closure.

**The undersigned organizations call on the Jordanian government to:**

- Immediately reverse the decision to block the websites and lift the ban on all affected platforms unconditionally.
- Publicly disclose the legal basis and justifications for any action that restricts freedom of expression or access to information, in full transparency.
- Ensure access to effective legal remedies to challenge blocking decisions before an independent judiciary, in line with constitutional and international standards, and in accordance with Article 100 of the Jordanian Constitution, guaranteeing judicial independence.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of Cybercrime Law No. 17 of 2023 through a transparent and participatory process involving civil society organizations, media actors, and legal experts. The objective must be to revise all provisions that are currently being used to curtail freedoms and to bring the law into full compliance with Jordan's international human rights obligations, particularly Article 19 and Article 14 of the ICCPR.

The undersigned affirm that protecting press freedom and media pluralism is not incompatible with the rule of law; it is a prerequisite for it. Disinformation cannot be countered through censorship, and public trust cannot be built by excluding independent voices. Stability is only achieved through an open, protected, and legally grounded media environment—one that guarantees the right to scrutiny and accountability and supports journalists in uncovering truth, not silencing it.

**Signatory Organizations:**

- HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
- CIVICUS

- MENA Rights Group (MRG)
- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH)
- Access Now
- Skyline International for Human Rights (SIHR)
- Robert F Kennedy Human Rights
- SMEX
- Center for Civil Liberties
- Arab Digital Expression Foundation
- Digital Action
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
- Daraj Media
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Start Point
- ZAWIA 3
- Salam for Democracy and Human Rights
- The Legal Agenda
- Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
- Samir Kassir Foundation
- ARTICLE 19
- Human Rights Watch
- IFEX