

RASSED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program 7th Weekly Report on the Performance of the Parliament During the 3rd Ordinary Session January 2, 2016

The House of Representatives held two sessions – Legislative and Regulatory – during the seventh week of the Third Regular Session. 23 meetings were held in the House of Representatives by 12 parliamentary committees. Seven meetings were held by the Finance Committee, three by the Legal Committee, three by the Economy and Investment Committee, and two meetings by the Palestine Committee. Additionally, three field visits were made by the Agriculture, Integrity and Education Committee to various institutions.

The loss of the quorum recurred in two of the House meetings. The Regulatory Session dedicated to complete the discussion of the government's economic policies lost the quorum, preventing the continuation of the session as the first general debate meeting. Loss of quorum repeated in the House meeting on Tuesday, where the Deputy Speaker proclaimed that this issue obstructed voting on the legislation listed on the session agenda. The parliamentary committees still suffer from lack of genuine discipline in attending the meetings due to frequent absences and delays in holding the meeting on time, resulting from a lack of quorum.

The committees want to reconsider the House Rules of Procedure regarding the current mechanisms used in dealing with the occurrence of unexcused absences from the sessions. The current Rules of Procedure do not enable the House Speaker to limit this problem.

Accordingly, the RASSED team calls upon the House of Representatives to reconsider the current mechanism used in publishing the names of

present and absent MPs, where MPs must ask for permission to leave the session. Additionally, the granting of a 15 minute break between sessions will ensure continuation of attendance.

The work of the House in the seventh week did not include the parliamentary note that calls for a Motion of No-Confidence against Government. This happened in spite of the fact that the agenda of Tuesday's session included two parliamentary notes which raised the question of the fate of the note that was signed by about 30 MPs two weeks ago without any actions mentioned from the House concerning this matter.

Regarding the work of parliamentary committees, the Legal Committee continues to hold consultation meetings without going into the details of the electoral draft law. The committee still has not intervened in the discussion of the draft law article by article.

On the other hand, the Finance Committee continues to hold meetings to discuss the draft law of the state budget for the 2016 financial year, and the independent government units draft law of the same year. The committee is holding meetings to discuss this matter; however, some MPs objected to holding meetings of the Committee during the sessions, which they considered to affect the sessions.

It is expected that the Finance Committee meetings end before the middle of the current month – to be initiated by the House Representatives – to discuss the draft of the two laws under the dome.

The Management Committee unusually returned to discuss the amended Petra development Tourism Region Authority draft law of 2015. The draft law was forwarded to the House in the previous Tuesday's session and the Committee has finished reviewing it.

The committees' decided to reconsider Article 5 in the draft law after the debates that arose from the fear that it will lead to selling the lands in the region to non-Jordanians and Arabs.

The committee also discussed the note forwarded by the House of Representatives, on the issue of the the Mayor of Amman, Akel Biltaji, who is not attending the meetings of the Palestine Parliamentary Committee.

The Agriculture and Water Committee discussed The Red Sea-Dead Sea Bahrain vector draft agreement. The Countryside and the Desert Committee held a meeting devoted to research the Hashemite University project to develop the desert.

The Finance Committee continued discussing the law of state budget and independent government units in its meetings during the seventh week. Additionally, they discussed dedicating a meeting to evaluate the income tax system and the tax on the contracting sector.

The Tourism and Antiquities Parliamentary Committee discussed the problems and obstacles faced by the touristic restaurants.

The Public Services and Transport Parliamentary Committee held a meeting which recommended the exemption of fees imposed on taxi owners.

The Energy and Mineral Resources Parliamentary Committee also held a meeting demanding the government to withdraw the Natural Resources Act of 2015 draft law.

In its first meeting, the Palestine Parliamentary Committee met with Ahmad Tibi, leader of the Arab Movement for Change, member of the Israeli Parliament «Knesset», and head of the Jerusalem Committee of the Joint Arab List. The second meeting was with the Palestinian Minister of Labor Ma'moun Obuchehla.

The Legal Parliamentary Committee held three meetings, two of them dedicated to discuss the draft law on drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 2015. The third meeting continued discussing the proposals submitted by political parties, civil society organizations, public associations, and segments of the society on the electoral draft law for the year 2015.

The Economic and Investment Parliamentary Committee held three meetings where they approved the act amending the Development of Economic Projects Law for 2008. They also approved the Patent law, and then began discussing the temporary law of the Chamber of Commerce for 2003. The third meeting was devoted to discuss the Provisional Law No. 25 of 2010, the ratification of the partnership agreement to establish a free trade zone between Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

The National Steering Committee discussed the laws listed on its agenda, most notably the amended law of the national access to information laws and the national documents draft law.

The Labor and Social Development and Population Parliamentary Committee discussed the demands of Jordan Knowledge Stations staff and the department of drilling workers. Three parliamentary committees visited a number of institutions. The Agriculture and Water Parliamentary Committee visited the Central Market for Fruits and Vegetables in Amman for examination and to discern the reasons behind the rise in prices and the damages of farms.

The Education and Culture Committee visited Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan to attend «The Reality and the Future of Higher Education in Jordan» seminar. The Integrity, Transparency and Fact-Finding Committee visited the Civil Service Bureau.