

## Roundtable Discussion

### “Challenges Facing Independent Media Platforms and Ways to Overcome Them from a Human Rights Perspective”

Cairo – Monday, February 24, 2025

#### **Summary of Outcomes and Recommendations**

1. Media freedom and the independence of media platforms are fundamental human rights, enshrined in international human rights instruments and the Egyptian Constitution.
2. The freedom and independence of the media constitute key guarantees for the right to information and the advancement of democratic participation by providing citizens with the information necessary for decision-making.
3. Emphasis on the importance of participatory, complementary, and cooperative relations between the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) and representatives of various independent media outlets.
4. The discussion addressed the legal and regulatory challenges obstructing media freedom, highlighting the contradiction of current legislation with constitutional principles and international standards, including:
  - Law No. 180/2018 on the Regulation of Press and Media;
  - Law No. 75/2018 on Combating Cybercrime;
  - Law No. 20/2015 on Combating Terrorism.
5. Practical challenges addressed during the meeting included:
  - Imprisonment of journalists;
  - Website blocking;
  - Denial of licensing;
  - Media ownership patterns and their implications;
  - Potential media monopolization;
  - Underfunding, particularly of independent media;
  - Rapid developments in information and communication technologies.

#### **Proposals and Recommendations**

1. Abolishing custodial penalties that violate constitutional protections.
2. Repealing legal provisions that impose unconstitutional restrictions on journalism and the right to access and disseminate information.

3. Eliminating vague and overbroad legal language that criminalizes undefined acts and is often used to target journalists and dissidents.
4. Amending specific articles of Law No. 180/2018 and the Sanctions Regulations issued by the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (Decision No. 16/2019).
5. Amending Articles 302–308 of the Penal Code on defamation to distinguish between personal and professional contexts.
6. Amending Articles 214–216 of the Criminal Procedure Code to ensure equal treatment of press-related misdemeanors and other offenses, particularly abolishing the exceptional referral of public defamation cases to criminal courts.
7. Amending Articles 142–143 of the Criminal Procedure Code to prohibit pretrial detention exceeding two years under any circumstances.
8. Amending Articles 7–8 of the Cybercrime Law to prevent website blocking as a punitive or precautionary measure.
9. Accelerating the issuance of the executive regulations of the Personal Data Protection Law (No. 151/2020) and ensuring broad stakeholder consultation.
10. Enacting a comprehensive Freedom of Information Law with four pillars:
  - Access: Guaranteeing access to public data and documents.
  - Availability: State obligation to make such data transparent and accessible.
  - Accountability: Criminalizing non-compliance by public officials.
  - Archiving: Mandating systematic documentation and digitization.