

RASED for Parliamentary Monitoring Program 15th Weekly Report on the Performance of the 17th Jordanian Parliament during its 2nd Ordinary Session February 14, 2015

The work of the House of Representatives during the 15th week of the Second Ordinary Session came to a close without a decision having been made by the Permanent Parliamentary Committees on any laws presented to them. Exception was the Financial Committee which managed to complete the study of the Draft Public Budget Law and Independent Governmental Units Budget. The majority of committees held sufficient amounts of meetings for general discussions of law articles presented to the committees. Other committees to acknowledged the need for further consultation, or due to lack of insufficient quorum to allow decisions on laws were not able to do so.

A number of Committees held regulatory meetings with other parties, some committees prevented the reaching of the quorum.

The House's move to convene a weekly regulatory meeting is an important milestone in the process of enhancing the regulatory performance of MPs. Nonetheless there are a number of observations noted by RASED on the method of convening this meeting and the lack of reaching the legal quorum. Despite this lack of quorum, the session is convened – as occurred this past Tuesday. The Head of the Session was aware of this fact but did not seem fazed.

Additionally, it is noted that the item listed as “Other Business” needs more specific mechanisms for it to be handled appropriately. Currently it is left open which is undesirable as it has lead to items being spoken about in an inconsistent manner and conflicting with the norms enshrined in the House of Representatives.

RASED invites the House of Representatives to decide on specific mechanisms to deal with this item through inclusion thereof on the meeting agenda. This would allow for determination of a number of speakers in this item, and rely on parliamentary norms and traditions.

Additionally, we stress the necessity of regulatory inclusion of this item on the agenda of House of Representatives' meetings, in addition to the necessity of the government to respond or comment on what is being said of the topics. Ministers are often observed as being reluctant to respond to the remarks of Representatives made during this time.

It seems the House has abandoned the habitual practice to convene a legislative session each Wednesday. The weekly legislative sessions have returned to be conducted twice weekly, once on Sunday morning, and the second on Tuesday evening.

Additionally, it has been noted that there is governmental absence in the legislative sessions, as occurred past Tuesday. This particular session was allocated to complete discussion of the Food law, where only the Minister of Political Development and Parliamentary Affairs and General Director of the Food Foundation attended. This means that the Minister of Health, who was considered the competent minister to lead this session, was absent for a long time and upon his attendance did not participate in any of the interventions.

During the 15th week, the parliamentary committees held regulatory and legislative meetings to continue law discussions as dictated by their agendas, and members of the executive power discussed various issues. It was observed that during this week, no committee approved any of the laws referred to them; some merely had general discussions of articles, and others acknowledged the need for further consultation or referred to the lack of quorum as reason for lack of law approvals.

The Health and Environment Committee convened a meeting commissioned by the House of Representative to discuss Articles 22 and 23 of the Law on Food Regulation to improve them. The Order and Conduct Committee discussed the Code of Conduct presented to them and delayed approval to a later meeting in an attempt to enable reaching a consensus without members submitting irregularities. The committee seeks to collect all materials related to conduct in the Internal Regulations, and include these in the new Code, upon which it will be presented to the House of Representatives so as to amend the Internal Regulations and include it as a chapter therein.

The Legal Committee returned to complete its discussion of the Law on Information Systems Crimes to update articles requiring amendments. The Public Services and Transportation Committee discussed Temporary Public Transport Law No. 33 of 2010. The Tourism and Antiquities Committee discussed the topic of regulation tourism inflows.

The Committee on Energy and Mineral Resources discussed the draft law ratifying the franchise agreement between the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and the Transeuro Energy Corporation in the Haqel Hamza area for the year 2014. This refers to the development program to evaluate, develop, and produce petroleum in Jordan.

The Labor, Social Development, and Population Committee discussed the demands of Housing Bank retirees without presence of representatives of the relevant banks, for example. Additionally, the Labor Committee convened to discuss a complaint of loading and unloading in Amman Customs.

The Rural and Badia Committee discussed environmental pollution in the al-Dhaleel and al-Khalidiyeh areas. The Education Committee researched topics related to education and developments in the Ministry of Education Affairs and the ministerial plan of future advancement of the instruction phase.

The Economic and Investment Committee listened to presentations by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Dr. Ibrahim Saif detailing the grant provided by the Gulf States. The Administrative Committee discussed a number of requests from employees of the Ministry of Public Works and Housing. The Palestine Committee paid a visit to the Department of Monitoring and Inspection for the procedures and services provided to the people of the West Bank.

These are either legislative or regulatory aspects, and it must be noted that a number of committees convened in regulatory meetings without paying heed to the quorum.