

RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program 23rd Weekly Report on the Performance of the 17th Jordanian Parliament during its 2nd Ordinary Session April 14, 2015

1. The lack of a quorum during the sittings of the House of Representatives raises doubts about its ability to perform its legislative and monitoring functions.
2. The lack of adequate rules in the House's internal bylaws is the main cause of the MPs' absences during the sittings.
3. To reduce absences, the House should announce the names of all absent MPs and impose a monetary penalty on them
4. It is necessary to pass a Parliamentary Code of Conduct to reduce the problems of the lack of a quorum and incidences of verbal violence.

In the 23rd Week of the 2nd Ordinary Session, His Majesty King Abdullah II met with the presidents of the permanent parliamentary committees. This meeting represented a milestone for the 17th Parliament, especially because during the meeting, His Majesty indicated a clear interest in the problem of the lack of quorum in Parliament sittings. This clearly indicates the need for the House to quickly address this phenomenon by amending its Internal Bylaws, which should have clear legal provisions to put an end to this phenomenon.

The recurrent lack of the quorum in the meetings of the House of Representatives creates doubts about the ability of the House to perform its work monitoring the executive branch, as well as its ability to deal with the its upcoming legislative tasks related to political, economic and social reforms.

Moreover, the problem of the MPs' absences doesn't just affect sittings of the Parliament, but it affects the meetings of the 20 permanent committees too which are considered to be crucial components of the House of Representatives.

RASED believes that the repeated absences of MPs from sittings of the Parliament, as well as the fact that they often deliberately leave the chamber and cause a lack of quorum during sittings, stems from the absence of any legal provision in the internal bylaws aimed at curbing this phenomenon, and the lack of implementation of existing provisions requiring MPs' attendance.

RASED believes that it is necessary for the Parliament to commit to putting an end to this phenomenon; apply the existing provisions of the internal bylaws the decisions of the Executive Office related to the issue; announce the names of absent MPs; impose penalties on them; and amend the Rules of procedure to introduce provisions aimed at reducing this phenomenon. Otherwise the problem of the lack of attendance will remain a recurrent issue and continue to negatively affect the work of the Parliament.

RASED also emphasizes the importance of the meeting between His Majesty the King and the chairs of the parliamentary committees, during the need to adopt a parliamentary Code of Conduct was addressed, in order to eliminate the phenomenon of the recurrent lack of a quorum and incidents of verbal violence, which prevent the Parliament from performing its work and harm the Parliament's image in the eyes of the citizens.

With regards to the work of the committees, the small joint Legal and Administrative Committee has started to work holding debate sessions in the governorates to listen to the opinions of the local community on the drafts of Municipalities and Decentralization Laws.

The Committee started its national dialogue sessions by holding meetings in the Governorate of Amman involving political parties, popular associations (such as professional unions and civil society organizations), presidents of the municipalities and municipal employees, youth organizations, experts, professors, and women's associations and specialists, in order to listen to their opinions and comments on the drafts of the two laws. Afterwards, other meetings were held in the governorates of Zarqa and Irbid.

With regards to the Administrative Committee, it continued to discuss the Temporary Law No. 81 (2003), focusing on the use of the IT in government institutions, while the Economic and Investment Committee continued its discussions on Securities.

The Energy and Mineral Resources Committee approved the draft of ratification of an agreement on the exploration and production of petroleum resources in Jordan between the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Transeuro Energy company in the Hamza sector. The National Steering and Media Committee approved the draft of the National Records Act for the year 2014.

During the week, the Parliamentary Investigation Committee continued to discuss the energy issue and the nuclear reactor project, while the Parliamentary Initiative bloc submitted its recommendations to the Joint Legal and Freedoms Committee on the draft political parties law for the year 2014.

The President of the National Steering and Media Committee submitted to the Prime Minister a report and its recommendations about the crisis of the newspaper Al-Dustour and of the daily newspapers and weekly magazines throughout the country.

With regards to oversight work, the Committee on Labor and Social Development discussed the possibility of closing a mill in Irbid. The Committee recommended the submission of a memorandum to the prime minister to re-examine the situation of a number of waste collectors who work in the Balqa Applied University, and bring them into to the Civil Service Commission, as the workers were hired through contracts at the expense of the secretariats but have worked now for six years.

With regards to the Committee on Education and Culture, it dedicated its meetings to discussing topics related to higher education, such as colleges and universities, problems of overcrowding, students' preparation within schools, burdens borne by the professors who teach 16 hours per week, admissions policy in public and private universities, and governmental scholarships and te education support given by the government to the universities.

The Committee for Women and Family Affairs met a delegation representing the Princess Basma Center for Development / Hashemite Fund and a number of volunteers at the picnic area of the center. The meeting was held to communicate with women from diverse sectors to listen to their comments and suggestions on the issues that concern them, stressing that the work of the Commission aims at monitoring the effectiveness of the policies that relate to their affairs in various sectors.