

RASSED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program

11th Weekly Report on the Performance of the Parliament

During the 3rd Ordinary Session

January 30, 2016

The House of Representatives held, in the 11th week of its Third Ordinary Session, one session devoted to its regulatory role. Six committees out of the 20 Standing Committees held 8 meetings, two meetings for each of the Foreign Affairs and Palestine Committees, while the Legal, Energy and Mineral Resources, Behavior and Order, and National Steering Committees held one meeting each. The other 14 Committees did not hold any meetings during the last week.

The only oversight session held by the House of Representatives in this week included on its agenda an interrogation presented by MP Rola Al-Hroub to the Prime Minister on the issue of raising the water prices. At the end of the interrogation discussion and after hearing the response of the Minister of Water and Irrigation, MP Al-Hroub declared a no-confidence motion before announcing the conclusion of the interrogation session and not to withdraw confidence in the government after hearing the MPs' opinions in this matter, which doubts the constitutionality of interrogating the Prime Minister, and raises fears that a decision not to interrogate the Prime Minister's Deputy will be recorded in the history of the 17th Parliament. MP Al-Hroub directed the interrogation on November 8, 2015 and was presented on the council's agenda several times, but it was postponed each time due to various reasons, until last Tuesday. However, and despite discussing the interrogation in the parliament and the controversy regarding the constitutionality of interrogating the Prime Minister, the Council has not yet issued final decisions regarding the interrogation of the Prime Minister.

Regarding the interrogation of the Prime Minister, some MPs raised the issue of the unconstitutionality of this interrogation, while others refused this orientation as it may detract the oversight role of this council.

These MPs based on the articles 133 to 137 of the Rules of Procedure of the House of Representatives that address the interrogations. These articles did not mention the MPs' right to interrogate the prime minister, but indicated their right to interrogate the minister on the work of his ministry.

This trend triggered another opinion in the Parliament, in which other MPs considered that this approach would place restrictions on the parliamentary work. They argued that the government works in solidarity, and that the Prime Minister follows the same rules applied on the ministers. The MPs also argued that article 51 of the Constitution indicates the responsibility of the Prime Minister as well as the Ministers of the state's public policy, and that this article indicates the responsibility of the Prime Minister in front of the MPs.

Evidences in RASSED's record, as well as the Parliament's records, show that the MPs have asked for 82 interrogations, 67 of which were directed to the Prime Minister. In addition to the recent interrogation, five interrogations were listed on the sessions' agenda, four of which were directed to the Prime Minister.

In earlier times, MP Zakaria Sheikh discussed his interrogation to the Prime Minister regarding Miyahuna company on February 25, 2014. MP Mahmoud Kharabsheh has also discussed his interrogation to the Prime Minister regarding Al-Balqa University campus violence, dated January 20, 2015. In the same session, MP Rola Al-Hroub discussed her interrogation regarding Mitna' Airport. In the last session, MP Al-

Hroub discussed her interrogation regarding the water tariffs, which raised the interrogations› constitutionality issue.

The common factor in all the interrogations was that they were directed to the Prime Minister, and were answered by the Prime Minister and the related Minister. The difference in MP Al-Hroub›s interrogation was that she declared her discontent with the response and asked for a no-confidence motion, which has put the council in this constitutionality confusion.

The Parliament›s progressive procedure and customs indicate that the House of Representatives has always directed interrogations to the Prime Minister. And if what the MPs say is true, then the MPs will lose their right to direct questions to the Prime Minister, as the MP can turn his question into an interrogation if he was not convinced with the Minister›s answer.

RASSED›s historical tracking over the life of the current parliament showed that the MPs have directed 14 interrogations to the Prime Minister in the 17th Parliament Extraordinary Session, while the rest of the interrogations were directed in the First and Second Ordinary Sessions.

Regarding the gradation which took place in the last interrogation shows that the President of the Council transmitted Al-Hroub›s interrogation to the Prime Minister, who in his turn responded to the interrogation. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs sent the Prime Minister›s reply on December 10, 2015, which included all his the answers to the interrogation.

The weather conditions that dominated large parts of the Kingdom during the last week had significant impact on the activities of the Parliamentary Committees, causing a clear reduction in the number of the committees› meeting.

The committees' overseeing role has overshadowed their legislative role during their meetings, since only two legislation meetings were held. The Legal Committee held a meeting where they continued discussing the Electoral Draft Law 2015. During this meeting, a thorough discussion on the law's article (9), which is related to candidacy to fill the parliamentary seats allocated to the constituency through the open list system.

The Energy and Mineral Resources Committee held a meeting to discuss the Natural Resources Act Draft Law 2015, as well as a number of articles of the Draft Law concerning exploration and mining licenses, the fees collected by the Energy and Minerals Regulatory Authority for issuing the licenses, as well as mining rights granting conditions.

The most prominent work of the committees was through meeting international delegations. Palestine Committee has met with a British parliamentary delegation, and held a press conference after the meeting. The Foreign Affairs Committee has met the same delegation, as well as a Norwegian parliamentary delegation. The System and Behavior Committee has met with experts from International Partners Foundation. During the meeting, the committee discussed the complaints the committee gets and how to handle them.

In their monitoring role, Palestine Committee has met with a delegation of the people of the Gaza Strip in the Kingdom and discussed with them the issue of the protest that was supposed to take place last Thursday in front of the Parliament to oppose the government's decision to issue work permits exempted from fees. The meeting resulted in a decision to cancel the protest. National Steering and Media Committee has dedicated its meeting to discuss a draft workshop regarding the complaints council and get recommendations to be represented for the Prime Ministry.