

RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program 2nd Weekly Report on the Performance of the Jordanian 17th Parliament During its 2nd Ordinary Session November 15, 2014

Summary Recommendations:

- RASED commends the decision of the speaker of the House of Representatives to publicize the Audit Bureau's report for 2014, and it calls upon the Parliament to discuss the Audit Bureau's five past yearly reports in its committees.
- RASED also calls upon the parliament to reform the parliamentary bylaws to order the formation of the Executive Office in conjunction with the formation of the Permanent Office.

Report:

During the 2nd week of the 2nd Ordinary Session, the House of Representatives finished deliberating its response to the Throne Speech, which it will submit to His Majesty the King. The House also succeeded in unanimously forming 5 standing committees, while the Speaker of the House chose to postpone elections and decisions on the other 15 committees until the 3rd week of the session. It is assumed these will be formed based on consensus or elections.

Most of the committees were formed outside the framework of the House's Executive Office. As RASED pointed out in its 1st Weekly Report, this contravenes Article 61 of the parliamentary bylaws, which states that "a permanent committee should consist of at least 5 members and at most 11, with its composition decided on by the executive office based on proportional representation of the blocs." This complaint was reiterated in a session last Wednesday by MP Jameel Al Nimri. It was apparent, however, that the Speaker

of the House did not share these concerns. During the course of the week, only 3 parliamentary blocs were registered in the House's General Secretariat, and the remainder of the blocs were left unregistered in contravention of parliamentary bylaws, making it impossible to form the Executive Office during this time. Thus its work is disrupted pending the completion of registration of parliamentary blocs, whereas Article 26 states that they have 30 days to register in the General Secretariat from the start of the session.

Article 26 of the parliamentary bylaws stipulates that “every bloc or parliamentary coalition should set up its own system for organizing its work, and should register itself with the General Secretariat within 30 days from the start of the ordinary session.” This provision contradicts a provision in the first paragraph of Article 61, which states that “A permanent committee should consist of at least 5 members and at most 11, with its composition decided on by the Executive Office based on proportional representation of the blocs.”

This case shows the necessity of clarifying certain internal contradictions in the parliament's internal bylaws. There must be greater coherence in the bylaws, especially with respect to the Executive Office. This office must be formed concurrently with the Permanent Office of the House; it is not acceptable to be lacking an Executive Office for the month of parliamentary bloc registration.

During the 2nd week, RASED noted that MPs showed a rushed to join certain committees while they were reluctant to join others, such as the Rural and Badia Areas, and Order and Conduct Committee, which were not able to attract full membership. Other committees had a rush of MPs attempting to register, including the Legal, Education, and Energy Committee. Every committee, according to Article 61, must have a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 11 members.

It is important to note that according to the parliamentary bylaws, the Executive Office is comprised of the Permanent Office, the heads of parliamentary blocs or their representatives, and representatives of independent candidates.

The bylaws stipulate that the Executive Office should work to enhance the role of parliamentary blocs in contributing to the legislative performance of the parliament as a whole.

One of the most significant events that occurred in the House during the 2nd week was the decision of Speaker of the House Eng. Atif Al Tarawneh to hand out the Audit Bureau's 62nd Annual Report for the year 2013 during the constitutionally mandated window.

Pursuant to the Constitution, the Audit Bureau presents its annual report to the National Assembly (the House of Representatives and Senate) at the beginning of every ordinary session. This report contains the results of the Audit Bureau's monitoring, evaluations of violations of the rules by bodies subject to monitoring, and other supplementary reports requested by the assembly.

The House has 5 annual Audit Bureau reports outstanding from 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 that it has still not discussed. RASED reaffirms the importance of the National Assembly discussing the reports of the Audit Bureau, which represents the Assembly's own financial monitoring body. RASED suggests that the Finance Committee discuss these reports in concurrence with its discussions on the General Budget and the Government Agencies Budget draft laws, as they already have the mechanisms and the resources needed to deliberate these types of issues. This will enable the reports to finally be addressed in committees rather than continually postponed and ignored.

RASED commends the decision of the Speaker of the House to distribute the yearly report of the Audit Bureau for 2013 in full on the website of the House, giving citizens the chance to view it and express their views on it and enhance parliamentary transparency and citizens' right to know.

The House decided not to hold a debate regarding Zionist [Israeli] encroachments on the Al Aqsa Mosque, but instead issued a press release decrying recent infringements on the site.